HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

LIMINALITY, SELF-REFLECTION AND INTERCULTURAL RECONSTRUCTION

Shamsuddinova Diyorakhon
Teacher, ASIFL

Abstract: This article examines the process of hybrid identity formation in Pearl S. Buck's A House Divided, the final novel of the House of Earth trilogy. The study explores Wang Yuan's psychological development through the concepts of liminality, marginality, self-reflection, and cultural hybridity. Employing psychological literary criticism, hermeneutic interpretation, and postcolonial theory, the research analyzes how the protagonist negotiates between traditional Chinese agrarian values and modern political consciousness. The findings reveal that Wang Yuan's identity evolves through a continuous process of cultural negotiation and self-reconstruction. The novel demonstrates that intercultural commonality emerges not through the dominance of one cultural system over another but through the creation of a hybrid identity capable of integrating diverse cultural experiences.

Keywords: Pearl S. Buck, A House Divided, hybrid identity, liminality, Wang Yuan, intercultural dialogue, self-reflection.

Introduction. Pearl S. Buck's House of Earth trilogy occupies a significant place in twentieth-century American literature due to its profound representation of Chinese society and its exploration of cultural transformation. The trilogy consists of The Good Earth (1931), Sons (1932), and A House Divided (1935), which collectively portray the evolution of Chinese society through three generations of the Wang family. While the first novel emphasizes harmony between human beings, land, and family, the second depicts the fragmentation of this harmony through generational conflict. The final novel introduces a new stage characterized by the search for identity in a rapidly changing social and political environment.

The protagonist of A House Divided, Wang Yuan, represents a generation caught between inherited agrarian traditions and emerging modern ideologies. Unlike his grandfather Wang Lung, whose identity is inseparable from the land, Wang Yuan seeks meaning beyond traditional structures. His psychological journey reflects broader cultural transformations occurring in early twentieth-century China.

Recent developments in identity studies emphasize the dynamic nature of identity formation and its dependence on historical and cultural contexts. According to Hall, cultural identity should not be understood as a fixed essence but as a continuous process of becoming rather than being (Hall, 1990, p. 225). Similarly, Taylor argues that modern identity is constructed through self-reflection and moral evaluation rather than inherited social positions (Taylor, 1989, p. 27). These theoretical perspectives provide a useful framework for understanding Wang Yuan's transformation throughout the novel.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the mechanisms of hybrid identity formation in A House Divided and to demonstrate how Pearl S. Buck presents intercultural commonality through the reconstruction of identity.

Methods

This research employs a qualitative literary approach combining psychological literary criticism, hermeneutic analysis, and postcolonial theory. The methodological framework is based on Victor

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

Turner's concept of liminality, Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity, Stuart Hall's cultural identity model, and Charles Taylor's theory of the reflective self.

The textual analysis focuses on Wang Yuan's internal monologues, psychological conflicts, and interactions with traditional and modern value systems. Particular attention is paid to narrative episodes that reveal identity crisis, cultural negotiation, and self-reflective consciousness.

Results and Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that Wang Yuan occupies a liminal position between two competing cultural worlds. Turner defines liminality as a transitional state in which an individual has left one social position but has not yet fully entered another (Turner, 1969, p. 95). Wang Yuan exemplifies this condition throughout the novel. He neither fully embraces the agrarian worldview of his ancestors nor completely assimilates into modern political ideologies.

This marginal position creates psychological tension. On the one hand, Wang Yuan recognizes the importance of family heritage and traditional values. On the other hand, he understands that the social realities of modern China require new forms of political and cultural consciousness. As a result, his identity remains unstable and continuously evolving.

The protagonist's condition can also be interpreted through Robert Park's concept of the marginal man. According to Park, individuals situated between two cultural systems often experience uncertainty and psychological conflict because they belong completely to neither culture (Park, 1928, p. 892). Wang Yuan's experience reflects precisely such a condition. His consciousness becomes a site where different cultural codes compete for legitimacy.

The process of self-reflection constitutes another important dimension of identity formation in the novel. Unlike previous generations, Wang Yuan repeatedly questions inherited beliefs and traditions. His development corresponds to Taylor's concept of modern selfhood, which is characterized by reflexivity and conscious self-examination (Taylor, 1989, p. 34). The central question underlying his psychological journey is not simply how to preserve tradition but how to redefine it within a changing historical context.

The novel further illustrates Hall's argument that identity is constantly reconstructed through historical experience (Hall, 1990, p. 226). Wang Yuan does not reject his cultural heritage; rather, he reinterprets it. Traditional concepts such as land, family duty, and social responsibility acquire new meanings within a modern political framework.

This transformation is best explained through Bhabha's theory of hybridity. Bhabha argues that cultural interaction creates a "Third Space" where new identities emerge through negotiation rather than assimilation (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56). Wang Yuan embodies such a hybrid identity. He simultaneously retains connections to Chinese cultural traditions while embracing modern political ideals. Consequently, his identity cannot be classified as either purely traditional or purely modern.

Unlike the external conflicts depicted in Sons, the conflict in A House Divided becomes internal and psychological. The struggle occurs within the protagonist's consciousness, where competing systems of meaning confront one another. This transformation of conflict from external social opposition to internal existential tension represents a crucial stage in the trilogy's conceptual evolution.

The novel ultimately presents identity as an ongoing process rather than a stable condition. Wang Yuan's development demonstrates that intercultural commonality emerges through dialogue, negotiation, and synthesis. The coexistence of different cultural perspectives enables the creation of new forms of selfhood capable of transcending rigid cultural boundaries.

Conclusion

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

The study reveals that A House Divided represents the final stage in the ideological and psychological development of Pearl S. Buck's House of Earth trilogy. Through Wang Yuan's character, Buck explores the emergence of a hybrid identity situated between tradition and modernity.

The protagonist's liminal status, reflective consciousness, and cultural negotiation demonstrate that identity is not inherited automatically but constructed through historical experience and personal choice. The novel suggests that intercultural understanding is achieved not through cultural homogeneity but through the creation of hybrid forms of identity that integrate multiple cultural influences.

Thus, A House Divided offers a significant literary representation of identity reconstruction in periods of social transformation and contributes to broader discussions of interculturality, selfhood, and cultural hybridity.

References

1. Bhabha, H. K. (1994). The Location of Culture. London: Routledge.
2. Buck, P. S. (1931). The Good Earth. New York: John Day Company.
3. Buck, P. S. (1932). Sons. New York: John Day Company.
4. Buck, P. S. (1935). A House Divided. New York: John Day Company.
5. Hall, S. (1990). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In Rutherford, J. (Ed.), Identity: Community, Culture, Difference. London: Lawrence & Wishart. Pp. 222–237.
6. Park, R. E. (1928). Human Migration and the Marginal Man. American Journal of Sociology, 33(6), 881–893.
7. Taylor, C. (1989). Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
8. Turner, V. (1969). The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure. Chicago: Aldine Publishing.