

CHAPTER III

SYNOPSIS AND SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

3.1 Synopsis

Wang Lung a young poor peasant who lives in North of China, marries to O-lan, an ex-slave in Hwang House, a wealthy and prominent family in their village. Starting a new life with a wife, lightens Wang's in doing daily life activities. She has expropriated his obligation serving his father, and helps him doing in the fields. On the other hand, now, he has someone that will serve him, forever. Not later, a first son is born by O-lan, and gives him the luck, in which his harvest is abundant. When the produce is sold from the years abundant crops. Wang Lung has some extra silver to be saved. It is used by him to buy Hwang's land.

Shortly, the birth of second son causes the happiness of Wang's family. On the other hand, Wang is very much disturbed by his uncle's family, since they want his money, which he gets it with working hard. In angry mood, he is more disappointed to the birth of girl baby. He considers it as an evil omen.

The time of evil comes upon him, that the gods in the Heaven do not fall the rain for a long time, which



causes a long dryness and terrible drought. Wang's family being starving, nothing to eat at all. Wang decides to evacuate to the South, but he does not know how to get there, since they are all so weak. Then his uncle appears with some men who want to buy his land, offering a ridiculously low price. He refuses their offer and O-lan supports their decision and decides to sell all their furniture. They get two pieces of silver, going to South with the clothes which they wore.

In the Kiangsu city, Wang's family starts a new life. He pulls ricksha to get some money, whereas O-lan and sons also the old father being beggar. But they never get any money beyond what they needed for their daily food. During this period he longs for to be back on his land, but no money that can take them there. The way out comes unexpectedly, when the gates of the rich are batter down by the poor. Wang Lung gets a handfull gold coins which can return them to his land.

Soon all is back in order, Wang Lung and O-lan, set about their work, and give Ching, their neighbour, seed to be planted. One night, he discovers that O-lan has stolen from the rich house a mass of jewels. He buys more Hwang's land with O-lan's jewel, but she meekly asks him to allow her to keep two small pearls.

With the fertile lands that had belonged to Hwangs, Wang Lung begins to have great harvests. Soon, he is not able to do the work by himself, he asks Ching working for his broad land. During this years O-lan has given birth to twin, a boy and a girl. But, a great flood comes over and all the valleys are filled with water. The Wangs are safes because his house is on the hill, and he still has two years harvest stored up. Nothing to do during the flood's time, makes him boring. Then. he looks O-lan, and it seems that this is the first time that he has really ever seen her. He scolded her for her appearance and complained that she never tried to make herself more beautiful as other women do. In angry and impatient mood, he goes to the Tea House, and falls in love toward Lotus, a prostitute girl. Then, he buys her and takes her to his house being his concubine. He does it without considering O-lan's feeling.

Suddenly, Wang's uncle family appears and make themselves at home in Wang's house. But, he can do nothing, since it will be dishonour to turn away his relatives. Actually, he hates them very much because their manners as the parasitic and get profit on the relatives success.

Before Wang Lung takes Lotus into his home, he has not foreseen the difficulties that will arise. O-lan

shows her displeasures to Cuckoo, Lotus' slave. Cuckoo is an ex-concubine in Hwang House. She is angry to see Cuckoo in her house, for she remembered how Cuckoo had treated her in the House of Hwang.

With the coming of the good weather, Wang Lung is back to work on his land. His harvest is good that year, and he starts to think to search a good wife his eldest son. From Lotus, he gets an information about Liu's daughter, and soon as possible he sends Cuckoo being the matchmaker, to propose to her. Then, betrothal between the two young, is waiting for till they are seventeen years old. Waiting for the marriage, Wang Lung sends the eldest son to the South, getting more knowledge as the eldest's wishing. For the second he makes arrangements to be apprentice to the merchant Liu, the father of the eldest's betrothed. He also arranges the betrothal for the youngest daughter with Liu's son.

O-lan gets a serious illness, during she lays dying, she wants to see the marriage of the eldest son. After this takes place, O-lan dies. In a short time later Wang's father dies. Wang Lung buries them at the same time. The one thing that really bothers him is his uncle's family. Then, the eldest suggest to give them opium to make them harmless. But one night, the uncle's

son will rape Wang Lung's youngest daughter. He is very angry, and soon as possible he sends her to Liu's house, since he can not keep watch on her virginity.

They move to town and live in Hwang House. And it is the time to search a wife for the eldest son. He sends Ching to get her. This done soon, and the marriage arrangements are made. For the youngest son, he wants to join the army, as the protest toward Wang Lung who has taken a slave eing hvs second concubine, that the youngest in love. During waiting his death, he overhears land as soon as his death. He is so sad to hear that.

3.2 Sketch of the author

Born Pearl Comfort Sydenstricker on June 26, 1892, at Hillsboro, West Virginia, reared in China, where her parents were missionaries. Buck grew up in Chinkiang, an inland city on the Yangtze River. They lived there till 1910. In 1900, during the Boxer Rebellion, her family was forced to flee and she experienced the horrors of racism.

Her education during in China studies with mother and with Confucian tutor. But when she was fifteen, she was sent to boarding school in Shanghai. In seventeen years old she was taken to Europe and England and then home to America. She completed her education at

Randolph-Macon College in Virginia (1910). At the end of her college life she went to her home in China to find her mother seriously ill. Two years she spent taking care of her and in 1917 she married a young American, Dr John Lossing Buck, an agricultural missionary. They lived in Nansuchon in Anhwei province (the setting of *The Good Earth*). After five years, they moved southward to Nanking, where her husband taught agriculture and she taught English literature at University of Nanking and in the Southeastern University. She published her first article in *The Atlantic* (January, 1923); "In China, Too" described the growing Western influence in China, particularly on Chinese youth. When her husband took a year's leave of absence, Buck studied English at Cornell University and received her master's degree. Her first published novel, *East Wind, West Wind*. She had written a novel before *East Wind, West Wind* but it was destroyed by soldiers entering her home in the 1926-1927 Nationalist Communist uprising. On March 2, 1931, *The Good Earth* appeared, creating a literary sensation.

Buck's early literary influences included her parents and her old Chinese nurse. Her parents, of course, encouraged her to read the Bible and told her tales of their American homeland, while her nurse told

her fantastic Buddhist and Taoist legends of warriors, devils, fairies and dragons. She learned to speak Chinese before English, but she learned to read and write in English sooner than in Chinese.

In 1932 she won Pulitzer Price for her novel *The Good Earth*, it became a successful motion picture, it gave its author the Howells Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1935, and with her subsequent work it led her becoming the Nobel Prizewinner in 1938.

The Bucks were divorced in 1935, and that same year Pearl married her publisher, Richard. J. Walsh, president of John Day and editor of *Asia* magazine. Their marriage lasted until his death in 1960. Buck loved both the United States and China throughout her life, serving as an intermediary between the two.

Buck's parents instilled into their daughter principles of charity and tolerance. Her love for the needy was also awakened by Miss Jewel the mistress of her boarding school. Jewel took her along as an interpreter on errands of mercy- to visit institutions for slave girls who have fled from their masters and institutions where prostitute went for help. Buck's own humanitarian effort begin in 1941 with the founding of the East and West Association, which endeavored to

increase understanding between diverse cultures. During World War II, Buck actively spoke against racism, against the internment of Japanese-Americans, and against the yielding of democratic privileges during war time.

In 1949, she and her husband founded Welcome House, an adoption agency for Amerasian children. In 1964, she founded the Pearl S. Buck Foundation to care for Amerasian children who remain overseas. She also worked for the Training School, a school for the retarded in New Jersey. For her many humanitarian efforts, she received the Brotherhood Award of the National Conference of Christian and Jews, the Wesley Award for Distinguished Service to Humanity and more than a dozen honorary degrees from American colleges and universities.

Along with her extensive humanitarian activities, Buck continued to write. Unfortunately, the quality of her fictions declined. Its strident and moralistic tone reflected her growing concern with social issues rather than artistic technique. She continued writing, however, and by the time of her death in 1973 had written more than eighty novels and novellas.

