

Constructing the Chinese Image in Pearl S. Buck's Novel "The Good Earth" from the Perspective of Cultural Linguistics

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Received: 24- June -2023

Revised: 27- July -2023

Accepted: 21- August -2023

Abstract— This paper presents an analysis of American female writer Pearl S. Buck's novel "The Good Earth," for which she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1938. Drawing upon the core concept of "cultural imagery" from the perspective of cultural linguistics, the study interprets the essence of cross-cultural competence in the text, revealing the significant role of English in the dissemination of Chinese culture. "The Good Earth" delves into the portrayal of rural Chinese society, showcasing the tumultuous fate of the Wang Lung, an ordinary Chinese farmer, and his family. It depicts the challenging life of Chinese farmers during the early 20th century, as they struggled against natural disasters in the agricultural era. The novel affirms the deep attachment of Chinese farmers to their land, praising their virtues of hard work, simplicity, and resilience. "The Good Earth" authentically showcases Pearl S. Buck's profound understanding of Chinese culture. With her cross-cultural experiences and perspectives, she has crafted a unique portrayal of China that has had a significant impact on Western readers. Breaking away from traditional Western literary representations of China, her work holds constructive significance for the study of the dissemination and reception of Chinese imagery. The cultural symbols in the novel and the dissemination of Chinese traditional culture both require the guiding perspective of cultural linguistics to encourage audiences to engage in profound reflection on the characters portrayed in the work. Through a global perspective, it fosters recognition of the construction and dissemination of Chinese imagery and enhances the world's understanding of China.

Index Terms—Cultural Linguistics, China's image, construction, English, The Good Earth

I. INTRODUCTION

The Chinese image in the West can be traced back to pre-Christ times and represents a cultural theme with a long history of scholarly exploration. The 13th-century work "The Travels of Marco Polo" by Marco Polo kindled the European fascination with the Orient. Subsequently, after traveling in China for several years during the Yuan Dynasty, the Italian Franciscan friar Odoric composed "The Travels of Friar Odoric," which further delineated the image of China in Western culture in the text. These literary works, both in content and form, reflect the authors' cognitive understanding and cultural awareness of the "otherness" of China, contributing to a deep and enduring impression of the Chinese image in Western consciousness.

Combining her own experiences, Pearl S. Buck completed her first novel on China-related themes, "East Wind: West Wind," in 1930, marking the beginning of her efforts in exploring and communicating the cultural exchange between the East and the West. In fact, Pearl S. Buck continuously sought solutions for the interaction and conflicts between Eastern and Western civilizations, with "The Good Earth" serving as the culmination of her cultural communication awareness. Therefore, this paper selects the epic novel "The Good Earth" as the subject of study, which narrates the story of Wang Lung, an ordinary young Chinese farmer who rises from poverty to become a landlord. Wang Lung marries a homely servant girl from a wealthy household, O-lan, and through their diligent labor, their lives gradually improve. However, a drought devastates Wang Lung's homeland, forcing the family to flee southward. During a period of turmoil, the couple unexpectedly obtained a windfall, allowing them to return to their hometown and purchase new land. They accumulated more and more wealth, becoming landlords and falling into the vices of the old landlords. Wang Lung took Lotus as his concubine, indulging in pleasure, while O-lan succumbed to illness due to excessive labor and passed away. Throughout the story, the land was Wang Lung's most precious wealth, and his love for it remained unwavering from beginning to end. "The Good Earth" has been translated into 30 different languages and has sold over 1.8 million copies, ranking high on the bestseller lists in the United States. It was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1932 and the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1938, with the award citation stating, "For her rich and truly epic descriptions of peasant life in China and for her biographical masterpieces." This work also became the only dual winner of the Pulitzer and Nobel Prize in Literature.

As Pearl S. Buck's most renowned novel, "The Good Earth" deeply portrays China's rural society and folk traditions, expressing praise and sympathy for the beautiful countryside and hardworking, kind people. The

Chinese image constructed within this dual cultural perspective represents Pearl S. Buck's response to the contradictions and conflicts between Chinese and Western cultures. In an era of multiculturalism characterized by increasingly frequent and profound exchanges between Eastern and Western cultures, researching the Chinese image constructed by an author who devoted her life to promoting communication between these cultures holds undeniable contemporary significance.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Construction of the Chinese Male Image

Pearl S. Buck lived in China for several decades, residing not in foreign concessions but among Chinese people. Consequently, she had extensive interactions with Chinese intellectuals and acquired a profound understanding of rural life through her long-term experiences. By the time she wrote "The Good Earth," Pearl S. Buck had accumulated years of first-hand experiences in Northern China, allowing her to adopt an "otherness" perspective to objectively depict the Chinese image and challenge the Western stereotypes of China. As Huang Yanni noted, "Through the portrayal of more and different walks of Chinese life, Pearl Buck improved the image of the Chinese people in the American mind." [1] As an author who wrote about China and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, Pearl S. Buck's upbringing in both China and the United States, her exposure to Eastern and Western cultures, and her immersion in traditional and modern civilizations shaped her unique cultural phenomenon in constructing the Chinese image.

Pearl S. Buck eloquently described the pastoral landscapes of China and praised the diligent and simple farmers living on this beautiful land. As stated by Paul Doyle, "Mrs. Buck has enabled us to witness and appreciate the patience, frugality, industry, and indomitable good humor of suffering people." [2] In her writings, the life significance of Chinese farmers is inseparable from the land. Represented by Wang Lung, the young generation of Chinese farmers, like their ancestors, toil diligently on the land and hope that their descendants will also love the land as much as they do. The land produces abundant crops and fosters new life. Chinese farmers should be intimately connected with the land from birth to death. The novel portrays the recurrent natural disasters, revealing Wang Lung's close and direct relationship with the land—Wang Lung is the land, and the land is Wang Lung. The land sustains the livelihood of farmers, and their prosperity, hardship, joys, and sorrows, as well as birth, aging, illness, and death, are all related to the land. The land feeds Chinese farmers, and they, in turn, serve the land: "This earth which formed their home and fed their bodies and made their gods." [3]

The earth brings wealth to the farmers, but it also brews natural disasters. It is the unwavering commitment of standing on the land, the resilience to withstand challenges from nature, that highlights the perseverance and tenacity of Chinese farmers towards their homeland. Despite calamities instantaneously devastating their diligently cultivated land and claiming countless lives, Wang Lung remains unwilling to abandon his own land. In the struggle between humanity and nature, Pearl S. Buck, with her simple language, repeatedly depicts Wang Lung's resistance against natural disasters. When the first drought arrives, the family is on the brink of starvation, and neighbors resort to secretly consuming human flesh. Wang Lung's uncle advises him to sell the land, but he firmly responds,

"I shall never sell the land! Bit by bit I will dig up the fields and feed the earth itself to the children and when they die I will bury them in the land, and I and my wife and my old father, even he, we will die on the land that has given us birth!" (P72)

He chose to sell off all the furniture and flee with his family to escape the famine. He only retained the land and farming tools, as they represented his last spiritual refuge. He was certain he would return to this land, for it was only on this land that he could find solace for his pain.

when he was weary he lay down upon his land he slept and the health of the earth spread into his flesh and he was healed of his sickness. (P174)

Only when a person's life is intertwined with the land does it become possible for the land to mend the soul. In contrast, once a person is detached from the land, he finds it difficult to obtain solace from the earth. Upon witnessing the Huang family, landowners, selling their land to indulge in pleasures, Wang Lung finds it incredulous because "Land is one's flesh and blood." Cultivating the land symbolizes diligence and virtue, and abandoning the land signifies departing from tradition and losing the soul's sense of belonging. During the famine, they lived under other people's walls as refugees:

He belonged, not to this scum which clung to the walls of a rich man's house; nor did he belong to the rich man's house. He belonged to the land and he could not live with any fullness until he felt the land under his feet and followed a plough in the spring time and bore a scythe in his hand at harvest. (P100)

After receiving an unexpected windfall upon returning to his hometown, he immediately thought of using the jewels to buy land. To him, treasures like these could not be preserved; they had to be sold and kept in a secure place—the land—because nowhere else could be safer than the earth. He drew close to the land, gripping the soil tightly, feeling life within his fingers. With this, Wang Lung felt content, as the kind earth patiently awaited his return. In his later years, Wang Lung even had his coffin carried to the old house closest to the land, intending to die on that piece of land. The exquisitely carved and soft grand bed in the urban landlord's mansion couldn't bring him sound sleep; instead, in his later years, he found solace in the rundown cottage in the countryside. There, he could spill herbal tea on the floor without worrying about damaging valuable possessions, and with a step, he could be in the fields. As Wang Lung reached old age and looked back on his life, he couldn't help but sigh:

“There in that land of mine is buried the first good half of my life and more. It is as though half of me were buried there, and now it is a different life in my house.”(P221)

By relying on his diligence and perseverance to gain favor from fate and striving for the continuation of his family, it is precisely this unwavering resilience and hardworking spirit that showcases the character of the Chinese nation and allows Chinese culture to be inherited. Language cannot operate independently without culture, and culture cannot have an isolated impact without language; as a socialized symbol, language is filled with rich cultural meanings.

It is evident that for Wang Lung, the land is not merely a simple object of cultivation and a source of wealth; rather, the land is his blood, the origin and destination of his life. The land also serves as the wellspring of his strength, and when he detaches himself from it and succumbs to desires, it is the resounding call of the earth, louder than any other voices in his life, that awakens him and grants him solace and liberation. Being close to the land allows Wang Lung to maintain his faith in life and the courage to endure in the face of relentless natural disasters. Through portraying the intimate connection between the land and its people, Pearl S. Buck presents to us a traditional agricultural society in China, a nation built on the foundation of agricultural civilization.

At the same time, Pearl S. Buck also expresses concern for the farmers who have lost their land. At the end of the novel, Wang Lung inadvertently overhears his sons plotting to sell the land to pursue greater profits. He despairs, realizing that his sons are eager to detach themselves from the land, and no one is willing to carry on the identity of a farmer. Tearfully, he says:

“It is the end of a family--when they begin to sell the land,” he said brokenly.“ Out of the land we came and into it we must go—and if you will hold your land you can live--no one can rob you of land——” (P292)

“If you sell the land, it is the end.” (P292-P293)

However, the knowing smiles exchanged between the sons foreshadowed Wang Lung's ultimate defeat in his unwavering commitment to the land, destined to succumb to the influence of capital. Chinese farmers have toiled on the land for generations, and Wang Lung's love for the land represents the most intrinsic and cherished essence of Chinese farmers. However, as society evolves, people gradually abandon their roots and forget that it is the earth that bestows life upon them. Just like the Huang family of landlords, who forgot and forsake the land, they eventually descend into decline. In this portrayal, Pearl S. Buck expresses boundless regret and nostalgia for the Chinese farmers who are about to lose their connection to the land.

2.2 Construction of the Chinese Female Characters

In “The Good Earth”, Pearl S. Buck also places significant emphasis on shaping a pivotal female character - O-lan. O-lan is one of the most successful female characters portrayed in all of Pearl S. Buck's novels, and this character image has allowed Chinese rural women to enter the Western perspective. O-lan works diligently her entire life, remaining silent like the sturdy earth, silently enduring storms for centuries. When Wang Lung first sees O-lan, he has such a feeling: “It was a face that seemed habitually silent and unspeaking; as though it could not speak if it would.” (P20)

In the novel, O-lan, like Wang Lung, symbolizes the land. The author repeatedly emphasizes the intertwining relationship between O-lan and the land, endowing her with earth-like qualities: "The woman and the child were as brown as the soil and they sat there like figures made of earth." (P36) In several instances throughout the novel, O-lan is directly described as "like figures made of earth". O-lan seemed to possess a natural ability to merge with the earth. While lying on the ground to nurse her child, her milk flowed like a spring, nourishing not only her

offspring but also the land that supported her. The abundant milk not only symbolized the fertility of Chinese female farmers but also represented the richness of the land. When she falls seriously ill, Wang Lung offers to sell all the land to afford her medical treatment, but she strongly refuses, stating that she will die one day, while the land will always remain. Through O-lan, Pearl S. Buck expresses her admiration for Chinese women. Her portrayal of O-lan's unwavering vitality captures her most vivid and authentic impressions of Chinese women, acquired through her long years of living in China. By conveying this truth through her writing, she allows readers worldwide to appreciate the charm of Chinese women living on this land.

Wang Lung's rise to prosperity was continuously supported by O-lan. It was only after O-lan's arrival that Wang Lung experienced unprecedented harvests. O-lan carried her son to visit Old Mistress Huang, and upon learning that the Huang family intended to sell their land, this prompted Wang Lung to buy a good piece of land from them. During the famine, the family fled to the southern city, and O-lan's rich life experience helped them overcome the difficulties—building a shelter under someone else's wall and teaching their son how to beg for food. Even the capital for Wang Lung's initial success and wealth came from O-lan's contribution—using her experience as a maid, she discovered a small bag of hidden jewels amidst the chaos. Wang Lung mercilessly took the bag of jewels and used it to buy the Huang family's land. O-lan had once humbly requested to keep two small pearls from the treasure:

“I wish I could keep two for myself,” she said with such helpless wistfulness, as of one expecting nothing. “If I could have two,” she went on humbly, “only two small ones--the two small white pearls even.....”(P121)

After marrying Wang Lung, O-lan was no longer subjected to ridicule and insult. She wholeheartedly helped Wang Lung, but after he became wealthy, he despised her, calling her "she was altogether hideous, but the most hideous of all were her big feet", and took away the only pearls she had left to please the prostitute Lotus. When she gave birth to twins, he once thought of the pearls she had wisely kept for good luck, “now he thought of it with contempt, for her breasts had grown fabby and pendulous with many children and had no beauty, and pearls between them were foolish and a waste.” (P140) These two pearls held special meaning for O-lan. In this household, it seemed like they were the only things that truly belonged to her. When she was a maid in the Huang family, she had no right to possess anything; she knew she was physically unattractive, so she remained silent and kept the two pearls, which represented her secret longing for love and affection. Even after Wang Lung became wealthy, she did not acquire any jewelry for herself. Compared to Lotus's extravagance, she lived more like a servant in the household. When Wang Lung criticized her for not boiling an extra pot of water for Lotus, she angrily exclaimed, "And to that one, you gave my two pearls!" Although Wang Lung regretted his actions after her death, he regretted the day when O-lan washed clothes for him by the pond and he took away her two pearls. Those two small pearls were not only mementos of the hardships they had endured together but also symbols of her position in the family. Now they were taken away by Wang Lung, and the impact on her can only be imagined.

O-lan is a character who has endured immense suffering. From a young age, she followed her parents in fleeing from famine-stricken northern Shandong to the south. At the age of 10, she was sold to the Huang family as a servant. Due to her unattractive appearance, she endured various hardships and humiliations, becoming the most lowly and submissive existence, even vulnerable to mistreatment from other servants. Throughout her life, she carried the burden of being downtrodden and could not find peace even at the end of her life.

“I will bring the meats to the door only-and well I know I am ugly and cannot appear before the great lord----” And again she said, panting, “Do not beat me---- I will never eat of the dish again----” And she said over and over, “My father----my mother----my father----my mother----” and again and again, “Well I know I am ugly and cannot be loved----”(P210)

When O-lan expressed her belief that she could not be loved because of her ugliness, Wang Lung could not bear to hear it, as he himself felt that she was speaking the truth. The love she received from Wang Lung was extremely limited; he married her because he needed her help. When she was about to give birth to their first child, Wang Lung asked if she wanted to hire a familiar woman from the Huang family to assist her, to which she responded with anger for the first time, saying, "None in that house!" This sudden outburst of anger towards the Huang family exposed the miserable past she had endured there during her ten years as a servant, which was an agonizing memory. She held a grudge against the Huang family, but this emotion didn't show particularly strongly in her. It was only when Wang Lung brought Cuckoo who had worked as a maid alongside in Huang family and who had bullied O-lan before, to serve for the concubine Lotus, that her anger finally erupted. She confronted Wang Lung twice with the same question.: "What is this slave woman doing in our house?" (P166) She hoped that her husband would respect her and send Cuckoo away, as she had endured numerous insults from her during their time as servants. However, Wang Lung's answer was:

“Well, it is my house and whoever I say may come in, she shall come in, and what are you ask? And what is it to you? ” (P166)

Tears streamed down her face, veiling her eyes, sorrowful like a speechless beast. This was a display of emotion never before seen since Lotus married Wang Lung. Her husband had become someone else's husband, and she had lost everything. When Cuckoo complained to Wang Lung that O-lan did not heat water for Lotus in the morning, he came to question her, and once again, she became angry:

But she answered with a sullenness deeper than ever upon her face: “I am not slave of slave in this house at least. ”(168)

At this moment, O-lan is angry and helpless. She feels that she is being forced back into the role of the servant who was mocked and bullied by Cuckoo all day long. She can only shout in anger that she is not a "slave of slave". Nevertheless, O-lan's anger is directed solely at Cuckoo. In the face of Lotus, she continues to endure silently, silently protesting. When Wang Lung openly despises her ugliness and taunts her, saying "Why should that one wear pearls with her skin as black as earth? Pearls are for fair women!" (P153), and mercilessly takes away the pearls to please the prostitute Lotus, O-lan remains in agonizing silence:

But O-lan returned to the beating of his clothes, and when tears dropped slowly and heavily from her eyes she did not put up her hand to wipe them away; only she beat the more steadily with her wooden stick upon the clothes spread over the stone. (P153)

Pearl S. Buck did not directly dissect O-lan's inner anger and sorrow; instead, she described her emotions through explicit actions—such as O-lan pounding the clothes harder. It was only towards the end of her life that O-lan finally revealed her disgust and contempt towards Lotus.

And again she said, suddenly: “How can't that one feed him and care for him as I do? Beauty will no t bear a man sons!’(P217)

Through delicate language, Pearl S. Buck portrays O-lan's joys, sorrows, and struggles, allowing readers to directly perceive her pain and bringing them closer to Chinese women. Language, from its inception, holds both sociological and cultural significance. It is not only a product of society but also a product of culture. When Wang Lung first saw O-lan, despite being repulsed by her ugliness and unbound feet, he felt a hidden joy as he brought her home. However, he did not express it openly; instead, he took out two copper coins to buy six small green peaches for her. The unique emotional exchanges and love among the Chinese people that she describes are deep and implicit, contrasting sharply with the direct openness of the West, representing a unique beauty of the East.

Pearl S. Buck not only depicted the suffering of Chinese women in a patriarchal society but also recognized the resilience they displayed under heavy pressure. O-lan's actions often showed greater wisdom, strength, and resilience than Wang Lung. During the drought and famine, Wang Lung hesitated to kill his own plow ox, but O-lan took a large knife from the kitchen to end the ox's life to save her family. When Wang Lung's uncle and his men came to buy the land by force, Wang Lung almost compromised, but it was O-lan who firmly refused without hesitation. When the starving villagers rushed into Wang Lung's house to steal things, facing the crazed mob, Wang Lung and his children were driven out. His father wept quietly, and as the villagers couldn't find any food and turned to seize furniture, pregnant O-lan stepped forward and dissuaded them, defending her family's belongings.

Then O-lan came forward and spoke, and her plain, slow voice rose above the men:

“Not that-not that yet,” she called out.“It is not yet time to take our table and the benches and the bed from our house. You have all our food. But out of your own houses you have not sold yet your table and your benches. Leave us ours. We are even.” (P62)

Faced with the imminent childbirth of O-lan, the villagers left in shame. O-lan's resistance was not frequently depicted in the narrative, but each portrayal was composed and forceful. This was a deliberate scene crafted by Pearl S. Buck to magnify O-lan's resilience and composure in the face of difficulties, allowing readers to see her hidden endurance and struggle. This spirit reflects the resilience of the Chinese nation in the face of adversity for thousands of years, describing the reality of Chinese survival and also reflecting the awakening of female consciousness in O-lan. However, O-lan still cannot escape the constraints of feudal views on women. She remains diligent, serving the elderly, taking care of children, and obeying her husband. Even when Wang Lung is infatuated

with Lotus, passionately building a new house, buying furniture, and marrying her, while constantly criticizing and disliking the unattractive O-lan, she does not raise a big fuss.

So that at last one morning O-lan burst into tears and wept aloud, as he had never seen her weep before; even when they starved, or at any other time.

But she answered nothing except to say over and over, moaning:
"I have borne you sons---I have borne you sons——"(P160)

"Having given birth to a son," it seemed to be her greatest achievement and pride in this household. Different languages carry different cultures, and a culture is largely reflected in its corresponding language. Social culture is manifested in the form of language, and an individual's culture is also expressed through language. O-lan was deeply affected and sacrificed by feudal concepts, ultimately meeting her end through excessive labor. Pearl S. Buck portrayed O-lan's death due to overwork as her ending, which might be considered the best outcome for O-lan, but for readers, it is another tragedy caused by feudal ethics and customs.

2.3 Pearl S. Buck's Strategies in Constructing the Image of China

Pearl S. Buck was one of the most famous American female writers of the 20th century. In October 1892, at the tender age of four months, she was taken to China by her missionary parents. In 1900, due to the Boxer Rebellion in northern China, Pearl S. Buck returned to the United States for the first time. However, in 1902, she returned to Zhenjiang, China. In 1917, she married a young American agriculturalist who shared her passion for Chinese culture. After living in Xuzhou for five years, they moved to Nanjing, where she became a teacher at Jinling University. She lived in China for a remarkable 41 years, considering it her "second motherland," and Zhenjiang as her "hometown in China." Many of her famous works were based on Chinese themes. Pearl S. Buck's childhood was entirely spent in China, where she received an education in both Chinese and Western cultures. This laid the foundation for her ability to observe and understand both Eastern and Western perspectives. Her years in China coincided with a time of intense collision between Chinese and Western cultures, with historical events such as the Boxer Rebellion and the Xinhai Revolution, which made Pearl S. Buck keenly aware of the profound changes occurring in China under the influence of Western civilization.

Although the life of the Chinese people was incredibly difficult, in the American literature of that time, the portrayal of Chinese people was mostly negative. They were depicted as having long queues, sallow complexions, and engaged in despicable activities such as theft, rape, assassination, and cunning schemes. "We must also acknowledge that China cannot be fully understood and accepted, and the Western stereotypes of China remain firmly ingrained. In cultural exchanges, we can cleverly borrow mysterious or natural Chinese impressions and imbue them with new contemporary connotations." [4] In "The Good Earth," Pearl S. Buck crafted a completely different image of the Chinese people from her previous works. In the novel, the Chinese people constantly struggle against natural disasters, living amidst hardship and challenges. They have their own cultural traditions and habits, and despite their weaknesses and flaws, they radiate the brilliance of humanity. At the beginning of *My Several Worlds*, Buck told her readers: "(My) story is told upon different levels about different places and peoples, the whole held together merely by time, for this is the way my life has been lived and must be lived until I die." [5]

Palmer's cultural linguistics argues that language systems, cognitive patterns, and worldviews are all constructed within social and cultural contexts. Pearl S. Buck's transformative portrayal of China's image not only stems from her profound observations of Chinese peasants but also arises from her narrative perspective that bridges Eastern and Western cultures, as well as her unique and distinctive language. Despite Pearl S. Buck's persistent efforts to define Chinese peasants, which can be seen as a form of othering in the text, the language style of the text itself is extremely concise. She expresses both sorrow and joy with succinct language, uses "estranged" language to depict characters and unfold the plot, imbuing the characters with an Eastern aura within the novel and helping Western readers understand China. Although Pearl S. Buck's English works may feel "alienated" to Chinese readers, when she engaged in literary creation, her primary audience was mostly Western readers. Therefore, the "alienation" mentioned here actually pertains more to foreigners in comparison to China.

In depicting the daily life of Chinese peasants, Pearl S. Buck uses language as a code to convey the Eastern way of thinking and cultural habits, revealing her aesthetic style as well. The vocabulary used in "The Good Earth" creates a deeper sense of estrangement for Western readers. Pearl S. Buck employs a considerable number of words that do not conform to English expression conventions, inviting readers unfamiliar with Chinese culture to understand the Chinese way of thinking and language characteristics. Language serves as the medium of the text, and the construction of characters is closely linked to the use of language. Due to Pearl S. Buck's bicultural identity, her novels adopt a dual cultural perspective in language usage, thus evoking a sense of estrangement in readers. By examining the specific text of "The Good Earth," we can observe that for the same object, Pearl S. Buck deliberately uses expressions different from ordinary English. For example, a father is referred to as "old father," an old man as "old head," a train as "fire-wagon," brown sugar as "red sugar," eat as "eat eat," a little bit of rice gruel

as "a little thin gruel of rice," a first-born son as "a first-born son," figures made of clay as "like figures made of earth," a shoulder pole as "shoulder pole (a pole across their shoulders)," a tigress as "an old tigress," a matchmaker as "middleman," and a yellow cart as "yellow rickshaw." She uses different language to describe unique cultural images in Chinese culture, such as the Land God as "the Earth God," the temple of the land as "The temple of the earth," an incense and candle shop as "candlemaker's shop," Spring couplets as "long strips of red paper", oil-paper umbrella for "oiled-paper umbrellas," and "the cold ashes of the incense" for cold incense ash from the censer.

There are many similar vocabulary expressions in the text, and Pearl S. Buck abandons the traditional method of translation. Instead, she creatively incorporates Chinese grammatical constructions directly into English from a cross-cultural perspective. She does not insist on the translatability of words but rather traces their origins, using basic vocabulary to embody the cultural essence. Language, as a tool for communication between people, is inseparable from specific social contexts and linguistic structures. In "The Good Earth," these completely unorthodox forms of word formation and sentence structure in English, while exaggerating cultural differences, fundamentally aim to facilitate peaceful and friendly dialogue between Eastern and Western civilizations. Pearl S. Buck attempts to use this seemingly peculiar English to encourage readers to pay closer attention to the Chinese way of thinking and understand Chinese behavior with goodwill.

Pearl S. Buck had early exposure to traditional Chinese culture. Her parents had her study Chinese first, and they even hired a scholar to teach her "Records of the Grand Historian" and "The Four Books and Five Classics." She read novels like "The Story of the Flowers in the Mirror" and "Extensive Records of the Taiping Era," which piqued her interest. She studied Chinese culture diligently and lived with her parents in a small alley in China, not in the foreign concession. Her first group of friends were Chinese, and she lived and celebrated festivals just like ordinary Chinese people. In "The Good Earth," there is a description of customs during the New Year:

Wang Lung went into the town to the candlemaker's shop and he bought squares of red paper on which were brushed in gilt ink the letter for happiness and some with the letter for riches, and these squares he pasted upon his farm utensils to bring him luck in the New Year. Upon his plough and upon the ox's yoke and upon the two buckets in which he carried his fertiliser and his water, upon each of these he pasted a square. And then upon the doors of his house he pasted long strips of red paper brushed with mottoes of good luck, and over his doorway he pasted a fringe of red paper cunningly cut into a flower pattern, and very finely cut. And he bought red paper to make new dresses for the gods, and this the old man did cleverly enough for his old shaking hands, and Wang Lung took them and put them upon the two small gods in the temple to the earth and he burned a little incense before them for the sake of the New Year. And for his house he bought also two red candles to burn on the eve of the year upon the table under the picture of a god, which was pasted on the wall of the middle room above where the table stood. (P40)

Pearl S. Buck's novels were written in English and targeted towards Western readers. As a result, her works often contain extensive explanatory language aimed at familiarizing Western readers with Chinese culture. Thanks to her study and understanding of traditional Chinese culture, she provided detailed descriptions of Chinese customs and traditions, even avoiding the use of corresponding English terms whenever possible. For example, in the above passage about the Chinese Spring Festival customs, she carefully explains the square red paper with the words "riches" and "happiness," which were pasted on farming tools and water buckets. "Long strips of red paper brushed with mottoes of good luck" were pasted on the sides of doors, and a "fringe of red paper cunningly cut into a flower pattern, and very finely cut" was pasted on the door panels. The new clothes made of red paper were for the Earth God. Pearl S. Buck chose not to directly use terms such as "spring festival scrolls," "window paper-cut," or "the God of Door," which have become conventional expressions. Instead, she drew from her rich experience of Chinese life and her understanding of Chinese customs. Such language descriptions are full of Eastern charm and serve as points of interest for Western readers, while also enabling them to better understand Chinese traditional customs. She believed that using commonly used Chinese phrases could allow Western readers to better grasp the image and emotions of Chinese people, showcasing the enchanting power of language.

Furthermore, in Pearl S. Buck's novels, there are numerous descriptions of the appearance of the concubine Lotus. Her face is repeatedly described as "with the pointed chin and the little small face, a face like a quince blossom for white and pink" (146), "A pointed face", "a little face pointed as a kitten's face", and her figure as "A body light as a bamboo", "The figure slender as bamboo", "the body of the woman slender as a bamboo".

As for the description of hands:

If one had told him there were small hands like these he would not have believed it, hands so small and bones so fine and fingers so pointed with long nails stained the colour of lotus buds, deeps and rosy. (147)

The description of the bound feet (small feet):

And if one had told him that there could be feet like these, little feet thrust into pink satin shoes no longer than a man's middle finger (147)

Pearl S. Buck most frequently uses vocabulary related to flowers and colors to describe the beauty of the concubine Lotus's appearance, such as "lotus buds," "quince blossom," "rosy," "quince blossom," and "pink." These cleverly suggest the delicate and fragile nature of this woman, who is dependent on Wang Lung for survival. In contrast, O-lan, who represents the earth, is portrayed with praise and sympathy. Names are also one of the carriers of culture; they are not only an essential part of material and spiritual civilization but also an external manifestation of humanistic ideas. As a medium of language, names serve as symbols that carry meanings and transmit culture. Therefore, examining and interpreting Chinese culture through names holds certain significance and value in the field of linguistic and cultural studies. When Pearl S. Buck chose names for characters in her novels, undoubtedly, she considered their qualities and personalities.

Wang Lung rejected the unattractive and big-footed O-lan and married the beautiful Lotus, who had delicate three-inch feet. Consequently, O-lan painfully forced her young daughter to undergo foot binding. What readers perceive is not only the peculiar aesthetic of Chinese folk customs but, more importantly, a deep sympathy for the helplessness and grievances in O-lan's heart after being despised by her husband. The act of foot binding was merely an attempt to secure happiness for her daughter and prevent her from experiencing the same fate as O-lan. Language, as a crucial component of character formation, is the focal point of character portrayal and serves as the foundation for shaping their personalities. Pearl S. Buck mentioned how the brilliant language used in the Chinese classical novels she read during her childhood deeply influenced her writing. The use of language in "The Good Earth" text reveals the cultural differences between the East and the West. At the same time, the portrayal of China by Pearl S. Buck also represents a secondary description of China as seen by the Western "otherness," achieving a new form of self-construction. Pearl S. Buck's novel creations focus extensively on the Chinese customs, which aligns closely with the Western interest and imagination about China. Her works find resonance within the Western "collective imagination" of the Chinese image, and based on this foundation, her bicultural identity as both Chinese and Western allows her the potential to reshape the image of China in her creations.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the text of the novel "The Good Earth," Pearl S. Buck aims to depict characters and scenes through a descriptive language style, avoiding complex scene descriptions. She uses objective and realistic language to portray the natural environment in the story. There is not much analysis of characters' inner emotions or stream of consciousness. Instead, she prefers straightforward language and uses dialogue and actions to reveal the characters' inner worlds, constructing their images with a natural and straightforward narrative style that highlights the Eastern charm of the characters.

"The Good Earth" not only reflects Pearl S. Buck's understanding of China but also showcases her unique perspective as a bicultural individual, which allows her to write about China in a special way and profoundly influence the Western perception of China. American historian James Thomson highly praises Pearl S. Buck, considering her the "most influential Western writer to describe China since Marco Polo in the 13th century." [6] Pearl S. Buck's writings on China not only provide valuable experiences and insights for the Chinese people but also leave behind precious wealth for people around the world who seek cultural exchange and integration.

In today's world of continuous multicultural exchange and integration, studying Pearl S. Buck's "The Good Earth" serves two purposes. On one hand, it aims to uncover the issue of shaping the image of China from the perspective of both Chinese and Western cultures. On the other hand, it also seeks to look at the self from multiple angles, fostering a sense of self-reflection from a different perspective. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of oneself, leading to a better ability to shape one's own identity.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in the continuous development of globalization, there is a constant collision and even a trend of mutual integration between Chinese and Western cultures. In recent years, the conflicts and exchanges between people of different cultures have received increasing attention. Scholars in the field of intercultural studies have shifted their focus not only to how to preserve cultural diversity but also to promoting peaceful coexistence among different cultures. The image of China has always been a topic of concern for Westerners. The birth of the Chinese image, its media construction, and its acceptance by the masses pose questions about how to reasonably utilize Western perceptions of traditional Chinese images, rectify stereotypes and outdated impressions, and build a positive and healthy image of China. This is a topic worthy of deep contemplation. Through the examination of the Chinese image portrayal in Pearl S. Buck's works, one can discern the proactive efforts of the author, imbued with

universal values, in facilitating the communication and understanding between Chinese and Western cultures. Pearl S. Buck introduced Chinese culture to the world through her works, allowing more Westerners to gain a deeper understanding of China and contributing to the global dissemination of Chinese culture. Her use of natural and straightforward language, coupled with an objective perspective in depicting Chinese characters, breaks away from traditional portrayals in Western literature, and constructs a genuine and industrious image of China. This endeavor holds significant cross-cultural introspection and serves as a valuable reference.

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