

Pearl S. Buck as A Practical Idealist: Patriotism, Humanity and Political Responsibility in *The Patriot*

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Abstract

Pearl S. Buck holds a unique place in the literature of the twentieth century due to her continual involvement with the questions of culture, history, politics, identity and human values. Her patriotic novel *The Patriot* (1939) offers an important literary framework on how to look at the connection between patriotism, humanity and political responsibility. Within the backdrop of the riotous Chinese politics of the day, the novel features the personal and ideological conflict of Wu I-wan whose political awakening slowly changes his perception of loyalty, nationalism and duty. The essay presented in this paper contends that in *The Patriot*, Buck comes out as a pragmatic idealist who does not oppose the commitment to patriotism nor does he believe in political ideology without question. Rather, she is trying to balance the national responsibility and universal human values. This paper discusses how Buck portrays patriotism as a moral and ethical duty as opposed to political loyalty. The events of revolutionary activism, exile, cultural displacement, personal relations, and I-wan later experiencing the national crisis in China show the intricate mechanism whereby political idealism is transformed into mature and effective patriotism. The article also examines the conflict between personal liberty and the duty to the community, showing that political realities defy the personal wishes and ethical beliefs of the protagonist. The way in which Buck treats revolutionary nationalism also demonstrates her worry of the human cost of political warfare, especially displacement, sacrifice, divided allegiance, and family and personal relations being uprooted. This paper employs a humanistic and textual approach to understanding *The Patriot* as a historical narrative as well as a moral understanding of political commitment. It argues that the practical idealism of Buck is in her efforts to make humanity the centre of patriotism. Finally, the novel indicates that true patriotism can be effective when the national loyalty is put into conscience, compassion, responsibility, and respect to human dignity. In this way *The Patriot* shows how Buck had a unique literary vision where political dedication and humanism on the whole can be held without the need to compromise on moral responsibility.

Keywords: Pearl S. Buck; *The Patriot*; Practical Idealism; Patriotism; Humanism; Political Responsibility; National Identity.

Introduction

The place of Pearl S. Buck in the literature of the twentieth century is unique due to her active involvement into the cultural, historical, political, and human realities of China. Born in America and brought up in China, Buck created a literary vision that often transcended the borders between East and West. Her fiction is marked by the radical interest in human dignity, cultural knowledge, social justice, and moral implications of political and historical transformation. The notable title of her Nobel Prize lecture, *The Chinese Novel*, is indicative of her strong

interest in Chinese literary and cultural traditions. The literary accomplishment of Buck is especially significant since, as she saw, fundamental human issues are universal. This ideology of humanism is a valuable background to her novel *The Patriot* (1939).

The Patriot is a historical and political novel which explores the connection of individual identity and national responsibility against the revolutionary China that was a turbulent background. Buck examines the multifaceted definition of patriotism, political devotion, exile, cultural alienation and individual accountability through the experiences of Wu I-wan. The growth of the

protagonist shows that patriotism is not so simple or definite a feeling. Instead, it is cultivated by experience, struggle, sacrifice and reflection. To this extent, the novel can be said to be an investigation of what occurs when political ideals come face to face with the harsh realities of human existence.

One of the primary issues of the novel is the notion of patriotism. The term patriot has traditionally been used to imply that one is a person who expresses his or her loyalty to his or her country. However, *The Patriot* challenges this traditional interpretation by raising the question of whether one should ever be loyal to a country, without being responsible to the wider humanity. The famous differentiation that George Orwell made between nationalism and patriotism can be applied in this respect. According to Orwell, patriotism is the devotion to a certain place and a certain way of living. This difference assists in understanding the way in which patriotism is portrayed by Buck as a highly personal and moral connection with the motherland instead of just being attached to the political authority.

The way that Buck treats patriotism is too much related with humanism. The political conflict in her characters is not in the form of abstract historical events but in the form of reality that influences families, relationships, identities and lives of individuals. Human price of political conflict thus comes to play as a significant aspect of her story. This point of view can be traced back to the more general philosophy of literature that Buck employs, where the differences between cultures do not eliminate the basic similarities of humans. Her well-known remark that the differences among

people are not so much as we think serves as the epitome of universalist inclination which permeates much of her writing.

The principle of practical idealism offers a rather helpful model of understanding *The Patriot*. Buck is not a mere celebration of revolutionary idealism but rather she looks at the way in which political ideals are challenged by historical conditions. The experiences of Wu I-wan force him to balance between the personal happiness and nationalism, individual and social responsibility, emotionality and political devotion. His growth, therefore, represents the shift of the idealistic political zeal to a more mature and realistic concept of patriotism.

The philosophical aspect of patriotism may also be connected to the general concept that the love of country is the earliest virtue in man, the issue traditionally linked to the classical argument as to civic responsibility. However, in his novel, Buck doubts the possibility of love of country being virtuous when it ignores human dignity. Her response is implicitly humanistic: political duty should not be disassociated with compassion, conscience, and respect of human life.

Thus, this paper will analyze Pearl S. Buck as a Practical Idealist: Patriotism, Humanity, and Political Responsibility in *The Patriot*. By using a humanistic and textural approach, the paper explores the concept of how Buck balances the nationalism and universal values of humanity. It states that *The Patriot* ends up giving patriotism not as an unthinking political obedience but as a morally duty to the land and the citizens. The practical idealism that Buck portrays through her effort

to hold onto the worth of political commitments and placing humanity, conscience, compassion and dignity at the forefront of national duty is the product of her effort to create a world that is better and good.

Research Gap

Pearl S. Buck has been widely critiqued as the writer of China, East- West relations, gender, family, social change, humanism and cross-cultural understanding. Her novels have been widely analyzed by scholars as literary and cultural works that upset stereotypical images of China and remind us of the universality of human experience. Her key works, especially *The Good Earth*, *East Wind: West Wind*, *The Mother*, and *Dragon Seed*, have been a subject of significant academic debate with regard to cultural identity, social change, gender relations, nationalism, and human values. Yet, relatively little critical scrutiny has been directed at *The Patriot* as a unique literary investigation of the connection of patriotism, humanity and political responsibility.

The current discourse on *The Patriot* is inclined towards stressing out its historical background, revolutionary politics, nationalism, and the personal evolution of the main character. These dimensions, though significant, are not enough to describe the ethical conflict behind the novel: the opposition of political loyalty and personal conscience. More specifically, the fact that Wu I-wan is turned into a more mature and responsible patriot at the expense of his political passion, is to be critically analyzed. His revolutionary activism, exile, cultural

displacement, personal encounters, and re-engagement with his homeland, can be seen as a complex process of moral and political growth.

Another loophole in the interpretation of *The Patriot* is the interpretation of the text by the idea of practical idealism. The political and humanitarian vision of Buck is not a strictly idealistic one and also not a strictly pragmatic vision. Rather, the novel is an effort to hold on to ideals of justice, national responsibility and social change in the face of the complex reality of political conflict and human suffering. The available methods fail to provide adequate linkages between this tension and the overall humanistic philosophy of Buck. As a result, the notion of practical idealism may offer a new interpretative approach based on which the discussion of patriotism by Buck could be re-evaluated.

Additionally, further investigation of patriotism and humanity in the novel is to be integrated. Patriotism is a commonly discussed concept in the context of nationalism or political allegiance, but the story of Buck is something that can be viewed in a more moral light where national duty is weighed against humanity, compassion, sacrifice, and human dignity. The novel poses a key question: what is the true patriotism in cases where political ideology is at odds with any personal relations and universal human values?

This paper thus aims to address the gap identified by studying *The Patriot* using a mixed humanistic, ethical and a textual lens. It particularly explores the way in which Buck balances national devotion and universal

humanism, the political consciousness that builds up in Wu I-wan, and political responsibility through moral conscience. The study brings a more integrated view of *The Patriot* not solely as a political or historical novel but as an important examination of the ethical aspects of patriotism and human duty by making Buck a practical idealist.

Statement of the Problem

The Patriot by Pearl S. Buck is a novel with a tricky relationship of political commitment, national identity, personal conscience and universal human values. Against the backdrop of the political and revolutionary upheavals in China, the novel depicts characters whose lives are deeply implicated with conflicting needs of patriotism, political ideology, family, love, cultural identity and personal responsibility. Even though one of the main issues of the novel is patriotism, it cannot be perceived as the blind obedience to a country or a political movement. Buck constantly puts her characters in the environment, where the ideals of politics clash with personal feelings, principles of morality and human relations.

The main issue that this study will deal with is the lack of critical consideration of the ethical and humanistic aspects of patriotism in *The Patriot*. The novel is commonly treated as more of a historical or political account, though it is worth looking more into the underlying message of the moral responsibility and human dignity. Specifically, the transformation of Wu I-wan is to be examined more carefully, as his development can be considered not only the shift in his political views. His events of

revolutionary activism, exile, cultural displacement, personal relations and reengagement in the political struggle of China slowly redefine his concept of being a patriot. The paper is then an examination of the conflict between political idealism and practicality in the image of patriotism as portrayed by Buck. The issue is particularly important due to the fact that the novel does not utterly renounce political idealism but it raises the question whether political ideal can be relevant anymore when they are disconnected with the human compassion and moral conscience. This brings to the fore a fundamental question about what responsible patriotism is; is it the duty to follow the political power or the moral obligation to the well-being and honour of country people.

The other aspect of the issue is the role of Buck as a writer who is greatly immersed in Chinese and Western cultures. Her interest in cross-cultural understanding and universal human values influence her portrayal of China. As such, *The Patriot* presents a chance to explore the interaction of national identity and cultural belonging with a more humanistic perspective.

This paper will solve these issues by viewing *The Patriot* in the context of practical idealism. It explores the way in which Buck tries to balance patriotism and humanity, political dedication and moral integrity and national duty and universal human principles. The main issue of the study can thus be stated as the following:

In what ways does Pearl S. Buck redefine the traditional concept of patriotism as an ethically accountable and humanistic ideal in *The*

Patriot and how does the personal and political growth of Wu I-wan reflect the concept of practical idealism that Buck envisioned?

By resolving this issue, the paper will prove that *The Patriot* is not, first of all, a political fighting and revolutionary novel but, above all, a great exploration of the moral duty of loving and serving the nation.

Research Objectives

The current paper, Pearl S. Buck as a Practical Idealist: Patriotism, Humanity and Political Responsibility in *The Patriot* seeks to fulfil the following goals:

1. To discuss the idea of patriotism as it is reflected in *The Patriot* by Pearl S. Buck and explore how the novel questions traditional ideas of loyalty to the country.
2. To explore the political and moral transformation of Wu I-wan, especially his shift of political idealism in his younger days to a more mature and realistic approach to patriotism.
3. To examine the connection between humanism and patriotism in the novel, especially to compassion, sacrifice, human dignity, and concern of others.
4. To consider the contradiction of personal conscience and political duty, it is important to examine the way political situation impacts personal behaviour and moral decisions of the characters.
5. To explore the conflict between idealism and political reality and how the conflict by Buck is used to support the understanding of her as a practical idealist.
6. To explore the relevance of exile, cultural displacement and national identity in the

context of how the protagonist has developed the sense of China, belonging, and patriotic responsibility.

7. To show that *The Patriot* is not only a historical and political story but a humanistic one where a national duty is related to the universal human values.

Research Questions

The current research, Pearl S. Buck as a Practical Idealist: Patriotism, Humanity, and Political Responsibility in *The Patriot* is aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. What is the way Pearl S. Buck embodies the idea of patriotism in *The Patriot*?
2. In what ways does the political and moral change of Wu I-wan lead to the idea of practical idealism that Buck develops?
3. Even how does patriotism and universal human values like compassion, sacrifice, human dignity and moral responsibility reconcile with each other as perceived by Buck?
4. What are the conflicts between personal conscience and political duty in *The Patriot*?
5. What does the novel say about the opposition of political idealism and practical truths of revolution, nationalism and political struggle?
6. What are the effects of exile, cultural displacement, and cross-cultural experiences on Wu I-wan in terms of comprehending national identity and belonging?
7. In what ways does *The Patriot* show that Pearl S. Buck was of the opinion that true patriotism should be informed by humanity, conscience and moral responsibility?

Significance of the Study

The article, Pearl S. Buck as a Practical Idealist: Patriotism, humanity, and political responsibility in *The Patriot* is important as it presents a full-fledged explanation of a novel that unites political history, national identity, cultural displacement, humanism, and personal moral responsibility. Instead of viewing *The Patriot* as a historical or political story, the paper explores how Pearl S. Buck reconfigures political strife into inquiry into basic human and moral issues.

1. Reassessing Pearl S. Buck's Literary Contribution

The work will add to a larger perceiving of Pearl S. Buck as a profound literary intellect who was concerned with political, cultural and ethical questions. It goes beyond the common focus on *The Good Earth* and explores the role of *The Patriot* in the greater literary accomplishment of Buck.

2. Understanding Buck as a Practical Idealist

Another important implication of the research is that it uses practical idealism as an interpretive approach. The writing of Buck shows a blend of the idealistic devotion to justice, humanity, and social responsibility and the acknowledgement of political realities. The paper demonstrates the work of these seemingly opposite dimensions in *The Patriot*.

3. Reinterpreting Patriotism

The study sheds a more subtle light on patriotism. Rather than associating patriotism with blind nationalism or loyalty to the nation,

it explores the concept of patriotism as an ethical duty that encompasses conscience, sacrifice, compassion, and devotion to the well-being of the people in his/her country.

4. Emphasizing Humanity over Political Ideology

The work is also important as it shows that Buck makes human dignity and compassion the focus of the political experience. Political conflicts are judged based on their impacts on families, individuals and communities. This anthropocentric approach is a valuable alternative to political only explanations of the novel.

5. Understanding Wu I-wan's Transformation

The study is elaborated in the understanding of the political and moral growth of Wu I-wan. His experience of political idealism into practical moral duty illustrates how experience can turn youthful political passion into mature patriotic duty.

6. Connecting History with Individual Experience

The paper illustrates how Buck transforms historical occurrences into personal experiences. Revolutionary conflict, political unstable situation, exile, national crisis are not just historical facts, they influence identity of characters, their relations, their choices and moral consciousness.

7. Contribution to East-West Cultural Studies

The Patriot can also be a good source of information about cross-cultural relations and cultural identity. The experiences that the protagonist goes through in various cultural settings reveal that displacement and cultural encounter may affect the perception of the homeland and belonging.

8. Contemporary Relevance

The research is still topical since the questions related to the national identity, political accountability, cultural displacement, patriotism, and human dignity remain significant in modern society. The emphasis of Buck on the necessity to balance national dedication and humanity provides an ethical approach towards political affiliation.

Overall Significance

Finally, this paper will prove that *The Patriot* is worthy of more consideration as a humanistic political novel. It is important because it demonstrates that patriotism does not necessarily have to be contrary to universal humanity. By depicting the themes of political conflict and personal change, Buck indicates that the most important patriotism is the one that is directed by the conscience, compassion, responsibility, sacrifice, and respect of human dignity.

Thus, the research also adds to Pearl S. Buck literature as it portrays her not only as a cultural interpreter or a China novelist, but as a pragmatic idealist who tries to balance the national duty with the universal human principles.

Research Approach

The analysis of the work takes a humanistic approach to interpreting the literature. It explores the human experiences that lay behind the political and historical events of *The Patriot*, especially issues of dignity, compassion, sacrifice, conscience, loyalty, identity and responsibility. The political events are not just regarded as historical facts in the research but as the forces which influence individual life and ethical decisions.

The textual-interpretative approach is also assumed in the study, which pays close attention to the language, characterization, situations in the narrative, conflicts, symbols, and thematic patterns according to which Buck develops her ideas.

2. Primary Source

The main primary writing to be used in the study is the novel *The Patriot* by Pearl S. Buck (1939). Special focus will be made on the experiences and formation of Wu I-wan whose political and personal life will give the major pattern of the analysis of the conception of patriotism and pragmatic idealism presented by Buck.

The textual analysis will be based on the passages about:

- patriotism and national identity;
- political idealism and revolutionary commitment;
- individual conscience and political responsibility;
- exile and cultural displacement;
- family and personal relationships;
- sacrifice and moral choice;
- humanity and human dignity;

- East-West/East Asian cultural encounters.

3. Secondary Sources

Peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, critical works, dissertations, biographies, historical works, and credible academic sources about Pearl S. Buck, *The Patriot*, Chinese history, nationalism, humanism, political idealism, and cross-cultural literature will be classified as secondary materials.

The intellectual and historical context of the novel will be determined with the help of critical works on the life of Pearl S. Buck, her literary philosophy, Chinese-American cultural experience and her humanistic vision.

4. Historical and Contextual Analysis

Since *The Patriot* is strongly related to the political turmoil in China, the research will utilize a historical-contextual approach and textual analysis. The political and social situation that is depicted in the novel will be discussed in the context of the greater historical picture of revolutionary China. Nonetheless, historical data will be utilized to shed light on the literary text but not to substitute the interpretation of the text.

5. Thematic Analysis

The paper will highlight and discern common themes in the novel. The key categories of analysis will consist of:

Analytical Category	Focus
Patriotism	Meaning of loyalty and national belonging

Humanism	Compassion, dignity, sacrifice, and human welfare
Practical Idealism	Relationship between ideals and political realities
Political Responsibility	Individual duty toward society and nation
National Identity	Belonging, loyalty, and cultural identity
Exile	Displacement and reconstruction of identity
Moral Conscience	Individual ethical judgment
Cultural Conflict	Encounters between different cultural worlds

6. Character Analysis

The character development of Wu I-wan will be paid special attention. His political awakening, his experiences of exile, his encounters with culture, his personal relationships and his evolving sense of national responsibility will be explored as steps in his moral growth.

This discussion will be useful in establishing whether his transformation can be realistically considered a shift towards practical idealism or not.

7. Theoretical Framework

The research mainly utilizes the humanistic and ethical paradigm, which is backed by the ideas of the nationalism and political responsibility study. The study will draw the line between patriotism as a sense of responsible attachment to the native country

and nationalism as a possible ideological or exclusionary political devotion.

The practical idealism will serve as the key interpretative prism. It will be applied to explore how Buck tries to hold on to ideals of justice, national responsibility, and human dignity and recognizes the ambiguities of political and historical reality.

8. Method of Interpretation

The analysis will be carried out by closely reading important passages of *The Patriot*. Certain textual evidence will be considered in accordance with the research questions and objectives. The analysis will cease to focus on separate passages and the experiences of the character and shift to more general conclusions about the humanistic philosophy of Buck.

The study will also make use, where justified, of contextual triangulation, comparing the literary text with existing historical literature and critiques of Buck. This will enhance the decoding and make sure historical assertions are not founded on fictive portrayal only.

9. Scope and Limitation

The study is focused mostly on *The Patriot* and does not aim at giving an in-depth study of the whole literary corpus of Pearl S. Buck. Other writings by Buck shall be mentioned only to the extent to which they can assist to explain common features of her humanistic, or cross-cultural philosophy.

The research is interpretive, and not empirical. Thus, its conclusions will be based

not on surveys and interviews, but on textual evidence and logical arguments.

10. Expected Methodological Outcome

The approach of the study is to prove that *The Patriot* is both a historical and political, as well as humanistic novel to be read at the same time. The methodology will help the research to explore how Buck relates patriotism to conscience, political responsibility to humanity and idealism to practical historical experience.

Finally, the methodology underlines the main thesis that the practical idealism in Pearl S. Buck is based on her efforts to balance the loyalty to the country with the human values, which makes *The Patriot* a significant source to investigate the ethical aspects of patriotism and political accountability.

Findings

In the current study, Pearl S. Buck as a Practical Idealist: Patriotism, Humanity, and Political Responsibility in the *Patriot*, it is evident that the novel by Buck is not only a political or historical work, but a valuable effort to show the moral aspects of patriotism. The textual and humanistic analysis yields the following key results:

1. Patriotism is presented as an ethical responsibility

The paper concludes that Buck questions the traditional definition of patriotism as mere obedience to the nation or to the political power. Patriotism in *The Patriot* is slowly equated with duty, sacrifice, conscience, and the well-being of its people.

True patriotism thus must be a matter of moral devotion and not blind obedience.

2. Wu I-wan's development represents practical idealism

The story of Wu I-wan is the focus of the political idealism that Buck deals with. His initial interest in the revolutionary ideas comes in contact with the complications of the political and personal reality. By means of exile, cultural experiences, relations, and political experiences, he comes to a more mature perception of national responsibility. His conversion is an indication of the shift between abstract political idealism to practical and morally aware patriotism.

3. Humanity remains central to political commitment

The study concludes that Buck puts humanity over political ideology. Only when it is in human welfare do political movements and national interests have sense. The pain and loss of life of people make the reader see the political conflict only in terms of ideological categories.

4. Political responsibility is inseparable from moral conscience

Political responsibility and individual conscience have a strong connection created in the novel. According to Buck, responsible political action involves making morally informed decisions as opposed to giving up their judgment altogether to political organizations or ideologies.

5. Exile Strengthens National Consciousness

The paper concludes that exile and cultural displacement can be significant in the growth of the protagonist. The physical distance between China and one provides a chance to think and discover himself. This experience that I-wan undergoes in a foreign country eventually helps him in realizing his sense of belonging, cultural identity and national responsibility.

6. Personal Happiness Conflicts with National Duty

Buck introduces patriotism as a challenging ethical decision as national obligation can be in opposition to individual needs and relationships. The experiences of I-wan show that one can be asked to sacrifice themselves to the homeland. This struggle renders his subsequent patriotic commitment more significant since he is gaining it through a deliberate act and not blind loyalty.

7. Buck's Practical Idealism Reconciles Ideals with Reality

Among the main conclusions of this paper is the fact that the idealism of Buck is not entirely abstract and/or politically naive. She sees the necessity of political and social change and at the same time notices the intricacies and human price of political conflict. Her pragmatic idealism arises as a result of trying to keep the ideals of justice and national responsibility intact without compromising humanity.

8. History is Represented Through Individual Experience

The study also discovers that Buck takes events of great historical magnitude and makes them personal. Through their impacts on individual and relationships, revolutionary conflict, political instability, and national crisis are introduced. As a result, *The Patriot* exhibits how literature may humanize history by unveiling the emotional and moral impacts of change in history.

9. Cultural Encounter Contributes to Identity Formation

The interaction of the novel with various cultural settings shows that the cultural encounters complicate and at the same time reinforce individual identity. The events that I-wan undergoes beyond China help him reevaluate his notions about his country and himself. Buck thus offers cross-cultural experience as a way of building more self-awareness.

10. *The Patriot* is Fundamentally Humanistic

The general observation is that *The Patriot* is not merely a novel of revolution or even nationalism but a humanistic political novel. The main issue of Buck is in the human being who is a captive of historical forces. The ultimate measure of patriotism, political responsibility, and national identity is the relation to human dignity, compassion, conscience, and responsibility.

Overall Finding

The paper concludes that Pearl S. Buck comes out as a pragmatic idealist in *The Patriot*, since she tries to balance two seemingly conflicting values, namely attachment to the country and attachment to the human. According to her novel, patriotism becomes the most ethical when national loyalty is informed by conscience and compassion. This principle is reflected in the transformation of Wu I-wan who proves that adult patriotism is not the fervent support of a political cause but the duty to the people and their well-being taken seriously and in a humane way.

Conclusion

The Patriot by Pearl S. Buck is a deep and insightful work on the themes of patriotism, humanity, political responsibility, national identity, and moral conscience. The novel shows that patriotism is not an easy emotion attached to the motherland or a blind devotion to the political ideology through the political and personal experience of Wu I-wan. Rather, patriotism, as depicted by Buck, is a complicated moral obligation that is acquired over time, sacrificed, in experience, in cultural experience, and moral discourse. The historical context of the novel gives the political frame, but its more profound meaning is in its study of how people react to the call of history and national duty.

This analysis shows that the development of Wu I-wan is the key to the idea of practical idealism as promoted by Buck. His early passion in politics is slowly forced to face the issues of revolution, exile, cultural displacement, private relations, and national

crisis. These events change his perception of patriotism. He passes out of a kind of idealistic and mostly abstract devotion to politically change to a manly consciousness of the duties that accompany the service of his country. His conversion implies that true political idealism has to be proven and perfected by experience. The paper also confirms that the mankind is a necessary ethical basis of patriotism in the novel. Buck does not enable political goals to be more significant compared to the people impacted by them. The discourse of political conflict is provided in terms of its impact on human beings, their relations, feelings, identities, and personal decisions. In this regard, *The Patriot* echoes the greater humanistic ideology of Buck: political and historical issues gain the greatest meaning when explored in the context of the personal human experience.

The other significant conclusion is that Buck differentiates between responsible patriotism and unquestioning nationalism. The national loyalty, in her personification, is only fruitful when it is coupled with the sense of conscience, compassion, sacrifice, and care about the well-being of other people. Moral responsibility cannot hence be divorced of political responsibility. The person should also be able to question, reflect and make ethical decisions despite the overwhelming political pressures.

This argument is further supported by the exile and cultural displacement that is treated in the novel. Geographical distance between the homeland and the country does not always kill the national identity; it might be a chance to think better about belonging and

responsibility. His experience beyond the borders of China helps I-wan to rethink his relationship with his motherland and leads him to the ultimate moral and political maturity.

Finally, this paper contends that Pearl S. Buck can rightfully be conceived as a pragmatic idealist in her approach to patriotism in *The Patriot*. Her idealism is premised on the faith in justice, responsibility, national devotion, and human dignity though her practicality is manifest through her awareness of political complexity and human constraints. She is neither romantic of political struggle nor denying the need of national responsibility. Rather she tries to balance political devotion and universal humanity.

In this way, *The Patriot* breaks the barriers of a traditional historical or political novel. It turns into a meditation on ethical sense of being a part of a nation. The final idea that is passed across by Buck is that patriotism is best when it is answerable to the human beings. National duty, political action and personal sacrifice can be morally significant only when they are informed by conscience, compassion, human dignity, and responsibility. It is in this balancing of the national devotion with the universal human values that is the lasting value of *The Patriot* and the unique power of practical idealism expressed by Pearl S. Buck.

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