PEARL S. BUCK'S FICTIONAL TREATMENT OF THE CROSS-CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND AMERICA

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I

Pearl S. Buck lived in China for nearly forty years and then in America for more than forty years. As a result, she had a persistent interest in dealing with cross-cultural subject matters in her fiction, and once stated, "My two worlds of East and West often unite before my eyes."[1] This "bifocal perspective," shaped primarily by Chinese and American cultures, has contributed a great deal to the uniqueness of her work. Due to her profound interest in writing about various peoples and cultures, she has been universally regarded as a bridge between East and West. It is the main purpose of the present study to demonstrate her achievement as the "human bridge" by way of examining the cross-cultural relations between China and America as they have been treated in her fiction.

Before going into her fiction itself, it is important to note that Pearl Buck discussed the relationships between cultures from various angles in many of her non-fictional writings too, including *My Several Worlds*, "China and the West," "East and West—Are We Different?" "People, East and West," and "East

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[1] Pearl Buck and Theodore F. Harris, *For Spacious Skies: Journey in Dialogue* (New York: John Day, 1966), p. 202.

and West." Unlike Kipling, she was convinced that East and West could and should meet. About two years before World War II ended, she wrote that a new renaissance was about to commence because the war and the development of science had forced all peoples to know one another better. She made predictions about the new era in a cheerful tone:

> This rebirth will be the greatest of all, for there is more equality now between the peoples than there has ever been before. In the Renaissance of the Middle Ages it was the East that gave to the West. In the modern Renaissance of Asia it was the West that gave to the East. But now each has something to give to the other, and from this mutual need and mutual richness there will spring, if the times are free, life for mankind richer and better than anything we have yet known.[2]

Undoubtedly, this conviction that East and West need each other to create a richer and better life has been an important guiding principle for Pearl Buck in dealing with the peoples of both her fictional and actual worlds. She was not alone in holding this conviction. It was shared, for example, by F. S. C. Northrop, who wrote, "They [East and West] can meet, not because they are saying the same thing, but because they are expressing different yet complementary things, both of which are required for an adequate and true conception of man's self and his universe."[3] He believed that the merging of the Oriental aesthetic and intuitive approach and the Occidental theoretic and scientific approach would result in a new international civilization.

While fully recognizing the need to harmonize the East and the West, however, Pearl Buck did not stress the differences between them as much as Northrop did. In fact, she stressed similarities, rather than differences, among cultures. In S. J. Woolf's article, "Pearl Buck Finds That East and West Do Meet," she was reported commenting on this point, . . . "it is

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[2] Pearl Buck, "People, East and West," *Asia*, June 1943, p. 329.

[3] F. S. C. Northrop, *The Meeting of East and West: An Inquiry Concerning World Understanding* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), pp. 454-55.

not background that interests me so much as character . . . . Irrespective of nationality, men and women act much the same under similar circumstances. There is not so much difference among races as many people believe."[4] Because she thought that there were more similarities than differences among races, she was always optimistic about the possibility of bridging the gap between the East and the West. In this connection she seemed very close to C. A. O. Van Nieuwenhuijze, who contends that the shrinking of socio-cultural world space has rendered the East-West dichotomy inadequate for understanding our world.[5]

In line with this argument, Pearl Buck went on to question the validity of the widely accepted concept that the East is "spiritual" in the sense of being other-worldly, while the West is "materialistic." Such a clear-cut distinction was, to her, quite misleading. She asserted, "The East is neither more nor less materialistic than the West."[6] It is out of common sense rather than a religious or spiritual motive, she observed, that Orientals place the greatest emphasis on harmonious family life and community fellowship for the sake of human happiness. The Chinese are practical and materialistic, and yet they emphasize pleasant human relationships rather than material enjoyment in their pursuit of true happiness. In her opinion, "The real materialism of the West lies in its ignorance of the importance of such psychological understanding."[7] The best gift of the East to the West is, therefore, this persistent emphasis on harmonious human relationships.

After expounding how the East and the West can benefit from each other's special gifts, she came to this conclusion: "There is nothing incomprehensible in the East or in the West. We are like men digging a tunnel through a mountain. We have

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[4] S. J. Woolf, "Pearl Buck Finds That East and West Do Meet," *New York Times*, 20 Nov. 1938, Sec. 7, p. 4.

[5] C. A. O. Van Nieuwenhuijze, *Cross-Cultural Studies* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963), p. 284.

[6] Pearl Buck, "East and West," *American Mercury*, May 1945, p. 526.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 528.

begun at opposite ends but the goal is the same – human happiness. We ought to meet somewhere one of these days and find that each faces the other's light."[8] These words may be taken as a footnote to the ultimate aim of her writing career – to help the two illuminate each other's way. There is no doubt that she was always serious about this task of tunneling through the metaphorical East-West mountain.

Since China occupied the most important position in her own cross-cultural experience, it is only natural for her to have started undertaking this task by exploring China's relations with the West. In "China and the West" she discussed such relations in historical terms. Her primary purpose in writing this article was to urge Westerners to improve their understanding of China which, she predicted, "will assuredly influence the progress of the world in the next century and perhaps even in the next half century."[9] It may be safely said that this same purpose motivated her to write many stories and novels about the encounters between China and America.

II

After foreign imperialists had opened the door of China by force, the Chinese people were compelled to look outward with open eyes. In order to learn how to catch up with the modern world, many Chinese students went to America to receive whatever education was still unavailable at home. When they returned to China, they brought with them many new skills and new thoughts. In time the impact of their foreign education began to be felt in many branches of Chinese life. It is this impact that Pearl Buck attempted to describe in her first novel, *East Wind: West Wind*, and in such other works as *A House Divided*, "The First Wife," *Kinfolk*, and *The Three Daughters of Madame Liang.*

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 529.

[9] Pearl Buck, "China and the West," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*, 168 (July, 1933), p. 118.

East Wind: West Wind is composed of two parts, both narrated by Kwei-lan, an articulate girl reared in the Chinese tradition. Part I dramatizes the numerous "culture shocks" caused by her marriage to an American-educated Chinese physician, Mr. K'ung, while Part II portrays her parents' bitter reactions to her brother's marriage to an American girl, Mary. These two parts are seemingly independent of each other as far as the plot is concerned. Actually they are linked by the persistent motif of change, a motif which is manifest through a delineation of the clashes between the old and the new as well as the East and the West. The marriages of these two couples become the author's focus in studying these conflicting forces.

Kwei-lan's story centers on her painful adaptation to Western ways as practiced by her husband. At first she is almost totally ignorant of foreign things. She gradually becomes aware of the imminent clash between her own country and the West as it is foreshadowed by her rebellious brother, who distresses her and her parents by his interest in science and his protest against arranged marriages. The direct clash starts with her marriage to Mr. K'ung who, though considerably westernized, does not renounce tradition entirely. At least he brings himself to a conditional compromise with the past by taking his betrothed Kwei-lan into marriage. His condition is that he will not accept Kwei-lan as a wife until she has turned herself into a modern woman, modern in the sense that she will regard herself as his equal instead of his subordinate. This condition, which he announces on the wedding night, is indeed a great shock to her. The two distinct traits of her character – conservatism and subservience – inevitably bring her into conflict with her "lord" who, like Westerners, believes in equality of sexes and so will not "lord it over" her. She is thus forced to awaken to Western values. At last she completes her adaptation process when she learns a sound lesson from a Mrs. Liu, a modern and well-educated woman, who advises her to be open-minded enough to draw whatever is good from both Chinese and Western cultures and at the same time to reject whatever is bad or undesirable in either. As a result of her dis-

criminating acceptance of modernity she finally wins her husband's full love.

This advocacy of modernization is further illuminated by the story of Kwei-lan's brother, Mr. Yang. His marriage with Mary presents a more serious challenge to himself and his old-fashioned parents. Their objection to his marriage is rooted in their contemptuous and even hostile attitude toward foreigners.

In a formally worded message, the father announces the main reasons for his refusal to receive Mary as a legal member of the family. The young Mr. Yang throws away the bag of silver sent by his father and shouts at the messenger furiously:

> Return to that one! Bid him take back his silver! From this day I have no father. I have no clan – I repudiate the name of Yang! Remove my name from the books! I and my wife, we will go forth. In this day we shall be free as the young of other countries are free. We will start a new race – free – free from these ancient and wicked bondages over our souls![10]

With this fiery passage the climax of this novel is duly reached. This passage is actually the young Mr. Yang's "declaration of independence." His rebellion against traditional values based on Confucianism is completed when he resolutely severs all ties with his parents, his clan, and even his race. At the same time his repudiation of the ancient Chinese tradition juxtaposes his total acceptance of Western values. According to Chinese traditional ethics, he has committed a grave sin of filial impiety. But according to Western standards, he has admirably achieved freedom, individuality, and independence. He is thus acculturated into Western values for the sake of his love of Mary. In this dramatic way the sharp differences between Chinese and American attitudes toward the family are made very clear.

Also for the sake of love, Mary is willing to be a Chinese wife. She has tried to learn such things as using chopsticks, playing the harp, and speaking Chinese. She takes upon herself Chinese customs and etiquette. However, she cannot endure the indifference and even antagonism of the whole Yang

[10] *East Wind: West Wind* (New York: John Day, 1930), p. 264.

family. As Kwei-lan observes, Mary is different from Chinese women in many ways. She is unrestrained in her movement, untimid in her speech, and above all, uninhibited in demonstrating her feelings. To the surprise of Kwei-lan, she displays her love for her husband openly. Through such a skillful description of Kwei-lan's observations and reflections, Mary's American character becomes even more impressive.

East Wind: West Wind, Pearl Buck's first published novel, is successful in dramatizing her basic attitudes toward the cross-cultural relations between China and America. It gives a simple and yet meaningful picture of the impact of West Wind on East Wind. West Wind turns out to be strong enough to subdue China's traditional parental authority over the young, to sweep away such signs of backwardness as superstition, arranged marriage, and foot-binding, to awaken the Chinese people to a new era of science and technology, and to instil such values as equality of sexes into the Chinese mind. The West is thus described here as a benefactor and instructor of the old China. This reminds us of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," in which the west wind sweeps away fallen leaves and promises a new spring. In this way Pearl Buck reveals her double image of China – a traditional China versus a changing China, which has been increasingly influenced by the West.

Kwei-lan's story resembles that of the heroine in the short story "The First Wife," in that both deal with the efforts to adapt to modern ways introduced from America. The main difference between these two stories is that one has a happy, while the other a tragic, ending. The unnamed "First Wife," a dutiful, filial, submissive, and yet illiterate woman, is shocked at her foreign-trained husband's decision to divorce her and then to marry an educated woman. Caught in the unexpected predicament, the poor wife is driven to end her life by hanging herself. Her tragedy clearly shows that one is bound to be a loser if one is unable to go along with the new times.

The emphasis in Pearl Buck's fiction has, up to this point, been placed on the tension between the young returned intellectuals and those who have never had any direct contact with

the West, a tension which is expressed primarily through their different perceptions of marriage. In *A House Divided*, she begins to view the encounter between China and the West from a different angle. She places Wang Yuan, the protagonist of this novel, in America and examines how he reacts to the alien culture.

Before discussing Yuan's story, we had better review briefly the *House of Earth* trilogy as a whole, particularly in terms of the increasing tension between generations, a tension which is, directly or indirectly, reflective of Western influence on China. Of the five generations covered in this trilogy, only the first two do not contain the so-called generation gap. As shown in *The Good Earth*, a traditional harmony exists between Wang Lung and his old father. But differences between Wang Lung and his sons become inevitable. Then in *Sons*, we find Wang Lung's grandchildren defiant and rebellious. Near the end of *Sons*, the eldest son of Wang the Landlord boldly insists on choosing his own wife, to the anger and dismay of his parents. Like many other young people, he has freed himself from his parents' authority. This same spirit of freedom and independence is demonstrated most thoroughly in *A House Divided.*

A House Divided is, in a sense, a psychological study of the long process of initiation and growth of Wang Yuan, who represents most Chinese youths in a transitional era, one with many unprecedented changes. His six-year stay in the United States plays a very important part in the long process of naturization for him.

A fine contrast between Chinese and American cultures can be drawn from Pearl Buck's depiction of Yuan's American experience. For instance, a remarkable difference in sex mores between these two countries is disclosed through Yuan's shock at "free love" in America. When he witnesses the way the frivolous daughter of his landlady behaves toward his classmate, Yuan thinks that "these white men and women were the loosest, lustiest race he ever heard of, and their whole inner thoughts were turned to each other wantonly."[11] At the

[11] *A House Divided* (New York: John Day, 1935), p. 159. All further references to

thought of the many sights of love-making he has come across in town, we are told, "his very stomach turned proud within him at such coarseness everywhere" (p. 159). So deeply disturbed is he by such things that one day he gravely says to his cousin Sheng, "Are all the women of this nation so – no chaste maids, no virtuous wives, no woman unassailable?" (p. 167). Thus Yuan judges American behavior according to Chinese ethical standards.

Another revealing example of Yuan's cross-cultural consciousness is seen in his reflections on the differences between his homeland and the land of America. He observes that the land in China is well tamed or cultivated while the land in America is still wild or uncaptured. The former is "saturated with its own humanity" while the latter is "still stronger than the people who strove to possess it. . ." (p. 144). He also observes that the wildness of America's land is reflected in the savage spirits and looks of American people.

It is implied that Yuan is very critical of things American because he tends to idealize his own country. He cannot bear hearing people underestimate or belittle his country. Hence, consciously or unconsciously, he begins to forget whatever is bad about his country. One day, he even quarrels in a church with a missionary who shows the congregation some pictures taken in China of filthy beggars and lepers. With the deepening of his isolation and hostility, his native pride becomes increasingly strong. This is why his view of western scientific achievement is accompanied by a bitter realization of his country's backwardness. As a result, he "fell into great secret despairs in those six years" (p. 161). Obviously, the reason why he keeps his despairs secret is that he wants to maintain his native pride and aloofness.

Yuan's cross-cultural knowledge is further deepened by his unfulfilled romance with Mary Wilson, daughter of his favorite professor. Unlike his landlady's daughter, Mary is very graceful and intelligent. Her good manners and intelligence are only

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this work appear in the text.

part of the reason why Yuan is attracted to her. What is more important is her love and reverence for Chinese culture. Because she respects his Chinese background, she feels embarrassed by her parents' attempt to interest him in Christianity. Yuan feels proud that in her eyes China is a perfectly beautiful and peaceful country, having forgotten his childhood memories of violence and war, especially those memories associated with his warlord-father. Taking such a great pride in Mary's favorable image of China, he naturally feels terribly ashamed when he hears of the news that the new revolutionists have persecuted white people in a city of his homeland. He thinks he must defend his people's innocence because he suspects that Mary seems to judge the event secretly against him. It is suggested that his shrinking from Mary's love is probably out of his secret fear that her ideal image of China may be broken if he should bring her back home.

Thus Yuan's cross-cultural experience is presented by a portrayal of his "divided" mind. Largely through his ambivalent point of view, Pearl Buck shows us how his prejudice is nurtured against America, how his admiration for its achievement is mingled with envy and even hatred, why he is fluctuatingly drawn towards and held off from Mary, and how the foreigners view his country. Having had such experience abroad, he inevitably feels depressed when he returns to see the true state of his country.

Like Yuan, most of the other characters in the novel are also influenced in one way or another by the West. The revolutionist Meng who is impatient to get rid of old superstitious ways, the dilettante poet Sheng who writes in a western style, the pretty girl Ai-lan who loves nothing but vanity and pleasure, and the young doctor Mei-ling who is trained in western medicine – all these young people go for modernity, for weal or woe. In the midst of such confusion, Yuan has been groping and wandering until he is eventually able to cast off all his doubts and fears about the future. This is a remarkable change in his character, one made possible by his cross-cultural experiences which have broadened his outlook on the

world and also enhanced his confidence in himself and his country. Consequently, he is able to say to his beloved Mei-ling, a very promising woman doctor, "We two, we two – we need not be afraid of anything" (p. 353). This optimistic ending is meaningful because it confirms his commitment to his changing country. It also implies that old fetters will soon be gone and a new order is surely to be established by such enlightened and dedicated young people as Yuan and Mei-ling.

In *Kinfolk*, Pearl Buck makes another attempt to dramatize the conflict between tradition and modernity by exposing the principal Chinese characters to both Chinese and American cultures and then depicting their consequent actions and reactions. Shifting the setting back and forth between New York and Peking, the story of the expatriate family of Dr. Liang Wen Hua presents the conflict in China during the first few years after World War II.

The story focuses on the tension between such traditionalists as Dr. Liang and Uncle Tao and such modernists as Dr. Liang's two elder children, James and Mary, and Dr. Liu Chen. The whole conflict between these two groups begins with James' insistence on going back to China right after his graduation from a medical college. Out of a profound love for China, James is determined to go, despite his father's objection. His sister Mary, a social worker, shares his patriotism. Although they have lived in America for twenty years, they still fully identify with China, where they were born.

Dr. Liang, a distinguished Confucian scholar teaching Chinese philosophy in a New York university, imposes upon himself the mission of introducing Chinese civilization to foreigners in the most favorable light. He is portrayed as a chauvinistic and traditionalistic intellectual, thinking that only scholars, rather than peasants, can represent China. He makes a point of defending Chinese ways, and at the same time will never admit that he has taken up certain American ways. For example, in private he likes to drink tea with cream and sugar, but in public he will declare that good tea is spoiled by such stuff. Another example is shown in his rage with his wholly

Americanized daughter Louise when he learns that she has had sexual relations with her American boyfriend. Her un-Confucian behavior has, he declares, brought a terrible disgrace to the family. He states, "They will say that our Confucian ways cannot withstand the ways of the barbarians."[12] He is so angry with Louise that he ends up beating her severely with a malacca cane.

Pearl Buck is concerned with not only how Dr. Liang and his family react to American life, but how his American-educated children react to Chinese life as well. In depicting their cross-cultural experiences, her ultimate purpose is to point out a practicable way of helping China by portraying the aspirations of James and other modernists. Before his departure for China, James tries in vain to persuade his beloved Lili Li to marry him and go with him. He says to her:

> Our people are good – our people are wonderful. China is great. She is not really weak. She is only in distress. All the great strength is simply waiting until we come to her help. She has lived in an old, old world and she needs to be born into the new one. I am a doctor and I think naturally in terms of birth – of bringing forth life – (p. 41)

These words show that James aspires to bring forth a new life for China by devoting to her the new skills and knowledge he has acquired in America. He is thus conscious of serving as a vehicle through which American influence can be transmitted to China.

After his return to China, he is distressed to see many signs of backwardness and corruption. Everywhere he sees filth and disease and poverty. He sees many beggars and refugees dying of starvation in the midst of extravagance and luxury in Shanghai, a bastard city in his eyes. Above all, he is disgusted with the Western-educated intellectuals whom he meets in a reception given in his honor by the Shanghai Dialectic Society, of which his father is an honorary president. The intellectuals

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[12] *Kinfolk* (New York: Pocket Books, 1952), p. 93. All further references to this novel appear in the text.

are decadent and cynical and indifferent to what is going on in the country. Equally repulsive to James is the fact that they all prefer to speak English. Evidently, those intellectuals who embrace Western values too enthusiastically do not appeal to Pearl Buck although she favors James' efforts to serve China with what he has learned in America.

After he starts work in an American-built hospital in Peking, he finds that almost all the doctors and nurses are callous toward the patients. Only Dr. Liu Chen is working really hard for them. Liu Chen is particularly angry with those selfish and irresponsible doctors who have also been American-trained. He says to James:

> Scholar, landlord, magistrate, warlord – there you have the tyrants of the people. And we have them still. To go to a college in America does not change a man's heart. It only gives him a new weapon, sharper than the old, to use against the people – if that be his heart. (p. 114)

Just like old-fashioned scholars, as exemplified by Dr. Liang Wen Hua, these modern Chinese intellectuals hold themselves high above the common people. It is clear that such a wide gap between intellectuals and common people is, to a considerable extent, responsible for China's problems, a point brought out very impressively in this novel.

The importance of bridging this gap is well illustrated by what James and Mary do for their ancestral village, Anming. Deeply sympathetic with the dirty, ignorant, and unhealthy villagers, they resolutely resign from their positions in the hospital in Peking and come to settle down in the village. At first they find their great-uncle Tao to be a big obstacle to their work. With his contempt for women, his opposition to universal education, his unhygienic habits, his hostility to the tenants, and his connections with the local police, the tax collectors, and the magistrate, this old great-uncle embodies almost all the traditional forces which have prevented progress in the country. But James and Mary are not discouraged by such difficulties. Step by step, they set up a bath house, then a school, and finally a small clinic. At last they even persuade

the stubborn great-uncle to undergo an operation on a big tumor in his stomach. This operation is symbolic of their success in transforming the backward village into a modern one. As further proof of their devotion to the villagers, Mary marries Liu Chen while James marries Yumei, a poor peasant's daughter. In this way, they are putting their roots down in Anming.

Unlike James and Mary, Peter and Louise never feel at home in Peking. They come to despise their father because they are bitterly disillusioned with the beautiful but unreal picture of China he has tried to instill in their minds. Finally Louise marries an American and returns to New York with him, while Peter is killed by government police because of his involvement in a plot to destroy the big marble bridge in the city.

Through an account of the Liang family's cross-cultural experiences in both China and America, *Kinfolk* clearly presents the theme of bringing forth a new birth of China by means of introducing American know-how. However, in presenting China's post-war situation, which reflects the clash between tradition and modernity, Pearl Buck tended to over-simplify many urgent issues so as to fit them into the thematic presentation. For example, James has deliberately avoided confronting the issues concerning the rising influence of the Communists, the worsening inflation problem, and the increasing hostility between Uncle Tao and his depressed tenants. Granted that the villagers of Anming badly need education and medical care, it is improbable that James and Mary would remain so detached from the larger political and economic problems threatening the country.

This formula of reform emphasizing the areas of education and hygiene, to the neglect of other equally if not more important areas, might have come out of Pearl Buck's background as a missionary. She seemed to be projecting into *Kinfolk* what a Western missionary would normally do for a village like Anming. In fact, we are told that Liu Chen is indebted to a missionary for giving him the opportunity to

receive medical training in America and that he is anti-Communist because, as he says to James, he has sworn his loyalties to all humanity. Pearl Buck's preference for the missionary fomula may be due to the fact that it could best serve the immediate needs of the peasants, while the Western values prescribed by it would not contravene the basic peasant values which she admired. In other words, this formula seemed to be conducive to a harmony between East and West toward which she always aspired. Such American-trained intellectuals as James and Mary become, therefore, model vehicles through which she could express her broad view of East versus West relations. She believed that it would substantially benefit Chinese society if these intellectuals could bring certain values of the West to a rural village and settle there for the sake of the people. Due to her support for this "missionary approach," it may be said that Pearl Buck did not confront squarely the larger economic and political problems which faced post-war China.

The next novel, *The Three Daughters of Madame Liang*, resembles *Kinfolk* in several ways. For example, the main characters in both novels are American-educated and return to serve their home country. Both novels deal with the clash between tradition and modernity. However, this novel is unique in the sense that it is Pearl Buck's only published novel about Communist China. Covering one of the most cataclysmic periods in Chinese history, from 1949 to the 1960's, this novel represents her most serious efforts to depict within her fiction the rapidly changing country from a cross-cultural perspective.

Needless to say, the many unprecedented changes which took place during this period have exerted a great impact upon Chinese life. This impact is presented in this novel through the reactions of Madame Liang and her three daughters, Grace, Mercy, and Joy. From these reactions, we find the theme that there should be a proper balance between tradition and modernity for the sake of real progress.

Madame Liang serves as Pearl Buck's commentator on Communist China. Running a most fashionable restaurant in

Shanghai, this French-educated woman still lives a sort of bourgeois life, adhering secretly to the teachings of ancient Chinese sages such as Confucius and Lao Tzu. The real drama begins when her eldest daughter Grace, a distinguished pharmacologist specializing in the medicinal value of rare plants, is called back from America by the government, against Madame Liang's secret wish. Grace returns willingly to accept the task of synthesizing Chinese and Western medicines.

After her return, Grace is surprised to see many changes, which indicate that the country has become drastically different from what was described in *Kinfolk*. In the midst of so many changes, how can one adjust to them? Madame Liang advises Grace to remain calm because "there is no change beneath the turmoil."[13] Evidently, Madame Liang is a traditionalist. With her faith in the past and her secret misgivings about the present, she looks to the future when a wiser generation, she believes, will revere the ancient sages again.

Madame Liang is a philosophical and critical woman, but her judgment of the past and her criticism of the present are often presented in a rather didactic tone. Sometimes her viewpoints are not convincing. For example, she considers it a mistake to have overthrown the traditional imperial government which to her is "the best, the wisest, ever devised by mankind" (p. 130). She and her husband used to be friends and followers of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Now she regrets her part in the revolution because of that "mistake." With her conviction that the ancient monarchy is the best political system in the world, she has evidently overstressed the value of reviving the past. Because of her faith in the throne, she has overlooked many other factors contributing to the chaos she refers to. In fact she has simply duplicated what Pearl Buck herself said elsewhere.[14]

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[13] *The Three Daughters of Madame Liang* (New York: Pocket Books, 1971), p. 35. All further references to this novel appear in the text.

[14] For example, she defended the traditional imperial government without knowing that it could not easily meet the needs of the people in modern times. See *Fighting Angel* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1936), pp. 140-41.

Perhaps owing to her mother's advice, Grace proves capable of adjusting herself to her new life. At the end of the book, she marries Liu Peng, a Chinese-trained doctor versed in Communist ideology. Unlike Grace, Mercy and her husband John Sung, a nuclear physicist, have great difficulty in conforming to the new standards of the country. Soon after his return, John finds himself in serious trouble because of his refusal to undertake a secret weapon project. He demands his right as an individual not to do what he regards as wrong. Chao Chung, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, angrily accuses him of having been "too long in the decadent West" (p. 106) and of hiding "a traitorous love for Americans" (p. 125). To correct John's individualistic behavior, he banishes him to hard labor, first in a commune and then in a coal mine. Later, moved by Madame Liang's appeal, he sends John to the province of Sinkiang on a nuclear project. Left behind in Peking to do her assigned task of developing a new school of music, Mercy begins to regret that she left America. At last, when she is informed of John's death in an unexpected blast, she is so sadly disillusioned that she immediately seeks ways of escaping to America.

The suppression of individual freedom is the very reason why Joy and her husband Hsuang Teng, a well-known artist, choose to stay in New York. For the sake of his art, he says, he has to stay where the air is free. Individualism, as a value common to traditional China and to the West, is thus in conflict with the Communist value of collectivism.

After Grace's escape, Madame Liang feels herself under surveillance. She begins to consider fleeing to America too, no longer confident that she will live to see "the restoration of the wisdom of the past" (p. 203). But before she can realize her plan of escape, she is killed by a band of red guards right in front of her own restaurant.

Through the narrative of the Liang family against a Chinese vs. American setting, Pearl Buck makes an appeal for keeping the country's door open to the outside world. This appeal is conveyed through Madame Liang when she says to

Grace:

> I sent you three abroad with a purpose. I saw our doors closing to the outer world. I saw the old haughty pride of my people reviving and I sent you out, knowing that when you returned you would bring the life of the world with you. Into this stale atmosphere you will bring freshness, a different point of view, a new spirit. (p. 59)

This emphasis on keeping a continuous contact with the outer world is also logically expressed by the sort of research which Grace is undertaking. She is searching for ways of blending Chinese and Western medicines. An old Chinese physician, Dr. Tseng, is assigned to instruct her in the theory and practice of Chinese medicine. He is opposed to the concept of a synthesis. He says to Grace, "The two schools of medicine, old and new, may not be mixed, else the body becomes confused and *Yang* and *Yin* are put out of order. Two ways of life cannot be mingled" (pp. 76-77). This remark betrays his traditionalist attitude, which is linked to his sense of Chinese superiority. When Grace points out certain similarities between Chinese and Western medicines, he declares, "Ah, doubtless the barbarians across the four seas have heard of our learning" (p. 133). While he tends to overemphasize the Chinese point of view, Grace tends to lean toward a Western point of view as a result of her Western training. But Liu Peng often serves as a mediator between these two perspectives. These three doctors' discussions on such subjects as ginseng and pulse diagnosis and acupuncture are significant in that they are highly suggestive of the value of intercultural exchange.

The same value is also suggested by the paintings of Hsuan Teng and Joy, which reflect a mixture of Chinese and Western techniques. Hsuan achieves remarkable success in an exhibition of his latest paintings in New York. His successful blending of Chinese and Western art, just like Grace's medical research, seems to reinforce Pearl Buck's appeal for a synthesis of what is good in the old and the new, as well as in China and the West.

A gradual change in Pearl Buck's attitude toward cross-cultural conflict seems quite discernible in this novel. Her

earlier work contained fewer reservations about Western values, due to her enthusiasm for change. This was demonstrated rather well in *East Wind: West Wind* and *A House Divided.* Later on, her feelings about changes in China as a result of Western influences seemed more mixed than before, and she became more and more nostalgic for the old China. This attitude seems to have been most clearly manifested in the creation of the character of Madame Liang, who is almost obsessed with old traditions. Pearl Buck was increasingly repulsed by overly Westernized intellectuals and also by the extensive and drastic reformation favored by the Communists. Perhaps this is why she emphasized so strongly in *The Three Daughters of Madame Liang* the importance of building the future on the basis of the past.

In dealing with China versus the West contact, the formula which Pearl Buck has employed most often is to let modern Chinese intellectuals go to study abroad, mostly in America, and then examine what they do and how they feel after their return to China. Only in a few cases did she present the contact by depicting how foreigners in China interact with Chinese natives. For example, in a short story entitled "The Frill," she exposes how a rich and haughty white woman fails to treat a poor, humble Chinese tailor with kindness and sympathy. Fine characterization of the white woman and the tailor makes the story very touching.[15] In another story, "Home to Heaven," Pearl Buck describes how an American family enjoys their luxurious life in Shanghai with the cheap services of many amahs, cooks, coolies, and chauffeurs. To this family, coming back to Shanghai after the war is like going to heaven. Their two patterns of life in New York and Shanghai are vividly contrasted, and their arrogant attitude toward Chinese people is well delineated.[16] Pearl Buck's frequent use of American-trained intellectuals as the main characters facilitates her des-

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[15] "The Frill," in *Stories of China* (New York: John Day, 1964), pp. 125-40.

[16] "Home to Heaven," in *Far and Near: Stories of Japan, China, and America* (New York: John Day, 1947), pp. 80-90.

criptions of many changes which have been caused about essentially by American influences. By means of this method she has handled, in particular, such changes as the widening of the generation gap, the liberation of women, the revolt against traditional marriage customs, the development of modern education, and the growing interest in studying science and technology. In order to dramatize these changes effectively she has naturally brought into focus the conflict between tradition and modernity. Because of her consciousness of such a conflict, the world reflected in her fiction is not static, but in flux.

Pearl Buck was often able to make a subtle comparison betweeen two cultures by describing her characters' reactions to certain cross-cultural situations. As demonstrated in many of her works, especially in *East Wind: West Wind*, *A House Divided*, and *Kinfolk*, such a comparison was not made for its own sake. Instead, it is closely tied to the narrative and therefore becomes a useful technique for characterization and thematic presentation.

III

Interracial love and marriage is another mode of cross-cultural contact in which Pearl Buck took special interest. Through this kind of contact, two persons of different racial or cultural backgrounds are often able to achieve a deeper understanding of each other's cultural heritage. Hence the contact is generally conducive to greater interracial tolerance and harmony. This may be the fundamental reason why Pearl Buck dealt with interracial love and marriage in so many of her works, including *Peony*, *The Angry Wife*, *The Patriot*, *The Hidden Flower*, *Letter from Peking*, *The New Year*, "Repatriated," "With a Delicate Air," and "Duet in Asia." In fact, as we have seen, she expressed her interest in this subject in her first novel, *East Wind: West Wind*. *Peony* portrays how a Jewish family is gradually assimilated into the Chinese society. While *Peony* celebrates the absence of racial problems in China, *The Angry Wife* deplores the clash between white and black in

America. *The Patriot* concerns a Sino-Japanese romance, in which Pearl Buck has two lovers confronted with the hostilities between their mother countries to see how they react to the cause of patriotism and to the call of love. *The Hidden Flower* is about an unsuccessful Japanese-American marriage, the cause of its failure being racial prejudice. *The New Year* deals with an American-Korean romance, but its emphasis is not on the romance itself, but on the problems confronting the illegitimate child of the American-Korean parentage. As to *Letter from Peking*, it deals with four marriages which mix Chinese and American blood. Since the central concern of this paper is with the cross-cultural relations between China and America, I will focus on *Letter from Peking* in this section.

In this partially autobiographical novel,[17] the marriage of Baba Macleod, an American lawyer, and Han Ai-lan, a modern Chinese woman, proves a failure because he does not really love her, being still emotionally attached to his American girl friend who would not marry him. His son Gerald marries an American, Elizabeth. This couple loves each other dearly, but the ideological differences between Communist China and America bring their harmonious marriage to a tragic end. After their separation, Gerald is obliged to marry a Chinese woman in Peking in order to prove his loyalty to the new government, as he explains in his thirteenth letter to Elizabeth. Finally, the marriage of Rennie, son of Gerald and Elizabeth, with Mary, an American girl, promises to be successful because it is free from any cultural or political barriers. Through Elizabeth's smooth narration of these marriages, Pearl Buck intends again

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[17] Pearl Buck worte, "My book, *Letter from Peking*, reaches deep into my own life, and not just mine. For example, the letter has indeed been written from Chinese husbands to American wives. . . . Elizabeth is not myself and yet she is myself in some aspects, in character if not in events. Baba was created partly from the material of my father but more from one I loved and of whose long decline I wrote in *A Bridge for Passing.* Gerald is of course the central character in the book as indeed he was for a certain period in my own life. His father was American and his mother was Chinese. . . ." See *For Spacious Skies: A Journey in Dialogue*, pp. 51-52.

to narrow down the gap of two cultures by exalting the interracial bond of love. How does Gerald manifest his half-Chinese, half-American character? How does Rennie react to his one-fourth Chinese heritage? These questions receive as much consideration as the unusual predicament of Gerald and Elizabeth.

Physically Gerald looks like a dark Caucasian, but mentally his Chinese self is much stronger than his American self. Ever since his childhood he has identified himself with China because he is wounded by his American father's lack of concern for him and his mother. This strong Chinese identity is revealed in, among other things, his choice to stay in Peking, where he serves as the president of a university. He explained his decision to Elizabeth before they separated from each other in 1945, but he failed to foresee that this decision would make impossible his reunion with her.

Elizabeth takes pride in Gerald's Chinese heritage. His Chinese character is manifested in many ways. He cherishes his family tradition. He has deep respect for his ancestors, and urges Rennie to remember the many generations of their ancestors. He teaches Rennie the value of courteous manners and filial piety. Besides, he is very tender and gentle toward Elizabeth. In her memory her relation with him is full of harmony and happiness.

But to her dismay, Rennie is not happy with his Chinese heritage. She advises him to accept himself as he is, "You have a noble inheritance, but it is on both sides of the globe."[18] He will not accept the advice, however. He finds it hard to forgive his father for choosing to stay alone in Peking. Finally, he decides to embrace America as his country, a decision which completes his prolonged search for identity. He has been torn by the two different cultural backgrounds of his parents and grandparents, and now has come to identify with America for the sake of his mother.

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[18] *Letter from Peking* (New York: John Day, 1957), p. 74. All further references to this novel appear in the text.

Pearl Buck is to be credited for her efforts to examine how people of mixed blood are tortured in various ways by the tension between the different cultural backgrounds of their parents. As illustrated by Gerald's choice to stay in Peking and Rennie's choice to settle in America, such people are often confronted with a kind of identity problem. Pearl Buck's treatment of this problem in this novel shows clearly that she is keenly conscious of the psychological impact that such cross-cultural situations have on people. However, in depicting how Gerald and Rennie tackle their identity problem and how they come up with their final choices, she has not penetrated deeply enough into their inner struggles. The consequences of the choices are made clear, but the analysis of how the choices are reached is less than profound. If the author had portrayed their inner struggles in more depth, she could have created a clearer picture of the cross-cultural milieux involved.

The same thing can be said about the characterization of Baba. Baba, we are told, has been heavily influenced by Chinese culture; "The subtle mellowing and maturing which China seems always to leave upon all who give themselves to her had reached perfection in him" (p. 48). But too little evidence is offered to support this statement, except for Elizabeth's repeated mentioning of his love of wearing Chinese silk gowns and reading his few Chinese books, especially *The Book of Changes.* In addition, the story of his unhappy marriage with Ai-lan seems too sketchy. Since Gerald's crucial decision to stay in Peking has much to do with Baba's estrangement from Ai-lan, the failure of Baba's marriage should have been further described in cross-cultural terms.

As for the presentation of the predicament facing Gerald and Elizabeth, it is done in a rather effective manner. Elizabeth has done a good job as a narrator in the novel. She succeeds in building a strong sense of suspense by her tactful handling of the letters from Peking. She also succeeds in interweaving her past memories with her present life in Vermont. As a result, she is able to impress the reader deeply with her pathetic situation.

What is more, her reactions to these letters are also well described. With her intense feelings of sorrow and loneliness, she reveals herself as a very sensitive, thoughtful, emotional, and faithful wife. And out of her genuine love for Gerald, she even permits Mei-lan to be his "wife-in-absence" (p. 115). Later, from another letter by Mei-lan, she is shocked to learn that Gerald has been shot to death while attempting to escape from Peking. This letter confirms that her vision of Gerald one night was not a dream, but real. Then in a letter to Rennie, she asks him to forgive Gerald: "He has made up his mind, it seems, to come to us. . . . Love was stronger in the end than country, stronger than history. This is our comfort. This is the message he sends us, by means of his death. . . . It is enough to make you forgive him, Rennie. Please forgive him!" (p. 173). Here in the letter is found a clear expression of the central theme of this novel. Elizabeth asserts the value of her inter-racial marriage by showing that love is stronger than "country and history." This is the underlying theme not only of this but other works mentioned in this section.

IV

Pearl Buck's cross-cultural vision has also found an expression in many works dealing with missionary life. Missionaries are almost ubiquitous in her works. They either appear as minor characters or are simply mentioned in passing in such novels as *The Good Earth*, *A House Divided*, *Dragon Seed*, *Imperial Woman*, *Kinfolk*, *The Time Is Noon*, *China Sky*, *The Living Reed*, *Mandala*, and so forth. But in the following works, missionaries are treated as major characters: *The Young Revolutionist*, "Father Andrea," "The Face of Buddha," "The Angel," "The Lesson," *Satan Never Sleeps*, *Pavilion of Women*, *God's Men*, and *Come, My Beloved*. The focus in this section will be on those works with a direct bearing on the religious relations between China and America.

Prior to our discussion of the works themselves, we should perhaps take a quick look at Pearl Buck's religious beliefs in

general and her views on foreign missions in particular. She was not a formally religious person in that she resented being restricted by any religious dogma or organization. Once she said:

> I have not discovered that religion, in itself, makes a difference in character, unless its precepts are established as part of the educational process in childhood. I am grateful that I had such education, mainly in Christianity and Confucianism. But the education has not left me either a Christian or a Confucian, although perhaps I am partly both and something else besides. I am not an atheist.[19]

Probably because she was influenced by both Christianity and Confucianism, Pearl Buck was more concerned with humanitarian and secular causes than with purely religious doctrines. In "This I Believe," she writes, "I feel no need for any other faith than my faith in human beings."[20] Her stress on man rather than on God, on this world rather than on the world beyond, reflects clearly her acceptance of the secularly-oriented and man-centered values of Confucius. Just like her mother, she strongly preferred to live a cheerful, natural life without being constantly burdened with a conscious search for God. She held the Chinese belief that "all religions were good – all gods were good."[21] She stated, "All have a measure of truth and goodness mingled with superstition and falsity. . . . After all, religion is only what people make it by their faith and practice."[22] With such a tolerant attitude toward all religions, she naturally deemed it "not necessary to discover or assert the superiority of Christianity over other religions."[23] In this way she displayed the same kind of open-mindedness which permits the Chinese people to treat Buddhism, Taoism,

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19 Theodore F. Harris, *Pearl S. Buck: A Biography*, II (New York: John Day, 1971), p. 257.

20 "This I Believe," originally published in *New York Herald Tribune*, 18 Feb. 1952. Quoted by Theodore F. Harris, p. 255.

21 *Fighting Angel: Portrait of a Soul* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1936), p. 56.

22 Harris, p. 251.

23 Pearl Buck, "Is There a Case for Foreign Missions?" *Harper's*, Jan. 1933, p. 152.

and Confucianism as being of equal worth.

In a highly controversial speech entitled "Is There a Case for Foreign Missions? ", which she gave in 1932 in New York, she offered a very severe criticism of foreign missions as a whole. She frankly pointed out that she was ashamed of many missionaries in China because they were "narrow, uncharitable, unappreciative, ignorant."[24] She added, "We have sent ignorant people as missionaries, we have sent mediocre people, we have sent arrogant people, we have sent superstitious people who taught superstitious creeds and theories and have made the lives of hungry-hearted people wretched and more sad."[25] Among the superstitious creeds taught by the missionaries, she was particularly indignant at the doctrine that an infidel would be damned unless he received Christ as his Saviour. She believed that one's chance for salvation lay in one's desire to seek goodness. Another major mistake committed by the missionaries, according to her, was their employing schools and hospitals as enticements to convert the people to the gospel. She argued that the missionaries should strive to meet the real needs of the people instead of enticing them into belonging to the church. She was convinced that the spirit of Christ should be "manifested by mode of life rather than by preaching."[26]

The many unorthodox viewpoints voiced in this speech immediately aroused many unfavorable responses. Under fire as a heretic, she finally resigned in May, 1933, from the missionary service of the Presbyterian Church. After her resignation, she tended to put more and more emphasis on a creedless faith. In "What Religion Means to Me," she simply equated God with goodness. She said, "I believe in the constant, yearning aspiration of the soul toward that great unknown good whom I call God."[27] Therefore, she rejected professional religionists; she valued only the unlabeled faith in goodness.

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 144.
[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 144-45.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 155.
[27] "What Religion Means to Me," *Forum*, Oct. 1933, p. 199.

These religious thoughts and attitudes have been echoed in many of Pearl Buck's works. But in a few works, such as *The Young Revolutionist* and "Father Andrea," she was not as critical of the missionary cause as she usually was. She wrote *The Young Revolutionist* at the request of the Missionary Education Movement, and she confessed that she felt guilty of having written it for money.[28] Besides, she had a dislike for it and regarded it unworthy of her work.[29] She had meaningful material about a Chinese teen-ager's initiation process, but failed to present it with adequate artistic detachment. The novel relates how Ko-sen, the 16-year-old protagonist, comes to reject not only Buddhism but also the anti-imperialist revolution, and is finally led to accept Christianity as his new faith. The author's purpose – to convert the young revolutionist into a follower of the missionaries – has been obtrusive throughout the novel. In an article, "China and the West," Pearl Buck explains why the Chinese people were hostile to missionaries:

> Because of the way the powers had used their missionaries to demand concessions from China, the Chinese looked upon the missionaries simply as the political forerunners of the foreign governments, and concluded that their presence could only work towards the gradual disintegration of the country.[30]

Pearl Buck was fully aware of the major cause of the conflict between the Chinese people and the missionaries. But instead of leading Ko-sen to understand this situation, she chose to keep him unconcerned about it so as to defend the missionary cause. Perhaps this is why she admitted elsewhere that Ko-sen's acceptance of Christ as his new master is merely "an isolated case."[31]

The same tendency to defend the missionary cause by

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[28] Harris, *Pearl S. Buck: A Biography*, I (New York: John Day, 1969), p. 85.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

[30] "China and the West," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*, 168 (July 1933), 127.

[31] Pearl Buck, "The Laymen's Mission Report," *The Christian Century*, 23 Nov. 1932, p. 1434.

stressing missionaries' innocence and benevolence is also manifested in "The Face of Buddha." But in this story, a favorable image of Buddhism is presented through an American missionary's eyes. Timothy Stayne comes to live in an old Buddhist temple in Tali, a beautiful city in the province of Yunnan. After living there comfortably for eight years, he decides in 1937 to help a large band of Chinese guerrillas by supplying them with American guns, which are produced by his father's munition factory in Philadelphia. The setting seems to suggest the author's aspiration for a peaceful coexistence of Christianity and Buddhism. The head of the Apostolic Mission of Life and Healing from Tennessee is opposed to Tim's living with a "heathen" "idol," but Tim insists on living in the temple because, as he says, the statue of Buddha "strengthens" his faith, and also because the Buddhist priests there "respect" his faith.[32] Besides, this setting makes it possible for Tim to be inspired by the prayers of Buddha's worshipers. At last, Tim becomes of tremendous help to the Chinese in their anti-Japanese war. By letting Buddha answer the guerrilla leader's prayer through a wealthy missionary's help, the author seems to suggest that Buddhists and Christians can benefit from mutual trust and respect.

In contrast to the missionaries we have examined so far, the heroine in "The Angel" is arrogant and unsympathetic toward Chinese people. A very fastidious and demanding woman, Miss Barry always complains that Chinese people are "slipshod," "filthy," and "lazy." Her obsession with perfect order and cleanliness is well symbolized by her garden, of which she takes meticulous care. It happens that an old Chinese night watchman often takes a rest in a ferny bed in Miss Barry's garden without her knowing. One night, when she chances to discover someone lying in the garden she gets so upset that she runs out of the compound, screaming hysterically, and finally jumps down a cliff over the Yangtze River. The

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[32] "The Face of Buddha," in *Today and Forever* (New York: John Day, 1941), p. 223.

old watchman, disturbed by the scream, takes the running figure in a white gown to be an angel. The following morning he learns what has happened to Miss Barry and he weeps over her death. In this dramatic way Pearl Buck presents a vivid contrast between a kind-hearted Chinese man and an unsympathetic and bad-tempered missionary. The satirical characterization of this missionary from Vermont sheds strong light on the darker side of missionary life in China.

In his "Introduction" to *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, John K. Fairbank gives a description of the major facets of missionary life:

> . . . the mission movement was pre-eminently a people-to-people phenomenon. The flow of influence may seem at first glance to have been one way, through Americans going to China. But this eventually induced a flow of Chinese students to the United States, and meanwhile the mission work in China had an impact on the missionaries themselves that was transmitted to the American people. Very soon, from missionary efforts on the two sides of the Pacific, the missionary movement became a part of American life.[33]

With these facets of the missionary movement in mind, we come to see that Pearl Buck concerned herself primarily with the impact of missionaries on Chinese people, rather than with the impact of the mission work on American people, or on missionaries themselves. In order to draw a more balanced picture of the cross-cultural encounters between American missionaries and Chinese people, she should have dealt in more detail with how missionaries are influenced by their life in China.

V

World peace is another important theme in Pearl Buck's work. In view of her aspiration for a world in which all peoples on earth can live together in peace and harmony, it is not at all

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[33] John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974), p. 6.

surprising that she unhesitantly and untiringly denounced war launched by imperialist powers. During World War II she expounded her anti-war and anti-imperialist stand in many speeches and articles. In her opinion, the issue of war was closely related to the problem of racial inequality. The unifying theme of most of her speeches and articles concerning this subject was that the peoples of America and England, in their joint efforts to resist the Axis, should try to help their Asian allies to obtain freedom and independence. To achieve this purpose they should first of all renounce their sense of "white supremacy" and treat their Asian allies as complete equals. Pearl Buck deplored white Americans' discrimination against not only their black fellow countrymen but also their colored allies in Asia. To her disappointment, Americans betrayed their prejudice against Chinese people, for example, in such things as discriminatory laws against Chinese immigration and also begrudging Chinese participation in the war strategy councils in Washington, D.C. She observed that Englishmen also denied equality to China as an ally when they prevented Chinese forces from defending Burma until it was too late. Over and over again she emphasized the idea that human brotherhood, or racial equality, is the only reliable basis upon which genuine peace can possibly be built. Racial inequality will brew nothing but more wars.

This urgent appeal for world peace is the dominant theme in such novels as *Dragon Seed*, *The Promise*, *The Living Reed*, *Command the Morning*, and *All Under Heaven*. Since an international war forces different peoples to confront each other, it becomes a highly manifest mode of cross-cultural contact on a large scale. In *Dragon Seed*, the author glorifies Chinese resistance to Japanese aggression and appeals to Americans and their allies to aid the Chinese. It is distinguished by a very sympathetic portrayal of the farmer Ling Tan and his family in their desperate struggle for peace. In their struggle against foreign tyranny the Lings and most of their fellow villagers prove themselves very brave, shrewd, and resourceful. The theme of peace is vividly unfolded through a truthful depic-

tion of how the main characters react to the extremely difficult situation imposed on them by the foreign conquerors. According to a folk belief, dragons are the heroic ancestors of the Chinese people. Hence, "dragon seed" refers to the descendants who are distinguished by heroism.

The meaning of the next novel's title, *The Promise*, is made clear in the opening sentence: "In their despair men must hope, when a promise is given, though it be only a promise."[34] This sentence is connected smoothly with the closing lines of *Dragon Seed*, where Ling Tan and Lao Er exchange some brief comments about a promise of rain in the sky. But *The Promise* ends with a bitter Chinese disillusionment caused by the Allied forces' failure to keep the promise to cooperate with the Chinese forces in the struggle against the Japanese invasion. By delineating how the hope of the Chinese turns into disillusionment, the author has evidently accused the white allies of failure to keep their promise. According to her, the real cause of their breaking the promise lies in their contemptuous attitude toward the Chinese. This is why the gist of this novel lies in her treatment of the interracial encounters involved in the historical Burma debacle during World War II. The unhappy encounters between the Chinese forces and their British and American counterparts are dramatized in order to unfold the theme that the cause of peace suffers because the white allies have failed to practice the principle of racial equality. The theme is impressive since it is illustrated with relevant historical events. Although the novel has such flaws as stiff characterization and a somewhat loose structure, it has well reflected the author's remarkable sensitivity to the intricate interrelationships among the English, the Burmese, the Indians, the Chinese, the Americans, and the Japanese. Without such sensitivity she could not have grasped the meaning of the cross-cultural encounters so firmly.

In *Command the Morning*, which dramatizes the development and dropping of the first atomic bomb during World

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[34] *The Promise* (New York: John Day, 1943), p. 1.

War II, Pearl Buck takes a serious look again at the war vs. peace issue, but from a different angle. While in the previous novels she pays special attention to the interactions between different peoples at war, she focuses here on the impact of the A-bomb upon human life. The issue is examined from various perspectives – political, moral, cross-cultural, and religious. So the novel offers some important food for thought regarding the future of the world in the nuclear era. Closely related to Pearl Buck's cross-cultural interest, it serves as additional proof that her vision covers the whole universe and that her concern embraces all mankind.

Pearl Buck denounces again the use of nuclear weapons in *All Under Heaven*. In the epilogue to this novel, she explains that the title is derived from a Chinese phrase which means "All under heaven are one." The reason why she did not use the whole phrase lies in the fact that the world remains divided. The novel is thus meant to appeal to all peoples to make the world a unified and peaceful one. The appeal for peace is voiced mainly through the figure of Malcolm MacNeil, who has just returned from Peking after working for the American Embassy there for twenty-five years. Inspired by his bitter experience of having been driven by the Communists back to his own country, he sets out to write a book on the history of the modern Chinese revolution in an attempt to show his fellow countrymen how to deal with the Communists wisely. As soon as he finishes the book, he goes on a lecture tour, for he is very eager to instruct his people how to avoid the danger of war. Wherever he goes, however, he comes across people who regard the atomic bomb as the best solution. In this way the bomb becomes closely related to the issue of world peace in this novel, just as in *Command the Morning*. Malcolm proposes an alternative to the bomb by saying, "If we Americans can see and understand that this is our opportunity, God given, I believe, to prove our ways and our thoughts to all men, then through us will come the golden age of mankind."[35] But what

[35] *All Under Heaven* (New York: John Day, 1973), p. 180.

are "our ways and our thoughts"? And how does one prove them to the world? Malcolm does not give explanations. Therefore, his proposal sounds rather ambiguous in meaning, and his hope for a golden age of mankind seems somewhat pollyannaish.

In presenting Malcolm's appeal for peace, however, the author has strengthened the appeal by describing the cross-cultural experiences of Malcolm and his wife and children, particularly those experiences which suggest why so many people favor the use of the A-bomb.

Malcolm is distressed by the apathetic attitude many Americans have toward other peoples. During his three-month lecture tour in America, no one ever asks him anything about his life in China. By contrast, he recalls, the Chinese people are very curious about other peoples. During his long stay in China, he was often surrounded by people with all kinds of questions about foreign countries. This contrast between Chinese curiosity and American apathy is meaningful. He feels that his perceptivity has been sharpened by his long experience of living among the Chinese. He considers them "a humanistic people, sensitive to every atmosphere of feeling and living so close to one another that peace was essential," and he shares the Chinese conviction that "peace could only be the fruit of a profound human understanding, a continuing delicacy of perceptive feeling" (p. 52). This description sheds light on the peace-loving character of the Chinese people, as portrayed vividly in *Dragon Seed.* Unlike the Chinese, he observes, Americans are kind and amiable externally, but internally they are hard and indifferent to other peoples. Furthermore, he realizes that most Americans, present-conscious and future-oriented, are not concerned about the past.

In a sense, this novel offers a rationale for easing the tension between democratic and Communist countries. In line with the spirit of detente, this rationale seeks to avoid the threat of a nuclear war. As proposed in the book, the solution to the tension is to replace the atomic bomb with a sympathetic and understanding heart toward other peoples. Although Pearl

Buck makes a good point that genuine peace cannot be achieved without, first of all, building a profound mutual understanding among peoples, her analysis of the war vs. peace issue seems rather oversimplified here. The arguments against war are not as fully debated in this novel as they are in *Command the Morning*. As a result, the appeal for peace does not come through as urgently or as convincingly as it does in the previous novels.

All Under Heaven does, nonetheless, express clearly Pearl Buck's sympathetic view of the present world. Just like many other works by her, it shows that she is very much distressed by the divisions of the world, no matter why and how those divisions have been brought about. It is closely linked to her other works by an explicit, if not sufficiently artistic, revelation of her yearning for an undivided world, a yearning which has undoubtedly grown out of her deep concern about cross-cultural relationships.

VI

Pearl Buck became an internationalist by chance rather than by choice. Had she been brought up in her own country, instead of her adopted one – China, she would probably have acquired an entirely different outlook on the world. Needless to say, her cross-cultural perceptivity resulted from her abundant experiences of having lived in "several worlds." Her life, her thought, and her work have all been colored or conditioned, in one way or another, by the "cross-culturalism" or "internationalism" thus acquired. The most important reason why she appealed to the Nobel prize jury in 1938, according to James Gray, was that she was "an internationalist."[36]

Of the several countries dealt with in her fiction, China is handled most impressively. She turned out to be the first major non-Chinese writer who could make the Chinese and

[36] James Gray, *On Second Thought* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1946), p. 32.

their culture come alive for Westerners. The tremendous influence she has exerted on the attitudes of Westerners toward the Orient in general and China in particular is an important factor contributing to her reputation.

It is an unusual accomplishment on her part to have presented so many different images of various peoples in her works. So far as her treatment of Sino-American relations is concerned, her cross-cultural perceptivity is well apparent in the diversity of characters and subjects in her fiction. Several types of Chinese characters prove to be particularly impressive, including the industrious, frugal, and illiterate peasants; the selfish, pleasure-loving, and snobbish landlords; the confused, discontented, and critical young intellectuals trained at home or abroad; the provincial, cruel, and power-craving warlords; the restless, iconoclastic, and anti-imperialist revolutionists; as well as the submissive, dutiful, and ignorant housewives who have great difficulty in coping with their modern educated husbands. Pearl Buck describes both positive and negative traits of the Chinese, but her general image of Chinese people is quite favorable.

As for American characters, various types are depicted, including businessmen, physicians, scientists, artists, middle-class housewives, diplomats, and missionaries. Generally speaking, these Americans share such qualities as naturalness, plainness, forthrightness, and friendliness, the qualities which Pearl Buck liked best, as she pointed out in a speech called "What America Means to Me."[37] However, some characters display undesirable qualities such as being indifferent to or even contemptuous of other peoples. The quality which has received the most severe criticism from her is the sense of "white supremacy"; her image of an arrogant white man with a strong feeling of superiority leaves a deep impression on the reader.

Her images of different peoples are often presented by making cross-cultural comparisons. The major differences be-

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[37] "What America Means to Me," in *What America Means to Me* (New York: John Day, 1943), pp. 196-212.

tween Americans and the Chinese, as treated in her works, lie in their attitudes toward nature, science, religion, and family. Pearl Buck's insight into cross-culturalism is also shown in the various patterns of reactions to cross-cultural encounters.

It is evident that Pearl Buck took such pains to explore cross-cultural encounters because she wanted to improve cross-cultural understanding among peoples. This purpose was prompted by her ideal of creating "one world" out of her "several worlds." This ideal did not mean that all cultures should be merged into one or that all peoples should become alike. Instead, it meant that all peoples should try to understand and appreciate each other's culture so that they can expect to live together peacefully and harmoniously on equal grounds. In short, a reading of her works centering on such exploration will inevitably result in the broadening of one's vision of the world and the sharpening of one's cross-cultural sympathy and perceptivity. Her "one world" idealism is the most commendable legacy she has handed down to her audiences in the East and the West.

賽珍珠小說中的中美文化交錯關係

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摘　要

賽珍珠深受中美文化的影響，因此她對文化交錯的題材深感興趣。全世界公認她是東西之間的橋樑。本文主旨卽在於探討她小說中所處理的中美文化交錯關係，藉以說明她扮演這種橋樑角色所獲的成就。

在**東風・西風**、**分家**、**元配夫人**、**親戚**、以及**梁夫人的三千金**這些作品中，賽珍珠處理留美中國知識青年的文化交錯經驗。她將他們對中國傳統與現代之間的衝突加以戲劇化，藉以刻劃美國對他們的影響。

國際戀愛與婚姻是賽珍珠特別感到興趣的另一種文化交錯模式。**來自北平**的信是一本半自傳式的作品，其中呈現的是四椿混合中美血液的婚姻。

賽珍珠的文化交錯靈視也表現於專寫傳教生涯的作品中。**年青的革命家**、**菩薩的臉**、以及**天使**這些作品描繪了美國傳教士與中國老百姓之間的遭遇。

還有一種文化交錯的接觸就是國際間的戰爭。它是**龍種**、**光明在望**、以及**天下**等作品的主要題旨。賽珍珠藉着對「白人優越感」以及對核子武器的駁斥，來表現她和平的主題。總之，賽珍珠在小說中描寫了許多不同文化背景的人物，以及他們之間各種各樣的交錯情境，因而充分表現出她對這類題材的敏悟力。她所以創作這些小說，乃是因爲她想在她的「幾個世界」中創造一個「大同世界」。她爲增進文化交錯關係確已付出極大的努力。