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ALIENATION AND RECONCILIATION IN THE NOVELS
OF JOHN STEINBECK

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ALIENATION AND RECONCILIATION IN THE NOVELS
OF JOHN STEINBECK

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: SCOPE OF STUDY AND REVIEW OF CRITICISM

On October 25, 1962, the world learned that John Steinbeck had won the 1962 Nobel Prize for Literature. In citing him as the sixth American to receive this award meant for the person "who shall have produced in the field of literature the most distinguished work of an idealistic tendency,"¹ the official statement from the Swedish Academy said, "His sympathies always go out to the oppressed, the misfits, and the distressed. He likes to contrast the simple joy of life with the brutal and cynical craving for money."² These sympathies and contrasts are brought out in this thesis, which purports to synthesize the disparate works of John Steinbeck through a study of the factors causing alienation and reconciliation of the characters in his novels.

Chapters II, III, and IV of this study present ideas that, while perhaps not unique, were achieved through an independent study of the novels. Chapter II attempts to establish the values of John Steinbeck as seen through his

¹ "John Steinbeck Wins 1962 Nobel Prize for Literature," Publishers Weekly, CLXXXII, Part 2 (November 5, 1962), 21.

² Ibid.

novels; Chapter III describes alienation--the rejection, or withholding, or absence of love; Chapter IV gives specific examples of reconciliation--situations which go from the absence to the presence of a state of communion between characters (the achievement of "love"). There is some overlapping in the ideas of these chapters, as it would be impossible to show, for example, the value of love without showing the loss of one who lacks love, or the joy of one who shares it. Upon the conclusion of the writing of Chapters II, III, and IV, a search was made for related published views, and a summary of these views is presented in this introductory chapter. Chapter V, a conclusion, concisely brings together the main ideas of all previous chapters.

In citing statements from critics and reviewers, no attempt has been made to separate what has been said regarding values, alienation, and reconciliation; for while many remark about love (and related sympathy and compassion), and some refer to, for instance, loneliness (a result of alienation), or brotherhood (a result of reconciliation), very few comment on alienation and reconciliation per se as they are treated here in Chapters III and IV; and critical comment is therefore presented chronologically. Articles collected by E. W. Tedlock and C. V. Wicker in Steinbeck and His Critics have been quoted as they appeared in that 1957 anthology because they contained revisions by their authors in some cases, but they are cited here in the order of publication

of the original articles, with the year of the original publication indicated, to help create a concept of the progression of views of Steinbeck and his interpreters. For, as it will be brought out in Chapter II, Steinbeck has never changed his values, but he has reappraised them, and this is most clearly seen in his latest novel, The Winter of Our Discontent, the primary work³ securing him the Nobel Prize.

Commenting on the novels Steinbeck had published up to that time--Cup of Gold, To a God Unknown, Tortilla Flat, In Dubious Battle, and Of Mice and Men--Edmund C. Richards wrote this about the novelist in 1937: "The dry rot of gentility has never touched him and neither sex nor a woman's honor nor romantic love loom large as a man's serious problems in his view."⁴ Richards referred to Steinbeck's "preference for paisanos and vagabonds and drifters and cowhands,"⁵ saying that ". . . his compassionate understanding has read their dream and their desire."⁶ In the same year Joseph L. Jackson said:

As for his essential gentleness, his sympathy, his ready understanding of any kind of human being, those things are as natural to him as breathing.

The point is that John Steinbeck is a simple,

³ Ibid.

⁴ Edmund C. Richards, "The Challenge of John Steinbeck," North American Review, CCXLIII (Summer, 1937), 411.

⁵ Ibid., p. 412.

⁶ Ibid.

natural individual, not given to pose of any kind, impatient--his only impatience--of pretense anywhere.⁷

In 1938 Burton Rascoe described a conversation with Steinbeck which significantly illustrates the novelist's feelings about hate and its antidote.

He said that he was mortally afraid of hate and that he never wanted to hate anyone or have anyone hate him--very much. The only defense against concentrated hate, he said, was immediate surrender, capitulation; and this must take the form of humility, benevolence, friendliness. The only way to combat hate is to remove from within yourself the reasons for this hate; only thus can you disarm the one who hates you; only thus can you render the terrible force of his hate impotent. "If I knew a man hated me a great deal," he said, "I would try to make friends with him; if I had done him harm I would try to undo that harm quickly. I wouldn't try to hate him back, no, no, because then the only reason I would have for hating him was because he hated me, and that isn't reason enough to generate any strong, counteracting emotion."⁸

Samuel Levenson pointed out in 1940 that ". . . the single emotion which dominates Steinbeck is compassion, a deep and abiding sympathy for the homeless, the hungry, the vagrant and the sick,"⁹ and that ". . . in the main he is concerned with the simple desires of a simple people: of a man for a piece of farm land, of a mother to keep her family fed and united . . ."¹⁰ But it is loneliness with which

⁷ Joseph H. Jackson, "John Steinbeck, a Portrait," Saturday Review of Literature, XVI (September 25, 1937), 17.

⁸ Burton Rascoe, "John Steinbeck," Steinbeck and His Critics, edited by E. W. Tedlock and C. V. Wicker (Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1957), p. 65.

⁹ Samuel Levenson, "The Compassion of John Steinbeck," Canadian Forum, XX (September, 1940), 185.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Steinbeck sympathizes most; he feels that "In every person there is a store of affection which must be expended. . . ." ¹¹ In a passage of The Grapes of Wrath which shows how the down-trodden subjects are bound together by misfortune, Levenson recognized the importance of this reconciliation by saying, "Thus the companionship of men becomes both a spiritual and economic good. Thus loneliness and poverty are both overcome." ¹² Also in 1940 C. E. Jones saw The Grapes of Wrath as a plea to help the migrants: "The solution is not revolution, but love and understanding." ¹³ Frederick I. Carpenter said in 1941 that by virtue of a migrant's participating in his new group, ". . . the individual may become greater than himself." ¹⁴ Carpenter commented that while Jim Casy questions the old idea of morality that makes sex sinful, he has his own code of morality which "recognizes that love must always remain responsible and purposeful." ¹⁵ Formerly love of the family was uppermost; in this novel unselfish love of all people supersedes even that.

Joseph W. Beach gave this description of John Steinbeck in 1941:

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 186.

¹³ C. E. Jones, "Proletarian Writing and John Steinbeck," Sewanee Review, XLVIII (October, 1940), 455.

¹⁴ Frederick I. Carpenter, "The Philosophical Joads," Tedlock and Wicker, op. cit., p. 245.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 246.

. . . he is positively fond of people. More especially he has shown himself fond of men who work for bread in the open air . . . He likes them strong and lusty, ready to fight and ready to make love. . . . He likes to see people enjoying their food, however coarse, and sharing it with others, what there is of it.¹⁶

At the end of a review of Steinbeck novels through The Grapes of Wrath, Barker Fairley described in 1942 what were to Steinbeck the ideal conditions for reconciliation.

What he says is that at the very bottom of the social scale . . . there can grow a nucleus, a focus, a gathering point of thoughts and feelings and aspirations that make a new bond and a new beginning. . . . What he says is that only the down-and-outs, the dispossessed, can reach to the level, the bottom level, at which this thing begins. Anyone can qualify; he only has to lose everything he has.¹⁷

Contrasting Steinbeck's attitude toward down-and-outers with that toward prudes, Lincoln R. Gibbs wrote the same year:

. . . he has the priceless grace of discovering the redeeming trait in the most degraded person--the prostitute, the jailbird, the drunkard that neglects his family, even the hard prosperous person who is correct and presentable, but inhumanly cold. . . .

.
 . . . deeply impressed by the graces and virtues and wrongs of the proletarians, he would be somewhat less than human if he did not now and then delight in ruffling the composure of prudes and making them squirm.¹⁸

Giving Tom Joad in The Grapes of Wrath as an example of the novelist's admiration for efficiency, Gibbs said:

¹⁶ Joseph W. Beach, "John Steinbeck: Art and Propaganda," Tedlock and Wicker, op. cit., pp. 250-251.

¹⁷ Barker Fairley, "John Steinbeck and the Coming Literature," Sewanee Review, L, No. 2 (April-June, 1942), 154.

¹⁸ Lincoln R. Gibbs, "John Steinbeck: Moralizer," Tedlock and Wicker, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

Steinbeck delights to recognize the efficiency of such obscure persons. By this recognition he does democracy a service. On the whole they do their jobs far better than the corporation magnate does his, and in the aggregate their labors, are quite as important to the national well-being.¹⁹

In 1947 Maxwell Geismar attempted to outline Steinbeck's attitudes towards the conventionality and materialism of our society. The early Cup of Gold and To a God Unknown, Geismar notes, show that Steinbeck opposes social restraints; but it is in Tortilla Flat that the novelist affirms his position, as ". . . these marvelous paisanos gain their happiness by refusing the dominant values of our vaunted American civilization: they scorn equally our competitive motivation and our individualistic power-rewards."²⁰ Yet a ". . . quite formalized code of ethics . . . underlies the apparent immorality of the paisanos."²¹

Also writing in 1947, Norman Cousins said that just-published The Wayward Bus could be interpreted as social criticism pointing to "the greatest tyranny of all--the self-torture of self-inflicted restraints, the surface adherence to artificial values of morality, the inevitable disintegration of the individual when exposed to the corrosive acids of

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 101.

²⁰ Maxwell Geismar, Writers in Crisis (Boston, 1947), p. 253.

²¹ Ibid.

a fabulously complicated social organism."²² If the reader of that book interprets it allegorically, the description of the lights of San Juan can be seen as "a description of the people in the story--or even of all members of our civilization--lost and lonely in the night, 'strung on chains,' but essentially remote from each other."²³ Using phrases from Steinbeck's journal Sea of Cortez, Frederick Bracher explained in 1948 that the characters Steinbeck likes in The Wayward Bus "all share the main 'non-teleological' virtue: the ability to see what 'is' (which includes what needs to be done) with 'the love and understanding of instant acceptance';"²⁴ whereas "The middle class . . . has abandoned its versatility, and its values are atrophied into a sluggish desire for comfort and security."²⁵ Bracher said that Steinbeck believes man's most serious blunder is losing his vitality and initiative and adaptability because he thus becomes de-humanized.

Stressing Steinbeck's "biological view of man," Bracher said, "Steinbeck persistently writes of sex relations in physical terms only, and the sex act is presented as a pure

²² Norman Cousins, "Bankrupt Realism," Saturday Review of Literature, XXX (March 8, 1947), 22.

²³ Antonia Seixas, "John Steinbeck and the Non-Teleological Bus," Tedlock and Wicker, op. cit., p. 279.

²⁴ Frederick Bracher, "John Steinbeck and the Biological View of Man," Tedlock and Wicker, op. cit., p. 196.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 192.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 190.

good in itself. . . . From this point of view, sex is bad only when the normal biological drives are subverted in the interest of gentility or some man-made convention."²⁷ This may be because, as Woodburn O. Ross illustrated in 1949, Steinbeck values human behavior which harmonizes with natural law. "He clearly loves human beings whom he considers to be living natural lives--the Joads, the paisanos, 'the boys,' and the characters of deficient mentality who appear often in his pages. . . . His love of the natural extends to naturalistic ethics; he loves natural behavior."²⁸ Yet, Ross observed, Steinbeck's ethical system is complicated by an altruism which is manifested by exciting admiration for characters who love their brothers.

Blake Nevius commented that in The Grapes of Wrath Steinbeck, lenient in his attitude toward human nature, showed how ". . . men act brutally toward less fortunate men out of fear for their possessions."²⁹

Praising Steinbeck in 1950 for his theme in his new book, Burning Bright, Norman Cousins wrote: "It tries to emancipate men from the tyranny of the personal self. It tries to develop an aspect of man's nature, too often hidden,

²⁷ Ibid., p. 191.

²⁸ Woodburn O. Ross, "John Steinbeck: Naturalism's Priest," Tedlock and Wicker, op. cit., p. 209.

²⁹ Blake Nevius, "Steinbeck: One Aspect," Tedlock and Wicker, op. cit., p. 201.

which hungers truly for larger understanding and mutuality in life,"³⁰ which, Cousins said, the book does by repeating with new skill the old truth of the brotherhood and immortality of men. Martha Jo Oyler, in her master's thesis at North Texas State College in 1951, considered Joe Saul of this book to be most representative of Steinbeck's "leader-type" because ". . . he has discovered that all humanity is holy, and that there must be love for all humanity."³¹ Love for humanity is also characteristic of another classification of characters which she called the "understanding ones." These men are lonely because they stand apart from others in order to gain a clear picture of life, and are the most unselfish because their special insight inspires them to give of themselves to others.

French reviewers have also observed the benevolent qualities of John Steinbeck. In 1947 Fauchery stated in Action, "'His last word is always fraternity.'"³² Marie Forestier wrote, ". . . he is without doubt the most complet and the most human American writer. He redeems his faults by qualities of the heart. It is the heart, it is the sympathy which

³⁰ Norman Cousins, "Hemingway and Steinbeck," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXIII (October 28, 1950), 27.

³¹ Martha Jo Oyler, "Character Studies in John Steinbeck's Fiction," unpublished master's thesis, Department of English, North Texas State College, Denton, Texas, 1951, p. 74.

³² Thelma M. Smith and Ward L. Miner, Transatlantic Migration (Durham, North Carolina, 1955), p. 170.

stimulates in him the creative imagination."³³ Said Jacques Vallette, "'Two things make Steinbeck's work good: his ability to catch the feelings of a group, and his warm human sympathy."³⁴ In a preface to a 1949 Le Club Français du Livre publication of the play version of Of Mice and Men and the novel Tortilla Flat, Madeleine Paz was aware of Steinbeck's concern for man's loneliness as shown in the play; she wrote: "'Alone--we are always alone is the cry of mankind. This human torment has re-echoed from one end of the earth to the other and has given a masterpiece to men; he who has created it is John Steinbeck."³⁵

Charles C. Walcutt was another critic to point out how Steinbeck's sympathy with simple people contrasts with his scorn for a society that is stupid, commercial, exploitative. In 1956 he wrote that Steinbeck loves his irresponsible outcasts of Cannery Row who defy such a society, yet balances them with the admirable Doc and "shows that mere defiance of accepted standards and values does not make a way of life."³⁶ The Pearl, wrote Walcutt, "seems to suggest both that Kino is better off as a primitive and that he is defeated because he does not have the knowledge of civilized men which enables them to trick and destroy him . . ."³⁷

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 174.

³⁶ Charles C. Walcutt, American Literary Naturalism, a Divided Stream (Minneapolis, 1956), p. 266.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 267.

Martin Shockley's 1957 article "Christian Symbolism in The Grapes of Wrath" calls attention to Jim Casy's identity with Jesus Christ. According to Shockley, Casy expresses the meaning of the book through the articles of his faith, the central doctrine of which he states in words that "paraphrase the words of Jesus, who said, 'God is love,' and 'A new commandment I give unto you: that ye love one another.'"³⁸ The second and third articles of Casy's faith, which depend on reverence for life and a sense of the oversoul, are related to non-Christian religions, but ". . . the major intended meaning is . . . essentially and thoroughly Christian."³⁹

In the first book-length study of Steinbeck's work, The Wide World of John Steinbeck, published in 1958, Peter Lisca made this observation concerning the role of the individual in Steinbeck's writing:

. . . while many of his novels concern themselves with men primarily as mystical, social, psychological, or biological unit-protagonists, rather than individuals per se, his thought as a whole rejects the values of the group and asserts the primacy of the individual. For only the individual is capable of initiating the new directions and departures which prevent the species from losing its "survival quotient."⁴⁰

Discussing Cup of Gold, Lisca pointed out that there were in Steinbeck's first published novel several ideas which became

³⁸ Martin Staples Shockley, "Christian Symbolism in The Grapes of Wrath," Tedlock and Wicker, op. cit., p. 267.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 270.

⁴⁰ Peter Lisca, The Wide World of John Steinbeck (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1958), p. 199.

important in later works, principally the biological view of man and an unconventional attitude toward sex and prostitution. (In the chapter on Cannery Row, Lisca expressed his opinion that Steinbeck relegates women to a choice between homemaking and whoredom, and indicated that to Steinbeck comradeship of men is superior to romantic love.) Lisca also noted the foreshadowing of "occasional references to religion and to the man of skill"⁴¹ in Cup of Gold, but he did not elaborate.

Significantly related to the analysis of alienation in this study is Lisca's classification of the three kinds of evil in Steinbeck's novels--that which coincidence causes, that which people bring on themselves, and that which systems produce: coincidence is guilty of "a nameless kind of evil";⁴² some people hurt themselves if they are ecologically maladjusted; and some people function harmfully because evil systems control them, as in In Dubious Battle, The Grapes of Wrath, The Moon Is Down, and The Pearl.

Lisca saw Cannery Row and The Pearl as rejections of society. Cannery Row, like Tortilla Flat, favorably represents a retreat from competition, whereas The Pearl teaches what their characters already know: that to conflict with society is to pay too great a price for keeping the pearl (getting ahead). A pitiless examination of our civilization,

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 128.

⁴² Ibid., p. 210.

The Wayward Bus appears to Lisca to be a "point of stasis"⁴³ between these rejections and the affirmations of Burning Bright and East of Eden; it is affirmative because it seems to say that realistic and objective people like Juan Chicoy can save the world from the others. Emphasis on a moral theme--the problem of good and evil--in East of Eden "is undoubtedly the most important change in Steinbeck's work since the beginning of his career twenty-three years earlier."⁴⁴ Printed two years after East of Eden, Sweet Thursday, a continuation of Cannery Row characters and setting, is a declaration of the need for romantic love. A changed Doc suggests corresponding changes in his creator. Lisca saw the shift as a relaxation of attention, a surrender, of the novelist which began in The Wayward Bus--but another critic, Hugh Holman, in 1954 had seen Sweet Thursday as "an emphatic and clear-cut statement of Steinbeck's greatest single theme: the common bonds of humanity and love which make goodness and happiness possible."⁴⁵

In his master's thesis in 1961, Allen R. Penner also pointed out changes in Steinbeck's position. Penner noted that Cannery Row departs from Tortilla Flat with the addition of Doc, "who retains the virtues of the older order and yet

⁴³ Ibid., p. 247.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 275.

⁴⁵ Hugh Holman, "Narrow-Gauge Dickens," New Republic, CXXX (June 7, 1954), 19.

maintains a steady occupation,"⁴⁶ and that Doc's marriage in Sweet Thursday is a further compromise. Juan in The Wayward Bus renounces the self-centered philosophy of Danny of Tortilla Flat and Mack of Cannery Row; Juan feels a debt to mankind. Penner summarized Steinbeck's attitude toward man's obligation in this way:

There is a debt which every man owes his fellow man; and the people who are most prompt in paying it are, ironically, the poorest in material wealth. Their acceptance of responsibility for those in need is a quality not so frequently found in the upper and middle classes.⁴⁷

The same year Warren French observed Steinbeck's reverence for all men, but he also noted that with Steinbeck as with Hawthorne, ". . . the only lasting and meaningful reforms originate in the human heart."⁴⁸ Following are some ideas of French which are pertinent: Cup of Gold says that the man who pursues power must compromise or be destroyed, whereas the artist who withdraws from society triumphs in the end. The Pastures of Heaven is a book which tells how much Steinbeck hates middle-class respectability, represented by the Monroes. (French touches here on a source of alienation. The Monroes are insensitive people who never think they could be wrong, who never think of others' feelings; to Steinbeck,

⁴⁶ Allen R. Penner, "Social Criticism in the Works of John Steinbeck," unpublished master's thesis, Department of English, North Texas State College, Denton, Texas, 1961, p. 61.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 112.

⁴⁸ Warren French, John Steinbeck (New York, 1961), p. 112.

these characters are villainous.) Burton in To a God Unknown is "a typical Steinbeck Christian: he is narrow, bigoted, destructive . . ." ⁴⁹ Steinbeck condemns other men who are insensitive, violent, and fanatical in In Dubious Battle and Of Mice and Men. Jody of The Red Pony acquires a characteristic valuable to reconciliation: he "learned that the only way to deal with the fallibility and the limitations of both man and nature is to be compassionate."⁵⁰ What might be called the tension between alienation and reconciliation is seen by French as the theme of The Grapes of Wrath:

It is an allegory that is applicable wherever prejudice and a sense of self-importance inhibit co-operation, and the message of the book is that co-operation can be achieved only through the willingness of individuals of their own volition to put aside special interests and work towards a common purpose.⁵¹

French considered Cannery Row to be another attack on the respectability which is often the source of man's frustrations and conflicts. Chapter Fourteen of that novel repeats a perennial Steinbeck argument, "that obsession with property destroys joy and human sympathy."⁵² Life in Cannery Row is better than that in more "respectable" places, but it is not without its problems. For example, French recognizes the alienation of Mack, who lives haunted by and resigned to his inadequacies. The gopher episode symbolizes the difficulty of simultaneously attaining security and affection

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 49.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 107-108.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 93.

⁵² Ibid., p. 128.

(whereas Sweet Thursday later says the gopher was wrong). French interpreted the old Chinaman as a symbol of the terrors isolation can bring a person who lets the opinion of his world influence his happiness; this chapter and the one about William of the Bear Flag Restaurant deal with people who feel or fear rejection. How man may achieve satisfaction, however, is an underlying idea of the novel; he must unselfishly help others rather than promote his own interests.

An article by R. W. B. Lewis in Modern American Fiction, 1963, mentions

. . . two kinds of motif in the fiction of John Steinbeck. The first may be called the American motif; a celebrational sense of life, a sense of promise and possibility and of as yet unspoiled novelty in man and his habitation, a mystical sympathy both for the individual and for what Whitman called the "en-masse." . . .

The second is the contemporary motif . . . This motif springs from the tragic awareness, which in Steinbeck's case is sometimes only an intensely pathetic awareness, of the faithful division between man and man; and of that division as a central feature of the mutilated life it is the novelist's business to give a direct impression.⁵³

It is hoped that retrospection of foregoing opinions will provide the impression that one emotion dominates the work of author John Steinbeck: love. The author himself loves all men and he considers love and recognition "every

⁵³ R. W. B. Lewis, "John Steinbeck: The Fitful Daemon," Modern American Fiction, edited by A. Walton Litz (New York, 1963), pp. 267-268.

man's desire,"⁵⁴ but he is forever conscious of "the loneliness we are born to."⁵⁵ Analyzing his purpose in writing, he says that "What some people find in religion, a writer may find in his craft or whatever it is,--absorption of the small and frightened and lonely into the whole and complete, a kind of breaking through to glory."⁵⁶ Glory it is when people "break through" to each other; and John Steinbeck's constant concern is the impediments to such glory, the sources of alienation among men. He accounts for human differences when he says, "It is the nature of man to rise to greatness if greatness is expected of him, and it is equally his nature to be driven to bestiality through the despair of hatred."⁵⁷ His writing is a plea for men to recognize the rights of one another and to love unselfishly, thus opening the way to greatness and likewise to the greatest experience life has to offer: communion.

The purpose of this study is to show how, in a world with a system of values based on love, the characters in the novels of John Steinbeck are alienated and reconciled.

⁵⁴ John Steinbeck, "More about Aristocracy: Why Not a World Peerage?" Saturday Review of Literature, XXXVIII (December 10, 1955), 11.

⁵⁵ John Steinbeck, "Rationale," Tedlock and Wicker, op. cit., p. 309.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Steinbeck, "More about Aristocracy," p. 11.

CHAPTER II

VALUES

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the values of John Steinbeck in order to make clear subsequent chapters on alienation and reconciliation in his novels. It attempts to note the first significant indication of each value, then to show the values that were emphasized in each book. In general, Steinbeck's system of values is based on love. The author values these things because they suggest the presence of that emotion (on a plane that may be either personal or social): loyalty to the family group; helpfulness; unselfishness; personal honesty; gallantry; kindness to the misfits, the downtrodden, the elderly; uninhibited sexual relationships. He values skillful and adaptable people because they can accommodate to life; he appreciates land or a home as being important to man's happiness. Steinbeck distrusts money because he feels business interests thrive only in an environment which subordinates brotherly love. He opposes conformity with laws, religion, and social conventions when it interferes with the happiness of men.

As a first novel, Cup of Gold is not outstanding, but the author introduces in it attitudes which he developed later into important themes. The trivial message of Cup of

Gold is that the greatest prize in life is security. The family unit is the hearthstone of happiness. To fail to appreciate this, to pursue ambitions that lead to riding over the rights of men, will bring disappointment. Learning this is seventeenth-century Henry Morgan, the British buccaneer.

Fired by his yearning for adventure in the Indies, young Henry respectfully seeks the counsel of the mystic Merlin, who says to him:

"You are a little boy. You want the moon to drink from as a golden cup; and so, it is very likely that you will become a great man--if only you remain a little child. All the world's great have been little boys who wanted the moon; running and climbing, they sometimes caught a firefly. But if one grow to a man's mind, that mind must see that it cannot have the moon and would not want it if it could--and so, it catches no fireflies."¹

After a lifetime leading pirates who amass a fantastic fortune by seizing ships, sacking towns, burning houses, plundering citizens, he still lacks the feeling of fulfillment he anticipated. The letdown follows his monstrous seizure of Panama, the "Cup of Gold," which was his greatest conquest. When, as Merlin predicted, he sees he cannot reach for the moon, and he at last has reached disillusioning maturity, he abruptly sets another aim for his life:

"I think that hereafter I shall be gallant for two reasons only--money and advancement. I tried to be gallant for the pure, joyous looks of things. You see, I was honest with myself before and I am honest with myself now. These two honesties are antithetical."²

¹ John Steinbeck, Cup of Gold (New York, 1936), p. 27.

² Ibid., p. 227.

Steinbeck values this personal honesty. Although henceforth Henry achieves money and advancement in a flagrantly immoral manner, the fact that his actions have a purpose different from that of gaining fame and riches per se makes the reward of his efforts more satisfying. He rationalizes his right to take all the spoils from Panama and abandons his men at Chargres to starve, to be tortured by Indians, to be strangled by Spaniards, or to be hanged by Englishmen.

Henry Morgan is not the author's ideal man; he will be introduced in later books. Henry compromises to adjust to life, but his personality still suggests that people successful with business and money violate the author's sense of values. The morality of business, which will be the important problem of The Winter of Our Discontent, presents no concern with ethics to the pirate.

Henry had learned many things in dealing with the slaves. He knew that he must never let them see what he was thinking, for then, in some ineffable way, they had a hold on him which would be difficult to shake off. He must be cold and distant and insulting to those below him. . . .

If one were brilliantly dressed, all men presumed him rich and powerful, and treated him accordingly. When he said things as though he meant them, nearly all acted as though he meant them. And, most important of his lessons--if he were perfectly honest and gave a strict accounting in nine consecutive dealings, then the tenth time he might steal as much as he wished . . .³

³ Ibid., p. 84.

That society can force a man to change his outlook is illustrated when two pirates are brought before Henry in his new role as lieutenant governor of Jamaica. They say that he is no longer sure of himself, that now he is several men. "Sir Henry laughed. 'That is more or less true. It is not my fault, but it is true. Civilization will split up a character, and he who refuses to split goes under.'"⁴ After dutifully sentencing them to hang, he says, "I would like to stay and talk to you of that old time, but my wife expects me. She is apt to fuss if I am late for luncheon."⁵

Basically, Henry Morgan is still more honest than society. When he faces death, the Vicar asks him if he has repented his sins. He answers:

"My sins? No, I had not thought of them. Shall I repent Panama?"

The Vicar was embarrassed. "Well, Panama was a patriotic conquest. The King approved. Besides, the people were Papists."

"But what are my sins, then?" Henry went on. "I remember only the most pleasant and the most painful among them. Somehow I do not wish to repent the pleasant ones. It would be like breaking faith with them . . ."⁶

This is linked to Steinbeck's attitude toward religion. He sees orthodox religions as narrow doctrines which allow people to perform inhumane, selfish, and intolerant acts in the name of God; or, at best, to rationalize or to cleanse

⁴ Ibid., p. 255.

⁵ Ibid., p. 256.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 263-264.

themselves of guilt. The captain of the ship taking Henry as a boy from his home to slavery, instead of to the life he expected, preached to his men:

"But take the warning of the lesson of the Lord. Repent! Repent! or the wrath destroys you."

He swung his arms wildly and spoke of the poor lonely dead, suffering and burning for dear human faults; and at last he sent his men terrified away.

"That is not so," said the old sailor fiercely to Henry. "Do not be taking stock in his crazy talk. Who made the storm--God or devil--made it for itself and took joy of it. What being could hurl the wind so would not be bothering himself about a chip of a boat floating in immensity."⁷

Less despicable than the captain was Tim, the bos'n, Henry's "friend" who turned him over for sale; Tim had some sincere regrets. "'Ah!' said Tim sorrowfully, 'if only I had a religion to me like the master, I might say, "'Tis God's will,"--and then be forgetting about it. And if I had a business or position I might be talking how a man must live.'"⁸

And, from his cragtop, Merlin questioned the beliefs of the people in the valley:

"For up here, . . . that furtive hope the valley men call faith becomes a questionable thing. Oh, without doubt, if there were a great many about me, and they all intoning endlessly the chant, 'There is a wise, kind God; surely we shall go on living after death,' then I might be preparing for the coming life. But here, alone, halfway up the sky, I am afraid that death would interrupt my musing. The mountains are a kind of poultice for a man's abstract pain. Among them he laughs--oh, far more often than he cries."⁹

⁷ Ibid., p. 62.

⁸ Ibid., p. 72.

⁹ Ibid., p. 144.

Death, to John Steinbeck, has no religious significance. There is no promise of life after death, yet death is not to be feared but welcomed as relief from the struggle of life. Henry finds death rather pleasant. Warm and very tired, he waits to receive "Brother Death."¹⁰ He has a vision in which his childhood sweetheart, Elizabeth, tells him about his home. His father, who had been afraid to live, is "happily dead," and "Merlin is herding dreams in Avalon."¹¹

Robert and Merlin had escaped from a society which demands conformity, condemns individuality and ridicules them because they found pleasure in things that were "different." Merlin had accepted alienation; Robert had not. Steinbeck values the individual, respects each entity as precious and inviolable. Merlin is the only hero in Cup of Gold--he has found happiness by retreating from society. Henry comes to long to see Merlin again now; he is a symbol to Henry of real values, of peace and security. Through the years Henry has aggrandized Elizabeth--but in his mind the peasant girl represents what he has missed in life by leaving home.

An anti-conventional sympathy of John Steinbeck, condoning prostitution, is encountered in Cup of Gold for the first time. Morgan asks his newly appointed friend, Coeur de Gris, to tell him something about his family. For reasons not essential to the plot, Coeur de Gris says:

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 262.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 269.

"My mother is one of the free women of Goaves. . . . Hers was a very ancient family, but Huguenot in worship. . . . And she was picked up by the watch in Paris streets one day and sent to Goaves with a shipload of women vagrants. . . ."

"But you say she is a free woman," said Henry Morgan . . . "Surely she has given up this--this practice . . . You are taking home enough for both of you, and more."

"I know I am, but she continues. I do not mention it, for why should I interfere with what she considers a serious work. She is proud of her position, proud that her callers are the best people in the port. . . . Why should I change the gentle course of her ways, even if I could? No, she is a dear, lovely woman, and she has been a good mother to me."¹²

In this novel, then, John Steinbeck introduced these ideas: (1) that home and a feeling of security are very important; (2) that the individual being is valuable and that an individual may have to retreat from society to be happy; (3) that men who seek material wealth are unscrupulous and dishonest; (4) that formal religion is a farce; (5) that death as a release from life is good; (6) that society is blind; and (7) that prostitutes can be very good women.

Steinbeck's second published novel was The Pastures of Heaven (1933), an episodic narrative in which the characters are residents of a fertile California valley founded by Spanish missionaries around 1776. Each short story shows strong positive or negative values of the author. In the first, Mae Monroe is described as growing in the image of her mother, who, Steinbeck almost says, is a typically dull "good" woman. Mae

¹² Ibid., pp. 128-129.

arranged five boudoir pillows in positions of abandon, and against them leaned a long-legged French doll with clipped blond hair and with a cloth cigarette dangling from languid lips. Mae considered that this doll proved her openness of mind, her tolerance of things she did not quite approve. She liked to have friends who had pasts, for, having such friends and listening to them, destroyed in her any regret that her own life had been blameless.¹³

Next there is the tale of Edward "Shark" Wicks, whose greatest joy in life came from the manipulation of an imaginary fortune. Steinbeck mocks the social convention of funerals in a remark about Shark: "Shark had never known his Aunt Nellie very well, but he had thoroughly enjoyed her funeral. In some way his relatives had heard of his wealth, for they treated him with deference and dignity."¹⁴

More sympathy for the "different" creatures of nature is shown in the third episode, which makes man-made laws seem unjust. These discouraged words come from Franklin Gomez, who speaks of the foundling he has reared:

"This Little Frog should not be going to school. He can work; he can do marvelous things with his hands, but he cannot learn to do the simple little things of the school. He is not crazy; he is one of those whom God has not quite finished.

"I told the Superintendent these things, and he said the law required Tularecito to go to school until he is eighteen years old. That is seven years from now. For seven years my Little Frog will sit in the first grade because the law says he must. It is out of my hands."¹⁵

¹³ John Steinbeck, The Pastures of Heaven (Cleveland, Ohio, 1946), p. 19.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

The following subject is Helen Van Deventer, a neurotic woman to whom "pain is a pleasure."¹⁶ Since she is rich, she is also cold and self-centered.

Julius Maltby, whose tale is fifth, had cast off civilization as he had his shoes, living in poverty with such happiness achieved through his studies and philosophy that he was unaware of his "needs" as the town saw them. Another of the outcasts beloved by Steinbeck, he stands apart from the civilization in which everyone who could "bought Fords and radios, put in electricity and went twice a week to the moving pictures in Monterey and Salinas."¹⁷

Still two more gentle souls who are pressured by the Pastures of Heaven are Rosa and Maria Lopez. In their bedrooms they gratefully reward the patrons of their Mexican cuisine. But ". . . in the valley of the Pastures of Heaven, the whisper went about that the Lopez sisters were bad women. Ladies of the valley spoke coldly to them when they passed."¹⁸ A complaint closes their doors and cuts off their livelihood. Desperate and sobbing, feeling that the Virgin whom they adored (to whom they confess regularly) has abandoned them, they decide they must go to San Francisco to become "bad women" "for money."¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 107.

Molly Morgan, the schoolteacher of the valley, had a mother who was another neurotic. Molly had adored her father, a charming drunkard. In her story she knows she must grow up to see the world as does practical young Bill Whiteside, who unintentionally describes her when he says, in speaking of Vasquez, the eighteenth-century Spanish bandit said to have lived near their valley: "'Everybody thinks Vasquez was a kind of a hero, when really he was just a thief. . . . It seems to me, Molly, we ought to teach people to hate robbers, not worship them.'"²⁰ Bill was the third generation of Whitesides to live in the most impressive house in the Pastures of Heaven, but he did not inherit the dream that Whiteside progeny should fill the house. Leaving it to live in Monterey, he upholds a curse on the Whiteside family and the home burns. Steinbeck's view that businessmen are naturally, although sometimes unwittingly, cruel, is displayed in Bill's actions toward Molly and his father.

The episodes of The Pastures of Heaven continue indications that Steinbeck values the individual, condemns society as a group, condones prostitution, frowns upon the prosperous, and wishes that all men could have a haven-like home. He has introduced several more women so that now his women can generally be typed as "good" or "bad." The "good" women

²⁰ Ibid., p. 122.

are dull, nagging, neurotic, conventional, self-centered, or insipid--usually several of these; the "bad" women are warm, sensual, and often illicit. The classifications are those that Steinbeck thinks society has assigned, but his values reverse them; the "bad" women are good; the "good" are "bad."

Because the main character is presented uncertainly, it would be difficult to determine Steinbeck's primary values in To a God Unknown (1933) without an acquaintance with other works of the author. Joseph Wayne may be classed with only one other Steinbeck character, Cathy Trask in East of Eden, as an extra-human creation the author himself does not entirely understand.

Joseph intensely loves land and develops a pantheistic worship of it. The reader is persuaded neither to accept his paganism nor to scoff at it. Such later works as Of Mice and Men and The Grapes of Wrath recall Joseph's saying that a man needs something to tie to. Arriving in California from Vermont, ". . . he knew that he could never lose the feeling for the land."²¹ Yet he was aware that "This land might possess all of him if he were not careful."²² The land soon does possess him; but the foreshadowing is not meant as a message in this mystic tale, and does not detract from the impression that Steinbeck believes land is rightfully important to men.

²¹ John Steinbeck, To a God Unknown (New York, 1933), p. 8.

²² Ibid.

Joseph's three brothers represent values of Steinbeck negatively: Tom's fault is that he does not understand people (he should love them unquestioningly); Benjy does not fit well into ranch life (Steinbeck admires a man oriented to his environment); Burton is a religious fanatic (because of his orthodox beliefs he tries to thwart Joseph's nature worship). However, since Steinbeck values family solidarity, Joseph dislikes Burton's leaving the ranch because it splits the Waynes. A religious man the author treats more kindly is Father Angelo--but Steinbeck is no more convinced of the validity of Christianity than that of paganism, and he suggests that there are some pagan aspects of Catholicism. Another character treated with sympathy is Juanito, an underdog because he is Indian.

Steinbeck flouts the conventional marriage ceremony in describing the wedding of Joseph and Elizabeth.

The church had so often seen two ripe bodies die by the process of marriage that it seemed to celebrate a mystic double death with its ritual. Both Joseph and Elizabeth felt the sullenness of the sentence. "You must endure," said the church; and its music was a sunless prophecy.

.....
 "There's a foulness here," he thought. "Here in the church I've thought there lay a beauty if a man could find it, but this is only a doddering kind of devil worship." . . . He was embarrassed that Elizabeth must witness the maculate entrance to the marriage.²³

²³ Ibid., pp. 87-88.

The author indicates that real marriage occurs in the physically fulfilling consummation of the couple.

An unusual foreword to Tortilla Flat copyrighted in 1937 sets forth John Steinbeck's opinion of reaction to the first publication of that book in 1935. He makes a clear statement of several values:

When this book was written, it did not occur to me that paisanos were curious or quaint, dispossessed or underdoggish. They are people whom I know and like, people who merge successfully with their habitat. In men this is called philosophy, and it is a fine thing.

Had I known that these stories and these people would be considered quaint, I think I never should have written them.

I remember a little boy, a school friend. We called him the piojo, and he was a nice, kind brown little boy. He had no mother or father--only an elder sister whom we loved and admired. We called her, with a great deal of respect, a hoor-lady. . . . I have been subjected to decency for a long time, and still I can't think of the hoor-lady as (that nastiest of words) a prostitute, nor of piojo's many uncles, those jolly men who sometimes gave us nickels, as her clients.

All of this gets around to the point that this is not an introduction, but a conclusion. I wrote these stories because they were true stories and because I liked them. But literary slummers have taken these people up with the vulgarity of duchesses who are amused and sorry for a peasantry. These stories are out, and I cannot recall them. But I shall never again subject to the vulgar touch of the decent these good people of laughter and kindness, of honest lusts and direct eyes, of courtesy beyond politeness. If I have done them harm by telling a few of their stories, I am sorry. It will not happen again.²⁴

In his preface Steinbeck tells us, "This is the story of Danny and of Danny's friends and of Danny's house,"²⁵ and

²⁴ John Steinbeck, Tortilla Flat (New York, n.d.), foreword.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 9.

says that ". . . Danny's house was not unlike the Round Table, and Danny's friends were not unlike the knights of it."²⁶ To compare the inhabitants of Tortilla Flat with the rest of America, he says: "The paisanos are clean of commercialism, free of the complicated systems of American business, and, having nothing that can be stolen, exploited or mortgaged, that system has not attacked them very vigorously."²⁷

Danny inherits two houses, and his friends come to live with him. Among these is Pilon, whom the author calls an honest man. But Tortilla Flat's is a peculiar brand of honesty. Pilon is as moral as he is honest when he invades the bedrooms of neighbors' wives, or takes the money and wine of his friends when he can. However, since his friends operate under the same code, the only unfairness lies in the fact that Pilon is smarter.

The women of the Flat are warm and generous. Danny and his pals enjoy many romantic escapades. Only once is the Flat invaded by the "good ladies" Steinbeck dislikes, as Pilon and Big Joe Portugee lie asleep on the beach. The author makes the women appear ridiculous:

Two elderly ladies, collecting seashells, saw the bodies and hurried past lest these men should awaken in passion, pursue and criminally assault them. It was a shame, they agreed, that the police did nothing to control such matters.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 145.

Danny's impoverished, wine-loving group, who live from jug to jug, will steal from anyone but will help anyone in need: a Mexican corporal who deserts the army to care for his baby; the Pirate, in his goal to buy a golden candlestick for St. Francis; Teresina Cortez when her family is in danger of starving.

Even in Tortilla Flat, however, the custom of the funeral is a conventional one, and Steinbeck makes further comments on this social function.

Imagine going to a funeral without first polishing the automobile. Imagine standing at a graveside not dressed in your best dark suit and your best black shoes, polished delightfully. Imagine sending flowers to a funeral with no attached card to prove you had done the correct thing. In no social institution is the codified ritual of behavior more rigid than in funerals. . . . No, dying, a man may be loved, hated, mourned, missed; but once dead he becomes the chief ornament of a complicated and formal social celebration.²⁹

Danny's friends cannot attend his funeral because they do not have the proper clothes--they respect this one social custom.

The author indicates thus why he loves his paisanos:

It is astounding to find that the belly of every black and evil thing is as white as snow. And it is saddening to discover how the concealed parts of angels are leprous. Honor and peace to Pilon, for he had discovered how to uncover and to disclose to the world the good that lay in every evil thing. Nor was he blind, as so many saints are, to the evil of good things. It must be admitted with sadness that Pilon had neither the stupidity, the self-righteousness nor the greediness for reward ever to become a saint. Enough for Pilon to do good and to be rewarded by the glow of human brotherhood accomplished.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 305-306.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 99.

Because Cannery Row (1945) and its sequel Sweet Thursday (1954) are similar in style and tone to Tortilla Flat, they will be considered here out of chronological order. All three may be called light and farcical, but the later two have a serious undertone lacking in the earlier book. Whereas Tortilla Flat displays a good-natured partiality for a group the author presents as happily free from social restraint, Cannery Row is a meaningful attack on society and a testimony in favor of the man who retreats from it in order to preserve his personal integrity. Like Danny and his friends, Mack and the boys have a code of behavior--one that comes out of, rather than restrains, natural behavior.

Steinbeck says of them:

They are the Virtues, the Graces, the Beauties of the hurried mangled craziness of Monterey and the cosmic Monterey where men in fear and hunger destroy their stomachs in the fight to secure certain food, where men hungering for love destroy everything lovable about them.³¹

Other characters through whom Steinbeck demonstrates his values are Dora Flood and her successor, Fauna, town madams, who are wise and humanitarian; Mrs. Malloy, who is hurt by her desire for conventional respectability; Lee Chong and Frankie, who are tenderly treated misfits; Gay, who is praised because he is a skillful mechanic; and most important, Doc, who is patterned after the man who was the author's greatest friend, a marine biologist, Ed Ricketts.

³¹ John Steinbeck, Cannery Row (New York, 1945), pp. 14-15.

Doc reveals the quality the author most admires.

Doc cried to no one, "Give me a little time! I want to think. What did Bach have that I am hungry for to the point of starvation? Wasn't it gallantry? And isn't gallantry the great art of the soul? Is there any more noble quality in the human than gallantry?"³²

This explains Steinbeck's love for the lower classes.

Theirs is the need and opportunity for gallantry; the wealthy have to sacrifice gallantry to obtain or maintain wealth. Implementing Doc with an educated mind and a taste for the arts to speak directly for the author, Cannery Row departs significantly from Tortilla Flat; published nine years after Cannery Row, Sweet Thursday shows growth (which evolved through intervening novels) in the author's concern for the human race, above and beyond the needs of the individual. Steinbeck displays a new attitude toward social responsibility in Sweet Thursday as he questions the purpose of man's existence.

Where does discontent start? You are warm enough, but you shiver. You are fed, yet hunger gnaws you. You have been loved, but your yearning wanders in new fields. And to prod all these there's time, the bastard Time. The end of life is now not so terribly far away--you can see it the way you see the finish line when you come into the stretch--and your mind says, "Have I worked enough? Have I eaten enough? Have I loved enough?" All of these, of course, are the foundation of man's greatest curse, and perhaps his greatest glory. "What has my life meant so far, and what can it mean in the time left to me?" And now we're coming to the wicked, poisoned dart: "What have I contributed in the Great Ledger? What am I worth?" And this isn't vanity or ambition. Men seem to be born with a debt

³² John Steinbeck, Sweet Thursday (New York, 1954), p. 245.

they can never pay no matter how hard they try. It piles up ahead of them. Man owes something to man. If he ignores the debt it poisons him and if he tries to make payments the debt only increases, and the quality of his gift is the measure of the man.³³

Writing In Dubious Battle (1936) after Tortilla Flat, Steinbeck seems to have enlarged his sympathy for human beings to include a mass of society: the downtrodden apple pickers of the Torgas Valley of California. The naturalistic style of the novel attempts to expose through the eyes of Mac, a communist, and Jim, aspiring to be a party member, what it is like to be on the scene with crop tramps after owners drop their wages. The communists move in to organize a strike. Although he shows Mac doing all he can in the name of helping unfortunate people, Steinbeck is not endorsing communism; he speaks through fence-sitting Doc Barton, a non-member who works with the Party for no pay. Doc is interested in people, not movements, and in the functioning of man as a part of a group. His aim is to see as much as he can. He recognizes that Mac uses trickery to move a crowd; he questions Jim's purpose in wanting to be a part of the strike. Jim's answer, Doc says, is

"Pure religious ecstasy. I can understand that. Partakers of the blood of the Lamb."

"Religion, hell!" Jim cried. "This is men, not God. This is something you know."

"Well, can't a group of men be God, Jim?"³⁴

³³ Ibid., pp. 22-23.

³⁴ John Steinbeck, In Dubious Battle (New York, n.d.), pp. 254-255.

This is the seed of an idea to grow in The Grapes of Wrath.

Between In Dubious Battle and The Grapes of Wrath came two books published in 1937, The Red Pony and Of Mice and Men. The Red Pony is a group of four stories first published separately in the North American Review. The most important contribution of this book toward establishing the personal values of John Steinbeck comes from its attitude toward old people--two of its stories show Steinbeck's respect for the elderly. Gitano, the ancient Mexican who has returned to the homesite of his ancestors, and Grandfather are both treated with great sympathy. Looking backward, one can see in Cup of Gold that Merlin and Henry's senile grandmother, Gwenliana, were respected for their age. In In Dubious Battle old Dan, the apple picker who had been a "top faller" in his youth, demanded--and got--consideration for his years.

In Of Mice and Men Candy, who swamps the bunkhouse, owns a toothless, nearly blind dog "so God damn old he can't hardly walk."³⁵ The ranch hands think the dog stinks, and because they do not like to be reminded that they, too, will be of no use when they are old, Slim, the skinner, says, "That dog ain't no good to himself. I wisht somebody'd shoot me if I get old an' a cripple."³⁶ Candy lets Carlson

³⁵ John Steinbeck, Of Mice and Men (New York, n.d.), p. 65.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 81.

shoot the dog, then mourns and regrets that he let a "stranger" do it.

"You seen what they done to my dog tonight? They says he wasn't no good to himself nor nobody else. When they can me I wisht somebody'd shoot me. But they won't do nothing like that. I won't have no place to go, an' I can't get no more jobs."³⁷

Candy longs to share in the dream of ranch hands Lennie and George to have a little house and a couple acres of land. The goal is thwarted because the cold laws of civilization seek moronic Lennie for a murder of which he is not morally guilty.

Leading the pursuit of Lennie is the husband of the victim, Curley, the son of the ranch owner. Curley's wife was a tramp who had in her favor the fact that she did not like Curley (of the owning class). Steinbeck evokes sympathy for her after her death.

Curley's wife lay with a half-covering of yellow hay. And the meanness and the planning and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face. She was very pretty and simple, and her face was sweet and young. Now her rouged cheeks and her reddened lips made her seem alive and sleeping very lightly. The curls, tiny little sausages, were spread on the hay behind her head, and her lips were parted.³⁸

Death has given her her escape, returned her to an age of innocence.

She had pursued all the men on the ranch, but they would have nothing to do with her. They preferred the pleasure and safety of

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 106-107.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 160.

". . . old Susy's place. Hell of a nice place. Old Susy's a laugh--always crackin' jokes. Like she says when we come up on the front porch las' Sat'day night. Susy opens the door and then she yells over her shoulder, 'Get yor coats on, girls, here comes the sheriff.' She never talks dirty, neither. Got five girls there."³⁹

George explains why they avoid girls like Curley's wife.

"You give me a good whore house every time," he said. "A guy can go in an' get drunk and get ever'thing outa his system all at once, an' no messes. And he knows how much it's gonna set him back. These here jail baits is just set on the trigger of the hoosegow."⁴⁰

Besides Lennie an outcast is "busted-back nigger" stable buck Crooks, a proud man who remains aloof, reading in his room. He too would like to join Lennie and George on their hoped-for piece of land. For a moment he forgets his pride and reserve to share the dream with Lennie and Candy. But he is easily sent back into his shell. Steinbeck has made of him a compassionate portrayal.

The author suggests that the plan of these men is the ideal of all men--to have a place of their own, free of responsibility to others, a place to care for which will care for them. But when Lennie's innocent crime makes it impossible, George mercifully gives him death to spare him from losing the only thing he lived for; George does not think that he himself is committing a crime. Slim consoles George for his loss. "Slim said, 'You hadda, George. I swear you

³⁹ Ibid., p. 92.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 98.

hadda. Come on with me.' He led George into the entrance of the trail and up toward the highway."⁴¹

Slim is Steinbeck's spokesman and is respected by all the men. He is skillful in a rough job, physically well adapted to his environment, straight-forward, confident, perceptive. He had seen Lennie as a "nice fella" and had said of him, for Steinbeck, "'Guy don't need no sense to be a nice fella. Seems to me sometimes it jus' works the other way around. Take a real smart guy and he ain't hardly ever a nice fella.'"⁴²

Steinbeck's sympathies remain with the lower class in The Grapes of Wrath (1938), but the later book presents a broader point of view through the insight of Jim Casy, spokesman of Steinbeck's religion. Formerly a preacher, Casy denies that he still is one since he looks at things in a new way.

"Before I knowed it, I was sayin' out loud, 'The hell with it! There ain't no sin and there ain't no virtue. There's just stuff people do. It's all part of the same thing. And some of the things folks do is nice, and some ain't nice, but that's as far as any man got a right to say.'"

.....
 Casy spoke again, and his voice rang with pain and confusion. "I says, 'What's this call, this sperit?' An' I says, 'It's love. I love people so much I'm fit to bust, sometimes.' An' I says, 'Don't you love Jesus?' Well, I thought an' thought, an' finally I says, 'No, I don't know nobody name' Jesus. I know a bunch of stories, but I only love people . . .'"

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 186.

⁴² Ibid., p. 73.

" . . . maybe that's the Holy Sperit--the human sperit--the whole shebang. Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of.'"43

Business has become a monster in The Grapes of Wrath.

The bank is something else than men. It happens that every man in a bank hates what the bank does, and yet the bank does it. The bank is something more than men, I tell you. It's the monster. Men made it, but they can't control it.44

Accordingly, people who have money or are engaged in business are despised or ridiculed for the characteristics of their class, which the author suggests "show" that these people are inferior to the less artificial, more natural, more adaptable lower classes.

The big cars on the highway. Languid, heat-raddled ladies, small nucleuses about whom revolve a thousand accouterments: creams, ointments to grease themselves, coloring matter in phials--black, pink, red, white, green, silver--to change the color of hair, eyes, lips, nails, brows, lashes, lids. Oils, seeds, and pills to make the bowels move. A bag of bottles, syringes, pills, powders, fluids, jellies to make their sexual intercourse safe, odorless, and unproductive. And this apart from clothes. What a hell of a nuisance!

• • • • •
Beside them, little pot-bellied men in light suits and panama hats; clean, pink men with puzzled, worried eyes, with restless eyes. Worried because formulas do not work out; hungry for security and yet sensing its disappearance from the earth. In their lapels the insignia of lodges and service clubs, places where they can go and, by a weight of numbers of little worried men, reassure themselves that business is noble and not the curious ritualized thievery they know it is; that business men are intelligent in spite of the records of their stupidity; that they are kind and charitable in

⁴³ John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath (New York, 1961), pp. 31-33.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 45.

spite of the principles of sound business; that their lives are rich instead of the thin, tiresome routines they know; and that a time is coming when they will not be afraid any more.⁴⁵

The changing economy which has replaced men with machines, farmers with land owners, and has displaced many thousands of people, shatters many family groups. This is a tragedy to Steinbeck.

Muley seemed embarrassed. "My wife an' the kids an' her brother all took an' went to California. They wasn't nothin' to eat. They wasn't as mad as me, so they went. They wasn't nothin' to eat here."

The preacher stirred nervously. "You should of went too. You shouldn't of broke up the fambly."

"I couldn'," said Muley Graves. "Somepin jus' wouldn' let me."⁴⁶

The Joads, who are the protagonists, form a well organized group which makes decisions as a unit.

The family met at the most important place, near the truck. The house was dead, and the fields were dead; but this truck was the active thing, the living principle. The ancient Hudson, with bent and scarred radiator screen, with grease in dusty globules at the worn edges of every moving part, with hub caps gone and caps of red dust in their places--this was the new hearth, the living center of the family; . . .⁴⁷

Casy felt privileged to be admitted to the group, pinion gear of which is Ma Joad, the most admirable woman Steinbeck has created.

Her full face was not soft; it was controlled, kindly. Her hazel eyes seemed to have experienced all possible tragedy and to have mounted pain and suffering like steps into a high calm and a superhuman understanding. She seemed to know, to accept, to welcome her position,

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 210-211

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 65-66.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 135-136.

the citadel of the family, the strong place that could not be taken. And since old Tom and the children could not know hurt or fear unless she acknowledged hurt and fear, she had practiced denying them in herself. And since, when a joyful thing happened, they looked to see whether joy was on her, it was her habit to build up laughter out of inadequate materials. But better than joy was calm. Imperturbability could be depended upon. And from her great and humble position in the family she had taken dignity and a clean, calm beauty. From her position as healer, her hands had grown sure and cool and quiet; from her position as arbiter she had become as remote and faultless in judgment as a goddess. She seemed to know that if she swayed the family shook, and if she ever really deeply wavered or despaired the family would fall, the family will to function would be gone.⁴⁸

Ma does all she can to keep the family together. At one time her son Tom asks if she is afraid.

"No," she said quickly. "No, I ain't. You can't do that. I can't do that. It's too much--livin' too many lives. Up ahead they's a thousan' lives we might live, but when it comes, it'll on'y be one. . . . An' it's jus' how soon they gonna wanta eat some more pork bones." Her face tightened. "That's all I can do. I can't do no more. All the rest'd get upset if I done any mor'n that."⁴⁹

When her daughter Rose of Sharon tells Ma she and her husband do not want to live in the country in California, Ma tries to discourage their ambitions, which will break up the family. Once when Tom suggests that part of the family leave the others behind as they journey to California to look for work, Ma insists that they must stay together, for all they have is "the family unbroke."⁵⁰ That the group does deteriorate indicates just how serious circumstances

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 100.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 168.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 231.

become. First to leave is Tom's brother, Noah. Last to see him is Tom, whom he tells that he cannot leave the nice river where they have stopped. Noah thinks he can catch enough fish to live, and Tom cannot persuade him to change his mind.

At last even Ma's fortitude seems weakening when Tom tells her he must leave.

"They was the time when we was on the lan'. They was a boundary to us then. Ol' folks died off, an' little fellas come, an' we was always one thing--we was the fambly--kinda whole and clear. An' now we ain't clear no more. I can't get straight. They ain't nothin' keeps us clear. Al--he's a-hankerin' an' a-jibbitin' to go off on his own. An' Uncle John is jus' a-draggin' along. Pa's lost his place. He ain't the head no more. We're crackin' up, Tom. There ain't no fambly now."⁵¹

But Ma regains her strength and finds the ability to encourage Pa when he worries about having relinquished his proper role in the family. She says, "'We ain't gonna die out. People is goin' on--changin' a little, maybe, but goin' right on.'"⁵²

The longing for land and the security it meant to people like the Joads is felt throughout the novel. The loss of their home, for example, was too much for Grampa.

Casy said, "He was foolin', all the time. I think he knowed. An' Grampa didn' die tonight. He died the minute you took 'im off the place."

"You sure a that?" Pa cried.

"Why, no. Oh, he was breathin'," Casy went on, "but he was dead. He was that place, an' he knowed it."⁵³

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 536.

⁵² Ibid., p. 577.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 199.

That good land of rich owners lies fallow is an irony these people can hardly bear. Not blaming the owners, Steinbeck clearly sympathizes with the Joads and Casy, who epitomize the kind of people the author loves.

Frequently they are proud to be poor.

Casy said, "Seems like that's the way. Fella havin' fun, he don't give a damn; but a fella mean an' lonely an' old an' disappointed--he's scared of dyin'!"

Pa asked, "What's he disappointed about if he got a million acres?"

. . . "If he needs a million acres to make him feel rich, seems to me he needs it 'cause he feels awful poor inside hisself, and if he's poor in hisself, there ain't no million acres gonna make him feel rich, an' maybe he's disappointed that nothin' he can do'll make him feel rich--not rich like Mis' Wilson was when she give her tent when Grampa died. I ain't tryin' to preach no sermon, but I never seen nobody that's busy as a prairie dog collectin' stuff that wasn't disappointed."⁵⁴

An experience at an employer-owned store reaffirmed Ma's faith in her class.

"Look!" she said. "They're a-workin' out there. You let me have some sugar an' I'll bring the slip in later."

"I can't do it, Ma'am. That's the rule. No slip, no groceries. . . ."

"For a dime?"

"For anything, ma'am." He looked pleadingly at her. And then his face lost its fear. He took ten cents from his pocket and rang it up in the cash register. . . . "There you are," he said. "Now it's all right. You bring in your slip an' I'll get my dime back."

Ma studied him. Her hand went blindly out and put the little bag of sugar on the pile in her arm. "Thanks to you," she said quietly. She started for the door, and when she reached it, she turned about. "I'm learnin' one thing good," she said. "Learnin' it all a time, ever' day. If you're in trouble or hurt or need--go to poor people. They're the only ones that'll help--the only ones."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 282.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 513-514.

As a Steinbeck heroine, Ma has warmth. Rose of Sharon also displays this quality, in the conclusion, when she symbolizes Steinbeck's theme. But unlike other heroines, they are not "bad" women, perhaps because of the epic scope of the novel.

Some "bad" men are white-washed by Casy, however.

"Some a them fellas in the tank was drunks, but mostly they was there 'cause they stole stuff; an' mostly it was stuff they needed an' couldn' get no other way. Ya see?" he asked.

"No," said Tom.

"Well, they was nice fellas, ya see. What made 'em bad was they needed stuff. An' I begin to see, then. It's need that makes all the trouble."⁵⁶

Long before this Steinbeck had opened the question of the fairness of laws and prisons. As the book began, Tom exposed his feelings about the short term he had just served in a penitentiary.

"The thing that give me the mos' trouble was, it didn' make no sense. You don't look for no sense when lightnin' kills a cow, or it comes up a flood. That's jus' the way things is. But when a bunch of men take an' lock you up four years, it ought to have some meaning. Men is supposed to think things out. Here they put me in, an' keep me an' feed me four years. That ought to either make me so I won't do her again or else punish me so I'll be afraid to do her again"--he paused--"but if Herb or anybody else come for me, I'd do her again. . . . That sort of senselessness kind a worries a man."⁵⁷

How men should work out their own laws is demonstrated by the description of mores in migrant camps.

The families learned what rights must be observed--the right of privacy in the tent; the right to keep the

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 521.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 74.

past black hidden in the heart; the right to talk and to listen; the right to refuse help or to accept, to offer help or to decline it; the right of son to court and daughter to be courted; the right of the hungry to be fed; the rights of the pregnant and the sick to transcend all other rights.

And the families learned, although no one told them, what rights are monstrous and must be destroyed: the right to intrude upon privacy, the right to be noisy while the camp slept, the right of seduction or rape, the right of adultery and theft and murder. These rights were crushed, because the little worlds could not exist for even a night with such rights alive.

And as the worlds moved westward, rules became laws, although no one told the families. . . .

And with the laws, the punishments--and there were only two--a quick and murderous fight or ostracism; and ostracism was the worst.⁵⁸

Notorious Pretty Boy Floyd is Ma's example of what laws and punishment can do to a man. Blaming the punishment for his early "little bad thing" for making him "mean-mad," she forgave him his later violence. The Joads remember Pretty Boy and Tom with pride when they find it necessary to step around the law after Grampa's death.

Pa said, "We got to figger what to do. They's laws. You got to report a death, an' when you do that, they either take forty dollars for the undertaker or they take him for a pauper."

Uncle John broke in, "We never did have no paupers."

Tom said, "Maybe we got to learn. We never got booted off no land before, neither."

"We done it clean," said Pa. "There can't no blame be laid on us. We never took nothin' we couldn' pay; we never suffered no man's charity. When Tom here got in trouble we could hold up our heads. He only done what any man would a done."

.....
 "Sometimes the law can't be foller'd no way," said Pa. "Not in decency, anyways. They's lots a times you

can't. When Floyd was loose an' goin' wild, law said we got to give him up--an' nobody give him up. Sometimes a fella got to sift the law. I'm sayin' now I got the right to bury my own pa. Anybody got somepin to say?"

The preacher rose high on his elbow. "Law changes," he said, "but 'got to's' go on. You got the right to do what you got to do."⁵⁹

Casy's statement represents one of his changing ideas of right and wrong. Similarly, Casy later says to Uncle John, ". . . for anybody else it was a mistake, but if you think it was a sin--then it's a sin. A fella builds his own sins right up from the groun'."⁶⁰

In Chapter Twenty-three, his essay on amusement, Steinbeck implies many of his values in one paragraph.⁶¹ "And always, if he had a little money, a man could get drunk. The hard edges gone, and the warmth. . . . Failures dulled and the future was no threat." (Drinking is not a vice, since it gives temporary relief from life.) "Death was a friend, and sleep was death's brother." (Death is the best kind of escape. There is no expectation of life after death.) "Ought to find a girl to talk to. That's nice. Might lay with her, too." (She would be a "bad" girl--immoral according to conventional standards, but warm and willing.) "Like to stay drunk all the time. Who says it's bad? Who dares to say it's bad? Preachers--but they got their own kind a drunkenness." (Religion is a farce whose

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 190-191.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 447.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 306.

perpetrators are misled.) "Thin, barren women, but they're too miserable to know." (These are society's "good" women.) "Reformers--but they don't bite deep enough into living to know." (One cannot have really lived and still find fault with the lives of others.) "No--the stars are close and dear and I have joined the brotherhood of the worlds. And everything's holy--everything, even me." (This is part of the religion of John Steinbeck: All men are holy; the greatest joy lies in experiencing communion with other men; thus the reward of life can belong to the living.)

The Moon Is Down (1942) differs from all other Steinbeck novels in that the setting is hypothetical. Written during World War II as an analysis of the feelings of captors vs. the captured in war, soldiers and citizens alike are fraught with longing for peace and security, the importance of which the author has previously emphasized in such books as Of Mice and Men and The Grapes of Wrath.

But in all Steinbeck's work, home, family, and security never seem more precious, nor is the underdog ever more idealized, than in The Pearl, which appeared in book form in 1947. Men with money and important positions are the now-familiar villains. When he is informed that the son of Kino, a poor Mexican peasant, needs his help, the village doctor replies, "'Have I nothing better to do than cure

insect bites for little Indians? I am a doctor, not a veterinary.'"⁶² The doctor's rejection drives Kino to find a valuable pearl in the ocean. The difference between the rich and the poor is stressed when his "neighbors hoped that sudden wealth would not turn Kino's head, would not make a rich man of him, would not graft onto him the evil limbs of greed and hatred and coldness."⁶³ In self-defense Kino kills a man who seeks the pearl; typically, the law appears to be at fault because Kino must fear punishment. Juana is Steinbeck's ideal woman when she subjugates her personality to support Kino. Although Kino valued the things the pearl could bring him, he valued far more his family's happiness. Realizing he could not keep both, he returned the pearl to the sea.

The year 1947 also saw the appearance of The Wayward Bus, a novel which mercilessly castigates our society and economy through representative characters; as before, those of whom Steinbeck approves behave naturally and contrary to convention; those of whom he disapproves appear artificial and inhibited. The dishonest Pritchard is contrasted with the honest, competent, capable bus driver, Juan, and the bright, realistic salesman, Ernest Horton. Pritchard's proper wife is found wanting when contrasted with the stag-party

⁶² John Steinbeck, The Pearl (New York, 1962), p. 18.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 60.

entertainer, Camille. Religion is treated ironically-- except where it is "practical," like the religion of Juan Chicoy, who supports his faith by carrying in the glove compartment of his bus a 45-caliber revolver, bandage, iodine, smelling salts, and whisky. Death is mentioned as a desirable escape from life by two of the characters--Alice Chicoy and Mr. Pritchard.

Through Joe Saul, who in Burning Bright (1950) changes from a man to whom blood line is of utmost importance to one who proclaims that ". . . every man is father to all children and every child must have all men as father,"⁶⁴ Steinbeck says that individual blood lines are not important, but that

"It is the race, the species that must go staggering on. . . . our ugly little species, weak and ugly, torn with insanities, violent and quarrelsome, sensing evil--the only species that knows evil and practices it--the only one that senses cleanness and is dirty, that knows about cruelty and is unbearably cruel."⁶⁵

Thus the author restates his love for humanity, his sense of the brotherhood of man, that transcends the imperfections of the human race.

Consistent with all other Steinbeck novels, East of Eden often displays the author's values through the handling of characters, although almost all characters are seen more "in the round"--are treated with greater depth and show more

⁶⁴ John Steinbeck, Burning Bright (New York, 1950), p. 158.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 157.

varied aspects of personality--in this long tale than in some stories that are shorter or allegorical. Woven throughout East of Eden are details about the family of Sam Hamilton, John Steinbeck's maternal grandfather. The author's appraisals of his relatives fit his usual scale of values but are not acid-tinged as they frequently are with fictional characters. For example, Sam Hamilton's second son Will is a literary relative of Mr. Pritchard of The Wayward Bus; a successful business man, Will lacked the sensitivity of his unprosperous father.

Among fictional characters Lee, highly educated Chinese servant of the chief protagonist, Adam Trask, is resigned to a low position in life because of irrational Caucasian discrimination against his race. Lee is a sympathetically treated underdog. Guessing that Adam's brother Charles had been a miser, Lee adds that ". . . a miser is a frightened man hiding in a fortress of money,"⁶⁶ which sounds like Casy in The Grapes of Wrath when he said that some men need possessions to feel rich because they feel poor inside. The minister who influences Adam's son Aron seems other-worldly, ethereal, typically incapable as a Steinbeck "man of God" to deal with deep problems of life.

For the first time Steinbeck shows in East of Eden that there is a sordid side to prostitution as well as a "decent" one, that there can be "bad" whores. This idea is perpetuated

⁶⁶ John Steinbeck, East of Eden (New York, 1952), p. 377.

in the next novel, Sweet Thursday, in which the "good" madam, Fauna, has problems with some of her girls. Believing prostitution is not for everyone, she takes pride in the marriage of some of her girls, particularly in Suzy's marriage to Doc. It is significant to note that Doc was never a client at Fauna's, nor, for that matter, has any Steinbeck hero ever had sexual intercourse in a whorehouse in the course of a novel. In Sweet Thursday Doc yearned for a type of love he apparently could achieve only through marriage, although in Cannery Row he had seemed complete without it. He did not expect total harmony with a wife, but he wanted what companionship and help Suzy could give him. Thus Sweet Thursday stressed the value of love.

But the author never portrays a marriage in which there is spiritual communion between a man and wife. In his novels the highest state of communion between a man and woman is achieved physically. That is why sexual relationships outside of marriage are condoned; and marriage is a mockery if the physical aspect fails. In the happy marriages, the wife appreciates the husband's prerogative in making all important decisions. She is the traditional keeper of the hearth. The ceremony of marriage itself means nothing, compared to the wife's understanding of her responsibilities and her husband's needs.

And the loneliness of men, the longings of men, and the love of men that are the concern of the novelist, are the

loneliness, the longings, the love of men, half of the earth's population. Steinbeck sees the other half of the human race as having some inborn capacity for happiness lacking in males. He believes women should endure on the strength of their inner being, and exist for the comfort of vulnerable males. This is evident from the time of the first young love of the first novel. To Henry, Elizabeth, daughter of a poor tenant farmer, ". . . was a thing of mystery. All girls and women hoarded something they never spoke of."⁶⁷

That man needs love is the most important belief in East of Eden. Tracing two generations of a family, Steinbeck repeats a situation in which a father who had two sons loved the good one and rejected the bad one. Yet the "badness" of the rejected sons was in a large measure due to feelings of humiliation, jealousy, and anger stimulated by the father's partiality. The author seems to believe that, to want to be good, men must have a fundamental feeling of being loved, of being accepted and approved. Ostensibly East of Eden is a story of the conflict between good and evil. In an essay chapter Steinbeck says:

I believe that there is one story in the world, and only one, . . . Humans are caught--in their lives, in their thoughts, in their hungers and ambitions, in their avarice and cruelty, and in their kindness and

⁶⁷ Steinbeck, Cup of Gold, p. 30.

generosity too--in a net of good and evil. I think this is the only story we have and that it occurs on all levels of feeling and intelligence.⁶⁸

This may be the only story, one of good and evil, but it is at the same time one of alienation and love.

In uncertainty I am certain that underneath their topmost layers of frailty men want to be good and want to be loved. Indeed, most of their vices are attempted short cuts to love. When a man comes to die, no matter what his talents and influence and genius, if he dies unloved his life⁶⁹ must be a failure to him and his dying a cold horror.

The importance of love to each individual may have eclipsed but it has not replaced the author's affection for all mankind. Beyond his respect for the right of each individual to reject society to achieve freedom and comfort, Steinbeck has come to have a special reverence for one who is in some sense isolated from the masses for the purpose of making a creative or humanistic contribution to society. In East of Eden the author makes his first forthright statement of his belief in the value of the free mind of man. Fore-runners of this statement were the characterizations of Merlin in Cup of Gold; Casy, then Tom, in The Grapes of Wrath; Doc Burton in In Dubious Battle; and Doc in Cannery Row.

And this I believe: that the free, exploring mind of the individual human is the most valuable thing in the world. And this I would fight for: the freedom of the mind to take any direction it wishes, undirected.

⁶⁸ Steinbeck, East of Eden, p. 413.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 414.

And this I must fight against: any idea, religion, or government which limits or destroys the individual. This is what I am and what I am about. I can understand why a system built on a pattern must try to destroy the free mind, for that is one thing which can by inspection destroy such a system. Surely I can understand this, and I hate it and I will fight against it to preserve the one thing that separates us from the uncreative beasts. If the glory can be killed, we are lost.⁷⁰

In his latest novel, The Winter of Our Discontent, 1961, Steinbeck represents the morality of today's society in conflict with his own values--but the author of this book feels far more responsibility for the world than when he wrote, for example, Tortilla Flat. No longer does he seem to say that human happiness can be achieved on a personal level, and only that way, by rejecting that impersonal monster, society. The monster is not inscrutable, after all; it is made up of people who act consciously, deliberately--people driven by a worship of money, whose morals and motivations all have a pecuniary base, who explain their often only quasi-legal conduct with aphorisms like "Everybody does it"⁷¹ and "You got to look after number one."⁷² Ethan Hawley is at the same time the most realistic and the most idealistic of Steinbeck's protagonists. He is realistic when he awakens from his lethargy to recognize how modern America's standards differ from his own--that his "racket," honesty, has made him an

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 132.

⁷¹ John Steinbeck, The Winter of Our Discontent (New York, 1961), p. 25.

⁷² Ibid., p. 31.

anachronism. He tries to effect a temporary compromise to please his family and secure their love. But the conduct that this requires conflicts so greatly with his principles that he reaches a point where he cannot go forward, he cannot go back. He seeks the escape of death, yet even that is denied him as he is persuaded, by contact with a symbolic link with his daughter, to accept the responsibility of trying to uphold what he believes in in a darkened world.

Until now the author's criticism of society has been indirect: he has apotheosized victims of social injustice; he has sublimated the essential drives of men by putting them before ideals; he has condoned lawlessness when man-made laws infringed upon the divinity of the individual; he has justified all actions which brought men closer to a holy state of communion with other beings and the world. The Winter of Our Discontent is still Steinbeck's: the outcast (Marullo) is heroic; the good women are bad, the bad good (Ethan's wife never quite understands him; Margie Young-Hunt conceals a secret virtue); home and family are precious; older people command respect (Cap'n Hawley and Aunt Deborah); religion is only a ritual and a social custom; death is an escape. But here none of these elements is in full focus. The concern of John Steinbeck is higher, broader, and deeper than it has ever been before because to him morality seems to be decaying in all America; for once he sees every group, every individual threatened alike. It is up to only a brave, individualistic

few to support the old-fashioned virtues of honesty, personal pride, unselfishness, and brotherly love--and save the species.

At this point, the author of this novel may seem as far detached from the man who wrote Cup of Gold as twentieth-century Ethan Hawley is from seventeenth-century Henry Morgan. But the two protagonists may have more in common than either had with any other: Henry had said a man had to "split" or he would "go under,"⁷³ and both had split; each had external success; neither found his success totally satisfactory because each sacrificed something greater. Greatness lay in what each could do only as a solitary and isolated human being. Significantly, the novel of the mature Steinbeck values love for humanity, a trait which is barely traceable in his earliest novel, but which is the underlying tone of all other novels. It is found in the irony of The Pastures of Heaven, the mysticism of To a God Unknown, the humor of Tortilla Flat, Cannery Row, and Sweet Thursday, the conflict of In Dubious Battle, the tenderness of The Red Pony, the empathy of Of Mice and Men, the defiance of The Pearl, the cynicism of The Wayward Bus, the pacifism of The Moon Is Down; in different ways it is the theme of The Grapes of Wrath, Burning Bright, East of Eden, and Sweet Thursday.

To summarize the values that are most important in each novel, there are, first of all, in Cup of Gold, besides the

⁷³ Steinbeck, Cup of Gold, p. 255.

disparagement of financial prosperity, condemnation of orthodox religion and conformity, and favorable attitudes toward home and security, personal honesty, individuality, misfits, prostitutes, and death. In The Pastures of Heaven the author sympathizes with misfits; condemns conformative middle-class society; condones prostitution, reversing conventional appraisals of "good" and "bad" women; again disparages the prosperous; and shows the importance to men of "home." Love of the land is the prominent value of To a God Unknown; orthodox religion and social conventions again encounter disfavor; and the author shows favor toward men who adapt well to their environment. Tortilla Flat praises men who reject society and merge successfully with their habitat, forming their own code to regulate customs and morals. Canary Row and Sweet Thursday likewise endorse those who reject society, but they show respect for the man who has retreated to protect his integrity. Misfits, prostitutes, and skillful people continue to receive kind treatment. Indicating broader social concern in In Dubious Battle, the author sympathizes with a large mass of downtrodden society. The Red Pony demonstrates Steinbeck's respect for the elderly. While depicting man's loneliness and longing for land, Of Mice and Men shows that the author values men skillful in rough jobs and those governed by a technically illegal morality.

The Grapes of Wrath repeats the value of land and the criticism of man-made laws, while it pleads for brotherly

love. People with money are ridiculed, while the lower classes are admired for their unselfishness, adaptability, and natural behavior. The unity of the family group is important, but the unity of mankind becomes even more important. The women who are worthy are the strength of their families; they do not act illicitly. The Moon Is Down shows again the longing of men for peace and security. Security, together with family ties, is also most important in The Pearl, which shows great sympathy for the underdogs of society and deplors the discrimination of business and professional men and their laws. Approving natural, anti-conventional behavior, The Wayward Bus castigates conformity in modern society. Burning Bright preaches the brotherhood of man, whereas East of Eden shows how Steinbeck values love as a fundamental need of all men. Attitudes toward underdogs, businessmen, religion, are consistent with other works in East of Eden, but the attitude toward prostitution appears less favorable. Praise in the latter book for the individual, creative man evolves as belief in man's debt to society in Sweet Thursday, which again declares man's need of love. In The Winter of Our Discontent Steinbeck pits things he values--honesty, personal pride, unselfishness, and brotherly love--against society's overwhelming materialistic and conforming principles, saying that only the non-conformists can save America.

CHAPTER III

ALIENATION

Because he loves man, John Steinbeck wants him to be happy. He believes that the greatest happiness open to men is achieved through acceptance by other human beings, which can lead to a state of empathy and understanding, ergo, communion. But he sees men rejected by each other and by circumstances, more often than he sees them reconciled. Those who are rejected can be classified according to three major causes of alienation: pursuit of success, lack of communication, and the fundamental nature of man.

There are positive and negative aspects of these causes. Men are often rejected through circumstances they cannot control; or they may bring about their own rejection; or they may by choice withdraw from the opportunity to compete for acceptance. Moreover, the rejecter or the rejected, or both, may suffer as a result of the estrangement.

The first class, the group in pursuit of success, consists of people who are driven or made to feel secure by the standards and conventions society supports. To achieve or maintain their coveted positions, or to be governed by rules for the conduct of man which violate man's essential nature, they sacrifice their potential for the supreme happiness:

feeling part of a great whole--of the human spirit Jim Casey speaks of in The Grapes of Wrath--because this state requires love and equality with all men. The "successful" may have victims who are shut off from material things, but the latter still attain the greater personal reward; they are rejected only on a general level. There remains to the outcast, the down-trodden, a chance to achieve communion with each other. For them, rejection is not final. They are the ones gifted with cosmic insight and can find a separate bliss.

On a large scale, people are separated from each other by boundaries of economy and politics; men of property or social position are kept apart from masses of less fortunate human beings. If one has obtained position in the owning class by inheritance or accident, he may not be completely aware of his misfortune. But the pursuit, or even only the envy, of success results directly in alienation. Not only the economy of society but society's conventions as well cause the alienation of men. These include man-made laws, religion, duty to some organization of society, rules governing "proper" behavior. Following such standards instead of doing what it is natural to do condemns many men to lives of secondary pleasure. Again, those who voluntarily submit to controls suffer most; those who are forced to submit suffer only superficially.

Fear is an important factor in the "pursuit of success." Because men are afraid, they oppress or are oppressed, they

set up laws; they embrace religions; they become selfish, or proud, or jealous.

The second major cause of alienation among human beings is a lack of communication. To appreciate and not fear their differences, to understand common needs and longings, to permit the flow of honest emotions, would bring men closer together and open to many for the first time the rewards of love.

If a person differs in some way from the characteristics of a group of which he is a part, he is liable to be rejected on these grounds. Such a difference may be that of race, age, financial position, education, origin, sex, physical or mental health, or outlook. In their rejection, the group does not realize how they are hurt by deliberately rejecting the misfit; as a rule, the outcast suffers more, being unique and having no one with whom he can establish rapport.

Also in the second category of the rejected are people who fail to communicate because they have not learned how to handle their emotions. They are people who do not love freely and naturally, who try to temper love with discipline, who are too demanding of love, or who allow their love to be shackled by a sense of obligation. Moreover, men inhibit the show of emotions they do not understand. An honest display of sympathy, or warmth, or sorrow, for example, could sometimes effect an unimagined sensation of communion.

Being a non-teleological writer, John Steinbeck has created some characters who cause or experience alienation as a result of their fundamental nature. The third group of alienated individuals is comprised of these. Some men take pleasure in cruelty to others. Some are isolated by feelings of guilt. A few, inspired by the talent of creativity or by high principles, sublimate their basic needs.

Steinbeck sees all men as essentially lonely creatures. To be complete, fulfilled, happy, men must abandon inferior ideals. They must trust each other and their emotions. And they must love.

In Cup of Gold, Henry Morgan is the first of John Steinbeck's characters to pursue happiness through the satisfaction of great ambition. He does not identify himself with other human beings, and therefore does not enjoy reconciliation with anyone. During his lifetime, he deliberately alienates many people, and is rejected by a few.

His father, who felt, "A great gulf lies between my son and me, but none at all between me and my son,"¹ knew Henry did not understand "the hunger that's in me for his staying,"² when Henry was bent on leaving home. Great disappointment came to Henry Morgan when he discovered his humanity, his "mediocrity" as he called it.³ He had sought romance and adventure through the acquisition of wealth and fame, and he

¹ Steinbeck, Cup of Gold, p. 16.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 221.

had thought he was different from all other men. When arguing with Coeur de Gris about the quest for La Santa Roja, he is told by his friend that all men share his lusts and yearnings, and he is bewildered and terrified. Henry receives an even greater shock when he is rejected by the Red Saint because of his very similarity to other men.

Despising his humanity and attempting to prove his superiority, Henry shoots an epileptic with whom Coeur de Gris had compared him. He shoots Coeur de Gris as well, because the Red Saint likes the young man. Now that the most important things in his life are removed--his romantic ideal, his vanity, and his one friend--Henry, for the first time in his life, longs for peace.

Since he is a selfish person, he misses the chance to admit love. Perhaps the very inability of Henry to understand his feelings and to communicate with his childhood sweetheart, Elizabeth, leads Henry on his empty chase. In Barbados, when his slave Paulette tries to get him to marry her, he rejects her scornfully, comparing her to Elizabeth, whom he says he loved with his soul. Finally, nearing death, he becomes aware that his wife has loved him, and he realizes his loss, which was caused by a lack of communication.

Henry also rejects his mother, whom he tells he is determined to leave home in spite of everyone, and James Flowers, his master on Barbados. Flowers makes Henry his son, but Henry tells him he wants to be a buccaneer. Then, since

Henry learned to handle men by being "cold and distant and insulting,"⁴ he handles his sailors this way, so that at the peak of his success he is alone. He has sacrificed love and friendship for the sake of his dreams.

But this is not the first time Henry feels shut out by others. Following his indentureship, he had called on his uncle, Sir Edward, the Lieutenant Governor of Jamaica, who had dismissed Henry very coolly with a warning that if he went marauding, he would be punished. "He was bitter against these proud relatives who seemed to edge away from him as though he were foul. He could not call them silly, for they had impressed him too deeply. They had succeeded in making him feel alone and helpless and very young."⁵

Sir Edward revealed that he had heard that his brother, Henry's father, "'does peculiar things in his rose garden.'"⁶ The uncle suggests that Robert never was normal, for "'He revered nothing worthy of reverence.'"⁷ In Wales Merlin, trying to help Robert understand the society which rejects them, tells him:

"People have so often been hurt and trapped and tortured by ideas and contraptions which they did not understand, that they have come to believe all things passing their understanding are vicious and evil--things to be stamped out and destroyed by the first comer."⁸

⁴ Ibid., p. 84.

⁵ Ibid., p. 107.

⁶ Ibid., p. 103.

⁷ Ibid., p. 104.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 146-147.

In summary, rejection in Cup of Gold is brought about by the pursuit of success and the lack of communication.

In To a God Unknown the four Wayne brothers differ widely. Joseph, the central figure of the story, is distinguished by his love of the land and his mysticism. Thomas is a practical realist who understands animals, but not people. Burton is pallid and weak, dedicated to a religious life. Benjamin is a happy, beloved ne'er-do-well who likes only to sing and win the favor of women. While these men are separated by natural differences, they are in a sense further divided by their pursuit of success in diverse directions. Joseph's life is dedicated to the growth of his ranch, and he is driven by his goal to see everything flourish. Benjy's pursuit of romantic success brings his death--as foreseen by his brothers--at the hand of an angry husband. After killing the tree which was the altar of Joseph's worship, thus alienating Joseph, Burton abandons the ranch to pursue his ideals in a religious colony. Thomas eventually leaves the ranch out of fear of ruin, with the hope of saving some of the stock.

While fundamental differences and the pursuit of success keep these brothers apart, the primary cause of alienation in this story is the lack of communication.

Joseph found a wife with whom he began to feel a closeness, but he lost her. "It was the one chance to communicate," he said. "Now it is gone."⁹ But Rama, Tom's wife, who is

⁹ Steinbeck, To a God Unknown, p. 234.

gifted with special insight, tells him he never knew Elizabeth, or any person; that he does not see people as units, but only the whole.¹⁰ When Joseph and Tom come upon an old man living alone by the sea, Joseph instantly understands him; but Tom, who does not understand him, fears and rejects him. "'He was crazy,' Thomas insisted. 'In any other place he would have been locked up.'"¹¹ Since the old man senses Tom's rejection, Joseph explains:

"Yes, you're crazy. Thomas says you are. Burton would say you are. It is not thought safe to open a clear path to your soul for the free, undistorted passage of the things that are there. You do well to preach to the beasts in the cage, else you might be in a cage yourself."¹²

This explanation will suffice to tell why, when Joseph tells his friend, Juanito, that he shares the beliefs of this Indian, "Juanito looked up gratefully and then dropped his eyes, and the two men stared at the ground."¹³ The barriers against a display of emotions were up again. Juanito, who was ashamed that his mother was Indian and his father was unknown, liked to tell people that he was Castillian. He loved Joseph first because Joseph appeared to believe his pretense, but later, and more, because Joseph appreciated him for what he really was.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 243.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 275.

¹² Ibid., p. 267.

¹³ Ibid., p. 33.

McGregor, the father of Joseph's wife, is the most pathetically rejected figure in the book. Fearing the strength of others and his own weakness, he hated both Elizabeth and her mother because he felt they were strong and he was weak. He refused to consider accepting an invitation to visit Elizabeth and Joseph after they were married. He was envious of the Waynes' ranch. He told his daughter not to forget him, but that ". . . it wouldn't be an unusual thing if you did. It's almost a custom these days."¹⁴

All ten stories of The Pastures of Heaven deal with the alienation of people, pointing up the irony of the name of that beautiful valley. The Spanish corporal who had discovered "Las Pasturas del Cielo" never returned to its peace before he died, as "An Indian woman presented him with the pox, and, when his face began to fall away, good friends locked him in an old barn to prevent the infection of others, and there he died peacefully."¹⁵ The fear of his "friends" caused his rejection; and this introduction seems to keynote the tone of the tales.

The first story, about the cursed Battle farm, reviews two generations of Battles who were isolated either by epilepsy and madness, fanatic devotion to religion, or obsession with the work of the farm. After years of disuse, the farm

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁵ Steinbeck, The Pastures of Heaven, p. 10.

is occupied by Bert Monroe, who has failed in many previous enterprises. He has aroused the animosity of the people in the Pastures, because his presence challenged their idea that the farm was haunted. The way that country people react to a stranger is here vividly described:

He knew that the people who were to be his new neighbors were staring at him although he could never catch them at it. This secret staring is developed to a high art among country people. They have seen every uncovered bit on you, have tabulated and memorized the clothes you are wearing, have noticed the colour of your eyes and the shape of your nose, and, finally, have reduced your figure and personality to three or four adjectives, and all the time you thought they were oblivious to your presence.¹⁶

Shark Wicks tried to "protect" his lovely daughter from society; "He did not love her as a father loves a child. Rather he hoarded her, and gloated over the possession of a fine, unique thing."¹⁷ Her beauty itself set her aside as being different. At dances she found the boys too embarrassed to dance with her. When Shark learned that Jimmy Monroe had kissed Alice, he considered killing Jimmy to maintain his dignity, at stake because Jimmy violated the symbol of Shark's authority.

Tularecito, the simple-minded "Little Frog," is not understood by anyone but his guardian and eventually Miss Martin, his schoolteacher. "With a few suggestive words she had been able to make his life unreal and very wonderful, and separated from the stupid lives about him."¹⁸ Because

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 54.

of the community's lack of sympathy and tolerance for this different creature, he is committed to an asylum for the criminally insane.

Helen Van Deventer is the mother of a daughter really insane. When she asks her doctor, who knows she enjoys her burden, what he would suggest, "'A hospital for the insane,' he said, and it delighted him that his reply was brutal."¹⁹ But she ignores his advice, and consequently "The people of the Pastures of Heaven learned with interest and resentment that a rich woman was coming to live in the valley."²⁰ (They resent her because of her wealth.) Her endurance weakens, however, and she decides to throw off her hair shirt. In a mood set by the cool peace of the valley, she sets herself free to enjoy life by cold-bloodedly murdering her daughter.

Neighbors reject Junius Maltby because of his laziness, his willing poverty, and his lack of pride, although he is ignorant of their dislike. When he must send his son Robbie to school, he points out the way society controls people:

"The law has a self-protective appendage called penalty. We have to balance the pleasure of breaking the law against the punishment. The Carthaginians punished even misfortune. If a general lost a battle through bad luck, he was executed. At present, we punish people for accidents of birth and circumstance in much the same manner."²¹

¹⁹Ibid., p. 62.

²⁰Ibid., p. 63.

²¹Ibid., p. 81.

And society sorely wounds father and son when its representatives from the community present Robbie with proper clothing. Robbie's teacher, Miss Morgan, who was opposed to the idea, understands why the gift sends Robbie bolting through the door. The teacher explains, a little angrily, "'I think, you see--why I don't think he ever knew he was poor until a moment ago.'"²²

The shock sends Junius to San Francisco to look for work. Miss Morgan sees him and Robbie waiting for a bus.

"You see," he explained simply. "I didn't know I was doing an injury to the boy, here. I hadn't thought about it. You can see that he shouldn't be brought up in poverty. You can see that, can't you? I didn't know what people were saying about us."

.....
Miss Morgan was angry . . . "You don't believe everything silly people tell you, do you?"

He looked at her in surprise. "Of course not. But you can see for yourself that a growing boy shouldn't be brought up like a little animal, can't you?"²³

Thus, by attempting to force them to conform to its standards, society has removed the happiness of the previous communion between father and son. It is the same society that sent the two Lopez sisters to San Francisco to become prostitutes, because the community did not approve of the way they encouraged the customers of their little café.

The life of schoolteacher Molly Morgan is featured in the following story. Molly's mother had alienated her children because she was too demanding of their love.

²² Ibid., p. 94.

²³ Ibid., pp. 95-96.

Her mother sat in a straight chair in the kitchen. "Draw up, Molly. Just sit with me for a little while. Love me, Molly! Love your mother a little bit. You are mother's good little girl, aren't you?" Molly squirmed on her chair. "Don't you love your mother, Molly?"

The little girl was very miserable. She knew her mother would cry in a moment, and then she would be compelled to stroke the stringy hair. Both she and her brothers knew they should love their mother. She did everything for them, everything. They were ashamed that they hated to be near her, but they couldn't help it.²⁴

They rejected her, because she "had wanted so much to be loved, and she hadn't known how to draw love. Her importunities had bothered the children and driven them away."²⁵ When Molly's brothers became old enough, they joined the navy to escape poverty and their neurotic mother. They became so changed that they were strangers to Molly. Molly ran away from her place of happiness in the Pastures of Heaven to avoid facing the truth about the father she had adored. Most important in her new life was her position in the community. She did not wish to jeopardize this with a possible reconciliation with the man who deserted his family and who she suspected now was an irresponsible drunkard.

Raymond Banks was "different" from other men because he liked to attend executions at the penitentiary for the profound emotional experience they rendered him. "The people of the valley were interested, fascinated and not a little horrified by the excursions to see men hanged."²⁶ While

²⁴ Ibid., p. 113.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 114.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 133.

some people might enjoy an execution out of sadism, none could understand Raymond's thrill. Curiosity stimulated Bert Monroe to persuade Raymond to say he would take Bert to the next execution. Then backing out, Bert planted seeds of conventional opinion in Banks' mind. This disrupted the custom which had for years given Banks "a holy emotion that nothing else in his life approached,"²⁷ in which he "could share the throbbing nerves of the other men."²⁸

Pat Humbert had been resented by his elderly parents because of his youth. When they died he was, nevertheless, lonely and thirty years old. For the next ten years he joined many groups, but "never became a part of any group he joined."²⁹ Not taking the trouble to understand his needs, "The people of the valley considered his presence inevitable. They used him unmercifully and hardly knew that he wished nothing better."³⁰ He worked hard on his farm to avoid terrifying loneliness. Then he entertained a dream of marriage with Mae Monroe. The dream was shattered by her engagement to Bill Whiteside. Pat had been alienated first by his parents, next by an unsympathetic community, and finally by his inability to express and understand emotions--all problems of communication.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 132.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 151.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 133.

³⁰ Ibid.

The great disappointment of the life of prosperous, prominent John Whiteside was the failure of the Whitesides for three generations to produce more children. His father, Richard Whiteside, had been an only child, John was an only child, and John had only one child, William. But John shared the dream of his father--to establish a dynasty in the solid, luxurious home his father had built.

Seeing Richard's wife made an invalid for trying to have another child, the doctor "left the house abruptly because he hated to be as sorry for anyone as he was for Richard Whiteside."³¹ (He could not handle his emotions.) Richard's wife was a kind and gentle woman, but she made the people of the valley "feel like peasants calling at the castle"³² at the infrequent times they saw her, because she was "aloof, quiet, rather a frightening person."³³ John Whiteside, too, was hindered by lack of communication, and suffered sorely because of the difference between him and his son. When Bill was a boy, John's wife explained to her husband, "'He isn't your kind, John, and you might as well know it now as later.'"³⁴ The first difference John acknowledged was Bill's mechanical aptitude. Then

John noticed another difference about the boy, a side that was strange to the Whiteside family. He was not only very secretive, but sharp in a business sense.

³¹ Ibid., p. 173.

³³ Ibid.

³² Ibid., p. 176.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 180.

. . . It was a long time before John would admit to himself that he could not communicate with his son.³⁵

When Bill and Mae Monroe married, they went to live in town, not caring about the family home and the things it stood for. The home went up in flames when John burned land he wanted to farm again. Knowing "'how a soul feels when it sees its body buried in the ground,'"³⁶ John telephoned Bill to say he and his wife would go to live with Bill in Monterey.

The stories are concluded by the thoughts of people on a sight-seeing bus, who think the valley must be as peaceful as it looks. Called "Pastures of Heaven," this place is an ironic symbol of their yearning.

The great obstacle to perfect communion among Danny's friends in Tortilla Flat was the very thing that brought them together: Danny's houses. Although they shared freely in what he owned, and knew that they would continue to do so whether or not they paid any rent, Danny's ownership of the property alienated the others. Wanting to buy a gift for a "lady,"

Danny spoke pointedly. "It would not look well for a man who owns two houses to cut squids. But perhaps if a little rent were ever paid--"

Pilon arose angrily. "Always the rent," he cried. "You would force us into the streets--into the gutters, while you sleep in your soft bed."³⁷

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 188.

³⁷ Steinbeck, Tortilla Flat, p. 54.

Likewise, Danny feels the burden of a responsibility to maintain a position of superiority by keeping the others in place.

The Pirate and his dogs slept in the living room, secure and warm in their corner. Pilon and Pablo and Jesus Maria and Danny and Big Joe Portugee slept in the bedroom. For all his kindness, his generosity, Danny never allowed his bed to be occupied by any one but himself. Big Joe tried it twice, and was smacked across the soles of the feet with a stick; so that even he learned the inviolable quality of Danny's bed.³⁸

Danny had actually been relieved when one of the houses had burned, since it lightened the load of ownership, not a pleasant thing for Danny.

He remembered that the name of Danny was a name of storm. Oh, the fights! The flights through the woods with an outraged chicken under his arm! The hiding places in the gulch when an outraged husband proclaimed feud! Storm and violence, sweet violence! When Danny thought of the old lost time, he could taste again how good the stolen food was, and he longed for that old time again. Since his inheritance had lifted him, he had not fought often. He had been drunk, but not adventurously so. Always the weight of the house was upon him; always the responsibility to his friends.³⁹

Atavisticly Danny reverts to his former behavior, which is hard on his friends. Deserting the house, he steals from it at night.

Now all peace had gone from Danny's house, and there was only worry and sadness.

"Where is our happiness gone?" Pablo mourned.

"Somewhere we have sinned. It is a judgment. We should go to confession."

.....
Sad as they were at his moral decay, the friends were not a little jealous of the good time Danny was having.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., p. 238.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 261.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 268.

In his reckless chase to restore the old happiness, Danny even steals Pablo's shoes. A "crime against friendship"⁴¹ is the greatest sin, and his friends resolve to catch Danny and cure him. But capturing him and commanding him to conform to the standards of their group crush his spirit, proof that any plurality of people--even "unconventional" people--forms a code of behavior and alienates violators. Danny becomes so apathetic that "When Big Joe got in his bed one evening, . . . Pilon and Pablo had to beat Big Joe for him."⁴² No one--not even Danny--knew what it was that made him feel as he did.

The residents of Tortilla Flat, like people anywhere, are victims of jealousy and greed. When Danny presented Sweets Ramirez with a vacuum cleaner, regardless of the fact that she had no electricity, and even though, as it turned out, there was no motor in the appliance, her "friends" envied the prestige its possession established for Sweets, and "Her friends tried to belittle the present, saying, 'It is too bad you can't run this machine.' And, 'I have always held that a broom and dustpan properly used, are more thorough.'"⁴³

Danny is not the only one of the group who is punished for violating the friendship of the group. Big Joe Portugee

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 269.

⁴² Ibid., p. 283.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 161-162.

steals a blanket from Danny to buy wine, and is attacked by Pilon. Big Joe also steals the money Pirate has saved to buy a candle for St. Francis, and for this offense the others torture him cruelly.

Torelli, who runs the store, is considered fair game for the paisanos' trickery because they see him as a selfish, greedy man (since he is in business).

The friends are not entirely immune, however, from social pressures outside their nucleus. When Pirate prepares to attend church to see the gold candlestick he bought, his comrades are concerned about his appearance. It is true that the bizarre accessories he then buys, complemented by clothes loaned from all, could not have been any less startling in church than his usual rags; but it is significant that his friends recognized that ". . . on such an occasion as this you cannot go into the church looking like such a gutter rat."⁴⁴ They had made an effort to remove the embarrassment they faced in conventional society.

Their poverty shuts Danny's friends out from that great social event--the funeral--when Danny dies; for on this one occasion all their resourcefulness fails to produce the clothes which will make it possible for them to attend services. They must lie in the grass to watch the burial. Steinbeck says:

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 205.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 308.

You may say, did they not love Danny enough to go to his funeral in rags? Would you go in rags when your neighbors were dressed in finery? Would not the disrespect to Danny be more if they went in rags than if they did not go at all?⁴⁵

Another who had been alienated by the rules of a group is the corporal the paisanos befriend. Having yielded his wife to a captain, he defends his action. "'I was only a caporál,' said the boy. 'I had to run away.' Tears of shame were in his eyes. 'There is no help for a caporál when a capitan is against him; so I ran away, with the baby Manuel.'"⁴⁶

The friends acknowledge other causes of alienation. One tells a story of Bob Smoke, who attempted suicide because he wanted to be admired and loved but was laughed at. Jesus Maria observes, "'It is worse than whipping to be laughed at. Old Tomas, the rag sucker, was laughed right into his grave. And afterwards the people were sorry they laughed.'"⁴⁷ And when Pirate is invited to join the group, he feels the common embarrassment brought about by emotions.

The Pirate had a great deal of pride. He was afraid he might not conduct himself well. "Go away now," he said pleadingly. "Go home now. Tomorrow I will come."

His friends knew how he felt. They crawled out of the door and left him alone.⁴⁸

For all the joy of association in Tortilla Flat, Steinbeck is still aware of man's essential loneliness. He once

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 182.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 110.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 248.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 151.

says, "The night was cold and aloof, and its warm life was withdrawn, so that it was full of bitter warnings to man that he is alone in the world, and alone among his fellows; that he has no comfort owing him from anywhere."⁴⁹

This sober fact is proved by the death of Danny, the magic element that had synthesized the relationship of the paisanos. Realizing their loss, they allow the house to burn, rather than see it inherited by a stranger, "'some joyless relative of Danny's.'"⁵⁰

Danny's friends still stood looking at the smoking ruin. They looked at one another strangely, and then back to the burned house. And after a while they turned and walked slowly away, and no two walked together.⁵¹

The pursuit of success is the primary source of conflict in In Dubious Battle. The plot of alienation pits underpaid apple pickers in California's Torgas Valley against the ruthless orchard owners. Mac, a communist, organizes a strike among the pickers, with the help of Jim, who wants to join the Party, and Doc Burton, who works with the movement to learn about "group-men."⁵²

Mac says of property owners, ". . . to some of those guys property's more important than their lives." Men of property are the game of the communists who point up the owners' alienation of the little man. "'They took all the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 315.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 317.

⁵² Steinbeck, In Dubious Battle, p. 144.

profits from your work,'" says Jim to old Dan, the former "top faller." "'They got rich, an' when you couldn't go up any more, they kicked you out.'"⁵³ Trying to win the help of a less powerful owner, one not in the owners' organization, Mac describes the tactics of that group. "'Have they been squeezing you? You know God damn well they have. How long you going to last? Maybe one year; and then Torgas Finance takes your place. Is that straight?'"⁵⁴ Mac explains another technique of the owners--their use of vigilantes to protect their interests.

"Why, they're the dirtiest guys in any town. They're the same ones that burned the houses of old German people during the war. They're the same ones that lynch Negroes. They like to be cruel. They like to hurt people, and they always give it a nice name, patriotism or protecting the constitution. But they're just the old nigger torturers working. The owners use 'em, tell 'em we have to protect the people against reds. Y'see that lets 'em burn houses and torture and beat people with gg danger. And that's all they want to do, anyway."⁵⁵

Such a "citizens' committee" alienates the strikers first with threats, then with bribes, then with violence. At last Mac acknowledges defeat. "'They'll kick us out if they have to use cannons. Once they get a court order, they'll kick us right out. Then where are we going to go? Can't jungle up, because there'll be ordinances. They'll split us up, an' beat us that way.'"⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid., p. 70.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 113.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 166.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 285.

One of the first lessons Mac teaches Jim is that fear is often a part of alienation. He says, ". . . mostly a guy that tries to scare you is a guy that can be scared."⁵⁷ When the frightened strikers are waiting for more pickers to come into the railroad station, they are surrounded by railroad guards, motorcycle police, and deputy sheriffs. Mac observes, "The cops are scared, too."⁵⁸ When he sees that the strike is failing, Mac admits. "The guys're scared. I don't know what they'll do, but they'll want to scam tonight."⁵⁹

Jim had turned to communism because he felt alienated by the existing system of our society. He felt that his whole family had been ruined by labor trouble in which his father had been involved. He said, "All the time at home we were fighting, fighting something--hunger mostly. My old man was fighting the bosses. I was fighting the school. But always we lost."⁶⁰ He felt alienation not so much from "the fact that someone profited from the mess,"⁶¹ but because he hated "being in the rat-cage."⁶² He explained, "Christ knows I don't want luxury, but I don't want to get batted around the way all the kids I knew got it."⁶³ Thus Jim saw that alienation is often a matter of duty and

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 38.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 160.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 339.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 24.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 25.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 39.

circumstances. While other pickers resented the attitude of a collegiate checker, Jim said, "'It's not his fault. . . . He's just got a job.'"⁶⁴

But duty must also come first in Mac's "job," and at one time he must warn Jim, "'Don't you go liking people, Jim. We can't waste time liking people.'"⁶⁵ Dr. Burton analyzes Mac's technique, and alienates him with the truth about the way the communist controls men. "Mac said irritably, 'Quit sniping at me, Doc. I've got a job to do, and I've got to use every means to do it.'"⁶⁶ Explaining to Jim the futility of the battle, Burton says, "'The other side is made of men, Jim, men like you. Man hates himself. We fight ourselves and we can only win by killing every man.'"⁶⁷ Burton professes he is lonely because he has "'nothing to hate.'"⁶⁸ Therefore he is alienated because his idealism makes him "different" and prevents him from identification with any group.

It is lack of communication that makes The Red Pony the poignant story that it is. Carl Tiflin, father of Jody, "hated weakness and sickness, and he held a violent contempt for helplessness."⁶⁹ Because he confused weakness with

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 65. ⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 115. ⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 227.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 253-254. ⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 254.

⁶⁹ Steinbeck, The Red Pony, p. 34.

tenderness and compassion, he alienated Jody, who gave his devotion to Billy Buck, the cowhand. Carl Tiflin sorely wanted his son's love, but he did not understand the boy. "Nearly all of his father's presents were given with reservations which hampered their value somewhat. It was good discipline."⁷⁰

When Jody's first pony was seriously sick, Carl thought he could distract the boy with stories.

. . . his father gradually became aware that he wasn't listening very carefully. "Isn't that funny?" he asked.

Jody laughed politely and said, "Yes, sir." His father was angry and hurt, then. He didn't tell any more stories.⁷¹

The father felt rejected again when he tried to protect Jody from observing the pony's agony.

"You better come on, out of this," his father insisted.

Billy turned on him angrily. "Let him alone. It's his pony, isn't it?"

Carl Tiflin walked away without saying another word. His feelings were badly hurt.⁷²

After his pony died, Jody attacked the buzzards which were feeding on the carcass. Jody

. . . was still beating the dead bird when Billy Buck pulled him off and held him tightly to calm his shaking.

Carl Tiflin wiped the blood from the boy's face with a red bandana. Jody was limp and quiet now. His father moved the buzzard with his toe. "Jody," he explained, "the buzzard didn't kill the pony. Don't you know that?"

"I know it," Jody said wearily.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 42.

⁷² Ibid., p. 50.

It was Billy Buck who was angry. He had lifted Jody in his arms, and had turned to carry him home. But he turned back on Carl Tiflin. "'Course he knows it," Billy said furiously. "Jesus Christ! man, can't you see how he'd feel about it?"⁷³

Owning the pony had changed Jody's status among boys.

Out of a thousand centuries they drew the ancient admiration of the footman for the horseman. They knew instinctively that a man on a horse is spiritually as well as physically bigger than a man on foot. They knew that Jody had been miraculously lifted out of equality with them, and had been placed over them.⁷⁴

Jody was not the only victim of Carl Tiflin's emotional abuse. An old Indian, Gitano, returned to die at the scene of his birth, which had become the Tiflin ranch. Carl refused to let him stay. In referring to his old horse, Gitano spoke of himself also. "'Too old to work . . . Just eats and pretty soon dies.'" Carl Tiflin caught the last words. He hated his brutality toward old Gitano, and so he became brutal again.⁷⁵ Carl did not want to be brutal; but he did not know how to be gentle; hence cruelty was his defense against feeling soft. "Jody knew how his father was probing for a place to hurt in Gitano. He had been probed often. His father knew every place in the boy where a word would fester."⁷⁶

Mrs. Tiflin's father also experienced the festering of a word from his son-in-law. Isolated as a survivor of the "westering" generation of whom he had been a leader, Grandfather had one pleasure in life: the re-telling of his

⁷³ Ibid., p. 50.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 64.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 65.

pushing west. But Carl could not suffer him this pleasure without protest, and the old man was robbed of the illusion he enjoyed in relating his tales when he overheard Carl Tiflin's objections.

Alienation due to physical differences is prominent throughout Of Mice and Men. Moronic Lennie is naturally a misfit because of his size, awkwardness, and low mentality. Crooks is a frequent victim of alienation; the swamper, Candy explains:

"Ya see the stable buck's a nigger."

"Nigger, huh?"

"Yeah. Nice fella too. Got a crooked back where a horse kicked him. The boss gives him hell when he's mad. But the stable buck don't give a damn about that. He reads a lot. Got books in his room."⁷⁷

But seldom do people understand the pain of the rejected, for as Crooks says to Lennie,

"Maybe you can see now. You got George. You know he's goin' to come back. S'pose you didn't have nobody. S'pose you couldn't go into the bunk house and play rummy 'cause you was black. How'd you like that? S'pose you had to sit out here an' read books. Sure you could play horseshoes till it got dark, but then you got to read books. Books ain't no good. A guy needs somebody--to be near him." He whined, "A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you. I tell ya," he cried, "I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick."⁷⁸

When he enters Crooks' room, Candy says, "'Must be nice to have a room all to yourself this way.'" But Crooks says,

⁷⁷ Steinbeck, Of Mice and Men, p. 38.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 127.

"And a manure pile under the window. Sure, it's swell."⁷⁹
 While Candy and Lennie are there discussing their dream of sharing a piece of land, Curley's wife comes into the room. Crooks retires "into the terrible protective dignity of the negro."⁸⁰ When she scoffs at their plans and picks on Lennie, Crooks has enough.

"You got no rights comin' in a colored man's room. You got no rights messing around in here at all. Now you jus' get out, an' get out quick. If you don't, I'm gonna ast the boss not to ever let you come in the barn no more."⁸¹

But she reminds Crooks that he is the one with no rights.

She turned on him in scorn. "Listen, Nigger," she said. "You know what I can do to you if you open your trap?"

Crooks stared hopelessly at her, and then he sat down on his bunk and drew into himself.

She closed on him. "You know what I could do?"

Crooks seemed to grow smaller, and he pressed himself against the wall. "Yes, ma'am."

"Well, you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny."

Crooks had reduced himself to nothing. There was no personality, no ego--nothing to arouse either like or dislike. He said, "Yes, ma'am," and his voice was toneless.⁸²

Candy tries to defend Crooks, but she reminds Candy that no one would listen to him, and he subsides. By marriage she is associated with the owning class, and Candy is barely

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 131.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 140.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 137.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 140-141.

above Crooks, by virtue of race. He himself is a cripple and can hold only a menial job on the ranch where he lost his hand.

Curley's wife, too, is alienated because there are apparently no other women on the ranch, her questionable background makes the men fear and avoid her, and her jealous husband "'ain't a nice fella.'"⁸³

George objects to Lennie's being in Crooks' room, and this disrupts the brief communion of the three misfits.

Candy and Lennie stood up and went toward the door. Crooks called, "Candy!"

"Huh?"

"'Member what I said about hoein' and doin' odd jobs?"

"Yeah," said Candy. "I remember."

"Well, jus' forget it," said Crooks. "I didn' mean it. Jus' foolin'. I wouldn' want to go no place like that."⁸⁴

After Lennie accidentally killed Curley's wife, George

. . . tried to reassure himself. "Maybe they'll lock 'im up an' be nice to 'im."

But Candy said excitedly, "We oughta let 'im get away. You don't know that Curley. Curley gon'ta wanta get 'im lynched. Curley'll get 'im killed."

George watched Candy's lips. "Yeah," he said at last, "that's right, Curley will. An' the other guys will." And he looked back at Curley's wife.

Now Candy spoke his greatest fear. "You an' me can get that little place, can't we, George? You an' me can go there an' live nice, can't we, George? Can't we?"

Before George answered, Candy dropped his head and looked down at the hay. He knew.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid., p. 154.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 144-145.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 163-164.

Since he had first met him, George had feared he would have to struggle with Curley. George had said to Lennie, "'Ya know, Lennie, I'm scared I'm gonna tangle with that bastard myself. I hate his guts.'"⁸⁶ Candy explained Curley's antagonism this way:

"Curley's like a lot of little guys. He hates big guys. He's all the time picking scraps with big guys. Kind of like he's mad at 'em because he ain't a big guy. You seen little guys like that, ain't you? Always scrappy?"⁸⁷

And George had remarked, "'This guy Curley sounds like a son-of-a-bitch to me. I don't like mean little guys.'"⁸⁸ Because of his size, then, Curley felt rejected and tried to make up for it by alienating others. Being son of the ranch owner implemented Curley's arrogance and made him a natural enemy for George.

Knowing the threat that existed for Lennie, George shot his friend. The misunderstanding that brought about Lennie's death alienated George and Candy as well by shattering their goal, the "little place." George said, "'I think I knowed we'd never do her. He usta like to hear about it so much I got to thinking maybe we would.'"⁸⁹ The relationship that had existed between George and Lennie had been rare. That fear may be the cause of men's isolation is suggested by Slim, the skinner. "'Ain't many guys travel around

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 164.

together,' he mused. 'I don't know why. Maybe ever'body in the whole damn world is scared of each other.'"⁹⁰

The Grapes of Wrath is the second novel illustrating a conflict between property owners and masses of workers. In this novel, in expository essays intermittent with the story of the Joad family, Steinbeck attempts to explain the economic phenomena in the United States that led to the substance of the plot. Like Jim in In Dubious Battle, the Joads do not attempt to fix blame on property owners for circumstances. They want only to be treated fairly and to be given a chance to provide themselves with a decent living.

First representative of alienating forces is the tractor which pushes the Joads and thousands like them off the land they worked as tenant farmers. Because one machine can now do the work of twelve or fourteen families, the property owners no longer have need for these people. Drivers hired for three dollars a day push their own people off the property. The angry farmers say, "' . . . where does it stop? Who can we shoot?'" And Steinbeck answers, in the person of a driver, "'Maybe there's nobody to shoot. Maybe the thing isn't men at all. Maybe, like you said, the property's doing it.'"⁹¹

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

⁹¹ Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath, p. 52.

The unseen owners are a breed different from the tenant farmers. A tenant ponders,

". . . let a man get property he doesn't see, or can't take time to get his fingers in, or can't be there to walk on it--why, then the property is the man. He can't do what he wants, he can't think what he wants. The property is the man, stronger than he is. And he is small, not big. Only his possessions are big--and he's the servant of his property."⁹²

To show that greed is an alienating factor, Steinbeck speaks as the voice of the many who must sell their goods and move from their homes.

You're buying years of work, toil in the sun; you're buying a sorrow that can't talk. But watch it, mister. There's a premium goes with this pile of junk and the bay horses--so beautiful--a packet of bitterness to grow in your house and to flower, some day. We could have saved you, but you cut us down, and soon you will be cut down and there'll be none of us to save you.⁹³

He warns the owning class, saying: ". . . if you could know that Paine, Marx, Jefferson, Lenin, were results, not causes, you might survive. But that you cannot know. For the quality of owning freezes you forever into 'I,' and cuts you off forever from the 'we.'"⁹⁴

Chapter Nineteen is an essay in which the author traces the growth of the movement that is the foundation of The Grapes of Wrath. From the time frantically land-hungry squatters seized property from the occupying Mexicans, the farms in California continuously increased in size. The owners became fewer and were detached from the land,

⁹² Ibid., pp. 50-51. ⁹³ Ibid., p. 118. ⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 206.

exploiting and abusing Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, or Filipino slaves who made them rich. The dispossessed migrants moved toward the fabulous empires existing in California in hope of finding work, only to see land lying fallow and guards protecting crops which would be destroyed if prices were low. Constantly the Okies, as they came to be known, were rejected by the owning class and subjected to persecution by the citizens and police of the state because of the fear their presence had put into the privileged minority.

The tractors which throw men out of work, the belt lines which carry loads, the machines which produce, all were increased; and more and more families scampered on the highways, looking for crumbs from the great holdings, lusting after the land beside the roads. The great owners formed associations for protection and they met to discuss ways to intimidate, to kill, to gas. And always they were in fear of a principal--three hundred thousand--if they ever move under a leader--the end. Three hundred thousand, hungry and miserable; if they ever know themselves, the land will be theirs and all the gas, all the rifles in the world won't stop them. And the great owners, who had become through their holdings both more and less than men, ran to their destruction, and used every means that in the long run would destroy them. Every little means, every violence, every raid on a Hooverville, every deputy swaggering through a ragged camp put off the day a little and cemented the inevitability of the day.⁹⁵

The cruelest, most stinging alienation is described in the essay of Chapter Twenty-five. It emphasizes the guilt of the American economy.

Men who have created new fruits in the world cannot create a system whereby their fruits may be eaten. And the failure hangs over the State like a great sorrow.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 325.

.....
 Burn coffee for fuel in the ships. Burn corn to keep warm, it makes a hot fire. Dump potatoes in the rivers and place guards along the banks to keep the hungry people from fishing them out. Slaughter the pigs and bury them, and let the putrescence drip down into the earth.

There is a crime here that goes beyond denunciation. There is a sorrow here that weeping cannot symbolize. There is a failure here that topples all our success. The fertile earth, the straight tree rows, the sturdy trunks, and the ripe fruit. And children dying of pellagra must die because a profit cannot be taken from an orange.⁹⁶

Small owners were also victims of the system, for the cost of raising crops was beyond the profit they could make. The large owners bought canneries and took up the profit there, eventually buying out their small competitors. Then ". . . money that might have gone to wages went for gas, for guns, for agents and spies, for blacklists, for drilling."⁹⁷ Fear, offspring of the economic situation, aggravated the conflict, which came to include the middle class.

The local people whipped themselves into a mold of cruelty. Then they formed units, squads, and armed them--armed them with clubs, with gas, with guns. We own the country. We can't let these Okies get out of hand. And the men who were armed did not own the land, but they thought they did. And the clerks who drilled at night owned nothing, and the little storekeepers possessed only a drawerful of debts. But even a debt is something, even a job is something. The clerk thought, I get fifteen dollars a week. S'pose a god-damn Okie would work for twelve? And the little storekeeper thought, How could I compete with a debtless man?⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 476-477.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 388.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 386.

Separation of the classes was supported by lack of understanding and sympathy, as the townspeople said of the Okies, "They'll steal anything. They've got no sense of property rights. . . . They bring disease, they're filthy. We can't have them in the schools. They're strangers."⁹⁹

The Joads, as Steinbeck's exemplary group, suffer hunger, fear, separation, exploitation, and persecution--all forms or results of alienation that stem from an economy based on the pursuit of success; they are pushed off their Oklahoma farm by a tractor; they are divided because of insecurity and lack of opportunity; they lose their meager funds to profiteers where they camp or buy food; they are pushed around by policemen; they (Tom and Casy) are punished by laws that ignore true justice.

Inevitably, there is lack of communication as another source of alienation. As in almost every novel, the author expresses at least once the inability of man to communicate completely on a verbal level. Ma Joad, "her eyes digging to know better," studies her son Tom "for the answer that is always concealed in language."¹⁰⁰ The children of the Okies are rejected because of their difference. A father says, "'Well, a raggedy kid with no shoes, an' them other kids with socks on, an' nice pants, an' them a-yellin' 'Okie.' My boy went to school. Had a fight evr' day."¹⁰¹

99

Ibid.

100

Ibid., p. 103.

101

Ibid., p. 462.

Another enduring the rejection of being different is the one-eyed man running a wrecking yard visited by Tom and Al Joad. The misfit tells how he is ridiculed by a boss who alienates him out of cruelty, often part of the nature of men. Nature also leads Uncle John to experience the guilt feelings that make him a lonely man; and nature causes Noah Joad to depart from the rest of the family because ". . . there was a listlessness in him toward things people wanted and needed. . . . He was a stranger to all the world."¹⁰² Since he felt unloved, he decided to stay near a river that gave him a feeling of happiness he had not found among people.

The aggressive pursuit by men who wage war in The Moon Is Down leads soldiers who alienate the people of an invaded town to suffer greater alienation themselves. The war seems to be the Second World War and the setting resembles Norway. The plot is not the war, but what happens to people under circumstances that place bold captors in possession of a town formerly held by a brave, freedom-loving people.

Colonel Lanser, who heads the invasion, is a veteran officer with sad memories of the "other" war, which taught him ". . . that war is treachery and hatred, the muddling of incompetent generals, the torture and killing and sickness and tiredness, until at last it is over and nothing has

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 106.

changed except for new weariness and new hatreds."¹⁰³ He still has faint hope that perhaps it will not always be the same. But following the first incident after the invasion when a citizen is shot, he says slowly to himself, "'So it starts again. We will shoot this man and make twenty new enemies. It's the only thing we know, the only thing we know.'"¹⁰⁴

Young men under Lanser's command, enlisted and inspired by a "leader" whose ambition is behind the invasion, must learn this lesson. They cherish dreams of someday settling in the community they have seized and becoming a part of it. They are appalled to find how much hate can be aroused in the peaceful people, and that they are safe nowhere. Steinbeck's soldiers are not automatons but men who long for warmth and love, girls and laughter. After affixing themselves to a movement which promised "flower-strewn streets,"¹⁰⁵

. . . gradually a little fear began to grow in the conquerors, a fear that it would never be over, that they could never relax or go home, a fear that one day they would crack and be hunted through the mountains like rabbits, for the conquered never relax their hatred. The patrols, seeing lights, hearing laughter, would be drawn as to a fire, and when they came near, the laughter stopped, the warmth went out, and the people were cold and obedient. . . . And every man carried in his heart the terror. "If home crumbled, they would not tell us, and then it would be too late. . . ."

¹⁰³ Steinbeck, The Moon Is Down, p. 47.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 167.

.....
 Thus it came about that the conquerors grew
 afraid of the conquered . . .¹⁰⁶

A young lieutenant called Tonder becomes hysterical when he recognizes the truth. He states sacreligiously, "Conquest after conquest, deeper and deeper into molasses. . . Maybe the leader is crazy. Flies conquer the flypaper. Flies capture two hundred miles of new flypaper!"¹⁰⁷ His loneliness takes him to the pretty widow of one of the victims of the invasion. Although lonely herself, she kills him with her scissors.

Lanser sees the pattern forming again.

"Take the leaders, shoot the leaders, take hostages, shoot the hostages, take more hostages, shoot them"--his voice had risen but now it sank almost to a whisper--"and the hatred growing and the hurt between us deeper and deeper."¹⁰⁸

The noble Mayor Orden tells Lanser that the failure of the conqueror is due to a misunderstanding. "You and your government do not understand. In all the world yours is the only government and people with a record of defeat after defeat for centuries and every time because you did not understand people."¹⁰⁹ Lanser even agrees that this is a fault: ". . . one of the tendencies of the military mind and pattern is an inability to learn, an inability to see beyond the killing which is its job."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 102-104.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 165.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 86-87.

Severely shocked by the alienation of the citizens is the man who betrayed them--the storekeeper, Corell. Ambitious for civil authority and thinking his community will be no different under occupation, he goes to Lanser to claim what he thinks is his earned reward. He is unbelieving when Lanser tells him that even the invaders will not respect him. The colonel warns Corell that his life will be perpetually in danger. Corell realizes this danger after he is waylaid, but he still thinks there is no more to do than to put down a rebellion. He still does not comprehend the magnitude of the feeling that has grown among his "friends."

Man's fundamental nature causes his alienation in Cannery Row and its sequel, Sweet Thursday. The beloved Doc lives alone in his Western Biological Laboratories enjoying his work, recorded music, and occasional visits from girl friends. From here he observes or has thrust upon him the problems of Mack and the boys and the rest of Cannery Row. The first episode pointing up suffering from alienation describes William, watchman at the Bear Flag Restaurant, who wanted very much to be a part of the Palace Flophouse group and sit with them, wasting time on the pipes in a vacant lot. Although Mack and the boys are kind-hearted, they ". . . just didn't like William."¹¹¹ And because

¹¹¹ Steinbeck, Cannery Row, p. 19.

William wanted very much to be accepted, he was badly hurt when his overtures to become friends with them produced no more than strained conversation in his presence. Mack makes excuses which he does not really mean when he says to the boys, ". . . I hate a pimp!"¹¹² Overhearing this is a heart-breaking blow to this man with a sensitive, introspective nature. William returns to the Bear Flag and talks despondently to the Greek cook in the kitchen. Then, in front of the amazed Greek, he puts an ice pick into his heart.

The popular Mack himself, however, is not immune to feeling alienation and once explains to Doc that his bungling nature has often brought him rejection and made him the clown he is. Just as he has temporarily alienated Doc by letting a party get out of control and wreck the laboratory, Mack lost his wife as he could do nothing but hurt her when he wanted to do good things.

The cruelty that is present by nature even in children is found in an episode between two boys, Willard and Joey. Willard learns that Joey's father died by taking rat poison because he had been unable to find a job. Willard shrieks with laughter, makes a poor joke about it, grabs a penny Joey saw first in the gutter, and finally says to Joey, "'Why'n't you go take some rat poison?'"¹¹³

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 175.

Doc is a figure of loneliness; he becomes increasingly aware of a deep longing haunting him in Sweet Thursday. An intelligent, philosophical man, he tries to analyze his feelings. While his work is the most important thing in his life, he cannot shut out the feeling that he is missing something. For some time he refuses to admit that he needs a wife, but eventually the low voice he constantly hears becomes clearer. "'Lonesome!' the low voice cried in his guts. 'No one to receive from you or give to you. No one warm enough and dear enough.'"¹¹⁴

An eccentric scientist friend, "Old Jingleballicks," helps Doc identify his ache. Telling Doc that there is a lack of fulfillment in him, he reminds Doc that he often mentions the name of Suzy, one of Fauna's girls at the Bear Flag, whom Doc had found interesting when he took her to dinner at Fauna's request. Doc accuses Old Jay of being romantic. Old Jay protests, saying, "'Who's talking about romance? I was speaking of hunger. Maybe you can't be wholly yourself because you've never given yourself wholly to someone else.'"¹¹⁵ Finally Doc realizes that, although there will be many unpleasant moments with her, he must have Suzy or he'll mourn for her the rest of his life. By nature he is incomplete without her; after this realization, a lack

¹¹⁴ Steinbeck, Sweet Thursday, p. 66.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 187.

of communication maintains their alienation until they resolve their differences.

Doc had not previously been unaware of problems of communication. As a young man he learned that people were alienated by anything different and by truth. He had taken a long walk across the country. When he tried to explain that he was doing it because ". . . he was nervous and besides he wanted to see the country, smell the ground and look at grass and birds and trees,"¹¹⁶ they scowled, laughed, or shook their heads. Because they even feared him, Doc at last felt compelled to lie, saying he was doing it on a bet--a thing they could understand.

Doc had long wondered what a beer milk shake would taste like. Afraid of how such an order would affect a waitress, he had often resisted an impulse to order one when he was in a strange town. He knew that even wearing a beard made him suspect. "You couldn't say you wore a beard because you like a beard. People didn't like you for telling the truth. You had to say you had a scar so you couldn't shave."¹¹⁷ Suddenly, feeling aggressive after a conflict with a hitch-hiking passenger, Doc ordered his beer milk shake. But he lied to avoid alienating the waitress, saying that it had been prescribed for a bladder complaint.

¹¹⁶Steinbeck, Cannery Row, p. 108.

¹¹⁷Ibid., pp. 107-108.

One of the most inviolable codes of Doc's friends forbids a crime against friendship. After the first party which wrecked Doc's laboratory, Mack and the other participants were ostracized by the rest of the community for alienating the great friend of them all. A lack of communication delayed the reconciliation of Doc and the boys. "Doc didn't know the pain of self-destructive criticism in the Palace Flophouse or he might have tried to do something about it. And Mack and the boys did not know how he felt or they would have held up their heads again."¹¹⁸

A lack of understanding also causes the police chief to "put away" Frankie, a little boy who adores Doc. A low mentality and lack of coordination make him "different." He steals a gift for Doc, his friend and benefactor; but his intentions are misunderstood and the police believe the theft indicates a felonious tendency. Once again, society alienates a human being whom it fears rather than understands.

A chasmic class difference in The Pearl is responsible for the importance Kino places on his valuable possession and for the alienation and tragedy that are consequences of his wealth. Nearly four hundred years before, the Spaniards conquered Kino's people, the natives of Mexico, and Spanish descendents still despise and oppress the indigents. Kino

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 152.

is different from his downtrodden people because he is not willing to accept this oppression without wanting something better.

Kino's first-born child is stung by a scorpion, and Kino daringly seeks the doctor's help.

And as always when he came near to one of this race, Kino felt weak and afraid and angry at the same time. Rage and terror went together. He could kill the doctor more easily than he could talk to him, for all of the doctor's race spoke to all of Kino's race as though they were simple animals.¹¹⁹

When he is rejected, shame fills the procession which accompanied him to the doctor's, and Kino is furious. He dives to find a pearl to give him the money he needs for the doctor, and finds the fabulous "Pearl of the World."

Still hating the doctor but afraid not to take his help, Kino watches the man treat his baby, Coyotito, knowing that "He was trapped as his people were always trapped, and would be until, as he had said, they could be sure that the things in the books were really in the books."¹²⁰ Kino vows that his son will have education to remove the handicap of ignorance.

Their village is one accustomed to its ways, and even the village priest does what he can to perpetuate the status quo; annually he preaches a sermon to remind the peasants that, as Kino remembers it,

¹¹⁹ Steinbeck, The Pearl, pp. 15-16.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 44.

. . . each man and woman is like a soldier sent by God to guard some part of the castle of the Universe. And some are in the ramparts and some far deep in the darkness of the walls. But each one must remain faithful to his post and must not go running about, else the castle is in danger from the assaults of Hell."¹²¹

Like all little towns, La Paz is jarred by any deviation from the norm; Kino's prize upsets the equanimity. The townspeople are alienated through envy. Kino gains enemies who seek to harm him out of greed. He alienates his wife Juana when in fear she tries to get rid of the pearl and he hurts her. He "curiously became every man's enemy."¹²²

Thus the pursuit of success tore Kino from the security, peace, love, and happiness he had enjoyed.

. . . Kino's future was real, but having set it up, other forces were set up to destroy it, and this he knew, so that he had to prepare to meet the attack. And this Kino knew also--that the gods do not love men's plans, and the gods do not love success unless it comes by accident. He knew that the gods take their revenge on a man if he be successful through his own efforts. Consequently Kino was afraid of plans, but having made one, he could never destroy it. And to meet the attack, Kino was already making a hard skin for himself against the world."¹²³

Kino is determined to use the pearl "to break out of the pot that holds us in."¹²⁴

Refusing the unfair bid of La Paz pearl buyers, Kino, although terrified at the prospect, plans to take his pearl to the capital. His brother Juan Tomás warns him that he has defied not only the pearl buyers but the whole structure

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 63.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 42.

¹²² Ibid., p. 34.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

of life as well. Kino's friends will stand by him only as long as they are not endangered; he is walking on strange new ground.

Soon after this warning Kino kills a stranger who attacks him; he and his family must flee because the authorities will not deal justly with Kino if they apprehend him. Pursuers kill Coyotito. Kino and Juana return to La Paz and cast into the sea the pearl that has been a constant cause of alienation.

Among the motley passengers of Juan Chicoy's wayward bus in the book named after that vehicle, The Wayward Bus, only a few can afford to accept anything but alienation as the final pronouncement of human experience.

Living in America, Juan himself is alienated only because of his Mexican race. His foreignness allows weaker people, such as his wife and Mr. Pritchard, to feel superior to him to combat their own insecurity. Alice Chicoy is a woman occasionally steeped in self-pity. Her love that demands reassurance alienates Juan and conversely draws rejection, until Juan considers leaving her. Mr. Pritchard is a man afraid of any deviation from an established norm, and he distrusted foreigners. Juan acknowledges a longing for more familiar surroundings. "His mind plunged with pictures of the sun-beaten hills of Lower California. . . . What was he doing in this country anyway? He didn't belong

here."¹²⁵ He admits to the metal figure of his beloved Virgin of Guadalupe, "'You know that I have not been happy and also that out of a sense of duty that is not natural to me I have stayed in the traps that have been set for me.'"¹²⁶

Pritchard also lacks communion with his wife. She enjoys thinking that he pursues success in business which is his world, while she glories in a private, feminine domain. Yet a good distance away from each of them is their daughter, Mildred, who does not understand her father because he is illogical, obtuse; nor her mother, because Mrs. Pritchard is unfeeling, unimpassioned. So selfish and frigid is Mrs. Pritchard that, while she appears calm and controlled, her resentment of her "sacrifices" to others is barely below the surface and comes out under trying circumstances; and although she rarely admits her thoughts, she often "punishes" her family with her headaches which are meant to attract sympathy. Accustomed to these parents, Mildred "felt that saps and juices were all dried up at fifty. . . . A man or woman in love at fifty would have been an obscene spectacle to her."¹²⁷ Arousing brief sympathy, one passage explains the effect of Pritchard's wife's alienation on him, tracing his sense of alienation to his childhood.

¹²⁵ Steinbeck, The Wayward Bus, pp. 234-235.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 221.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

He felt the sudden lonely sorrow that came so often. He remembered, really remembered, the first time it happened. He had been five when his little sister was born, and suddenly there were doors closed against him and he couldn't go into the nursery and he couldn't touch the baby and the feeling came on him that he was always a little dirty and noisy and unworthy and his mother was always busy. And then the cold loneliness had fallen on him, the cold loneliness that still came to him sometimes, that came to him now. The little smile meant that Bernice had retired from the world into her own room, and he couldn't follow her.¹²⁸

Regardless of this explanation Steinbeck has used Mr. and Mrs. Pritchard to demonstrate that typical middle-class Americans are doomed to a level of no more than secondary pleasure in life because they accept all the clichés of conventionalized society (attitudes towards home, church, politics, etc.) as their personal standards. They are afraid to try to understand or accept any person or idea foreign to them. Their pursuit of success and their lack of communication with others prevent greater happiness.

Mildred envies Camille Oaks, whom she thinks to be a tramp with sexual freedom and no regrets. Camille, who exudes sex appeal that attracts all men and alienates most women, senses Mildred as a natural enemy. Often regretting her rare quality, Camille tires of girls like Mildred; of having to reject men like Mr. Pritchard, who try to make a "business" arrangement with her; and of girls like Norma who want to be her friends but are always alienated when their boy friends are attracted to her. Camille longs for a

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 275.

permanent, natural, married relationship with a husband, home, and children; but achieving this goal is apparently impossible because of nature's endowment.

Norma thinks the world she lives in is the one portrayed in movie magazines. Because she cannot evaluate life's situations realistically, she leaves herself open to disappointment. As examples, she lets her hopes soar with plans that include Camille; she cherishes a dream of marrying Clark Gable; and she allows herself to be tricked by Pimples Carson until she finds herself grappling with him. Truth and reality alienate Norma because of her naiveté--her incomplete communication with the world.

Pimples had gained her sympathy through pity for the acne condition that made him feel alienated. Another passenger, Mr. Van Brunt, experiences rejection for a physical reason. He is disagreeable to everyone, but his hatred stems from the knowledge that a stroke has upset his inhibitions in his old age, and that another, worse stroke is doubtless imminent.

Although Joe Saul and Mordeen experience some estrangement in Burning Bright because their union has produced no offspring, Victor unexpectedly becomes the victim of their reconciliation because he fathered the child Mordeen wants to have for Joe Saul. The truth momentarily alienates Joe Saul when he learns of his sterility and determines

Mordeen's plot; but Victor is permanently rejected because his association with Mordeen has transformed him from a self-centered, incommunicative, unaffectionate young man to a warm, sensitive human being with a capacity for deep emotions and a desire for Mordeen's love and the possession of his own child. The same Mordeen who told Victor what he had missed in life with his shallow concept of love must tell him subsequently that the love she has brought forth in him has no future, that he must find someone else to love. Finally the friend and protector of Mordeen and Joe Saul, called Friend Ed, murders Victor when the latter refuses to accept Mordeen's rejection and tries to make her go away with him. The fact that Victor was originally a person incapable of communication leads to this tragic result.

Based on a new interpretation of the story of Cain and Abel from Genesis, East of Eden is fundamentally a story of rejection. Developed through numerous analogies with the Biblical figures, the characters in East of Eden are repeatedly rejected. Their rejection results from their inability to communicate love. All important characters in this sprawling novel are essentially lonely and aware of their loneliness; they want love or are aware of the lack of love. But aside from a few brief, ecstatic moments of reconciliation shared by several of them, they advance fitfully through life in a morass of feelings deeply rooted, intense,

and too personal or complicated to allow the characters the happiness they could have through free exchange of emotions.

First of the three generations of Trasks depicted is Cyrus Trask. A self-styled martinet who eventually obtains an important position in Washington based on the false reputation he built for himself, Cyrus, deploring any weakness in human beings, sternly regimented the lives he controlled, demanding discipline above all. His second wife, Alice, suffered from this because he

had developed a method for dealing with sickness which resembled punishment. A stomach ache was treated with a purge so violent that it was a wonder anyone survived it. If she had mentioned her condition, Cyrus might have started a treatment which would have killed her off before her consumption could have done it.¹²⁹

His attitude toward his sons, Charles and Adam, is one of a general toward his soldiers. Being of different natures, the boys react to this treatment differently. Adam comes to hate his father because, since Alice is not his own mother, he feels completely alienated in the family group. "She was not his mother--that he knew because he had been told many times. Not from things said but from the tone in which other things were said . . ."¹³⁰ Cyrus is not insensitive to Adam. He rears him in the way he thinks best. He seems to believe that rearing Adam to perform properly in battle will prepare him for a life that is, essentially, war.

¹²⁹ Steinbeck, East of Eden, p. 19.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

Cyrus takes his post in Washington after Adam has adjusted to the army, which Cyrus forced him to join. Cyrus is lonely, and he wants to have Adam with him. But Cyrus did not give Adam love and understanding when he needed it, and Adam is not going to be reconciled with his father now. Adam tells his father he wants to go back to his regiment. Cyrus acquiesces, warning Adam that he'll rot in barracks. "Adam remembered his father's tone and how he looked. And he had plenty of time to remember, because he did rot in barracks. He remembered that Cyrus was lonely and alone-- and knew it."¹³¹

Also sensitive to his father's rejection, the boy Charles feels compelled to earn and to compete for his father's love. Charles is the stronger, more aggressive of the boys; his feeling toward Adam is one of "protective contempt."¹³² "Adam was glad of Charles the way a woman is glad of a fat diamond, and he depended on his brother in the way that same woman depends on the diamond's glitter and the self-security tied up in its worth; but love, affection, empathy, were beyond conception."¹³³ Charles cannot bear for Adam to excel in anything, and Adam seldom tries to, because of the inevitable beating he will suffer. Years later, Charles tells Adam how he loved their father. Adam admits

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 53.

¹³² Ibid., p. 23.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 21.

he never loved Cyrus, and after this confession Adam is no longer afraid of Charles, because he understands that Charles was fighting for love.

When Adam is discharged from the army, he feels "a crippling loneliness for the close men in barracks and tent."¹³⁴ He goes to a bar and is "almost nestled in the human clot."¹³⁵ Charles has been looking forward to Adam's return, but to Adam "Home was not a pleasant place in his mind. The kind of feelings he had had there were dead in him, and he had a reluctance to bring them to life."¹³⁶ Finally ejected by the bartender and frowned on by his landlady, he re-enlists. He does not even write to Charles. As a result, Charles gradually isolates himself from the village, except for contacts with the inn and the postmaster. Though he has learned not to fear Charles, Adam is indifferent to Charles's feelings. Many years later, when he writes to Charles to invite him to California, Adam, on his part, becomes impatient, expecting an immediate reply. But Charles has died.

His unhappy life did not teach Adam how to be a good father; of his two sons, he loves Aron and rejects Cal. Adam has developed no insight to help him understand his "dark" son. Cal feels Adam's rejection keenly and deliberately alienates people in retaliation.

134 Ibid., p. 48.

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid.

Nearly everyone preferred Aron with his golden hair and the openness that allowed his affection to plunge like a puppy. Cal's emotions hid deep in him and peered out, ready to retreat or attack.

Cal did not question the fact that people liked his brother better, but he had developed a means for making it all right with himself. He planned and waited until one time that admiring person exposed himself, and then something happened and the victim never knew how or why. Out of revenge Cal extracted a fluid of power, and out of power, joy. It was the strongest, purest emotion he knew. Far from disliking Aron, he loved him because he was usually the cause for Cal's feelings of triumph. He had forgotten--if he had ever known--that he punished because he wished he could be loved as Aron was loved.¹³⁷

Nor does Aron understand his brother any better than Adam understood Charles.

"I'd like to know why you do it. You're always at something. I just wonder why you do it. I wonder what it's good for."

A pain pierced Cal's heart. His planning suddenly seemed mean and dirty to him. He knew that his brother had found him out. And he felt a longing for Aron to love him. He felt lost and hungry and he didn't know what to do.¹³⁸

Steinbeck gives some blame to heredity and environment for the traits in Cal which bring about rejection.

From his first memory Cal had craved warmth and affection, just as everyone does. If he had been an only child or if Aron had been a different kind of boy, Cal might have achieved his relationship normally and easily. But from the very first people were won instantly to Aron by his beauty and his simplicity. Cal very naturally competed for attention and affection in the only way he knew--by trying to imitate Aron. And what was charming in the blond ingenuousness of Aron became suspicious and unpleasant in the dark-faced, slit-eyed Cal. And since he was pretending, his performance was not convincing. Where Aron was received, Cal was rebuffed for doing or saying exactly the same thing.

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp. 348-349.

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 374-375.

And as a few strokes on the nose will make a puppy head shy, so a few rebuffs will make a boy shy all over. . . . And once a boy has suffered rejection, he will find rejection even where it does not exist--or, worse, will draw it forth from people simply by expecting it.¹³⁹

Eventually, Adam realizes some mistakes he has made and he says, "I'm the same as my father was. He didn't allow me to be a person, and I haven't seen my sons as people."¹⁴⁰ But this realization doesn't change him.

Once as boys, Charles and Adam had given their father birthday gifts. Cyrus loved the puppy Adam had given him, but never used the knife from Charles. Charles knew Adam was the favorite son, and he tried to murder his brother. Like his father, Adam rejects a gift--\$15,000 Cal earned to help his father recover from a financial disaster. Cal's suffering is as acute, and his reaction is as dramatic, as Charles's murder attempt.

Adam's wife, Steinbeck suggests, was born lacking the desire, as well as the capacity for communion. She is a "mental or psychic monster."¹⁴¹ As a child, she did not avoid being different as most children do, and "After a while only one person at a time associated with her."¹⁴² Moreover, ". . . just as a cripple may learn to utilize his lack so that he becomes more effective in a limited field

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 444.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 455.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 74.

than the uncrippled, so did Cathy, using her difference, make a painful and bewildering stir in her world."¹⁴³

She derived sadistic pleasure from ". . . her ability to distress people, to make them restless and uneasy and even envious."¹⁴⁴ Yet this was not adequate compensation for being alienated.

Most of the time she knew she was smarter and prettier than anyone else. But now and then a lonely fear would fall upon her so that she seemed surrounded by a tree-tall forest of enemies. Then every thought and word and look was aimed to hurt her, and she had no place to run and no place to hide. And she would cry in panic because there was no escape and no sanctuary.¹⁴⁵

Among her early victims is Mr. Edwards, who hires her as a prostitute but falls in love with her. Realizing he has been duped, he nearly kills Cathy. Adam nurses her back to health and she marries Adam because she wants protection and money to feel secure.

The two men of greatest human insight and understanding in East of Eden--Lee, Adam's Chinese servant, and Samuel Hamilton, their great friend and neighbor--sense Cathy's strangeness. Samuel feels that "The eyes of Cathy had no message, no communication of any kind. There was nothing recognizable behind them. They were not human eyes."¹⁴⁶ She who has been the great joy of Adam's life rejects Adam and her infant sons as soon as she is able to leave the

¹⁴³ Ibid., pp. 72-73.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 551.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 177.

ranch. Adam, who "dies" from the shock, does not know for years that she goes no further than Salinas, where she eventually owns a brothel specializing in perversion. She is unique among Steinbeck's madams and whores; because of her malformation, she cannot enjoy "wholesome" prostitution. She taints this profession as she did childhood, wifehood, and motherhood. But then, being inhuman, she is not really female. Although pretty, she has a boyish figure even after she is grown. Her breasts, which had never developed very much, did not change at all during her pregnancy. When Cal discovers her existence, he demands of Lee what she is like.

"Cal," he said, "I've thought about it for a great many hours and I still don't know. She is a mystery. It seems to me that she is not like other people. There is something she lacks. Kindness maybe, or conscience. You can only understand people if you feel them in yourself. And I can't feel her. The moment I think about her my feeling goes into darkness. I don't know what she wanted or what she was after. She was full of hatred, but why or toward what I don't know. It's a mystery. And her hatred wasn't healthy. It wasn't angry. It was heartless."¹⁴⁷

Cal must see her. When he tells her he loves his father, she senses her void; ". . . a curious spasm shook her-- an aching twist rose in her chest."¹⁴⁸ On leaving her place, Cal tells her that he thinks she is afraid. She cannot stand the truth and shouts at him to get out. Plying fear in others has been her great tool; she cannot bear to admit its presence in herself.

147

Ibid., p. 448.

148

Ibid., p. 464.

Adam at last accepts her for what she is, and finds the opportunity to say, when she shows him lewd pictures of prominent men, "I know what you hate. You hate something in them you can't understand. You don't hate their evil. You hate the good in them you can't get at. I wonder what you want, what final thing."¹⁴⁹ He also tells her:

"I think you are only a part of a human. I can't do anything about that. But I wonder whether you ever feel that something invisible is all around you. It would be horrible if you knew it was there and couldn't see it or feel it. . . ."

.
He turned and went out and closed the door behind him. Kate sat down and stared at the closed door. She was not aware that her fists beat softly on the white oilcloth. But she did know that the square white door was distorted by tears and that her body shook with something that felt like rage and also felt like sorrow.¹⁵⁰

It is this horror, this desolation, together with snowballing dangers of her life, that lead her to suicide. Cathy's complete lack of communication is pointed up by this passage, wherein Steinbeck seems to divorce himself from the responsibility of creating her:

The trouble is that since we cannot know what she wanted, we will never know whether or not she got it. If rather than running toward something, she ran away from something, we can't know whether she escaped. Who knows but that she tried to tell someone or everyone what she was like and could not, for lack of a common language.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 323.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 385.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 184.

Abra, who is Aron's childhood sweetheart, is a girl of unique sympathy. She understands better than Cal and Aron themselves how they have missed not having a mother, and sympathizes with them for their alienation. She asks Aron how it is not to have a mother, and although he cannot tell her, he knows, ". . . at Christmas and graduation, when the mothers of other children came to the parties--then was the silent cry and the wordless longing. That's what it was like."¹⁵² Abra muses to Lee that some people may need things more than others and that Aron seems to her "'un- finished, because he didn't have a mother.'"¹⁵³

In his adolescence, Aron is swept with a religious passion and decides to become a minister. He temporarily rejects Abra, thinking he wants a life of celibacy, and denounces Cal for his godlessness. Feeling dirty, Aron wishes to withdraw as did the Franciscans and the Augustines. Religious fervor also caused guilt feelings in Adam's mother; thus pursuit of success in a religious life is responsible for alienation of these characters.

Adam is another who contributed to his own rejection. Like Richard Whiteside in The Pastures of Heaven, he was anxious to build a house that would be a symbol of the success of his family--his dynasty. He was blind and deaf to Cathy, who even tried to warn him that she would not stay.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 428.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 495.

The Hamilton family portrayed in East of Eden are Steinbeck's own maternal relatives. Samuel Hamilton was not accepted when he moved to the Salinas Valley because of his nationality and other qualities which make him "strange."

He was in fact a foreigner and an Irishman. At that time the Irish were much disliked in America. They were looked upon with contempt, particularly on the East Coast, but a little of it must have seeped out to the West. And Samuel had not only variability but was a man of ideas and innovations. In small cut-off communities such a man is always regarded with suspicion until he has proved he is no danger to the others.¹⁵⁴

Even after he became accepted,

Samuel kept always a foreignness. Perhaps it was in the cadence of his speech, and this had the effect of making men, and women too, tell him things they would not tell to relatives or close friends. His slight strangeness set him apart and made him safe as a repository.¹⁵⁵

Samuel was also alienated by forces with financial power. An inventor, he kept his family poor by investing in his ideas and fighting a manufacturer who stole one of his methods. "It was his first sharp experience with the rule that without money you cannot fight money."¹⁵⁶

Samuel's wife Liza "was a good woman and raised good children. . . . There was a nail-hard strength in her, a lack of any compromise, a rightness in the face of all opposing wrongness, which made you hold her in a kind of awe but not in warmth."¹⁵⁷ Her experience with her husband was

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 43.

"a tiresome and sometimes painful duty."¹⁵⁸ She clung to a hard-core Protestantism. The Bible, which she read continually but did not comprehend, was her authority for everything. She alienated people and did not enjoy her marriage as she might have enjoyed it because she did not try to understand and communicate with others.

Since he is practical like his mother, Will Hamilton's embarrassment about his father's "strangeness" makes him a conformist. He decides that "The only way to make any money is to sell something somebody else makes."¹⁵⁹ He becomes quite prosperous from selling Fords in King City; but his pursuit of success requires that he base relationships with others on dollars and cents. He cannot know the happiness that comes from love and unselfish communion with other human beings. He tells Adam, "I'm the only one in the family, except my mother, who didn't have ideas, and I'm the only one who ever made a dime."¹⁶⁰ He advises Adam not to invest in a plan to ship East from Salinas Valley produce packed in ice. When Adam's project becomes a fiasco, sympathy and friendship do not prevent Will from bragging about his foresight.

Of the eight Hamilton children, Tom was most like his father. He remained a bachelor because "It was a very moral

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 211.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 436.

family he was born into,"¹⁶¹ and Steinbeck suggests that a driving concupiscence made him feel unworthy. Thus conventional morality caused Tom's alienation.

Adam's boys shared his rejection following his business failure. Because they were young, they were more vulnerable to the cruelty of society. At school they were called "Aron and Cal Lettuce" and "Lettuce-head." Losing the security of their father's wealth, they came to know the importance of the money they had taken for granted and to recognize the role it played in their position in the community. Aron says to Abra:

"Well, I'm not good enough for you now. I'm just another poor kid. You think I haven't seen the difference in your father?"

"You're just crazy," Abra said. And she frowned a little because she had seen the difference in her father too.¹⁶²

Aron hates his father for bringing about this ostracism. Abra reproves him, knowingly: "'Don't blame your father. If it had worked everybody'd been bowing to him.'"¹⁶³

How Lee is alienated on grounds of race is made very clear in one of his conversations with Samuel Hamilton. Lee explains that while Sam can come from Ireland and in a few years "disappear"--be absorbed into Caucasian society--Lee, who was born in California and attended the University of California, must wear a queue and "'talkee Chinese talk'"¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 441.

¹⁶² Ibid., pp. 440-441.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 163.

to be understood at all, since that is what people expect of an oriental.

Another cause of alienation familiar in Steinbeck novels and based on the lack of communication is found in East of Eden--the contraction of emotions. Steinbeck says that when Adam was in the army "He volunteered for work in field hospitals when he was exhausted from his regular duties. He was regarded by his comrades with contemptuous affection and the unspoken fear men have of impulses they do not understand."¹⁶⁵ Also, Will Hamilton, who is incommunicative, had never before "met anyone who spoke so nakedly. He was near to embarrassment because of the nakedness"¹⁶⁶ when he talked with Cal.

Evidence of Steinbeck's doubt of the ability of women to communicate spiritually with men is found in references to Cathy. "Catherine was clever, but even a clever woman misses some of the strange corridors in a man."¹⁶⁷ Adam tells her,

"It doesn't matter whether you liked Sam Hamilton. I found him wise. I remember he said one time that a woman who knows all about men usually knows one part very well and can't conceive the other parts, but that doesn't mean they aren't there."¹⁶⁸

Truth is an alienator when it is not accepted or understood. Samuel knows intuitively, on meeting Cathy, that

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 481.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 321-322.

some day he will have to shatter Adam's happiness. He says satirically to his naive friend,

"It's my duty to take this thing of yours and kick it in the face, then raise it up and spread slime on it thick enough to black out its dangerous light. . . . I should hold it up to you muck-covered and show you its dirt and danger. I should warn you to look closer until you can see how ugly it really is. . . ."

"It is the duty of a friend. I had a friend who did the duty once for me."¹⁶⁹

His prophesy coming true, Samuel often alienates and invites rejection from his friend by speaking truthfully to him. Once he threatens to kill Adam because Adam has no love for his infant sons and has not even named them. Later he tells Adam he knows how Adam lives on memories of his love for Cathy. Years after this Samuel must tell Adam what has become of her.

Cal is also one who frequently alienates with the truth. Just as he had angered his mother with the truth about herself, he takes revenge when Adam rejects his gift by exposing Aron to the truth about their mother. Cal suffers enormously after doing this, being alienated by his own guilt; and he burns the money his father refused as a sacrifice, hoping it will reconcile him with Aron. But Aron has joined the army to escape the truth he cannot accept, and he is killed in World War I.

Lee is often Steinbeck's spokesman. It is Lee who contributes the interpretation of the Cain and Abel story that

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 171.

is the foundation of East of Eden.

"I think this is the best-known story in the world because it is everybody's story. I think it is the symbol story of the human soul. . . . The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell he fears. I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection, and with the crime guilt--and there is the story of mankind. I think that if rejection could be amputated, the human would not be what he is. Maybe there would be fewer crazy people. I am sure in myself there would not be many jails. It is all there--the start, the beginning. One child, refused the love he craves, kicks the cat and hides his secret guilt; and another steals so that money will make him loved; and a third conquers the world--and always the guilt and revenge and more guilt. . . . Therefore I think this old and terrible story is important because it is the chart of the soul--the secret, rejected, guilty soul."¹⁷⁰

This is the Steinbeck ethic. In his tale based on rejection, Steinbeck has shown many ways in which men are alienated. But he has shown that, beneath the surface, all men are alike in their need for love.

In The Winter of Our Discontent, written largely in the first person, John Steinbeck examines our nation's present moral fiber. Through his protagonist, Ethan Hawley, the author presents a contrast between standards of the past and values of the present. Ethan finds that his family suffers from being alienated by a society which looks down on people who lack abundant material possessions. A special stigma comes to his family from the fact that Hawleys were

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 270-271.

wealthy in former generations. Ethan experiences rejection by his family because, on account of his poor business sense, he has been demoted to clerk in what was his own store.

Mr. Baker, New Baytown banker, convinces Ethan that his family does not appreciate their conservative, secure economic position as much as they would enjoy the gains of speculative investments. Ethan becomes aware that his place in the family depends on more than acceptance on a personal level; he must meet terms of society if he is to avoid alienation from his loved ones.

With a sudden interest in money, Ethan begins to absorb the philosophy of people who revere "success." His Sicilian boss, Marullo, tells him, "'You don't look after number one, whose'll do it?'"¹⁷¹ He tells Ethan that money is not friendly, that even the "friendly" businessmen Ethan knows are not nice when it comes to making money. Joey Morph, who works in Baker's bank, advises Ethan to take a bribe offered by a supplier because it is not illegal and anyone else would take it. Ethan's wife Mary tells him that everyone is laughing at him because "'A grand gentleman without money is a bum.'"¹⁷² Ethan realizes that in wanting money Mary really wants "new curtains and sure education for the kids and holding her head a little higher and, face it,

¹⁷¹ Steinbeck, The Winter of Our Discontent, p. 25.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 40.

being proud rather than a little ashamed of me."¹⁷³ Ethan is even alienated unexpectedly by his old friend, Danny, who had become an alcoholic after being expelled from Naval Academy. Danny is alienated by his own high principles because he cannot forgive himself his failure. Although he lives by panhandling for one bottle of liquor after another, Danny can say to Ethan, ". . . don't forget--I'm better off than you are. I'm not a clerk."¹⁷⁴ Ethan's son Allen alienates his father by complaining that they lack, as examples, a car and a television set; Ethan's daughter cuts him by saying she wishes he would hurry up and get rich, because she is sick of being poor.

Eventually Ethan is led to the belief that "In business and in politics a man must carve and maul his way through men to get to be King of the Mountain. Once there, he can be great and kind--but he must get there first."¹⁷⁵ Wanting to please his family, to hold their love and respect, to gain the wealth which will do these things, he rationalizes his code for living and sacrifices his high principles. He takes control of the land Danny owns which is the only thing between Danny and total disrespect. Danny is not misled by Ethan's pretense of helping him with the money involved in the transaction. Both know Danny will drink himself to

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 173.

death. Finding, though, that the price he has paid for reconciliation with his family has rendered this happiness unacceptable, and having reached some disheartening conclusions about the ethics of our generation, this fundamentally moral man loses his raison d'être and starts to take his life. He changes his mind only when he thinks he may keep his ideals alive in his daughter.

Certainly the progress of Ethan Hawley through The Winter of Our Discontent proves that a man with high principles is a man apart from the crowd. His values have become a part of his nature and he is alienated by this difference. On the other hand, money is a Judas goat leading the herd to disaster. Afraid to be different, afraid of rejection, people seek the same things, believe the same things, admire the same things. The pursuit of success loses for them the honesty required for communion with each other. Ethan becomes increasingly conscious of the loneliness of man. First, in reminiscence about his beloved grandfather, he imagines Cap'n Hawley telling him that men are really no different now from what they were in his day. The Cap'n seems to say, "'Only in a single man alone--only in one man alone. There's the only power--one man alone. Can't depend on anything else.'"¹⁷⁶ In "taking stock" at his secret refuge, Ethan thinks, "No man really knows about other human beings. The

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

best he can do is to suppose that they are like himself."¹⁷⁷ Then, although Mary and he love each other, he acknowledges that they are not entirely in communication, that he does not really know her, and asks himself, "Does anyone ever know even the outer fringe of another?"¹⁷⁸ When he tries to inspire morality in Allen, Mary criticizes Ethan, who says to himself, "'A man is a lonely thing.'"¹⁷⁹ Preparing to commit suicide, he thinks,

It isn't true that there's a community of light, a bonfire of the world. Everyone carries his own, his lonely own.

.
My light is out. There's nothing blacker than a wick.¹⁸⁰

Ethan Hawley considers the possibility that men, like animals, have in their natures a trait which makes them want to destroy a weaker member of the species. Another example of natural alienation is represented in Allen, who is going through an adolescent phase which makes father and son despise each other; and Allen and Ellen hate each other now and may always, although they may learn to cover their feelings.

Life in terms of intra-human experience appears to be a wasteland of rejection for Ethan. He sees no promise of complete reconciliation between friends, business associates, husband and wife, father and son, or sister and brother, because of at least one barrier: the pursuit of success, the

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 311.

lack of communication, or man's fundamental nature. Moreover, The Winter of Our Discontent is the most pessimistic of Steinbeck's novels because the subject has gone from complacency, at least, to a condition of knowledge and despair. Steinbeck has always said that man stands in the way of his reconciliation with man by alienating others in his pursuit of success, by failing to communicate because of differences or misunderstood emotions, or by having some fundamental characteristic that set him apart. Until The Winter of Our Discontent Steinbeck said that, in the large view of life, the choice, the opportunity, for happiness was available to most men. But in this book, American society of the sixties offers man no such choice. He must live selfishly and shallowly; or, if he is basically a moral man he is a rare man and he must learn to live with alienation.

In summary of this chapter, it appears that the misfits and the underdogs earn the author's great compassion because they are alienated by nature or circumstances and not through acts they commit deliberately. In a category called here "lack of communication," those who are "different" from others suffer alienation in every novel. Truth--especially truth expressed without sensitivity to others' feelings--is another alienator in this category. Other common causes of alienation due to a lack of communication are the inability to handle the emotions and the demand for discipline.

The pursuit of success is an alienator which has many faces. A desire for money or social position drives men from communication with each other and is found behind the impersonal factors of war and shaky economic conditions which cause mass alienation. Laws and religions often violate brotherly love when they demand blind adherence to convention. Fear, pride, selfishness, envy, jealousy, and greed are emotions common to the people who cause their own alienation.

Fate and man's fundamental nature are important factors in alienation. Man is naturally lonely. Death or circumstantial loss are the alienators of fate; personality factors like cruelty and guilt are to an extent fundamental in some individuals. A man who chooses loneliness in order to lead or create for the sake of mankind because of a special instinct that is part of his nature makes a noble sacrifice.

CHAPTER IV

RECONCILIATION

The characters in the novels of John Steinbeck who gain reconciliation are those who have satisfied Steinbeck's sense of values and are capable of dropping any inhibitions to the flow of natural emotions. Steinbeck believes that there is inherent in man a capacity for love unknown to many because it is superseded by passions alien to the nature of love. Although there is no guarantee that communication will be established, man can be prepared to communicate with others only if he is devoid of, or casts out, emotional impurities effected by a lust for property, a fear of society, or a lack of understanding.

This explains why Steinbeck has a penchant for the down-trodden, for outcasts, and misfits. Through no fault of their own, but by reason of some factor beyond their control, they experience rejection. To Steinbeck, they are the pure in heart. Since reconciliation begins at a personal level, they are the ones most likely to succeed in being reconciled with one another. In the end, it is the alienators who are alienated. The "pure in heart" can share problems, sympathy, and suffering to an extent that goes beyond a personal level in some cases to link them as a group.

While reconciliation is found in all of Steinbeck's novels, it occurs much less frequently than alienation. Because all of the novels have been discussed in detail in this thesis in chapters dealing with values and alienation, this chapter will cite only examples of reconciliation selected from the novels The Pastures of Heaven, The Grapes of Wrath, The Moon Is Down, The Wayward Bus, East of Eden, and The Winter of Our Discontent. The examples to be used are significant because in them reconciliation follows growth or adaptation of individuals which makes reconciliation possible and advances the characters' accommodation to life.

The outstanding episode among those in The Pastures of Heaven which demonstrates how reconciliation is achieved is that of Edward "Shark" Wicks. Shark was forced to confess that the fortune he manipulated was only on paper, produced by his imaginary investments. He felt humiliated, debased; this "wealth" had brought him status in the community which had been very important to him. Until the time of his exposure Shark and his wife had not shared a feeling of closeness.

In his treatment of her, Shark was neither tender nor cruel. He governed her with the same gentle inflexibility he used on horses. Cruelty would have seemed to him as foolish as indulgence. He never talked to her as to human [sic], never spoke of his hopes or thoughts or failures, of his paper wealth nor of the peach crop. Katherine would have been puzzled and worried if he had. Her life was sufficiently complicated without the added burden of another's thoughts and problems.¹

¹Steinbeck, The Pastures of Heaven, p. 28.

But when Shark lost his fortune--which he had possessed in all but the most tangible aspects--he lost the pride, greed, and social position which had made him estranged from his wife and his neighbors. The way was open now for reconciliation. Katherine was ready for this moment--and gave Shark something genuine on which to base his life to fill the void.

As Katherine stood in the doorway, a feeling she had never experienced crept into her. She did a thing she had never contemplated in her life. A warm genius moved in her. Katherine sat down on the edge of the bed and with a sure hand, took Shark's head on her lap. This was instinct, and the same sure, strong instinct set her hand to stroking Shark's forehead. His body seemed boneless with defeat.

.....
 Katherine stroked his head gently and the great genius continued to grow in her. She felt larger than the world. The whole world lay in her lap and she comforted it. Pity seemed to make her huge in stature. Her soothing breasts yearned toward the woe of the world.

.....
 Suddenly the genius in Katherine became power and the power gushed in her body and flooded her. In a moment she knew what she was and what she could do. She was exultantly happy and beautiful. "You've had no chance," she said softly. "All of your life you've been out on this old farm, and there's been no chance for you. How do you know you can't make money? I think you can. I know you can."

She had known she could do this. As she sat there the knowledge of her power had been born in her, and she knew that all of her life was directed at this one moment. In this moment she was a goddess, a singer of destiny. It did not surprise her when his body gradually stiffened. She continued to stroke his forehead.

.....
 Shark's eyes lost their awful lifelessness. His body found strength to turn itself. He looked at Katherine and saw how beautiful she was in this moment, and, as he looked, her genius passed into him.²

² Ibid., pp. 42-43.

Reconciliation in The Grapes of Wrath is keynoted by Casy when he describes his new religion. He has decided that he cannot censure people for their actions as he was required to do when he was a preacher, for he cannot distinguish between sin and virtue. Since orthodox religion stands in the way of his peace of mind, his new doctrine is based on love and a feeling for the human spirit of which all men are a part.

Casy's people are those who have little but their instincts to make them happy, and he wants to learn from them. He tells Ma Joad:

"I ain't gonna baptize. I'm gonna work in the fiel's, in the green fiel's, an' I'm gonna be near to folks. I ain't gonna try to teach 'em nothin'. I'm gonna try to learn. Gonna learn why the folks walks in the grass, gonna hear 'em talk, gonna hear 'em sing. Gonna listen to kids eatin' mush. Gonna hear husban' an' wife a-poundin' the mattress in the night. Gonna eat with 'em an' learn." His eyes were wet and shining. "Gonna lay in the grass, open an' honest with anybody that'll have me. Gonna cuss an' swear an' hear the poetry of folks talkin'. All that's holy, all that's what I didn' understan'. All them things is the good things."³

Casy wants to preach his new ideas not as a religion but as a credo which will make his people happy with their lot. The reward of his theology is reconciliation of men on earth.

Each time the people give of the little they have, they share in this reward. Muley Graves shares his rabbit with Tom and Casy because he has no choice--it is the natural thing to do and he is enriched by it; the Wilsons help the

³Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath, pp. 127-128.

Joads but Sarah Wilson says that it makes her feel safe and that people need to help.⁴ The outgrowth of this, Steinbeck warns oppressors, is unity among the unfortunate which makes them stronger than the forces which oppose them.

One man, one family driven from the land; this rusty car creaking along the highway to the west. I lost my land, a single tractor took my land. I am alone and I am bewildered. And in the night one family camps in a ditch and another family pulls in and the tents come out. The two men squat on their hams and the women and children listen. Here is the node, you who hate change and fear revolution. Keep these two squatting men apart; make them hate, fear, suspect each other. Here is the anlage of the thing you fear. This is the zygote. For here "I lost my land" is changed; a cell is split and from its splitting grows the thing you hate--"We lost our land." The danger is here, for two men are not as lonely and perplexed as one. And from this first "we" there grows a still more dangerous thing; "I have a little food" plus "I have none." If from this problem the sum is "We have a little food," the thing is on its way, the movement has direction. Only a little multiplication now, and this land, this tractor are ours. The two men squatting in a ditch, the little fire, the side-meat stewing in a single pot, the silent, stone-eyed women; behind, the children listening with their souls to words their minds do not understand. The night draws down. The baby has a cold. Here, take this blanket. It's wool. It was my mother's blanket--take it for the baby. This is the thing to bomb. This is the beginning--from "I" to "we."⁵

Steinbeck refers to "the little screaming fact that sounds through all history: repression works only to strengthen and knit the repressed."⁶ He sees the great owners ignoring history; he hears the repressed saying, "Our people are good people; our people are kind people. Pray

⁴ Ibid., p. 192.

⁵ Ibid., p. 206.

⁶ Ibid., p. 324.

God some day kind people won't all be poor."⁷ He says the owners know that the praying will stop some day, and that will be the end.

The effect of unity is brought out in the story of the Joads. Tom remembers some "Scripture" that Casy has spouted to him; he quotes this to Ma when he decides to spread Casy's gospel.

"'Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lif' up his fellow, but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up.' That's part of her."

"Go on," Ma said. "Go on, Tom."

"Jus' a little bit more. 'Again, if two lie together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him, and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken.'"⁸

He thinks Casy may have been right about each man's soul belonging not to the individual but to one great soul, and that it is worthless unless it is with the rest, a part of the whole.

Ma also interprets life in terms of a whole. While her family is her immediate concern, she has great compassion for all humanity. She attempts to explain her philosophy of the communion of life to her daughter.

"When you're young, Rosasharn, ever'thing that happens is a thing all by itself. It's a lonely thing. I know, I 'member, Rosasharn." Her mouth loved the name of her daughter. "You're gonna have a baby, Rosasharn, and that's somepin to you lonely and away. That's gonna hurt you, an' the hurt'll be lonely hurt, an' this

⁷ Ibid., p. 326.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 570-571.

here tent is alone in the worl', Rosasharn." . . .
 "They's a time of change, an' when that comes, dyin' is
 a piece of all dyin', and bearin' is a piece of all
 bearin', an' bearin' and dyin' is two pieces of the
 same thing. An' then things ain't lonely any more.
 An' then a hurt don't hurt so bad, 'cause it ain't a
 lonely hurt no more, Rosasharn. I wisht I could tell
 you so you'd know, but I can't." And her voice was so
 soft, so full of love, that tears crowded into Rose of
 Sharon's eyes, and flowed over her eyes and blinded
 her.⁹

With Ma's encouragement, Rose of Sharon partakes of
 this communion in the final, symbolic scene of the novel.
 Having lost her baby, she gives the milk in her breasts to
 a starving man. Although the plight of the Joads has never
 seemed darker, "She looked up and across the barn, and her
 lips came together and smiled mysteriously."¹⁰ This sug-
 gests that these people will endure, that the supreme
 happiness of communion is continually theirs, that material
 discomforts have only strengthened their perseverance.

Strife again welds together a group of people in The
 Moon Is Down, the novel which followed The Grapes of Wrath,
 and which like the latter shows how people are reconciled
 when they unite against oppressors, to the effect that their
 reconciliation becomes a social phenomenon. Oppression
 breaks down lines of social demarcation: servant and master,
 citizen and mayor can communicate when they fight for a com-
 mon cause. Joseph, Mayor Orden's servingman, "at last had
 opinions. 'People are getting together,' he said. 'They

⁹ Ibid., pp. 285-286.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 619.

don't like to be conquered. Things are going to happen."¹¹ Mayor Orden explains the feeling in his town to Colonel Lanser: ". . . we cannot act as quickly as you can, but when a direction is set, we all act together."¹² Mayor Orden tells Lanser that the conquerors have undertaken the one thing in the world that can't be done, "'To break man's spirit permanently."¹³ Before going to his death, Orden tells Lanser that free men "'can fight on in defeat. Herd men, followers of a leader, cannot do that, and so it is always the herd men who win battles and the free men who win wars."¹⁴ The motives of herd men are ulterior; Steinbeck implies that men who are united through love of and concern for humanity will ultimately succeed; and even in their hardship they are happier sharing their strife than the conquerors who have caused it.

Reconciliation in The Wayward Bus is dealt entirely on a person-to-person level. The travelers have a joint concern--their trip from Rebel Corners to San Juan de la Cruz, but it is not of a magnitude sufficient to test whether or not they could be united in a common effort. Actually, each person is involved in thoughts of individual problems, and the trip is no more than an interlude between events of very separate lives.

¹¹ Steinbeck, The Moon Is Down, p. 77.

¹² Ibid., p. 41.

¹³ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 186.

The most significant reconciliation between two of the characters culminates in the sexual union of Juan Chicoy and Mildred Pritchard. Juan knows from the time he first observes Mildred that he can seduce her. Rejected by some people because of his race, Juan does not suffer from alienation because his openness, his honesty, his values, and his natural appeal reconcile him readily with anyone he likes in all situations that are meaningful to him; and important among the latter are opportunities for sexual satisfaction. Struggling to develop her own sense of values, dismayed by conforming parents, and disposed toward a strong sexual appetite, Mildred is drawn by Juan's magnetism to be like him, open and honest about her feelings, and as a result she is elated by the act that marks her reconciliation with Juan. In Steinbeck's system of values this represents progress in the development of Mildred's character toward the "good" woman who is free to enjoy sex, uninhibited by conventional attitudes, and away from the frigid example set by her mother.

Having the same attributes as Juan Chicoy, which include a self-confidence undisturbed by middle-class mores, are Camille Oaks and Ernest Horton. It is therefore natural that they should be reconciled on the trip, given an opportunity. He frankly admires her. When she offers to help him move stones to get the bus out of the mud, they make a tentative date and she tells him he's a "good guy."

Camille had earlier established a temporary rapport with Norma. Norma admired Camille because she had "beauty," poise, confidence, and experience--things Norma wanted very much. Headed for the same destination, the girls complemented each other's plans: Norma saw Camille as helping her, sharing an apartment and the expenses of her new life; Camille saw Norma as a kind of shield from the dangers she always attracted. But out of Camille's sympathy and Norma's hunger there came warmth. Norma was fraught with conventional clichés, but she was guileless; she was as sincere as she could be in her limited outlook on life--and her delight in suddenly feeling "free" was a sign that her pseudo-conventionality was governed not by choice but by accident. The more that Camille thought of helping Norma, the more pleasure they gleaned from their relationship; and the more Camille communicated her thoughts to Norma, the more ecstatic the ingénue became.

As explained in the chapter on alienation, there is throughout East of Eden the implication that a need for love is at the root of evil. A pattern of rejection by their fathers followed by revenge on their brothers and subsequent guilt and unhappiness is found in two generations of Trasks with Charles and Caleb as the "dark" brothers. Adam Trask learned that Charles hated him because he was jealous of their father's love. Despite this, he does not realize that he has favored his son Aron over Cal in the same way that

his father favored him. Adam and Cal experience momentary reconciliation when Adam gets Cal out of jail after he has been picked up in a gambling house raid. Cal is astonished to hear his father admit he has failed him.

"You see, I don't know," said Adam. "I don't know anything about you."

Cal wanted to throw his arms about his father, to hug him and to be hugged by him. He wanted some wild demonstration of sympathy and love. He picked up his wooden napkin ring and thrust his forefinger through it. "I'd tell you if you asked," he said softly.

"I didn't ask. I didn't ask! I'm as bad a father as my father was."

Cal had never heard this tone in Adam's voice. It was hoarse and breaking with warmth and he fumbled among his words, feeling for them in the dark.¹⁵

Cal learns that Adam himself has been jail and has robbed a store.

"I don't believe it," Cal said weakly, but the warmth, the closeness, was so delicious that he clung to it. He breathed shallowly so that the warmth might not be disturbed.¹⁶

Adam says, "' . . . I haven't seen my sons as people. . . .'" He looked right into Cal's eyes and smiled, and Cal ached with affection for him."¹⁷ After their discussion, it seems that a new, lasting relationship has been established.

When Cal was in the kitchen Adam looked inward at himself with wonder. His nerves and muscles throbbed with an excited hunger. His fingers yearned to grasp, his legs to run. His eyes avidly brought the room into focus. He saw the chairs, the pictures, the red roses on the carpet, and new sharp things--almost people things but friendly things. And in his brain was born

¹⁵ Steinbeck, East of Eden, p. 454.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 455.

sharp appetite for the future--a pleased warm anticipation, as though the coming minutes and weeks must bring delight. He felt a dawn emotion, with a lovely day to slip golden and quiet over him. He laced his fingers behind his head and stretched his legs out stiff.

In the kitchen Cal urged on the water heating in the coffeepot, and yet he was pleased to be waiting. A miracle once it is familiar is no longer a miracle; Cal had lost his wonder at the golden relationship with his father but the pleasure remained. The poison of loneliness and the gnawing envy of the unlonely had gone out of him, and his person was clean and sweet, and he knew it was. He dredged up an old hatred to test himself, and he found the hatred gone. He wanted to serve his father, to give him some great gift, to perform some huge good task in honor of his father.¹⁸

Cal then explains that he has in the past hated his brother, but, he says, "'I don't hate him now. I won't ever hate him again. I don't think I will hate anyone, not even my mother--'"¹⁹ The result of this slip is that Adam sternly lets Cal know that he trusts him not to hurt Aron with the truth about Kate.

But Adam still does not realize that he controls Cal by his love or rejection and he makes the same mistake his own father made: he rejects a gift from Cal. Rejection of a gift means to Cal, as it did to Charles, a rejection of love. Cal retaliates by revealing Kate to Aron. As Cal expected, the truth is unbearable to Aron, and the "good" brother joins the army and is killed in World War I. In effect, Cal has killed Aron. As he learns these things, Adam suffers a series of strokes.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 457.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 458.

The servant Lee has in the past discussed with Adam the scholarship of his Chinese relatives. Their interpretation of the Hebrew word "timshel" in the story of Cain and Abel is "thou mayest" rather than "thou shalt" or "do thou," so that God, in this passage in the Bible, in referring to sin, would say to Cain, "'Thou mayest rule over him.'" Lee's belief in the importance of man's freedom to choose his course and triumph over sin prompts him to speak to Adam about Cal.

Cal said, "Lee--you can't."

"I have to," said Lee. "If it kills him I have to. I have the choice," and he smiled sadly and quoted, "'If there's blame, it's my blame.'" Lee's shoulders straightened. He said sharply, "Your son is marked with guilt out of himself--out of himself--almost more than he can bear. Don't crush him with rejection. Don't crush him, Adam."

Lee's breath whistled in his throat. "Adam, give him your blessing. Don't leave him alone with his guilt. Adam, can you hear me? Give him your blessing!"

A terrible brightness shone in Adam's eyes and he closed them and kept them closed. A wrinkle formed between his brows.

Lee said, "Help him, Adam--help him. Give him his chance. Let him be free. That's all a man has over the beasts. Free him! Bless him!"

The whole bed seemed to shake under the concentration. Adam's breath came quick with his effort and then, slowly, his right hand lifted--lifted an inch and then fell back.

Lee's face was haggard. He moved to the head of the bed and wiped the sick man's damp face with the edge of the sheet. He looked down at the closed eyes. Lee whispered, "Thank you, Adam--thank you, my friend. Can you move your lips? Make your lips form his name."

Adam looked up with sick weariness. His lips parted and failed and tried again. Then his lungs filled. He expelled the air and his lips combed the

rushing sigh. His whispered word seemed to hang in the air:

"Timshell!"

His eyes closed and he slept.²⁰

Thus Cal is reconciled with his father because his father released him from his anguish. While Adam may not live to enjoy this reconciliation, Cal is free to face his future and to try to overcome his weaknesses without a dreadful cloud of guilt overshadowing his life.

Ethan Hawley says, in The Winter of Our Discontent, that he presumes "that every family has a magic thing, a community thing that inflames and comforts and inspires from generation to generation."²¹ But certainly it is not ordinary for such a "thing" to play a role in real life that his mound of translucent stone does for him in this novel. Symbol of the basic, most natural and reliable unit of human beings, the family, this talisman is anything that a Hawley wants or needs it to be to represent Life or to give solace and meaning to the seeker. Ethan is pleased to observe that the stone is important to Ellen, his daughter, and this makes him feel closer to her. Ellen has followed her father also in her outlook on life: it is she who turns her brother in for plagiarizing famous speeches in his winning "I Love America" essay. Father and daughter are essentially honest people who live in an unscrupulous world and share a sense

²⁰ Ibid., p. 602.

²¹ Steinbeck, The Winter of Our Discontent, p. 143.

of values which Ethan violates in performing the deeds that help him gain money.

Suffering guilt, Ethan wonders to himself "what my payment would be and when demanded. If I took my talisman down to the Old Harbor and threw it in the sea--would that be acceptable?"²² However, such a symbolic act cannot resolve the moral problem in The Winter of Our Discontent as it did in The Pearl when Kino thrust the pearl back into the sea and returned to the Whole. Ethan could not restore the status quo, for his new state of knowledge has made him aware that formerly only ignorance and complacency made life seem acceptable to him.

Ellen knows he is troubled; she caresses him before he sets out for the "walk" from which he does not plan to return. At his "secret place" he prepares to take his life.

I . . . reached in my side pocket for my razor blades and I felt the lump. Then in wonder I remembered the caressing, stroking hands of the light-bearer. For a moment it resisted coming out of my wet pocket. Then in my hand it gathered every bit of light there was and seemed red--dark red.

A surge of wave pushed me against the very back of the Place. And the tempo of the sea speeded up. I had to fight the water to get out, and I had to get out. I rolled and scrambled and splashed chest deep in the surf and the brisking waves pushed me against the old sea wall.

I had to get back--had to return the talisman to its new owner.

Else another light might go out.²³

²² Ibid., p. 260.

²³ Ibid., p. 311.

The talisman has symbolically effected the reconciliation of Ethan Hawley with his daughter.

Until The Winter of Our Discontent, concern for morality was an impediment to reconciliation of Steinbeck characters. Conversely, in this novel, it is only Ethan and Ellen who are concerned with morality, and they are reconciled because of this common concern as well as their love. It would seem that there has been a gradual change in the values of the author--a shift in emphasis. Love, sincerity, and freedom from false standards are and always have been requisite to happiness. But the new Steinbeck hero has a different outlook on honesty. He cannot abandon social and moral responsibility and expect to live in peace. Significantly he rejects the opportunity for a tempting adulterous relationship. When no one else worries about what is happening to our society, Steinbeck's protagonist does, and he does not give in to society or set himself apart from it as other Steinbeck heroes have done. In this story, the enemy is not a system; the solution can be found only in each individual conscience.

A general look at all the novels of John Steinbeck indicates that circumstances which may provide reconciliation between characters are those in which there is an absence of the things which cause alienation: most often, factors associated with the pursuit of success (lust for money, position, power; respect for organized conventions; pride,

selfishness, and jealousy). There must be communication between the characters--an absence of misunderstanding, discipline, and demanding emotions. Also, there must be, in the nature of the individuals, the capacity to love and the desire to be loved. Reconciliation may then be achieved if the right psychological moment occurs.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Critics of John Steinbeck stress above all his love for mankind. They describe his value of human traits based on love: compassion, understanding, sympathy, brotherliness, benevolence. They note that the people Steinbeck loves are most often found in the lower strata of society where people lack possessions that make them selfish, where they are open and natural in their behavior. Critics observe that to Steinbeck what is natural is good, and that it seems to the novelist that the behavior of lower classes is most nearly in harmony with natural laws, that lower-class people are more practical, realistic, and self-sufficient than those of the upper classes, as well as more willing to share what they have and to help each other. Thus the down-trodden prove for the novelist that the greatest goodness and happiness is that which comes out of the performance of acts of humanity and brotherly love. Romantic love is good if it vents natural passions, but the love intrinsic to comradeship is the most rewarding. Still, while observing his love of all mankind, critics observe that Steinbeck asserts the primacy of the individual; for only a man alone can

initiate reforms and give direction to the group. Men who love their brothers enough to sacrifice themselves, who attempt to pay a debt to humanity owed by all men, are the most meritorious.

Because he loves mankind and believes in the need of all men for love to appreciate the fullness of life, Steinbeck's values are based on love. Qualities in men which indicate their love for one another or their ability to adapt to life successfully are the ones he admires; the only material things he values are those which promote a life which is happy without being competitive or insecure. Specifically, he values unselfishness; honesty; gallantry; kindness to the downtrodden, the elderly, the misfits; uninhibited sexual relationships; skillful and adaptable people; land; and "home." He distrusts money and business because he feels that the acquisition and preservation of money interfere with man's instincts for love. Similarly he opposes man-made laws, religions, and social conventions when adherence to them violates his own code based on what he believes is man's naturally moral behavior.

Strongly desiring man's happiness, John Steinbeck is pre-occupied with the factors that prevent it--factors that cause alienation between human beings. He feels that every person has a capacity for affection, and that if men would only love one another, many of their problems would not exist. Instead, men often reject each other, or are otherwise

shut out from love, for reasons that originate from three major causes: their pursuit of success, their lack of communication, or their fundamental nature. The first cause alienates people who are driven or made to feel secure by the standards and conventions supported by society. They sacrifice feeling the warmth of the brotherhood of man to gain material possessions or to maintain special positions in society; proud of what they have, they establish laws, embrace religions, become jealous and afraid.

The second major cause of alienation is the lack of communication. The failure to understand common needs, individual differences, and honest emotions keeps many people away from the state of communion.

Finally, as a non-teleological thinker Steinbeck acknowledges that there are some natural qualities in men which cause their alienation; unfortunate traits like cruelty or guilt, or fortunate ones like willingness to sacrifice communion in order to lead or create, are qualities inherent to some men which lead them to experience isolation.

Essentially lonely creatures, men must abandon inferior goals to be completely happy--to enjoy reconciliation with one another or to have the even greater sensation of being part of the "whole" at the expense of personal communion. To enjoy reconciliation, people must be devoid of emotional impurities effected by a lust for property, a fear of society, or a lack of understanding. They must trust each other.

And they must love. Even meeting these qualifications does not guarantee a man communion with others, but he must be ready for that experience if the opportunity for reconciliation occurs.

The one goal for man greater than the happiness achieved in communion with other human beings is to make a contribution toward the total happiness, the general well-being of all society. A man able and willing to sacrifice himself for this end is the new Steinbeck hero.

It seems significant to this study to note that the first seven novels of John Steinbeck almost all conclude with scenes which illustrate the loneliness or isolation of men. But beginning with The Grapes of Wrath, the conclusions of most of the novels depict scenes of reconciliation or at least indicate that the characters will be reconciled. Reconciliation of characters in the concluding scenes comes to them as no accident or coincidence; it is a reward for their inner growth toward accepting Steinbeck's values or for accommodation to Steinbeck's reality.

Moreover, there has been a gradual shift in emphasis in the values of Steinbeck in the thirty-two years spanned by publication of these novels. Out of this shift a new hero has evolved. The author's earlier novels primarily reflect concern for individual man to the exclusion of concern for society en masse, as though to say that, to be happy, each man must live for himself. Certain novels in the author's

middle period--In Dubious Battle, The Grapes of Wrath, and The Moon Is Down--differ from others that continue that approach by showing concern for large segments of society. From the time of The Wayward Bus, however, Steinbeck faces society as a whole, trying to help man see the sources of his frustration and unhappiness and to show him how to live. The author seems to have concluded that if all men of integrity reject society, society will be lost. Steinbeck has always believed in brotherly love; his later works emphasize the need for men of integrity to accept rather than reject society, with all its imperfections, and to work toward improving it for the sake of the world's most precious species--man.

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