

A CRITICISM OF THE GOOD EARTH

In this prize winning novel, Pearl Buck, a modern twentieth century writer depicts the primitive story of man and land in a new and living way. It is the dramatic story of a Chinese farmer, and his experience as inseparably connected with the soil.

Wang Lung was born a humble Chinese peasant who found not only his life's work but his very life, deeply rooted and inseparably connected with his land. From a poor Chinese farmer who took unto him a slave wife, he arose to be a wealthy land owner. But it was not without difficulty, for a famine struck the land which sent them begging to the south. However the invigorating smell of the fresh spring air and his overwhelming love for his land drew him back to it. Then through flood and famine, disease and death, troubles and trials, he managed, by the increase of land and its productivity, to rest his earth worn frame in the comfort of his unanticipated glory--to be a land lord himself. Yet through it all, Wang Lung never ceased to remember that his roots were embedded in the Good Earth--from it he was, by it he became, and to it he finally departed in peace.

The plot of this book was schematically interwoven into the very fabric of what appears to be a very common story in such a way that one might say that it was profoundly simple. There was never a dull moment, and yet one thing flowed into another as though it were most natural. At the same time, the element of suspense was not robbed from the reader and it was very difficult to make any prophecy of what might be coming next. The action itself was the oft repeated life circle of the Chinese farmer and the story itself was open as a book is to a desirous reader. The hidden mystery, if any, was the cryptical beauty of drama which was staged anew in the ever living

story of success, and yet in the most common setting and with two of life's most essential elements--man and land.

I feel like I have met Wang Lung personally. His village, farm, and relatives seem to be my next door neighbors. Every character was consistently true to narrative form and yet not so much so that one could not expect to find such an one if he should go to China. Wang Lung shall always be a friend of mine. I feel that I have lived with him, not only through 344 type-written pages, but through some fifty years of his life. His ideals were great, yet humanly simple. He was a man of the land. Soil to him was the source and substance of all true riches. Other things were only incidentally related to it. When his moral fortitude was at its lowest ebb, it took only a thought of his land to bring strength to him again. He was a true personality in every sense of the word. Surely, he must have really lived if not a thousand times under different names and in sundry lands--but he must have lived.

Somehow one senses that he has moved in a strange culture for years without a single social barrier when he has read this story. The so-called orientalisms fade away and the genus human nature is everywhere present without the specific differences that time, color of skin, customs, geography, and languages give to various peoples. Even though the setting is the Chinese farm land in the early nineteen hundreds, yet this story is not likely to become old too soon. It has a dateless, placeless aspect about it.

I enjoyed reading this book, and at times lost sight of the fact that it was an assignment at all. Therefore, my evaluation would place the book very high. The author has achieved success in putting the moral of man's everlasting association with the soil into a new and invigorating setting. Wang Lung through hard labor, perspiration, and determination gained a life-long treasure of land only to be divided in spoils by his sons in a simple smile at their father's death. I felt like shouting, "It isn't fair", but thus is the end of a great story.

THE GOOD EARTH

By Pearl S. Buck

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of the book in a pocket
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