

'balzac and the little
chinese seamstress'
psychoanalytic-
marxist analysis of
luo...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* by Dai Sijie, Luo's attempt to re-educate the Little Seamstress is indicative of his own participation in the class struggle. This protagonist projects his own desire to be a member of the more sophisticated 'upper-class' in his education of the Little Seamstress. However, the end results of Luo's endeavors reveal the somewhat paradoxical approach to issues of class and agency that is central to the narrative

Luo is the son of a victim of China's oppressive ruling class under Mao. A famous dentist who fixed the supposedly perfect Chairman Mao's teeth, despite being upper-class in China's pre-Mao era, Luo's father was labeled as a reactionary and publicly humiliated "A great slab of cement hung round his neck from a wire so deeply embedded in the skin as to be visible...I could make out a dark stain on the ground..." (Sijie 9). forced to falsely confess to sleeping with a nurse as his crime. Luo is enraged that his father suffered this, becoming fixated on the fact the oppressive regime put his father down. This is made clear from Luo's punching the narrator in the face after he tears up in sympathy for Luo's father, causing an outburst of anger from Luo, the only time there was conflict between the two friends. Luo promises "We'll note down everyone who denounces my father, or beats him. That way we can take our revenge when we're older." (9). The dominant class which puts Luo's father in prison ignites a desire for Luo to seek reconciliation for this wrong by becoming a sophisticated, upper-class man as his father was to undermine and topple Mao's ruling regime as his revenge.

Once confined to the mountain, Luo transfers his own class struggle through his desire for the seamstress to be recognized as sophisticated, Since "...Luo
<https://assignbuster.com/balzac-and-the-little-chinese-seamstress-psychoanalytic-marxist-analysis-of-luo/>

nor I were high school graduates. We had not enjoyed the privilege of studying at an institution for advanced education...as young intellectuals we had only the statutory three years of lower middle school." (7). This inferiority complex and need to become cultured and thus upper-class manifests itself in how Luo wants the seamstress to be. Naturally, Luo chooses the daughter of the member of the village who is highest on the social hierarchy, the Taylor. " The Tailor lived like a king...served the choicest food...a pig might even be slaughtered"(22). If Luo could change the daughter of such a man to be sophisticated, it must mean Luo was himself was himself the most erudite. When the narrator asks Luo about his feeling towards the seamstress, Luo replies " She's not civilised, at least not enough for me!"(27). Luo takes great pride in his teaching the seamstress of western literature. " With these books I shall transform the Little Seamstress. She'll never be a simple mountain girl again." (100). Luo wants the seamstress to embody those same aspects he strives for, educated, refined, powerful, and holding sway over others. Luo projects his aspirations on to her by trying to shape her into something he himself strives to be.

In Luo's teaching of the seamstress he wants another enlightened ally to help overthrow the bourgeois, China's oppressive dictatorship, in a world where " Every nook and cranny of the land came under the all-seeing eye of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which had cast its gigantic, fine-meshed net over the whole of China." (160). In the name of his father. Luo comes to deeply care about the seamstress, and falls in love with her, just as he desires to self-actualize through becoming cultured and thus meeting his goal of completing the class struggle through the uprising of the true

proletariat as they dissolve Mao's regime and appropriate an cultured, intellectual, and prosperous life for all— minus the decadence and free of the oppression of the previous bourgeoisie. As the seamstress articulates “ It was a totally new experience for me. Before, I had no idea that you could take on the role of a completely different person, actually become that person—a rich lady, for example—and still be your own self.” (145). Just like the seamstress, on an unconscious level, Luo is method acting as an enlightened teacher, projecting his own desires into creating a sophisticated seamstress will indicate he is himself a superior member of the upper class along with her, since he himself is the one who educated the seamstress. “ Luo was delighted with her transformation”(104). With an enlightened seamstress by his side, Luo hoped break free of class oppression and escape the mountain, although ironically, it was the seamstress alone who achieved this goal, leaving Luo behind.