A STUDY OF JOHN STEINBECK'S MICROCOSMS

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PREFACE

John Steinbeck has been severely criticized and labeled a primitivist for depicting lives withdrawn from contemporary society. The purpose of this study is to examine Steinbeck's feelings toward withdrawal and "natural" man in order to see if such criticism is warranted. I shall also try to discover Steinbeck's views of contemporary civilization in the works where the withdrawn characters are found.

I wish to thank Dr. Samuel H. Woods, Jr., not only for his valuable guidance and assistance in the preparation of this thesis but for his suggestion that the pastoral implies criticism and that perhaps Steinbeck's pastoral novels, Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row, were actually written in criticism of contemporary society, a suggestion which led me to an investigation of Steinbeck's views of withdrawal and civilization. I also wish to thank Dr. Mary Rohrberger for her careful reading of the manuscript and for her helpful suggestions concerning it.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

John Steinbeck has had a very diversified career. Between 1929 and 1962, he has written eighteen novels, six non-fictional works, seven plays and film scripts, and numerous pamphlets and short stories. His books have been chosen for numerous local literary awards and as Book of the Month Club selections. He has received the Pulitzer Prize, and he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962. His record of achievements sounds distinguished; however, critics have been rather wary of Steinbeck.

In my study of Steinbeck criticism, I found many contradictory remarks made by authoritative critics concerning Steinbeck. Critics claim that Steinbeck writes on three levels (and each critic names a different three), thinks "non-teleologically," is extremely diversified in his writings, is easily compared with earlier writers, confuses man with animals and seems pre-occupied with man's animalistic tendencies, is both a primitivist and not a primitivist, is a mystic, a realist, and a sentimentalist, and is both a writer in the naturalistic tradition and a writer not in the naturalistic tradition. About the only point on which the critics concur is that Steinbeck's work has declined since World War II, and even on this point they disagree about the causes of the decline.

Steinbeck is a popular writer, as can be evidenced by the sale of his books. The reasons given for his popularity are varied. John S. Kennedy contends that perhaps Steinbeck's preoccupation with life and living is "the main reason for his popularity and influence...He has won both critical and popular acclaim, largely, it would appear, because he is, within limits, an affirmative writer....He does not fit into any of the categories of negativism prevalent in this age's fiction." [1] The Swedish Academy praised Steinbeck when awarding him the Nobel Prize for Literature for "his at one and the same time realistic and imaginative writings, distinguished as they are by a sympathetic humor and social perception," and for his expounding of the truth "with an unbiased instinct for what is genuinely American, be it good or bad." [2] F.W. Watt believes that Steinbeck is popular because of the range of moods he represents--angry, gay, tender, erotic, thoughtful, sad, whimsical--and because of his power to communicate sympathetically and refreshingly an awareness of the experiences of common humanity. [3] H.G. Wells has referred to Steinbeck as "that amazing genius," [4] and even Maxwell Geismar, who is generally adversely critical of Steinbeck, notes Steinbeck's popularity by stating that "Steinbeck is perhaps closer to the American audience than any other comparable writer. The traits in him which fluster the critic are those which endear him to mankind." [5] Steinbeck has recently received a few laudatory comments concerning his position among contemporary authors. George Snell in 1961 said of Steinbeck that "He gives promise still of being our most gifted all-round novelist, with the greatest feeling for the basic human values, the surest sense of the novelist's obligations to drama and the most lavish story-telling ability since Mark Twain's." [6] Joseph Fontenrose begins his Preface to his 1963 book on Steinbeck by stating that "It is hardly too

much to say that John Steinbeck is now that most eminent of living American novelists." [7] Andre Malraux has said that Steinbeck has given him the "greatest satisfaction" of the "Big Five"--Dos Passos, Hemingway, Faulkner, Caldwell, and Steinbeck. [8] Steinbeck does have a prominent position in our literature according to some few critics, but these are not numerous and are not the most authoritative and best known critics of contemporary literature, and Brooks, Warren, and Blackmur have not even found Steinbeck sufficiently engaging to discuss.

Not all of the critical remarks concerning Steinbeck are as commendatory as the ones listed above. Most of the better known critics have some word of disparagement for Steinbeck. Alfred Kazin still, in 1945, felt Steinbeck to be a "distinguished apprentice" even after a dozen books. [9] Edmund Wilson states that "It is hard to feel that any of his books, so far, is really first rate" and mentions the "ever-present paradox of the mixture of seriousness and trashiness in the writing of Mr. Steinbeck." [10] F.W. Watt also mentions the extremes found in Steinbeck's works: "mixtures of warmth, tenderness and subtlety, but also tastelessness, crudity, and sentimentality; brilliant comedy mixed with adolescent facetiousness; intense human charity and magnanimity fading off into lax and shallow morality; powerful vision beside superficial and pretentious preaching." [11] Edward Wagenknecht thinks that Steinbeck's position in our fiction "and even his future remain...quite undefined and hypothetical." [12] R.W.B. Lewis, [13] W.M. Frohock, and Norman Coussins are dissatisfied with Steinbeck's characters. [14] Many critics have complained of Steinbeck's tendency to portray animalistic characters, and some believe that he is too pre-occupied with the lower forms of life to portray convincing human characters. Edmund Wilson, along with Stanley Edgar Hyman, Claude-Edmonde Magny, and Alfred Kazin, [15] has

criticized Steinbeck's constant preoccupation with biology and his "tendency to present human life in animal terms." [16] Another disparaging comment is found in the New York Times made by the regular reviewer for the newspaper, Orville Prescott, who was frank enough to say, "Perhaps, after all, Steinbeck is a one-book author /The Grapes of Wrath/ and that book still tinges with a rosy hue the spectacles of reviewers of all his subsequent books." [17] Even though some lesser known critics do admire Steinbeck, most do not.

One aspect of Steinbeck about which the critics do concur is that his work has declined since World War II. Warren French notes in the Preface to his book John Steinbeck (New York, 1961) that "John Steinbeck is not critically fashionable today. Steinbeck's novels since World War II have not lived up to his earlier works." Even Peter Lisca, who usually commends Steinbeck's works, agrees that Steinbeck's latest attempts have sunk to the level of expression of a "third-rate popular journalist." [18] Edward Wagenknecht also mentions Steinbeck's disappointing record during the postwar years. [19] R.W.B. Lewis asserts that perhaps Steinbeck's career is finished:

> Steinbeck's literary reputation is not very high at the moment, and I see few reasons why it should grow greater in the future. It has declined a good deal since its peak during the war years....It declined in Europe, where Steinbeck had been confusedly but advantageously associated with writers like Hemingway and Faulkner, with whom Steinbeck has little in common....At the same time, Steinbeck is no doubt in some vague way established as a novelist. I see that a university press is bringing out a doctoral dissertation on Steinbeck's fiction, and a volume of critical essays about him by several hands has made its appearance. Thus he has been accorded the respectful burial which is our contemporary American way of honouring living writers whom we have pretty well decided not to read any longer....His career to date has the shape of a suggestive, a representative, and a completely honourable failure. If, as Faulkner has rather perversely contended,

> a writer is to be measured these days by the extent and quality of his failure, Steinbeck must inevitably be reckoned among our most sizeable novelists. [20]

Steinbeck criticism branches off into many phases, and one of them is his comparison by critics to writers before him. Steinbeck has been compared to Thornton Wilder for The Pastures of Heaven (New York, 1932) because of the poetical descriptions and the fantasy, and to William Faulkner because of the "mordant quality in some of the tales." [21] Because of Steinbeck's emphasis upon the god of fecundity in To a God Unknown (New York, 1933), critics have compared Steinbeck to D.H. Lawrence. In Dubious Battle (New York, 1936) has caused Steinbeck to be compared with Frank Norris, Jack London, and Upton Sinclair "because he had taken the step from art to argument in this book." [22] Joseph Warren Beach and Andre´ Gide comment that many of Steinbeck's short stories remind one of Chekhov. [23] Floyd Stovall in 1943 mentioned Wolfe and Steinbeck as representing the most significant tendencies in American fiction [24] and also compared Steinbeck's social philosophy to that of Whitman, Emerson, and Jefferson in that they are "all at one in their faith in man's power to rise above circumstances and advance toward the ideal." [25] Peter Lisca has compared Steinbeck to Hawthorne, especially through their common theme that ambition separates one from humanity. [26] W.O. Ross has praised Steinbeck by comparing his thinking to that of Comte's. [27] Another writer with whom Steinbeck has been compared by George Snell and Hugh Holman has been Dickens. Snell has noted that "There has been something Dickensian about Steinbeck's writing." He believes though that Steinbeck has a "twentieth-century frankness that would have dumbfounded Dickens." [28] The comparisons of Steinbeck with

other writers from Dickens to Norris to Comte show the diversity of Steinbeck's works.

Steinbeck has written books on so many different subjects that it is hard to classify his writings. His varied and uneven fiction has led to mixed critical appraisal; therefore, critical guides are comparatively hard to come by. "Steinbeck has never been a predictable or classifiable writer." [29] Steinbeck began his career by writing an adventure novel about the life of a pirate (Cup of Gold, New York, 1929), and then he next turned to a collection of episodes dealing with the frustrated lives of people living in a valley in his native California (The Pastures of Heaven). In addition to his short stories, pamphlets, and screen scripts, since that time he has written a novel about the Wayne family's move to California and their hardships with and love of the land (To a God Unknown); a story of paisanos living near Monterey, California (Tortilla Flat, New York, 1935); a novel about strikes and organized violence in the fruit industry (In Dubious Battle); a varied collection of episodes (The Long Valley, New York, 1938); a novel and play about itinerant laborers moving from ranch to ranch to find work (Of Mice and Men, New York, 1937); the famous novel of the dispossessed farm workers who journeyed from Oklahoma to California to find work, which set an all-time high in advance sales (95,000) (The Grapes of Wrath, New York, 1939); a novelette about a Norwegian community's reaction to Nazi invasion during the war (The Moon is Down, New York, 1942); a novel about a scientist and his friends who live on Cannery Row (Cannery Row, New York, 1945); a novel about a child's experience in the adult world and his growth to maturity (The Red Pony, New York, 1945); an allegorical tale about a bus trip and the passengers (The Wayward Bus, New York, 1947); a fable about

an Indian who finds "The Pearl of the World" (The Pearl, New York, 1947); a play-novelette about circus people, farmers, and sailors who represent all mankind's basic love of humanity (Burning Bright, New York, 1950); a novel about three generations of the Trask and Hamilton families in California (East of Eden, New York, 1952); a satire on French politics (The Short Reign of Pippin IV, New York, 1957); a sequel to Cannery Row (Sweet Thursday, New York, 1954), which was made into a musical comedy; a novel about an Eastern bankrupt man from an Old New England, formerly well-to-do family who comes in contact with evil and is unable to combat it effectively (The Winter of our Discontent, New York, 1961); and a narrative of his travels across the United States with a poodle "in search of America" (Travels with Charley, New York, 1962). As Edmund Wilson says of Steinbeck, "When his curtain goes up, he always puts on a different kind of show." [30]

Peter Lisca notes that even though each of Steinbeck's books seems a new departure, critics have begun to classify them into three main groups: social protest, quaint and picturesque comedy, and simple rural life. [31] Of Steinbeck's variability, Frohock states that "We have been right all along in suspecting that there are really two Steinbecks." He lists the two as the angry man of The Grapes of Wrath, In Dubious Battle, and some short stories, who has tension in his work, and the other Steinbeck "who seems at times to be only a distant relative of the first one, the warm-hearted and amused author of Tortilla Flat, Cannery Row, The Wayward Bus, and The Pearl...increasingly soft and often downright mushy." [32] Some critics, including Geismar, Claude E. Jones, Edmund Wilson, and Edward Wagenknecht see Steinbeck's "versatility" only as proof that he cannot find himself as a writer. [33] Steinbeck himself

says of his multi-faceted works,

> My experience in writing has followed an almost invariable pattern. Since by the process of writing a book I have outgrown that book, and since I like to write, I have not written two books alike. Where would be the interest in that? The result has been...that every book has been attacked by a large section of the critical family. I can also prove by old notices that the preceding book is compared favorably over the current one and the one before over the preceding one. To a sensitive reader this would indicate that starting nowhere I have consistently gone down. [34]

In addition to his versatility, other tendencies in Steinbeck's works are noted by different critics, and many of them seem contradictory. Warren French, in the Preface to John Steinbeck, states that Steinbeck's three general tendencies are to write allegorically, to be pre-occupied with non-teleological thinking, and to hold the theology of the nineteenth century American transcendentalists. [35] F.I. Carpenter notes a single purpose which has directed all of Steinbeck's literary thought: "Always his fiction has described the interplay of dream and reality; his thought has followed the development of the American dream." [36] J.S. Kennedy states that the common theme of Steinbeck's work may be called "reverence for life" and that Steinbeck's concept of life is that its fullness is found only in the group and never in the individual. [37] Percy Boynton asserts that Steinbeck's work is that of an "evangelist." [38] Woodburn O. Ross notices that the controlling attitude in Steinbeck's work is that he accepts the scientist's representation of life: "To a great extent, though not completely, Steinbeck accepts the ethical implications which many have seen in natural science." [39] This naturalistic tendency of Steinbeck's is the one upon which much critical disagreement abounds. Kennedy calls Steinbeck a "sentimentalist"

instead of a naturalist. He quotes Clifton Fadiman as once saying that "The classification of Steinbeck as a hard-boiled writer is incorrect; if there must be a comparison with eggs, Steinbeck is soft-boiled." Kennedy goes on to say that "'Steinbeck, the realist' is a misnomer, for the flight from reason which, in common with so many of his contemporaries, he has indulged in, has prevented him from seeing reality as it is, in its entire fullness and proportioning and significance." [40] Wagenknecht seems to be right when he says that "Steinbeck's relation to naturalism is difficult to define." [41]

Naturalism is a broad literary term made up of numerous aspects: determinism, animalism, love of earth, and primitivism, among others. One aspect of naturalism with which I am specifically concerned is the motif of escape or retreat from the conventions of civilization found in Steinbeck's works. Many critics have called Steinbeck a primitivist because they feel that he writes literature which deals with withdrawal from society and advocates a return to nature. The question of whether he is actually advocating the withdrawal or irresponsibility which he depicts requires consideration. The main works dealing with escape from responsibility which have received the most discussion are Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row because of what the critics call the novels' lack of a moral code and advocacy of laziness and irresponsibility. However, in my opinion, Steinbeck is not really advocating the irresponsible, withdrawn existence depicted in the microcosms found in these two books but is using this type of life as a vehicle to satirize or criticize the conventions of contemporary society from which the people of these novels have withdrawn. One will also find, on close inspection of these two novels, that Steinbeck is also satirizing the irresponsible lives of the

characters of the novels.

Many critics have denounced Steinbeck for his portrayal of the "natural" life of irresponsibility especially in Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row. Maxwell Geismar says of him,

> In the variety of his early 'solutions' to civilization--the life of egoistic adventure, and that of bloody daring, the primitive way, the natural and anti-social life, the return to the soil, the dabblings with the abnormal--Steinbeck seems almost to traverse the entire circuit of contemporary artistic escapes. In him are reflected the evasions of his generation. [42]

W.M. Frohock also accuses Steinbeck of writing escape literature and of admiring the irresponsible characters whom he portrays in Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row:

> In Cannery Row and Tortilla Flat Steinbeck's people have no commitments to society and no inhibitions worth mention. They get drunk and fight, and afterward their kindliness and native innocence make them extremely sorry if they have hurt someone or burned a house or done anything else to be ashamed of....One reason for our liking these characters so much is that they can do everything we would like to and cannot....What makes them so delightful is that, for the man who can afford to buy Steinbeck's books, they are characters of pure escape literature. [43]

In the same vein Edwin Burgum speaks of "decadence represented by an amused tolerance for ignorance, poverty and depravity" in Tortilla Flat.[44] Wagenknecht asserts that "There is a glorification of immorality and irresponsibility (so long as they are coupled with kindliness of spirit) in The Pastures of Heaven, Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row,"[45] a view similar to those of Prescott, Boynton, Holman, Fairley, and Chamberlain. [46]

Is Steinbeck really a primitivist or an advocate of the "natural" life as these critics imply? Is he really tolerant of irresponsibility and of those who "get away from it all"? Does he really endorse the code

of the paisanos of Tortilla Flat or of the boys in Cannery Row? Does he admire them enormously and consider them "the salt of the earth"? Are they really as irresponsible as they have been denounced as being, and do they live "without idea or ideals"? Are Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row to be read only for fun as "holiday books"? These are important questions to consider if one is to understand Steinbeck thoroughly.

Steinbeck seems to wish that his characters could withdraw from the evils of conventional society, and indeed many of them do. However, even though his sympathies are with those who would like to find a retreat, in studying the motif of retreat in Steinbeck's works, I have found that his characters who withdraw either come back into civilization or commit suicide in their places of retreat. Getting back to nature, or leading a purely primitive or irresponsible life, is not the solution to the problems of contemporary society that Steinbeck proposes. After studying the microcosms found in Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row especially, I found that Steinbeck does not advocate withdrawal from responsibility or ease as his answer. Instead, through his mock-heroic attitude, he satirizes the way of life that the main characters of these two novels lead rather than endorsing their irresponsibility. In addition, his dramatic endings show the failure of the type of existence portrayed in the microcosms of these novels. Plot as well as tone reveals to the reader Steinbeck's attitude toward withdrawal from cares and responsibility. Instead of really being tolerant of irresponsibility and immorality as many critics have accused him of being, I believe that he uses the actions of the shiftless characters found in these two novels as a means not only to criticize their way of life but also to criticize contemporary conventions of society. A few critics do note that Tortilla Flat and

Cannery Row are satirical, but I have found no thorough exploration of the satire in the novels. I plan to investigate the satire of the novels and to study Steinbeck's attitudes toward withdrawal from responsibility and his attitudes toward the conventions of the society from which his characters have withdrawn.

CHAPTER II

THE MOTIF OF RETREAT

In order to understand Steinbeck's views concerning escape to an environment, withdrawn from the responsibilities and conventions of a society concerned primarily with monetary gain and social prestige, one should begin by examining Steinbeck's views of society's conventions. The next step would be to look at the minor instances in Steinbeck's novels and stories of retreats from these conventions to discover how Steinbeck feels about the escapes made by his characters. As was mentioned in the Introduction, Steinbeck does object to the restraints of conventions. He has written many social protest novels and has displayed his opposition to contemporary civilization in his numerous other works. Critical statements on this point are plentiful, and only a few instances will suffice. Charles C. Walcutt asserts of Steinbeck,

> Thus we see in novel after novel...a radical distrust of commerce, industry, the business out-look, and conventional piety and morality. The latter he finds either fraudulent or irrelevant to the fundamental problems of men--except insofar as they interfere....His ideals draw him to naturalistic primitivism and toward mysticism; his despair at the inhumanities of commercialism pulls him toward the opposing extremes of retreat and revolution. [1]

Warren French contends that "Steinbeck feels that civilization destroys childlike innocence so that no ambitious man can survive in society without succumbing to the mediocrity entailed in love of money." [2] He maintains that Steinbeck does not really argue against the existing

system of civilization but argues that it must be "overhauled." [3] The four organizations with which Steinbeck finds fault are, in French's opinion, organized charity, organized religion, organized government, and organized private enterprise. Joseph Fontenrose remarks that a recurring theme of Steinbeck's fiction is that the "values of a simple people are opposed, as more healthy and viable, to the values of a competitive society." [4]

Steinbeck's social protest novels, The Grapes of Wrath, Of Mice and Men, and In Dubious Battle, are evidence of his dislike for existing society, and even in The Pastures of Heaven, it is "modern civilization which is the curse which defeats Steinbeck's characters and is the source of our troubles. In his return to the past, in the advocacy first of the lawless adventurer, and then of the pagan seeker who renounces his culture, Steinbeck makes clear his opposition to the restraints of society." [5] The Wayward Bus, too, is filled with middle-class, "respectable," materialistic people who have surrendered large portions of their souls to the superficial conventions of a society ruled by business and advertising. Steinbeck does not approve of these characters. The "saved" ones (allegorically) are the natural, unspoiled characters who are not involved in the materialistic enterprises of contemporary society. Therefore, Steinbeck's attitudes toward the conventions and restraints of society are evident. There are many characters in Steinbeck's fiction who cannot exist amidst the problems of contemporary society and, therefore, find a place of retreat.

A retreat occurs in Steinbeck's works when a character finds that the responsibilities and conventions of a commercialized society are becoming too involved for him and he feels that he needs to find a place

to be alone. Numerous instances can be found in Steinbeck's fiction of caves, thickets, shelters, and houses where characters have gone to be alone. Most of the characters who retreat from society find a hiding place close to nature. However, some are able to find the isolation needed only by retreating to a house or other shelter which they feel separates them from the rest of humanity. In some of the retreats depicted by Steinbeck, one finds only an individual, and in others he will find groups of individuals who have withdrawn from society and banded together to form a type of civilization of their own which may be viewed as a microcosm of the real world. In some of the set-apart places, all that takes place is that the character rests, communes with nature, and re-orients himself to live amidst the problems of a commercialized society. In others, anti-civilizations are intuitively set up by those who have found it difficult to exist among the prevailing conventions of society. However, in all of the retreats, whether it be a cave or a house, there is a definite pattern found which I believe is a recurring motif in Steinbeck's works. While the characters are withdrawn from society and in their places of hiding, they decide either to return to civilization or to commit suicide. Withdrawal from the responsibilities of conventional society is not the answer which Steinbeck proposes. Steinbeck's retreats fail as social institutions because ease and irresponsibility do not lead to fruitful endeavors. Even though Steinbeck does criticize many of the conventions of contemporary society, he nowhere advocates isolation, either of an individual or of a group withdrawn from the rest of society.

Throughout the range of Steinbeck's works down through the years, one is able to find numerous instances of characters who have withdrawn from the cares, responsibilities, restraints, and conventions of society.

In Steinbeck's first published work Cup of Gold (1929), one finds the disillusioned Merlin who has withdrawn from society and lives in a retreat in Wales. He is a sage and was once a poet but is not mentioned as a descendent of the Arthurian Merlin. The boy Henry Morgan, the protagonist of the novel, is sent to Merlin for counsel when Henry decides that he must leave his home valley to see the wonders of the world. The physical description of Merlin's retreat is found at the first of the novel:

> Young Henry turned soon from the road to climb up a broad trail which soared to Crag-top and then over the wild mountains. Its windings could be seen from below until it disappeared into the great cliff. And on the topmost point of the trail dwelt Merlin....Merlin had shut up his song in the stone house on Crag-top and kept it a strict prisoner there while he grew old....The Crag-top house was round like a low gray tower with windows letting sight on the valley and on the mountains....The pathway narrowed on young Henry as he climbed. Its inward side was a stone wall cutting into the heavens knife-like, and the misshapen, vague images along the way made it seem the rock temple of some old, crude god whose worshipers were apes. There had been grass at first, and bushes, and a few grave, twisted trees; but upward all living things died of the rock loneliness. Far below, the farm-houses huddled like feeding bugs and the valley shrank and drew into itself...The path broke on a top of solid stone, semi-spherical like the crown of a hat; and on the peak of its rise was the low, round house of Merlin, all fitted of irregular rough rocks, and a conical roof on it like a candle-snuffer...The single room was thick carpeted in black, and on the walls were hung harp and spear-head harp and spear-head all the way around; small Welsh harps and the great bronze leaf spears of the Britons, and these against the unfinished stone. Below these were the all-seeing windows wherefrom you might look out on three valleys and a mighty family of mountains; and lower still, a single bench circled around the room against the wall. There was a table in the center loaded with tattered books, and beside it a copper brazier, set on a Greek tripod of black iron. (CG, 20-28)

When Henry tells Merlin of his dreams to go to the Indies, we hear of Merlin's loneliness.

> 'I think I understand,' he said softly. '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 greats have been little boys who wanted the moon; running and climbing, they sometimes caught a firefly. But if one grows 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.'
>
> 'But did you never want the moon?' asked Henry.
>
> ...'I wanted it. Above all desires I wanted it. I reached for it and then--then I grew to be a man, and a failure... I am sorry for you, boy with the straight, clear eyes which look upward longingly. I am sorry for you, and Mother Heaven! How I envy you!
>
> 'I don't want to be forgotten, Henry. That is greater horror to an old man than death--to be forgotten.' (CG, 29)

As Henry leaves, he looks back once " as the black silhouette of the house sank behind the crag's shoulder, but no light had flashed behind the windows. Old Merlin sat there pleading with his harps, and they echoed him jeeringly." (CG, 29)

In this first retreat depicted by Steinbeck one finds an old, disillusioned bard who lives alone with his memories. He makes no more songs because as Merlin tells the man who describes him as "an old molted eagle roosting up on that crag-top" (CG, 31), "I have grown to be a man and there be no songs in a man. Only children make songs--children and idiots." (CG, 32) In the Preface to Cup of Gold, Lewis Gennett calls Merlin "a sort of key to Steinbeck himself"; perhaps the statement that Merlin makes about the ability of children and idiots to make songs is further proof of Steinbeck's preference for Innocence over Maturity. Mature men do not grasp at fireflies, either. As far as the pattern of retreat in this novel is concerned, Merlin, even though very lonely, is able to exist in his hiding place and does not return to civilization because of his art and memories. He also has a

dwelling place filled with finery and is not, therefore, dwelling in a primitive hiding place. He does not return to society, for he has no need to. He has his memories, his books, and his harps. He is a lonely artist dwelling away from men. Warren French notes that "It is Merlin who triumphs in the long run...Merlin who has retreated from society rather than obey his girl's injunction to make a success of himself." [6] Even though Merlin is able to stay in his retreat, by withdrawing from society, he is not socially a success. The people of the valley fear Merlin and will not accept him. Isolation always results in social failure in Steinbeck's novels. Merlin is able to survive alone, but many other of Steinbeck's characters in his later novels who retreat to a more primitive place, rather than to a well-furnished one, find that they must return to civilization or die.

The un-idyllic nature of withdrawal is found especially in Steinbeck's second book, The Pastures of Heaven (1932), where a Spanish Corporal on a scouting mission rides to the "top of the ridge, and there he stopped, stricken with wonder at what he saw--a long valley floored with green pasturage on which a herd of deer browsed. Perfect live oaks grew in the meadow of the lovely place, and the hills hugged it jealously against the fog and the wind...'Holy Mother!' he whispered. 'Here are the green pastures of Heaven to which our Lord leadeth us.'" (PH, 2) The irony of the situation is that the next 238 pages are filled with stories of people who come to the Valley to retreat from the problems of life and are ruined because of living in the Pastures of Heaven. They suffer in their retreats because of their actions. Edward Wicks is discovered by the villagers to be a fraud. Tularecito, a perfect example of Steinbeck's interest in the sub-normal, is committed to the asylum

for the criminal insane at Napa because he assaults a man who interferes with his digging in the earth for gnomes. Helen Van Deventer kills her insane daughter. The Lopez sisters, because of their quiet lives and the ostracism of the other ladies in the Valley, decide to leave the Pastures of Heaven and go to San Francisco and become prostitutes. Molly Morgan, the school teacher, has the beautiful image of her father shattered when a drunken bum turns out to fit her father's description. John Whiteside's house burns down, and his dream of establishing a family dynasty is shattered. All is not as ideal in a beautiful, withdrawn place as one would expect. The people of the beautiful valley are full of evil. "California's idyllic 'Pastures of Heaven' are seen to be earthly and temporal after all, made, as it were, not in God's image but in man's." [7] Therefore, in my opinion, it seems foolish for some critics to claim that Steinbeck approves of withdrawal. His retreats are not depicted as being paradisaical.

At the end of The Pastures of Heaven, Steinbeck ironically presents a group of tourists who are viewing the valley and wishing, for individual reasons, that they could live there because of its peaceful atmosphere and feeling of being withdrawn from the rest of the world.

> They climbed stiffly from their seats and stood on the ridge peak and looked down into the Pastures of Heaven. And the air was a golden gauze in the last of the sun. The land below them was plotted in squares of green orchard trees and in squares of yellow grain and in squares of violet earth. From the sturdy farmhouses, set in their gardens, the smoke of the evening fires drifted upward until the hillbreeze swept it cleanly off. Cowbells were softly clashing in the valley; a dog barked so far away that the sound rose up to the travelers in sharp little whispers. Directly below the ridge a band of sheep had gathered under an oak tree against the night.
>
> 'It's called Las Pasturas del Cielo,' the driver said... 'The name means Pastures of Heaven...' (PH, 241)

A business man silently makes plans to buy the Pastures for real estate purposes. A priest thinks fondly of what a parish such an idyllic place would make: "It would be quiet there; nothing dirty nor violent would ever happen there to make me sorry nor doubtful nor ashamed." (PH, 241) The reader knows just how quiet and non-violent the valley would be. A young man thinks of living there, but his wife answers,"'There's ambition to think of, and all our friends expect things of us. There's your name to make so I can be proud of you. You can't run away from responsibility and cover your head in a place like this. But it would be nice.'" (PH, 241) Perhaps this is Steinbeck speaking: It would be nice to retreat, but one cannot run away from the cares and responsibilities of civilization.

Steinbeck's belief about the fact that withdrawal would seem to be ideal but that an isolated person is not suitable in contemporary society is found in the story of Junius Maltby in The Pastures of Heaven. Maltby had worked in an office for ten years and suddenly retreats to the valley for his health. There he grows superbly lazy. He marries a widow and lives by a meadow stream, dangles his feet in the water, and reads his pocket copy of Stevenson's Kidnapped. Junius Maltby even reads books by the stream while his wife and children are dying of the black fever.

> When the bodies were all gone, Junius went back to the stream and read a few pages of Travels with a Donkey. He chuckled uncertainly over the obstinancy of Modestine. Who but Stevenson could have named a donkey 'Modestine'? (PH, 89)

One baby son survives the fever, and Junius rears him on goat's milk and hires an old German to help him on his farm. The German turns out to be as indolent as Junius. The baby, Robbie, named after Robert Louis Stevenson,

soon grows up, and he and his father and the old German spend their time dangling their feet in the stream, reading, and discussing books.

> Sometimes the people of the valley hated Junius with the loathing busy people have for lazy ones, and sometimes they envied his laziness; but often they pitied him because he blundered so. No one in the valley ever realized that he was happy. (PH, 90)

When Robbie comes of age to attend school, the people of the valley insist that he be enrolled. Through Robbie's innate ability and his knowledge gleaned from all the books he had heard discussed by the stream, he becomes the leader of the younger boys at school and makes many friends. He is completely accepted even though he comes to school barefoot and ragged. Some of the boys even copy his mode of dress. Many of his friends begin to come to the Maltby place to hear Junius tell tales from great books and teach them new games. Everything is going well for Robbie until the "respectable" members of the school board, who are extremely concerned with conventions and appearances, decide that he should be given new clothing to wear to school. When the clothes are presented to Robbie, he runs away and hides. Junius and Robbie are not aware of their poverty until they receive the clothing, and they immediately leave for San Francisco in order for Junius to get another job so that Robbie will not be brought up in poverty. As they are boarding the bus, Junius tells the school teacher that "'He's lived like a little animal too long, you see. Besides, he doesn't know how nice it will be in San Francisco.'" (PH, 114) "The irony of Junius' words indicates Steinbeck's own attitude." [8] The irony is evident here in the contrast between mature, conventional civilization and primitivistic innocence. Primitivism and escape from responsibility will not work in our society,

however, as is depicted in this story, even though Steinbeck seems to wish that it would. This story was published separately in 1936 and included an epilogue which makes Steinbeck's sympathies even more obvious:

> I've often wondered whether Junius got a job and whether he kept it...I for one should find it difficult to believe he could go under. I think rather he might have broken away again. For all I know he may have come back to the Pastures of Heaven. [9]

Then Steinbeck suggests his return and his meetings with the farmers where he tells them about Heroditus, Delphi, and Solomon. The last words in the book are, "I don't know that this is true. I only hope to God it is."

Steinbeck seems to be sympathetic with those who need to get away from conventional society. However, an individual in isolation is never socially acceptable in Steinbeck's works. Perhaps the social failure of an isolated individual stems from Steinbeck's preference for groups rather than individuals. According to Steinbeck, the fulness of life is always found in the group and never in the individual. However, as will be made clear, the isolated microcosms in Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row fail also. The only individuals or groups which succeed in Steinbeck's works are those which have reconciled both primitive and civilized methods of living, such as the Joads or Doc of Cannery Row. Steinbeck does sympathize with some of his "natural" characters more so than with some of his petty, middle-class "respectable" ones, but he realizes that a reconciliation of the two natures must be reached before a full man is drawn. The only ones who will not "split under civilization" as Henry Morgan says in Cup of Gold are those who are both children of nature and of civilization "whom ease will not make irresponsible, nor the world corrupt." [10]

That Steinbeck does not propose retreat as a solution to solving the problems which society poses is further evidenced by the un-idyllic nature of the retreat in Steinbeck's next novel To a God Unknown, published in 1933. This novel contains an example of a primitivistic character who mystically unites with the earth and retreats from the problems of civilization to a huge rock in a shaded glen of trees in order to commune with nature. Joseph Wayne, the protagonist of the novel who first retreats in the late 1800's from civilized Vermont to primitive California, feels that he is mystically part of the earth, a "symbol of the earth's soul." (TAGU, 90) After his family arrives to live with him, he and his brother Thomas and an Indian farm worker Juanito are out riding the range one day and come upon the glade, which will be Wayne's retreat:

> The glade was nearly circular, and as flat as a pool. The dark trees about it, straight as pillars and jealously close together. In the center of the clearing stood a rock as big as a house, mysterious and huge. It seemed to be shaped, cunningly and wisely, and yet there was no shape in the memory to match it. A short, heavy green moss covered the rock with soft pile. The edifice was something like an altar that had melted and run down over itself. In one side of the rock there was a small black cave fringed with five-fingered ferns, and from the cave a little stream flowed silently and crossed the glade and disappeared into the tangled brush that edged the clearing....Joseph's eyes were wide, looking at the glade as a whole. He saw no single thing in it...
>
> 'Be still a moment, Tom....There's something here. You are afraid of it, but I know it. Somewhere, perhaps in an old dream, I have seen this place, or perhaps felt the feeling of this place.' He dropped his hands to his sides and whispered, trying the words, 'This is holy--and this is old. This is ancient--and holy.' (TAGU, 39-40)

Joseph later finds out from Juanito that this place is a symbol of fertility to the Indians and a place where expectant Indian women come for consolation. As they are leaving the glen, Joseph tells Thomas

not to be afraid.

> 'There's something strong and sweet and good in there. There's something like food in there, and like cool water. We'll forget it now, Tom. Only maybe sometime when we have need, we'll go back again--and be fed.' (TAGU, 41)

Joseph does come to the glen many times in order to be "fed" or revived, especially when he is worried about the drought and losing his land. One day when Joseph is away, Elizabeth, Joseph's pregnant wife, wanders to the pines, mainly because she instinctively senses that Joseph does not want her to go there. She forces her way through the screen of vines and brambles which bar her way and crawls through an opening on her hands and knees. As she finally enters the glen, Steinbeck describes her as follows:

> Her eyes grew wide with wonder at the circle of trees and the clear flat place. And then her eyes swept to the huge, misshapen green rock. She whispered to herself, 'I think I knew it was here. Something in my breast told me it was here, this dear good thing.' ...The green moss covering of the rock was as thick as fur, and the long ferns hung down over the little cavern in its side like a green curtain. Elizabeth seated herself beside the tiny stream, slipping secretly away across the glade, and disappearing into the underbrush. Her eyes centered upon the rock and her mind wrestled with its suggestive shape.
>
> 'Some place I've seen this thing,' she thought. 'I must have known it was here, else why did I come straight to it?' Her eyes widened as she watched the rock, and her mind lost all sharp thought and became thronged with slowly turning memories, untroubled, meaningless and vague... Always the whispering went on over her head and she could see out of the corners of her eyes how the black trees crowded in and in on her. It came upon her as she sat there that she was alone in all the world; every other person had gone away and left her and she didn't care. (TAGU, 136)

Elizabeth becomes frightened of the place and feels that there is something "malicious in the glade, something that wanted to destroy her." (TAGU, 169)

She becomes afraid of the big, crouched rock and runs from it and later tells Joseph about the incident. She asks him to take her there when she is well. Joseph tells her that it is a strange place, and he "will have to think whether she should go." (TAGU, 149) After the child is born, Joseph does take her to the glen in order to show her that there is nothing to fear. Elizabeth, when climbing the huge rock, loses her footing on the moss, strikes her head against the rock, and dies. As she dies, the rain begins to come.

At the end of the novel when the drought has come to the valley, Joseph retreats to the rock in order to watch the stream which flows out of it. He rejects his family and the responsibilities of civilization and goes to live at the rock. He communes with the rock: "'We will sit here, barricaded against the drought.'" (TAGU, 217) As Joseph watches the stream dry up, he first sacrifices a calf to the stream, and when this death does not bring rain, he sacrifices himself:

> When he had rested a few minutes, he took out his knife again and carefully, gently opened the vessels of his wrist. The pain was sharp at first, but in a moment, its sharpness dulled...Then his body grew huge and light. It arose into the sky, and out of it came the streaking rain.
> 'I should have known,' he whispered. 'I am the rain...I am the land...The grass will grow out of me in a little while.' (TAGU, 244)

This is the most primitive retreat described by Steinbeck. Only nature is present. The retreat is beautiful but is by no means idyllic. There is supernatural evil here, and two people lose their lives because of escaping to it. Elizabeth feels evil and death, and is ironically sacrificed to the rock, the "dear good thing," that was to "feed" them. In this retreat Joseph has to decide whether to return to civiliza-

tion, drought, and family responsibilities or to die. A person cannot exist in such a primitive retreat, it is seen. Joseph tries to exist there, away from any other form of life, but ends up killing himself in order to replenish the earth.

There are numerous other hiding places found in Steinbeck's works. Most of them are secluded places in the woods. I have found only one critic, Peter Lisca, who mentions that Steinbeck does make use of hiding places. Lisca states that "Steinbeck's novels and stories often contain groves, willow thickets by a river, and caves which figure prominently in the action...Coming to a cave or thicket by the river symbolizes a retreat from the world to a primeval innocence...While the cave or the river thicket is a 'safe place,' it is physically impossible to remain there, and this symbol of primeval innocence becomes translated into terms possible in the real world." [11] In Of Mice and Men, written in 1937, there is further evidence of Steinbeck's concern with withdrawal and its consequences. His pattern of withdrawal is discovered to be the same as in his previous books. The first scene of this novel occurs in a clearing by the side of a pool. George, one of the migrant ranch hands, tells Lennie, the simple-minded follower, that if there is any trouble at the ranch where they plan to work, that he is to come straight back to this retreat and hide here until George comes. At the end of the book, in order to save Lennie from a lynching mob, George has to kill Lennie in this beautiful retreat where,

> ...the deep green pool of the Salinas River was still in the late afternoon. Already the sun had left the valley to go climbing up the slopes of the Gabilan mountains, and the hilltops were rosy in the sun. But by the pool among the mottled sycamores, a pleasant shade had fallen.
>
> A water snake glided smoothly up the pool, twisting its periscope head from side to side; and it swam the

> length of the pool and came to the legs of a motionless heron that stood in the shallows. A silent head and beak lanced down and plucked it out by the head, and the beak swallowed the little snake while its tail waved frantically.
>
> A far rush of wind sounded and a gust drove through the tops of the trees like a wave. The sycamore leaves turned up their silver sides, the brown, dry leaves on the ground scudded a few feet. And row on row of tiny wind waves flowed up the pool's green surface...(OMM, 172-173)

The action of the heron and snake seems to foreshadow George's murder of Lennie. The idea of withdrawal is also found in the dream that George and Lennie have that "Someday--we're gonna get the jack together and we're gonna have a little house and a couple of acres an' a cow and some pigs and live off the fatta the lan'...and have rabbits." (OMM, 29) This plan of withdrawal never comes true though because the conventions of civilization interfere, and George has to shoot Lennie in the little clearing which is beautiful but turns out not to be idyllic.

Another example of retreat is found in "The Harness," one of the episodes of The Long Valley, Steinbeck's next book (1938). A character who objects to the restraints of convention and respectability is Peter, whose wife, Emma, forces him to be quite respectable and makes him wear a web harness to hold back his shoulders. Peter retreats to the brothels of the town once every year to get away from the restraints of conventional respectability. He says, "'I'd've busted if I hadn't got away.'" (LV, 119) After Emma dies, he thinks of all of the things he can do now that he is free and first of all removes his harness. However, after a few days of freedom from restraint, he returns to the same pattern that his wife had established rather than retreat from the conventions. "The best things in life come to those who throw off the harness--so much is apparent. But the harness always goes back on. The dream ends and reality takes over...So it always is in Steinbeck's world." [12] Emma,

though dead, still controls Peter. "'She didn't die dead...She won't let me do things,'" Peter says. (LV, 129) Emma seems to represent conventional society with its restraints that Peter wants to break away from but has to return to. One cannot live in a brothel. In another short story in the same volume, "The White Quail," Mary Teller withdraws to her garden as her hiding place instead of being an active participant in life and ironically creates more tensions than if she had remained a part of civilization.

Steinbeck continues depicting the un-idyllic nature of a withdrawn place in The Grapes of Wrath, written in 1939. Another example of a character who retreats from the way of life imposed upon him by the changing times is Muley. When all of his neighbors and relatives leave their lands in Oklahoma which have been bought by land companies and move to the West to try to find employment, Muley retreats to the woods and hides out among the deserted homes, camping out and living off of wild jackrabbits and other small game. When he meets Tom Joad and Jim Casy as they are going to the Joad's house, he asks them if they think he is "touched" because of the way he lives. "'Touched, nothing,' said Joad. 'If you're touched, I wisht ever'body was touched.'" [13] One might feel sympathetic toward Muley's cause and his love of his home land, but one is able to see that such isolation is not a solution to the problems of an expanding civilization. Muley's retreat is not ideal. He is reduced to an animal level and has to forage for food; he is constantly being hunted down by authorities; he has no company; he is exposed to the weather. As the Joads leave Oklahoma, they encourage Muley to join them, but he decides to remain in his primitive hiding places with no hopes for the future.

In The Wayward Bus, written in 1947, Juan Chicoy, the bus driver, tries to retreat from the bus (allegorically the world) and makes plans to go to Mexico and leave the bus stuck in the mud: "Why in God's name had he stuck to this as long as he had? He was free. He could do whatever he wanted to. Let them look for him. He might even see a note about it in the L.A. papers...Why in hell hadn't he gone back before?" 14 He does abandon the incapacitated bus with the plan in his mind of running away. He stops at an abandoned farmhouse and dreams of Mexico as he sleeps. He awakens to reality though and knows that his present way of life, even though restraining and sometimes boring, is the only civilized way to live, and he returns.

Through the years, Steinbeck has kept depicting retreats and withdrawals with the same pattern in mind. Other examples of retreats are found in East of Eden, Steinbeck's 1952 novel. Adam, the father of the Trask twins, used to hide from his father, Cyrus, every time he needed to be alone and think out a problem when he was a boy. Steinbeck says, "Adam retired secretly and walked out of the house and into the woodlot to a sheltered place behind a stump that he knew well. He settled deep between the protecting roots." (EE, 21) After he has reached maturity, Adam confesses to Cyrus that he had a retreat:

> ...Suddenly Adam said, 'You see that stump there, sir? I used to hide between the roots on the far side. After you punished me I used to hide there, and sometimes I went there just because I felt bad.'
>
> 'Let's go and see the place' his Father said. Adam led him to it and Cyrus looked down at the nestlike hole between the roots. 'I knew about it long ago,' he said. 'Once when you were gone a long time I thought you must have such a place, and I found it because I felt the kind of a place you would need. See how the earth is trampled and the little grass is torn?'...
>
> Adam was staring at his father in wonder. 'You never came here looking for me,' he said.

> 'No,' Cyrus replied. 'I wouldn't do that. Always you must leave a man one escape before death. Remember that! I knew, I guess, how hard I was pressing you. I didn't want to push you over the edge.' (EE, 26)

Adam's son Aron also finds a hiding place where he and Abra, his childhood girl friend, can go to be alone:

> On the edge of the field stood a little pump house, and a willow tree flourished beside it, fed by the overspill of water. The long skirts of the willow hung down nearly to the ground. Abra parted the switches like a curtain and went into the house of leaves made against the willow trunk by the sweeping branches. You could see through the leaves, but inside it was sweetly protected and warm and safe. The afternoon sunlight came yellow through the aging leaves. (EE, 423)

Cal, Aron's twin brother, knows the place, and at the end of the novel wants to go there after he finds out about Aron's death, but Abra holds him back and makes him face the real world, rather than retreating from it.

> 'Do you remember the willow tree?'
> 'I remember it.'
> He said, 'The branches come down like a tent and their tips touch the ground...'I want you to go inside the willow tree with me...'
> 'No,' she said. 'That's not right.'
> 'Don't you want to go in with me?'
> 'Not if you're running away--no I don't.'
> Cal said, 'What shall I do? Tell me what to do.'
> 'Will you listen?'
> 'I don't know.'
> 'We're going back,' she said.
> 'Back? Where?'
> 'To your father's house,' said Abra. (EE, 599)

Even Kate, the invincible, cruel mother of the twins, who tries to kill her husband, deserts the children, and runs a house of prostitution after that, has a hiding place.

> Then she built the lean-to and had it painted gray. She said it was because the light troubled her eyes, and gradually she began to believe the light did trouble her eyes. Her eyes burned after a trip to town. She spent more and more time in her little room. It is possible to some people, and it was possible for Kate, to hold two opposing thoughts at the same time. She believed that the light pained her eyes, and also that the gray room was a cave to hide in, a dark burrow in the earth, a place where no eyes could stare at her. Once, sitting in her pillowed chair, she considered having a secret door built so that she would have an avenue of escape. And then a feeling rather than a thought threw out the plan. She would not be protected then. If she could get out, something could get in. (EE, 474)

Kate poisons herself in the lean-to rather than return to the filthy "civilized" life that she had been leading. This retreat fits into the pattern of withdrawal found in Steinbeck's works since it is the place chosen to be the site of Kate's suicide.

Another example of withdrawal to a primitive retreat where suicide is contemplated is that found in The Winter of Our Discontent, Steinbeck's latest novel. Ethan Allen Hawley, the protagonist, has a secret retreat which he slips out of the house to go to one night after being tempted to evil during the day. He says of his retreat,

> It's odd how a man believes he can think better in a special place. I have such a place, have always had it, but I know it isn't thinking I do there, but feeling and experiencing and remembering. It's a safety place--everyone must have one, although I never heard a man tell of it....(WD, 43)
>
> On the edge of the silted and sanded up Old Harbor, right where the Hawley dock had been, the stone foundation is still high there. It comes right down to the low-tide level, and high water laps against its square masonry. Ten feet from the end there is a little passage about four feet wide and four feet high and five feet deep. Its top is vaulted. Maybe it was a drain one time, but the landward entrance is cemented in with sand and broken rock. That is my Place, the place everybody needs. Inside it you are out of sight except from seaward...That was the place I was headed for. I spent nighttide there before I went in the service,

> and the nighttide before I married my Mary, and part of the night Ellen was born that hurt her so bad. I was compelled to go and sit inside there and hear the little waves slap the stone and look out at the sawtooth Whitsun rocks...It's big changes take me there--big changes...It sounds uncomfortable and silly, sitting cross-legged in a niche like a blinking Buddha, but some way the stone fits me, or I fit. Maybe I've been going there so long that my behind has conformed to the stones. As for its being silly, I don't mind that...Sometimes being silly breaks the even pace and lets you get a new start....I don't think she /Mary/ knows about the Place. How could she? I've never told anyone. It has no name in my mind except the Place--no ritual or formula or anything. It's a spot in which to wonder about things...Now, sitting in the Place, out of the wind, seeing under the guardian lights the tide creep in, black from the dark sky, I wondered whether all men have a Place, or need a Place, or want one and have none. Sometimes I've seen a look in eyes, a frenzied animal look as of need for a quiet, secret place where soul-shivers can abate, where a man is one and can take stock of it. Of course I know of the theories of back to the womb and the death-wish....I call whatever happens in the Place 'taking stock.' Some others might call it prayer, and maybe it would be the same thing. I don't believe it's thought. (WD, 50-52)
>
> I said there was no ritual involved with the Place but that is not entirely true. Sometime on each visit I reconstruct Old Harbor for my mind's pleasure--the dock, the warehouses, the forests of masts and underbrush of rigging and canvas. And my ancestors, my blood...No nonsense of Madison Avenue then or trimming too many leaves from cauliflowers. /Ethan is a grocery clerk./ Some dignity was then for a man, some stature. A man could breathe. (WD, 54)

At the end of the novel, Ethan, after succumbing to temptation, returns to the Place at the time of the rise of the tide with a package of razor blades in his pocket: "There comes a time for decent, honorable retirement, not dramatic, not punishment of self or family--just good-by, a warm bath and an opened vein, a warm sea and a razor blade." (WD, 311) He plans to kill himself in the retreat, but finds that he has with him his family talisman, a stone, that he suddenly decides to pass on to his daughter; he has to fight the water to get out in order to return it to her so that her life might be guided by it. He almost kills himself in his Place but decides to return to the evils of civiliza-

tion, bribery, drunkenness, prostitution, cheating, and heartbreak.

As can be seen from the previous examples, a pattern of withdrawal has become established in Steinbeck's works through the years. A character who withdraws from life must have an artistic temperament or the comforts of life surrounding him in order to survive, as does Merlin in Cup of Gold, his first novel. Although Merlin does survive, his loneliness and isolation are evident, and he himself admits that he is a failure. If the character withdraws to a completely primitive place, however, he must return to society, as do Junius Maltby, Peter Randall in "The Harness," Juan Chicoy, and Ethan Allen Hawley, or either come to the realization that he must kill himself, as do Joseph Wayne and Kate. Through all of his novels from 1929 to 1961, one can see that Steinbeck is not sanctioning withdrawal as a means of escaping the evils of conventional society, even though he is sympathetic with those who would like to get away. He presents the ironical fact in all of his novels that the secluded places do not turn out to be as ideal as was first expected because of the actions that take place in them. [15]

In his latest book, Travels with Charley (1962), Steinbeck notes that everyone seems to want to get away:

> Under the big oak trees of my place at Sag Harbor sat Rocinante /his camping trailer/ handsome and self-contained, and neighbors came to visit, some neighbors we didn't even know we had. I saw in their eyes something I was to see over and over in every part of the nation--a burning desire to go, to move, to get under way, anyplace, away from any Here. They spoke quietly of how they wanted to go someday, to move about, free and unanchored, not toward something but away from something. I saw this look and heard this yearning everywhere in every state I visited. (TWC, 10)

One of the first people that Steinbeck meets on his trip comes out to view the trailer. Steinbeck says,

> And then I saw what I was to see so many times on the journey--a look of longing. 'Lord, I wish I could go.'
> 'Don't you like it here?'
> 'Sure. It's all right, but I wish I could go.'
> 'You don't even know where I'm going.'
> 'I don't care. I'd like to go anywhere.' (TWC, 25) [16]

Although many of Steinbeck's characters seem to want to withdraw and although civilization is not depicted by Steinbeck as being complete, neither are primitive societies. As is seen by the previous examples of the grove in To a God Unknown, the clearing in Of Mice and Men, the cave in The Winter of Our Discontent, and the valley in The Pastures of Heaven, Steinbeck does not picture primitivistic retreats, close to nature, as ideal either for groups or for individuals. In Steinbeck's books dealing with primitive societies, he certainly does not picture the primitive villages as the antidote for the miseries of contemporary society. In The Forgotten Village (New York, 1941), he depicts the ignorance, pain, crudity, and squalor of the villagers who will not accept medical help when a typhoid epidemic occurs. Only one young boy, the hero Juan Diego, is the least bit interested in modern science and civilization. Steinbeck also pictures the native village of Kino and Juana in The Pearl as one of illiteracy, filth, and poverty. "The scorpion that stings Coyotito /Kino's child/ is evidence that life near nature is not necessarily paradisaical." [17] In The Pearl Steinbeck depicts the civilized whites as sadistic, greedy, and guided only by money-making ambitions. He definitely shows his dislike of civilization but does not uphold withdrawal or primitivism as an answer to its problems. Kino and Juana retreat from their village and hide in a cave where their baby is killed. They then return to their village, the

only type of civilization that they know, according to the motif of retreat found in Steinbeck's works. In "Flight," also from The Long Valley, another of Steinbeck's stories of Mexican people, the ignorance and dirt of poverty is shown, but Pepe is innocent as long as he is at home, withdrawn. When he goes into town and mixes in society, he becomes involved in a murder and has to flee. He retreats, and is killed as he is running away.[18] It seems that Steinbeck is saying that neither primitivism nor contemporary civilization is perfect. It takes a reconciliation of both primitive and civilized methods of living to make a perfect existence.

It is evident from the above examples taken from the majority of Steinbeck's works that Steinbeck is quite concerned with withdrawal and its consequences. For thirty-three years he has depicted characters who have withdrawn from society, but he does not seem to advocate withdrawal as a solution to the problems of civilization. With Steinbeck's views toward retreat as an unacceptable method of existence and his motif of withdrawal in mind, let us look at the places set apart from conventional society pictured in Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row as microcosms reflecting the real world.

CHAPTER III

THE MICROCOSM OF TORTILLA FLAT

Tortilla Flat was written in 1935 and was refused by nine publishers before Covici-Friede agreed to take a chance on it. However, there were six printings of the book during the first year,[1] and the book was definitely a success, popularly as well as critically. Edmund Wilson has gone so far as to call Tortilla Flat Steinbeck's "most successful work artistically," [2] and Beach asserted in 1941,

> Tortilla Flat is the favorite with academic readers, and this for the obvious reason that it is most unmistakably among his books a literary feat. It is a very skillful blend of several varieties of comic writing; it recalls Don Quixote and Gil Blas and Anatole France and Charles Lamb. And in addition it recalls the simple heroic manner of Malory's 'Morte d'Arthur,' and the sweet simplicity of 'The Little Flowers of Saint Francis.'[3]

Steinbeck gives his reasons for writing the novel as growing out of his study of the Arthurian cycle.

> I wanted to take the stories of my town of Monterey and cast them into a kind of folk-lore. The result was Tortilla Flat. The Chamber of Commerce of Monterey, fearing for its tourist business, issued a statement that the book was a lie and that certainly no such disreputable people live in that neighborhood.[4]

Let us examine the neighborhood and the "disreputable" people who populate it to see what Steinbeck's views are toward this group.

The neighborhood where the "disreputable" people live is set apart from Monterey, and the paisanos who live in Tortilla Flat are free of most of conventional society's social ambitions and materialistic endeavors,

although they do have their own ambitions and material needs. Tortilla Flat may be viewed as a microcosm of the contemporary world with its own mores, customs, ambitions, and needs, which in many cases are opposite to those of contemporary society and in some cases are similar. The microcosm is physically set apart, just as the individual retreats of many of Steinbeck's other works are withdrawn from contemporary society; however, it differs in the fact that the microcosm is a small community containing groups of people interacting with each other, whereas the private retreats mentioned in the previous chapter are individual ones where mere physical withdrawal primarily takes place. In the microcosm more than physical retreat is involved. These people are mainly retreating from responsibility,and they group together and organize. It is ironic that Steinbeck, the foe of organization, immediately has these characters band together and form their own set of rules and conventions to fit their needs. Steinbeck seems much more interested in these groups than in some of his individual characters in their retreats; however, withdrawal from responsibility in both cases brings its dire consequences.

Steinbeck describes Tortilla Flat as follows:

> Monterey sits on the slope of a hill, with a blue bay below it and with a forest of tall dark pine trees at its back. The lower parts of the town are inhabited by Americans, Italians, catchers and canners of fish. But on the hill where the forest and the town intermingle, where the streets are innocent of asphalt and the corners free of street lights, the old inhabitants of Monterey are embattled as the Ancient Britons are embattled in Wales. These are the paisanos.
>
> They live in old wooden houses set in weedy yards, and the pine trees from the forest are about the houses. 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.
>
> What is a paisano? He is a mixture of Spanish, Indian, Mexican and assorted Caucasian bloods. His ancestors have lived in California for a hundred or two years. He speaks English with a paisano accent and Spanish with a paisano accent.

> When questioned concerning his race, he indignantly claims pure Spanish blood and rolls up his sleeve to show that the soft inside of his arm is nearly white. His color, like that of a well-browned meerschaum pipe, he ascribes to sunburn. He is a paisano, and he lives in that uphill district above the town of Monterey called Tortilla Flat, although it isn't a flat at all. (TF, 10-11)

The motif of retreat is found also in this novel. Steinbeck here depicts a rather "natural" microcosm which fails socially, where the people of the microcosm decide to die or leave it. The small community with which I shall be concerned is found in the quiet, withdrawn neighborhood of Tortilla Flat and is centered in an old house where Danny, a paisano of the Flat who was "related to nearly every one in the Flat by blood or romance," (TF, 12) and his friends, Pilon, Pablo, Big Joe Portagee, Jesus Maria Corcoran, and Pirate, live a life of ease away from the cares of conventional civilization. This is a group endeavor rather than an individual one but still fits the same pattern of withdrawal generally found in Steinbeck's works because it is isolated from contemporary society and because of the conclusions which can be drawn from its failure as a way of life. These men have all been exposed to the conventions of a society ruled by petty restraints and conventions and have withdrawn, perhaps involuntarily though, from conventional society to a quiet existence where they are guided by their instincts and feelings rather than by acquisitive, possessive ambitions induced by the society. This withdrawn place becomes the center of the microcosm where an anti-culture has been set up by the group.

The paisanos of the novel lead a very quiet, retired life in their retreat. They live in the house which Danny has inherited from his grandfather along with another house which Pablo and Pilon burn to the

ground after living there a few weeks. The establishment is described as a "low house streaked with old whitewash, uncurtained windows, blank and blind, with a paintless picket fence." (TF, 27) It has three rooms, a bed, and a stove in it. The windows have no curtains on them, but numerous cobwebs. This building is called by Steinbeck a "symbol of holy friendship, this good house of parties and fights, of love and comfort." (TF, 316) The paisanos do not encounter many problems in their daily lives. They awaken late in the morning, thoughtfully and slowly.

> It is a time of quiet, joy, the sunny morning. When the glittery dew is on the mallow weeds, each leaf holds a jewel which is beautiful if not valuable. This is no time for hurry or for bustle. Thoughts are slow and deep and golden in the morning. (TF, 47)

Clocks and watches are not used by the paisanos of Tortilla Flat. Their daily routine is as follows:

> They did not awaken quickly, nor fling about nor shock their systems with any sudden movement. No, they arose from slumber as gently as a soap bubble floats out from its pipe. Down into the gulch they trudged, still only half awake. Gradually their wills coagulated. They built a fire and boiled some tea and drank it from the fruit jars, and at last they settled in the sun on the front porch. The flaming flies made halos about their heads. Life took shape about them, the shape of yesterday and of to-morrow...The sun glistened in the pine needles. The earth smelled dry and good. The rose of Castile perfumed the world with its flowers. This was one of the best of times for the friends of Danny. The struggle for existence was remote. They sat in judgment on their fellows, judging not for morals, but for interest. (TF, 240-241)

"The friends had sunk into a routine," Steinbeck says, "that might have been monotonous for any one but a paisano...Occasionally the friends procured some wine, and then there was singing and fighting." (TF, 260) They spend much of their time drinking wine which they buy, borrow, or steal from Torrelli, the local boot legger, whose price is a dollar a gallon.

The friends never bother to work. They can always accumulate enough to eat and drink by other methods. Usually they are able to swindle someone out of something or even steal if it is necessary. Sometimes they comb the beach after a ship wreck and pick up any usable articles and either sell them or trade them for wine. They even resort to throwing rocks at men in mackerel boats during a mackerel run in hopes that the men will throw mackerel back at them. They do go to work for one day in order to make enough money to throw a party for Danny, their friend who has been letting them live with him. The people of the Flat never do completely recover from the shock of seeing the paisanos work a full day at cutting squids for Chin Lee. Usually though, they acquire most of their possessions through more devious means. When they steal, they do not steal for pleasure, but for need. They most usually rationalize their deeds afterwards. One of the first instances of Danny "at work" occurs when he goes to the back of a restaurant.

> 'Got any old bread I can give my dog?' he asked the cook. And while that gullible man was wrapping up the food, Danny stole two slices of ham, four eggs, a lamb chop and a fly swatter.
>
> 'I will pay you sometime,' he said.
>
> 'No need to pay for scraps. I throw them away if you don't take them.'
>
> Danny felt better about the theft then. If that was the way they felt, on the surface he was guiltless. He went back to Torrelli's, traded the four eggs, the lamb chop and the fly swatter for a water glass of grappa and retired toward the woods to cook his supper. (TF, 20-21)

Pilon is the theoretician of the group, and after moving into the house with Danny, Pilon discovers a source of food in Mrs. Morales' chicken yard next door. "After a moment of consideration, he opened a few small holes in the fence for the hens," Steinbeck notes.

> 'They will like to make nests in the tall weeds,' he thought kindly.
> 'We will live happily,' he thought again. (TF, 29)

A superb example of Pilon's power to steal and to rationalize the theft occurs when he comes upon a half-grown Plymouth Rock rooster scratching in the road. Steinbeck notes,

> It had come to that adolescent age when its voice cracked, when its legs and neck and breast were naked. Perhaps because he had been thinking of Mrs. Morales' hens in a charitable vein, this little rooster engaged Pilon's sympathy. He walked slowly on toward the dark pine woods, and the chicken ran ahead of him.
> Pilon mused, 'Poor little bare fowl. How cold it must be for you in the early morning, when the dew falls and the air grows cold with the dawn. The good God is not always so good to little beasts.' And he thought, 'Here you play in the street, little chicken. Some day an automobile will run over you; and if it kills you, that will be the best that can happen. It may only break your leg or your wing. Then all of your life you will drag along in misery. Life is too hard for you, little bird.' (TF, 31)

Pilon catches the chicken in the forest and "that chicken, which Pilon had prophesied might live painfully, died peacefully, or at least quietly." (TF, 32) After eating the chicken that evening, "Danny went out for a few moments and returned with some apples. 'The rain would have spoiled them anyway,' he apologized." (TF, 34)

The paisanos also receive most of their wine in a similar manner by elaborately swindling someone and rationalizing the idea in their own minds. When Pilon and Pablo, who at first "rent" Danny's second house before they burn it down and move in with Danny, find Jesus Maria Corcoran, who has just come into town, they discover that he has some money; they are able to talk him out of some of his money by asking him to move in with them and to rent from them and pay $2.00 in advance for

for the rent. They very logically present the advantages of living with a roof over one's head and suggest to Jesus Maria that he looks as if he were sick from exposure to the weather. They convince him of his own illness, and he hands over the money. They had originally planned to present the $2.00 to Danny for rent so that he could buy Mrs. Morales, his current lady friend, a box of candy. Their plan is diverted, though, when they deduce through another elaborate logical process that Danny might eat some of the candy himself and ruin his teeth, and they do not want to be the cause of Danny's dental trouble. They instead use the $2.00 to buy wine for Danny to give to Mrs. Morales. After the three friends get through drinking part of the wine, however, there is not much of a gift left.

Another such incident occurs when Pilon, Pablo, and Jesus Maria are in the woods one day and find a picnic party with a huge lunch basket. Pilon smells the odors emanating from the basket and tells his friends that he is going for a walk; he asks them not to bring the basket, if they can help it. In a little while, the picnickers hear a "dog bark, a rooster crow, high shrill laughter, the snarl of a wild cat, a little short scream and a cry for help." (TF, 84) When the two men and two women leave their basket and trot toward these versatile sounds, Pablo and Jesus Maria steal the food. The four friends, including Danny, have quite a feast that night.

On the surface, it seems as if the desires of the paisanos are relatively simple. All they seem to want out of life are the four essentials listed by Pilon: "Wine, food, love and firewood." (TF, 70) As is evident, their love of wine and their drinking ability are prodigious

and unbelievable. They constantly buy wine with any money that they can get their hands on and are able to consume gallons in an evening's time. One example of the method of drinking will suffice: "Pilon tilted the bottle over his elbow. He swallowed four times and over a pint left the jug...He raised the jug and the red wine gurgled happily down his throat." (TF, 56) As far as their sexual life is concerned, the paisanos are quite promiscuous. They seem a little direct and "innocent" at times in their sexual habits. Big Joe, the most nearly animal of the group, makes love to Tia Ignacia in the middle of a muddy street and is almost run over by a policeman. Big Joe is the most depraved of the paisanos. Steinbeck comes out openly and says of Big Joe that whenever Big Joe was led into the pit that "vile and false harpies and pimps" are always ready to lead people into, that Big Joe "was not very moral and had no revulsion for the pit: he liked it." (TF, 123) Big Joe Portagee is not the only immoral paisano. Danny, for instance, is roused by Jesus Maria in the middle of his love affair with Mrs. Morales and notified that his second house that Pilon and Pablo rent for a while is burning down. He simply asks, "Is the fire department there?" Jesus Maria answers in the affirmative. "Well, says Danny, "if the fire department can't do anything about it, what does Pilon expect me to do?" (TF, 79) All of the people of Tortilla Flat attend the fire except Danny and Mrs. Morales.

Critics have attacked Tortilla Flat as a vile, vulgar book without any type of moral code. Some have denounced it as completely indecent. Maxwell Geismar calls the paisanos "ignorant, lazy, obviously 'immoral,' childlike, starving, slovenly, and obviously very happy." Beach says

of Danny and his friends that in addition to their good qualities, they are also "shiftless and lazy; they are inveterate if petty thieves; they are ignorant and superstitious; they are something very like drunkards; and these are hardly traits which their author could regard as moral virtues. He /Steinbeck/ likes them, he says, because they are people who merge successfully with their habitat," [6] a term which seems to show that they are a little bit primitivistic or animalistic. Bracher notes that the paisanos have the repose of "healthy animals or of primitive men." [7] Even as late as 1963, Burgum accuses Steinbeck of admiring the paisanos' way of life and compares them to lower organisms who wait "for pleasure to come their way in the form of food or chance acquaintance.... Decadence could hardly go farther." [8]

Steinbeck was quite concerned when the first reviewers of Tortilla Flat perceived that these people were curicus or quaint, dispossessed, or underdoggish. He had never thought that they were anything of the sort. Critics were extremely hard on Steinbeck's paisanos, and I believe that perhaps they did not look at the lives of the paisanos carefully enough. On the surface, it seems as if all that the paisanos care for is fulfilling their primitive, biological needs and drinking a little wine. However, if one reads the novel carefully, he finds that in the microcosm, or little community of the paisanos, there is quite an instinctive anti-culture set up rather than just a primitive existence. The paisanos have an instinctive, well developed code to which they adhere rigidly. One finds that these "shiftless, inveterate bums" are quite humanitarian. However, at the same time, one receives the impression that there is an element of irony in Steinbeck's description of the good qualities of the paisanos because he does not want to give the impression

that withdrawal and irresponsibility are solutions to the problems of contemporary society. Steinbeck says of Pilon that "He was a lover of beauty and a mystic...That not too perfect Pilon who plotted and fought, who drank and cursed, trudged slowly on; but a wistful and shining Pilon went up to the sea gulls where they bathed on sensitive wings in the evening. That Pilon was beautiful, and his thoughts were unstained with selfishness and lust. And his thoughts are good to know." (TF, 39) "...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." (TF, 99) Of Jesus Maria Corcoran, Steinbeck says, perhaps ironically though, "He was a pathway for the humanities. Suffering he tried to relieve; sorrow he tried to assuage; happiness he shared. No hard nor haunted Jesus Maria existed. His heart was free for the use of any one who had a use for it. His resources and wits were at the disposal of any one who had less of either than had Jesus Maria. He it was who carried Jose de la Nariz four miles when Jose's leg was broken. When Mrs. Palochico lost the goat of her heart, the good goat of milk and cheese, it was Jesus Maria who tracked that goat to Big Joe Portagee and halted the murder and made Big Joe give it back. It was Jesus Maria who once picked Charlie Marsh out of a ditch where he lay in his own filth..." (TF, 173)

Another of Jesus Maria's humanitarian efforts occurs when he finds a Mexican corporal with a sick baby in the gutters of Monterey and saves him from a policeman. He takes the corporal to the house, where the paisanos try to help the sick baby. Jesus Maria goes to Mrs. Palochico's house to borrow goatmilk for the baby. Big Joe and Pablo get an apple box and line it with a sheepskin coat for the baby. They even try to feed the baby some of their mackerels. They also are very kind to the

distraught corporal who has lost his wife to a captain. They feed him, give him wine, and listen to his story of his plan for his son to become a general so that he can attract ladies and take them away from captains.

Steinbeck mentions the humanitarian projects of the paisanos but also leaves the impression that the men are not completely virtuous or altruistic in their motives. One of their endeavors is to save Senora Teresina Cortez and her nine children from starvation after the bean crop fails. The Teresina brood has been brought up on nothing but beans--beans for breakfast, lunch, and supper. As the Senora says, "Beans are a roof over your stomach. Beans are a warm cloak against economic cold." (TF, 228) The paisanos hear of the plight of the Cortez brood after big rains ruin the bean crop of Monterey. The paisanos steal from the Hotel Del Monte and the Paladini Company crates of vegetables, fish, meat, cantaloupes, pumpkins, abalone steaks, lettuce, tomatoes, celery, among other items for the family. Steinbeck says, "If you could see the complaint book at the Monterey Police Department, you would notice that during this time there was a minor crime wave in Monterey." (TF, 232) Their feelings toward this type of helpfulness are summed up by Pablo: "Theft robbed of the stigma of theft, crime altruistically committed--what is more gratifying." (TF, 232) However, one feels that their actions are not completely honorable because the last thing which Steinbeck notes in this chapter is that Teresina is idly wondering which of Danny's friends is responsible for her impending pregnancy. One must also note that this episode cannot be completely described as altruistic since by helping the Cortez family, the men harm those from whom they steal. However, the paisanos have no concern for respectable society or those involved in capitalistic enterprises, such as the owners of the establish-

ments from whom they steal the food. Therefore, they have no guilt feelings about their theft. They never steal from whose who might be hurt by their actions.

This type of helpfulness is an instinctive part of the paisanos' spontaneous way of life. When the paisanos first meet the feeble-minded man called Pirate, who has been hiding his money at the rate of twenty-five cents a day from his sale of fire-wood for many months, they at first plan to find out where the money is hidden for selfish purposes, even though they rationalize that they will use the money to buy new clothes and shoes for Pirate since he does not know how to spend his money wisely. However, after Pirate comes to live with the paisanos, gives them the money for safe-keeping, and tells them that the purpose of the money is to buy a gold candlestick for San Francisco de Assisi, not one of the men will touch a cent of it. Steinbeck does not make it clear if they leave it alone out of superstitious fear or virtuous restraint, but they are quite careful never to take any money after it is entrusted to their care. One time, the bad one of the lot, Big Joe Portagee, takes $1.00 out of the sack, and the others beat him into unconsciousness, cut his back with knives, and put salt in the wounds as punishment for taking money from the Pirate's sack. Steinbeck notes that "The bag of money had become the symbolic center of the friendship, the point of trust about which the fraternity revolved. They were proud of the money, proud that they had never tampered with it. About the guardianship of the Pirate's money there had grown a structure of self-respect and not a little complacency. It is a fine thing for a man to be trusted." (TF, 198) Their helpfulness is seen in their attitude toward the Pirate after he comes to live with them even though their concern at

first is motivated chiefly by greed. They allow the dogs, which had lived with him in his old chicken house, sleep in Danny's house with Pirate. They loan him their clothes for church on the day that he presents the candlestick; they also go through quite an elaborate process to get him ready to attend church.

> On Sunday morning the preparation was violent. They washed the Pirate and inspected his ears and his nostrils. Big Joe, wrapped in a blanket, watched the Pirate put on his blue serge trousers. Pilon brought out his father's hat...(TF, 211)

Therefore, it is evident that the paisanos are not the completely degenerate bums or "good-for-nothings" that so many critics have complained that they are, even though Steinbeck does leave the impression that some of their motives for their humanitarian endeavors are not completely virtuous, but the motives for most of the humanitarian endeavors of contemporary society are rarely found to be virtuous either. The paisanos do have spontaneous feelings, and their lives are quite involved at times because of this fact. In addition to being helpful, there are other instinctive rules which the paisanos observe. They do not interfere in each other's business. When Pilon first goes to see Pirate, no one questions where he is going. When one of the paisanos tells a story, none of the others interfere, even though some of the parts are not exactly the way they remember because "it is Pablo's or Pilon's or Danny's story," and he can tell it any way he wants without interference. When one of the paisanos finds a girl to visit, the others ask no questions. As was noted earlier, another part of their code is that they only steal necessities and only from those for whom they have no concern. They do not steal from the other paisanos of Tortilla Flat or from each other

in seriousness. If they do take something from one of the other paisanos, they always return it. When Big Joe first comes to live with the paisanos, he steals Danny's blanket to exchange for wine, and Pilon makes Big Joe work all night digging as a penance. Danny, at the end of the novel, leaves the house and lives a riotous life and steals, rapes, drinks, and mutilates houses; however, the paisanos do not worry about any of his deeds until he steals Pilon's shoes. The paisanos become enraged at this act, because as Pilon says, "It is a crime against friendship to take them. And that is the worst kind of crime." (TF, 269)

Consequently, it is hard to agree that the paisanos are merely lower forms of life which exist only for biological pleasures. They are recognizably,complicated human beings with responsibilities of their own and a type of civilization of their own, instinctively set up in defiance of some of the conventions of the civilization which the microcosm reflects. Considering the intricacy of the paisanos' 'philosophic-moral system' "it is not really possible to say, as does Edmund Wilson, that these paisanos are 'human beings so rudimentary that they are almost on the animal level,' or that they are 'cunning little dolls that amuse us like pet guinea pigs or rabbits.' Neither is it possible to agree with Freeman Champney that Tortilla Flat shows 'man as animal...without any other pretensions.'" [9] Many of the critics who have attacked the way of life of the paisanos have stressed that Steinbeck romanticizes their life, one of irresponsibility and laziness. I must disagree with these critics, though, after a careful reading of the novel. Steinbeck does satirize them and their type of life, but he approves of the paisanos to some extent because they do have some good qualities which are easily

noted: they have spontaneous humanitarian impulses and are many times more concerned about others than about themselves, even though they many times profit in some way from the venture; they are interested only in the necessities of life and not in the luxuries, except for wine, and are therefore not involved in the competitive schemes of society to which Steinbeck so highly objects; their actions are spontaneous rather than planned; they are altruistic, by their own definition, and able to laugh at themselves. Even their laziness is in some ways good. As Steinbeck notes in Sea of Cortez, "Only in laziness can one achieve a state of contemplation which is a balancing of values, a weighing of one against the world and the world against itself. A busy man cannot find time for such balancing." [10]

Throughout the novel, one can see that Steinbeck is implicitly arguing that the stratum of Tortilla Flat has as much of a right to follow its code as does the competitive, commercial world. This argument is connected with Steinbeck's "is" philosophy or his non-teleological thinking in that his philosophy is concerned with what actually is rather than what might have been. He presents the paisanos' way of life as it actually is, and since he does not fully approve of their irresponsible behavior his satire is discovered in his mock-heroic attitude and ironical side comments. Since Steinbeck is familiar with the paisano way of life as it actually exists, and since Danny is modeled after a paisano that Steinbeck once knew, Steinbeck does not try to argue that this way of life should be changed to fit the conventions of the commercialized world. He seldom implies that the dominant culture has any significant virtues, while the out-groups do at least have spontaneity, even if they are also irresponsible. In approaching conventional society

and the social out-groups through his "is" philosophy, he does not appear to judge the out-groups by the cultural standards of the dominant culture, but seems to approach them with some objectivity. His fairly careful description of the out-groups' standards and mores might suggest that he believes those standards and mores have as much relative validity for those groups as those of the dominant culture have for it. However, the microcosm cannot sustain life because of its lack of direction and its irresponsibility. "Danny and his friends are the direct antithesis of the middle class; they do what they want to do, and they cheerfully pay the price for leisure and independence. Steinbeck likes them, as he likes all viable viological specimens. He refuses to criticize them by the standards of modern, industrialized man, and he is bitterly resentful of the patronizing attitude of middle-class tourists who find them 'quaint' and 'picturesque.'" [11]

Steinbeck does mention the good qualities of the paisanos, but beneath the surface of the wording, one can see that he is also satirizing the actions of the men according to the standards of responsible, active men, rather than romanticizing their lives. He does not consider them models of human conduct.

Burlesque is one of the major techniques of satire, a method of treating a low subject in quite a high, elevated style not suited to it. Steinbeck begins his novel by comparing Danny and his friends, a group of lazy paisanos, to King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

> For Danny's house was not unlike the Round Table, and Danny's friends were not unlike the knights of it. And this is the story of how that group came into being, of how it flourished and grew to be an organization beautiful and wise. This story deals with the adventuring of Danny's friends, with the good they did, and with their

> thoughts and their endeavors. In the end, this story tells how the talisman was lost and how the group disintegrated. (TF, 9-10)

Steinbeck uses the form of the Malory version--"The coming of Arthur... the forming of the Round Table, the adventures of the knights and finally the mystic translation of Danny." [12] The chapter titles continue the Arthurian overtones. An example of such is the title of Chapter 8: "How Danny's Friends sought Mystic Treasure on St. Andrew's Eve. How Pilon found it and Later how a Pair of Serge Pants changed Ownership Twice." The search for "Mystic Treasure" is analogous to the search for the Holy Grail.

Steinbeck recalls phrasing from the New Testament spoken through the words of the paisanos, as part of the burlesque tradition. Pilon says of Danny, "We have been his friends for years. When he was in need, we fed him. When he was cold, we clothed him." (TF, 54) Steinbeck draws many comparisons between the paisanos and famous or courageous men, and this procedure seems to be just another part of his burlesque. He compares the people of the two different social strata in numerous places; however, he does not imply that Tortilla Flat should be modified to meet the conventions of the other strata. After the paisanos' one and only day of work, Steinbeck says, "At five-thirty, the friends marched up the hill, tired and bloody, but triumphant. So must the Old Guard have looked when they returned to Paris after Austerlitz." (TF, 292) The day of the big party given in honor of Danny turns out to be nice, and Steinbeck compares it to the day that the Battle of Waterloo was fought and the day that the Donner Party left. A comparison of the elevated and low is again found when halos are made about the paisanos' heads by

flies and when the paisanos are said to be embattled as the Ancient Britons are embattled in Wales. The candle which causes Danny's second house to burn is compared to an "artist who consumes himself to become divine" because it aims its spear of light at heaven.

In quite a few places, Steinbeck does not imply criticism, but simply makes outright satiric statements against the paisanos. When Pilon decides to go to his friends for advice about a problem, the author asks, "Who could give better advice and help than those comrades, Danny, Pablo, and Jesus Maria? Who could be so stealthy, so guileful? Who could melt to kindness with more ease?" (TF, 107) Another example of Steinbeck's satire of the men occurs in the chapter about the search for treasure. After finding "treasure" on St. Andrew's Eve, Pilon is preaching to Big Joe and admits that he has led a life of sin. He confesses,

> 'It is worth while to be kind and generous...Not only do such actions pile up a house of joy in Heaven; but there is, too, a quick reward here on earth. One feels a golden warmth glowing like a hot enchilada in one's stomach. The Spirit of God clothes one in a coat as soft as camel's hair. I have not always been a good man, Big Joe Portagee. I confess it freely.'
>
> Big Joe knew it perfectly well.
>
> 'I have been bad...I have lied and stolen. I have been lecherous. I have committed adultery and taken God's name in vain.'
>
> 'Me too,' said Big Joe happily. (TF, 134)

Another clear attack occurs when Sweets Raimez is taking up too much of Danny's time. The author mentions that the friends "organized a group, formed for and dedicated to her destruction." (TF, 163) Steinbeck seems to have his tongue in cheek when he mentions one night in particular when the paisanos are serious and drink soberly because the Pirate's gold candlestick has been purchased.

> It was three hours before they sang even an obscene song. And it was late before their thoughts strayed to light women. And by the time their minds turned to fighting they were almost too sleepy to fight." (TF, 211)

He concludes his comment by adding, "This evening was a great good marker in their lives." (TF, 211)

Many of Steinbeck's statements about the life of the paisanos and their values seem to be made with tongue in cheek, and one feels Steinbeck's displeasure with their mode of existence, even though he believes that the paisanos do have a right to live according to their own well-developed code. Steinbeck makes his reader receive this feeling of displeasure because of his use of asides in commas which rather undercut the main statement he makes, thus displaying his irony. An example is found in his description of the relationship of Pilon and Big Joe. Joe Portagee's crimes are not condoned by Pilon, who is constantly trying to correct Joe's ways. Joe finally becomes afraid of Pilon. Steinbeck says, "Big Joe's fear of Pilon, armed with a righteous cause, and a stick of pine wood, was great." (TF, 140) /Italics are mine./ In one instance, after Pilon steals Big Joe's pants, trades them for wine, steals them back again from Mrs. Torrelli, and presents them to Big Joe, Pilon makes it seem as if he has done a big favor for Joe by returning his trousers to him. Steinbeck ironically adds that

> Big Joe Portagee was happy to be with Pilon. 'Here is one who takes care of his friends,' he thought. 'Even when they sleep he is alert to see that no harm comes to them.' He resolved to do something nice for Pilon sometime. (TF, 152)

One has to read carefully in order to observe all of the satire directed against the men. When Pilon makes the holes in the fence for the hens to come through so as to lay eggs in his yard, he says, "They will like to

make nests in the tall weeds, " and Steinbeck adds, "he thought kindly." Also, when Pilon catches his rooster in the road Steinbeck mentions that the rooster engaged Pilon's sympathy because he had been thinking of Mrs. Morales' hens in a charitable vein. Steinbeck makes an ironical statement about Pablo's drinking ability when he says that Pablo makes a "passionate protest" before having another drink. Another of Steinbeck's revealing comments comes after Danny's second house, which Pilon and Pablo have been "renting," burns down and the friends withdraw to the woods in order not to see Danny for a little while. As they are walking away from the fire, the reader hears the only moral which the paisanos learn out of the disaster. The first statement made by Pilon is quite serious: "It is a lesson to us." The next statement is Steinbeck's ironical one: "By this we learn never to leave wine in a house overnight." (TF, 80) The wine has burned down with the house. At the end of the novel, after Danny's death, when the paisanos allow Danny's last house to burn without trying to stop the flames, Pilon, "who profited by every lesson, took what was left of the wine with him," Steinbeck notes, as they leave the house to the flames. (TF, 317) Another example of Steinbeck's tongue-in-cheek attitude toward the people of the Flat is found in his calling beans, the entire diet of the Cortez family, an "eternal verity." Steinbeck also satirizes Sweets Ramiez's plans for trapping Danny, since Danny is suddenly a man of property and will be quite an asset to a girl.

> She was a lady, and her conduct was governed by very strict rules of propriety. If Danny should walk by, now, if they should talk, like the old friends they were, if he should come in for a social glass of wine; and then, if nature proved too strong, and her feminine resistance too weak, there was no grave breach of propriety. (TF, 155)

The previous pages of this chapter have been filled with examples of Sweets's "feminine resistance" and her lady-like conduct "governed by very strict rules of propriety" as she traps nothing but poor Indians and paisanos who own no houses. Therefore, the reader gets the impression that Steinbeck is quietly laughing at the paisanos themselves and at the same time laughing at the society which the small community reflects. In one place Steinbeck calls the paisanos the "deathless and hopeless ones." It does not seem as if he is fully endorsing them or their type of life. Perhaps he is not the Romantic that many critics call him because he does see the darker side of the lives of the paisanos. The ending would be happy if Steinbeck advocated this way of existence, but instead Danny kills himself in an "assault on the gods," and the other members of the "fraternity" burn the house and walk slowly away, no two walking together. The isolation of the group from conventional society fails because of its lack of direction and its irresponsibility. Danny discovers that he must kill himself, and the others leave their small community.

Steinbeck does not approve of withdrawal from the responsibilities of civilization as an ideal way to lead a happy life, as is illustrated by his motif of retreat. The microcosm found in Tortilla Flat seems to be no exception. Like Joseph Wayne and Kate and like Ethan Hawley potentially, Danny kills himself rather than returning even to the type of civilization that he and his friends have instinctively set up. He withdraws from the party given for him by his friends to total isolation and throws himself over a steep cliff after challenging the gods when he has completed a night of revelry and wild drinking. After the death of Danny, the other men burn the house and each one leaves by himself

to find another way of life rather than stay. Warren French asserts that

> Tortilla Flat is not a novel of escape, but defeat. Danny is defeated by civilization and responsibility. Once one challenges civilization, there is no drawing back. The novel is a criticism of change-fearing mediocrity that deifies the uncivilized. It is a 'shrewd ribbing of those who lead lives of quiet desperation.'" [13]

In Tortilla Flat the primitive ideal of communal life fails in its naive form for reasons other than its primitiveness. The men are bored. "Living only for pleasure, they crave action and even self-sacrifice. The communal ideal, Steinbeck seems to say, must go beyond mere sociability and security to include purposeful and responsible action. These paisanos are children of nature. Civilization punishes them because they ignore its laws. But their natural community fails finally through its own lack of purpose. To the values of nature must also be added the values of civilization." [14] Steinbeck seems to be asking for responsible actions controlled by humane and sensible laws rather than by petty conventions.

Some later critics than the reviewers who objected so strongly to Tortilla Flat have noted that Steinbeck is not wholly enraptured with the primitive. Peter Lisca asserts that

> Although Tortilla Flat points out certain advantages of the paisanos' 'philosophic-moral system,' Steinbeck had his reservations. As he wrote to his agents...'Rarely does any theme in the lives of these people survive the night.' Steinbeck uses the comic spirit of Tortilla Flat to criticize certain aspects of society, but there is no indication that the life depicted in its pages, though it has its virtues, is the ideal for which man should strive. [15]

This view is similar to the ones held by French, Snell, Gannett, and Watt. [16]

Since Steinbeck in his other works does not advocate withdrawal, I do not believe that he completely approves of the type of lives that the paisanos lead, nor do I believe that their type of living is quite as

primitivistic as some of the reviewers of this novel have complained. Instead, I feel that the main purpose of presenting these men's lives in their microcosm is to criticize and satirize the society which the setting symbolically represents. Numerous critics have mentioned that there is a satirical vein running through Tortilla Flat, but none of them has thoroughly discussed the particular satirical incidents of the novel. French notes that critics have missed the subtly ironic point of the book. "In Tortilla Flat Steinbeck satirizes the same respectable middle-class mediocrity that had been his target previously," [17] a view similar to that of Bracher, Gibbs, Geismar, and Fontenrose. [18]

Charles Metzger analyzes Sweet Thursday, the sequel to Cannery Row, as a version of the pastoral tradition. He bases his assertions on Empson's Some Versions of the Pastoral, where Empson suggests that "the pastoral by its very existence implies criticism--of society and its presiding attitudes." Metzger goes on to say, "Yet often in the pastoral, criticism is not left to inference, but is stated outright.... Steinbeck criticizes our society and its attitudes both directly and indirectly." [19] Metzger believes that perhaps the most effective way to criticize society is indirectly, according to the pastoral mode in Empson's greatly enlarged sense. Tortilla Flat is most definitely in the pastoral tradition, picturing the lives of people set apart from contemporary society, with an aura of good feeling and fellowship. Even though Steinbeck does not fully advocate the pastoral life that he has pictured in Tortilla Flat, he definitely does criticize and satirize the contemporary society against which his pastoral setting is placed. Steinbeck seems to have two motives in Tortilla Flat--to show that withdrawal is not ideal, but that commercialized, competitive civilization

as it now exists is not either. Watt notes that "dealing with such people the author has placed himself in a position of double advantage. He can exploit the carefree, gay, irresponsible world of the paisano while at the same time criticizing, explicitly or implicitly, the aspects of respectable society which make the holiday life of those beyond its bounds so attractive." [20]

The satire of the civilization from which the paisanos have withdrawn is quite evident in Tortilla Flat. Steinbeck's attack is principally directed against middle-class mediocrity, conformity, and concern with conventions, society's social institutions, and the materialistic, money-making impulses which tend to guide the hectic contemporary society. His satire is rather unsystematic in Tortilla Flat. Rather than viciously attacking the society he is satirizing, he tries to keep the story of the paisanos uppermost in importance and works in his satirical comments when the time seems appropriate. The social institutions with which Steinbeck seems to be the most concerned in the novel are organized military life; petty, corrupt local government; some aspects of organized religion; and petty social conventions. There is not much about contemporary civilization of which Steinbeck approves. [21]

One of the first episodes of the novel concerns the enlistment of the paisanos into the army. Perhaps beneath the humor of the episode, Steinbeck intends to attack one of the established social institutions, because the sergeant who enlists the men does so while they are drunk. He goes into the street only to quiet them because of the noise that they are making and ends up signing them up. Steinbeck says,

> They passed everything but the sobriety test and then the sergeant began his questions with Pilon.
> 'What branch do you want to go in?'
> 'I don' give a god-dam,' said Pilon jauntily.
> 'I guess we need men like you in the infantry.'
> And Pilon was written so. He turned then to Big Joe, and the Portagee was getting sober.
> 'Where do you want to go?'
> 'I want to go home,' Big Joe said miserably.
> The sergeant put him in the infantry too. Finally he confronted Danny, who was sleeping on his feet.
> 'Where do you want to go?'
> 'Huh?'
> 'I say, what branch?'
> 'What you mean, 'branch'?'
> 'What can you do?'
> 'Me? I can do anything.'
> 'What did you do before?'
> 'Me? I'm a mule skinner.'
> 'Oh, you are? How many mules can you drive?'
> Danny leaned forward, vaguely and professionally.
> 'How many you got?'
> 'About thirty thousand,' said the sergeant.
> Danny waved his hand. 'String 'em up,' he said.
> And so Danny went to Texas and broke mules for the duration of the war. And Pilon marched about Oregon with the infantry, and Big Joe, as shall be later made clear, went to jail. (TF, 14-15)

The episode of the Mexican corporal and the captain who steals his wife seems to be another satiric attack on the same social institution. The men, through rank, are able to take away anything, including a wife, from a subordinate instead of using their ranks legitimately, and Steinbeck seems to be quite bitter in his attack in this instance.

City officials, which are an important element of institutionalized government in contemporary society, are also satirized in Tortilla Flat. As soon as Danny returns from the war, he is put in jail because of a riotous night he spends in celebration. He is bothered at first by the bedbugs at the jail, but soon he starts playing what Steinbeck calls a "satiric game."

> He caught a bedbug, squashed it against the wall, drew a circle around it with a pencil and named it 'Mayor Clough.' Then he caught others and named them after the City Council. In a little while he had one wall decorated with squashed bedbugs, each named for a local dignitary. He drew ears and tails on them, gave them big noses and mustaches. Tito Ralph, the jailer, was scandalized; but he made no complaint because Danny had not included either the justice of the peace who had sentenced him, nor any of the police force. He had a vast respect for the law. (TF, 19)

Another critical comment about petty, local officials is found when Steinbeck mentions that if Danny had not just been discharged from the army after the victory over Germany, he would have been sentenced to six months for his misdeeds. As it was, "the judge gave him only thirty days." The satire is continued when the jailer, Tito Ralph, is mentioned again later in the novel as the best jailer that had ever been in Monterey. The fact that he had been a former inmate is mentioned by Steinbeck and seems to cast suspicion on the caliber of officials found in Monterey, which seems to represent conventional civilization. Tito Ralph's only problem is that he has spent so much time in jail himself that if he drinks wine, he forgets that he is the jailer and escapes; consequently, other officials have to catch him. One night when Danny is in jail, Tito Ralph gets drunk with the inmates and escapes, taking the others with him. He is caught, but the escaped prisoners are not. The culmination of the story is that Tito Ralph is put in jail at this time for letting the others escape; however, he escapes again because he still has the keys. Beneath the humor of the episode there is a satiric note which makes fun of another of the institutions of our society. Another example of Steinbeck's attitude is found when we are first introduced to Pablo. He has just been put on parole after being put in jail for stealing a goose. He is on parole, he says, because

"'the judge said the sentence did me no good, and the police said I ate more than the allowance for three men. And so,' he finished proudly, 'I am on parole.'"(TF, 43) These do not seem like extremely adequate reasons for parole, but perhaps Steinbeck is implying that conventional society uses logic like Pilon's.

Some of Steinbeck's probings at the heart of "respectable society" and at petty corruption are almost hidden. He lists many things which are taking place in town on the day of the big party being given in Danny's honor, and among the items listed is another example of petty corruption: "Jake Lake, the cop, arrested a roadster from Del Monte and turned it loose and bought a cigar." (TF, 311) Perhaps Steinbeck is implicitly asking "Who will guard the guardians?"

In addition to noting the corruption of institutionalized local government, Steinbeck satirizes some of the aspects of institutionalized religion in Tortilla Flat. One of the most important incidents of the novel concerns the Pirate's money which he is saving for a gold candlestick for a saint. At the time he plans to present the elaborate gift to the saint he is living in filth in a chicken house with a pack of dogs and eating scraps for which he begs. Another aspect of religion is brought up in the character Cornelia Ruiz who is the most talked-about prostitute in town but is quite religious and "still has masses sung for her father, ten years dead." The paisanos wonder if the mass has virtue when the money for that mass comes out of men's pockets while "they sleep in wine at Cornelia's house." As Pilon says,

> 'A mass is a mass....Where you get two-bits is no interest to the man who sells you a glass of wine. And where a mass comes from is of no interest to God. He just likes them, the same as you like wine. Father Murphy used to go fishing all the time, and for months the Holy Sacrament tasted like mackerel, but that did not make it less holy.' (TF, 50)

Steinbeck has presented characters in other works who are quite religious and quite sinful at the same time. In The Pastures of Heaven, the Lopez sisters kneel before the Virgin Mary each time they emerge from their rooms after selling themselves. In Tortilla Flat Senora Teresina Cortez with the nine children, and unmarried, is quite religious and "went often to confession. She was the despair of Father Ramon. Indeed he had seen that while her knees, her hands and her lips did penance for an old sin, her modest and provocative eyes, flashing under drawn lashes, laid the foundations for a new one." (TF, 223) Teresina's mother lives with her and her brood and helps to care for the children. When the bean crop is about to fail, the old vieja burns four candles to the Virgin, but still the bean crop fails. After this incident, the old vieja transfers her allegiance to Santa Clara. Steinbeck says, "She told Santa Clara of the injustice that had been done. She permitted herself a little malicious thought at the Virgin birth. 'You know, sometimes Teresina can't remember either,' she told Santa Clara viciously," (TF, 230) a statement which makes one wonder if Steinbeck is satirizing the belief or the believer in this case.[22] Steinbeck is nowhere clear as to his feelings about orthodox religion. In many of his works he mentions characters who seem outwardly religious but upon whose actions or morals religion seems to have no effect. It leaves confusion in the reader's mind as to whether Steinbeck is actually being satirical about religion itself as an institution or about the people who are outwardly participating in religious observances. He at least does not accuse the immoral people of the microcosm of being hypocritical, whereas he does imply that many of his middle-class "respectable" characters who are outwardly religious are at heart as immoral as many of the paisanos and can also be classified as hypocritical.

Steinbeck does not have a conventionally acceptable or orthodox opinion of saints. When he speaks of Pilon as a good man, he states that he was not 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." (TF, 99) Another attack on saints and on the credulousness of people who believe in them occurs in the episode of Pirate and his candlestick. Pirate saves his quarters from the sale of firewood for the gold candlestick for Saint Francis because he believes that the saint had once saved a sick dog of his after he prayed to Saint Francis. Steinbeck satirizes Pirate's belief in the miracle which occurred because of Saint Francis' intervention because he tells us that a few days later the dog was run over by a truck. Steinbeck also satirizes people's feelings toward miracles when he says that "It is no little thing to have one's prayer answered with a true miracle. It if were noised about, the Pirate would have a higher station on Tortilla Flat. Already his friends looked at him with a new respect. They thought no more of his intelligence than they had before, but they knew now that his meager wits were supplemented with all the power of Heaven and all the strength of the saints." (TF, 207) When Pirate describes to his friends his view of Saint Francis blessing his dog, he states that the saint looked on him and smiled "like the good saint he is. Then I knew the miracle was done. He said, 'Be good to little doggies, you dirty man.'" Pablo tells Pirate that he does not think that he remembers that last part exactly right.

Another institution which Steinbeck satirizes is a funeral.

> Funerals are social functions. 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. Imagine the indignation if the minister altered his sermon or experimented with facial expression. Consider the shock if, at the funeral parlors, any chairs were used but those little folding yellow torture chairs with the hard seats. 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. (TF, 30

Another of the conventions of society which Steinbeck attacks is its attitude toward eating habits and scientific rules of healthful living. The Cortez family has been brought up on beans for three meals a day, as has been already related. The children even take beans wrapped in a tortilla to school with them for their lunch. The school nurse and doctor become alarmed about the diet of the Cortez children and visit the home. Steinbeck says,

> The doctor stayed two hours, for his scientific interest was piqued. He went away shaking his head.
>
> He shook his head incredulously while he made his report. 'I gave them every test I know of, he said, 'teeth, skin, blood, skeleton, eyes, co-ordination. Gentlemen, they are living on what constitutes a slow poison, and they have been from birth. Gentlemen, I tell you I have never seen healthier children in my life...I never saw such teeth in my life. I never saw such teeth.' (TF, 227)

When Danny and the other paisanos collect food for the Cortez children, Steinbeck notes the following:

> At first Teresina was maddened with joy at so much food, and her head was turned by the compliment. After a week of it, she was not so sure. The baby was down with colic, Ernie had some kind of bowel trouble. Alfredo's face was flushed. The creepers and crawlers cried all the time... 'Green things and fruit are not good for children,' she

> explained. 'Milk is constipating to a baby after it is weaned.' She pointed to the flushed and irritable children. See, they were all sick. They were not getting the proper food. (TF, 233-234)

To solve the problem, the paisanos steal a four-hundred pound bag of beans for the Cortez family. Perhaps Steinbeck is suggesting that some of the scientific attitudes of modern society could use a slight modification.

Steinbeck objects to the corruption of organized military, business, religious, and social life in contemporary society, but the bulk of his satire in Tortilla Flat is concerned with the importance of money, private property, and social position to the middle-class members of society. In the novel he satirizes heavily society's interest in money and prestige with some side comments on materialism and ownership. As soon as Danny comes back from the army, he finds that he has inherited two houses, and Steinbeck says, "When Danny heard about it he was a little weighed down with the responsibility of ownership." (TF, 17) When Pilon first receives news of Danny's inheritance, Pilon says of property owners to Danny,

> 'When one is poor, one thinks, 'If I had money I would share it with my good friends.' But let that money come and charity flies away. So it is with thee, my once-friend. Thou art lifted above thy friends. Thou art a man of property. Thou wilt forget thy friends who shared everything with thee, even their brandy.'

Danny then tells him that as long as he has a house, Pilon also has a house. Pilon says, "I must see this to believe it...It would be a world wonder if it were so. Men would come a thousand miles to look upon it." (TF, 26) When Pilon and Danny go to the houses to look at them, Steinbeck mentions, "Pilon noticed that the worry of property was settling on

Danny's face. No more in life would that face be free of care. No more would Danny break windows now that he had windows of his own to break. Pilon had been right--he had been raised among his fellows. His shoulders had straightened to withstand the complexity of life." (TF, 28) At the end of the novel, Danny breaks away from the house and his friends and retreats to the woods away from any rules or responsibilities. "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." (TF, 261) Danny breaks away from civilization's responsibilities for three weeks but in the end comes back to the house worn out with life. In Danny's last frenzied effort to drive out the piece of civilization in him, he dies, as many of the other characters who retreat from civilization's responsibilities in Steinbeck's works have done. Geismar suggests that perhaps "Liberty is a larger concept than the mere evasion of civilizational restraints." [23]

By Danny's rise in status, Steinbeck shows that all a person needs in order to be placed above his fellow man in contemporary society is some piece of private property, no matter how good a person he is, at which point the values of the microcosm become synonymous with the values of contemporary civilization. The importance of material possessions is noted later by Steinbeck. Pilon agrees to rent Danny's second house for $15.00 a month, "but he would have agreed to much more, for he saw the elevation that came to a man who lived in his own house; and Pilon longed to feel that elevation," Steinbeck says. (TF, 33) He also notes that "Danny became a great man, having a house to rent, and Pilon went up the social scale by renting a house." (TF, 35) All of this occurs

without either of them doing anything to deserve this rise in social stature. That money is quite a determiner of a man's importance in contemporary society and in the society of the microcosm is further noted by Steinbeck because Danny has an affair with a well-to-do widow Mrs. Morales, and after one of the houses burns, Danny "could not explain to his friends the coolness that had come to his relationship with Mrs. Morales since he was the owner of only one house." (TF, 87) A perfect example of the way in which a person is elevated according to personal possessions, whether they are useable or not, is found in the episode of Sweets Raimez and her vacuum cleaner. When Sweets hears that Danny is an heir and a man of property, she dreams of being his lady as does every other female on the Flat. Danny buys her a large aluminum vacuum cleaner with a blue and yellow checked dust bag and a long, black, slick electric cord which becomes a perfect example of a status symbol. No other woman in Tortilla Flat has a vacuum cleaner. Of course, there is no electricity in Tortilla Flat, and later it is discovered that there is not even a motor in the machine. However, these facts do not seem to matter to the people of Tortilla Flat for when Sweets receives the vacuum cleaner, Steinbeck notes that "through its possession, she climbed to the peak of the social scale of Tortilla Flat. People who did not remember her name referred to her as 'that one with the sweeping machine.'" (TF, 161) Sweets sweeps her house every day and makes a loud humming noise in her throat as she does so. "She excited envy in many houses. Her manner became dignified and gracious, and she held her chin high as befitted one who had a sweeping-machine. In her conversation she included it. 'Ramon passed this morning while I was pushing the sweeping-machine.' 'Louise Meater cut her hand this morning, not three hours after

I had been pushing the sweeping-machine.'" (TF, 162) It is evident that Steinbeck objects to the high value placed on material possessions by both the owners and the members of society with whom the owners come in contact. He satirizes the importance of these possessions by showing that they do enhance a person's social status even though they may have no practical value whatever.

It is obvious, because of the satire directed against contemporary society in Tortilla Flat that Steinbeck objects to many of the institutions, to most of the mere conventions of society, and to the importance of money and social position to the members of contemporary society and to the people in the microcosm of Tortilla Flat who live in accordance with some of the materialistic values of conventional society. However, the irresponsible, withdrawn way of life does not seem to be his answer either. Because of the motif of retreat in this novel where those who have withdrawn from some of the cares and conventions of society and have established a microcosm, or small community, of their own with its own customs and mores that in some ways resemble and in some ways depart from the conventions of contemporary society find that they must either die or find new ways to live other than by isolating themselves from responsible actions, it is clear that Steinbeck is not advocating mere withdrawal or endorsing irresponsibility. Neither a primitive existence or "natural" life based upon irresponsibility and lack of direction, nor corrupt conventional contemporary society seems to be Steinbeck's complete answer. Steinbeck implies that a mixture of the natural life and the civilized life would be ideal.

Cannery Row, which is similar in idea to Tortilla Flat, is another novel which seems to make Steinbeck's position concerning civilization and withdrawal from responsibility clear. It is another satirical novel directed against the conventions of contemporary civilization but also directed against the lives of the "bums" who live in another microcosm on Cannery Row.

CHAPTER IV

THE PALACE FLOPHOUSE OF CANNERY ROW

Steinbeck wrote Cannery Row in 1945, he said, as a "kind of nostalgic thing, written for a group of soldiers who had said to me, 'Write something funny that isn't about the war. Write something for us to read--we're sick of war.'" [1] Many critics have noted the similarity between Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row, and most of them have felt that Cannery Row is inferior in quality to Tortilla Flat. Orville Prescott, reviewing Cannery Row states that when Steinbeck wrote of the "gay and irresponsible paysanos /sic/ of Tortilla Flat he struck a note which appealed to many readers. But when he waxed enthusiastic over the debased bums of Cannery Row he seemed not to be praising the natural man, but to be denying the essential human decencies, to be finding life best when lived on a merely biological level." [2] Walcutt refers to Tortilla Flat as a "mock epic" but mentions that he would call Cannery Row a "farce...their /the boys'/ irresponsible doings are presented farcically and with gusto." He calls them "cunning misfits and resourceful loafers who make a glory of having neither goal nor purpose in their lives." [3] Edmund Wilson, in his review of Cannery Row, confesses that of Steinbeck's books Cannery Row is the one he "most enjoyed reading" but goes on to attack it for its sentimental and inadequate philosophy. [4] Cannery Row has been listed by some critics as evidence of the decline of

Steinbeck's works. Nevertheless, one finds in Cannery Row, whether it is a success artistically or philosophically, further evidence of Steinbeck's feelings toward civilization and withdrawal from responsibility.

In Cannery Row one finds the Palace Flophouse which is similar to Danny's house. The "boys," as Steinbeck calls them, who live in the Flophouse are in many ways similar to the paisanos of Tortilla Flat. The "boys" enjoy liquor immensely and consume prodigious amounts of it. They are not above stealing food or essential items of existence. They do not work unless it is entirely necessary, but they have worked a few months in their lives. They are schemers, lovers, drunkards, but humanitarians and philanthropists, just as the paisanos are. Peter Lisca contends that

> Both novels have as protagonists a tight little group with its own moral standards; and although Cannery Row has a wider range of characters, in both novels this group is made up not so much of social outcasts as of individuals who have retreated from society. In both novels the structure and mores of this little group serve as commentaries on the structure and mores of that society which they have abandoned. [5]

However, I must disagree with Lisca's view that this group is made up of individuals who have retreated from society. I believe that the men of Cannery Row seem to have been rejected by conventional society and seem to have withdrawn more or less involuntarily just because they were not able to live according to the rules of society. Virtually no character in Cannery Row, except Doc, has deliberately chosen his isolation. Steinbeck here depicts another microcosm representing the real world with its own customs, needs, and ambitions. The novel does fit the pattern of withdrawal found in Steinbeck's works; again,

an isolated group is not able to succeed socially, and a dramatic, unhappy ending shows the failure of an irresponsible way of life set apart from the main stream of civilization. This group of characters is different from any other group or individual that Steinbeck has depicted in a retreat or microcosm because none of them would be able to make their way in any other type of life. Doc is able to remain in his retreat, Western Biological Laboratories, even though he is lonely, because of his devotion to his work and his artistic temperament just as Merlin was able to do in Cup of Gold.

Cannery Row, the place where the Palace Flophouse is located,is set apart from the rest of Monterey. It is described by Steinbeck as follows:

> It is a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit, a nostalgia, a dream. Cannery Row is the gathered and scattered, tin and iron and rust and splintered wood, chipped pavement and weedy lots and junk heaps, sardine canneries of corrugated iron, honky tonks, restaurants and whore houses, and little crowded groceries, and laboratories and flophouses. Its inhabitants are, as the man once said,'whores, pimps, gamblers, and sons of bitches,' by which he meant Everybody. Had the man looked through another peephole he might have said, 'Saints and angels and martyrs and holy men,' and he would have meant the same thing. (CR, 1)

One finds the location of the Palace Flophouse, the center of the microcosm with which I am concerned in this novel, when he leaves the grocery and "walks catty-cornered across the grass-grown lot, threading his way among the great rusty pipes thrown out of the canneries," and finds a path worn in the weeds. If he follows it past the cypress tree, "across the railroad track, up a chicken walk with cleats, he will come to a long low building which for a long time was used as a storage place for fish meal." (CR, 7) This building had been given to Lee Chong,

the Chinese grocer, in payment for a grocery bill. Mack and a gang of "boys" bargain with Lee Chong for the house and tell him that they will rent from him, although both they and he know that he will never receive a cent in payment; however, Lee Chong knows that he must let them have the place or he will find it either burned down or destroyed soon. It turns out to be a profitable business venture for Lee Chong because no more groceries are stolen from his store by Mack and the "boys" since they will not steal from a benefactor.

The boys are somewhat similar to the paisanos and are described by Steinbeck as follows:

> Mack was the elder, leader, mentor, and to a small extent the exploiter of a little group of men who had in common no families, no money, and no ambitions beyond food, drink and contentment. But whereas most men in their search for contentment destroy themselves and fall wearily short of their targets, Mack and his friends approached contentment casually, quietly, and absorbed it gently. (CR, 11)

Mack; and Hazel, a young man of great strength and weak mind; Eddie, who filled in as a bartender at La Ida; Hughie; and Jones, who occasionally collected frogs and cats for Western Biological, have been living in the large rusty pipes in the lot next to Lee Chong's until they move into what they later name the Palace Flophouse and Grill. At first, the place is little more than shelter from the wind and rain and is only a bare room. Mack organizes the group and draws chalk lines around each man's particular sleeping area, and soon they set about finding furniture for it. Steinbeck notes that "a chair appeared and a cot and another chair. A hardware store supplied a can of red paint not reluctantly because it never knew about it, and as a new table or footstool appeared it was painted, which not only made it very pretty but

also disguised it to a certain extent in case a former owner looked in." (CR, 13) "After a few months, it was, if anything, overfurnished. There were old carpets on the floor, chairs with and without seats... There were tables, a grandfather clock without dial face or works.... Pictures began to appear--mostly calendars showing improbably luscious blondes holding bottles of Coca-Cola....A bundle of gilded cattails stood in one corner and a sheaf of peacock feathers was nailed to the wall beside the grandfather clock." (CR, 40-41) They find a silver scrolled stove with "floriated warming ovens and a front like a nickel-plated tulip garden" which becomes the main attraction of the house. "It was the gold tooth of the Palace....With the great stove came pride, and with pride, the Palace became home." (CR, 41) This is the center of the microcosm.

The boys understand human nature and flattery as well as the paisanos do. Through Mack's obsequiousness toward a belligerent landowner, they talk the man into allowing them to catch frogs in his pond and even into giving them a meal and quite a few drinks of his specially brewed liquor which he has been saving. Mack calls the man "Captain" and suggests that he knows that he must have been in the service because of the way he carrys his shoulders. He also takes care of an infected tick bite on the man's dog and praises the dog highly.

The boys steal food, as do the paisanos of Tortilla Flat, but they do have the advantage of more mechanized methods. In one instance, Gay hits a rooster on the road with a truck while they are going on their frog hunting expedition, and Hazel reaches down, picks it up, and plucks it as they are driving. In addition, on this same expedition, they pick up a "sack of carrots which had fallen from a vegetable truck, and half

a dozen onions which had not." (CR, 78) Most of the liquor comes from La Ida's bar where Eddie sometimes works as bartender when the regular man is sick. Every time Eddie works, a few bottles are missing. In addition, Eddie keeps a gallon jug under the bar, and in the mouth of his jug there is a funnel. Eddie pours the dregs in the glasses into the jug before he washes them and then takes the jug home. The boys sit in the afternoon sun and sip this concoction. Once, Jones commits a breach of social etiquette by suggesting that Eddie have two jugs and try to separate different drinks that might taste better together.

As in the case of the paisanos, the boys' existence is not completely primitive. Actually, their life is bound together by certain rules. The microcosm has its own code and conventions. The men have philanthropic impulses and plan a nice party for Doc, the hero of the novel, because of his help to them. Dora, the best friend of the boys and the owner of the Bear Flag Restaurant, really the local whore house, is the biggest philanthropist in town. She helps in time of sickness and sits up with the town's children during a flu epidemic and makes soup for all of the families. She gives more to charity, though involuntarily, than anyone else in town. Steinbeck's prostitutes at the Bear Flat are, as French notes, "quite good people, and in the novel one finds a contrast between selfish respectability and unselfish disreputability." [6]

Steinbeck approves of the life of the boys in some ways but not completely. He satirically advocates their type of life over that of the people in bustling contemporary society and describes Mack and the boys as,

> ...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. Mack and the boys are the

> Beauties, the Virtues, the Graces. In the world ruled by tigers with ulcers, rutted by strictured bulls, scavenged by blind jackals, Mack and the boys dine delicately with the tigers, fondle the frantic heifers, and wrap up the crumbs to feed the sea gulls of Cannery Row. What can it profit a man to gain the whole world and to come to his property with a gastric ulcer, a blown prostate, and bifocals? Mack and the boys avoid the trap, walk around the poison, step over the noose while a generation of trapped, poisoned, and trussed-up men scream at them and call them 'no-goods,' 'come-to-bad-ends,' 'blots-on-the-town,' 'thieves, rascals, bums.' Our Father who art in nature, who has given the gift of survival to the coyote, the common brown rat, the English sparrow, the house fly and the moth, must have a great and overwhelming love for no-goods and blots-on-the-town and bums, and Mack and the boys. Virtues and graces and laziness and zest. (CR, 15)

Steinbeck says later of Mack and the boys that "They were not mercantile men. They did not measure their joy in good sold, their egos in bank balances, nor their loves in what they cost." (CR, 124)

Doc, Steinbeck's scarcely-veiled spokesman, modeled after Edward Ricketts, owns and operates Western Biological Laboratories where he collects marine animals and makes specimens and slides for educational purposes. Doc is called the "fountain of philosophy and science and art" by the people of Cannery Row. (CR, 29) Doc seems to summarize Steinbeck's feelings about the criteria of success in contemporary society when he says,

> 'It has always seemed strange to me...The things we admire in men, kindness and generosity, openness, honesty, understanding, and feeling are the concomitants of failure in our system. And those traits we detest, sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness, egotism and self-interest are the traits of success. And while men admire the quality of the first they love the produce of the second...The sale of souls to gain the whole world is completely voluntary and almost unanimous--but not quite. Everywhere in the world there are Mack and the boys...' (CR, 150-151)

In another place Doc, Steinbeck's spokesman, says of Mack and the boys,

> 'There are your true philosophers. I think...that Mack and the boys know everything that has ever happened in the world and possibly everything that will happen. I think they survive in this particular world better than other people. In a time when people tear themselves to pieces with ambition and nervousness and covetousness, they are relaxed. All of our so-called successful men are sick men, with bad stomachs, and bad souls, but Mack and the boys are healthy and curiously clean. They can do what they want. They can satisfy their appetites without calling them something else.' (CR, 149) [7]

As in Tortilla Flat, I believe that Steinbeck is not actually "waxing enthusiastic over" or endorsing Mack and the boys as much as he is criticizing conventional society. Mack even confesses to Doc that things have never gone right for him in his life, and we see the reasons behind his unhappy, involuntary retreat from civilization. At the end of the novel, after causing the wreckage of Doc's laboratory during a party the boys give for Doc, a party at which Doc never does arrive, Mack confesses,

> 'It don't do no good to say I'm sorry. I been sorry all my life. This ain't no new thing. It's always like this... I had a wife...Same thing. Ever'thing I done turned sour. She couldn't stand it any more. If I done a good thing it got poisoned up some way...Same thing ever' place 'til it just got to closin' in. I don't do nothin' but clown no more. Try to make the boys laugh.' (CR, 138)

The men who live in the Palace Flophouse are not living in perfect happiness, and Steinbeck does not try to romanticize their type of life. He does not overlook any of their unhappiness or loneliness, as a true Romantic writer would do. Gay longs to return to his wife who beats him every night. Mack knows that his life is tainted. Hazel, whom Steinbeck laughs at openly in the novel, but also shows sympathy for,

is living a withdrawn life only because he is not intelligent enough to compete with the members of contemporary society. Therefore, one can see that all is not idyllic in this retreat. "Behind the idyllic picture of pleasant loafers we glimpse the maladjustment which brings a man to Skid Row, where he spend his time cadging money to buy bottles of cheap wine or liquor." [8] Walcutt notes that the "story comes to a climax when the boys invade Doc's house and in a night of wild irresponsible drunkenness reduce it to a shambles."

> What does this mean? I believe it shows that Steinbeck is not as irresponsible himself as he has often been considered. He has been blamed for presenting his boys as if they were exemplary citizens; reviewers of Cannery Row wanted to know what would happen to America if the boys were taken as examples. But the way they destroy the possessions of their good friend who trusts them shows that mere defiance of accepted standards and values does not make a way of life. [9]

In Cannery Row Steinbeck has some interpolated, on inter-plot, chapters which digress from the actual plot and many times contain Steinbeck's explicit satire or comments other than those related directly to the plot, the purpose of which is to make the novel more universal. [10] Perhaps the interpolated chapter about a gopher that is the pentultimate chapter of Cannery Row sheds light on a perfect existence carried on withdrawn from the dangers of civilization. A gopher finds the "perfect place to live in a thicket of mallow weeds in the vacant lot on Cannery Row." There are no gardens about so that no one would think of setting a trap for him. "Cats there were, many of them, but they were so bloated with fish heads and guts from the canneries that they had long ago given up hunting. The soil was sandy enough so that water never stood about or filled a hole for long." (CR, 203) The gopher digs his great chamber and makes four emergency exits and a waterproof deluge room and

begins to store food. He makes elaborate preparations for his future family, but there is one trouble. He is not able to find any female gophers in the area. He squeaks and squeaks for them, but none ever come; therefore, he has to leave his paradise and "move two blocks up the hill to a dahlia garden where they put out traps every night." (CR, 204) He has to leave his retreat and return to imperfect civilization. Perhaps this chapter is intended as a fable to show that one cannot live apart from the snares of civilized life. Steinbeck admits this fact and does not really advocate the withdrawal and irresponsibility of the boys as much as he uses this type of life for an excuse to criticize some of the unnecessary conventions and commercialized values of contemporary society.

Some critics have mentioned that there is satire in Cannery Row. Fontenrose notes that "Cannery Row was meant to provide more than a relief from war: beneath its humor lurks a criticism of American culture." [11] Watt believes that "Cannery Row is a revulsion against modern industrial and commercial society and embodies a strong critical attack, direct or indirect, on the ways and values of American civilization." [12] Warren French notes that Cannery Row is another "letter of advice to an erring world. It shows how an individual may achieve a measure of contentment in a generally depraved society. For one thing, Steinbeck attacks respectability: 'the desire to attain an unnatural security for one's self by ruthlessly disregarding the feelings of others.'" [13] Even Steinbeck, himself, says of Cannery Row that it is a "mixed-up book...with a pretty general ribbing in it." [14]

Along with many overt critical statements about contemporary society, some of Steinbeck's criticism in Cannery Row is in the vein of satire as it was in Tortilla Flat. He seemed to be a little more bitter about the conventions of contemporary society in 1945 than he had been in 1935 when he wrote Tortilla Flat, however. The satire in Cannery Row is more systematic than was the satire in Tortilla Flat. Steinbeck interrupts the plot quite often to make overt satirical statements and even includes some interpolated chapters with satirical intentions. His targets seem to be the same as in Tortilla Flat: the commercialized values, the ruthless creed of property and status, and the relentlessly accelerating pace of contemporary society. He objects to the same conventions and social institutions as he objected to in Tortilla Flat, ten years earlier.

He satirizes institutionalized religion as one of society's organizations again in this novel by continuing his list of characters who are quite religious but quite sinful at the same time. The same confusion about his religious views is found that was also present in Tortilla Flat. Steinbeck again shows religion's shallow effect upon the characters' morality but again does not accuse the characters of the microcosm of hypocrisy, though he overtly attacks the "respectable" members of Monterey's women's clubs as being hypocritical. He mentions that over half of the girls at the Bear Flag house of prostitution are Christian Scientists and that the bouncer spends his Sunday mornings reading Science and Health to them. Eva Flanegan is one of the "hustlers" at the house who has red hair "and went often to confession every week." Steinbeck says that Eva is quite a "spiritual girl with a big family of brothers and sisters, but she was an unpredictable drunk." (CR, 20)

The next institution in contemporary society to which Steinbeck objects is private ownership. Steinbeck's views on the importance of material possessions to members of society are easily seen in the previous quotations about the frantic, materialistic life of the members of society in opposition to the uninvolved, un-acquisitive lives of the "boys." I believe that if Steinbeck had a chance, he would construct a society where greed and ambition based essentially on materialistic ends would not dominate the actions of the members of society but also one where the members would not be completely irresponsible and lacking in goals and direction. That income property may damage human relations is an important thesis of both Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row. Steinbeck satirizes the materialistic impulses of members of society when Mr. and Mrs. Sam Malloy move into one of the big boilers in the vacant lot by Lee Chong's. The boiler looks like "an old-fashioned locomotive without wheels. It had a big door in the center of its nose and a low fire door....If you came in through the fire door you had to get down on your hands and knees, but once in there was head room in the middle and you couldn't want a dryer, warmer place to stay....It was a roomy, dry, and safe apartment." (CR, 48-49) The satire occurs when Mr. Malloy begins renting out some of the larger pipes on the lot to workers at the canneries during a housing shortage. Steinbeck notes that "Mrs. Malloy had been contented until her husband became a landlord and then she began to change. First it was a rug, then a washtub, then a lamp with a colored silk shade. Finally she came into the boiler on her hands and knees one day and she stood up and said a little breathlessly, 'Holman's are having a sale on curtains. Real lace curtains and edges of blue and pink--$1.98 a set with curtain rods thrown in.'" (CR, 49) Naturally,

a boiler does not have windows in it, but Mrs. Malloy has to be respectable and conform to the wishes of a materialistic, status-minded society.[15] Another example of contemporary man's predominant interest in monetary matters occurs when Doc, as he is searching for octopi in the tide pools, finds a body of a beautiful girl who has drowned. He notices her beauty and the peaceful look on her face, but another man comes and envies Doc the bounty for finding a body. Doc tells the man to collect the bounty himself; he is not interested in the money. As Doc leaves, the picture of the girl's loveliness fades away because of the intrusion of greed.

Continuing his satire on the importance of money to private enterprise, Steinbeck satirizes modern advertising techniques through his description of the flag-pole skater which Holman's Department store employs to attract customers. He says in one of the inter-plot chapters,

> ...On a tall mast on top of the store he had a little round platform and there he was on skates going around and around. He had been there three days and three nights. He was out to set a new record for being on skates on a platform. (CR, 106) Since there weren't many flag-pole skaters and since this one was by far the best, he had for the last year gone about breaking his own world's record....
>
> Holman's was delighted about the venture. They had a white sale, a remnant sale, an aluminum sale, and a crockery sale all going at the same time....Everyone in the town was more or less affected by the skater. Trade fell off out of sight of him and got better the nearer you came to Holman's. Mack and the boys went up and looked for a moment and then went back to the Palace. They couldn't see that it made much sense.[16]
>
> Holman's set up a double bed in their window. When the skater broke the world's record he was going to come down and sleep right in the window without taking off his skates. The trade name of the mattress was on a little card at the foot of the bed. (CR, 117-118)

Steinbeck ingeniously satirizes some of society's institutions besides religion, monetary practices, and organized business. He mentions that "Hazel did four years in grammar school, four years in reform school, and didn't learn anything in either place. Reform schools are supposed to teach viciousness and criminality but Hazel didn't pay enough attention." (CR, 32) Another sly attack is found when Steinbeck notes that at one time "Dora was having trouble with her income tax, for she was entangled in that curious enigma which said the business was illegal and then taxed her for it." (CR, 100)

He satirizes the medical profession in two different places. He speaks of an influenze epidemic which broke out in Monterey and Cannery Row and says that Doc of Western Biological had to take care of the Cannery Row patients because the physicians were very busy, and besides that, he quickly adds, they knew that they could not make much money in Cannery Row. At another time, the flag-pole skater complains that someone is shooting at him with an air gun. The department store finds out that the offender is one of the town's physicians, hiding behind the curtains of his office, "plugging away with a Daisy air rifle. They didn't denounce him and he promised to stop. He was very prominent in the Masonic Lodge." (CR, 118)

Part of Steinbeck's satire is directed against the unsuitability of women in organized government. The wife of the "Captain" who goes frog hunting with the boys is a Representative in the State Legislature for the district. Her husband says of her," and when the Legislature isn't in session, she's off making speeches. And when she's home she's studying all the time and writing bills." (CR, 93) Mack and his friends know that they are the "worst threats to a home, for they offer

ease and thought and companionship as opposed to neatness, order, and properness." (CR, 94)

As part of his satire of petty corruption in government, city officials are also given a tongue-lashing in this novel as they were in Tortilla Flat. Steinbeck says that "Gay, who had lived a good life in the County Jail in Salinas by letting the sheriff beat him at checkers, suddenly grew cocky and never lost another game. He lost his privileges that way but he felt a whole man again." (CR, 166) Later, when Gay is in jail, he hears of the party which the boys are giving for Doc and makes a "deal with the sheriff to get off that night and borrowed two dollars from him for a round trip bus ticket. Gay had been very nice to the sheriff who wasn't a man to forget it, particularly because election was coming up and Gay could, or said he could, swing quite a few votes." (CR, 178)

As a social institution, women's clubs are satirized by Steinbeck. He calls them a "group of high-minded ladies in the town" who demanded that "dens of vice" must close to protect young American manhood. He goes on to state that this campaign happens about once a year, and the Bear Flag usually closes down for a week when it happens and takes care of repairs. This year the club women really go on a crusade though because "it had been a dull summer and they were restless. It got so bad that they had to be told who actually owned the property where vice was practiced, what the rents were and what little hardships might be the result of their closing. That was how close they were to being a serious menace." (CR, 153)

Doc makes a few satiric statements about people in contemporary society not liking to hear the truth. He never tells anyone that he wears a beard simply because he likes a beard. Doc says, "People didn't

like you for telling the truth. You had to say you had a scar so you couldn't shave." (CR, 107) Earlier in his life Doc had gone on a walking trip just to get away from his work, and when he told people that he would meet the truth about walking through the country, they did not trust him; however, when he stopped telling them the truth and told that he was doing it on a bet, everyone liked him then and believed him. All of his life Doc has wondered how a beer milk shake would taste but has never had the nerve to order one for fear that people, extremely concerned with correctness and appearances, would think him crazy. In order to satisfy his curiousity, he finally orders one and says it is his doctor's order that he drink one each day for his health. Steinbeck says, "Doc still loved true things but he knew it was not a general love, and it could be a very dangerous mistress." (CR, 108)

Steinbeck's views of some of the attitudes, institutions, and conventions of contemporary society are not very complimentary. His views of society are evident in Cannery Row, and Steinbeck agrees with Malcolm Cowley that if Cannery Row is a kind of literary cream puff, "it is a remarkably poisoned cream puff. The poison would seem to be the implicit attack on middle-class values which may be found in all the novels....The real poison in the novels is concealed beneath the readability which has made them best sellers. Though many readers may gulp the cream puff without indigestion, the virus remains latent there... an implicit attack on most of the things dear to the hearts of the respectable." [17]

Cannery Row continues Steinbeck's attack on middle-class mediocrity, ruthlessness, and love of money, an attack begun in Tortilla Flat and in his social-protest novels. He does not speak well of conventional society, by any means, but neither does he advocate mere retreat or the irresponsible life presented in the microcosms of Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

After studying Steinbeck's concern with civilization and withdrawal, I believe that perhaps Steinbeck has been improperly criticized for being merely a primitivist and writer of escape literature. He does object to many of the conventions and institutions of contemporary society, as shown by his novels of social protest and the satire directed against contemporary society in novels such as Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row. However, Steinbeck does not advocate either physical withdrawal or withdrawal from responsibility as his solution to the problems of society. The "natural" or irresponsible life does not lead to virtue. In his works one finds that all of the characters who try to escape physically from society to a withdrawn place decide either to commit suicide or to return to the problems and frustrations of conventional society. In addition, Steinbeck's dramatic endings in Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row indicate that lives of irresponsibility will lead to no fruitful endeavors. I believe that Steinbeck does not advocate irresponsibility, ease, and escape, as many critics have stated that he does.

If Steinbeck does not completely endorse the conventions and code of contemporary society nor the conventions of an irresponsible life of ease, what does he suggest be done? I believe that Steinbeck advocates, by implication, a middle way. He implies that he approves of people like Doc in Cannery Row whose civilized manners and concern with

conformity do not overbalance their natural intuitive love for humanity and people whose irresponsibility does not overbalance their sense of respect for themselves and others. Even though Steinbeck does devote more space to the presentation of the lives of the paisanos of Tortilla Flat and the "boys" of Cannery Row, a fact which would automatically lead one to think that he approves of their type of life instead of that of a more balanced character like Doc, for example, I believe that he implies that the best existence would be one not completely withdrawn from civilization; however, he also implies that one concerned with too many of the superficial, middle-class rules of respectability and conformity to which he so strongly objects is not an appropriate existence.

The main weakness of Steinbeck's satire is its lack of the positive alternative. One of the weaknesses of Tortilla Flat as satire is that there is no clear presentation of Steinbeck's positive alternative to the retreat of the paisanos or the greed of Monterey. In Cannery Row Steinbeck does offer Doc as the embodiment of his virutes and as a more balanced character than the irresponsible "boys," but Doc is not a very promising ideal because of his loneliness. Steinbeck's satire, I believe, would be more effective if he were to depict more explicitly his view of the perfect life.

Perhaps many critics have been wrong about Steinbeck. They have let his social indignation, his verisimilitude of language, his interest in marine biology lead them to judge him as a naturalist or primitivist. He is much too sympathetic and sentimental to be a naturalist. If there were such a person as a pure naturalist or primitivist, he would endorse escape, which Steinbeck does not do. A naturalist or primitivist would

endorse man's natural or animalistic qualities above his reason and humanity, which Steinbeck does not do. According to Steinbeck, biological or natural qualities alone will not suffice. A man who is too involved with the petty restraints of civilization is not his proposal either. I believe that Steinbeck would approve of a mode of life which had reconciled and blended both natural and civilized methods of existence, where the persons had retained enough of their spontaneity and natural goodness to be lovable but also had respect for rules and for some of the conventions necessary to the survival of the society.

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References will be to the following editions, and the abbreviated titles and page numbers will be noted in the text in parentheses.

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CG. Cup of Gold. New York: Covici-Friede, 1929.

EE. East of Eden. New York: Viking Press, 1952.

LV. The Long Valley. New York: Sun Dial Press, 1938.

OMM. Of Mice and Men. New York: Covici-Friede, 1937.

PH. The Pastures of Heaven. New York: Viking Press, 1932.

TAGU. To a God Unknown. New York: World Publishing Co., 1933.

TF. Tortilla Flat. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1935.

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NOTES

CHAPTER I

[1]John S. Kennedy, "John Steinbeck: Life Affirmed and Dissolved," Fifty Years of the American Novel 1900-1950, ed. Harold C. Gardiner (New York, 1951), p. 219.

[2]Alba della Fazia, "Nobel Prize, 1962," Books Abroad, XXXVII (1963), p. 24.

[3]F.W. Watt, John Steinbeck (New York, 1962), p. 1.

[4]Quoted in R.W.B. Lewis, "John Steinbeck: The Fitful Daemon," The Young Rebel in American Literature, ed. Carl Bode (New York, 1960), p. 123.

[5]Maxwell Geismar, Writers in Crisis: The American Novel Between Two Wars (Boston, 1942), p. 268.

[6]George Snell, The Shapers of American Fiction 1798-1947 (New York, 1961), p. 197. Snell continues by saying that of our contemporary novelists, Steinbeck seems the "most naturally gifted, the best endowed with creative talent, and certainly the writer with the most evident love for his fellow humans."

[7]Joseph Fontenrose, John Steinbeck: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York, 1963), p.v.

[8]Quoted in E.W. Tedlock, Jr., and C.V. Wicker, ed., Steinbeck and his Critics: A Record of Twenty-five Years (Albuquerque, 1957), p. xxxii. Watt, John Steinbeck, p. 107 mentions that Steinbeck shares with Hemingway a "distaste for the abstract intellect, a bond with ordinary people, an admiration for practical skills and physical toughness, and a magnanimous attitude toward human passions." However, Watt asserts that Hemingway, by staying within the narrow range of his powers, has "achieved artistic coherence and penetration beyond Steinbeck's reach."

[9]Quoted in Peter Lisca, The Wide World of John Steinbeck (Brunswick, New Jersey, 1958), p. 12.

[10]Edmund Wilson, "The Boys in the Back Room," Classics and Commercials: A Literary Chronicle of the Forties (New York, 1950), p. 44.

[11]Watt, John Steinbeck, p. 2. Cf: Lincoln R. Gibbs, "John Steinbeck: Moralist," Antioch Review, II (Summer, 1942), pp. 172-184. Gibbs makes another derogatory remark about Steinbeck by stating that "There are in Steinbeck's books hundreds of unsavory incidents, ribald speeches, scores of perverts, thieves, lechers, bullies, and prostitutes, a few horrible tales of sex perversion and one irreverent parody of a saint's legend. For the reading of Steinbeck one needs a good heart and a strong stomach." /Italics are Gibbs's/

[12]Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the American Novel (New York, 1952), p. 443.

[13]Lewis, "Daemon," p. 140.

[14]Cited by Lisca, Wide World, p. 13.

[15]Kazin says that Steinbeck approaches "the modern social struggle as a tragicomedy of animal instincts." (Quoted in Kennedy, "Affirmed," p. 226.) Magny in "Steinbeck, or the Limits of the Impersonal Novel," in SHC, ed. Tedlock, p. 218 asserts that Steinbeck seems "incapable of painting human beings in their individualities as men; he sees them only in their animality." John Chamberlain,"Back to Tortilla Flat," Harper's, CXC (February, 1945), among front advertising pages, compares Cannery Row to a circus or zoo because of being devoid of human meaning. Along the same line, Arthur Mizener advises that Steinbeck continue writing in the vein of The Long Valley and The Red Pony rather than trying to work with moral themes: "There is evidence even in East of Eden of what is quite clear from Steinbeck's earlier work, that so long as he sticks to animals and children and to situations he can see to some purpose from the point of view of his almost biological feeling for the continuity of life he can release the considerable talent and sensitivity which are naturally his. As soon as he tries to see adult experience in the usual way and to find the familiar kind of moral in it, the insight and talent cease to work and he writes like the author of any third-rate best seller." (Quoted in Lisca, Wide World, p. 275.)

Kennedy, "Affirmed," p. 228, complains of Steinbeck's plainly stated parallels between men and animals. In addition to these prejudiced attacks on Steinbeck's naturalistic tendency of dealing with low life forms, there are two good pieces of criticism. Woodburn Ross believes that Steinbeck uses his naturalism or interest in lower forms of life as a basis for ethics and worship of nature. (W.O. Ross, "John Steinbeck: Naturalism's Priest," College English, X (May, 1949), pp. 433-434; hereafter cited as Ross, "Priest.") An essay by Frederich Bracher, "Steinbeck and the Biological View of Man," Pacific Spectator, II (Winter, 1948), pp. 14-29,makes it clear that it is not only possible put profitable to discuss Steinbeck's "biological view of man" without succumbing to the old idea of his "animalism." Cf. Lisca, Wide World, p. 17: "Bracher demonstrated that Steinbeck's biology goes beyond animalism to a mystic reverence for 'life in all its forms.'" Ross's and Bracher's essays take exactly those materials which had provided all the critical cliches about Steinbeck's animalism, primitivism, and immorality and reinterpret them more convincingly as the basis of Steinbeck's humanity, his mysticism, and his reverence for life.

[16]Wilson, "Back Room," pp. 36-41.

[17]Quoted in H.C. Gardiner, In All Conscience (New York, 1959), p. 135. Hereafter cited as Gardiner, Conscience.

[18]Lisca, Wide World, p. 286. Lisca (p. 287) notes that a "serious writer who turns to the kind of journalism exemplified by 'How to Fish in French' and 'Vegetable War' has either lost the distinction between literature and cheap journalism or has willingly embraced the latter." He mentions The Short Reign of Pippin IV(New York, 1957) and Sweet Thursday (New York, 1954) as evidence of Steinbeck's present state of decline.

Orville Prescott, "Squandered Talents," In My Opinion: An Inquiry Into the Contemporary Novel (Indianapolis, 1952), p. 60 mentions Cannery Row (New York, 1945), Burning Bright (New York, 1950) and The Pearl (New York, 1947) as "monumental examples of utter intellectual confusion and the evidence of the decline of Steinbeck."

[19]Wagenknecht, Cavalcade, p. 447. Cf: Gardiner, Conscience, p. 136 for the following denunciation: "Alas, Poor Yorik Steinbeck--he may have been an emperor of American Literature once; he is pretty bare now."

[20]Lewis, "Daemon," pp. 121-122.

The fact that Steinbeck's work has declined is agreed upon, but the critical explanations of the causes of the decline are varied. Warren French, John Steinbeck, (New York, 1961), p. 161 lists as the possible causes the death of Ed Ricketts, the scientist-friend who gave Steinbeck most of his philosophical ideas and went on the expedition that The Sea of Cortez (New York, 1941) is based upon and is the proto-type of Doc in Cannery Row and Sweet Thursday; Steinbeck's move from California to New York City; the fact that after the war Steinbeck avoided reality and thus became detached from his characters and has grown increasingly touchy and disgruntled about the reception of his work; and the fact that he lacked the sophistication to deal with urban society as he had with rural. Wagenknecht, Cavalcade, p. 447 has suggested that the war may have destroyed the faith expressed in The Grapes of Wrath and left Steinbeck where Hemingway was grounded after World War I. Maxwell Geismar, American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity (New York, 1958), p. 155 believes that Steinbeck's "success" in terms of the commercial stage, the movie scenario, and the best-seller has apparently led Steinbeck to develop the least satisfactory elements of his previous work. "One can still hope that he will throw off the adolescent philosophy, the facile emotions, the final subordination of any genuine interest in human beings as such to a tricky theme or a theatrical climax."

[21]Percy H. Boynton, America in Contemporary Fiction (Chicago, 1940), p. 243.

[22]Ibid., p. 247.

[23]Joseph Warren Beach, American Fiction: 1920-1940 (New York, 1941), p. 311. Gide's comment was quoted in Watt, John Steinbeck, p. 42.

[24]Floyd Stovall, American Idealism (Norman, 1943), p. 162.

[25]Ibid., p. 164. Frederic I. Carpenter, "The Philosophical Joads," College English, II (December, 1940), pp. 324-325 notes that Steinbeck brings together three of the great skeins of American thought (especially in The Grapes of Wrath): Emerson's faith in common man, Whitman's religion of mass democracy, and the realistic philosophy of pragmatism.

[26]Lisca, Wide World, p. 24.

[27]W.O. Ross, "John Steinbeck: Earth and Stars," SHC, ed. Tedlock, pp. 167-182.

[28]Snell, Shapers, pp. 187, 197 respectively. He notes their similarities as follows: both have the gift of story telling; both create characters by humours; both exaggerate; both are sentimental.

Hugh Holman, "A Narrow-gauge Dickens," New Republic, CXXX (June 7, 1954), p. 20 also compares Steinbeck and Dickens and calls Steinbeck a "narrow-gauge Dickens but properly in the tradition of sentimental social criticism of which Dickens is the greatest master." The likenesses he finds are that they are both successful portrayers of children and child-like states of mind; both are tender-spirited, sensitive to suffering; and both picture grotesques.

[29]Wagenknecht, Cavalcade, p. 444.

[30]Wilson, "Back Room," p. 36.

[31]Lisca, Wide World, p. 231. Lisca classifies the books into the groups as follows: social protest, In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, The Grapes of Wrath; quaint and picturesque comedy, Tortilla Flat, Cannery Row, Sweet Thursday; simple rural life, The Pastures of Heaven, The Long Valley, The Pearl, and The Red Pony. He notes that Cup of Gold and The Wayward Bus were conveniently forgotten.

[32]W.M. Forhock, The Novel of Violence in America: 1920-1950 (Dallas, 1950), p. 147.

[33]Cited in Lisca, Wide World, p. 17.

[34]John Steinbeck, "Critics, Critics Burning Bright," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXIII (November 11, 1950), p. 21.

[35]Non-teleological thinking parallels that older and more famous conception of artistic objectivity. For further definition of non-teleological thinking, Cf. Watt, John Steinbeck, p. 4: "This pure kind of thinking would concern itself primarily with what actually 'is' in attempting to answer at most the already sufficiently difficult questions what or how instead of why." Cf. Blake Nevius, "Steinbeck: One Aspect," Pacific Spectator, III (Summer, 1949), p. 305: "Steinbeck's non-teleological or 'is' thinking is that the truest reason for anything's being so is that it is. This is of use to him as a means of clearing the air for a detached but sympathetic approach to human nature."

Concerning the levels which Steinbeck writes on, Antonia Sexias (Tony Ricketts) in "John Steinbeck and the Non-teleological Bus," in SHC, ed. Tedlock, pp. 275-281 states that Steinbeck purposely writes on several levels of meaning: story level, social protest level, symbolic level, and philosophical level.

[36]Frederic I. Carpenter, "John Steinbeck: American Dreamer," Southwest Review, XXVI (Summer, 1941), p. 454. Hereafter cited as Carpenter, SW Rev.

Lewis, "Daemon," p. 125 speaks of the "American motif in Steinbeck's works--a celebrational sense of life--and also of a contemporary motif of an intensely pathetic awareness of the fatal division between man and man."

[37]Kennedy, "Affirmed," pp. 218, 224. Baker Fairley, "John Steinbeck and the Coming Literature," Sewanee Review, L (Spring, 1942), p. 153 agrees with Kennedy. He contends that "Steinbeck is supremely interested in what happens to men's minds and hearts when they function, not as responsible, self-governing individuals, but as members of a group."

[38]Boynton, America, p. 257. In opposition, Freeman Champney in "John Steinbeck, Californian," in SHC, ed. Tedlock, pp. 135-151 observes that Steinbeck accepts Marxian dogma and distrusts humanity.

[39]Ross, "Priest," pp. 433-434. On p. 438, Ross goes on to quote Steinbeck from Sea of Cortez where Steinbeck says, "There would seem to be only one commandment for living things: Survive!" Ross declares that Steinbeck does have naturalistic tendencies, but to describe him as a naturalist is in one sense false. "The description is incomplete. He has many characters which are contradictory to naturalism and he amalgamates them....It is outside the naturalistic tradition in that it is not objective. Steinbeck loves whatever he considers 'natural' and is keenly sensitive to its emotional values." Ross thinks that Steinbeck is the "first significant novelist to begin to build a mystical religion upon a naturalistic base. Steinbeck does not see through nature to a God beyond as Wordsworth does; for Steinbeck there is no spirit which rolls through all things. There is only nature....But such a nature Steinbeck loves, and before it, like primitive man, he is reverent."

For Steinbeck's feeling about being called "mystical," Cf. Burton Rascoe, "John Steinbeck" English Journal, XXVII (March, 1938), p. 213: "Steinbeck abhors and abjures the tag 'mystic' which some critics have used in describing him. He is deeply concerned with the problem of Good and Evil, not in any conventional, moral or philosophical sense but as phenomena in life and as animating principles in life."

Concerning Steinbeck's naturalistic position, Eric Carlson in "Rebuttal: Symbolism in The Grapes of Wrath," College English, XIX (January, 1958), p. 175 expresses the view that Steinbeck's naturalism goes beyond "both the mechanistic determinism of Dreiser and the mystic dualism of traditional Christianity. Steinbeck lifts the biology of stimulus-response to the biology of spirit....His epic naturalism is neither romantic nor mystic, nor Christian; it is an experiential discovery of the process by which 'physiological man' becomes the 'whole man.' As such it is a humanistic integration of the knowledge of man made available by modern science, philosophy, and art."

[40]Kennedy,"Affirmed," p. 236.

[41]Wagenknecht, Cavalcade, p. 444.

[42]Geismar, Writers, p. 266. Geismar in 1947 in Moderns, p. 152 said that "Of all the ranking modern writers who have gone back to primitive materials as a protest against and a solace for contemporary society, Steinbeck is, as a matter of fact, the least well-endowed...." In the same book, p. 155, he again criticizes Steinbeck's primitivism when he says that as an antidote for the machine age it is "tinged with adolescent notions of 'Fun,' 'anarchy,' 'sex.' Steinbeck's works from Cannery Row to Sweet Thursday can be classified only in the category of entertainment--that is to say, hits and ham."

[43]Frohock, Violence, pp. 147-148.

[44]Edwin Berry Burgum, "Fickle Sensibility of John Steinbeck," The Novel and the World's Dilemma (New York, 1963), p. 273.

Carl C. Van Doren, The American Novel 1789-1939 (New York, 1940) p. 364, says that "Tortilla Flat was like nobody but Steinbeck. The paisanos of Monterey were for him 'good people of laughter and kindness, of honest lusts and direct eyes, of courtesy beyond politeness.'"

[45]Wagenknecht, Cavalcade, p. 446.

[46]Orville Prescott calls Cannery Row a "sentimental glorification of subhuman behavior" and a "glorification of weakness of mind and degeneration of character." He adds that "the atmosphere is one of biological benevloence, a sort of beaming approbation for human activities conducted below the demarcation line of pride, honesty, self respect and minimum decency...Mr. Steinbeck admired them /the boys/ enormously and seemed to consider them the salt of the earth....He insisted with deliberate perversity on exalting his bums, on conveying the impression that they were lovable and admirable, that their way of life without ideas or ideals, without love or loyalty, without purpose or effort, was charming and attractive. (Prescott, In My Opinion, pp. 51, 60,61).

Cf. Boynton, America, p. 246: "Tortilla Flat is something between fantasy, burlesque, and farce. The author was as irresponsible as his characters."

Baker Fairley, p. 149, expresses the opinion that Tortilla Flat must be called a "holiday book--a book to be read playfully."

The most scathing denunciation of Steinbeck's attempts at presenting a picture of the lives of irresponsible people comes from Chamberlain in his Harper's review (among front advertising pages) who speaks of Cannery Row as an "amoral place, and Steinbeck is amoral in his approach to it. Between the boys of the Palace Flophouse and the tomcats they catch for Doc there is little discernible difference, and the girls of Dora's Bear Flag bordello might be out of the Elsie Dinsmore books for all that Steinbeck cares....Cannery Row is an idyll, but it is a naturalist's idyll. It is fun to read, and that is all."

CHAPTER II

[1]Charles C. Walcutt, American Literary Naturalism, a Divided Stream (Minneapolis, 1956), p. 259. A similar view is voiced by Robert Bennett in Wrath of John Steinbeck (Los Angeles, 1939), p.2: "Many have called attention to gross blunders in economics, medicine, science, religion and politics while setting out to remedy the evils and thereby adding fresh truth by their endeavors. Of such men is John Steinbeck."

[2]French, Steinbeck, p. 37.

[3]Ibid., p. 120.

[4]Fontenrose, Introduction, p. 33.

[5]Geismar, Writers, p. 254.

[6]French, Steinbeck, p. 38. French, p. 38, calls Cup of Gold a defense of the "superiority of the artistic calling....Despite the superficial pirate story, Cup of Gold really contrasts...the man who pursues the grail of power and finds that he must compromise with society or be destroyed and the man who pursues the grail of art and transcends society."

[7]Watt, John Steinbeck, p. 4. Watt believes that one of Steinbeck's themes that recurs throughout his work is that of the oldest human dream of finding and re-entering the Garden of Eden and the awakening that inevitably follows.

[8]Lisca, Wide World, p. 68.

[9]Ibid., p. 69.

[10]Carpenter, SW Rev, p. 459.

[11]Lisca, Wide World, p. 135.

[12]Nevius, p. 303.

[13]John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath (New York, 1939), p. 68.

[14]John Steinbeck, The Wayward Bus (New York, 1947), p. 234.

[15]Secluded places are ironically presented as un-idyllic; however, Steinbeck also makes clear that civilization is also bad. Many of the minor characters in his novels and stories want to get away from the conflicts of its conventions. In addition to the major characters, Joseph Wayne, Ethan Allen Hawley, Adam Trask, Kate, Junius Maltby, and Merlin, in The Red Pony Steinbeck pictures an old paisano named Gitano who comes back from civilization and retreats to the mountains to die because of their quietness. Jim Casy in The Grapes of Wrath retreats to wander in the wilderness for meditation but returns to spread his message of love for humanity to all men. In To a God Unknown there is an old man who lives in a little shack at the edge of the Pacific Ocean completely by himself. He is the last man in the world to see the sun go down,and he sacrifices an animal to the sun just at the minute that the sun disappears every night. In Sweet Thursday, Doc meets a "seer" who lives alone in a home covered with pine boughs between two sand dunes in a valley by the ocean. These people prefer isolation to civilization, with the exception of Jim Casy.

[16]Cf. Lewis, "Daemon," p. 128: "It is the traditional American impulse to withdraw into the terrain of freedom in order to find or re-find one's identity and one's purpose as a human being; to dissociate from the given, the orthodox, the habitual, from whatever passes at the time for civilization." Lewis notes that Huck lights out for the territories because he has been to civilization before. The same impulse is seen in Thoreau's withdrawal to Walden. Natty Bumppo lights out for the uncomplicated forest from the oppressive society of the town of Templeton, and Melville reflects on the evils of civilization after being a part of the civilization of cannibals in Typee. On p. 131,

Lewis contends that the next phase, in American literature, has customarily been the return into society to testify amidst its betrayals and denials to the lessons learned in solitude. Therefore, we can see that Steinbeck seems to be following the American tradition in dealing with retreat.

[17]Watt, John Steinbeck, p. 85.

[18]Bracher, "Biological View," p. 26 notes that Steinbeck does not have any illusions about the noble savage. His picture in Sea of Cortez of the fishing Indians of the Gulf of California stresses their superstitions and suffering. Steinbeck says in Sea of Cortez, "It is not implied that this fishing Indian lives a perfect or even a very good life."

CHAPTER III

[1]Frank Scully, Rogues' Gallery: Profiles of My Eminent Contemporaries (Hollywood, 1943), p. 52.

David Ray, "Many Keys to Steinbeck," The Nation, CLXXXIV (April, 1957), CLXXXIV (April, 1957), pp. 346-347, states that it was turned down by eleven publishers and that the executive who paid $4,000 for the movie rights of Tortilla Flat was fired for doing so.

[2]Wilson,"Back Room," p. 44. Fairley, p. 148, attributes its success to the talk, "the trick of speech of those California down-and-outs whose tale it is."

[3]Beach, Fiction, p. 317.

[4]John Steinbeck, "My Short Novels," The English Journal, XLIII (March, 1954), p. 147. Hereafter cited as Steinbeck, "My Short Novels."

[5]Geismar, Writers, p. 252.

[6]Beach, Fiction, p. 319.

[7]Bracher, "Biological View," p. 26.

[8]Burgum, "Fickle Sensibility," pp. 275-276.

[9]Lisca, Wide World, p. 88.

[10]Quoted in Bracher, "Biological View," p. 27.

Burton Rascoe, p. 206, praises the paisano by saying that "he is, in fact, your better self; and, if you wish and expect to fare well in a highly acquisitive society and if you wish to be well thought of by your worse possible neighbors, it is better to keep this better self hidden or in abeyance."

[11]Bracher, "Biological View," p. 25.

[12]Lewis Gennett, "John Steinbeck: Novelist at Work," Atlantic Monthly, CLXXVI (December, 1945), p. 56.

W.M. Frohock, Violence, p. 154, states of the Arthurian theme that

"There is supposed to be an interior continuity to Tortilla Flat based upon the Arthurian legend. The critics missed it unanimously. As a matter of fact, Steinbeck is the only person I have ever heard of who affirmed that the unity was there."

French, Steinbeck, p. 54 notes that detailed parallels between Tortilla Flat and Morte d'Arthur are not consistently enough worked out to be very illuminating.

[13]French, Steinbeck, p. 61.

[14]Carpenter, SW Rev., p. 462.

[15]Lisca, Wide World, p. 91. In addition Lisca points out on pp. 81-82 that Tortilla Flat has been hailed by critics as expressing "Steinbeck's ideal of a primitivistic humanity...but in none of Steinbeck's books is the 'natural' state of man seen as ideal; nor are poor diet and filth considered quaint or superior to more civilized standards of living. Steinbeck did not write Tortilla Flat to apotheosize 'natural' man."

[16]Cf. French, Steinbeck, p. 132: "The Bohemian way of life is not all full of joy. Its pleasures are intense but short-lived....Steinbeck suggests that one cannot enjoy anything more than short-lived successes alternating with disappointment unless one makes some concessions to civilization." On page 57, French maintains that Tortilla Flat is the primary exhibit of those who charge Steinbeck with being preoccupied with loafers. "The point of Tortilla Flat is partially that the way of life of these 'bums' is in some ways superior to the average American's, and that we might learn something from them; but it is also partially a warning that the simple, close-to-nature life that some men think they long for is not the answer to society's problems either."

Cf. Snell, Shapers, p. 191: "Steinbeck is not necessarily a champion of the underdog per se; he is rather concerned with the question of how the pure in heart are to survive in a civilization that places a premium on sly multifariousness."

Lewis Gannett in The Portable Steinbeck (New York, 1943), p. xiv also mentions Steinbeck's asservation about the short-lived successes of the paisanos and states that "Obviously, John Steinbeck as a writer was never quite the naive primitive discovered by some of his hoity-toity critics."

Watt, John Steinbeck, p. 40 also notes that Steinbeck does not "romanticize the dispossessed nor is he enraptured by primitive, uncivilized folk."

[17]French, Steinbeck, p. 56.

[18]Cf. Bracher, "Biological View," p. 28: "In Tortilla Flat there is an implicit attack on most of the things dear to the hearts of the respectable...The middle class, Steinbeck seems to be repeating in his novels, has abandoned its versatility, and its values are atrophied into a sluggish desire for comfort and security."

Gibbs notes the satire of Tortilla Flat on p. 177: "It is not too strained an interpretation to read this book as a jolly satire of respectable society. Treat the average community as follows: Eliminate the institution of property; reduce marital fidelity to a minumum--or less; raise the

per capita consumption of alcohol many degrees; instead of doing your exploitation legally and on a grand scale, do it by petty larceny and burglary; let your charities be matters of sporadic impulse; and spread over the whole a veneer of religion. You then have a parallel between the reputable world and the community of paisanos. The proportion of good and evil favors the average community--and that is important; but the ingredients are the same. There--in Tortilla Flat--but for the grace of God goes Main Street."

Cf. Gibbs, p. 175: "One suspects that Steinbeck would cheerfully plead guilty to the charge of deliberately shocking the respectables. Convinced as he is that many of them are Pharisees, and 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. In the Preface of Tortilla Flat he complains of having suffered long from the oppression of decency. 'The unco guid and the rigidly righteous' are a sore trial to generous, sympathetic souls, especially to artists...Steinbeck overdoes this matter, but his license of speech does not spring from a vile mind; it springs from the heart of a rebel who hates cant and injustice."

Among others who have noted that Tortilla Flat is in opposition to the conventions of contemporary society is Maxwell Geismar, who says in Writers, p. 253, "The moral of Tortilla Flat is that the 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."

Fontenrose, Introduction, p. 108 notes that in Tortilla Flat Steinbeck is attacking and satirizing the drive for success as commonly conceived, as wealth, ownership and status.

[19]Charles Metzger, "Steinbeck's Version of the Pastoral," Modern Fiction Studies (1960), p. 120.

[20]Watt, John Steinbeck, p. 39.

[21]Even though Steinbeck does not approve of contemporary society, he does not explicitly present his view of the perfect existence, or a positive alternative to the greed of Monterey or the irresponsibility of the paisanos in Tortilla Flat.

[22]Steinbeck does not accept conventional religiosity. He displays his attitude in a short story entitled "St. Katy, the Virgin" which is a parody of a Saint's tale with Katy being a pig. He treats satirically the materialism of the church in this story and suggests that the church has become a symbol of social and material respectability. In other of his works, one finds glimpses of Steinbeck's feelings toward modern religion. Burton, Joseph Wayne's older brother in To a God Unknown, is a "typical Steinbeck Christian: he is narrow, bigoted, destructive. Burton apparently survives, but Steinbeck leaves the impression that although the pious are hard to eradicate, their state is something worse than death." (French, Steinbeck, p. 149) In addition, Uncle John in The Grapes of Wrath is another Steinbeck Christian who still "ain't very happy."

[23]Geismar, Writers, p. 255.

CHAPTER IV

[1]Steinbeck, "My Short Novels," p. 147.

[2]Prescott, p. 63. Lisca, Wide World, p. 198, notes that Prescott states that Steinbeck wrote a "sentimental glorification of weakness of mind and degeneration of character" in Cannery Row."

Frohock, Violence, p. 152, asserts that we expected more of Steinbeck than is found in Cannery Row.

[3]Walcutt, Naturalism, p. 265.

[4]Quoted in Lisca, Wide World, p. 198.

[5]Lisca, Wide World, p. 199.

[6]French, Steinbeck, p. 20.

[7]Burgum, "Fickle Sensibility," p. 277, says the following of Mack and the boys: "Our very consciousness of superiority permits us, under the cover of what we take for a literary interest, secretly to envy them. For in them we see those aspects of ourselves, freed from the fetters of duty, and thus capable of being used actively to serve themselves.... Their cunning may be as low as their literacy, but it gains their ends; and it captivates us when we are sick of the toiling and the thinking that remain always insufficient for our more comprehensive goals. Peering through the haze of the picturesque, we do not notice that these rogues lack bath tubs and breakfast cereals; we only see that they are living the life of Reilly while we drag behind us the chain of hectic obligations and dull conformities."

[8]Fontenrose, Introduction, p. 107.

[9]Walcutt, Naturalism, p. 266. Cf. Walcutt, Naturalism, pp. 265-266: "The boys represent only half the answer. Doc's quiet expeditions to the seaside to collect specimens illustrate the devoted rather than the irresponsible escape from society....In Doc and the Boys emerge more or less fused, the two great strands of Steinbeck's transcendental naturalism: the belief in the unfettered human spirit, and the belief that exact scientific knowledge will bring us to inmost truths...Doc's life has form because it is controlled by devotion to an ideal. The boys are admirable because they are spontaneous and because they take joy in the simple physical pleasures of life."

Lisca, Wide World, p. 215, also notes that Doc embodies all the qualities which Steinbeck finds admirable. "In him all opposites are reconciled. He is both scientist and mystic, both calculating and tender, both learned and common, both intellectual and emotional, both classicist and romanticist."

[10]For further discussion of these inter-plot chapters, see French, Steinbeck, pp. 123-124. He calls many of these chapters "Interpolated fables." The main purpose of the "paired" chapter is to universalize the implications of the chapter in the main narrative that it follows.

[11]Fontenrose, Introduction, p. 101.

[12]Watt, John Steinbeck, p. 84.

[13]French, Steinbeck, p. 120.

[14]Portable Steinbeck, p. xxvi.

[15]In Sweet Thursday, the sequel to Cannery Row, Mr. Malloy spends much of his time trying to find a glue that will adhere to metal so that he can hang the curtains on the curtain rods which Mrs. Malloy bought.

[16]One must note that Mack and the "boys" are not affected by the advertising venture of the materialistic-minded owners in contemporary society. Another example of their good sense and lack of good sense of most people in society is found when they do not bother to turn their heads when a parade passes directly in front of them because they have seen the very same parade with the very same people in it in the very same order with the bands playing the very same songs year after year. They are, however, feeling quite guilty at the time of the parade because of having wrecked Doc's laboratory during their party. Consequently, they miss the innocent excitement of a parade in their remorse.

[17]Bracher, "Biological View," p. 28.

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