

An Analysis of the House of Earth's Main Characters from a Perspective of Socialist Feminism

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Abstract

Literature work can serve a society in a sense that influences readers' empathy and appreciation. Pearl S. Buck carefully illustrated the history of Chinese women's liberation in her epic work—the House of Earth trilogy reflecting on three periods of history from tradition to modern, the impacts of social changes on women's social status and their struggle with power and freedom. Although many papers examined this trilogy from various feminism angles, a socialist feminism perspective has not been applied yet. Therefore, this paper's objective is to analyze Buck's trilogy from socialist feminism angle. To fulfill the objective, there are two research questions. First, why were women treated unequally? Second, how did women liberate themselves? Methodology: the main characters' speech, actions and consciousness are selected as data and then categorized into two themes: women's social status and women's feminist consciousness. Socialist feminists Stanley's and Wise's three themes on feminism including "women's oppression", "the personal is the politics" and "feminist consciousness" are taken as the framework. The results and discussion indicate that: 1) Chinese women's low social status was mainly due to unequal social class and the patriarchy; 2) education led women to resist the patriarchy consciously; 3) the professional work supported women's economic independence; and 4) women would gain contentment through men's respect and love. Conclusion: The findings can be useful for modern women to reposition themselves socially as well as for modern men to reconsider women's social status.

Keywords: The House of Earth trilogy, main characters, socialist feminism, social status, feminist consciousness