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GRADUATE COLLEGE

JOHN STEINBECK: LOVE, WORK, AND THE POLITICS OF COLLECTIVITY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

JERRY WAYNE WILSON

Norman, Oklahoma

1977

JOHN STEINBECK: LOVE, WORK, AND

THE POLITICS OF COLLECTIVITY

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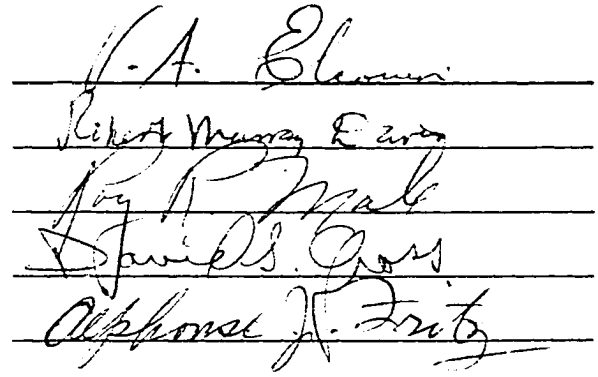

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	LOVE AND WORK IN AMERICA	1
II.	JOHN STEINBECK: MAN OF LOVE AND WORK	49
III.	STEINBECK'S EARLY FICTION	83
IV.	STEINBECK'S ENGAGED FICTION	133
V.	STEINBECK'S DECLINE	201
VI.	AFTERWORD	252
NOTES		255
BIBLIOGRAPHY		268

Jerry W. Wilson

JOHN STEINBECK: LOVE, WORK, AND THE POLITICS OF COLLECTIVITY

Chapter I

Love and Work in America

Love and work have been the subjects of scores of books in the past century. Much that has been said has been theoretical and speculative, but nevertheless valuable, because it has probed and challenged human potential and has been forward-looking and progressive. Many of the discussions of love and work have been so abstract as to isolate these crucial facets of human existence from each other and from other phenomena with which they always and inevitably interact. Love and work are presumed to exist neutrally in a hermetically sterile vacuum, and the reader must submit to this artificial world in order to find validity in such discussions. Another kind of treatment has even been so narrowly limited as to assume that historically observable manifestations of love and work impulses provide the raw material from which we can ascertain what is "natural" to the human condition. The error of this approach should be immediately obvious: Never in the history of civilization has mankind been free of what

Herbert Marcuse calls the governing "reality principle," those sets of assumptions which exist in every historical setting, but which, being in a constant state of flux, have little to do with "nature."

Sigmund Freud was on the verge of confusing historical reality with nature when he talked about the human "instincts." It may be true that we are impelled partly by the promptings of built-in or inherited drives, but how can one sort out what is "instinctual" and what is the product of acculturation? Never-the-less, Freud's contribution to our understanding of love should not be under-rated; Freud's genius is apparent in his understanding of the evolution of civilization and of the roles of aggression, repression, and guilt, as well as love in that process. Freud posited man's basic conflict as the antagonism between the demands of instinct and the restrictions of civilization.

Early in his career, Freud assumed that aggression was part of the instinct of self-preservation. But in Beyond The Pleasure Principle, (1920) Freud hypothesized the independent "death instinct" as the source of aggression. Thus man's struggle to survive, which necessitated civilization, also puts him into conflict, not only with other men, but with himself as well. "Originally," Freud says, "the ego includes everything; later it separates off an external world from itself."[1] This act of separation leads to a three-fold threat of suffering for man. Because part of the aggression,

including the independent death instinct, can be turned inward, man is threatened from within. But he is also threatened by the external world and by his relations with other men. In a society, the last threat, the threat of alienation from other men, is most painful; but ironically, the best defense against this threat is similar to the threat itself--isolation.

Isolation is obviously the enemy of socialization, and the challenge to man in his search for community has been to find alternatives to isolation. The principal alternative, which Freud recognized as the basis of civilization, is repression. Repression paves the way to civilization. And the movement along the path is from the "pleasure principle" to the "reality principle." Individual needs must yield to community needs. Immediate satisfaction may have to be delayed. To achieve security, some freedom must be surrendered. And in place of play, members of the community must work.

An interesting part of Freud's thought is his speculation about how civilization (and its pre-requisite repression) evolved. Ontogenetically, Freud observed, repression occurs during early childhood when submission to the particular reality principle of the child's family is enforced by the parents, especially the father. Later the reality principle of the larger society is further enforced by the various educational institutions encountered by the child.

Freud hypothesized this same pattern on the phylogenetic level. In the "primal horde," the primal father monopolized power and pleasure and forced renunciation on the part of his sons. Thus, according to Freud, civilization and its component order and repression of aggressiveness were first brought about by superior aggressiveness, hardly a healthy basis for what we like to think of in positive terms as civilization. But that is not the worst; the suppression of pleasure by the father was not the only result of domination; it also "created the mental preconditions for the continued functioning of domination."[2]

Having learned to accept domination, man was finally in a position to establish civilization as we know it. Having learned to accept suppression from without, man was prepared to implement self-controls and prohibitions in the interest of preserving the order that had been achieved through the authority of the primal father. In the modern sense of the term, "civilization begins only in the brother clan, when the taboos, now self-imposed by the ruling brothers, implement repression in the common interest of preserving the group as a whole."[3] But how did this development come about? According to Freud, the decisive psychological event was the development of guilt. "Progress beyond the primal horde--i.e. civilization--presupposes guilt feelings: it introjects into the individuals, and thus sustains, the principal prohibitions, constraints, and delays in gratification on which civilization depends."[4]

While recognizing guilt as essential to civilization, Freud also recognized it as the most important problem in the development of civilization. This inherent and seemingly unsolvable paradox is recognizable in Freud's hypothesized primal man. In order to counter the unsettling internal effects of guilt, as well as to maintain the necessary repressions demanded by the brother clan, the individual (the ego) had no methods other than those directed at external threats, so these same aggressive feelings are introjected, and the result is what we today call alienation. The human psyche is unable to meet all the demands made upon it simultaneously, for some of these demands are diametrically opposed. To expl. in this conflict, Freud described the psyche in terms of a disintegrated and warring three-part entity: First a part of the "id" developed into the "ego" as a result of the conflict over the needs of the individual and the demands of his society. Later the "super-ego" evolved as the voice of repression of that society. So at best, it seems, man has always had to live with uncompromisable conflicts if he would choose community over isolation.

So far as the theory of civilization is concerned, it would be difficult to refute Freud's conclusions. But it does seem to me that he was too uncritical of his own empirical observations. No theorist can or should ignore the realities of his own time, but it is also an error to see historical reality as anything more than it is, that is, to confuse the

observed conditions of man at any point in time with an abstract "nature" of man. As Rollo May has observed, "The culture in which Freud studied, thought, and worked was an alienated one, and that alienation is already revealed in his definition of love and sex--as it reveals itself even more in ours a half-century later."[5]

Freud's perceptive observations convinced him that there are two basic human urges. One is the self oriented urge for happiness, which he called "egoistic." The second is others-oriented, the urge toward union with the community, which he called "altruistic." But he goes on to conclude that "the two processes of individual and of cultural development must stand in hostile opposition to each other."[6] In an aggressive, competitive society such as Freud's and ours, Freud's observations certainly seem valid. But the as yet unanswered question is whether these conditions are natural and inevitable, or whether they are the artificial creations of a particular historical reality principle.

It seems safe to accept the notion that the process of civilization inevitably involves the repression of instincts (basic drives) to achieve security. That some repression is an essential precondition of civilization is a point of almost universal agreement among modern psychologists and sociologists. But as Marcuse points out, in modern capitalist industrial society, the replacement of the pleasure principle by the reality principle involves considerable "surplus

repression."[7] The role of the ego has always been essentially to defend against both the id and the outside world. And Freud explained the needs and demands of the outside world in terms of the super-ego. For the individual there is an uninterrupted transition from the direct authority of the parents to the external restrictions of the society. These restrictions (the phylogenetic super-ego) have their counterpart in the individual; they are introjected into the consciousness and become what we call conscience. Thus conscience, or super-ego, is the agency of repression. And the restrictions of conscience arise, not from within, but from outside the individual. It is apparent, then, that these restrictions oppose the interests of individual pleasure. When restrictions go beyond what is necessary for preservation of the individual and the society, they can be said to involve surplus repression. In Marcuse's words, "surplus repression is the restrictions necessitated by social domination."[8]

A closer look at the reality principle of modern society is required. What sort of "social domination" exists, what is the nature of the surplus repression in this society, and how are the two related? Marcuse stresses the fact that behind any reality principle always lies the fact of scarcity (either actual scarcity or scarcity caused by the method of distribution). It is usually "the consequence of a specific organization of scarcity" brought about by domination.[9] In capitalist systems, a market economy rather than a planned

economy always prevails. Such a system fosters aggressiveness and acquisitiveness, and has as its basic value, productivity. Marcuse accurately labels the prevailing reality principle of such a system the "performance principle."[10] Individuals are encouraged to perform, to acquire, and to dominate. Thus, scarcity is either caused by or accentuated by the basic organizational principles of the society. And those who gain dominant positions in the society not only organize future distribution, but also take upon themselves the roles of law-giver and value-setter for the society. No longer does repression originate from the real needs of the majority, but from the selfish desires of the few. No longer is repression only an instrument of security for the individual and survival for the society, but it becomes the tool of social dominance itself. And eventually, the "basic repression and surplus repression [become] inextricably intertwined."[11] The result is further introjection of repression and fragmentation of the individual psyche.

A major weakness in Freud's thought is his failure to distinguish between inhibitions imposed by actual scarcity, by the struggle for existence, and those emanating from an interest in domination. Like every historical reality principle, the performance principle is relative rather than "natural" and eternal. But Freud came close to identifying the established reality principle with reality itself. And as I have already stated, his assumption that there exists

such a thing as human instinct would imply permanent, rather than changing, principles of reality. Yet his conclusions about human instinct are based primarily upon his observations of man in his own historical epoch. Finally, as Marcuse points out, if Freud's instinct theory is valid, then the current historical manifestation of reality, the performance principle, must arise from it. But the performance principle is obviously relative. Freud failed to bring to bear an historical dialectical approach in his analysis of civilization.

Building upon the strengths of Freud's thought, Marcuse provides some of the clearest insight into the actual functioning of the performance principle. As I have said, performance, or production is the basic value in capitalistic society. Profit is the motive, and the "bottom line" is the measure. All institutions, which by their very nature are conservative, are tuned to the maintenance and defense of the system. We are thus taught to function in concert with the performance principle. We learn to be aggressive, competitive, acquisitive, and to submit both our "instincts" and our productive capacities to the societal repression. Social labor is controlled, not in accordance with the needs and desires of the workers or the society as a whole, but in the interest of greater efficiency, and hence, greater profits for the capitalists. The surplus repression by which we are controlled is incorporated into the super-ego, internalized, and turned against our real desires and needs. This

fragmentation and disintegration of the psyche advances, and the "normal" individual learns to accept his alienation as "normal." As Marcuse points out, the major function of modern psychoanalysis is to teach the individual to adapt to a sick society. "Behind the tolerant attitude of the 'neutral' analyst is concealed respect for the social taboos of the bourgeoisie."[12] In more damning terms, the poet Diane di Prima calls the analysts "pimps for this decadence."[13]

Modern capitalist industrial society, which is a continuation of Freud's society, is full of built-in contradictions. We use such words as "performance," "productivity," and "progress" to describe it; yet the most singular achievement of the society is the "containment of social change."[14] The society produces and nurtures, as Marcuse puts it, "one-dimensional man." Marcuse describes our society as "irrational as a whole. Its productivity is destructive of the free development of human needs and faculties, its peace maintained by the constant threat of war, its growth dependent upon the repression of the real possibilities for pacifying the struggle for existence."[15] The values of the society are "rational" only in the sense that they conform to the relative rationality of the performance principle. It is an "omnipresent" system which perpetuates itself by swallowing up or repulsing all alternatives.

It would seem logical to ask how such a system, if it is really opposed to the interests of the majority of its

constituents, could continue to exist. The answer is that part of the inherent nature of such a system is the machinery geared to denying people the freedom to change it. "Freedom" is a key word for the defenders of one-dimensional capitalist order. But it is important, not so much for what it offers as for what it hides. "Free enterprise" really means the freedom to make as much money as you can by whatever exploitative means. For the worker, freedom has meant the freedom to work or to starve. Politicians use the term "free world" to include dozens of authoritarian dictatorships, many of which are instituted and maintained in power for the interests of American capital. But most important, the preservation of control in this "free" society requires that people be led to think that they have freedom of choice, when in reality all the "choices" are carefully regulated. The individual hasn't even the autonomy to choose the things he needs, for his needs are frequently artificially created. Social control rests in the fact that what the individual comes to "need" are the things which the society produces.

Some of the more apparent features of one-dimensional society are: the creation of false needs by advertising, the pervasiveness of the "military mind," the "sanctity" of the two-party system in politics, and the function of most educational and spiritual institutions in the perpetuation of the status quo. Take the function of advertising. The average American watches television about two hours each day. This

means that he is confronted with from fifteen to twenty commercials from this one medium alone, a statistic which is greatly enlarged when we consider the saturation of advertising in newspapers, on the radio, and on signs and bill-boards. All of these advertisements have one thing in common. They attempt to create a need for the product they sell. The "need" may be any of several types; the product may appeal on the level of fulfilling sexual desires, enhancing self-esteem, or providing ease and luxury instead of work.

The important fact is that advertising works. The median family income in the United States in 1976 is over $13,000. Yet if all the assets of all the families were liquidated, and all the debts owed by the families were paid, over half the families in America would be in debt. Ours is a consumer society. We consume, perhaps not more than we produce, but at least more than we have left when the profits of our labor (surplus value) are taken off by the capitalists. And the reason is simple. We buy, not what we really need, or what we would choose to buy if we were really free to choose, but what fulfills false needs created in us by advertising. Our "free economy" is stimulated by our purchases, the rich get richer, and often the worker finds himself in the position of not being able to buy the things he really needs--the products which he, as a worker, may have produced.

As pervasive in our society as advertising is the "military mind." Even during times of "peace" the society is

geared to defense. Each year the military budget increases and more sophisticated "exotic" weapons are built. The Pentagon spends millions of dollars each year justifying its existence by propaganda designed to create fear of all sorts of imagined enemies. Among most of our society's institutions there is a constant and concerted effort to "educate" us concerning the "menace" of Communism. The executive and administrative ranks of government, business, and even universities are top-heavy with retired military people and with civilians who have adopted the military mind. There can be no relaxing of vigilance. For the enemy is everywhere, and the enemy is permanent. Little does it matter that our military budget dwarfs our budget for humanitarian and progressive programs. Though our society's chief value is productivity, little does it matter that the product of the military monster is nothing but potential destruction. We are sold the military mind-set just as we are sold mouthwash, and for much the same reasons. In both cases the need is created because profit is involved. Hence, the perennial need for an enemy. And "The Enemy is not identical with actual Communism . . . he is . . . the real spectre of liberation."[16]

Another enemy of liberation from "one-dimensional society" is America's "sacred" two-party system. The system gives the illusion of choice. Most Americans now have the right to vote, and the act of casting the ballot perpetuates the illusion that the individual is taking a significant part in

determining his future and the future of the society. But in reality, the options for the voter are as limited as the options for the consumer. Monopoly control is almost universal and total in American life. If we wish to buy a car, it will more than likely be from one of three corporations. Three or four brands of toilet paper on the grocery shelf cost almost exactly the same, and are probably all the products of one or two giant corporations. A handful of major corporations control the oil industry from the well to the automobile, and their executives meet regularly to fix prices. One corporation controls the nation's telephones and reaps an annual profit of four billion dollars. Why then should we expect politics to be different? The ruling class-controlled media conspire to be sure that no candidate besides those of the two traditional capitalist parties gets elected. Each election year we are told that this time we have a "real choice," but the fact is that the political system is geared precisely to <u>preventing</u> a real choice. If we have nationally televised debates in the presidential race, only the Democrats and the Republicans are invited to participate. After all, given a real choice, the people conceivably might vote the choice-limiting corporations and the super-rich and their candidates out of power.

Of course the political system is not the only institution in America which helps to limit freedom of choice and to preserve the narrow <u>status quo</u>. All institutions are by

nature conservative and myopic. History leaves little room to question this claim. The nuclear family, the church, the public school, the university, and all levels of government--in short, all the major influences that the individual encounters between the cradle and the grave--have as their first and primary function the preservation of the system of which they are integral parts. And all of these institutions and qualities of modern American life play their parts in maintaining social control through surplus repression. But why do most people seem to adapt as readily as they do to one-dimensional life?

There are some complex and subtle forces at work here. To begin with, as I have said, much of the energy of the society is spent in its defense and preservation in its present form. "Mass communications blend harmoniously, and often unnoticeably art, politics, religion and philosophy with commercials, [and] they bring these realms of culture to their common denominator--the commodity form . . . . Exchange value, not truth value counts."[17]

Those who have a stake in the system put on the "happy face," espouse the new "right-thinking" positivism, take a jingoistic super-patriotic stance, and settle back before the color T.V. The have-nots are made to believe that they are nothing because they have nothing, and that their poverty is their own fault; presumably because they have not wholeheartedly endorsed the system, their suffering is deserved.

In other words, the repression and potential or real aggressiveness are introjected, internalized. The individual feels guilt; he feels that he should be punished. This is what Marcuse means by "surplus repression."

Freud recognized that whenever repression becomes self-imposed, the process involves the re-direction of energy from the primary instincts. This energy, Freud felt, could be sublimated in work. The so-called "work-ethic" evolves and becomes institutionalized. The result for the capitalist class is increased profits, and the result for the working class is increased alienation. On the spiritual level, further psychic tension develops as the worker's creative energy (Freud's Eros) is channelled toward mere guilt reduction. On the material level, his exploitation is rationalized and justified. And on the social level, he realizes his bankruptcy in a commodity system where his only saleable commodity, his labor, often results in products which have neither aesthetic nor personal value, and which do nothing to enhance his position or esteem within the system. Marcuse correctly criticizes Freud for his acceptance of the sublimation of creative energies into work. In any system in which social control is maintained through surplus repression, to vindicate the sublimation of repression into work is to support the repression. In a projected future society, free of excess repression for social control and providing for fair distribution of scarcity, no such sublimation would be required, for

work could be motivated by other means than guilt and mere self-preservation.

Freud's view of work in civilization imposes a difficult paradox. Believing that the energy for work must be drawn from the primary instincts (sexual and destructive drives) Freud saw work as painful, in opposition to the pleasure principle, and without an original drive. But the continued sublimation of creative energy into work must weaken Eros and unbind destructive impulses. Yet, as Marcuse says, "Civilization is first of all progress in work . . . . Work in civilization is itself to a great extent social utilization of aggressive impulses and is thus work in the service of Eros."[18]

Does civilization evolve from love or work or both? Do we work because we love, or is our capacity to love reduced by our work? Are there theoretical assumptions that can be made about love and work in the abstract, or do the concepts exist meaningfully only in a specific historical context? We must move beyond theory to place love and work in the context of modern civilization. I have attempted to describe certain conditions that I believe are quintessential to twentieth century American life. Through the dialectical method of attempting to see all phenomena, not as isolated, but in relation to all else, perhaps a better understanding of the phenomena of love and work in our civilization can be reached.

I have described life in capitalist industrial society in such terms as fragmentation, introjected repression, and

alienation. Observing civilization in similar terms, Freud saw love (Eros) as "the great unifying force that preserves all life."[19] If civilization is "first of all progress in work," and love is the unifying force that makes work (and all social action) possible, then we must seek further insight into love. Why do we love? If there are different kinds of love, are there also different motives for loving? Responding to the Biblical injunction, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," Freud says "If I love someone he must deserve it in some way. He deserves it if he is so like me in important ways that I can love myself in him; and he deserves it if he is so much more perfect than myself that I can love my ideal of my own self in him."[20] Schiller had suggested that "hunger and love" move the world. Freud adds: "Hunger could be taken to represent the instincts which aim at preserving the individual; while love strives after objects, and its chief function, favored in every way by nature, is the preservation of the species."[21]

Having described our love motivation in non-idealized terms, Freud observed that the real significance of love is that it is essential to the evolution and maintenance of society. We cooperate with others either in so far as we look up to them with respect and admiration, or in so far as we can determine that such cooperation is in our best interests. In either case we are governed by the impulse of Eros to expand beyond ourselves and to reinterpret ourselves in terms of the

larger group. But the least sophisticated observer can readily see that at all times there are co-existent tendencies in all individuals, and hence in all groups or societies toward the dissolution of the group. This tendency is what Freud called the death instinct.

In his later work, Freud had concluded that the death instinct is a basic drive in man, just as the love instinct is. He observed that these two instincts, which he called Eros and Thanatos, "seldom--perhaps never--appear in isolation from each other."[22] He described the phenomenon of human life as the constant warring between these two impulses. If the two impulses, which Freud elsewhere called "altruistic" and "egoistic," represent opposite poles of human instinct, and if we are bound together in human community by love, then we must conclude that whatever works in favor of the individual to the detriment of the community has its origin in the death instinct.

If this is true, then American capitalist society is virtually ruled by the death impulse. Most of the values of capitalist society are individual values. A 1976 poll indicated that four out of five Republican leaders in America believe that the blame for poverty rests upon the poor. They believe the poor are poor because they are not aggressive enough to get rich. At the same time, a candid article by Sanford Rose in the September, 1976 Fortune magazine gives big business' key to "licking inflation." Rose admits what

Karl Marx observed as early as 1867 in the first volume of Capital, that a surplus labor force is essential to the smooth operation of the capitalist mode of production. The unemployed provide a surplus army of human material always ready for exploitation. While members of the American ruling class blame the poor for their poverty, they consciously establish policies which make continued poverty inevitable. An article in the Wall Street Journal recently called for an end to the minimum wage, supposedly so that the unemployed could be taken on in low-paying positions. But one doesn't need to be an economist to see that the ultimate result of such an action would be to lower wages for all segments of the working class.

Volumes of statistics, position statements, and attitudes could be cited to illustrate the motivational principle of capitalist society, but that is hardly necessary. As I have already stated, the values of our society, supported and perpetuated by all the institutions of the society, are aggressiveness, competition, acquisitiveness, and the surplus repression that is necessary to make these values stick. Freud recognized that aggressiveness is "the greatest impediment to civilization."[23] What is grabbed by the individual is not available to the group. And grabbing readily becomes a way of life.

Whether the impulse of the individual to get all that he can is natural must be left an open question. Nowhere in the history of civilization has there been an occasion to test

the theory. Again Freud's analysis is weakened by his assumption that we would naturally rather take for ourselves than share with others. Observing what actually is in our society, we see that we must set the question of what is "natural" aside. We are too far removed from nature for the question to be anything but academic. But accepting the premise that the impulse of love seeks to preserve and unify and to enhance the development of the community, we can see that even these positive instincts are degraded and perverted in capitalistic society. For even communities, bound together for the common good, often take on the qualities of individuals, seeking their own preservation and advancement at the expense of other groups.

Again the wisdom of Freud is helpful. "It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness."[24] But observing this sad fact about civilization as he knows it, Freud again makes the leap into the abstract to conclude that "the two processes of individual and cultural development must stand in hostile opposition to each other."[25]

Why must individual and group interests be opposed? Is it not possible that the needs of the group and the needs of its component individuals could be the same? Marcuse hypothesizes the possibility of an open, non-repressive civilization which would be directed by mental forces which Freud had

identified as remaining essentially free from the governing reality principle, namely fantasy. Fantasy, imagination, is linked with the pleasure principle, which is of course suppressed by reason, which dominates the present reality principle, performance. But Marcuse believes that the pleasure principle and the reality principle could be reconciled in a society in which surplus repression is eliminated and in which there is a fair distribution of scarcity. Given the example of present American society, such a formula would not require increased productivity, but rather an end to the creation of false needs and an equitable distribution of existing wealth and power. A non-repressive order would not require abundance or excess, but only that the basic real needs of all be met.

As valid and valuable as such speculations about the future may be, they unfortunately have little relation to observed present reality. Our civilization may have succeeded in establishing machinery which provides a degree of security to individual members, but it has not as yet overcome the power of the death impulse. Freud's somewhat pessimistic observations about capitalist industrial society still ring true. In fact, with the creation of nuclear bombs, the death instinct seems entrenched, and the atmosphere of modern life hangs heavy with potential destruction. Civilized society is now perpetually threatened with total disintegration. But the real question is why. If the love impulse embodies the potential to unify and preserve us as a group which retains the

interests of all its individual members, then why do groups continue to function like individuals? At least part of the answer is inherent in the ruling reality principle already discussed. That the cohesiveness of one group is maintained or strengthened by its aggression towards another group is not entirely accidental. The need for a scape-goat, which may or may not have roots in "human nature," is exploited by the ruling class for their own ultimate profit.

Returning to the question of unemployment, a look at any period of American history will plainly show that not only unemployment, but the pitting of one group of the unemployed or semi-employed poor against another has always been the conscious plan of the owning and managing classes. The modern capitalist era in America may be said to have originated with the Civil War. While thousands were dying in this bloody struggle over the "right" to exploit labor under conditions of slavery, others paid replacements to go in their stead and stayed home to amass America's first great fortunes through war profiteering. Those who stayed at home and enriched themselves by the misery of their countrymen included Morgan, Mellon, Carnegie, Gould, Fisk, and Rockefeller.

There were jobs for all during the war. But when the war was over, the troops were demobilized, and the war contracts ran out, thousands were left without jobs. It was after the ruling classes made peace that the war for jobs began. And that struggle continues. In the 1860's, Black

people were forced to work for the lowest wages in order to survive. As the number of Blacks holding previously "all-white" jobs increased, two things happened. Wages for all declined as the surplus of labor out-stripped demand. And Blacks as a racial group became the enemies of the threatened white working class. So has it always been since that time. In the past century there has always been a new wave of immigrants from somewhere, compelled to work for less than the prevailing wage or even to take jobs as strike-breakers because they had to in order to survive. And always the situation has been exploited by the owners and managers so that the workers of both races or national groups end up venting their hostility on each other rather than upon their real common enemy. For as always, the institutions of the society were in the service of the ruling class. And the ruling class has always known and feared the potential strength of the masses if they are allowed to organize, to unify, to exert their individual energies into the group in such a way that the group in return represents the interests of the individuals.

Perpetual, controlled unemployment is just one aspect of the nature of work in the capitalist industrial world. A thorough look at other aspects of working in such a society is required. Harry Braverman's Labor and Monopoly Capital provides considerable help. A most important characteristic of modern work, having originated with the industrial

revolution, is the division of labor. Marx recognized two kinds of labor division. The first is a "natural" social division which divides occupations among various members of a society on the basis of aptitude, ability, and social need. The second is the "detailed" division of labor which "destroys occupations . . . and renders the workers inadequate to carry through any complete production process."[26] Such a division of labor has been a basic aspect of production throughout the industrial era, though it reached its most de-humanizing form only with the introduction of the modern assembly line in the twentieth century. Control over the entire process of production is reconstructed under management. The division of the craft cheapens the individual parts, and those parts requiring the least skill can be done by the cheapest labor. The process destroys the individual of all-around skills.

It would be possible, of course, to conclude that the division of labor is simply a necessary part of the industrial system. There may be some truth here, though it is likely that the most alienating aspects of the labor process could be improved if the process were people-oriented rather than profit-oriented. In any case, it is at least unquestionable that the capitalist class which arose with industrialization has multiplied its profits through the detailed division of labor. Under the assembly-line process, both job and worker are firmly under the control of management, greater profits

are returned on the investment, and the workers come to hate their work.

The importance of the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to this discussion could hardly be over-emphasized. But Braverman sees in the last century a second revolution of analogous importance, the "Scientific-Technical Revolution."[27] Science has traditionally been the province of thinkers, tinkers, and philosophers. Even the steam engine, the heart of the Industrial Revolution, had been invented and developed by working mechanics. But beginning around the 1880's, science too became a tool of capitalist exploitation. In America, corporate laboratories began with the era of monopoly capital. The government helped out with the Hatch Act (1887) which established tax-supported Department of Agriculture laboratories. Like labor, science became another balance-sheet item as science became the last "social property to be turned into an adjunct of capital."[28]

Another evolution of twentieth century capitalism has been the development of "scientific management" and "industrial psychology." Scientific management began early in the twentieth century when Frederick Taylor attacked workers for "loafing" and "soldiering" (sticking together rather than competing). In search of greater efficiency, Taylor brought the stop-watch, greater division of labor, and the now infamous "speed-up" to the assembly line. Workers came less and less to be regarded as human beings; rather they became

another "factor of production" on the ledger sheet--another instrument of capital. Emerson's warning in his "Ode to Channing" has become far too true: "Things are in the saddle/ And ride mankind."

Closely related to scientific management, at least in intent, was the new industrial psychology. Hugo Münsterberg's Psychology and Industrial Efficiency (published in Germany in 1912) paved the way for the use of psychology in a variety of ways to increase production and profits. Münsterberg called his new science a "service to civilization." The "service" so far as workers were concerned, involved a variety of new and subtle ways to extract from them more of their labor power for less money, once again increasing the profits of capital. By the 1930's, the new science had become considerably more sophisticated and was being called "human relations."

Important as all these other "advances" are in understanding work in America, perhaps the most important single factor has to do with mechanization itself. Both Marx and Marcuse have suggested that there are possibilities in machines for the liberation of workers. Unfortunately, under the governing reality principle, just the opposite has occurred. Increasingly, the worker has been replaced by the machine. Machines don't go out on strike, and they don't demand higher wages or human rights.

As Marx noted, mechanization began when the tool was taken out of the hand of the worker and fixed into a mechanism

which the worker operated. Today, highly sophisticated machines which once required great skill to operate are controlled by computers, templates, and tapes. The worker (once a skilled craftsman) becomes a subservient operative of the machine. Stanley Aronowitz observes in his book False Promises that at General Motors' most highly mechanized assembly plant at Lordstown, Ohio, the average assembly line job can be learned in half an hour, and the new worker can keep up with the line in half a day. Thus, there is a continual reduction in demand for skilled labor, and a continual increase in the number of jobs to be filled by cheap labor.

What happens to the displaced skilled workers? There are always the ranks of the unemployed. Some take the newly-created low-paying unskilled jobs, which they naturally detest. And some workers will be absorbed into various levels of the management bureaucracy, which becomes ever more top-heavy. (The total number of workers involved in "goods producing" jobs has dropped from 46% of the work force in 1920 to 33% in 1970.)[29] Other phased out workers are absorbed into non-productive jobs in the government and the military.

Though the most damaging effects of the technical revolution must be measured in human terms (jobs, skills, and self-esteem lost and increased worker alienation) the product has also been degraded. As workers are conditioned to accept de-humanizing work conditions, consumers are conditioned to accept molded plastic, pre-fabricated houses, and imitation

food. In addition to creating a demand for such shoddy products, the modern corporation has found a way to continually keep those products moving--planned obsolescence. Even if a car or a television set doesn't fall apart, it is soon outdated and out-moded. A new style is on the market, and consumers are encouraged to throw away the old and get the new. For the source of status is no longer in being able to make things, but in being able to buy them. As Braverman says, the family was once the key institution of social life, production, and consumption. Capitalism leaves only the last to the family.

Even "free time" is exploited. We may either watch cop shows and commercials on television or we may go out and buy entertainment. But there is little left to do even in free time that is not debased by the profit motive. Capitalism has created the universal market.

Before focusing more narrowly on love and work as they manifest themselves in our society, one final observation about the structure of the society needs to be made. It is necessary to understand that there exists a close interlocking relationship between the government, the corporations, and the military. These are the true "three branches" of our national power structure. The cohesiveness of these three entities is maintained by their common end: the corporations, the dominant entity of the three, require the services of both the domestic government and the military in order to maintain

their position of control. The government helps out by providing direct subsidies, maintaining a low corporate tax structure with plenty of loop-holes (Ford Motor Company paid no taxes in 1975 on a profit of two billion dollars), using money to pay for research which will benefit the corporations, regulating money and labor supplies, and spending capital. (In 1961, 29% of the Gross National Product went for the operations of all levels of government.) The military assists capital by maintaining hysterical fear among the people, turning this fear into a "need" for more and more weaponry (which provides great profit for capital but produces no useable product for the people) and most important, by maintaining hegemony over as much of the world's exploitable resources and labor power as possible.

These are the major ends of capital which are served by the government and the military. The means are as readily apparent. First, there is a continual movement of top level management among these three entities. Virtually all top government administrators are drawn from the top ranks of business and the military. After "serving" in the "public sector," these same people move smoothly back into their old slots as the directors of capital. Obviously their interests do not cease to be private during the interim when their jobs are public. Second, the manner of selecting national "leaders" insures that the president and most senators and representatives will always be drawn from the ranks of the ruling

class. I have already discussed the way in which our political choices are narrowed by the institutions of one-dimensional society, especially by the fact that the media are almost universally controlled by these same corporate interests. And the phenomenal expense of running a campaign for a national office makes it a possibility only for those who are themselves very rich or who are the candidates of the rich.

Finally, the one-dimensional society effectively suppresses rational analytical thought on the part of the masses. As Marcuse observes, language is subverted in such a way as to conceal rather than reveal truth. Concrete situations are abstracted in order to circuit the real issues. Orwellian "double-speak" (war is peace) is common, and shockingly, so is the acceptance of the lies it conceals. Language becomes "closed." Such language "does not demonstrate and explain--it communicates decision, dictum, command." [30] A nuclear weapon plant becomes an "industrial park." And the president of the United States faces 100 million people on the televised presidential debates and describes American foreign policy, the real purpose of which is to maintain exploitative hegemony, as "based on the highest moral standards."

What has been the real effect of the ascendancy of the one-dimensional society? The phenomenon has proved to be self-reinforcing and self-perpetuating. "'The people,' previously the ferment of social change, have 'moved up' to become the ferment of social cohesion."[31] Largely through the

exploitation of foreign labor and resources, American capital has been able to meet most of the "needs" of the growing middle class. With material needs largely fulfilled and with dissent silenced, the middle class has become increasingly numbed into self-satisfaction. But there are still the exploited, not only elsewhere in the world, but among the American working class. And it is among these that Marcuse sees the hope of opening and changing the closed society. Marcuse ends One-Dimensional Man by quoting Walter Benjamin, who "at the beginning of the fascist era," wrote, "It is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us."[32]

Having considered love and work in primarily abstract terms, and having examined the realities of modern industrial capitalist society, there remains the need to attempt to see what love and work mean to us in the context of this specific historical setting. First, what has happened to the "unifying force" of love in the twentieth century?

Perhaps the most significant thing that has happened to love in modern civilization is a reduction of intensity. Recalling Freud's polarization of human instincts as love and death, the pendulum of the twentieth century has swung toward the latter. If any society could be described as a "death culture," certainly ours can. Violence is rampant. Dozens of people "die" violent deaths nightly in full color on television. The annual number of murders in the United States doubled between 1960 and 1970. During the Viet Nam war, the

first televised mass genocide in history, the people were taught to accept General Westmoreland's conclusion that it was necessary to "destroy villages in order to save them." The brutal bloody facts of the war were neutralized by the euphemism of "body counts." Now the President of the United States speaks of the possible necessity of a "limited nuclear war." And a recent survey indicates that one American in five might kill another human being for $20,000. In such a hostile world, love is forced into retreat. When we are cowed by the acceptance of death, our operative instinct is toward preservation of the self. It is only when the threat is reduced or shared that we are able to radiate the love that is crucial to the establishment of wholesome relations with others.

Ours is a neurotic age. In Love and Will, Rollo May describes the neurotic as one whose sensitized consciousness (due to his inability or refusal to accept one-dimensional society) places him on the frontier of the society's evolution.[33] The artist is such a person, and so long as his balance upon the precipice is maintained, he may give expression, form, or meaning to the chaos that he feels. The dilemma of our age is that most of us lack this artistic faculty, but are forced to live in Toffler's world of "future shock" anyway. The result for the majority is alienation, detachment, fear, and retreat back to the safety of one-dimensional life--a can of beer and another cop show on T.V. There is danger

in openness, involvement, love. There is safety in the retreat into unfeeling detachment, uninvolvement, apathy.

May sees apathy as the ruling quality of modern life. "Hate is not the opposite of love; apathy is."[34] We protect ourselves by regulated degrees of apathy. We try to learn to work with the machine without becoming the machine or without allowing the machine to dominate us. But we do so at the expense of detachment from work as well as from love. In other words, much of the alienation that we feel results from our retreat from real involvement in both love and work in favor of mere self-preservation. More will be said of work later. First, let us look more closely at love, the chief casualty of apathy.

May identifies four kinds of love in our tradition: (1) sex (lust); (2) eros (the love drive to create or procreate); (3) philia (friendship); and (4) agape (devotion to the welfare of others).[35] The latter three kinds of love have in common that they are "others-oriented." They involve projection, reaching out, attachment to others. Consequently, they all involve the dangers already discussed. De-sensitized, apathetic, having lost much of the capacity for these kinds of love, modern society shifts most of the weight of love to sex. May dates this shift in emphasis from World War I. Since then, he says, we have shifted from acting as though sex didn't exist to being obsessed by sex. People were once made neurotic by their quilt about <u>having</u> sex. Now, May says,

we feel guilty if we don't have active sex lives. And many have lots of sex but little feeling or passion.

There are several reasons for this shift. One of the most obvious is a healthy reaction against Victorian taboos. A less healthy reason is the increasing detachment which grew partly out of the devastation of the first world war. At any rate, with modern birth control we can have sex without fear of involvement. And the preoccupation with sex is not unrelated to advertising and the general tendency in capitalist society to commercialize everything, to see everything in commodity form. And perhaps most significant, sex in the mechanical age becomes reduced to technique. The mechanistic attitude toward sex, an attitude confirmed and standardized by Kinsey, leaves us feeling anxious if we fall behind schedule. The passion of love-making is reduced to the technique of sex.

Both sex and the "higher" kinds of love affect and are affected by the kinds of work we do. If as Freud says, work is the chief link that "binds us to reality," and if the energy for work comes from the love instinct, then love and work are surely linked. But let us see more specifically what it is that motivates us to work. All workers besides those who are bound by a condition of slavery work because to do so fulfills certain needs that they have. Abraham Maslow ranks in five levels of complexity the needs which motivate us.[36] They are (1) survival, (2) security, (3) belongingness, (4) esteem, and (5) growth. The most basic needs, of course,

are physiological (food, shelter, survival). If these needs are not met, they will remain the primary motivating force. For the man who is hungry, utopia is where the food is. Life itself is defined in terms of eating. Freedom, love, community feeling, and philosophy are waved aside. But once survival needs are met, other "higher" needs begin to emerge at once and to replace hunger as the source of motivation. And the higher needs tend to be social in nature.

The second level of needs, the security needs, include protection, stability, freedom, and order. And to satisfy these needs, the individual must have the cooperation of others. It was the security needs which Freud saw as the motivation behind the evolution of civilization. Security can be achieved only when individuals agree to work together, agree to a degree of repression, and expend the "love energy" that is necessary to bind a group of individuals together for safety.

The attempt to satisfy the survival and security needs places the individual in what is basically a defensive position. It is only when these needs are met and the still higher needs begin to emerge that opportunities for real community feeling come. At the third level, the individual is motivated by the need to belong. He begins to see things in terms of "we." He feels the need for a sense of place, for friends, for acceptance by his peers, for contact and intimacy. Most American workers have already achieved the means

of survival and security, and have thus reached at least this level of motivation. And it is at this point that alienating work, piece work, the assembly line speed-up, and excessive competition hinder the satisfaction of need. But on the other hand, it is also this level of motivation, the need to belong, which encourages workers to organize and to identify with one another against a common enemy.

Once the worker feels that he belongs, has a sense of "we," the need for esteem begins to emerge. Within the group the worker feels a sense of security. But once secure in his group, he will want to be looked up to as an individual, perhaps even a leader, one for whom other members of the group have respect. Feeling comfortable in his "we" position, he again begins to think in terms of "I." The need for self-respect, self-esteem, and the respect and esteem of others is healthy, and it is this need which provides every group with its leaders. But again, this essentially healthy level of motivation can be perverted in a work situation where workers are forced to engage in cut-throat competition to achieve satisfaction of this need. Thus, the unfulfilled need of many workers may be to become the foreman or the manager. And the struggle for "rank" may involve community-destroying aggression rather than community-building Eros.

It is the esteem needs, the need for visible, even ostentatious success, that seem most to motivate the American power structure. The person motivated on this level tends to

be materialistic, ambitious, power-oriented, status-seeking, and authoritarian. The result, as I have already observed, is that these same qualities become the dominant American values. Individualism becomes a higher value than unity. The successful American worker learns to be an "over-achiever" who strives to conquer rather than to cooperate. The average worker can never achieve real esteem in his job; the nature of the job itself and the hierarchy of management will prevent the satisfaction of this need. So this is the limbo in which the average worker remains; and it is at this level, having been accepted into the "we" and struggling to become an "I" that the worker is likely to feel the most alienation and aggression.

The highest level of motivation, the need for self-actualization, arises only for the few who have found a position of esteem. At this level, human differences are greatest, and the individual is motivated by the need to do what he is most fitted to do, to be true to his own nature, to find self-fulfillment. The basic precondition for the satisfaction of this need is freedom. And this kind of freedom is difficult to achieve in a stratified one-dimensional society. In a society free of surplus repression and social control, many might find self-actualizing work, but unfortunately, ours is not such a society--at least not so far as the experience of the majority of workers is concerned. That is not to say that self-actualization cannot occur in our society; it is possible

for a worker at any level of need satisfaction to achieve the understanding of himself and the society which will allow him to use his talents in the fulfillment of both his own and his group's needs. But the fact remains that the one-dimensional nature of the society functions to prevent such comprehension. Thus self-actualization must in most cases evolve in spite of and in opposition to the controlling ideas of the society rather than with the society's help.

As I have already pointed out, work in America is organized in accordance with utilitarian principles. The early utilitarian, Jeremy Bentham, proposed to parliament the building of an institution which would be half factory and half prison.[37] This identification of factory and prison is not surprising, considering that factories in Bentham's day were little better than prisons. In twentieth century America, factories are somewhat improved. And most workers are sentenced to only forty hours a week. The public relations approach of modern industry has brought the coffee break, the staff psychiatrist, and the inflated job-title. But the motive remains the same--greater efficiency and higher profits. Efficiency demands that the assembly line be retained and that jobs become increasingly more detailed and automated. And whatever the level of needs motivating the worker, in a capitalist system he is not motivated by a share of the profits. So from the beginning of the factory system to the present, workers have rebelled against the growing enslavement

of the assembly line and the machine. To the dismay of the owners and managers, even more money is now failing to stem the tide of disenchantment.

Only recently have the owners and managers turned to the psychologist to find out what would motivate the workers. Until recently, most workers could be motivated by more money, for when the individual is still struggling for survival and security, money is what he needs. And more money (though perhaps in the form of greater esteem) has always motivated the capitalists, so why not the workers too? Thus, when Henry Ford introduced the time-saving assembly line in 1913, he doubled the prevailing wage. He didn't mind paying $5 a day, because the line so increased efficiency that his profits were soaring. Imagine Ford's surprise when his turn-over rate in 1913 reached 380%.[38] Lots of people worked at Ford that year, but they stayed an average of only about three months. Many returned to their old jobs at half the pay, but the "old jobs" were soon to disappear as well, for the assembly line quickly became almost universal. It was only then that management realized that workers must be appealed to on other levels. Elton Mayo of the Harvard Business School was a pioneer in the new human relations approach to worker control. His basic assumption was that the ends of production are given, and the worker is to be adjusted to his job so that the human equation matches the industrial equation.

Though it has not yet happened in America, worker disenchantment with the assembly line has actually led some corporations to experiment with throwing the whole concept out. In Sweden, Volvo has had 20% absenteeism and a 20% annual turnover rate in its conventional assembly plants.[39] These figures are comparable with those reported by the American auto industry. Volvo has responded by building an experimental assembly plant where fifteen to twenty workers cooperate as a team to assemble major "packages" on each car. Workers can trade their specific parts of the team task during the day. Each team works next to a glass-paneled wall with a view of open fields and trees. Each team has its own lounge for coffee breaks and its own sauna for relaxation at the end of the day. Every effort has been made to keep the factory quiet and to furnish the work areas pleasantly. The results have astonished Volvo executives. The turnover rate has been cut to 15% and the absentee rate to 11.8%. And the best news of all for those who make decisions according to the "bottom line" is that productivity has actually shown a slight increase. The United Auto Workers in America have expressed interest in such attempts to humanize the factory. But as one auto worker said, it will never happen at G.M., Ford, or Chrysler unless there is proof that the new idea will increase profits. In the meantime, in spite of continual speed-ups, the American assembly line grows ever less efficient as workers find new ways, including sabotage, to express

their hostility and alienation.

Abraham Maslow revises an old cliché thus: "What is not worth doing is not worth doing well."[40] Here is a clue to understanding modern work. Can one find self-actualization in a chewing gum factory? Can the salesman of phony plastic products gain self-respect from his job? Can the teacher, enlightened to the desperate condition of his society, find fulfillment in more abstract intellectual theorizing? All of these questions ultimately boil down to one--the question of subject-object relationships. Is the worker to be merely another object, a number, a part in a machine turning out an endless stream of other shoddy objects, or is he to be a subject man or woman affecting objects, in control of his work activity, producing goods or services which seem to him worth producing? Rousseau, who in Emile introduced the concept of alienated labor, was critical of monotonous trades, and chose the trade of carpenter for Emile, for it is independent, skilled, and provides for a major real need of society. Also, the carpenter acts directly upon the object world, shaping a product which is the real end of his purposeful activity.

Marx noted that three elements comprise the basic infrastructure of the material world. There is a mutually reciprocating relationship between man, his purposeful activity (work), and the world. Capitalism, Marx observed, destroys the natural "instrumentality," the natural relationship between man and the world. Naturally, man as subject acts

upon the object world in some purposeful way, and the product of his work is also the object of his work. But wage-labor, the instrumentality of capitalism, removes the worker from a direct relationship with the object of his work. "The product of his activity is not the object of his activity."[41] The weaver of silk weaves, not to produce a garment, but to produce wages, to produce the means of subsistence. And if the product of work is not the object of work, then the work ceases to manifest the life of the worker. On the contrary, as Marx pointed out, life for the alienated worker begins after work, after his supposed "purposeful activity" ceases, "at table, in the public house, in bed." Marx's classic analogy concludes "If the silk worm were to spin in order to continue its existence as a caterpillar, it would be a complete wage-worker."[42] It is not only the kinds of work available, then, which alienate us, but also the relations of production. The final result of wage labor is the destruction of a healthy subject-object relationship and its replacement by an object-object relationship in which the worker's purposeful activity has no real bearing on his world. And the machine, which has the potential to free workers, comes to be used to further exploit them and to remove them still further from their work. In the extreme, man, machine, and product are equally valuable and equally dispensable objects of capital.

These are the basic qualities of working in America. Some workers buy the rationale of the performance principle and become allies of the Gross National Product. Others consciously prostitute themselves in various ways and accept alienation as an inescapable quality of their struggle for survival. Another group of workers declare independence from work and escape it in a variety of ways. Still other workers are able to find meaningful jobs and take pride in the fruits of their labor. And finally, there are those whose work flies in the face of their historical epoch, those whose purposeful activity begins with Marcuse's "Great Refusal" to accept the assumptions of the prevailing reality principle, and who work toward the end of changing in some way the realities of their time.

Most of the discussion of work has centered thus far on the alienating factory job, since this is the most nearly typical work experience in America. Even on the assembly line it may be possible for a person to enjoy his work. Persons motivated by the most basic needs will find any job which puts food on the table "rewarding." And it is possible for other needs to be met in the factory too. But are there other jobs which, in themselves, have a greater potential for gratification? Is it possible for a person to love his work? In his Philosophical-Economic Manuscripts, Marx said that man will be free when "nature is his work and his reality," and when he "recognizes himself in a world he has himself made."[43]

What kind of work can set us free? In what work can we recognize "nature?" And under what circumstances can we love our work?

There is little question that the response to work directly affects the love relations of the worker. Our work, especially in the broad sense of purposeful activity, cannot help but alter all other relations. For example, in his socio-historical study, The Black Family, Herbert Gutman explains the disintegration of the Black family in terms of work.[44] Gutman found that after slavery the Black family unit remained strong until economic necessity forced the mass migration of Blacks to city ghettos. In the city, the Black family began to fall apart. And the root of the problem, Gutman concludes, was the absence of regular meaningful employment. Because Blacks have always been the last hired, the lowest paid, and the first fired, unemployment and underemployment have always been serious problems for them. Gutman cites 1975 statistics to support his conclusion that the lack of regular employment is an index to Black family disintegration. In 1975, 15% of the White men and 45% of the Black men in America fell below the poverty line. Deprived of the ability to keep a regular job and to support their families adequately, Black men lose self-esteem and turn inward in despair. One result, though not necessarily indicating a loss of love, has been the disintegration of the family.

To detect and codify patterns of love-work relationships is a worthwhile aim, but a difficult task. In the abstract, such an effort would produce only partly valid generalizations. The major thrust of this paper will be an attempt to detect and describe such relationships in the writing of John Steinbeck. But to conclude the theoretical discussion of love and work, a look at the actual experience of a number of real workers in America should be helpful.

One of the most valuable documents of recent years on the subject of work is Studs Terkel's book, Working, which is appropriately dedicated to Jude Fawley, Hardy's classic alienated lover/worker. Terkel listens as scores of American workers in a wide range of occupations talk about their work and the meaning or lack of meaning it gives their lives. Terkel finds American workers to be almost universally alienated. Only a few believe in the system and believe that their work enriches both their lives and the life of the society. Only a few endorse the prevailing reality principle and its chief value, performance. The majority see themselves as exploited victims. They hate their work. But most have accepted their alienation as, if not natural, at least inevitable. And each has a mechanism of survival--a dream, a fantasy, a way of rebelling. A steel worker of forty years finds his satisfaction in the fact that his son is a priest--not a steel worker. A construction laborer's dream is to save enough money to escape and start his own business. A migrant farm worker

passes the day by fantasizing his own little farm. Love and romance seldom have anything to do with his job, but an auto worker spends his day thinking about having sex with his female co-workers, though work conditions prevent him from even getting to know them. In fact, many workers talk sadly of taking their work hostility home to vent on those they love. In discussing her work, a New York prostitute verbalizes the sentiments of many workers in a wide range of occupations. For her, alienation is complete. "The role one plays when hustling has nothing to do with who you are."[45] The woman accepts her role because she feels that all of her other options would be nothing more than other kinds of hustling. After a time, she has ceased to have feelings at all. Survival has become a process of "numbing yourself." She ends by contradicting her earlier statement quoted above: "You become what you do."

There <u>are</u> workers in Terkel's book who love their work and take pride in what they produce or do. A stone mason in Ohio feels nearly immortal because he builds good houses of the best stone, houses which will outlast his children and grand-children. A migrant farm worker in California, turned United Farm Workers organizer, has learned to combine love and work. After years of silent humiliation, he heard Ceasar Chavez speak and learned the strength that comes with solidarity. He loves his people and works to organize them, to give them a feeling of belonging and a sense of dignity, as

well as to put food in their stomachs. In Indiana, carpenter/poet Nick Lindsay (son of Vachel Lindsay) wonders if "pride" is the best term to describe the feeling a well-crafted house or poem gives him. "Do you take pride in embracing a woman? You don't take pride in that. You take delight in it."[46] In Chicago, a former insurance company lawyer now has a storefront office in a ghetto community. Sickened by his former job of suing people who had been hit by cars, he now defends the poor against slum landlords. The change, he says, has improved his whole life. "My work and my life, they've become one. No longer am I schizophrenic."[47] Discernible patterns of love and work do begin to emerge. But this is not a statistical study, and no attempt to graph correlations will be made. This study must remain primarily literary; it is an attempt to see how one writer/lover/worker, John Steinbeck, treats his characters in love and work.

There is no evidence that Steinbeck's work proceeded from a consciously developed set of assumptions about love and work. But a writer who is concerned with reality and whose work involves value judgments about reality could hardly avoid treating love and work. My aim is to explore the kinds of love and work and lovers and workers which Steinbeck created, and to see each in the context of the other and all in the context of historical reality. Of course such a study could be beneficially made of the work of many writers. But Steinbeck's identification was with workers, and the heroes of his fiction are people of love and work.

Chapter II

John Steinbeck: Man of Love and Work

> For myself there are two things I cannot do without. Crudely stated they are work and women, and more gently--creative effort in all directions. Effort and love.
>
> --John Steinbeck[1]

John Steinbeck was a man of love and work. He loved deeply--sometimes jealously. He loved women and men, dogs and horses, natural beauty and truth. His compassion for the exploited and the dispossessed is well-known. He was a man of humility, and at least in the beginning, of strong principles. One face of his self-love was a confident self-respect; the other face was an intense self-consciousness which produced both remarkable self-knowledge and a gnawing doubt of himself and his work. And Steinbeck loved work--hard work, honest work, productive work which represented the best efforts of the worker.

Nothing in Steinbeck's system of values out-weighed the importance of work. From his first summer job on a ranch near King City, California to the last feeble scratchings of his writer's pencil, work was the unifying and preserving factor of his life. Steinbeck respected all honest work. Though he is not generally regarded as a "proletarian novelist," his

books are full of heroic working people, and his own natural identification was with the working class.

Steinbeck found love and work to be inextricably related, in society, in his own life, and in the lives of his fictional creations. Work was his first love; when in conflict with his personal life, his work had to come first. Yet love was for him an absolute prerequisite for good work. Work was always essential to Steinbeck's happiness. In times of crisis it was a necessity for his survival; it was his salvation.

In this chapter I have several aims. With the considerable help of Elaine Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten's recently published Steinbeck: A Life in Letters, I will construct a biographical sketch of Steinbeck's life, emphasizing his own love and work. I will also deal with his attitudes about love and work and their relatedness. I will be concerned with Steinbeck's self-perception, with his notions of the writer's job, and with his conception of his own audience and work. Finally, and sadly, I will examine the creeping erosion of Steinbeck's hold on himself, his capitulation to influences and values which, though foreseen and feared, gradually diminished the power of his great soul.

In a letter to his elder son, Thom, who was fourteen, Steinbeck said, "There are several kinds of love. One is a selfish, mean, grasping egotistical thing which uses love for self-importance. This is the ugly and crippling kind. The other is an outpouring of everything good in you--of kindness,

and consideration and respect--not only the social respect of manners but the greater respect which is recognition of another person as unique and valuable. The first kind can make you sick and small and weak but the second can release in you strength, and courage and goodness and even wisdom you didn't know you had." (p. 564) Like every human being's love, Steinbeck's at one time or another embodied all the characteristics of his definition. But unlike many others, he constantly examined not only his feelings, but his motives as well. This tendency could be written off as excessive self-consciousness or insecurity, but it is more than that. It came of a genuine sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others, a deep respect for others as "unique and valuable." And when his love showed its uglier face, Steinbeck was generally honest enough to confront rather than deny his feelings, and to examine both himself and the object of his love for clues as to what was wrong.

Perhaps part of Steinbeck's trouble with loving women arose from his own attitudes, which were fairly consistent with the assumptions of the patriarchal American society. He didn't like women who "acted like men," and he expected women to stay in their places in an age when women were beginning to rattle the chains of their suppression. He praised submissive Mexican women who were "content to be women," and who did not challenge the assumptions of masculine dominance. Predictably, as a member of a society whose sexual and marital

mores were shifting, Steinbeck was somewhat confused. But he did struggle to understand love and to comprehend his own failures and successes in love.

Steinbeck apparently had some familiarity with Freud and Jung. As a young man he had written, "There are streams in man more profound and deep and strong than the libido of Freud. Jung's libido is closer but still inadequate." (p. 82) Specifically, Steinbeck seems to have been impressed by Freud's concept of the co-existent instincts of Eros and Thanatos, love and death. Facing World War II, he described what was about to happen in terms of the struggle between these two impulses on the phylogenetic level. He was discouraged that the species of man seemed to learn nothing at all, "that the experience of ten thousand years [of civilization, which is based on the love instinct] has made no impression on the instincts of the million years that preceded." (p. 207) The love instinct will not die, he said, but neither will the death instinct. Both, he concluded with Freud, are parts of the human condition. "Two sides of a mirror are required before one has a mirror . . . . Two forces are necessary in man before he is man." (p. 207)

For Steinbeck, just as love, though subordinated to work, was essential to good work, so sex, though subordinated to love, was essential to healthy love between a man and a woman. And yet, as has been widely observed, there is in sex something akin to war, to struggle, to surrender and death.

Steinbeck's experience had taught him the fragile and complex nature of love. Throughout his life, his work suffered when he was not in love. Yet he was very much aware of the destructive potential that lurks behind the face of this source of happiness and the energy to do productive work.

Little needs to be said about Steinbeck's non-sexual, non-marital loves. He had several, they were open, and they were healthy. Perhaps the somewhat sexist attitudes toward women mentioned above contributed for Steinbeck to the inherently more difficult task of loving women. But he seems to have had few hangups in his love for men. Elizabeth Otis, Steinbeck's literary agent and close friend and confidante for over thirty years, was the one woman whom Steinbeck seems to have loved "like a man." Men to whom Steinbeck was very close and for whom he openly expressed affection were his college room-mate Carlton Sheffield, film-maker Elia Kazan, Swedish painter Bo Beskow, and marine biologist Ed Ricketts. Of these and other men to whom Steinbeck was close, he probably loved Ed Ricketts best.

Steinbeck's love and his capacity to love were not limited to individual men and women, however. His social love was broad and encompassing, and he had special compassion for the oppressed, the exploited, the dispossessed, and the poor. During the early thirties he and Carol had lived just above the hunger level as millions of other Americans had. Then in 1935 Tortilla Flat began to bring in some money. Steinbeck's

first impulse was to spread the "wealth" around. Apparently he offended some friends with his lack of tact about the matter, but his intentions were good. It was also at this time, being able now, as he said, to get his shoes half-soled, that he began to turn his attention to the exploitation of California farm workers, which would be the subject of his best work. He wrote in 1936 that he was "deeply involved with migrant workers." Of his writing he said, "Funny how mean and little books become in the face of such tragedies." (p. 149)

In addition to In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, and The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck wrote numerous articles and essays about the suffering of the dispossessed and exploited workers in his native state and about the economics of greed which fostered this shameful situation. And he gave generously of his time and abilities in an effort to ease the suffering of these poor people and to encourage organization of "group man," a sense of community among the exploited "Okies" through which they might resist together and survive. His compassion for the victims of greed was matched only by his hatred for the greedy exploitative owners and the vigilantes who did their dirty work. More will be said about these subjects in chapter four.

No discussion of Steinbeck as lover would be complete without reference to his love for work. Work was a basic need for him. Sometimes it almost seems that he was driven by a Puritanical work ethic. And work was also a refuge,

almost an escape in times of trouble. But it was more than this. In positive terms, Steinbeck truly loved to work, whether it was writing, gardening, or building a house. But the work must be honest; it must represent the best efforts of the worker. Typical Steinbeck comments on the subject are, "It's wonderful how much work I can do," (p. 222) or "As long as I can work I shall be happy." (p. 28)

Steinbeck looked with respect and admiration upon all honest productive work and upon all honest productive workers. Whether the job was picking peaches, writing novels, or repairing automobiles, he valued both the product of the work and the performance of the worker. He did not hold himself superior to any kind of worthwhile work, and he himself worked at many non-prestigious jobs without a feeling of condescension.

An important quality of Steinbeck's personality, his humility, seems correspondent to his working class identification. Instead of signing letters to his friends, he sometimes stamped them with his self-symbol, "Pigasus," the flying pig. The symbol was often accompanied by the motto Ad Astra Per Alia Porci ("To the stars on the wings of a pig.") He thought of himself as earthbound but aspiring. Whatever else he may have been, Steinbeck was not egotistical or pretentious. On several occasions he expressed a lack of confidence in his own work, but his pride was in the fact that this had not stopped him from trying. "Long ago," he wrote in 1961, "I knew perhaps that mine was not a truly first-rate talent. I

had then two choices only--To throw it over or to use what I had to the best of my ability. I chose the second." (p. 663) His pride was really perhaps less in the product than in the doing, the struggle, the work. Near the end of his life he summed up his accomplishments. "I have whomped a small talent into a large volume of work." (p. 683)

Perhaps related to Steinbeck's humility was his dread and fear of popularity and publicity. He never expected to be well-known, and when Tortilla Flat catapulted him into the public eye, his reaction was fear. "I'm scared to death of popularity," he wrote to Elizabeth Otis, "It has ruined everyone I know." (p. 105) One of the reasons he wanted In Dubious Battle to be published next, he said, was to stem the tide of publicity, for he rightly suspected that the strike novel would have a more limited audience. Throughout the late 1930's, Steinbeck hid from "the nightmare of publicity," struggled to deal with flattery, and tried to give away much of the money he was making. He honestly didn't want the fruits of popularity. In 1939, during the furor over The Grapes of Wrath, he lived almost reclusively on his ranch at Los Gatos, and in 1940 he escaped with Ed Ricketts to explore the coast-line of the Sea of Cortez in Mexico.

It is difficult to determine which Steinbeck feared most in the 1930's, popularity itself, or the money which would come with it. It is equally difficult to say whether it was the actual publicity or the money which proved to be more

harmful to him. Temperamentally, he was not geared for public life. And his origins, class identification, and values were not compatible with having a lot of money. Early in his career he said that he had trouble dealing with more than two dollars at a time, and there is little question that his happiest years were those in which his simple tastes and needs were being simply satisfied.

Steinbeck's distaste for public exposure was so strong that for years he denied that there was anything of himself in his works. When he received the Commonwealth Club Award for Tortilla Flat in 1935, he insisted that the book get the award, not the author. He declined to make a personal appearance. He explained to Joseph Henry Jackson, "I feel that the whole future working life is tied up in this distinction between work and person." (p. 112) He claimed there was "no ego" in his work, and insisted that work come before his personal life. In 1939, Viking was begging for biographical material to fulfill the demand created by The Grapes of Wrath. Steinbeck's response again was "Let's have no personality at all." (p. 169)

By the 1950's certain basic changes (which will be discussed in more detail below) had occurred in the author. Most of the changes, as Steinbeck himself realized, were not for the better. But his attitudes about personality vs. work had become more realistic. Now he spoke of the completion of a novel as "a kind of death," and even admitted, "All the things

in my books are me." (p. 407) To Elizabeth Otis he explained, "The novelist, perhaps unconsciously, identifies himself with one chief or central character in his novel. Into this character he puts not only what he thinks he is but what he hopes to be. We can call this spokesman the 'self character.' You will find one in every one of my books." (p. 518) But the inability to separate writer from work can be a fatal flaw. For Steinbeck it seems to have been. He was a humble, self-conscious, private person; publicity was not good for him. In a 1959 analysis of what had gone wrong over the past fifteen years, he identified this as part of the problem. "I brought the writing outside, like a cook flipping hot cakes in a window. And it never should have come outside." (p. 616)

Perhaps one-third of what Steinbeck wrote was consciously written "outside." I am referring, of course, to Steinbeck the journalist. His first extensive use of his "non-fictional voice" was in behalf of the exploited farm workers of California. Then during World War II he wrote a propaganda novel and an Air Force recruiting tool, and worked for the Office of War Information, writing radio broadcasts. His trip to Russia in 1947 provided an opportunity for what he called "straight reporting." Other notable examples of his "outside writing" are Travels with Charley and America and Americans. Steinbeck liked journalism. He was aware of its potential power, and to his detriment, he exploited that power on several occasions. Faulkner's assessment that

"Steinbeck is just a reporter, a newspaperman, not really a writer," is surely unjust, but the fact is that in addition to his work as a "writer," journalism was an important part of Steinbeck's work.[2] And before the crucial turning point of World War II, his non-fictional writing was clearly in the service of the working class.

Explaining the values in his work, Steinbeck wrote to Elia Kazan, "A writer sets down what has impressed him deeply, usually at an early age." (p. 591) In Steinbeck's case, it was "heroism." Above all other virtues he loved heroism and gallantry, and believed that these qualities should permeate his fiction. His job as a writer, he said in his 1962 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, was to foster the individual, to "celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit--for gallantry in defeat, for courage, compassion, and love."[3] "Gallantry" meant to Steinbeck the capacity to struggle, the undying effort to live life qualitatively. Thus, he saw his job as voicing optimism and faith in the individual--and in "group man" when communities were organized so as to meet the needs of the individuals. But his faith did not extend to established organized society. Upon being named recipient of the Nobel Prize, Steinbeck was asked about the function of the writer in society. His reply was, "Criticism, I should think."[4]

If the writer's job is criticism, whom should he criticize? And the corollary question is, for whom shall he write?

About these questions, the early Steinbeck was consistent. When his publishers brought out a ten-dollar limited edition of The Red Pony, he let it be known that he preferred twenty-five cent books and unlimited editions. He was not an elitist, and his work was not aimed at an elite audience of scholars and critics. At the peak of his popularity in the late 1930's, he wrote to Elizabeth Otis, "If a story of mine is as well done as I am able to do it, I wouldn't give a hoot if it were printed in Captain Billy's Whiz Bang." (p. 129) He refused to do a story on the migrant workers for Fortune magazine because he didn't like the audience, and he steadfastly refused to write for Hollywood. When Viking press asked him to change some of the language in The Grapes of Wrath, he declined, saying, "This book wasn't written for delicate ladies . . . . I've never changed a word to fit the prejudices of a group and I never will . . . . I've never wanted to be a popular writer--you know that. And those readers who are insulted by normal events or language mean nothing to me." (p. 164) When reviewers almost universally criticized the general inter-chapters in The Grapes of Wrath he responded, "Fortunately I'm not writing for reviewers." (p. 171) For whom, then, did Steinbeck write? First, apparently, for himself. And second, he wrote for a general audience, including everyone who wanted to hear what he had to say. But his external audience can be better perceived by observing an aspect of his writing technique.

"A long time ago," Steinbeck wrote in 1958, ". . . I stopped addressing my work to a faceless reader and addressed only one person as though I had only that one to talk to." (p. 554) He had first mentioned this technique in 1932, when he told Carlton Sheffield that all his writing was addressed to him. Others who were later honored by being Steinbeck's private audience were his sister Mary, Henry Fonda, Ed Ricketts, and his two sons, Thom and John, to whom the family narrative East of Eden was addressed. Steinbeck tried not to worry about the faceless generalized audience which might read his work, and concentrated on someone he loved and knew to be sympathetic to his work and to the subject about which he was writing.

Steinbeck's habits and attitudes relating to work were both fairly consistent. For example, he never lost sight of the fact that his work had a dual importance; hopefully it was important to the world, but certainly it was important to him. He described himself as a writer as "an animal conditioned to this kind of work." (p. 383) And he advised his niece, Joan, "You must not insist on being consistent in anything but work." (p. 374) Steinbeck was anything but lazy, and generally wrote at a pace which required considerable discipline. He wanted no interruptions when he worked--not even pleasant ones. He always preferred a place of isolation in which to write. Upon his return to Monterrey in 1944, he sought an office with "four doleful walls and a ground glass

door . . . particularly if the door says 'accountant.'" Unfortunately the prophet was without honor in his own land in 1944, and the man who monopolized Monterrey's business offices refused to rent to Steinbeck, explaining that his buildings were reserved for "professional people like doctors and dentists and insurance." (p. 258)

Steinbeck always spent some time in the morning warming up "like an athlete" before he got down to serious writing on the project at hand. Sometimes he wrote letters then; during the writing of East of Eden he kept a daily journal addressed to his editor, Pascal Covici, which served this purpose. (These entries were published in 1970 as Journal of a Novel.) Steinbeck often wrote only until noon, but his work occupied most of the day. Three hours of writing, he said, required twenty hours of preparation. By 1935 he said that he had learned to dream about his work, which saved time. Occasionally Steinbeck worked himself too hard. Upon completion of The Grapes of Wrath, for example, he collapsed and spent two weeks in bed recovering.

Steinbeck did love good hard work. But as I suggested earlier, work was also a necessity for his survival. Early in his writing career, he had said, "When there is no writing in progress, I feel like an uninhabited body. I think I am only truly miserable at such times." (p. 45) At times of crisis, such as the failure of his first marriage, Steinbeck escaped into work. "Work saves me," he wrote. "I am working

as hard and as well as I can and I don't dare do anything else. I've been pretty near to a number of edges and am not away from them yet by any means but I find safety in work and that is the only safety I do find." (p. 215)

Thus far in this chapter I have discussed Steinbeck's attitudes toward his love and his work. What remains is to see them in relation to each other and to see the process of loss and compromise which shook the foundations of this connection and contributed to Steinbeck's loss of power.

Steinbeck's earliest job, at age sixteen, was on a ranch near King City, California. Looking back on this work many years later, he said, "I learned a great deal on that job, things I have been using ever since. I got a sense of values I have never lost but above all I became free . . . . Also I learned about men, how some are good and some are bad, and most are some of both . . . . I think that until a boy is put out on his own, he hasn't a chance to be a man. A kind of pride comes with it that is never lost again and a kind of humility." (p. 614)

Steinbeck worked at many other jobs before his writing began to support him. He worked at the City Cafe in Palo Alto, clerked in a department store, helped build the first highway below Big Sur, broke horses for the army, loaded and stacked sugar in Salinas, was a ship-hand on a California to New York freighter, labored on the construction of Madison Square Garden, and reported for the New York American, a Hearst paper

from which he was fired. Back in California he worked at a fish-hatchery and was care-taker of a Lake Tahoe estate, where he wrote his first novel.

In 1935 when his father died, the author wrote, "I feel very badly, not about his death, but about his life, for he told me only a few months ago that he had never done anything he wanted to do. Worst of all he hadn't done the work he wanted to do." (p. 104) To Steinbeck, doing one's best at the work one wants or needs to do was a thing almost sacred, a thing which had to come before the personal life.

Just as he valued his own work, Steinbeck also valued the work of others. It was partly because they did not work the land that Steinbeck so hated the absentee land owners of California. And it was partly because they did work hard and well that he admired and sympathized with the dispossessed masses who did work the land. His class identification was invariably with workers rather than bosses, with the working class rather than the owning class.

Steinbeck was a strong defender of the right and the absolute necessity of working class organization. Three of his novels deal with this theme. Steinbeck himself moved among and worked with the migrants and encouraged them to work for class unity. He was appalled when he saw the film "Lifeboat," for which he had written the script. Alfred Hitchcock, whom Steinbeck described as "one of those incredible middle-class snobs who really and truly despise working

people," had altered the script to include "slurs against organized labor." (p. 249)

A major influence on Steinbeck's thought and work was Ed Ricketts, whom Steinbeck met in 1930. Ricketts, who had a small marine biology laboratory on Cannery Row in Monterrey, contributed significantly to Steinbeck's attitudes and philosophy.[5] The two men spent many hours together, drinking beer or wine and discussing a wide range of scientific and philosophic subjects. The scientific perspective that typifies Steinbeck's work of the 1930's, his "non-teleological" view of life, and his interest in "group man" evolved at least partly out of his contact with Ricketts.

Also in 1930 Steinbeck married Carol Henning. For the ten years in which he wrote his greatest fiction, the marriage seems to have been happy. But late in 1940, he met Gwyndolyn Congor in Hollywood, and an immediate romance evolved. By the spring of 1941, the affair had been discovered, he and Carol had separated, and he was living with Gwyn. The split from Carol in 1942 was the first divorce that had occurred in his family, and he seems to have viewed the break partly as a personal failure. Though Steinbeck was acting upon his assumption that the individual should do what he feels he must do, his separation from Carol was not unaccompanied by guilt. According to the mores of the society, Steinbeck was in the wrong, and he knew it. And in purely personal terms he felt guilty too, for he had caused suffering to someone he

had loved. But the marriage had apparently not been entirely good. From the perspective of two years later, he recalled "step by step how two people hurt each other for eleven years." (p. 235)

By 1940 Steinbeck had more money than he knew what to do with. He had alienated friends with his attempts at sharing it, he was being constantly hounded by people who wanted to use him and his money, and he had begun to be a conspicuous consumer. In 1940, he wrote that he was surrounded with "things." "And sometimes I get so dreadfully homesick I can't stand it and then I realize it's not for any home I ever had." (p. 204) Perhaps fortunately for him, Carol took most of his excess money off his hands in the divorce settlement. But Gwyn, whom he soon married, seems to have been quite materialistic, and before long the Steinbecks were living an elite life in which their disagreeable work was being done for them by a servant and a maid. However, a period of intense but unproductive work did come to an end now that he was again in love. He wrote, "I seem to take energy from a good relationship with Gwyn that makes me want to work." (p. 227)

Several events of the late forties (to be discussed below) contributed to Steinbeck's decline as a writer. But perhaps the most significant factor was the compromise of his love for truth. After working for several months of 1938 on his "vigilant novel," (the fore-runner of The Grapes of Wrath) Steinbeck had abandoned it. It had not held "as much of the

truth as he knew." Throughout the late 1930's he was deeply involved with trying to help the exploited, starving migrant workers, but one thing he would not do, even in their behalf, was distort the truth. His integrity demanded that he be objective and fair in spite of his hatred of the "fascist group of utilities and bankers and huge growers." But by 1940, Steinbeck's anti-fascist sentiment, which in itself was admirable, had over-powered his love for objective truth. He wrote to President Roosevelt in June, more than a year before the U. S. entry into the war, proposing the establishment of a war propaganda office and volunteering his services.

During the next three years, 1941-43, Steinbeck's energies were devoted almost exclusively to writing propaganda. In 1941 he wrote broadcasts for the Office of War Information. In 1942 he wrote Bombs Away, an Air Force recruiting tool, and The Moon Is Down, a propaganda play-novelette about anti-Nazi resistance, presumably in Norway. In that year he and Ed Ricketts also offered to make their knowledge of the shorelines of Pacific islands available to Navy Intelligence. In 1943 he wrote the film script for Life-Boat and went to Africa and Europe as a war correspondent for the Herald-Tribune. (His correspondence was published in 1958 as Once There Was a War.)

Of course there was some justification for Steinbeck's contributions to the "war effort." And most of the criticism of his work of this period suggested that his work failed by

being too objective and reasonable. Concerning The Moon Is Down, Steinbeck said that the critics had "turned propagandists." Indeed, most of the criticism of Moon, like much of the criticism of In Dubious Battle, was a debate over political lines, over what the people should be told. Yet, Steinbeck knew that his war writings had compromised his principles, and he didn't feel good about it. Of his war reporting, he wrote in 1944, "The crap I wrote over seas had a profoundly nauseating effect on me. Among other things modern war is the most dishonest thing imaginable." (p. 255) Repulsed by his own contributions to the dishonesty, and at the request of G.I.'s who wanted something to help them forget the war, he went to work on Cannery Row, which was to be partly an escape for both writer and reader.

In 1946, the war was over and so was Steinbeck's job. He couldn't seem to get back to his own work. He did not feel well and he suffered from depression. It seems not to have occurred to him at the time that both his illness and his inability to work may have been results of compromises he had made, but he did see that the two symptoms were connected, and that the unsought "rest" was not good for his "soul."

Steinbeck's interest in and sympathy for working class solidarity and collectivized society was still strong in 1947. In the summer of that year he toured Russia with photographer Robert Capa. Steinbeck was expected to meet with dignitaries, attend formal dinners, and talk about his novels, some of

which were quite well known and popular in Russia. But one thing is apparent in his Russian Journal. Steinbeck preferred to be with "the people." As in America, so in Russia, he felt a close identification with workers and farmers. The Journal gives little attention to the toasts and speeches of the Russian elite, but it is full of warmth and understanding for the workers. He wrote from Russia, "The farmers and working people are a pleasure to talk to." (p. 280)

When Steinbeck had returned to California from his second trip to New York in 1937, he had said that, God willing, he would never go East again. He was at home in California, among the ranchers, the residents of Cannery Row, or the migrant workers of the California valleys. But after the war he went back to New York again, this time, except for brief intermissions, to stay. He had been lured back to the big city by the need for anonymity. Success and popularity had hounded him out of his home state.

Steinbeck seems, in 1947, to have felt a terrible sense of having been uprooted. But he was not able to find happiness in New York either. And in 1948, Gwyn asked for a divorce. Their marriage had lasted only five years, and except for the fact that the couple had two sons, their relationship was even less satisfying and productive than his first marriage had been. There are several apparent reasons for this failure. John and Gwyn seem to have been two very different people. From the first Gwyn had wanted to live in

New York, which had uprooted Steinbeck from his native California. After the marriage was over he said that Gwyn had killed his love with her "little cruelties." But Steinbeck did not blame Gwyn alone; after this second marriage had failed, he began to feel that much of the fault must be his own. It is in this time, the late 1940's, that his letters relentlessly explored the problems of love, marriage, sex, and especially what happens to these for one like himself who had always found it necessary to put his work before them.

Steinbeck's most honest and candid correspondence at this time was with his artist friend, Bo Beskow, in Sweden. Perhaps it was partly Beskow's physical remoteness that made him the choice "sounding board" for Steinbeck's soul-searching. Steinbeck's deep hurt is apparent; he later spoke of "the wild and violent heartbroken time after Gwyn." (p. 309) And his reactions were not entirely unpredictable. This was a period of frenzied and almost indiscriminate sexual activity for him, but a time when his psyche required insulation from love. "I have forgotten what it is like to love a woman," he wrote. "It is very strange. It is like forgetting pain or hunger. Desire I have in great and all-directional abundance, even a fine goat-like-lust--but love--the softening--the compassionate thing I don't have now." (p.321)

Just as he periodically swore off New York, Steinbeck at this time rejected marriage--at least for himself. In a

letter to Beskow he bitterly denounced marriage, and said that he must have "no more wives." "Men and women should never come together except in bed. There is the only place where their natural hatred of each other is not so apparent . . . . The warfare between the unaroused male and female is constant and ferocious. Each blames the other for his loss of soul." (p. 294) In the same vein, he wrote to Pascal Covici, "A woman holds dreadful power over a man who is in love with her but she should realize that the quality and force of his love is the index of his potential contempt and hatred." (p. 317) Steinbeck was particularly bitter toward "the breed of American women" who, he said, "have the minds of whores and the vaginas of Presbyterians." (p. 322)

Within two weeks of Steinbeck's separation from Gwyn, Ed Ricketts was hit by a train and killed. Steinbeck's immediate feeling was that he would "not be able to do anything" for months. Faced with this double shock, he retreated as he always did at such times, into work. Work was his refuge, his therapy, his salvation. Over the next four years, in "About Ed Ricketts," in Burning Bright, and in Sweet Thursday, Steinbeck attempted to "lay the ghost." But his love for and attachment to this great friend made the loss difficult to master. The extent of Steinbeck's love for Ricketts is suggested by a comment in "About Ed Ricketts," the preface to the 1951 edition of The Log from The Sea of Cortez. "It wasn't Ed who had died but a large and important part of oneself."[6]

His world shattered, Steinbeck headed back to Monterrey to wage a desperate struggle to renew his roots in California. He moved into the little three-room cottage his father had built in Pacific Grove before his birth, tried to buy the old family ranch which had been the setting of the somewhat autobiographical story, The Red Pony, and looked up old friends. But nothing worked out. The ranch wasn't for sale, old friends were cool, and as I have mentioned, he was even unable to rent space for an office. His roots had been permanently severed. His only firm link with the past was his father's little house, and this tie was insufficient. Rejected in California, he again returned to New York, restless, needing to feel stability somewhere. Steinbeck was not an Easterner and he never would be; yet by the mid-1950's he would lose touch almost completely with the West coast. In retrospect, it seems apparent that the uprooting of the early 1940's, which occurred simultaneously with the peak of Steinbeck's popularity, the end of his first marriage, and his decision to write propaganda, was to leave him a restless wanderer for the rest of his life and greatly reduce his power as a writer.

In this crucial year of 1948, trying to get back to what was natural and basic to him, Steinbeck lived very simply. "I really do not need much money," he wrote. "It has only done bad things for me. My tastes have not become more complicated than they were. Transportation, food, shelter,

and sex. And all of them can be very simple." (p. 304) But in this frantic year before he met Elaine, Steinbeck over-indulged in work, liquor, and sex. He drank heavily, travelled in Mexico, and had sex with many women, trying to overcome his depression. But as usual, nothing helped except work. At times he was even too low to write. "Alcohol doesn't help," he wrote to Covici. "I usually go out into the garden and work hard." (p. 313) Repeatedly in this time he spoke of work as his only salvation from "the horrors."

Steinbeck's failures in love were perhaps as damaging as his loss of roots. Coming from a family which had never had a divorce, he had now had two, and these failures created in him a sense of guilt. But his agonizing over these failures brought him to a realization of an inherent paradox involved. Though love was crucial to his ability to do good work, his work always had to come first. Thus he accepted much of the blame for the estrangement from his first two wives. "Being married to me is a very hard thing," he wrote in 1949. "I am kind and loving and generous, but there is always the rival (work) and to most women that is worse than another woman." (p. 337)

Steinbeck often spoke of his work as "a lonely business." Writers, he said, are "hard to live with, impossible as friends, and ridiculous as associates. A writer and his work is and should be like a surly dog with a bone, suspicious of everyone, trusting no one, loving no one." (p. 572)

Of his abundant but loveless, animalistic sex life of 1948 he said, "There will be only one test of this and that is whether any good work comes out of it." (p. 312) Sex alone failed the test. But fortunately Steinbeck soon recovered from his bitterness, his contempt for women, and his fear of love. Within six months after his denunciations of women, he was again in love, this time with a married woman, Elaine Scott, who would be his wife from 1950 until his death in 1968. In retrospect, he thought of his year of sex without love as being "like intercourse with a condom." There was "pleasure but no joy." And he rejoiced that this "dark and deathly" sterile, unproductive time was over. "It is gone," he wrote, "and the energy is washing back into me." (p. 352) Sex was important and necessary to Steinbeck, but he always spoke of it in primarily animal terms. One of his basic needs, he said, was an "occasional loss of semen" (italics mine). But love was a greater need. In love he found only gain, energy, the power to do good work. And it was not until he was in love with Elaine that sex and love, energy and work, came together again; his third wife was apparently able to adapt to living with what Steinbeck called "a zombie."

That is not to suggest that his work-life was unhampered. Other debilitating problems, some of them even related to Elaine, were to arise. Throughout his remaining years, love and work were more ecologically balanced for him than ever before, and except for brief periods, he continued

to work. But other factors had changed. His passion for truth, first forsaken to write World War II propaganda, had never been completely regained. He was unable to restore his cut-off roots. The money and popularity he had so feared proved to be too strong. And gradually the man of principle had learned to compromise.

Based upon his own experience, Steinbeck now seemed to conclude that what was true of the species of man was also true of the individual. Safely in love with Elaine, soon to be his third wife, he wrote to Beskow, "Both of my wives were somehow in competition with me." (p. 374) In a letter to Beskow on the same subject, he continued, "There is one other thing besides love that can tie two people together, and that is guilt. There are so many destructive relationships--or perhaps more than there are creative ones. I have had two destructive ones. I think I have the other kind now." (p. 383) In a similar vein, he explained to his step-daughter, Waverly Scott, that "sex is a kind of war, but the quiet time after, if there is love and interest, is about the only time when a man and woman get together and become one thing." (p. 477) This is, of course, almost a reversal of the comments about sex and love which he had bitterly made during the loveless time after his second marriage had failed.

But by the early fifties, too many compromises had been made. In 1952, the man who had once said he would never write "for" magazines was doing light articles for Colliers.

Also in that year Steinbeck's friend Elia Kazan gave compromising testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and Steinbeck defended Kazan's actions. In 1953 Steinbeck wrote Sweet Thursday, which he admitted was "a little self-indulgent." In 1954 he realized that he had "written about nothing current for a long time," and he felt that he should write about the McCarthy hearings. "If such things are not written as fiction, a whole pattern of present day thinking and feeling will be lost." (p. 455) He did, in 1957, write in Esquire a defense of Arthur Miller, who was charged with contempt of Congress for refusing to testify. But this was after most of the hysteria had passed. In 1954, he wrote instead more light articles for Punch magazine and covered the Kentucky Derby and the presidential nominating conventions.

In 1956 Steinbeck returned to fiction, but the product was Pippin IV. And with this book he had reached an all-time low. He had become an avowed counter-revolutionary! "The reason for this book . . . . It's fun . . . . In our scowling era, laughter may well be the only counter-revolutionary weapon." (p. 500) By this point Steinbeck had practically compromised himself out of existence. Honest work had forsaken him. He either had nothing left to say, or he would not write what he knew he should write. So he escaped for most of the next three years into his private quest for the grail, his study of Arthurian romance. "Because I must go on working

because I get unhappy when I am not working I am taking on something I have always wanted to do," he wrote. (p. 506) That was the "reduction" of Malory's Arthur into "American." (The completed part of this work was published in 1976 as The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights.)

By 1954 materialism had crept back into Steinbeck's life and seemed entrenched to stay. Steinbeck complained about having to mend his glasses with wire while he and Elaine were going through $65,000 a year. They had a house full of "staff," he was driving a new Jaguar, and--he was seeing a psychologist. A kind of despair was coming upon him, a "winter of discontent," which he would never completely shake. He complained of having a "to hell with it" attitude much of the time, but as usual, he at least seems to have been wrestling with the problem. "I've lost touch," he said. "The more money I make the more trouble I'm in." (p. 461)

Having once compromised his devotion to truth, further compromise became easier. The writer who had written honestly and sympathetically about Russia in 1947 (A Russian Journal) had become a part of the cold war propaganda machine by 1957. On Eisenhower's plan for a "people to people" program to the "victims of Soviet tyranny," he said, "The book is revered The book is somehow true where propaganda is suspected." (p. 513) Steinbeck proposed exploiting this trust in books for propaganda purposes. And in 1963, when President Kennedy asked Steinbeck to make a cultural exchange visit to Russia,

he went even though he expressed reservations about having to explain this country's racial violence and injustice. He would find a way.

And there is one more sad chapter to be written in the decline of John Steinbeck. That concerns his support for the U. S. involvement against the Vietnamese revolution. Elaine had been a classmate of both Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson at the University of Texas, and the Steinbecks and Johnsons were friends. Steinbeck's support of the war may have been more than anything else support for Johnson, but support it he did, and in the most disgusting way. In a letter to Johnson's press secretary, he volunteered his services, speaking of "the power a writer has if he has not over-used or mis-used it." (p. 771) Steinbeck had no illusions about the war. He recognized it as a struggle for hegemony by the super-powers, especially the United States. He recognized the corruption of the South Vietnamese regime which the U. S. government was supporting. Yet he was willing to cynically use his power as a writer, a power based on people's trust in him, to support a war in which he didn't really believe. And Johnson, for his part, exploited Steinbeck's friendship by asking him to go to Vietnam as a correspondent/propagandist.

Steinbeck eventually went to Vietnam as a correspondent for Newsday. He dutifully reported what was expected, and privately suggested the use of scopolamine ("truth serum") on captured prisoners of war. By 1967 he seems to have lost all

former perspective, to no longer have been a man of principles. Yet he was "saddened" by the war, and just before his death in 1968 he had, according to Elizabeth Otis, begun to saw off the limb he had climbed so far out on. But he still seemed resentful of the involvement of his Vietnam veteran son, John, in the peace movement.

Even late in his life, when compromise had virtually destroyed Steinbeck's abilities and power, however, the spirit of compassion still remained and could be aroused. While "traveling with Charley" he had been so saddened by the racial injustice and violence he had witnessed in New Orleans that he had cut his trip short and hurried home. And in a letter to Martin Luther King that year, he supported a boycott of racist merchants who were responsible for brutality against Blacks.

Difficult times were of course the times when Steinbeck relied most heavily on work as a source of stability, though even in the best of times, work was a necessity. Work was like his life's blood. In the last year of his life, he had a painful back operation from which recovery was slow. Struggling to hold on to life, he once again wrote of the significance work held for him. Life, for him, was work. "I am trying to regroup," he wrote to his old friend Carlton Sheffield, "trying to determine if and what I have left to write. Maybe something, maybe not, but if not, then there was no point in the surgery." (p. 794)

Steinbeck's rootlessness, his failures in love, his problems with popularity and money, and the compromise of his work all seem to have contributed to his loss of power. And with this loss came a growing feeling in him of self-doubt and despair. From the end of World War II on, the tone of despair in his letters grows progressively deeper. By the late 1940's, he said that East of Eden might be his "swan song." (p. 289) By the late 1950's he wrote to Elizabeth Otis, "At night too often when sleep does not come, the yammer comes in my ears and I grow lonesome for death." (p. 570) In 1961 he wrote, "I have been so bloody weak that I just don't give a damn." (p. 684) And in 1964 he described himself as "a worked over claim."

Steinbeck's despair was not only personal. He was saddened and frightened by the mood of fear in the country, by the racial violence, and by the lack of political leadership. But mostly he had a keen self-knowledge, and this was his personal source of despair. Just before his death Steinbeck wrote, "I should get to work, I know, and I don't want to. I think the world, not only America, is in a state of very rapid change and I cannot foresee the direction it will take, but I deeply fear that it will get worse before it gets better. My impulse is not to yap about it, but to sit very quietly and watch it happen." (p. 797)

Lest my picture of Steinbeck's later years appear too depressing, there is brightness too. It will be recalled

that Steinbeck's favorite virtue was gallantry--especially gallantry in defeat. His keen soul-searching never let him hide from himself for long. Awareness of what was happening to him must have increased the sadness, but it also raised his fighting spirit. In 1959, after "turning a new leaf," he wrote, "I was sick of myself. A time was over and maybe I was over. I might just possibly be wiggling like a snake cut in two which we used to believe could not die until the sun set. But if that's it, I'll have to go on wiggling until the sun sets." (p. 596)

Later that year, having recovered from a mild stroke, Steinbeck was back at work. "The mind does not tire from true work," he said. "Only frustrations weary one to death--a blunt axe, a dull saw, or a false premise." (p. 616) He refused to take it easy, and in work recovered for a time his sense of dignity. And again he analyzed what had happened to him. "Over 12 to 15 years . . . . I lost command. I relinquished it slowly and imperceptibly . . . . I have only two ways to choose--either to take back command or to bow out. The third--remaining the way I have been--I won't have . . . . I have to slough off 15 years [since World War II] and go back and start again at the split path where I went wrong because it was easier." (p. 615)

After these realizations Steinbeck got up, regrouped, and set to work. In 1960 he wrote The Winter of Our Discontent--in search of himself. Then he set out on his travels

with Charley--in search of America. He described the trip to Elizabeth Otis as, not just a little trip, or reporting, but "a frantic last attempt to save my life and the integrity of my creative impulse." (p. 627) Even into the 1960's, right up to his death, Steinbeck struggled against his own defeat. Though his fingers "avoided the pencil as though it were an old and poisoned tool," (p. 803) he worked on, preferring to die "with his boots on," "in the middle of a sentence in the middle of a book and so leave it as all my life must be--unfinished." (p. 802

Chapter III

Steinbeck's Early Fiction (1928-1935)

"Only gods, kings, and heroes are worth writing about."

--Steinbeck, 1933

"Present day kings aren't very inspiring, the gods are on vacation, and about the only heroes left are the scientists and the poor."

--Steinbeck, 1939

In a 1933 letter to his publisher, Robert Ballou, Steinbeck affirmed his belief in Boileau's notion that "only gods, kings, and heroes are worth writing about." Steinbeck was specifically discussing his just completed To A God Unknown in which, he said, "the characters are not 'home folks.' They make no more attempt at being sincerely human than the people in the Iliad."[1] Steinbeck's stated principle of character creation may be applied to both of his earliest novels, Cup of Gold and To a God Unknown. His grasp of the materials and people that vitalize his greatest fiction of the late thirties can be detected in the short stories of The Pastures of Heaven and The Long Valley, and in his first popularly successful novel, Tortilla Flat, but romantic notions of heroism cut Steinbeck's first two novels loose from the earth to

which his later fiction would be rooted.

According to Harry T. Moore, Cup of Gold was Steinbeck's fourth attempt at a novel. It was rewritten six times from an unpublished story called "A Lady in Infra-Red" which he wrote during his Stanford days.[2] Cup of Gold was finally completed in its published form in 1928, the bulk of the writing having been done while Steinbeck was a snowed-in caretaker of a Lake Tahoe summer home. Steinbeck never had illusions about the quality of his first novel; he seems to have seen it as an obligatory practice-run which, once written, would clean his system so that the novelist in him might emerge. He wrote to his friend, Carlton Sheffield, "I am finishing the Henry Ms. out of duty, but I have no hope of it anymore."[3] In 1929, the year of its publication, he called Cup of Gold "the Morgan atrocity," and said that it had been "an immature experiment written for the purpose of getting all the wise cracks (known by sophomores as epigrams) and all the autobiographical material (which hounds us until we get it said) out of my system. And I really did not intend to publish it. The book accomplished its purgative purpose. I am no more concerned with myself very much. I can write about other people."[4] Obviously it would be a mistake to attach a great deal of importance to this first novel's merit or lack of merit. But Cup of Gold may be legitimately examined to see what it portends for Steinbeck's future as a writer.

Exactly what the "autobiographical material" purged by Cup of Gold was, is not clear. But Steinbeck later stated that every one of his novels has a "self-character," and presumably he did identify in some way with Henry Morgan, who is based on the historical buccaneer by the same name. Henry is a rebel. Against all advice, he severs home ties at the age of sixteen and sets out to make his own way in the world. It is easy to see how the young Steinbeck might have identified with the young Henry Morgan, and the reader is also drawn into sympathy with the protagonist. Before leaving home, Henry goes to see the wise old hermit, Merlin, who had once been "a fine poet" before the world of prosaic reality had made him an alien. Merlin recognises in Henry the romantic spirit, the dreamer, the child-like perspective which he says are the qualities of greatness. And so we follow Henry with high hopes as he leaves his native Cambria to explore the world. His curiosity, his eagerness to engage in a romantic quest, make him seem at first something like a Wordsworthian romantic innocent.

But Henry's innocence is short-lived. His introduction to the reality of the outside world comes from William the road-mender, who has once been to London. William describes the world in terms of the class conflict which the Steinbeck of the late thirties will fully comprehend. "People there are at London, and they do nothing but drive about and about in carriages, up one street and down another, bowing to each other, while good men sweat out their lives in the fields and

the mines to keep them bowing there."[5] Henry is not long in learning about the real world for himself, for at Cardiff, a new "friend" sells him to a sea captain who transports him to the Indies and in turn sells him into indentured servitude.

From this point on, identification with Steinbeck's protagonist becomes increasingly difficult. Steinbeck even intrudes as narrator to describe the horrible slavery and exploitation upon which the fortunes of the new world are being built. And though Henry is one of the victims of this cruel abuse, we soon realize that his identification is not with the oppressed, but with the oppressors. Henry misses the lesson that later Steinbeck victims such as Tom Joad will learn. He rejects the exploited working class for the "bowing class." Pierre le Grand, the most brutal and ruthless of buccaneers, becomes Henry's model.

Henry's new master in the colony, James Flower, is a planter and amateur intellectual. Henry soon becomes Flower's right hand man. When he sees his first slave hanging, Henry "cries nervously." But two years later, he is the ruthless overseer who personally beats and executes rebellious slaves. He has learned how to deal with people through intimidation. Soon he begins to steal from Flower, always readying himself to challenge the feared Pierre le Grand for mastery of the seas. He begins to trade among the islands, and to amass a fortune for himself.

On one of his trading voyages, Henry buys a beautiful young female slave named Paulette, whom he makes his concubine. Paulettte comes to love Henry, and believes that he too cares for her, but "Henry thought of her as a delicate machine perfectly made for pleasure, a sexual contraption." (Cup of Gold, 65) It becomes increasingly apparent that Henry, who does not work, cannot love either. He only uses and exploits others.

Gradually, another fact becomes clear about Henry, the dreamer. His entire life is a lie. He finds it increasingly difficult to face the truth about himself, particularly where women are concerned. When he left Cambria, Henry had left behind a girl, Elizabeth, for whom he had felt a strong attraction. Afraid of her sexuality, he hadn't even said goodbye. When he tells Paulette about Elizabeth, she becomes, in the telling, his lover and the daughter of a wealthy squire. He later tells fellow buccaneer, Coeur de Gris, that Elizabeth was an Earl's daughter. "We loved too perfectly--too passionately." (Cup of Gold, 98) With each new telling, not only Elizabeth's status, but their relationship grows more romantic and less true.

Finally, at the pinnacle of his power as a pirate, Henry decides to take Panama, the "cup of gold." He is motivated not only by the great riches of the city, but also by tales he hears of Ysobel, La Santa Roja, the dream of every man who had sailed the main. Henry tells Coeur de Gris,

"This woman is the harbor of all my questing. I do not think of her as a female thing with arms and breasts, but as a moment of peace after turmoil." (Cup of Gold, 128) Henry had left Elizabeth behind in Cambria without ever proclaiming his love. He names his first ship Elizabeth, an obvious substitute for a lover. He confuses Ysobel with Elizabeth, and finally marries his unromantic cousin, also named Elizabeth. And Henry never knows any of them as women. They all exist as disappointing incarnations of his colossal dream.

Having sacked the city of Panama and murdered many of its inhabitants, Henry reveals himself to be a complete fool when he at last confronts La Santa Roja. Like Gatsby, who had yearned toward Daisy's green light and devoted all his energies toward the realization of a false dream, Henry is disappointed by the reality of the fabled woman. "He was staggered at such a revolt against his preconceptions . . . . With all this preparation it must be certain that he loved her . . . . 'You are Elizabeth,' he said, in the dull monotone of one dreaming . . . . 'You must marry me Elizabeth--Ysobel. I think I love you Ysobel.'" (Cup of Gold, 141) Henry's last and grandest illusion is shattered when Ysobel rejects him, calling him a "bungling romancer." Henry gladly returns Ysobel to her husband for the ransom offered, gets all of his men drunk, and sails away with the loot. His childhood finally over, Henry marries his prosaic cousin, Elizabeth, and is eventually appointed lieutenant governor of Jamaica,

where he is charged with the task of trying and hanging pirates.

Henry's new-found virtue is that he begins to face reality, at least part of the time. But he continues to fantasize and expand his prowess as a lover--not only of Elizabeth, but of the fabled Red Saint of Panama as well. It is only when he lies on his death-bed that Henry finally comprehends his inability to love. It occurs to him that his cousin/wife really cares about him. "Suddenly he was seized with despair. 'This woman loves me,' he said to himself. 'This woman loves me, and I have never known it. I cannot know this kind of love.'" (Cup of Gold, 192).

The greatest weakness of Cup of Gold is that Steinbeck gives the reader no one with whom to identify. In so far as we can know Henry as a person, he seems a mass of contradictions. Identified with the poet and philosopher Merlin, who predicts that because he is like a little boy he will become a great man, Henry lives his whole life and dies in innocence. But it is an innocence from thought. As Henry is dying, a vicar asks him to repent his sins. Henry replies, "I don't remember ever having been consciously wicked." (Cup of Gold, 194) Henry has never been troubled by conscience, by love, by truth, or by passion. His life has been lived aloof from love and work and morality. In short, Henry's flaw is that he is not human. He is one of the abstract "heroes" with which the young Steinbeck was enamored, but a hero who serves

only to illustrate what happens to those who do not live life on the ground level.

If the reader were not already bewildered enough by Steinbeck's first protagonist, Henry's mystical death is certainly a final mystery. Like Joseph Wayne of Steinbeck's second novel, To a God Unknown, Henry bleeds to death--but at the hand of a quack doctor rather than from a self-inflicted wound. As he is dying, Henry, who has lived a whole life without seeing much, "found that he could see through his eyelids . . . . He thought, 'I am fixed. I am the center of all things and cannot move. I am as heavy as the universe. Perhaps I am the universe.'" (Cup of Gold, 196). A mystical death may be appropriate for a mystical figure like Joseph Wayne, but it is wholly inappropriate for Henry Morgan, whose life has been lived without even self-consciousness.

By the time he wrote his third book, The Pastures of Heaven (published second), Steinbeck had matured considerably as a writer, and his view of heroes (stated in 1939 as "scientists and the poor") was beginning to evolve. The people of The Pastures of Heaven may for the most part "lead lives of quiet desperation," but they at least are heroic in their struggles against the ironies of the lives that Steinbeck gives them. Between Cup of Gold and The Pastures of Heaven, however, came To A God Unknown. This second book has some of the faults of the first, but at least it is set on Steinbeck's native soil.

To A God Unknown represents a major stride in Steinbeck's development as a writer of fiction. And the key to this advancement is the fact that the second novel is more deeply rooted in realities that Steinbeck knew. Like Cup of Gold, To A God Unknown grew out of a juvenile mind, but not even Steinbeck's mind. In 1928, Steinbeck's old Stanford classmate, Webster Street, gave up on a play he had been writing called "The Green Lady," and gave it to Steinbeck to do with what he would. The play was about a man who falls in love with the forest and sacrifices himself by running into a forest fire. Steinbeck worked with these "foreign" materials for four years before realizing that, first, he couldn't write someone else's story, and second, the story needed to be grounded in realities that he knew. In early 1932 he wrote to his agents that he would "make a new story, one suggested by recent, and to me, tremendous events."[6] He was alluding to a recent drought in the Jalon valley which old-timers said was the repetition of a thirty-five year cycle. The drought had continued for ten years, and as the land died, diseases, crime, and insanity had increased too. Then, a month before the turning point in the writing of the novel, "the thing broke. There were two weeks of downpour. The rivers overflowed and took away houses and cattle and land. I've seen decorous people dancing in the mud. They had laughed with a kind of crazy joy when their land was washing away. The disease is gone." Having learned his most important

secret, to write about things he knew, Steinbeck finished To A God Unknown within the year.

The unifying central theme of To A God Unknown is man's innate need for gods. The original title was "To an Unknown God," and many critics, even as late as Peter Lisca (The Wide World of John Steinbeck, 1958) have assumed that the title alluded to St. Paul's unknown god of Mars Hill. But in a 1933 letter to his publisher, Steinbeck explained that the allusion was only to the Vedic hymn which was chanted to the unknown, all-powerful spirit of the universe whose shadow is both life and death, and to whom sacrifice must be made.

There are many gods in the novel, and each person has a god. Joseph Wayne's god is the land. Joseph himself is the god of his wife Elizabeth and his sister-in-law Rama. The old hermit of Big Sur worships and sacrifices to the sun. Father Angelo, perhaps Steinbeck's most favorably drawn representative of institutionalized religion, prays to the Christian God for rain. The Indians perform the sacred rituals of their ancient way. Who brings the rain to the dying land? To each character, it is the gift of his god; yet clouds have already filled the sky before Joseph sacrifices himself for the land. Steinbeck makes no judgment concerning the power or lack of power of the various gods, but the novel does suggest that to have a god, an object of worship and sacrifice, is a necessity of the human condition.

Several important Steinbeck themes and ideas can be seen in embryo in To A God Unknown. Here is the first use of Biblical myth to which Steinbeck would return again and again, especially in major works such as The Grapes of Wrath and East of Eden. Joseph, the central character, is the son of John Wayne (Yaweh?). He leaves the family's Vermont home and goes west to what he believes will be a land of plenty. Then he sends for his brothers, including his younger brother Benjamin, who come to California, accompanied, as Joseph believes, by the spirit of their father. Like his Old Testament counterpart, Joseph is the head of the clan, having received the father's blessing.

Once in the valley of Nuestra Señora (the Jalon Valley), the Waynes seemingly become just another pioneer family, working the land, taming the wilderness. Joseph's love for the land and his desire to possess it will be repeated by numerous later Steinbeck heroes. But Joseph's love for the land is of the intensity of sexual passion. "The hunger in his eyes became rapaciousness as he looked down the long green valley. His possessiveness became a passion . . . . He flung himself face downward on the grass . . . . His thighs beat heavily on the earth."[7] Suddenly Joseph realizes that he needs a wife, and he soon marries a young school teacher.

The distinction between merely owning, and possessing the land that is so important in The Grapes of Wrath is first apparent in To A God Unknown. In the later book, the land

owners of both Oklahoma and California are estranged from the land; they have no personal contact with it. The estrangement results partly from the fact that machines have come between man and land. But more important, these corporate farmers think of land exclusively in terms of "the bottom line." But none of these things is true of Joseph Wayne and his clan. Their bond with the land is strong. And they know the secret of possession, later articulated by the Joads, but first by Joseph Wayne. When Benjamin is killed and buried, Joseph "smiled wearily. 'The first grave. Now we're getting someplace. Houses and children and graves, that's home.'" (To A God Unknown, 67) The possessors of the land are those who live and die, have children and build houses, love and work on the land.

Fecundity is a perennial value in Steinbeck's fiction. Whereas Cup of Gold had been a loveless, sterile book, To A God Unknown is permeated by the principle of reproduction. Under Joseph's stewardship, everything on the land multiplies in abundance. Joseph had received his father's blessing with his hands presumably on the old man's groin, and in the virgin soil of the new West, Joseph's passion for fertility grows. "The soil, the cattle and the people were fertile, and Joseph was the source, the root of their fertility; his was the motivating lust." (TGU, 22) Thus is introduced the second level of myth, in which Joseph is the Fisher King, a fertility god whose sacrifice will ultimately be required by the land.

Joseph is ecstatic when he learns that his wife (another Elizabeth) is to have a child. But the principle of fertility seems almost more important to Joseph than the child itself. "The child is precious, but not so precious as the bearing of it. That is as real as a mountain. That is a tie to the earth." (TGU, 92)

Another Steinbeck theme which will come to full maturity in The Grapes of Wrath, but which is first introduced in To A God Unknown, is the ecological idea that the whole is holy. Joseph realizes that "All things are one, and all a part of me." (TGU, 61-62) Being a "godling," as Rama puts it, Joseph's perception of this truth cuts him off from those to whom he is closest. But with her "eyes full of the wisdom of childbearing," Elizabeth can see into her husband's mind. (TGU, 102) In motherhood, fulfilling her role as the perpetuator of life, Elizabeth grows wise. "I used to think in terms of things I had read," she tells Joseph. "I never do now. I don't think at all. I just do things that occur to me." (TGU, 110) Like future Steinbeck characters who recognize their parts in the holy whole, Elizabeth has learned through child-bearing to live life on a natural, instinctual level, and her love and her work become natural responses to the requirements of the whole.

For the first time in To A God Unknown Steinbeck develops a variety of characters who are readily distinguishable in terms of love and work. In this continuum, Joseph's

brothers Burton and Benjamin represent opposite extremes. Burton is a religious fanatic who "kept himself from evil and he found evil in nearly all close human contact . . . . Burton had embraced his wife four times. He had two children. Celibacy was a natural state for him." (TGU, 20) Burton rules his wife, but does not love her. A devotee of the work ethic, he works hard on the land, but does not love the land. Burton fears nature and the wild land to which they have come. Especially he fears Joseph's religious attachment to the land. Even before the drought comes, Burton takes his family and moves to a religious retreat in Pacific Grove where he will be safe from the natural world. "The mountains are too high," he cried. "The place is too savage. And all the people carry the seed of this evil thing in them . . . . Joseph, you love the earth too much. You give no thought to the hereafter." (TGU, 113)

Benjamin is Burton's counterpart. Like the Old Testament Benjamin, he is the spoiled younger brother. Benjamin is completely irresponsible, has little feeling for either the land or his family, and does very little work. His motivating passion is sexual lust for women, and "given a chance, he drank himself into a romantic haze and walked about the country singing gloriously . . . . Benjamin was nearly always in trouble with some woman or other." (TGU, 20-21) He nearly succeeds in seducing Elizabeth before Joseph marries her, and he is finally killed by Juanito, the hired hand, who finds

Benjamin in bed with his wife. While Benjamin is the embodiment of healthy sexuality, he is not interested in either love or reproduction. Like Burton, he is only half a man.

In spite of Joseph's feelings and his self-appointed role as fertility god, it is Thomas, the oldest brother, who is really closest to nature. Thomas likes and understands animals, and they seem to respond to him in a similar way. In some ways Thomas is more like the later Steinbeck hero than Joseph is. He fears and avoids Joseph's rituals as well as those of Burton or the old sun-worshipper as "a kind of little trap," and he lives on an instinctual level that puts him really in closer harmony with nature than Joseph is. But Thomas has one significant flaw. "Humans he neither understood nor trusted very much." (TGU, 19) The only other human to whom Thomas is close is Joseph.

As the central female character, Elizabeth is both lover and mother. She is a pretty seventeen year-old school teacher when Joseph meets her. During the year it takes Joseph to woo and wed her, she is strongly tempted to give herself sexually to the drunken Benjamin, who sings beneath her window. Then, on a visit to the Wayne ranch, she climbs up into and hugs the oak tree which Joseph likes to believe his father's spirit inhabits. Finally, Joseph marries her and takes her "through the pass" to his home in the Valley of Our Lady. As they approach the pass "She untied her veil . . . . She cried 'I want to stop, dear. I'm afraid.'

She was staring through the cleft into the sunlit valley." (TGU, 51) Elizabeth is passionate but fearful, and it takes the wisdom of Rama to guide her in the transition to lover and mother. She is a passionate lover, but it is only when she becomes a mother that she is fulfilled. She mysteriously acquires the "mother wisdom" of Ma Joad, and as she performs her work as a mother, her new insight into her strange husband intensifies her love both for him and for his ideal of fertility.

Except for the death of Benjamin which occurs on their wedding night, life is good for Joseph and Elizabeth for a time. Their son, John, is born, and Joseph sets him in the big oak tree to which he has previously made sacrifices. It is this act which horrifies Burton and prompts him to leave. But fearful for Joseph and his family, Burton girdles Joseph's tree before he goes. With the death of the tree, the drought begins. The land is parched, all except for a pine grove on the hill, out of which flows a spring. Juanito had told Joseph that this was an ancient sacred place for the Indians, and one day Joseph takes Elizabeth to the grove. Elizabeth climbs upon the rock to "tame" it, but slips and falls, breaking her neck. Seemingly in response to Elizabeth's death, a little rain falls, but not enough to affect the drought.

Joseph and Thomas decide to go into the Santa Lucia Mountains to the west in search of water. At last they come

to Big Sur and look down upon the ocean. There they find an old sun-worshipping hermit who lives on this mountain in order to be "the last man in the western world to see the sun." (TGU, 143) Each day at sunset, he kills some animal. Joseph asks for an explanation of the practice. "'I don't know,' he said quietly. 'I have made up reasons, but they aren't true. I have said to myself, "The sun is life. I give life to life . . . ." I gave up reasons. I do this because it makes me glad. I do it because I like to. In the moment, I am the sun.'" (TGU, 147)

This meeting precipitates a crucial decision for Joseph. He tells Thomas that he must take the cattle to other pastures, and he (Joseph) will stay with the land. The brothers return home to "their own dry dead valley, burning under the vicious sun." (TGU, 151. Italics mine). The object of the old man's worship is their enemy. But in his desperation to save the land, Joseph seizes upon the old man's "wisdom," believing that his land might be saved by sacrifice. Joseph identifies with the old man, even though the man had come to his hermitage as an indulgence of selfish individualism--to escape the real world of men. Unlike the somewhat similar prophet figure of Sweet Thursday, this old man has no message of life. He is a death cult of one. But Joseph returns home to sacrifice not only his only son (he gives John to Rama), but ultimately his own life for his land.

Joseph's life has moved through three distinct phases. First he had worshipped the land. Then at the time of his marriage he had felt in harmony with the land. "Within him there was arising the knowledge that his nature and the nature of the land were the same." (TGU, 71) But with the death of Benjamin, Joseph first realizes what his father's blessing had meant. "I know now, my father, that you were lonely beyond feeling loneliness, calm because you had no contact." (TGU, 62) Joseph too feels the loneliness of greatness, of "godhood." He had just realized that "all things are one, and all a part of me" (TGU, 61), a conclusion similar to that later reached by preacher Casy in The Grapes of Wrath, but he also now realizes what Rama has known all along. Rama tells Elizabeth, "Perhaps a godling lives on earth now and then . . . . I tell you this man is not a man, unless he is all men . . . . He is all these, a repository for a little piece of each man's soul, and more than that, a symbol of the earth's soul" (TGU, 66)

As a significant part of an organic whole, Joseph is an admirable character. As a leader of men and as a lover of the land, he also evokes our sympathy. He is fair, kind, generous, and hard-working. But it is in his greatness that his weakness as a human being lies. Rama tells Elizabeth, "I do not love him. There is no chance of a return. I worship him and there's no need of a return in that." (TGU, 67) Though Joseph seems to love, those about him feel that he is

aloof from them. Even Elizabeth sometimes awakens at night "cold and fearful, feeling that a marble image lay in bed with her." (TGU, 75) And when Elizabeth dies, Joseph "wanted to cry out once in personal pain before he was cut off and unable to feel sorrow or resentment . . . . He said 'Goodbye, Elizabeth,' and before the words were completely out he was cut off and aloof." (TGU, 129)

The night after Elizabeth's death, Rama comes to Joseph's bed. "'I want to see how you look at this time,' she said. 'There is no change. That makes me strong again. I was afraid there might have been a break.'" (TGU, 134) As in The Grapes of Wrath, the women watch the men to be sure that there has been no "break." But here, "no break" seems unnatural. The very human Joads share their grief--and then go on living. But Joseph seems too obsessed with his rôle of strength, potency, masculinity, to be really human. In fact, he almost resembles Hawthorne's unpardonable sinners who cut themselves off from human sympathy. Again, it is Rama who understands Joseph best. "You aren't aware of persons, Joseph," she tells him. "Only people. You can't see units, Joseph, only the whole." (TGU, 134) Ironically, it is Joseph's "wide-angle vision," his holistic perception, which in itself is good, that is his heroic flaw. Even on the night when Elizabeth had announced her pregnancy, Joseph had slipped out of bed and gone outside as soon as he thought she was asleep. "'He has some business with the night,' she thought." (TGU,

93) Joseph's first love, the "other woman" to whom he goes, is nature and his elevated, god-like role in her.

Certainly To A God Unknown represents a major improvement over Cup of Gold in almost every respect, including writing style and story interest. And many themes of importance in Steinbeck's greatest fiction are apparent here. But Joseph Wayne still suffers from the flaw which had been much more pronounced in Henry Morgan. He is not quite human. In his sacrificial death, Joseph's body "grew huge and light. It arose into the sky, and out of it came the streaking rain . . . . Then a lancing pain shot through the heart of the world. 'I am the land,' he said, 'and I am the rain. The grass will grow out of me in a little while.'" (TGU, 179)

Steinbeck was aware that Joseph was super-human. He purposely created him so. But Steinbeck's greatest fiction is about real, earthy people, men and women of love and work. We first encounter them in The Pastures of Heaven, a book published in 1932, a year before To A God Unknown, but conceived about 1930, and wholly Steinbeck's own.

It is in short fiction, the stories of The Pastures of Heaven and the early stories later to be collected in The Long Valley, that Steinbeck first plowed his own field. These stories are set in the California valleys which Steinbeck knew. The characters are no longer heroes in Boileau's sense, but are for the most part ordinary farmers and their wives and families, people of the working class. Looking back in 1939

upon his more recent books, Steinbeck radically revised his earlier definition of heroes: "Present day kings aren't very inspiring, the gods are on vacation, and about the only heroes left are the scientists and the poor."[8] Steinbeck's two statements about heroes "explain" the work which precedes them. And the two taken together indicate the growth of social consciousness that would be apparent by the late thirties. Steinbeck's new hero is a love/work hero, and it becomes increasingly apparent in his short stories that a correlation exists between the love and the work of most of his characters.

The tone of The Pastures of Heaven, beginning with the title, is ironic. Our first view of the beautiful valley, "Las Pasturas del Cielo," is from above, through the eyes of a Spanish corporal, the first European to see the valley. The corporal is out rounding up Indian slaves who have escaped their task of constructing a Catholic mission. Before the corporal can return to act upon his "holy emotion of discovery," he dies of the pox, which, in an ironic reversal of the usual pattern of transmission of the disease, he contracts from an Indian woman.[9]

By the second chapter of the book, the valley is the home of twenty farm families. We meet the Munroes, who move onto the old Battle farm, a farm which, because of the bad luck of the previous residents, is believed by many to be cursed. Steinbeck did not consider Pastures a novel, but contact with the Munroes does provide a loose unity for the

stories. As he began work on the book in 1930, Steinbeck described the project as "a series of short stories or sketches loosely and foolishly tied together."[10] Further along in the writing, in 1931, Steinbeck elaborated on his unifying device, indicating that the idea for the stories had a factual basis. He explained that the stories are set in a valley just below Salinas called Corral de Tierra, which was known for the harmony of its twenty families. Then a new family, the Morans (Munroes) moved in. Though there was no evidence of malicious intent, "everyone they came in contact with was injured. Every place they went dissension sprang up."[11] So the stories are unified by the self-contained locale in which they occur, and by contact, sometimes very peripheral, with the Munroes.

The Munroe family consists of Bert; his wife; a beautiful nineteen-year-old daughter, Mae; and two sons, Jimmy who is seventeen, and Manny who is seven. Soon after they move onto the Battle farm, Bert is talking to a group of men at T. B. Allen's general store. Like Caleb Trask in East of Eden, Bert had made a fortune selling beans during World War I. But when prices dropped in the last year of the war, Bert had lost his money, and he believes that he may be cursed. Now he has moved onto a farm that has had similar bad luck. Bert hopes, and suggests to the men, that his curse and the farm's curse may "kill each other off." But T. B. Allen laughs and betters the joke. "Maybe your curse and the farm's curse has

mated and gone into a gopher hole like a pair of rattlesnakes. Maybe there'll be a lot of baby curses crawling around the pastures the first thing we know." (Pastures, 15) Thus the "loose and foolish" structure of the book is established.

The third episode involves Edward "Shark" Wicks, his wife Katherine, and their pretty but dumb fourteen-year-old daughter, Alice. Shark is one of the least admirable inhabitants of the Pastures. He works hard in his peach orchard, but he is not satisfied with the subsistence living he makes. "Shark's greatest pleasure came of being considered a wealthy man." (Pastures, 16) In reality, Shark has never had more than five hundred dollars at any time in his life, but he keeps ledgers where he pretends play with the stock market. He fosters belief in his wealth by discussing investments with his neighbors.

Shark is egocentric and loveless. He "governs" his wife as he would a horse. He "never talked to her as to a human." (Pastures, 17) He doesn't love his daughter Alice as a person either, but he is so obsessed with the preservation of her chastity that when T. B. Allen tells him that Alice has been seen kissing Jimmy Munroe, he grabs a rifle and heads for the Munroe house. Shark must preserve his dignity. He is arrested, and because he is believed to be a rich man, a high bond is required. Thus, the lie that is his life is exposed. Shark has to admit that he has no money, and the admission crushes him. But he is mercifully saved by his

loving wife, Katherine, who in the rôle of wise mother-woman, restores a bit of his faith in himself.

The fourth sketch is about Tularecito, "Little Frog," a mentally retarded orphan who is taken in by Franklin Gomez. Tularecito is the first of Steinbeck's important sub-normal characters. Like Lenny in Of Mice and Men, Tularecito is gentle and sensitive and very strong. As a boy he can do the work of a man, and "he had planting hands, tender fingers." (Pastures, 29) Tularecito is also a gifted artist who carves and draws all kinds of animals. But Tularecito can't stand to have his work tampered with, and the school teacher, Miss Martin, is driven from the valley by the riot which occurs at the school when other children erase his drawings from the blackboard. Her replacement, Miss Morgan, encourages Tularecito in his art, and even finds another way to capture his interest. Tularecito is so enchanted by her stories of fairies and gnomes that he goes out at night and digs in Bert Munroe's orchard, looking for his people. Innocently, Bert is refilling the holes when he is attacked by the feeble-minded boy. Tularecito is committed to the asylum for the criminally insane at Napa. Like Lenny, Tularecito is a powerful lover and worker, but he can neither comprehend the values of "normal" society, nor articulate his own deep feelings to others. And so, like Lenny, Tularecito is destroyed.

The fifth episode of Pastures is about the only "outsider" to live in the valley. Helen Van Deventer is a fairly

wealthy woman who, with her apparently demented daughter, Hilda, moves to the Pastures as a retreat from the outside world. Helen neither loves nor works. Rather she makes an occupation of torturing herself by living in a dead past with her husband of three months who had died in a hunting accident.

A special feature of the big house Helen has built in the Pastures is a memorial room which houses her late husband's hunting trophies. She indulges her masochistic need by imagining over and over her husband's death. Presumably it is this unnatural atmosphere which has driven Hilda to insanity. One day Bert Munroe goes to visit his new neighbors, but is denied admittance. Hilda calls out to him from her upstairs window, telling him that she is a prisoner there. Then Hilda escapes and follows Bert, thinking of him as a romantic knight come to rescue her. Helen, who has lately been having trouble evoking the old emotions associated with her husband's death, takes one of his guns and kills her fleeing daughter. Then Helen arranges the appearance of suicide. She now has a new object with which to torture herself. As her doctor tells her, "You love your hair shirt . . . . Your pain is a pleasure." (Pastures, 40) Steinbeck tells us nothing of Helen's past, so we cannot know whether her illness results from her husband's death, or whether the death was from the beginning a source of perverse pleasure for her. But she is the one character in the book who is completely alien

to both love and work.

Episode six concerns Junius Maltby and his son, Robby (named for one of Steinbeck's favorite authors, Robert Louis Stevenson). Junius had been an accountant in San Francisco, but ill health had driven him to the Pastures of Heaven, where he is first a boarder, and then the husband of widow Quaker. Junius knows nothing about farming, and does little work. The farm goes down, and both of Mrs. Quaker's sons die in the flu epidemic of 1917. Then, just after giving birth to Robby, she dies too, leaving Junius, Robby, and the hired man, Jacob Stutz, in poverty and bliss. All day they sit on the horizontal branch of a sycamore tree, their feet in the water, talking about literature, philosophy, history, and any other subject their roving minds fall upon.

At last, Robbie has to go to school. But he enjoys school, and is a natural leader. Other children even tear their clothing to imitate the "style" Robbie sets. But Mrs. Munroe, whose husband Bert is by now on the school board, insists on publicly presenting "decent" clothes to poor Robbie. For the first time Robbie and Junius become aware of their poverty and of the contempt of their prosperous, respectable neighbors. We last see them boarding a bus back to San Francisco, where Junius will look for another accounting job.

Seemingly an anti-work hero, Junius is a sympathetically presented character with whom both Steinbeck and we identify. In some ways Junius anticipates the <u>paisanos</u> of

Tortilla Flat. But it must be remembered that Junius' "laziness" is selective. He is an intellectual, a "non-teleological scientist," the first of many versions of one of Steinbeck's new heroes. And what Junius had escaped in San Francisco was not fulfilling work in which he had a direct relationship to any product of his activity, but the alienating work of the accountant. Taking care of someone else's money, Junius had been twice removed from the object of his work, and from any natural relationship to his work. His activity had not been purposeful. We feel sad that Junius and Robbie must return to this life of alienation.

The title of the Junius Maltby story when separately published, Nothing So Monstrous, is taken from a line by Stevenson, quoted in school by Robbie: "There is nothing so monstrous but we can believe it of ourselves." (Pastures, 55) This must be seen as another theme, not only of this story, but of others in the collection. In this case, it is the insensitivity and slavish adherence to middle-class standards of respectability by Mrs. Munroe and others that leads to the destruction of the Maltbys' idyllic life-style. The imposition of "Munroe morality" has a similar effect in the next episode, which concerns the Lopez sisters.

Maria and Rosa Lopez combine love and work. They open a little restaurant in their home where they make good tortillas and the best enchiladas in the valley. And in gratitude to those who buy three enchiladas or more, they innocently

give themselves in love. A statue of the Virgin is conveniently located between the bedroom and the kitchen, and no guilt is carried from one part of the house to another. But their rationalized system is destroyed, apparently by a complaint originating with the Munroes. Maria and Rosa sadly leave the Pastures to go to San Francisco to be "bad women." They will have to sell their love rather than give it in order to live.

Molly Morgan, the central character of the eighth episode, is the new school teacher in the Pastures of Heaven. Molly comes from a poor family. Her mother has been overworked and underloved by her father, a traveling salesman who comes home bringing presents and stories about twice a year. Like her mother, Molly wants to believe in the love of her prodigal father, but finally his visits stop altogether. Molly works her way through school and comes to teach in the Pastures, where she boards with the Whiteside family.

Molly overflows with love. She is sensitive to the needs and gifts of children like Tularecito and Robby Maltby. But Molly is also insecure in the love of others, and builds grand illusions about her father. During a schoolboard meeting at the Whiteside house, Bert Munroe describes his new hired man, a lazy drinker who has been everywhere and is full of stories and adventures. Molly is afraid the man is her father, though she had told herself that he must be dead. Fearfully, Molly approaches to see the man, but turns back at

the last moment and leaves the valley for a period of rest. Her illusion concerning her father's love is too fragile, and Molly cannot risk its possible deflation.

One of the most confusing stories in The Pastures of Heaven concerns Raymond Banks. Raymond is a hard-working chicken farmer, has a beautiful, well-kept place, and is a favorite of many of his neighbors. Raymond is strong, friendly, and jolly. At Christmas he plays Santa Claus, and in the summer he gives barbecues for the whole valley.

Two or three times a year, Raymond receives an invitation from a high school chum, now Warden of San Quentin, to come to the prison to witness an execution. Raymond always goes. "It was like a super-church, solumn and ceremonious and sombre. The whole thing made him feel a fullness of experience, a holy emotion that nothing else in his life approached." (Pastures, 87). Raymond does not think of the condemned, and he does not gloat over suffering. But "he had developed an appetite for profound emotion, and his meagre imagination was unable to feed it." (Pastures, 87)

Not only is the apparent contradiction in Raymond's personality confusing, but it is also surprising that it is the usually insensitive Bert Munroe who senses the contradiction, and it is he who ruins Raymond's avocation for him by articulating all the possibilities his own imagination conjures up. Complaining of a headache, Raymond decides to cancel his trip to San Quentin. Disgusted with Bert Munroe,

Raymond tells his wife, "he's supposed to be a man." (Pastures, 94) Raymond has been proving his manhood to himself by watching and stomaching the hangings. What is confusing about the story is that it seems inconsistent with Steinbeck's usual pattern of characterization. Raymond is otherwise presented as a positive character, a skilled worker who likes other people, but his appetite for executions and the accompanying need to prove his masculinity seem perverse to me, as well as to Bert Munroe.

One of the most tragic and lonely residents of the Pastures is Pat Humbert. Pat's parents are old when he is born, and his up-bringing is unnatural. Pat is made to feel guilty for his youth. He doctors his aging parents until both die when Pat is thirty. Without grief, he seals their ghosts in the parlor, and seals off his hermitage in the kitchen. For ten years Pat runs about the valley looking for companionship while his house and farm go untended. Then one day he overhears pretty Mae Munroe's remark that his house resembles a pretty Vermont house she has seen on a post-card. The closest thing to a love Pat has ever felt inspires him, and he begins working day and night to transform the farm and the house, especially the long-sealed parlor, into what a magazine picture shows him a Vermont place should look like.

While Pat refurbishes his parlor, he also builds a dream of bringing Mae over to see it. His dream never gets as far as marrying, or even making love to Mae; his parents have

crippled his emotions too much for that. Finally Pat finishes his work and goes over to see Mae. He arrives just in time for the party celebrating her engagement to Bill Whiteside. Love has momentarily redeemed Pat, but this cruel irony destroys the fragile dreams he has built.

The last story in The Pastures of Heaven concerns the aristocrats of the valley, the Whitesides. Richard Whiteside had come to the Pastures in the 1850's, not for gold, but to found a dynasty. Richard has money, and has even been to Harvard. He buys a large farm, builds a big house with a slate roof, marries a distant cousin, Alicia, and settles down to become a patriarch and the "first citizen" of the valley. But Richard and Alicia have just one son, John.

Richard dies while John is at Harvard. After John finishes school, he returns to the valley; his mother commands him to marry and carry out his father's wishes. He does marry, but like his father, John and his wife Willa, have just one son, Bill. John is less aloof and less interested in a dynasty than his father had been, and his son Bill is just one of the boys. The story seems Faulknerian in its treatment of the theme of a declining aristocracy, the gradual leveling of an aloof family over three generations of time. And it also completes the unity of the book, for it is Mae Munroe, daughter of the curse, whom Bill marries.

But the ironies do not end here, and the Whiteside family does not necessarily improve with democratization.

Bill and Mae leave the land and move to Monterrey, where Bill buys a partnership in the Ford agency. What is worse, Bill has no love for the land. He urges his parents to move to Monterrey too, saying, "I could sell this place for you in a week." (Pastures, 121) John, who remembers his own father's ambitions and his love for the land, is saddened, and has no intention of leaving. But Bert Munroe instigates brush-burning on the Whiteside farm, and a whirlwind carries fire to the big house. Even the generations-old Meerschaum pipe, which has symbolized the Whiteside heritage, perishes in the flames.

Our last glimpse of the Pastures of Heaven, like the first, is from the hill above. A busload of sight-seers has stopped to look down into the beautiful valley. Comments overheard from the tourists range from the point-of-view of youth to that of old age, from faith to skepticism. A rich man sees property to be sub-divided and sold at a profit. A young man is attracted to the valley, but is too ambitious to consider such a life of retirement. A naive priest yearns for the protection of such a valley, and an old man sees a haven of rest from a weary life. The bus driver, more of a realist, would like to live on the subsistence level in the Pastures. In some way, each sees the Pastures as an escape from his own world, partly because they are looking down into heaven from a god-like position above.

But we have seen the realities of this valley, and we know that it is not what any of the passengers think it is. It is a microcosm of the world from which they have come, and which they generally wish to escape. The love and work, pain and joy, greed and ambition, the greatness and the littleness of the outside world are to be found in the Pastures of Heaven as well. The Pastures of Heaven is not fundamentally an "attack on middle-class respectability" as Warren French suggests.[12] For Steinbeck's mildly ironic perspective reveals a sympathetic acceptance and a basic admiration of the vital life that is lived here. This is "the people," the working class, sometimes narrow and small, occasionally even ridiculous, their lives passing by without notice, often in "quiet desperation." But the best of the people in the Pastures of Heaven are Steinbeck's evolving new heroes, close to the soil, working and loving, struggling against the ironies of life, struggling to break through the quiet desperation, if only momentarily, into heroism.

Though the stories of The Long Valley are more diverse than those of The Pastures of Heaven, many of the characters are similar. The Long Valley, conceived by early 1930, was not published until 1938, but most of the stories were written considerably earlier, and many of them were published in various periodicals. Among the early stories of the collection and their publication dates are: "The Murder," 1931; "The Gift" and "The Great Mountains," (Parts I and II of The Red

Pony), 1933; "The Chrysanthemums," 1933; "The Raid," 1934; and "The White Quail," 1935. The "Long Valley" is Steinbeck's native Salinas River Valley, which runs over one hundred miles from San Luis Obispo to Monterrey Bay. It is into the Long Valley that the Pastures of Heaven open, both geographically and in Steinbeck's fiction. In The Long Valley, the writer moves out of the circumscribed microcosm of the Pastures into the heart of the central California agricultural region in which his greatest fiction would be set. The stories of The Long Valley lack a comprehensive unifying device; one story, "Saint Katy The Virgin," is even set in medieval France, and seems not to fit in the collection at all. But most of the stories deal with the lives of ordinary working people of the Salinas Valley, and most continue to develop the love, work, and political themes which would dominate Steinbeck's fiction of the late thirties.

The first written story of The Long Valley, for which Steinbeck received the O'Henry Prize in 1934, was "The Murder" (1931). Jim Moore is a rancher in the Cañon del Castillo in the Santa Lucia Mountains, the range which forms the west wall of the Salinas Valley. Jim marries Jelka Sepic, a Jugo-Slavic girl. "She was a fine wife, but there was no companionship in her."[13] The fact is that a strong cultural barrier separates Jim and Jelka, a barrier which Jim sees reflected in Jelka's passive eyes. Jim and Jelka love each other, but "only in the climax of his embrace did she seem to

have a life apart, fierce and passionate. And then immediately she lapsed into the alert and painfully dutiful wife." (LV, 117) Before long Jim begins to crave the company and the small talk of bar room women. On Saturday nights, he leaves Jelka and goes to town. But one night Jim returns early to find Jelka in bed with her Jugo-Slavic cousin. Jim shoots the cousin, and punishes his wife with a bull-whip.

What happens in "The Murder" is the result of a double standard of sexuality. Though Jim and Jelka love each other and enjoy their sexual relationship, each accepts the sexist code of behavior inherited from his or her culture. Jim goes to other women every Saturday night, but whips Jelka and kills her cousin/lover for the same conduct. And apparently Jelka expects and accepts her whipping, which is the other half of the double standard. When they were married, Jelka's father had advised Jim to beat her occasionally to keep her in line. What does Steinbeck think? He makes no overt judgement, but he does call the story "The Murder."

The first two stories of The Red Pony, "The Gift" and "The Great Mountains," are also about death. Steinbeck wrote the stories in brief interludes between waiting upon his dying mother in 1933. Much of the content, at least of "The Gift," seems autobiographical. In response to his publisher's request for biographical material in 1932, Steinbeck wrote of "the most tremendous morning in the world when my pony had a cold."[14] The whole four-story series is told in the third

person, but from the point-of-view of Jody Tiflin, who is ten when he receives "the gift," the red pony. Jody is a sensitive boy, and he loves the pony almost painfully. All his leisure hours are spent with the pony, whom he names "Gabilan" after the gentle mountains which form the east wall of the Long Valley. But one day while Jody is at school, Gabilan is left out in a violent rain storm, and catches cold. In spite of all the skilled efforts of the hired man, Billy Buck, Gabilan dies. When the death seems imminent, Jody retreats to the dark brush line on the hill and looks back down at the ranch and at the dark cypress tree (where hogs are killed, and which is associated in Jody's mind with death). "The place was familiar, but curiously changed. It wasn't itself anymore, but a frame for things that were happening." (LV, 162) Facing the death of a pony dearly loved, Jody comes to the end of innocence.

"The Great Mountains" is about an old paisano named Gitano who, much like Silas in Frost's "The Death of The Hired Man," comes back to the Tiflin ranch to die. Though Jody's insensitive father, Carl, cannot understand the old man's desire to die in the place of his birth, the now matured Jody can. Jody asks Gitano many questions about the mysterious Santa Lucia Mountains to the west, mountains which Gitano had known as a boy. But Carl is only anxious to have the old man off the place. The next morning, a neighbor sees Gitano riding Carl's worthless thirty-year-old horse (ironically

named "Easter") up into the mountains. Carl Tiflin still does not understand the old man, and speaks of his "stealing" the horse. But Jody "lay down in the green grass near the round tub at the brush line [the spring, the place associated in Jody's mind with life]. He covered his eyes with his crossed arms and lay there a long time, and he was full of a nameless sorrow." (LV, 179)

Besides Jody, the most important character in The Red Pony is the hired man, Billy Buck. Seen through Jody's boy's eyes, Billy looms heroically, and part of Jody's loss of innocence is his disillusionment in Billy's infallibility when Billy fails to save Gabilan's life. But even seen more objectively, Billy is one of Steinbeck's most sympathetically drawn work heroes, comparable to Tom Joad of The Grapes of Wrath, Juan Chicoy of The Wayward Bus, and the marine biologist, Doc (based on Ed Ricketts) who recurs in several of Steinbeck's fictions. Billy Buck "was a broad, bandy-legged little man with a walrus mustache, with square hands, puffed and muscled on the palms." (LV, 137) Billy's actions are "deliberate" and "wasteless of time." Billy knows all there is to know about ranches in general and horses in particular. He carefully and patiently teaches Jody how to care for Gabilan, and when the pony is sick, Billy does everything humanly possible to save him.

Though strong and tough and a hard worker, Billy is also loving and sensitive. Though Carl Tiflin never tries

very hard to understand Jody, "Billy Buck knew how he felt." (LV, 144) When the time comes to begin training Gabilan, Steinbeck, who had himself been a breaker of horses for the U. S. Cavalry, has Billy explain, "Of course we could force-break him to everything, but he wouldn't be as good a horse if we did. He'd always be a little bit afraid, and he wouldn't mind because he wanted to." (LV, 150)

In "The Great Mountains," when Carl cruelly suggests in old Gitano's presence that Easter, and by association Gitano, should be shot and put out of their misery, Billy insists, "They got a right to rest after they worked all their life." (LV, 173) It is Billy Buck, not his own father, that the boy Jody idolizes and emulates. And the man Steinbeck had found the form for his greatest heroes.

The first two stories in The Long Valley, "The Chrysanthemums" and "The White Quail," may be fruitfully considered together. Both stories have a woman as the central character, and both women take their greatest delight from their gardens. But essentially, Elisa Allen of "The Chrysanthemums" and Mary Teller of "The White Quail" are opposites. The husbands in the stories are somewhat neutrally presented. Henry Allen is a good man, a hard-working farmer, and a kind husband. But he could be more sensitive to Elisa's need for romance in her life. Harry Teller is a loan officer, and as such, we could expect Steinbeck to treat him with less than complete respect. However, Henry is the victim of his wife's egocentricism, so

we feel sympathetic towards him.

Elisa Allen loves to work in her garden. Her "face was eager and mature and handsome; even her work with the scissors was over-eager, over-powerful." (LV, 2) Her house and garden are neat and well-kept. She enjoys the work she does. And as her husband observes about her gardening, she has "a gift with things." (LV, 2) But Elisa is thirty-five, childless, and frustrated. And as William V. Miller points out, "The Chrysanthemums have become for Elisa an outlet for [a] dimension of her sex role--her maternal instincts. Her pride in her gardening aptitude tends to be maternal."[15] In terms of her self-concept, Elisa slightly resembles Joseph Wayne.

It is because Elisa's spiritual needs are unfulfilled that she is so readily conned by the travelling tinker, who exploits her love for flowers so that she will give him a job to do. Elisa wants so badly to identify with this emissary from the imagined romantic outside world that she opens herself to him, imagining that there is a subtle communication between them. But when she later sees the chrysanthemums lying in the road where he has dumped them, she knows she has been had. She "cried weakly, like an old woman." (LV, 12) The tears are for her own unfulfilled life, a life which offers satisfying work, but which denies expression of the love and romance Elisa feels and needs.

Whereas in "The Chrysanthemums" there is at least an organic harmony between the human and the natural, in "The White Quail," Mary Teller is a selfish and egocentric woman who isolates herself from both her husband and the natural world. Mary has married Harry Teller because he seems compatible with the house and garden which she has already planned in elaborate detail in her mind. Harry gives in to Mary's every wish. They have the house and formal garden built just as she had planned. Mary is there every moment to direct the work, but she does none of it herself, not even the planting of the garden.

Mary fears nature, and thinks of her garden as a refuge from the "enemy" outside its borders. Similarly, she is completely passionless toward Harry. She "lets him kiss her" now and then as a reward, and she locks herself in her own bedroom at night. In her narcissistic isolation Mary neither loves nor works; she thinks only of herself and of the garden, which is an extension of herself. When one day a white quail wanders into the garden, Mary immediately identifies with this unique and abnormal creature. "'Why,' Mary cried to herself, 'she's like me!' A powerful ecstasy quivered in her body. 'She's like the essence of me, an essence boiled down to utter purity.'" (LV, 22) Then Mary sees a cat slinking toward the white quail and begins to scream hysterically. "The cat was after me," she tells her husband. "It was going to kill me." (LV, 24) Distraught, Harry takes his gun out, but instead of the cat, Harry kills the white quail. "'I'm

so lonely,' he said. 'Oh, Lord, I'm so lonely.'" (LV, 25) Almost hysterical himself in his loneliness, Harry has symbolically killed his aloof and loveless wife.

"The White Quail" presents a woman who has completely cut herself off from both nature and other people, from both work and love. But the story also has a symbolic dimension. Arthur L. Simpson, Jr. suggests that "it portrays the humanly destructive effects of an absolute commitment to what M. H. Abrams would term an expressive aesthetic."[16] Mary is an elite aesthete who has completely subordinated life to art. Simpson contrasts Mary the artist to Steinbeck the artist as revealed in his Nobel Prize speech where he speaks of the "ancient commission of the writer--which is social."

One other early story from The Long Valley, "The Raid," (1934), points directly to In Dubious Battle, which Steinbeck began writing in the same year. The two labor organizers in "The Raid," Dick and Root, closely resemble Mac and Jim, respectively, of In Dubious Battle. Dick and Root have been sent by "the party" to conduct an organizing meeting in a little California town. Root is green, and a bit frightened. Like Henry Fleming of The Red Badge of Courage, his greatest fear is that his own courage may fail. It becomes apparent that the men expect violence. As they wait in the dark room, Root's fear grows, and Dick tries to calm him. "Dick walked near and touched him on the shoulder. 'You'll be all right. I can tell a guy that will stick.'" (LV, 69)

At last Dick and Root hear people coming, but instead of workers, vigilantes arrive, and beat the two organizers up. Root is knocked to the floor by a two by four. "He got himself erect again. His breath burst passionately. His hands were steady now, his voice sure and strong. His eyes were hot with an ecstasy. 'Can't you see?' he shouted. 'It's all for you. We're doing it for you. All of it. You don't know what you're doing.'" (LV, 71) Root's speech anticipates Jim Casy's last speech in The Grapes of Wrath, and of course recalls Christ's dying words as well. Though Dick and Root do almost seem to have a martyr complex, the crucial fact remains that they are organizing because they care about exploited working people, and are willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of a larger community. Thus, in Dick and Root, Steinbeck gives us the first of several heroes whose principal values are communal rather than individual, and whose activity is directed by a deep love for the broad community of workers. Dick and Root are not removed from the product of their activity. Directed by love, their work is their life activity.

"The Raid" is obviously a product of the same mind-set which produced such works as In Dubiuos Battle and The Grapes of Wrath. But another, quite different novel, Tortilla Flat, had already been in progress for about a year when Steinbeck's "social action" fiction was begun. It was Tortilla Flat which proved to be Steinbeck's first widely read novel. While on

the surface Tortilla Flat seems to be radically different from Steinbeck's other work of the mid-thirties, a closer look indicates a shift more in perspective than in basic attitudes.

Besides being his first novel to make the Best-Seller list, Tortilla Flat represents other firsts for Steinbeck. It is his first humorous novel. It marks the first indulgence of his life-long interest in the Arthurian legend. And it is his first of several novels concerned with "group man."

It should be noted at the outset that Steinbeck did not take Tortilla Flat very seriously. Like Cannery Row, which was written near the end of World War II, Tortilla Flat was written partly for escape. When Steinbeck began the book in 1933, both his parents were dying, and he and his wife Carol were their live-in nurses. The ordeal lasted for over a year, and there were few bright moments for the Steinbecks during the writing of the paisano story. "This last book is a very jolly one about Monterrey paisanos," Steinbeck said in a letter to his old friend, Edith Wagner. "Its tone, I guess, is direct rebellion against all the sorrow of our house."[17] And soon after its publication, Steinbeck expressed surprise to his agent Elizabeth Otis that the book was selling so well. "Curious that this second-rate book, written for relaxation, should cause this fuss. People are actually taking it seriously."[18]

Steinbeck had a sense of identification with the paisanos of Tortilla Flat. For one thing, his own poverty at the time put him in about the same economic class. But he also admired the paisanos for their capacity to survive, for their rejection of bourgeois respectability and morality, for their independence from materialistic values, and for their communal spirit and their willingness to share with one another. Tortilla Flat was written for fun, and Steinbeck obviously was not holding up the paisanos as models to be emulated by the whole society, but they do have a communal code of morality which is perhaps healthier and more natural than that of the larger society.

Among other things, Tortilla Flat is a satire on bourgeois values and social conventions. The basic value of capitalist society is ownership, and while the inheritance of two houses does elevate Danny's status among his neighbors, the ownership of property also leads to his unhappiness and his death. Danny's second house, his "rent house" for which he receives not a cent in rent, is particularly troubling. Not only does ownership threaten to separate Danny from his friends, but it also cramps his style. "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."[19] Therefore, Danny is glad when his friends accidentally burn down the house. He feels "relief that at least one of his burdens was removed." (TF, 37)

Before Danny can settle into this, his "true emotion," however, he must, as Peter Lisca points out, enact the ritualized behavior of the larger society.[20] He calls his friends "dogs of dogs," "thieves of decent folks' other house," and "spawns of cuttlefish." But "all this clutter of necessary and decent emotion having been satisfied," he welcomes his friends to move into the other house with him. (TF, 39-40) Thus is established the "round table" with Danny at its head.

This same condescending observance of social rituals occurs throughout Tortilla Flat. In chapter one, Danny returns home from the war, gets drunk, and is arrested for breaking windows. (This is before Danny has become a man of property.) Danny is jailed, but one night he and the jailor, Tito Ralph, get drunk together. When Tito Ralph goes out for more wine, Danny goes with him, and doesn't return. "When the brilliant sun awakened Danny about noon, he determined to hide all day to escape pursuit. He ran and dodged behind bushes. He peered out of the undergrowth like a hunted fox. And at evening, the rules having been satisfied, he came out and went about his business." (TF, 6) Even at Danny's funeral in the last chapter, surface homage to convention is still being paid. Because they have no "decent" clothes, Danny's friends hide in the grass and watch the funeral from a distance.

Steinbeck's juxtaposition of middle-class conventions to the life and code of the paisanos is of course intended to

be funny, but the group code by which Danny and his friends live also illustrates Steinbeck's growing serious interest in the concept of "group man." As Steinbeck makes clear in the book's preface, Danny and his friends are a modern Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, or Robin Hood and his Merry Band. The warring cells of his dying mother's body had provided for Steinbeck the first symbol of this notion of the dual identity of individual and group (a body cell representing the life of one individual in a group or society), and his speculations on the idea were stimulated by talks with Ed Ricketts, the marine biologist whom Steinbeck met in 1930.[21] It was just before he began work on Tortilla Flat that Steinbeck first articulated his thoughts about group man, and the concept underlies his work for the rest of the decade. He wrote to Carlton Sheffield, "The group is an individual as boundaried, as diagnosable, as dependent on its units, and as independent of its units' individual natures, as the human unit, or man, is dependent on his cells and yet is independent of them."[22] It is apparent that while Steinbeck is interested in individuals in Tortilla Flat, he is even more interested in Danny and his friends in their functions as a group.

It is evident through their partial adherence to bourgeois social codes that the paisanos are not really primitives, and it is also obvious that their group actions are not directed toward any long-range goals. But they do, as individuals and as a group, live their lives on a level that is

close to natural instincts and needs. Frederic Carpenter suggests that their life style is "a kind of primitive communism . . . . On the primitive level, the ideal of these ragamuffins is social, unselfish, and fundamentally good . . . . Together they have almost achieved social security. But nevertheless they are bored. Living only for pleasure, they crave action and even self-sacrifice. The communal ideal, Steinbeck seems to say, must go beyond sociability and security to include purposeful and responsible action."[23] Commitment to social action will come for Steinbeck and for his characters in his next book, In Dubious Battle. But the actions of the paisanos, with a couple of notable exceptions, stop at the achievement of sociability and security.

In his essay, "The Arthurian Cycle in Tortilla Flat," Arthur F. Kinney recalls Muriel Bradbrook's Sir Thomas Malory, in which she distinguishes three qualities of medieval knighthood.[24] First, the heroes must be knights. Second, there is a binding loyalty, a comitatus, between the men which even supersedes the love for a woman. Third, the comitatus grows out of mutual respect and understanding for each other and for a code of conduct to which they all subscribe. Such a bond exists between Danny and Pilon, Pablo and Jesus Marie, Big Joe Portagee and the Pirate. Petty theft in the group interest is rewarded, especially if the "benefactor" is well-off. But the comitatus is threatened when Big Joe trades Danny's blanket for a jug of wine, and is broken when Danny steals

Pilon's shoes.

Occasionally the six "knights" transcend the mere provision for their own comfort and rise to altruism. Such is the case when the weak-minded Pirate is taken in. Of course the Pirate does happen to own a heavy bag of quarters, but once he is a part of the group, the group code prevents attempts to get the money, which the pirate is saving to dedicate a golden candlestick to Saint Francis. On another occasion, Danny and his friends learn that Señora Teresina Cortez and her eight children are hungry and out of beans. The men fan out over Monterrey to find food for the family. "It was a glorious game. Theft robbed of the stigma of theft, crime altruistically committed--what is more gratifying?" (TF, 109) Of course by the time the emergency has been dealt with, Teresina finds that she is pregnant again. She doesn't know which of Danny's friends is responsible.

This is one of two times when the men "work" beyond what is necessary for survival. The other time is when all of Danny's friends spend an entire day cutting squid in order to buy wine for a party. It is not an ordinary party. The responsibility of property has weighed so heavily on Danny that his depression is actually threatening the existence of the group. The men earn enough money to buy fourteen gallons of wine, and all of Tortilla Flat is invited to the party. There are drunken fights and much love-making, but nothing can lift Danny out of his stupor. The party ends when Danny

falls down the gulch behind the house to his death.

There is much love and little work in Tortilla Flat. The idealization of women in the medieval romance is reduced to animal lust, but a lust which is biologically natural and healthy. The deep love between Danny and his friends is, in Freudian terms, the love for one's peers, the love for others who are like oneself. But again, it is a pure and healthy love, deeply committed and freely expressed. The paisanos do not work partly because, like Junius Maltby, they are repelled by the kinds of work available to them, but more importantly, because they do not want the things for which most people work. The paisanos do not love work for itself, but when they do work, they are invariably motivated by love.

Steinbeck's paisanos live by a series of petty larcenies, but they steal only what they need for the moment, and always in accordance with their own code of ethics. Before stealing a chicken, they consider whether its owner can afford to lose a chicken. In this respect, they exhibit a primitive class-consciousness which will be more highly and more seriously developed in Steinbeck's next novels. And Danny and his friends do not steal for themselves alone, but for the existence and pleasure of the entire group. Their petty crimes are treated with humor, but they do have this level of seriousness. They are committed partly out of the paisanos' love for each other and for the group of which each man is a part. Their virtues, as Frederick Bracher points out, are

vitality, adaptability, honesty, and love. And beside these, at least from a biological point-of-view, their vices seem almost not to exist.[25]

In many respects, Tortilla Flat is out of character for its chronological position in Steinbeck's work. Undoubtedly, the events surrounding its composition partly account for this fact. The men of Tortilla Flat are only distantly related to the love and work heroes Steinbeck was about to create. But they exist for different purposes and cannot be fairly compared. In contrasting Tortilla Flat to Steinbeck's next novel, In Dubious Battle, Carpenter points out that "where one was mock-heroic, the other is heroic. Where the paisanos dreamed of pleasure, the Communists dream of the new society. Where the first were survivors of a primitive era, the second imagine themselves citizens of the future. But both seek 'the good life' through group action, unselfishly."[26] And both illustrate the shift in Steinbeck's interest from "gods and kings" to ordinary people of the real world.

Chapter IV

Steinbeck's Engaged Fiction (1936-1939)

"I am hectic and angry."

--Steinbeck, 1938

Like millions of his contemporaries, Steinbeck was "educated" by the 1930's. Relieved from preoccupation with his own survival by the success of Tortilla Flat, his attention became centered in mid-decade on the plight of those who were starving, particularly the migrant farm workers of California. In 1934 Steinbeck began work on his strike novel, In Dubious Battle, and for him the rest of the decade was to be a time of increasing personal engagement. After the publication of In Dubious Battle in early 1936, he went almost immediately to work on the play-novelette, Of Mice and Men. But meanwhile, during the summer of 1936, Steinbeck became more and more involved personally in the lives and struggles of the farm workers, living and working beside them in the fields, giving of his own abundance in an effort to ease their suffering, writing tracts designed to gain public support for the exploited workers, and gathering material for his 1939 masterpiece, The Grapes of Wrath.

Continuity with Steinbeck's earlier work is apparent in the fact that several key themes and interests of the earlier work come to full flower in the late 1930's. Also, his skill as a writer was growing, and the work of the late thirties represents his highest artistic achievement. But most crucial in this period was Steinbeck's development of a broad social perspective, a growing comprehension of what his character Jim Nolan calls "the whole thing." In a time of intensified class struggle, Steinbeck increasingly aligned himself with workers. As he became more aware of the level of exploitation of the working class, his ecological notions concerning "group man" became a political conviction that the working class must organize to survive. As Steinbeck lived among the dispossessed, the mystical attachment to the land of To A God Unknown became an active concern for land reform. The writer who half a decade earlier had been interested in "gods and kings" was not the compassionate champion of the poor. And in a time of unemployment and deprivation, Steinbeck created his greatest love/work heroes.

Though In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, and The Grapes of Wrath are similar in setting, character, and theme, they are different in structure and focus. Of the three novels, In Dubious Battle is the most objective in tone and is largely social in focus. Of Mice and Men treats the themes of love, work, group man, and possession of the land in primarily personal or individual terms. And The Grapes of Wrath

combines the personal with the social, alternately providing the reader with close-up and wide-angle views in the same novel.

In Dubious Battle brought Steinbeck and his work to the full attention of the critics. Unfortunately, few critics were able to discuss this controversial book objectively, and even four decades later much Steinbeck criticism is too limited by the prejudices and preconceptions of the critic to be of much value. Thus, the overwhelming majority of critics, threatened by the strong working class identification of the book, have sought ways to vindicate Steinbeck, or to prove that he didn't really mean what he said. As late as 1975, in the first publication of Steinbeck's 1950 film script, Viva Zapata! editor Robert Morsberger devotes most of his introductory essay to demonstrating that Steinbeck was not, and never had been, a revolutionary.

Morsberger bases his entire discussion on Albert Camus' studies of rebellion, The Rebel, and Resistance, Rebellion, and Death, which distinguish between the rebel and the revolutionary. Zapata, Morsberger states emphatically, is a rebel rather than a revolutionary. And, Morsberger continues, "This distinction runs throughout the work of John Steinbeck."[1] Morsberger detects no changes in Steinbeck's attitudes between 1936 and 1950, and declares that Zapata is rooted in In Dubious Battle, which, he says, is "profoundly critical of revolutionist tactics." Morsberger describes Mac

as a "ruthless revolutionary to whom people are merely tools of guerrilla warfare."[2] This tendency to dissociate Steinbeck from his revolutionary heroes typifies most of what has been written about In Dubious Battle.

The fact is that two sometimes conflicting interests dominated Steinbeck's thinking by 1936. Through his association with Ed Ricketts, his interest in science and the objective, naturalistic approach which a scientific point of view requires had been stimulated. But simultaneously, Steinbeck's social sense, his outrage at the ruthless exploitation of workers, had provoked his commitment to reform. To put the paradox in terms of Steinbeck and Rickett's 1941 collaboration, The Sea of Cortez, Steinbeck had simultaneously become a "non-teleologist" in philosophy, and a reformer in action.

In Steinbeck's fiction of the late thirties there is frequently a substantial difference between his stated self-perception as a writer and the actual work he produced. The Sea of Cortez, he said in 1941, would "finish a cycle of work that has been biting me for many years."[3] Steinbeck felt that the book's discussion of "non-teleology," or non-causal thinking, would "explain" his work of the previous half-decade. And frequently in the late thirties he spoke in his letters of the scientific objectivity of his writing in that period. Non-teleology, as delineated in chapter fourteen of Sea of Cortez, the "Easter Sunday Sermon," involves the rejection of cause-effect relations in favor of careful observation of what

is. "Non-teleological thinking concerns itself primarily not with what should be, or could be, or might be, but rather with what actually 'is'--attempting at most to answer the already sufficiently difficult questions what or how, instead of why."[4] All teleologies, or "thought systems," imply sets of assumptions, particular points of view, and values. Non-teleology presumes to see from a point of neutrality, a point removed from the struggles it observes. For the conscientious writer, there is an obvious advantage is such a perspective, for truth, it is readily apparent, can best be found by taking off what Doc in In Dubious Battle calls "the blinders of 'good' and 'bad'."[5] Such was Steinbeck's intention in his work of the late thirties.

Yet with Steinbeck, as with all of us, intentions and self-perceptions do not always match realities. The "Easter Sunday Sermon" goes on to say that "the greatest fallacy in, or rather the greatest objection to, teleological thinking is in connection with the emotional content, the belief. People get to believing and even to professing the apparent answers thus arrived at."[6] Though he professed to be a non-teleologist, this description of teleological thinking certainly goes a long way toward describing Steinbeck's thought and work of the late thirties. This is not to say that he was not honest, nor that he was not as objective as he could be. It is to say that he was a compassionate human being who believed strongly in the capacity of man to survive through struggle, through love and work. It is to say that Steinbeck overestimated his own

capacity for non-teleological objectivity and underestimated his own commitment to changing circumstances which he firmly believed to be causing the human misery that had become an undeniable part of his consciousness.

One answer to the apparent paradox in Steinbeck's thought and work is the obvious one that all of us, including Steinbeck, are capable of embracing two or more contradictory notions at the same time. But a more "non-teleological" answer is provided by Betty Perez in her article, "Steinbeck, Ricketts, and the Sea of Cortez: Partnership or Exploitation?" Though both Steinbeck and Ricketts claimed in 1941 that the book was a thorough collaboration, Perez cites a letter from Ricketts to Joel Hedgpeth in which Ricketts states that the crucial chapter fourteen, the "Easter Sunday Sermon," is 99 34/100% his own.[7] If Ricketts' claim is true, and other evidence suggests that the philosophic chapter is based largely on an essay previously written by Ricketts, then the major document upon which assumptions of Steinbeck's objectivity are based is not even Steinbeck's work. Yet it is also obvious that Steinbeck endorsed the concept of non-teleology, at least intellectually. And his letters indicate how extremely conscientious he was at the time in his attempt to write the truth. In 1938 he destroyed "L'Affaire Lettuceburg" because he felt that it revealed "less of the truth than I know" and started over on what would become The Grapes of Wrath. And Steinbeck also strongly asserted the objectivity of the first book of his

period of social commitment, In Dubious Battle.

Should the reader conclude that this apparent contradiction between Steinbeck's self-concept and his work detracts from the work? Not at all. His work is made better by the fact that his objectivity (which is here assumed to be a virtue) is tempered by his compassionate humanity, by his love and his great respect for work and for the working class. Steinbeck's fiction of the late thirties can be best understood and appreciated, not as detached, but as "engaged" work, work that is concerned with social change. In his 1949 essay, What Is Literature? Sartre asserts that the writer's message must always be freedom.[8] The writer is responsible for freeing others by a relentless search for truth. But the search for truth, Sartre says, must be dialectical; it must proceed by "praxis," the dialectical movement between non-teleology and teleology, between the abstract and the concrete. Sartre defends what he terms "engaged" literature, pointing out that all writers are really engaged. The only question is, in what cause? Is the writer going to be a "clerk" in the medieval sense, a mere recorder, the effect of whose work will be the maintenance of the status quo? Or is he going to be engaged in the struggle of the oppressed, working to change the conditions of oppression? Steinbeck's stated self-concept, as well as much of his work, places him in the first category. His "engaged" fiction of the late thirties is in the best

tradition of the second.

In a similar vein, Granville Hicks, whose book Proletarian Literature in The United States was published the year before In Dubious Battle, insists that there is no apolitical position.[9] Hicks would say that Ricketts' non-teleology is in itself a political position, or a teleology. And Hicks is correct. For to remain aloof as a mere observer of exploitation is to condone exploitation. Thus, the secret of Steinbeck's engaged, committed fiction is that he is in the best sense of the term a "recording consciousness," but he avoids being merely that. Surely no careful reader of In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, or The Grapes of Wrath could miss the fact that Steinbeck takes the side of the workers. And his non-fiction of the period leaves no doubt that his commitment was active. It is to Steinbeck's credit that he allowed neither "pure art" nor "pure science" to displace his compassionate humanity, his love.

Steinbeck's interest in collectivity, or group man, goes back as far as the early thirties. I noted in chapter three that To A God Unknown is undergirded by the holistic notion that the individual is a part of a larger collective whole. And in Tortilla Flat, the paisanos' sense of group identity is perhaps stronger than their sense of individual identity. But in the first book the theme is treated mystically, and in the second with humor. It is in the three novels of the late thirties that the theme receives serious treatment

as a real social and political goal. These books contain considerable philosophic discussion of the concept and the phenomenon of group man. Bringing non-teleological observation to bear in In Dubious Battle, Steinbeck gives his characters Doc and Mac insight into the various potentials inherent in group man. Steinbeck is obviously aware of the potential of this "new animal" for destruction, for action that to the individual man seems irrational. Steinbeck does not romanticize group man. Rather he has an instinctive fear of the mob, and in letters of the late thirties he even identifies the fascist movement in Europe as an example of group man gone awry. Yet there is potential for good in group man too--practically unlimited potential. And for powerless individuals, Steinbeck realized that identification with the collective man (that was more than all the individuals who comprised it) was their only hope of survival. Thus, Steinbeck's scientific objectivity and his compassionate humanity combined in the late thirties to produce three novels in which the basic values are consistently collective. As I stated above, the focus in Of Mice and Men is narrowed to individuals, but George and Lenny dream of achieving successful collective identity. And in In Dubious Battle and The Grapes of Wrath, group unity (collective love, collective work, and collective action) is the supreme value.

With the exception of his first novel Cup of Gold, Steinbeck's fiction had focused on ordinary people, the working

class. American economics in the 1930's placed a high premium on work. The man who could find work was a fortunate man. Millions of people existed on a marginal level because they were unemployed or underemployed. Millions of others worked for the exploitative wage which a capitalist system in crisis offered them. Thus, the 1930's was a time when America was seething with the desire for rewarding, productive work. Steinbeck shared, both personally and collectively, in this need.

Steinbeck was also a proponent of the work ethic. As demonstrated in chapter two, work was essential to his health, it was his refuge in times of turmoil, and it was his greatest source of pleasure. Steinbeck knew and appreciated the desire to work, to be engaged in purposeful activity, to produce. Thus, the heroes of his greatest fiction are workers. Some work with their hands, some with their minds and consciences, but all are active; in the fiction of the late thirties contempt is reserved for the leisure class, for the soft and decadent exploiters who do not work. But a new dimension also now evolves. Steinbeck's earlier work heroes, such as Joseph Wayne and Billy Buck, had worked primarily as individuals for individual goals. But Mac and Jim, George, Casy and the Joads work collectively for collective goals. In Steinbeck--and hence in his characters--a sense of communal responsibility, of social love, was evolving. An important theme of both In Dubious Battle and The Grapes of Wrath is the education of the hero. We see Jim Nolan, Jim Casy, and Tom Joad, as well as

lesser characters, emerge from narrow individualism to a sense of group love, group identity, and group responsibility. These dynamic characters reenact the evolution that their creator was experiencing in the nineteen-thirties.

Paralleling, actually preceding, the movement toward group work in Steinbeck's heroes is the development of group love. This growth of social consciousness is the motive force which precipitates all productive group efforts. Regardless of what one thinks of the tactics used by Mac and Jim in In Dubious Battle, it is obvious that they are motivated by a selfless love for others--and not just for individuals, but for the entire exploited working class.

Like Steinbeck's previous fiction the work of the late thirties contains little romantic love. His first major treatment of this kind of love would not come until The Wayward Bus in 1947. It may be that he did not feel comfortable with the subject, and it may be that he simply chose to deal with other themes, and with other kinds of love. There are lovers, love affairs, passion, and sex in his early fiction, but little direct treatment of romance. The omission of this kind of love continues in Steinbeck's engaged fiction, but now, reasons for the omission seem apparent, and perhaps even calculated. For the characters in his novels of the dispossessed, romantic love is essentially postponed. Mac has a strong sex-drive, but he denies satisfaction of his personal desires because they are incompatible with the demands of his social love. Similarly,

Jim Casy and Tom Joad desire women, but must delay personal gratification while working in the interest of group survival. Thus, the major development of the theme of love in Steinbeck's engaged fiction is the movement from individual to group love. In the process, individual love is not lost, and sexual need is not overcome. Few people live with more passionate intensity than Mac or Casy or Tom. And the very intensity of their lives is the manifestation of their developing sense of, and capacity for, group love.

From the tone of Steinbeck's letters before, during, and after the writing of In Dubious Battle, it seems likely that the actual researching and writing of this book were the crucial events which moved him to active involvement in the struggle of California's farm workers. In January of 1935, with In Dubious Battle under way, he wrote to George Albee concerning the book: "I have used a small strike in the orchard valley as the symbol of man's eternal, bitter warfare with himself. I'm not interested in strike as means of raising men's wages, and I'm not interested in ranting about justice and oppression, mere outcroppings which indicate the condition. But man hates something in himself. He has been able to defeat every natural obstacle but himself he cannot win over unless he kills every individual. And this self-hate which goes so closely in hand with self-love is what I wrote about. The book is brutal. I wanted to be merely a recording consciousness, judging nothing."[10] A few days later, Steinbeck wrote to his agent about

his new book. "I guess it is a brutal book, more brutal because there is no author's moral point of view."[11] And in April, with the manuscript in the publisher's hands, he lamented to Elizabeth Otis about Covici's attitude. "Does no one in the world want to see and judge this thing coldly?"[12]

It is obvious from these statements that Steinbeck perceived himself as a neutral, cold observer, a non-teleological scientist, "merely a recording consciousness." And he was essentially correct. In Dubious Battle is undoubtedly his most objective book of this period. Even the book's most negative critic, Warren French, compares the point of view of In Dubious Battle to the objectivity of Henry James (though he contradicts himself three pages later by speaking of the"Swiftian bitterness" with which Steinbeck "satirizes society.")[13]

The influence of Ed Ricketts on In Dubious Battle is strong. In fact, Doctor Burton seems to be the first of several fictional recreations of Steinbeck's friend. The non-teleological philosophy espoused by Doc parallels Ricketts' "Easter Sunday Sermon" as well as Steinbeck's stated objectives as author. And this influence is certainly not all detrimental; it is partly the objectivity of In Dubious Battle that has enabled it to survive while many other strike novels of the thirties have been forgotten. And the truth value of the book is enhanced by the author's "neutrality." But in spite of, or perhaps because of, the book's objectivity, the reader is drawn into identification with the striking workers. We come to

detest the owners and the vigilantes who do their dirty work. We sympathize with the starving workers. And if we are able to read the book as objectively as Steinbeck wrote it, we find ourselves on the side of the labor organizers too, for Steinbeck presents them as human--sometimes ruthless, sometimes undisciplined, but always on the side of the oppressed, and always motivated by collective love.

Because of Steinbeck's authorial objectivity, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what his personal feelings were about the strike, the labor organizers, or the whole exploitative system of California agriculture. But it should be noted that the man who, in the winter of 1936, claimed to be interested in strikes only as a symbol of an abstraction, as a manifestation of man's self-hate, found himself in the summer of 1936 sitting in a ditch in a migrant camp, writing an explosive series of articles on migrant labor for the San Francisco News (which the paper refused to print at the time. As Steinbeck explained to Albee, "Any reference to labor except as dirty dogs is not printed by the big press out here.")[14] And the man who in January was "not interested in strike as means of raising men's wages" was actively engaged in attempting to organize men for that exact purpose, and in attempting to convince the owning class that their own self-interest involved paying a living wage and providing decent living conditions for the workers. Thus, unless a major transformation occurred in Steinbeck's attitudes in half a year, it may be assumed

that he had already taken his side before he wrote In Dubious Battle, and that the objectivity of the book was the authorial pose from which he believed the story could be most effectively told. In either case it is difficult to see how the assumption has grown up that Doc Burton is speaking for Steinbeck in the novel.

Almost without exception critics have assumed that Doc represents Steinbeck's personal point of view. And in spite of the author's claim of objectivity, this view has persisted. But Richard Astro, whose extensive study of the relationship of Ricketts and Steinbeck demonstrates the vast difference between the aloof scientist and the engaged humanist, has rejected this assumption outright. Representative of the majority opinion, however, are the conclusions of Stanley Hyman, John Kennedy, and Warren French. Hyman concludes that "Steinbeck's social attitude . . . seems to be best expressed by the doctor."[15] Kennedy says that, "Doc the character who, it is manifest, speaks for Steinbeck, debunks the legend of the Communist's altruistic humanitarianism."[16] And French concludes that because Burton seems to be Steinbeck's spokesman, Steinbeck must favor solving labor troubles by "studying" them rather than by action. In fact, French says, In Dubious Battle is an "attack" on the labor organizers.[17] How could so many usually perceptive critics have misread Steinbeck's strike novel? The problem is partly the result of reviewers having been afflicted with what Joseph Henry Jackson called "the

class itch." Isolated by their own social positions from the struggles of the working class and the poor, many critics have been unable to comprehend or appreciate Steinbeck's attitudes and commitments to this class and their love and work.

Granville Hicks provides further insight into the failure of bourgeois critics to comprehend working class art.[18] Beginning with his thesis that there is no apolitical position, Hicks describes the "man in white," the bourgeois critic who claims disinterestedness, but who is the first to denounce working class literature as "propaganda." The denunciation itself may be viewed as politically-inspired support for the status quo. The fact is that even the objectively presented experience of workers will likely be rejected by the middle-class critic, whose very class position makes an understanding of working class experience almost impossible. "Class itch" may have contributed to many less than objective readings of In Dubious Battle.

Ricketts' non-teleology is actually a limited version of the dialectical perspective generally associated with Marxism. It is limited because it does not presume to go beyond analysis. A true dialectical approach to problem-solving involves a balanced movement between the abstract and the concrete, between analysis and action. I believe that something of Steinbeck can be found in each of the major characters of In Dubious Battle, Mac, Jim, and Doc. Their

conversations and interactions juxtapose a variety of responses to the problem of human exploitation, and it is through examination of this dialectic that the best comprehension of Steinbeck's own positions can be found.

Many critics have taken Steinbeck's title, "In Dubious Battle," to mean that Steinbeck was dubious about both the means and the ends of the apple-pickers' strike. Howard Levant says that "It is certain the strike cannot produce good." And of Mac's view that even a failed strike has the value of teaching men who they are and what they must do, Levant says that "this unscrupulous long-term purpose negates the ostensibly humanitarian short-term purpose to raise wages and improve working conditions."[19] Levant seems to think that the creation of a true rather than a false consciousness in men is a selfish concern on Mac's part. And he fails either to understand or to care about what Steinbeck obviously did understand and care about--the fact that the very survival of the migrant workers depends upon their learning to work together. And of course either a careful perusal of Steinbeck's letters or a careful reading of the context from which Steinbeck's title comes will show that only the outcome of the battle, and not the battle itself, is dubious. For Milton's Paradise Lost, from which the title comes, goes on in the next line to ask: "What though the field be lost?/All is not lost--the unconquerable will/ and study of revenge, immortal hate/ And courage never to submit or yield:/ And what is

else not to be overcome?"[20] Repeatedly in his letters of the late thirties Steinbeck expresses his solidarity with organized labor and with striking workers. And in The Grapes of Wrath he indicates that even beaten strikes are proof of progress. "Fear the time when the strikes stop while the great owners live--for every little beaten strike is proof that the step [in man's progress] is being taken."[21] Let us take a closer look at this "dubious battle."

The very fact that Steinbeck chose to tell his story from the point of view of the workers and organizers is an indication of his sympathies. Even though we see the personal failures, the sometimes questionable tactics, and the occasional excesses of the protagonists, we at least see them as human. The other side is not humanized at all. We see guns and teargas, machines and firebrands, platitudes and lies, and faceless, heartless capitalists who hide behind institutions and vigilantes and make every decision according to the "bottom line." If those critics who so enthusiastically denounce the tactics and violence of Mac and Jim would only add up the dirty tricks employed by each side, they would discover that the real violence is perpetrated by the owners, not the workers or the organizers. And it should also be emphasized that the battle lines are drawn by the owners when they back the already destitute and starving workers further into the corner by an additional wage-cut. Mac knows that it is not a question of whether there will be violence. Pouring

kerosene on edible fruit while children starve is an act of violence. And neither was violence against California's farm workers new in the 1930's. As Steinbeck points out in his 1936 Nation article, "Dubious Battle in California," violence against farm workers had been an institutionalized policy since the 1860's when Chinese laborers who had been imported to build the trans-continental railroad were dumped on the labor market.[22] The Chinese had been followed by the Japanese, the Mexicans, the Filipinos, and finally the "Okies." Mac knows that the only question is against whom the violence will be directed. In a class-society, especially one in crisis, class struggle is a given, a constant. Yet many so-called "humanists" who turn squeamish and react against violence in opposition to the status quo are strangely silent as long as the violence is directed against powerless workers.

Not only Mac and Jim, but London and some of the other workers are aware of who their enemy is and how he operates. The so-called "Growers' Association" dominates the entire establishment, including the press, the police, the health authorities, the banks with their power over the indebted small farmers, and worst of all, the "pool room boys" who can always be incited to terrorize the workers in the name of patriotic Americanism. And each of these cards is played by the owners for maximum effect. The police regularly break into the headquarters of the "radicals," and they intercept and read their mail. Laws are interpreted in such a way that

anyone who stands up against repression can be jailed for "vagrancy." Owners offer flattery and bribes, and if these don't work they use company spies, strike-breakers, guns, and fire. Against such overwhelming force the strikers have only the strength inherent in group man, and their labor power to withhold. Mac hopes to teach the men that the battle is permanent and the sides are clearly drawn, that the men as individuals will be picked off as individual victims, that the hope of surviving and creating a better life lies in learning to love, to work, and to fight together. Mac tells London, "They say we play dirty, work underground. Did you ever think, London? We've got no guns . . . . We've got no money, and no weapons . . . . It's like a man with a club fighting a squad with machine guns. The only way he can do it is to sneak up and smack the gunners from behind. Maybe that isn't fair, but hell, London, this isn't any athletic contest. There aren't any rules a hungry man has to follow." (IDB, 258-59)

Mac is not a highly trained theoretician of revolution. Steinbeck had drawn his information for both character and organizing tactics from "Irish and Italian communists whose training was in the field, not in the drawing room. They don't believe in ideologies or ideal tactics. They do what they can under the circumstances."[23] This is an accurate description of the organizing efforts of Mac and Jim. Mac tells Jim what their goals are, and how they will attempt to

achieve those goals. "Hell, we don't want only temporary pay raises, even though we're glad to see a few poor bastards better off. We got to take the long view. A strike that's settled too quickly won't teach the men how to organize, how to work together." (IDB, 27-28) "We've got to use everything," Mac says. ". . . We'll just look over the situation." (IDB, 43) Thus, the technique employed by Mac and Jim will be that recommended by Marx, "praxis," or theory molded into action to fit the requirements of the existing situation. The ultimate goal is the achievement of group unity, or class identity. The means will be to use whatever must be used. And the motive is love. When London presses Mac for a reason for his role as labor organizer, Mac responds, "You know how you feel about Sam an' all the guys that travel with you? Well, I feel that way about all the workin' stiffs in the country." (IDB, 235) What Mac and Jim are trying to incite is "a revolution against hunger and cold." (IDB, 258)

Given the ruthlessness, cruelty, greed, and violence of the owning class and their lackeys, and given the fact that potentially violent group action is the only weapon the strikers have in response, then Mac's only alternative to what he is doing is to do nothing and to allow violence against the exploited workers to continue. The latter is the end result of the attitudes expressed by the majority of the critics of In Dubious Battle, and it is the end result of the attitude expressed by Doctor Burton. But though his commitment is as

a scientist and a humanist, even Burton is obviously more committed to the survival of the workers than his stated philosophy would imply.

Doc is a paradoxical figure. He freely gives his services to the striking workers, not because he believes in their cause, but because they are in need. Doc cares about people as individuals, but he is interested in collective man only from an abstract point of view. Besides his basic humanity, Doc's strength is his analytical mind. Closely paralleling Ed Ricketts, Doc insists on seeing "the whole picture," and his psychological perceptions are keen. But out of these strengths grows Doc's weakness. His analytical bent requires thorough and continual inquiry and investigation, but never arrives at any concrete conclusions. Ultimately, Doc is ineffectual; because his probing leads to no course of action, Doc is in a sense a force of counter-revolution. Doc makes the mistake (as did Ed Ricketts) of presuming that all ideas and positions deserve equal respect and that one should not act until he has seen "the whole picture." That, of course, means never!

In Sea of Cortez, Ricketts (presumed to be the chief architect of the non-teleological philosophy) says of teleological ideas that they "may substitute a fierce but ineffectual attempt to change conditions which are assumed to be undesirable, in place of the understanding-acceptance which would pave the way for a more sensible attempt at any change

which might still be indicated."[24] Similarly, when the central philosophical discussion of group man in chapter eight of In Dubious Battle turns to the politics of collectivity and action, Doc steers it back into the realm of scientific neutrality. Doc views the movement of group man as he would the growth of bacteria under a microscope. Though men are responsible for one and germs for the other, Doc "can't see much difference" between social injustice and "physiological injustice, the injustice of tetanus, the injustice of syphilis, the gangster methods of amoebic dysentery." (IDB, 130) Mac responds that Doc is "too Goddamn far left to be a communist." (IDB, 131) He is too much a disciple of dialectics to ever take a stand. Mac is disgusted with Doc's impractical talk. "What's all this kind of talk got to do with hungry men?" he demands. "If you see too darn much, you don't get anything done." (IDB, 132)

As Levant has observed, Doc, Mac, and Jim provide a balanced series of responses to group man and a kind of dialectic on the whole situation. And it is undeniable that Doc speaks part of Steinbeck's truth. Clearly, careful scrutiny of any situation must precede effective action. What Doc provides is the essential first step in Marxist praxis. Mac recognizes the value of Doc's contributions, not only as a doctor, but as a thinker, and Mac is able to learn from Doc. After Doc's disappearance, and just before Jim's death, Mac recalls Doc's observation that "Men hate something in

themselves." Jim responds, "Doc was a nice guy, but he didn't get anywhere with his high-falutin ideas. His ideas didn't go anywhere, just around in a circle." (IDB, 294) As one of Steinbeck's new heroes, the scientist, Doc has part of the truth. But Jim's response defines the limitations of Doc's perspective. Thus, while Burton is a good and sensitive man and an essentially admirable character, he is a non-committed observer of what is, unwilling to take a position as both Steinbeck and his characters Mac and Jim do. The Steinbeck hero is always active, always engaged in progress. Steinbeck believed strongly in the goal-directed nature of the human animal. In The Grapes of Wrath he says of man, "Having stepped forward, he may slip back, but only half a step, never the full step back . . . . Fear the time when Manself will not suffer and die for a concept, for this one quality is the foundation of Manself, and this one quality is man, distinctive in the universe." (Grapes, 205)

Because Doc's perception of group man is only intellectual, he cannot participate in this organism he understands so well. He appears only in the middle third of the book, entering only after the workers have struck, and disappearing mysteriously, presumably having been picked off (as an individual) by the vigilantes. Burton is always set apart from the workers, even when he treats their wounds. In the army, Doc tells Jim, he had treated German soldiers just as he now treats the strikers. "I worked on 'em just as though they

were wood." "I'm kind of unhappy," Doc says. "I'm lonely, Jim. I have nothing to hate . . . . I'm awfully lonely. I'm working all alone, towards nothing. There's some compensation for you people. I only hear heartbeats through a stethoscope. You hear them in the air." (IDB, 230-32) These are Doc's last words.

For Doc's loneliness, Jim Nolan offers the solution he has found. "I used to be lonely, and I'm not any more . . . . And I can't be licked, because I'm more than myself." (IDB, 231) Doc knows intellectually about collective identity, but Jim experiences it. One major theme of In Dubious Battle (which will be repeated as the central theme of The Grapes of Wrath) is the education of the individual in the necessity for group unity. All the major characters of The Grapes of Wrath learn this lesson, but in In Dubious Battle Jim is the neophyte who moves from individual loneliness to group love. When we first meet Jim, he appears "dead." Two pages later, Party leader Harry Nilson observes that Jim is "waking up." (IDB, 9) Jim's education is enhanced by his past observations. "My old man always had to fight alone," Jim says. "He got licked every time." (IDB, 29)

In a letter to Louis Paul, Steinbeck said that "some of these communist field workers are strong, pure, inhumanly virtuous men."[25] This is a fairly accurate description of Jim. Jim doesn't smoke, drink, or fool with girls. He has "no vices," but is willing to take up smoking when Mac explains

its social advantages. Near the end of the novel, when his wound is making him delirious, Jim takes over from Mac and London and begins giving orders. "I know you're right," Mac says. "Cold thought to fight madness, I know all that. God Almighty, Jim, it's not human. I'm scared of you." (IDB, 249) "I'm stronger than you, Mac," Jim responds. "I'm stronger than anything in the world, because I'm going in a straight line. You and all the rest have to think of women and tobacco and liquor and keeping warm and fed." (IDB, 249) Though his infection has distorted his usual mild manner, Jim's comments are only an extreme statement of the truth about him. He is "virtuous" almost to the point of inhumanity. As Doc observes, Jim is like a religious enthusiast whose individuality is completely submerged in his collective identity. Jim's complete sureness, which results partly from his lack of experience, is the opposite of Doc's skepticism. Though Levant is unjust when he says that Jim comes to accept "violence as an end in itself," it is true that Jim is cold and emotionless, and seems either more or less than human. However, Steinbeck does humanize Jim by giving him compassion for his class, sensitivity to the feelings of others, and a strong sense of collective love as his motive. He is not, as F. W. Watt suggests "utterly devoted to an ideology," but he is utterly devoted to the working people, and to improving their lives.[26] He freely sacrifices his life for others, and Joseph Fontenrose even builds a convincing argument that Steinbeck intended

Jim to be seen as a Christ-figure.[27] In death Jim is faceless, completely submerged in his collective identity. The book ends with Mac's words, "Comrades! He didn't want nothing for himself. . . ." (IDB, 313)

In between the scientific aloofness of Doc and the "inhuman" submergence of Jim is Mac. In Mac, individuality and collective identity, intellect and emotion, pragmatism and love are balanced. Mac's goals are simple: He wants to teach working men "what they are, an' what they've got to do." (IDB, 293) Though Steinbeck presents Mac, like the other characters in In Dubious Battle, objectively, it is obvious that he has great respect for Mac. He describes Mac as a big man "with the face of a scholarly prizefighter." (IDB, 14) Mac is immediately established as the character who embraces both thought and action, who is balanced between the extremes of Doc and Jim. Mac is complex, and because he is human, he is sometimes ambiguous. The ambiguity arises from the fact that Mac is a humanitarian who must sometimes use individuals in the group interest. Mac tells Jim, "Don't you go liking people" (and thus lose perspective on the overriding needs of the group). (IDB, 103) But Mac obviously does like people. He is motivated by love for the whole working class, but he is human enough that he can't help violating his own injunction by loving individuals too. He criticizes himself when he discovers that he is trying to save Jim from harm for personal reasons. When Joy is killed, Mac is genuinely moved by

the loss of his friend. "It's a heavy weight," he tells Jim. (IDB, 156) The paradox is partially comprehended by Doc, who says, "Mac, you're the craziest mess of cruelty and hausfrau sentimentality, of clear vision and rose-colored glasses I ever saw." (IDB, 187)

But Mac is also a realistic, pragmatic leader of men. He knows the tendency to romanticize, and the tendency to be cynical, and he rejects both. (IDB, 21) He knows that Doc's "infection" is "invested capital." (IDB, 140) He has no illusions about the battle in which he is engaged, and he knows that it will require discipline and sacrifice. He knows that the outcome of the battle is dubious, but he knows that if the war is ever to be won, the battle must be fought. It is this man of work, this man of love, this very human being who is willing to sacrifice all for the collective good of his class, whom French describes as a "carbon copy" of the Nazi invaders in Steinbeck's The Moon Is Down.[28] Which of Mac's actions could possibly account for such a lack of sympathy and perception?

Being human, Mac does have his faults. Once, in anger, Mac condones Sam's plan to burn the house of Hunter, one of the three rich men who own and control the Torgas valley. But this is only after the owners' vigilantes have killed some of the striking workers and burned the barn of Anderson, the small farmer who has allowed the strikers to camp on his land. Mac does want violence to come, but not because he likes

violence. He knows that group man can be incited by violence. Mac does beat a young vigilante, but the boy has a rifle and had intended to kill some of the migrants. And as Jim says, Mac does the job correctly. "No hate, no feeling, just a job." (IDB, 248) Mac is obviously disgusted by what he has to do, but he knows how dangerous the vigilantes are, and that they must be dissuaded from their misdirected violence.

Twice Mac acts dishonestly. He exaggerates his interest in Anderson's prize pointers to secure Anderson's permission for the strikers to camp on his land. And though Mac has no medical experience, he delivers the baby of Lisa, London's daughter-in-law, in order to win the confidence of the group. It is for this act that Mac seems to me to most deserve criticism. But Mac justifies the action by the idea that he must "use" whatever is available to "get the men to work together." (IDB, 50) Incidentally, the baby would otherwise have been delivered on dirty newspapers by an old woman with "long and broken and dirty" fingernails. (IDB, 49) Mac uses his native intelligence to do the job under sterile conditions, and "he worked so gently that some of the fear left Lisa's face." (IDB, 52)

Finally, Mac has been attacked for "using" his friends, Joy and Jim. He publicly displays their bodies in order to create solidarity among the strikers. Mac states, and truthfully so, that both men would want to be used in any way to further the ends of the collective group which goes on after individuals have died. Because both Joy and Jim want to be used,

what Mac does is not a violation of morality, but of taste. And taste is a luxury that the starving workers can ill afford. In the final analysis, then, it is this matter of taste, and behind that of general class prejudices, that have produced so many misreadings of In Dubious Battle. Morsberger prefers Zapata, Casy, and Tom Joad over Mac and Jim because the former "at first have only spontaneous and improvised response to episodes of outrage, but gradually they learn to make long-range plans."[29] The distinction is false. What Morsberger prefers is the rebel, the individualist who has not yet submerged himself in group identity and who has not become a committed revolutionary, a true threat to the status quo. Jim, like Zapata, Casy, and Tom, is a rebellious individual when we meet him. And Zapata, Casy, and Tom, like Jim, progress in their education toward collectivity. Mac is different in this respect only in that he has already learned these lessons, and is already a full-blown threat to repression and exploitation.

Where, then, does Steinbeck stand, and from what perspective may we view his concerns with love and work? Steinbeck's claim of authorial objectivity should be reiterated. And that something of the author appears in each major character seems clear. But Steinbeck later said that each of his novels has a "self-character," and if any one character in In Dubious Battle most resembles the Steinbeck of 1936, it is Mac.

Steinbeck's engaged novels of the late thirties are all commentaries on love and work. Most of the characters are lovers and former possessors of the land who, through the ruthlessness of capitalist economics, have been reduced to, at best, wage-laborers. The migrants are so desperate that they will do almost anything for work--even for the kind of alienating labor that is available to them, and at the most exploitative wage. In terms of Maslow's theory of human motivation, they are reduced to the lowest level--that of mere survival. In Dubious Battle is set in an orchard, and "the apple symbolizes the worker's product which he himself cannot possess and enjoy."[30] Mac knows that only when the people have learned to work together can a man "get an apple for himself without going to jail."

The men having been reduced by exploitation to animals snarling for survival, the job of organizing their labor will be difficult. On the other hand, the workers have little to lose, and most can recall a former time when they had taken pride in their work. Old Dan, the man whose fall from a rotten ladder sets off the strike, had been a "top-faller." Even that work, Dan realizes, had been wage-labor from which the capitalists had skimmed the surplus value. But aside from economic considerations, Dan had taken pride in doing good work, in doing a job that few, including the bosses, could have done as well. "I'd go up a pole, and I'd know that the boss and the owner of the timber and the president of the

company didn't have the guts to do what I was doing. It was me. I'd look down on ever'thing from up there." (IDB, 62) Even under the disgraceful conditions of California agriculture, most of the migrants work long and hard at every opportunity.

The focus of The Grapes of Wrath is on the lives, the loves, and the work of the migrants themselves. Only at the end of that novel have the Joads evolved to the awareness of class identity. But the central focus of In Dubious Battle is upon the work of organizing workers, a work which Steinbeck respected. Steinbeck sympathized with the growing labor movement of the thirties, and he sympathizes with the job that Mac and Jim have to do.

Jim's first lesson about work comes in jail. He has read radical literature, but is inexperienced and individualistic. He has been arrested for his attendance at a "radical" meeting, and in jail he meets five professional labor organizers. "While there was anger in them, it wasn't the same kind of anger. They didn't hate a boss . . . . They hated the whole system of bosses . . . . The hopelessness wasn't in them. They were quiet, and they were working." (IDB, 20)

Jim soon learns that group work is not just an abstract ideal. It is also the way "The Party" operates. All work is shared . . . cooking, typing, making speeches . . . whatever needs to be done. In the field, this cooperative spirit continues to be in evidence. As a lesson in group work, Mac

asks all the men in the "jungle" for help with Lisa's baby. "Men always like to work together," Mac tells Jim. "There's a hunger in men to work together." (IDB, 54) Steinbeck does not fully agree with Freud's notion that civilization (the establishment of community) is only progress in repression. Steinbeck, who believed strongly in man's potential for selfless devotion to the common good, saw the evolution of civilization in more positive terms. Both men emphasized the countertendencies of love and hate as inherent qualities in man, but Steinbeck believed that a given society could encourage either aggressive or cooperative impulses. At the beginning of In Dubious Battle, when Mac and Jim arrive at the migrant jungle, they find apathetic individuals lying by the fire. When Mac organizes group help to deliver Lisa's baby, "a current of excitement filled the jungle, but a kind of joyful excitement . . . . The men seemed suddenly happy." (IDB, 50-51)

Mac also makes plain the pleasure he gets from the work of organizing group man. It is committed, engaged, meaningful work, motivated by love. London asks, "'Don't you guys get no pleasure?' 'Damn right' said Mac. 'More than most people do. It's an important job. You get a hell of a drive out of something that has some meaning to it, and don't you forget it. The thing that takes the heart out of a man is work that doesn't lead any place. Ours is slow, but it's all going in one direction.'" (IDB, 261)

In terms of Maslow's theory of human motivation, again, Mac and Jim find the migrants living at the lowest level, survival. Teaching them to work together will satisfy their needs for "security" and "belongingness," and in terms of self-concept, even for "esteem." It will be virtually impossible for these workers to go beyond that without a revolution. There is no "growth" or "self-actualization" to be found in this kind of exploitative work. But Mac and Jim are motivated at the highest level, and want to change the system so that self-actualizing work can be available to all.

In Freud's terms, as a non-teleological observation of civilization, Eros and Thanatos, love and death, do always seem to co-exist. As Doc says. "Man's self-love is balanced neatly with self-hate." (IDB, 230) But Steinbeck was not satisfied with descriptive formulas. His discouragement at what he observed was balanced by his great hope that man might make progress in asserting Eros over Thanatos. Thus, In Dubious Battle is also a book of love. As I have stated, in Steinbeck's engaged novels romantic love is generally postponed in favor of social love. As observed in chapter one, Rollo May sees as the trend of post-World War I, apathetic, desensitized society, a shift in emphasis from the "higher" kinds of love (eros, philia, and apage) to sex. Steinbeck's heroes of the late thirties essentially reverse this trend. And social love motivates characters such as Mac, George, Casy, and Tom precisely because they are not apathetic and

desensitized. These characters do have sex drives, but sexual need is generally sublimated into social love, into commitment to the welfare of the group or class.

In In Dubious Battle, only Jim is not troubled by lust. He seems either "inhuman" or "super-human" in his ability to repress his sex drive. He is humanized to some extent, however, by his frank appreciation of the beauty of the dark-haired woman he passes in the camp, and by his friendly interest in Lisa. Albert Johnson, one of the striking workers, "needs a floozy." It is Anderson's dogs that give the aloof Doc Burton "a sensual pleasure, almost sexual." (IDB, 132) Dick, the party member who is responsible for collecting supplies from sympathizers, is a "bedroom radical" who combines love and work. But as usual, Mac is the most "human" in this respect too. Mac has a strong sexual need, and would not pass up an opportunity for this kind of love . . . unless it conflicted with his dedication to the group. "Every time the sun shines on my back all afternoon I get hot pants," Mac says. "What's wrong with that?" (IDB, 66) But Mac too represses his sexual need, strong as it is, because he is motivated by a higher love.

One of the most puzzling aspects of In Dubious Battle is the role of women. Ma Joad is perhaps the strongest character in The Grapes of Wrath, and many women are developed in that "family story." But the world of In Dubious Battle is a man's world. Women are in the shadowy background, and the

reader can readily forget their presence. Only Lisa is even named, and she remains shallow and undeveloped. She is tantalizing, but seems to exist primarily for her symbolic value and to attract and humanize Mac and Jim. The birth of her child parallels the birth of the strike, and Mac is the "midwife" of both. Lisa's husband, London's son, is conveniently rarely present, and Lisa represents something of a temptation to the strike leaders. But In Dubious Battle remains a story, not of romantic, but of social love.

One might imagine from the reactions of various critics that the "radicals" are motivated by hate. Such is not the case. When Jim joins the party in chapter one, he says, "I've got nothing to lose." "Nothing except hatred," Harry answers quietly. "You're going to be surprised when you see that you stop hating people. I don't know why it is, but that's what usually happens." (IDB, 9) What happens in In Dubious Battle is the submergence of individualism into group identity and the development of a transcendent and selfless group love which has for forty years puzzled critics who cannot comprehend such love.

It was in the Spring of 1936, just after the completion of In Dubious Battle and just before his summer of direct involvement in the struggles of migrant workers, that Steinbeck wrote his first play-novelette, Of Mice and Men. In letters of the period he called the novel "A simple little thing" which he didn't expect to arouse much interest. "It

is a tricky little thing designed to teach me to write for the theatre."[31] And in his 1953 essay, "My Short Novels," Steinbeck described his short novels, including Of Mice and Men, as "exercises for the long ones."[32] Keeping in mind Steinbeck's recognition that Of Mice and Men was a relative "light-weight," it should be noted that it is a more narrowly focused and micro-cosmic treatment of many of the major themes of the two longer novels of the dispossessed between which it is sandwiched. The working title of the short novel was "Something That Happened;" evidently Steinbeck again intended to tell his story objectively, non-teleologically. But if the author's sympathies are evident in In Dubious Battle, they are more apparent in Of Mice and Men.

The focus of this short novel is personal. The setting is a farm on the Salinas River just south of Soledad. We meet a small group of farm workers, but the spotlight is on George and Lennie, who dream of escaping wage-labor and transience by possessing a little place of their own where they can live collectively "offa the fatta the lan'."[33] Carpenter says that Of Mice and Men "describes the individualistic survival of the old American dream."[34] It is true that George and Lennie jealously guard their dream of independence and self-sufficiency, but their goal can still be best described as collective. By turns both George and Lennie threaten to dissolve their narrowly defined community, but it is always obvious that a strong bond of love joins them, and that both

are repelled by the possibility of loneliness. And an important movement in the drama is the widening of the boundaries of their community as first Candy and then Crooks seek to join them.

That Steinbeck intended Of Mice and Men as a microcosmic manifestation of the universal desire to possess the land, to be free, independent, and self-sufficient, to work and produce according to one's own needs, and to live in collective harmony with others is supported by a letter from Steinbeck to his agents in 1937. Lennie, Steinbeck said, represents "The inarticulate and powerful yearning of all men."[35] Fontenrose adds that the novel's final title from Burns' poem suggests that the novel is a parable of the human condition. The nature of the "human condition" under the governing reality principle of exploitative capitalism is observable in the lives of the alienated, exploited, lonely, individual migrant workers. But once again Steinbeck offers the possibility. . . here smashed by the ironic reality of Lennie's feeble-mindedness . . . that the "human condition" is relative rather than absolute, and that loneliness and dispossession could be overcome by collective love.

Most of the characters in Of Mice and Men are sympathetically drawn, and only a few seem personally deficient. The boss of the ranch, Curley's father, makes only one appearance, and though Steinbeck's description of him is brief, he does not have the author's respect. "He wore high-heeled

boots and spurs to prove he was not a laboring man." (Mice, 23) Only one of the working men, Carlson, is unsympathetically presented. It is Carlson who kills Candy's aged and worthless dog with his Luger, thus foreshadowing Lennie's death. In his insensitivity, Carlson is sometimes cruel. But the only real villain in Of Mice and Men is Curley, the boss' son. Like his father, Curley also wears high-heeled boots; he is proudly aloof from the working "bindle stiffs." Curley has been married just two weeks, but sees every other man as a threat to his new possession, his wife. Curley is selfish and ego-centric, and his wife knows that he does not love her. Being a small man, Curley is especially threatened by the huge Lennie, and he provokes Lennie to fight. The fight makes the possible fulfillment of George and Lennie's dream even more remote, and it is partly because Lennie crushes Curley's hand that Curley's wife is attracted to Lennie, thus precipitating the final blow to the dream. One of the least respected characters in all of Steinbeck's fiction, Curley neither works nor loves.

The other characters in Of Mice and Men share dispossession, loneliness, and the need for love. And all of these characters, with the exception of Curley's wife, who is even denied the dignity of work, are workers. In a book full of outcasts, perhaps Candy and Crooks are the most pathetic. Candy is an old man who, because he lost his right hand on this farm, has been kept on in the menial role of "swamper,"

or custodian of the bunk house. Crooks, an old man with a broken and twisted spine, is the "nigger stable buck" who, because he is black, is even segregated from the other ranch hands. Candy and Crooks are in turn caught up in George and Lennie's dream, and timidly seek to join them.

Besides Candy and Crooks, the other most lonely person in Of Mice and Men is Curley's wife. Curley's wife, whose position as an object and a mere extension of Curley is suggested by her namelessness, has been maligned as the destroyer of George and Lennie's dream. But there is nothing sinister about her. She is another victim, more an effect than a cause, lonely and pitiable. Unloved by her husband, rejected by the other men who fear she will get them in trouble, denied even the fulfillment of productive work, Curley's wife has Steinbeck's sympathy. Though the men disrespect her and consider her a "tart," she is really just another human being who needs work, love, and human community.

During the Broadway production of Of Mice and Men in 1938, Claire Luce, who played Curley's wife, inquired about the personality of the character she was playing. Steinbeck replied that she is a woman whose whole training and experience have taught her that she could relate to men only as a sex object. "She is a nice, kind girl and not a floozy. No man has ever considered her as anything except a girl to try to make . . . . She is a little starved . . . . Her craving for contact is immense."[36] She is another lonely product of

an abusive, exploitative society who desperately needs to belong, who needs the kind of community that George and Lennie have. It is the need for contact which brings her to the barn and Lennie, who loves to stroke soft things. But Lennie strokes her hair too hard, she begins to struggle and scream, and in his fear, Lennie accidentally breaks her neck.

Three characters in Of Mice and Men stand out as love/work heroes. Besides the central characters, George and Lennie, Steinbeck seems to especially admire Slim. Slim is tall, and "he moved with a majesty achieved only by royalty and master craftsmen. He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders. He was capable of killing a fly on the wheeler's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule. There was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love." (Mice, 37) Slim is sensitive and gentle. He immediately comprehends the beauty of George and Lennie's companionship. It is Slim who considers Candy's feelings and reminds Carlson to take a shovel and bury Candy's dog. Only Slim transcends racism and treats Crooks with respect as a man. And when George must kill Lennie in order to save him from Curley's vengeance, it is Slim who knows how lonely George is and attempts to restore George's lost community. "Slim twitched George's elbow. 'Come on, George. Me an'

you'll go in an' get a drink.'" (Mice, 118) Like Billy Buck before him and Juan Chicoy after him, Slim is a "capable" and respected skilled worker, and a man of great sensitivity and love.

The central themes of Of Mice and Men . . . the love of the land and the desire to possess a bit of it, collective love and the attempt to forge a community, and the hope of combining work and love, vocation and avocation . . . revolve around George and Lennie. Of Mice and Men appears to be a pre-depression story. At least the topical is de-emphasized in favor of the universal. George and Lennie are socially unaware; they lack the strong sense of class-consciousness developed by the central characters of In Dubious Battle and The Grapes of Wrath. George even harbors an alternate dream of independence, though it is always clear that he prefers community and interdependence with Lennie. Since Lennie is retarded, George accepts most of the responsibility that community implies, but as Burton Rascoe points out, it is clear that George is psychologically dependent upon Lennie too. Life would be empty and meaningless for George without Lennie to take care of.[37]

In an attempt to demonstrate that Steinbeck's fiction is "preoccupied with biology," the influential critic Edmund Wilson set Steinbeck criticism back considerably with his 1941 essay, The Boys in The Back Room. For example, Wilson finds that Lennie "has murderous animal instincts," and is

motivated by the "impulse of the killer."[38] In fact, Lennie is gentle, sensitive, sensual, unwilling to fight, and motivated by love. He is also a powerful man who earns Slim's respect as a worker. Lennie is simply mentally deficient, and it is this fact which makes him the unknowing object of both seduction by Curley's wife and shooting by George, both acts prompted by impulses of love. As Levant says, "The attempted seduction balances the knowing murder; both are disastrous expressions of love."[39]

The most important single theme of Steinbecks's engaged fiction, the evolution of collective consciousness and efforts to achieve collective identity, is central to Of Mice and Men too. George and Lennie's dream is not to own a million acres like the newspaper man of The Grapes of Wrath (presumably Hearst) but to possess ten acres where they can harvest for themselves the crops that they plant, where they can achieve the dignity that is denied under exploitative wage-labor, where Lennie can gratify his sensual need by stroking and caring for the rabbits which, for him, symbolize their dream. The key to the dream is community. The dream would be almost meaningless to either man alone, and it dies when Lennie dies. Of Mice and Men anticipates the cooperative possession of the land which is the hope in The Grapes of Wrath. Fontenrose calls this hope a "religion" of "fellowship on the land."[40]

Looking back at Of Mice and Men in 1957, Steinbeck again recalled at least part of Boileau's statement about

heroes. "George is a hero and only heroes are worth writing about."[41] George is heroic because he loves and dreams, and works to make his dream a reality. But Of Mice and Men is a tragedy . . . a tragedy not so much of character as of idea. Foreshadowing early in the play-novelette makes the failure of the dream seem almost inevitable. And George knows how unlikely fulfillment really is. But both heroism and tragedy lie in struggling anyway. And like the other "dubious battles" of Steinbeck's engaged fiction, George and Lennie's is motivated by love.

Love and work, faith in man, love and possession of the land, and collectivity are themes which evolved to fullest development in The Grapes of Wrath, published in early 1939. The Grapes of Wrath is the symphony toward which the artistry, themes, and heroes of Steinbeck's fiction had been tending. It is a book of epic proportions which places a whole society in perspective in terms of both the topical and the universal. The depression and the dust bowl, the dispossession and migration of a class of people, and the outrageously exploitative nature of California agriculture are immediate concerns. But also a whole society, its mores and morals, its values, its aggressiveness, its decadence, and its ruthless economic system are brought into focus.

It is not surprising that Steinbeck reached his peak of social consciousness in the late thirties, for this was a period of unprecedented crisis in the capitalist world.[42]

In 1931 President Hoover had declared, "The poorhouse is vanishing." "No one is starving." But by 1933 forty million Americans were without work, without income. Millions were dispossessed of homes and lands, and the positive thinking ex-President was honored by the homeless who called the shantytowns which they threw up all over America "Hoovervilles." For many Americans the twenties had been a decade of prosperity, but for many farmers, depression was not new in the thirties, for already corporate farming, the "land company," the "Associated Farmers," the bankers had begun to dispossess them. In the first four years of the decade of the thirties a million farmers lost their land, and in Oklahoma, half the 200,000 tenant farmers were dispossessed during the decade.

Thousands of small businesses went the way of the small farmer too, as monopoly capitalism moved in this time of crisis to consolidate its control of the means of production and distribution in America. By 1935 eighty-four percent of the profits in the country were greedily garnered by four percent of the corporations. And the richest one and one half percent of Americans had greater total income than the forty-seven percent at the bottom.

The victims of the Great Depression did not all take their misery sitting down. Steinbeck found the heroes of 1939 among the poor precisely because of their capacity not just to "endure," as Faulkner put it, but to fight, to

struggle, to organize, to "prevail." The decade of depression was also a time of unequalled militancy, class unity, rebellion, strikes, and union organization in America. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was formed in 1935, and by 1940, ten million American workers had joined the unions. The fight was a bloody one. As had been the case since the Civil War, all attempts by workers to organize were labeled the work of "reds" or "communist agitators." The anti-communist Fish committee of the United States Congress was formed, not by accident, in 1930, and its legacy includes the establishment of the infamous House Un-American Activities Committee in 1938. As Steinbeck points out in The Grapes of Wrath, instead of wages, the profits of big business paid for spies, thugs, and vigilantes, tear gas bombs, and machine guns. In the mid-thirties an estimated eighty million dollars a year was spent to prevent the organization of workers.

But as Steinbeck also reminds us in The Grapes of Wrath, repression breeds rebellion, and workers fought back. The years 1935-1939 saw the unionization of workers in steel, rubber, and automobile manufacturing, as well as in other key industries. Steinbeck believed that the organization of labor was not only the only alternative to class war, but also a desirable end in itself. What was happening in American industry Steinbeck wanted to see happen in the fields of California.

For various reasons, chiefly the interruption of World War II and the post-war replacement of "Okies" by another wave of third world people, the organization of California's farm workers had to wait a long generation for the leadership of Cesar Chavez. But the ferment of the "grapes of wrath" was in the air as Steinbeck wrote his masterpiece, and he fully expected the "time-bomb" of California to blow at any moment. All over America hungry farmers had turned militant. The "penny sale," in which competitive bidding for a man's foreclosed land was forcably prevented by his neighbors, became almost an institution in the Mid-west. Much to the chagrin of the bankers, many a farm family repossessed their land for a penny. And the "Green Corn Rebellion" in Eastern Oklahoma was just one of several militant actions by farmers.

Of course the majority of farm workers in Steinbeck's California were, like the Joads, naive and devoid of a true class-consciousness. And there is little evidence of Steinbeck's politicization before 1934, but like the Joads, he gradually moved throughout the decade toward identification with the working class. In the early thirties, his own poverty may have blinded him to the plight of the exploited and dispossessed. His fiction before In Dubious Battle concerns first a romantic but self-centered historic figure, then a mystic, and then the narrow, self-contained communities of the California valleys and Tortilla Flat. Even In Dubious

Battle focuses on only a pair of strike organizers. But in The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck finally embraces his broadest community, the entire exploited farm laboring class.

In The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck's continued interest in non-teleological science and psychology is readily apparent, but it is tempered by compassion. As Astro observes, Steinbeck's deep concern with human problems grows out of his "dualistic philosophy, which combines empirical realism with a cosmic idealism."[43] I have already noted that Steinbeck spent much of the summer of 1936 in the fields, Hoovervilles, and migrant camps of California. Besides actually working with the farm laborers, he was finishing Of Mice and Men and beginning work on what would be the abortive fore-runner of The Grapes of Wrath, "L'Affaire Lettuceburg." The book was conceived in anger, and was a satire on vigilantes. Steinbeck wrote and rewrote his "vigilante novel" several times over the next two years before finally throwing it out and beginning afresh on The Grapes of Wrath. "L'Affaire Lettuceburg" had been a "mean, nasty book," "written in anger," an attempt at satire which Steinbeck now concluded he could not write. "L'Affaire Lettuceburg" had no "self-character," no one with whom the author could identify. Steinbeck's full identification was by now with the workers, and it was only after switching to their point of view that he could report to Elizabeth Otis, "This is a very happy time . . . . It is

nice to be working and believing in my work again."[44]

Another problem with the discarded book was a lack of total honesty. As Steinbeck explained, the facts were not distorted, but it was a "smart-aleck" book. "I'm trying to write history while it is happening, and I don't want to be wrong." The vigilante novel, he said, was less of the truth than he knew. Besides the migrant workers themselves, one other thing held Steinbeck's complete devotion in 1938: The truth of his book about them.

Steinbeck was actively engaged in the struggle about which he wrote. To Elizabeth Otis he wrote, "Just got back from another week in the field . . . . I break myself every time I go out because the argument that one person's effort can't really do anything doesn't seem to apply when you come on a bunch of starving children and you have a little money. I can't rationalize it for myself anyway. So don't get me a job for a slick. I want to put a tag of shame on the greedy bastards who are responsible for this but I can best do it through newspapers . . . . I am hectic and angry."[45] Until Pascal Covici flew to California to talk him out of it, Steinbeck even planned to prostitute himself to Hollywood for six weeks at a thousand dollars a week so he could give two dollars each to three thousand starving migrants. His love and compassion for the workers were real. Only one thing he would not do in 1938. He must write nothing but the truth.

He was not yet ready to compromise his own work.

One of the criticisms that has been leveled at The Grapes of Wrath is that it at times oversimplifies. It does not, like In Dubious Battle, confront the possibility that power can corrupt. Life in Tom Collins' government camp seems a bit romanticized. And character sometimes seems "generalized." Actually, the latter "weakness" is part of the author's conscious technique. In the preface to his next book, the fictionalized documentary The Forgotten Village (1940), Steinbeck explained that he wanted the reader to comprehend a class of people by getting to know just a few. The technique in The Grapes of Wrath is similar. "Group man" can be known only through representative individuals and leaders. Through Casy and the Joads we come to know the struggles of the entire dispossessed farm laboring class, and we witness the gradual emergence of their own sense of class-consciousness. Thus the generalization of character reflects Steinbeck's continuing interest in group man, and in collective love, work, and survival.

As for the charge that the conflict of the novel is oversimplified and one-sided, in his conscientious effort to be truthful, Steinbeck could hardly have presented the situation in any other way. On one side he saw "a fascist group of utilities and bankers and huge growers" who valued the dollar above human life.[46] On the other side were the naive

but gallant workers who were innocent victims of the owning class. Of the migrants he wrote, "I admire them intensely. Because they are brave . . . . strong . . . . kind, humorous and wise, because their speech has the metaphor and flavor and imagery of poetry, because they can resist and fight back."[47] Steinbeck sided with the migrants because they were heroic and strong, because they were the people of love and work, and because they were learning to live by the ethics of collectivity. And by recognizing the poetry of their speech, Steinbeck, as a worker with words, was learning from the masses, taking his words from the people, as Mao advises the artist to do.

Collectivity, transcending the boundaries of the nuclear family and embracing the whole community of workers, the growth of working class unity, is the key value of The Grapes of Wrath. All other themes and values of the book evolve from, and add up to this central concept. Frederic Carpenter has suggested that "for the first time in history, The Grapes of Wrath brings together and makes real three skeins of American thought. It begins with the transcendental oversoul, Emerson's faith in the common man, and his Protestant self-reliance. To this it joins Whitman's religion of the love of all men and his mass democracy. And it combines these mystical and poetic ideas with the realistic philosophy of pragmatism [William James] and its emphasis on effective action."[48] In addition to the philosophies of Emerson,

Whitman, and James, Chester Eisinger suggests that Steinbeck also blended a fourth, Jeffersonian agrarianism, the belief that "the farmer draws spiritual strength as well as sustenance from the soil," and that every man has a "natural right" to land.[49] All of these philosophic ideals presuppose cooperative, collective identity rather than aggressive, individualistic identity. And to these permeating ideas must be added the ecological views of W. C. Allee, which Steinbeck absorbed from Ed Ricketts. Allee's central thesis is that "grouped animals survive longer than isolated individuals."[50]

Land will obviously be important in any book about farm workers. And in The Grapes of Wrath, people can be set in opposing groups according to their relationship to the land. The Grapes of Wrath is the story of people who love the land, who are born and who die on the land, who work the land and coax the harvest from it. Dispossessed from the land by technology, drought, the depression and the banks, the Okies migrate to California, where they are reduced to, at best, survival level wage-labor. But land love and land hunger do not die out. They grow stronger. Group unity is an end in itself, but it is also the means by which the dispossessed hope one day to repossess the land.

Land hunger, like all the other themes of The Grapes of Wrath, is given specific development through the Joads. But also, as with other themes, Steinbeck's generalized commentary comes in the interchapters. Chapter five, on

dispossession from the land, is Steinbeck's strongest statement of his frequently drawn distinction between ownership and possession. The "Monster," the capitalist system of ownership, is sick. The bank, or the "Shawnee Land and Cattle Company," or whatever else the phalanx out of control behind which the owners hide is called, sends its representatives, its wage-laborers, out to dispossess the people from their land. Over the land roll the tractors, "snub-nosed monsters," pulling planters with their "iron penes erected in the foundry, orgasms set by gears, raping methodically, raping without passion." (Grapes, 47, 49) And the driver "sitting in the iron seat did not look like a man; gloved, goggled, rubber mask over nose and mouth, he was a part of the monster . . . . He could not see the land as it was, he could not smell the land as it smelled . . . . If a seed dropped did not germinate, it was nothing . . . . He loved the land no more than the bank loved the land." (Grapes, 48) In short, the land has fallen into the hands of those who do not love it. "And this is easy and efficient. So easy that the wonder goes out of work, so efficient that the wonder goes out of land and the working of it, and with the wonder the deep understanding and the relation." (Grapes, 157) The "owners" have a doller investment in the land from which they expect a dollar return. And the tractor driver . . . .

"Why, you're Joe Davis's boy!"

"Sure," the driver said.

"Well, what you doing this kind of work for--against your own people?"

"Three dollars a day." (Grapes, 50) The tractor driver, the son of a possessor of the land but now a wage-laborer, has betrayed his own people for thirty thin pieces of silver.

"It's our land," the tenant men cry. "We measured it and broke it up. We were born on it, and we got killed on it, died on it. Even if it's no good, it's still ours. That's what makes it ours--being born on it, working it, dying on it." (Grapes, 45) The tenant men (and, one can imagine, Steinbeck too) sit in the dust and figure. "There's some way to stop this. It's not like lightning or earthquakes. We've got a bad thing made by men, and by God that's something we can change." (Grapes, 52)

In chapter five the tractor is a monster machine which parallels the monster for which it is but a tool. A man who responded to many romantic impulses, Steinbeck may have preferred the era of pre-mechanized farming. But he was not a primitivist. It is not the machine itself that is bad. With Marx, Steinbeck advocates not the abolition of machinery, but the collective ownership of machinery, the means of production. In chapter fourteen, the crucial chapter in which the revolutionary politics of collectivity are advanced, Steinbeck speaks for group man. "If this tractor were ours it would be good--not mine, but ours. If our tractor turned the long

furrows of our land, it would be good. Not my land, but ours." (Grapes, 205) Steinbeck was not a communist. He unquestionably believed in the private possession of land. But the crucial distinction is that it would be impossible for a man to "possess" more land than he needs, or can love and work. Steinbeck's ideal is some kind of collective possession, and this is strongly contrasted to individualistic ownership. Steinbeck seems to be speaking bluntly to the absentee capitalists who "owned" most of the land, warning them of the consequences of perpetuated greed, trying to make them understand that "the quality of owning freezes you forever into 'I,' and cuts you off forever from the 'we.'" (Grapes, 206)

The "quality of owning" in the capitalist system is illustrated graphically for the Joads by a man whom they meet in Needles. The Joads have just crossed the river into California at last, but the other man has been to California and is on his way out. The man shocks the Joads with his description of what they are about to encounter. In perhaps the most scathing denunciation in Steinbeck'a fiction, the returning migrant tells of "a fella, newspaper fella near the coast, got a million acres . . . . Fat, sof' fella with little mean eyes an' a mouth like a ass-hole. Scairt he's gonna die. Got a million acres an' scairt of dyin'." (Grapes, 281) The Joads are amazed that such a thing should be, but the philosophic Casy concludes, "If he needs a million acres to make him feel

rich, seems to me he needs it 'cause he feels awful poor inside hisself." (Grapes, 282)

In chapter nineteen, in which he forecasts that revolution will result from continued oppression, Steinbeck describes the "hunger for land" of the original white settlers who had stolen the land from Mexicans. But in time, the squatters became "owners," and "they had no more the stomach-tearing lust for a rich acre." (Grapes, 315) "All their love was thinned with money . . . . And it came about that owners no longer worked on their farms. They . . . remembered only that they owned it." (Grapes, 316-17) The first love in The Grapes of Wrath, the love which predates the growth of collective consciousness, is the love, the possession of the land. And it is those who love the land and have been dispossessed from it who will be able to love each other. And out of this love grows the collective force by which wage-workers may again possess the land.

The Grapes of Wrath is an uncompromising attack on those aspects of capitalism which Steinbeck saw as destructive of the values of collective love and work. One of the most explosive tours de force in the novel is chapter seven, the interchapter on selling jalopies to the Okies. The used car dealer is absolutely without scruples about getting rich off the misery of others. He typifies all the capitalists in the novel in that what "work" he does is dishonest work. He instructs his salesmen: "Watch the woman's face. If the

woman likes it we can screw the old man. Start 'em on that Cad'. Then you can work 'em down to that '26 Buick. 'F you start on the Buick, they'll go for a Ford. Roll up your sleeves and get to work. This ain't gonna last forever." (Grapes, 83) After trading a junker for a pair of mules and fifty dollars, the dealer exclaims, "Jesus, Joe, that was a hot one! What'd we give for that jalopy? Thirty bucks--thirty-five, wasn't it? I got that team, and if I can't get seventy-five for that team, I ain't a businessman." (Grapes, 87-88) And the high price of jalopies is matched by the near theft of the few possessions the Okies must sell before they go.

Most of the "commentary" in The Grapes of Wrath comes in the general interchapters. In chaper twenty-one Steinbeck describes the specific exploitative manifestations of capitalism in California agriculture. As in most other industries, a major development during the depression was the movement to establish monopoly control through "vertical integration." The large land owners bought failed canneries and failed trucking companies so that the entire industry could be controlled by a few men. The small farmer who had no cannery could not compete, of course, and eventually would lose his land to the bank, which again was controlled by the same rich land owners. In chapter twelve, the interchapter about the migration on route 66, an anonymous migrant tells a joke: "When I was a kid my ol' man give me a haltered heifer an'

says take her down an' get her serviced . . . I done it, an' ever' time since then when I hear a business man talkin' about service I wonder who's gettin screwed." (Grapes, 164)

In chapter twenty-five, another interchapter on revolution, Steinbeck agonizes over the fact of "a million people hungry, needing the fruit--and kerosene sprayed over the golden mountains . . . . There is a crime here that goes beyond denunciation . . . . Children dying of pellagra must die because a profit cannot be taken from an orange." (Grapes, 476-77) People are starving, not because there is a scarcity of food, but because of, in Marcuse's words, the "specific organization of scarcity brought about by domination." In contrast to the greedy, grasping, individualistic impulses by which the capitalist system functions, Steinbeck constantly juxtaposes the ideal of a society bound by collective love, working cooperatively to meet the real needs of the collective group.

As The Grapes of Wrath was being published, Steinbeck wrote to Covici, "The fascist crowd will try to sabotage this book because it is revolutionary."[51] He was right on both counts. It is, and they did. While the novel was rejected by many leftists as "sentimental" or "revisionist," the fact remains that the implementation of the underlying concepts of the book would involve a major restructuring of society.

Peter Lisca notes that there are two negative movements in The Grapes of Wrath which are balanced by two positive

movements.[52] The disintegration of the Joad family is balanced by the growth of the new communal unit, and the Joads' economic decline is balanced by their education in class-consciousness and collectivity. In the specific narrative of the Joad family, the evolution of collective identity begins when the family, already numbering twelve, decides to admit Preacher Casy to the nuclear unit. Like Christ, Casy has just returned from the "wilderness" with the seeds of the knowledge of collectivity growing in his brain. The germ of Casy's knowledge expands from his mystical awareness in the wilderness that "There was the hills, an' there was me, an' we wasn't separate no more. We was one thing. An' that one thing was holy," to the application of his new knowledge in social and political terms. The potential for holistic unity in society was destroyed when "one mis'able little fella got the bit in his teeth an' run off his own way . . . . But when they're all workin' together,. . . that's holy." (Grapes, 110) Like Doc Burton, Casy begins by trying to see "the whole picture." But Casy becomes a force for social change because, as Astro puts it, "The non-teleological visionary turns teleological activist."[53]

By the end of the narrative, the original Joad family has been reduced to seven members. Granma and Grampa, unable to leave the land, have died along the way. Noah has wandered off down the Colorado River at Needles, and Connie Rivers has deserted the family. Jim Casy has been killed, and Tom is

taking his place as an organizer of group man. But the disintegration has been balanced by the adoption of the larger, extra-nuclear "family" of dispossessed workers. After Casy, Sairy and Ivy Wilson join the Joads before they get out of Oklahoma. Every night along the way to California, brief communities of the dispossessed spring up at the watering holes. "The families, which had been units of which the boundaries were a house at night, a farm by day, changed their boundaries . . . . At night they integrated with any group they found." (Grapes, 267) Ma has known instinctively from the beginning that they must organize in order to fight back, and by the end of the book, with the Joads and the Wainwrights sharing their box car home, Ma reflects on how her identification has broadened. "Use' ta be the fambly was fust. It ain't so now. It's anybody." (Grapes, 606)

A corollary of the growth of the extended family is the Joads' growing class consciousness. When we first meet Tom he is hitch-hiking away from McAlester, where he has served four years in the state penetentiary for killing a man in a bar-room fight. Tom appeals to the class instinct of the truck driver whose company has affixed a "No Riders" sign on his windshield, and gets a ride home to Salisaw. Later, when Tom buys a used rod bearing from a salvage employee in New Mexico, the man, whose boss would have charged five dollars, sells Tom the part for a dollar. When Ma is overcharged for the food she buys at the Hooper Ranches company store, she

tells the clerk, "I'm learnin' one thing good . . . . If you're in trouble or hurt or need--go to poor people. They're the only ones that'll help--the only ones." (Grapes, 514) Gradually, Ma's definition of "home" changes from a place to people. She identifies with the people in the government camp near Weedpatch. "We come home to our own people." (Grapes, 420) And when Tom, who changes dramatically from a cynical individualist to a committed labor organizer, accepts his collective identity, it is with the class of exploited workers. "Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there . . . . An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build--why, I'll be there." (Grapes, 571)

Though it is perhaps romanticized, life in Tom Collins' government camp seems to represent Steinbeck's collective ideal. Here decisions are made democratically through an elected central committee. Both work and play are shared. Child care is a community task, and a grocery fund is maintained by the people for those who are destitute. The camp is a place of collective love and work, a true community of workers, and it is specifically for this reason that the Growers' Association fears it and wants it destroyed. In so far as The Grapes of Wrath is "propaganda," an immediate concern of the author was the establishment of more such "socialist" communities.

Behind the central value of collective identity in The Grapes of Wrath lie the inextricably related themes of love

and work. The motive force behind group unity is group love, and the means as well as the end of group unity is group work. Casy's mystical notion that each individual "jus' got a little piece of a great big soul" is made concrete and political by his quote from "The Preacher": "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lif' up his fellow." (Grapes, 570) That love is the key to unity is established by Casy's prayer as the Joads prepare to begin their migration. "I'm glad there's love here. That'all." (Grapes, 111)

Also implied by the ideal of collective love is the recognition of death as an integral part of the life of the group. The one instance of romantic, sexual love in the novel is directly juxtaposed to death. Travelling at night through the California desert, Connie and Rose of Sharon cover themselves on the front of the loaded truck and make love. On the back of the load, Granma is dying. "In the heat they struggled together," while "the struggling body and the struggling heart" of Granma yield to death. (Grapes, 306-07).

As in In Dubious Battle, romantic and sentimental love must be largely postponed by these love-work heroes. They give up the gratification of individual needs while engaged in the struggle prompted by their love for the collective group. Al Joad, who is young and has not yet fully accepted communal responsibility, spends his spare time chasing girls.

"'I always got time for girls,' said Al. 'I got no time for nothin' else.'" Floyd Knowles, who tries to organize the residents of the Joads' first Hooverville and who helps to educate Casy and Tom, responds, "You get a little hungry an' you'll change." (Grapes, 347) It is only when their basic needs are met in the government camp that Ma has time to reflect on what they have been through, on where they are going, and on her own love. For the dispossessed, this is not a time for personal love. It is a time for group love, group unity, and group struggle which will bring about a time when Al, and the others, can again think of satisfying their personal love needs. It is a time for encompassing love and for work and action in commitment to the needs of the group.

The Grapes of Wrath is also a celebration of work. In the crucial philosophic chapter fourteen, the supposed non-teleological Steinbeck insists that the "labor trouble" which the owning class sees as a cause is really a result. "The causes lie deep and simply--the causes are a hunger in a stomach, multiplied a million times; a hunger in a soul, hunger for joy and some security, multiplied a million times; muscles and mind, aching to grow, to work, to create, multiplied a million times. The last clear definite function of man--muscles aching to work, minds aching to create beyond the single need--This is man . . . . For man, unlike any other thing organic or inorganic in the universe, grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead

of his accomplishments." (Grapes, 204) Similarly, Marx noted that lower animals live only to go on living; their activity is not "purposeful." But "conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from the life activity of the animal."[54] The migrant workers have been reduced to life at the "animal" level. Each day's earnings buys that day's food. Marx goes on to conclude that "a direct consequence of man's alienation from the product of his work, from his life activity, and from his species existence, is the alienation of man from man.[55] The ultimate goal of socialism on the other hand, Marx says, is the "association of free individuals." This is the supreme value of The Grapes of Wrath.

Not all the characters in The Grapes of Wrath are love/work heroes. Willy Freely, a neighbor of the Joads, takes a job tractoring his own people off for three dollars a day. Muley Graves, another Oklahoma neighbor, doesn't respect the banks or the government, and he expects to be "leaned on" by them. But Muley can't understand Willy Freely working against his own people, so he stops him and asks him why. "I got a wife an' my wife's mother. Them people got to eat," Freely answers. "'Fust an' on'y thing I got to think about is my own folks,' he says. 'What happens to other folks is their look-out.'" (Grapes, 75) Willy commits the unpardonable sin against community. He thinks only of "I," and not of "we."

Even a member of the Joad family, the twelfth, the "Judas," betrays his people, and for the same reason. Rose

of Sharon's husband, Connie Rivers, who is, as Levant says, absorbed by the values of the bank, deserts the family in their greatest need. Levant contrasts Connie to Al. Both want to learn technology, but whereas for Al the work is an end in itself, for Connie it is only a means by which to rise in the world.[56] Connie "is a sexual performer, but he loves no one." He even wishes he had stayed in Oklahoma and gotten a tractor driving job.

The most sympathetically drawn characters in The Grapes of Wrath, however, are those who have the healthiest attitudes toward work. Many of the migrants are skilled mechanics, and they have a love/work relationship with their jalopies which Steinbeck denies the men who drive the bank's tractors. Both Tom and Al are skilled at keeping their old Hudson going, and Al, who has much in common with Juan Chicoy of The Wayward Bus, looks forward to the chance for rewarding, productive work as a mechanic.

Any work well done is a source of pride to the Joads. Tom likes to work. On the first morning in the government camp, a family shares not only breakfast, but their own temporary job with Tom even though it will shorten their own employment. The job is digging a ditch, and Tom has done a lot of pick and shovel work in prison. "Tom hefted the pick. 'Jumping Jesus! If she don't feel good!'" (Grapes, 405) Back in the camp, Ma sees the Ladies Committee coming toward the Joad tent. "Get a-workin' now," she tells Rose of Sharon,

"so's I can be proud." (Grapes, 426)

Pa is a productive worker too, but deprived of work, he loses self-esteem and becomes docile and lethargic. Because he has no work to do and cannot provide, Pa abdicates his role as head of the family. It is only when work is again offered that Pa revives. He is excited when they arrive to work picking cotton. Pa says, "By God, I'd like to get my hands on some cotton! There's work I un'erstan'." (Grapes, 551) Pa is restored, not just by the prospect of money and food, but also by the prospect of work he understands.

Even guilt-ridden Uncle John is happy when he is working. Without work, John must get drunk or find some other escape from the guilt he feels for the death of his wife. But working, John is untroubled. "I'm workin' hard an' sleepin' good. No dreams nor nothin'." (Grapes, 560)

Casy, too, is ready to do any kind of work in the interest of the Joads or of the larger community. Having given up preaching because his sermons contradicted the vital life he has come to accept, Casy's new role is primarily philosopher and leader. But he is willing to do any other task that needs to be done too, and it is Casy who voices rejection of the traditional sexual division of labor. As the Joads prepare to leave their land, they butcher the two hogs to take along. Casy begins to salt down the meat, and Ma tells him that it is "women's work." "'It's all work,' the preacher replied. 'They's too much of it to split it up

to men's or women's work." (Grapes, 146) Casy takes the lead in teaching the non-sexist ethics of the new "family" which will emerge.

Finally, Rose of Sharon, whose conversion to collectivity comes late in the novel, has to learn the lesson of shared work and love. Before the Joads leave Oklahoma, Rose has "put on the barrier of pregnancy, the self-sufficient smile." (Grapes, 129) She frequently seems self-centered, and concerned, not even with the whole Joad family, but only with her husband, her baby, and herself. "You're feelin' sorry for yaself," Ma tells her. "You got to work." (Grapes, 366)

In his remarks on the qualities he likes and respects in the migrant workers, Steinbeck concludes that from these people "will grow a new system and a new life which will be better than anything we have had before."[57] Steinbeck is talking about the evolution and the progress of collective man, or civilization itself. To reiterate Marcuse's observation, cited in chapter one, "Civilization is first of all progress in work . . . . Work in civilization is itself social utilization of aggressive impulses and is thus work in the service of Eros [love]."

The central theme of The Grapes of Wrath is perhaps best comprehended in terms of the symbolic acts of Tom and Rose of Sharon. Tom kills two men. When the book opens, Tom has just completed a term in prison for killing a man in

self-defense in a fight. One of Tom's last acts in the book is also a killing, but this time he kills the vigilante who has just murdered Casy. Tom first killed in defense of his individualistic ego. In the end, Tom would kill only in the interest of the survival of his people, the new collective family he has come to accept. Similarly, Rose of Sharon emerges from self-preoccupation and offers the milk of life to a starving stranger. Her baby by the selfish Connie Rivers is dead, but instead Rose of Sharon suckles the new collective family that has been born.

Steinbeck refused to alter the closing scene of The Grapes of Wrath. The scene, he said, is tied to the ancient idea of "the earth mother feeding by the breast." "It is casual--there is no fruity climax, it is not more important than any other part of the book--if there is a symbol, it is a survival symbol not a love symbol, it must be an accident, it must be quick. To build this stranger into the structure of the book would be to warp the whole meaning of the book."[58] But to offer one's breast to a total stranger is obviously some kind of love. And the "meaning of the book" is that through this kind of love, collective love, an instinctual and encompassing love which wants the survival of those with whom the lover identifies, "the people," as May says, will "go on," will survive and grow. (Grapes, 383)

Chapter V

Steinbeck's Decline (1940-1968)

> "The only creative thing our species has in the individual, lonely mind."
>
> --Steinbeck, 1949

Upon completion of The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck collapsed with exhaustion and spent two weeks in bed. Except for assisting with the filming of Of Mice and Men and The Grapes of Wrath, he and Carol lived almost reclusively on their Los Gatos ranch for the remainder of 1939, hiding from the year of dreaded publicity The Grapes of Wrath had brought, and from the Associated Farmers, who were out to get him. Threats against Steinbeck's life were reported in various California newspapers in mid-1939.[1] In November, Steinbeck bought half the stock in Ed Ricketts' laboratory, and began reading biology and making plans for two Pacific coast trips with Ricketts to collect tide pool specimens. "The world is sick now," he wrote to Sheffield. "There are things in the tide pools easier to understand than Stalinist, Hitlerite, Democrat, capitalist confusion, and voodoo. So I'm going to those things which are relatively more lasting to find a new basic picture . . . . I must make a new start. I've worked

the novel--I know it as far as I can take it."[2] Having just completed the best and most socially engaged work of his career, Steinbeck now sought escape from hard times and coming war into the abstract verities of science.

This decision marks the turning point in Steinbeck's work. The reasons for his change of direction are many. As I noted in chapter two, it was the success of The Grapes of Wrath which brought both the money and the publicity Steinbeck feared. And his fears were well-founded. In retrospect, Steinbeck also seems to have been right about having reached the peak of his artistic potential with The Grapes of Wrath. Also, the emergence of fascism, and the world-wide hysteria associated with it, created in him, first the desire to escape, and then the willingness to compromise the integrity of his work in the fight against it. In addition, Steinbeck would soon fall in love with Gwendolyn Conger, which would end his first marriage. And soon he would leave his native soil.

The scope of this discussion is love, work, and politics in Steinbeck's fiction; and of his work of the early 1940's, only The Moon Is Down is fiction. However, the documentaries, travel journal, war reporting, and propaganda he wrote in this period seriously affected his fiction for the remainder of his career, so they should be at least briefly considered.

Steinbeck and Ricketts worked closely in the early forties, and Ricketts' influence on Steinbeck was perhaps strongest in this period. They made two biological collecting trips together in 1940, and in 1941, published their collaborative The Sea of Cortez, the philosophic thesis of which I discussed in chapter four. After the trip to the Sea of Cortez (Gulf of California) in the spring of 1940, Steinbeck went back to Mexico to work on the film "The Forgotten Village," a documentary on life in a remote village, which emphasized the clash between ancient magic and modern medicine. Over Steinbeck's objection, Viking published the thin volume of pictures and script in 1941. Steinbeck felt that the filmscript simplified the conflict too much to warrant publication. Also, the book was "phony" because it was "not a book at all but a trailer for a moving picture and the trailer costs two fifty."[3] But as a documentary film, "The Forgotten Village" is both compassionate and honest, and except for the non-fictional Sea of Cortez, it is Steinbeck's most successful attempt at non-teleological writing. He accurately describes the film in the published preface: "We did not editorialize, attack, or defend anything. We put on the film what we found."[4]

As early as June, 1940, more than a year before the U. S. entry into World War II, Steinbeck proposed the establishment of a government propaganda office, and in an August, 1940 letter to President Roosevelt, he volunteered his

services. Steinbeck realized that fascism was diametrically opposed to his collective ideals, and he saw the threat of Nazism as an international version of what the migrant farm workers were facing in California. Steinbeck's perception of international politics may have been somewhat naive, but at any rate, he was willing in 1940 to do what he would not do in 1938--compromise his work. He was ready to write propaganda, to write "less than he knew of the truth."

In 1941 Steinbeck left Carol and moved with Gwyn to New York, where, in addition to works in progress, he began his propaganda novel, The Moon Is Down, a work designed to encourage anti-Nazi resistance movements in Europe. Moon was Steinbeck's second play/novelette, and was first written in the play version. The story concerns the occupation of a small village (presumably in Norway) and the subsequent growth of a grass-roots resistance movement among the people. The townspeople have much in common with the Okies of Grapes. They are simple, peaceful people, naive and politically unconscious. But as in Grapes, repression and exploitation breed rebellion. At first the people are unorganized individuals. "Everyone was thinking of the war, thinking of himself."[5] But like the Joads, the townspeople gradually learn the lesson of group unity, and learn to resist as a group. As the people's rebellion grows into organized resistance, the lonely, isolated invaders grow weaker, and some individuals crack up. As a symbol of group strength, the people even make up a song,

"The flies have conquered the flypaper." (Moon, 113)

The Moon Is Down is a failure as a play, and not particularly good as a novel either. The reviews of the play were "uniformly bad," and when Steinbeck saw the play, he described it as "dull," and "not a dramatically interesting play."[6] But most of the criticism in 1942 was not about the dullness of the play, but about, of all things, its objectivity. "The critics have turned propagandists," Steinbeck wrote. "They are judging what should be told the people." What many critics objected to was the low-key level of the propaganda, the fact that Steinbeck humanized the invaders. And in this sense, The Moon Is Down is truly more non-teleological than The Grapes of Wrath.

The six officers of the invading force are not exactly admirable, but neitner are they monsters. In fact, they hardly seem to be Nazis. Colonel Lanser, the commanding officer, is a realist who seems to understand war in much the same terms that Steinbeck did--as the periodic manifestation of man's self-hate. Major Hunter is not a regular soldier, but an engineer; he has a model railroad in his back yard at home in Germany. And Lieutenant Tonder is a romantic poet, "a bitter poet who dreamed of perfect, ideal love of elevated young men for poor girls." (Moon, 21) The invaders are sometimes ruthless, for they have orders from "The Leader," who like the Associated Farmers of California, has not learned that people who are down will resist. The invaders even

represent a kind of group man, a phalanx. But it is a phalanx of "herd men" who, Steinbeck suggests, cannot hope to conquer a phalanx of free men. For the strength of the group depends upon the strength and motivation of the individuals, and the invaders lack the moral strength of the resisters. Mayor Orden tells the Colonel, "It is always the herd men who win battles and the free men who win wars." (Moon, 113)

The leaders of the phalanx of free men are Mayor Orden and Doctor Winter. Astro sees the doctor as another detached Rickettsian figure. He is "bearded and simple and benign, historian and physician to the town." (Moon, 2) But he is also profound, and voices much of the wisdom of the book. Orden is "the leader of men," but is also obviously a man of the people. He has a healthy love for his work, and his work is done in love. "He and his office were one. It had given him dignity, and he had given it warmth." (Moon, 7) Like Casy, Tom, or Zapata, these men are not rebels until rebellion is required of them. They are ordinary people, workers, who only gradually become resistance leaders. And even then they are only leaders because they happen to be at the head of a phalanx that is moving. Even Colonel Lanser understands that "Mayor Orden is more than a mayor . . . . He is the people." (Moon, 33) And resistance comes from the people. Because they are leaders, Winter and Orden must die as examples to their group. But Winter and Orden accept their own deaths because, like Jim Nolan of In Dubious Battle, they

realize that the individual is insignificant to the movement of the group.

In The Moon Is Down, Steinbeck's focus is not on love and work. Only Lieutenant Tonder attempts romantic love, and he is killed by the woman he desires. The "work" of the people is resistance, which is, of course, motivated by group love, the drive for preservation of the people. But the theme, repeated to the point of simplification, is the same as in The Grapes of Wrath. "The people" will go on. Corell, the "popular storekeeper" who has prepared the town for invasion, believes the people have been defeated. The people are "simple," "peaceful," "harmless and obedient," "calm and sensible." But Lanser knows better. "Defeat is a momentary thing," he says. "A defeat doesn't last." (Moon, 35) And Mayor Orden describes the invaders' job as "the one impossible job in the world, the one thing that can't be done . . . . To break man's spirit permanently." (Moon, 49-50)

The surprising thing about The Moon Is Down is its objectivity. Steinbeck had made a conscious decision to write propaganda before he started the novel. Pearl Harbor was bombed during the writing. Steinbeck wrote the day after the attack, "I wonder whether they picked up my [Japanese] gardener. I guess they will before long."[7] Steinbeck apparently did not protest. And Steinbeck's next two years were devoted almost exclusively to overt propaganda. But apparently his remaining integrity, or Ricketts' influence, or

both, prevented The Moon Is Down from being just propaganda.

In the summer of 1942, Steinbeck wrote broadcasts for the Office of War Information and Bombs Away, an Army Air Corps recruiting tool. In 1943 he went to Europe as a correspondent/propagandist for the New York Herald Tribune. Steinbeck certainly should not be criticized for his anti-Nazi activism. His position was essentially consistent with the social views of his engaged fiction of the thirties. But he had once expressed fear that compromise would lead to more compromise, and he was right.

Bombs Away is full of romanticized, oversimplified, half-truths. Steinbeck is still interested in group man, and he represents the bomber team as a phalanx (Americans are uniquely qualified because of their devotion to team sports); but he even goes so far as to deny the existence of heirarchy on the bomber team, calling it a "truly democratic organization."[8] Sympathy with group man and the allied cause aside, anyone who has experienced the military system will recognize an essential falseness here.

The people of the Army Air Corps Steinbeck pictures are elite, "above normal." They enjoy basic training, they are never harassed, their food is excellent, and when they go to town "they very quickly monopolize the time and the thought of the personable young women of the neighborhood." (Bombs, 46)

After picturing the life of the team, Steinbeck moves on to describe the individual jobs on the team. His devotion to work is apparent here. The bombardier does "a technical job, a surgeon's job." (Bombs, 66) The engineer is a "skilled mechanic." And the navigator's is "an intellectual job," "work for a perfectionist." (Bombs, 104) But the teams also needed aerial gunners, and these positions were harder to fill. Steinbeck appeals to the bully, killer instinct, and his description of the heroic gunner reminds one of Curley in Of Mice and Men. The gunner is "a small, wiry man of cold courage. The gunners are probably the cockiest group in the whole army. They walk on their toes and are not offered, nor will they take, any nonsense," (Bombs, 70)

Steinbeck later expressed reservations about his recruiting job--"playing the role of the goat who leads the sheep in, only to step aside himself."[9] But at the time he believed fully in the war against fascism, and wanted to get more personally involved. So in 1943 he went to Europe and Africa to report the war. His dispatches were collected and published in 1958 as Once There Was A War. In the preface to this work, written in 1958, Steinbeck admits that "perhaps the whole body of work [is] untrue and warped and one-sided."[10] He justifies having written less than the truth as "partly a matter of orders, partly tradition, and largely because there was a huge and gassy thing called the

'war effort'." (War, xi) Some of the "conventions" to which Steinbeck's reporting adhered are: (1) There were no cowards in the American Army. (2) There were no cruel or ambitious or ignorant commanders. (3) There was not a preoccupation with girls. (4) Commanders stayed reluctantly in the comfort and safety of the rear. (War, xii) To Steinbeck's credit, he did not feel good about this dishonest work. "The crap I wrote over seas had a profoundly nauseating effect on me. Among other unpleasant things modern war is the most dishonest thing imaginable."[11] In the same 1944 letter he revealed plans to write The Pearl. "It is a chance to do an honest picture." The key words describing his work of the past three years and his proposed work for the future are "dishonest" and "honest." But before he turned to the serious and honest work of the late forties, Steinbeck insulated and distanced himself from the war and his war writing with a "fun" book, an escape book, Cannery Row.

Cannery Row is frequently compared to Tortilla Flat in setting, theme, character, and tone. But the two are also similar in that both are "escape" books which came as transitions between major phases of Steinbeck's work. Steinbeck first mentioned working on Cannery Row, a "funny little book that is fun," in his first letter after returning from the European war theatre. He further explained in his essay "My Short Novels," that Cannery Row was "a kind of nostalgic thing, written for a group of soldiers who said to me, 'write

something funny that isn't about the war. Write something for us to read. We're sick of the war.'"[12] And to Carlton Sheffield he wrote, "You'll find a lot of old things in it. I find I go back to extensions of things we talked about years ago. Maybe we were sounder then."[13] Cannery Row seems also to have been an attempt to regain the perspective Steinbeck had lost through the compromise of his work.

Perhaps the most perceptive and influential criticism of Cannery Row was Malcolm Cowley's observation that the book is a kind of "poisoned cream puff." That is, below the superficial fun lies some rather caustic criticism of the monolithic material values of the society. And the post-war Steinbeck seems more pessimistic, or even cynical, than the engaged writer of the late thirties. The controlling metaphor of Cannery Row is the "Great Tide Pool," with its constant "fish eat fish" struggle for survival. Rather than explain his previous work, as Steinbeck thought it did, The Sea of Cortez seems in retrospect to have anticipated his future work. The "understanding acceptance" of Doc Burton in In Dubious Battle and Ed Ricketts in The Sea of Cortez now seems to be Steinbeck's prevailing attitude--with the important qualification that Steinbeck remains on one level the social critic. Doc of In Dubious Battle has not changed significantly in Cannery Row, but Steinbeck seems now to give greater credence to his philosophic position. And Fontenrose suggests that "Mack of Cannery Row looks like a deliberate

burlesque of Mac of In Dubious Battle." Now Steinbeck seems to feel that "the acquisitive society simply is, and there is no remedy except for the individual who can escape into idleness or creative activity or fun."[14]

Though Steinbeck would never again be the engaged champion of social change, and though he seemed in 1945 to see the battle against the prevailing values of capitalist society as itself dubious, he did remain the social critic. In so far as Doc's observations represent Steinbeck's attitudes, those attitudes do indeed poison the cream puff. Doc remarks, "I guess everything that comes out of the human mouth is poison."[15]

Most of the satire in Cannery Row is Horatian laughter, tempered by "understanding acceptance," but still critical of all that threatens love, work, and community. Marital troubles begin for the Malloys, who live in an abandoned boiler, when Mr. Malloy becomes a landlord. He begins to rent out big pieces of pipe as sleeping quarters for single men. The usually fair-minded Lee Chong is afflicted by "the poison of greed" when he sees the chance of making a double profit by taking twenty for a dollar frogs at twenty-five for a dollar's worth of merchandise. And though Hazel believes that the smooth-talking Mack "could of been president of the U. S. if he wanted," Jones rejects this epitome of bourgeois ambition. "'What could he do with it if he had it,' Jones asked. 'There wouldn't be no fun in that.'" (CR, 52)

Steinbeck did remain the critic of acquisitive values. But the change in his attitudes is reflected by the fact that the one political person in Cannery Row, the wife of the "captain" from whose pond Mack and the boys get their frogs, is an object of humor.

Of several important themes from Steinbeck's engaged fiction which extend into Cannery Row, the search for community is central. And though Mack and the boys are virtually "celebrate," as Mack puts it, and though, like Danny and his friends in Tortilla Flat, they rarely work, love and work are inextricably related to community. The actions of three characters in Cannery Row are destructive of communal values. Though Doc is something of a love/work hero, he is also (as in all his other appearances in Steinbeck's fiction) "set apart." He remains the eclectic, ecological, objective scientist, and an admirable worker. "His mind had no horizon." (CR, 17) But he is also aloof, individualistic, and distant, even from those nearest to him.

Two characters in Cannery Row commit suicide, the ultimate anti-community act. William, the "watchman" at the Bear Flag, kills himself because he feels unloved, and Joey's father kills himself because he can't find work. William wanted to join the community of Mack and the boys, but because they considered him a pimp, "the bums would not receive him socially." (CR, 11) And Joey's father had gone a year without work before his desperate act.

There are three distinct communities in Cannery Row. First and most important is that enjoyed by Mack and the boys at the Palace Flophouse. The one-room fishmeal warehouse becomes a palace (the house becomes a home) because of the communal need of the six men who occupy it. "Mack knew that some kind of organization was necessary particularly among such a group of ravening individualists." (CR, 23) Community evolves easily among the men, partly because they are not afflicted by greed. The bond among the boys is strong. When they get drunk and wreck Doc's house and lab, they become social outcasts, and "only a sense of the solidarity and fighting ability of Mack and the boys saved them from some kind of reprisal." (CR, 87)

Another community exists next door at Dora's Bear Flag "Restaurant." Dora's girls avoid the individualism which can poison the atmosphere of a brothel, because they are bound together by both love and work. "Under the community of effort, those fights and ill feelings that always are present in a whore house completely disappeared." (CR, 105)

The climax of Cannery Row is the celebration of Doc's birthday, which unites these two communities, as well as assorted individuals, into a new and temporary larger community, a phalanx called a "party." The fact that Steinbeck devotes two different passages of the novel to discussions of "the nature of parties" indicates that his interest in the dynamics and psychology of group man is still strong. But

the significant change is that the life or death struggle for class unity of his late thirties fiction has given way to parties and fun.

What distinguishes Cannery Row from the tide pool with which it is juxtaposed is love. There is a wide range of loves in the novel, and Levant suggests that "the persistent thematic motif identifies the good life with any of the possibilities of love."[16] Projected love is what makes community possible. But opposed to the values which produce community are narrow self-love and individualism, qualities most apparent in Doc. Everyone likes Doc. He is understanding and benevolent, and he is "concupiscent as a rabbit." But Doc never fully joins any community, and is always aloof from the other residents of the row unless they first approach him. A semi-orphaned boy named Frankie declares and demonstrates his love for Doc, but Doc's response is feeble. Doc seems to fear love and to value detachment; he falls short of the complete Steinbeckian love/work hero.

Not only are the two communities on Cannery Row unified by group love, but communal love is also projected by the members into the larger community. Dora's girls not only combine love and work at home, but when an influenza epidemic hits the neighborhood, they organize help for the needy families. And for Doc's birthday they work together in a "community of effort" to make him a beautiful patchwork quilt. And it is when Mack and the boys are secure in their communal

home that their thoughts turn to doing "something nice for Doc."

Though love is the means by which community, the central value of Cannery Row, can be achieved, Steinbeck's growing cynicism is apparent in the fact that he now balances the picture by showing us the dangers of love. Though the "set apart" nature of Doc is not to be admired, it is partly justified in the novel. In the last of a series of sometimes tenuously connected "inter-chapters," "Steinbeck tells the story of an underground resident of Cannery Row, a gopher, who in search of love and companionship, "had to move two blocks up the hill to a dahlia garden where they put out traps every night." (CR, 121)

If love is the key to life on Cannery Row, work is almost anathema here. Work interrupts the normal life of the row every morning, and only when the canneries close their doors does the row become itself again. (CR, 2) Though the central characters avoid work when they can, everyone on the row works now and then. And like love, work, and attitudes toward it serve as a touchstone by which we can judge various characters. Henri, the French painter who is neither French nor much of a painter, is an aesthete who steeps himself in obscurantist movements and puts a lot of time into his art, but produces no good work. Doc, on the other hand, works hard and honestly at his profession, and is a skilled scientist. His "fine hands worked precisely." (CR, 100) Doc is

also dedicated to truth. Doc's detachment, which prevents his commitment in group love, is to some extent an asset in his work. But Doc's disengagement is so complete that he hears private music in his head, both when he finds a beautiful but dead girl on the reef at La Jolla, and when he is in the presence of the row's two communities at his own birthday party. Doc is a work hero, but he loves his work more than he loves people. "Doc was a lonely and set-apart man . . . . In a group, Doc seemed always alone . . . . Even in the dear close contact with a girl Mack felt that Doc would be lonely." (CR, 62) Because Steinbeck has changed since his last fictional creation of Doc in In Dubious Battle, he now seems more approving of this essentially unchanged character; but it is still clear that Doc, though admirable to Steinbeck in work, is deficient in love.

Like Dora's girls, Mack and the boys maintain an essentially healthy attitude toward work. After their first well-intentioned party has wrecked Doc's place, Hughie and Jones go to work at the Hediondo cannery. But in this instance their work is not prompted by real needs, but is an act of penance and expiation. Typically, the boys work only to fulfill needs. The prospect of giving a party for a friend, a real love need, can provide a healthy motive for the boys to work. To get the necessary cash, the boys collect frogs, rather than taking a regular job, because they don't want to have to continue to work after the need is met.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the boys possess one of the work qualities always admired by Steinbeck; they are all skilled mechanics. "They were all practical mechanics, but Gay was an inspired mechanic . . . . His fingers on a timer or a carburetor adjustment screw were gentle and wise and sure . . . . Gay hummed, 'Dum tiddy--dum tiddy,' as he worked . . . . Gay was--the little mechanic of God, the St. Francis of all things that turn and twist and explode." (CR, 38-39) "Gay and his brotherhood" coax Lee Chong's junk Ford to run because "it knew it was working for a man who loved and understood it." (CR, 40)

Mack and the boys work only to satisfy real needs. But they are admirable, not for avoiding work, but for avoiding wanting the material things for which most people do work. "I think they survive in this particular world better than other people," Doc says. "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 could ruin their lives and get money . . . . They just know the nature of things too well to be caught in that wanting." (CR, 88) Of the various possibilities available to them for escaping the values of the one-dimensional society and the destruction of the healthy love/work life, Mack and the boys seem to have found the most successful.

The Cannery Row world of survival at the subsistence level is certainly preferable to the aggressive, acquisitive world which produced both Hitler and the exploitative California land owners. But the Palace Flophouse is really a fantasy island and its inhabitants, escapists. Mack and the boys are not centered in the evolving tradition of the Steinbeckian love/work hero. In his next three books, all about Mexican workers, Steinbeck would return to the depiction of heroes resembling Mac and Tom Joad and preacher Casy. But significantly, the new heroes, Kino, Juan Chicoy, and Emiliano Zapata, are, like the post-war Steinbeck, individualists. They lack the group orientation which motivated Steinbeck's heroes of the late thirties. Like Mack and the boys, these latest heroes avoid the trap of materialism and choose life on simple terms. And like Steinbeck's engaged heroes of the thirties, the protagonists of The Pearl, The Wayward Bus, and Viva Zapata! are rebellious. But more than they want group liberation, these men want individual peace.

The Pearl (1947) was first published as "The Pearl of The World" in Woman's Home Companion in 1945. Many parallels may be drawn between this book and its predecessors. Steinbeck's interest in group man is still in evidence, and he speaks of Kino's town, La Paz, as a "colonial animal" like those found in the tide pools of The Sea of Cortez and Cannery Row. Each element has a distinct and seemingly natural place and function in the whole. But the struggle continues

between the unified and entrenched ruling class--here represented by the monopolistic pearl buyer, the doctor, and the priest--and the poor, uneducated and inarticulate, fragmented and exploited working class. As in The Forgotten Village, Kino's people are victims of their own ignorance, which is purposely perpetuated and exploited by and for the benefit of the ruling class. Folk wisdom impresses Kino and Juana with the displeasure of the Gods at those who are foolish enough to attempt to leave their stations in life; the local priest reinforces this convenient superstition in an annual sermon in which he reminds the pearl divers of the fate of a group of their fathers who had once tried to organize in order to get a fair wage for their work.

According to his preface, Steinbeck intended The Pearl as a parable, and most critical discussion of the work has been in these terms. Astro sees the book as a parable of the human dilemma, in which Kino finally chooses the "region of inward adjustment" over the "region of outward possessions."[17] And Tetsumaro Hayashi speaks of The Pearl as the "novel of disengagement," the movement of which is "commitment to false values and a later disengagement from them"[18] The impulse to pigeon-hole The Pearl, which has dominated critical attention, is probably not very important anyway, but the attempt has led to misreadings of the novel. In terms of the traditional function of the parable, Hayashi's pronouncement would seem valid. But to accept the notion that the Steinbeck of The

Grapes of Wrath now accepts renunciation of manhood and of the attempt of the love/work hero to provide the necessities of life for himself and his family contradicts not only what we know of Steinbeck's values, but internal evidence in The Pearl as well. As Astro suggests, The Pearl is paradoxical. And if Kino is defeated in the end, it is a tragedy rather than a resolution.

In many respects, Kino is a continued evolution of Steinbeck's love/work hero. His status is elevated by his rebelliousness, by his struggle against oppression. The only "defense" of Kino's people has been quiet resignation and inner strength. But Kino proclaims, "I will fight this thing. I will win over. We will have our chance."[19] And when Kino must kill in self-defense, he is saddened, but like the Joads, "This last thing had tightened him beyond breaking." (Pearl, 80) As in The Grapes of Wrath, as long as there is anger, there is the will to survive and to overcome. Rather than committing himself to "false values" as Hayashi suggests, Kino really makes the only choices possible for a man and a Steinbeckian love/work hero.

In Cannery Row, Doc had observed that "the sale of souls to gain the whole world is completely voluntary and almost unanimous." (CR, 89) Like the merchant in Christ's parable who sold all that he had to buy the "one pearl of great price," Kino sells his soul for his great pearl. "'This pearl has become my soul,' said Kino. 'If I give it up I

shall lose my soul.'" (Matthew 13:46; Pearl, 87) But it is crucial to note what the pearl means to Kino and what motivates him to sell his soul. First, Kino is not buying materialistic "false values." Like Pa Joad, he desires only to fulfill the basic needs of his family. The legendary boy of La Paz upon whose story Steinbeck based his novel saw in his great pearl the chance "to be drunk as long as he wished," and that "he need never work again."[20] Kino, on the other hand, sees in his pearl the chance to marry Juana, the ability to replace his family's rags with decent clothing, a rifle and an education for his son, Coyotito, as protection against continued exploitation, and a new harpoon, a tool which he needs to continue his work. Kino's desires are neither frivolous nor false, but the expression of real needs. His aspirations are similar to those of both the Joads and Mack and the boys. And Steinbeck obviously approves. The human tendency never to be satisfied, he says, "is one of the greatest talents the species has and the one that has made it superior to animals that are satisfied with what they have." (Pearl, 32)

Kino sees in his pearl the chance for a continued, though improved, work life; and he is motivated by love for his family. It is the "Song of The Family," the unarticulated dedication to this basic unit of group man which guides Kino's thoughts and actions. His devotion to Juana and Coyotito is similar to Ma Joad's devotion to her nuclear "fambly" at

the beginning of The Grapes of Wrath. And Kino's tragedy lies in the inability of his people to transcend these narrow boundaries and to unify as a class. "My friends will protect me," Kino tells his brother. "'Only so long as they are not in danger or discomfort from it,' said Juan Thomas." (Pearl, 71) Like Doc of In Dubious Battle, the post-war Steinbeck seems to have lost his positive faith in group man. Though Kino's love motive is good, it is insufficient to save him, for its boundaries are too narrowly defined.

The Pearl ends as a tragedy of personal defeat. The poor are not unified against their exploiters, and alone, Kino is forced back into his place. To interpret Steinbeck's parable strictly as the "renunciation of materialism" does not work, not only because of the author's approval of Kino's struggle, but also because Steinbeck makes apparent the real, material reasons for Kino's defeat. And the enemy is the same as in In Dubious Battle and The Grapes of Wrath. But the paradox is that the hope of Steinbeck's engaged fiction--class unity--now seems to be lost. This is Kino's real defeat, and in it is reflected the defeat of Steinbeck's hopes as he abandons forever the ideal of group unity in favor of increasing individualism.

Peter Lisca has noted that Cannery Row and The Pearl, along with Steinbeck's next novel, The Wayward Bus (1947) form a triptych dedicated to "an inquiry into the assumptions underlying modern civilization."[21] The least admirable characters

in The Wayward Bus, the Pritchards, represent the worst aspects of the world of success and "respectability" which Mack and the boys have escaped. And the values of Steinbeck's thirties fiction--honesty, anti-materialism, love, and work--remain; but continuing the tendency of Cannery Row and The Pearl, these values are increasingly narrowed in The Wayward Bus from a social to an individual basis.

Like The Pearl, The Wayward Bus may be read on an abstracted as well as a realistic level. The epigraph from Everyman prepares the reader for allegory in The Wayward Bus. On this level, the plot concerns the springtime pilgrimage of nine wayfarers from Rebel Corners to San Juan de la Cruz. Lisca groups Steinbeck's passengers into the saved, the damned, and those in Purgatory, and parallels their spiral journey to that in The Divine Comedy. On the journey, each of the damned and purgatorial souls has illusions stripped away through contact with one of the elect. There is a combination prophet/devil figure, old Van Brunt, who incarnates the "everlasting nay," and a secular savior, Juan Chicoy (J. C.) who is, in Steinbeck's words, "all the god the fathers you ever saw driving a six cylinder broken down, battered world through time and space."[22] Having passed through various personal crises, the pilgrims eventually arrive at Saint John of The Cross, and the Everyman allegory is complete. But it is the interactions of the travelers, their "adventures" as Bernice Pritchard calls them, upon which the

realistic plot on the level of character evolves.

When Steinbeck threw out "L'Affaire Lettuceburg" in 1938, he concluded that he just couldn't write satire. Thus he shifted his emphasis from the hated vigilantes to the victimized migrant workers of The Grapes of Wrath. Similarly, in Cannery Row, Steinbeck only tells us about the "generation of trapped, poisoned, and trussed-up men," the successful but sick men with "bad stomachs and bad souls." (CR, 9, 98) But in The Wayward Bus he finally gives life to Mr. Pritchard, a man who epitomizes the qualities scorned by all of Steinbeck's heroes since In Dubious Battle, and who is the object of satire as biting and funny as that heaped on George F. Babbitt. Pritchard is a corporate executive, on his way to a Mexican vacation he doesn't want to take. The Pritchards are traveling by bus in order to get back in touch with "the people." Pritchard has habitually surrounded himself with other men just like himself so as to exclude all "foreign elements and ideas." Pritchard does not think, but is programmed to react; his glasses reflect the light and appear to have no eyes behind them. He completely dominates his wife, Bernice, whom he calls "little girl." Both Pritchard and his wife, who, though herself a victim, is equally despicable, hold completely materialistic values. Their conspicuous consumption is evident in the fact that Bernice wears her mink coat even though it is not cold. Pritchard's conversations invariably turn to business, taxes, or money. The

respectable Mrs. Pritchard is shocked and disgusted when she overhears Camille Oaks, the stripper, telling Norma, the waitress, about how a friend had conned a man into buying her a fur coat. Bernice fails completely to recognize the parallel to her own kind of prostitution, which is necessitated by her husband's tyranny. The Pritchards do not work, and neither is capable of loving anything beyond material possessions.

The Pritchards and their daughter, Mildred, are three of the passengers on Juan Chicoy's shuttle bus. The other passengers are old Van Brunt, Pimples Carson, Juan's apprentice mechanic, Norma, the waitress from the lunchroom at Rebel Corners, Ernest Horton, salesman of curiosities, and Camille Oaks, a blond stripper whose presence kindles the sexual tension which produces the central conflict of the novel. If Juan Chicoy's passengers may be grouped allegorically as the saved, the damned, and those in purgatory, they may also be divided on the realistic level according to work, sex, and love values. Bernice Pritchard believes herself incapable of sexual pleasure, and calls women who do enjoy sex "that kind of woman." Mr. Pritchard's sexual impulses having been strangled by his wife, he sublimates his sexual energy into making money. His only sexual stimulation is his attendance with other businessmen at stag shows, where he had once seen Camille strip. The Pritchards' elitist attitudes separate them from both work and love. When Juan's bus gets

stuck, the resulting crisis of extended contact with "the people" brings the Pritchards' deeply suppressed dislike for each other to the surface, and aroused by Camille's sensuality Pritchard rapes his wife.

With the exception of Van Brunt, the other six characters on the bus are also eventually paired, and experience types and degrees of sexual contact commensurate with their capacities for work or love. Pimples Carson, a sympathetic but ineffectual adolescent who is already becoming a skilled mechanic, is paired with Norma, the waitress. But Norma lives in a fantasy world dominated by Clark Gable, and the moment of contact between Pimples and Norma is brief.

Ernest Horton, a recently discharged soldier with a Purple Heart, sells the "Little Wonder Artificial Sore Foot," but unlike Pritchard, has no illusions about his business or his salesmanship. Ernest is an honest and thoughtful young man, and rather cynical about the work that he, a returned veteran, must do to survive. It is Ernest who punctures Pritchard's grand illusions about his own business ethics, which Ernest calls "blackmail." Ernest also forces Pritchard to admit his own inadequacy as a worker. In spite of his inflated self-image, Pritchard could not repair a carburetor, replace an electrical fuse, or survive by killing and eating a cow.

Camille Oaks is equally without illusions, an increasingly prominent characteristic of the post-war Steinbeck hero

or heroine. Camille is kind and understanding, and strips because it is the easiest of the kinds of "hustling" available to her. Camille is capable of love, and though she and Ernest do not get together in the novel, we are left with the impression that they will meet again in Los Angeles.

When we meet Mildred Pritchard, she has already rejected her parents' values, and is struggling to escape their domination. When Juan purposely mires the bus, and then walks away, planning to escape back to his native Mexico, Mildred follows him. She finds Juan where he is napping in an old barn, and they make love--but only after Juan forces her to be the aggressor, to take responsibility for her love act.

The changes in Steinbeck's attitudes between 1939 and 1947 are obvious and significant. His heroes now live with disillusionment. The only phalanx mentioned in The Wayward Bus is the group of corporate executives of which the perverted Pritchard is a part. In spite of their common problem of being stranded together, no sense of community evolves among the travelers. Collectivism has given way to individualism. And yet the key values of love and work remain. In this, Steinbeck's first novel of romantic love, the successful lover is also the honest, skilled worker. On page three of the novel Steinbeck intrudes to observe that Juan Chicoy "was a man, and there aren't very many of them in the world."[23] What does Steinbeck mean? Juan is a "magnificient mechanic."

He and Pimples enjoy "teamwork" as they overhaul the differential of the old bus. And Juan is also a passionate but honest lover. When he first sees her, he looks "frankly and with admiration at Mildred's legs." (WB, 49) He honestly faces, but rejects, his cruel impulse to seduce Mildred and then "throw her away," an impulse arising in his Indian blood, for in his "dark past lay the hatred for the ojos claros." (WB, 56) Similarly, Juan desires to escape from his sloppy wife, Alice, and from the tyranny of routine. But he comes back to his responsibilities because he knows that Alice loves him. He knows that love is "a structure and it has an architecture, and you can't leave it without tearing off a piece of yourself." (WB, 93)

As Lisca notes, The Wayward Bus ends on a positive note. The bus, though wayward, does arrive at Saint John of the Cross. In "a world populated by artificial and dishonest Pritchards, deluded Normas, [and] cynical Van Brunts . . ., there are also realistic and objective people like Juan Chicoy, without whom the world would flounder, who always return to dig it out of the mud, people like Camille Oaks and Ernest Horton, who are capable of tenderness and affection toward their fellow passengers."[24] The forces that propel the wayward bus are love and work. But for Steinbeck, the hope that these forces could be collectively channeled seemed dead by 1947. His next fictional work concerns the life of Emiliano Zapata, the Mexican revolutionary, whom Steinbeck admired

because he rejected leadership for individual peace.

In chapter two I duscussed the series of crucial events in 1948 which seem to have advanced the alteration of many of Steinbeck's key ideas and values. Between The Wayward Bus and the film script, Viva Zapata! (1950) came a 1949 letter to John O'Hara which details some of the changes in Steinbeck which would plunge his work for the rest of his life into an indulgent individualism, a kind of escape into the personal from which he would never fully recover. "The only creative thing our species has is the individual, lonely mind. Two people can create a child but I know of no other thing created by a group. The group ungoverned by individual thinking is a horrible destructive principle."[25]

Robert Morsberger, editor of Viva Zapata! (1975) is essentially right when he argues that Zapata was a rebel, at least by temperament, rather than a revolutionary.[26] But in chapter four I disagreed with his suggestion that "this distinction runs throughout the work of John Steinbeck." This point of view assumes that Steinbeck had not changed significantly between 1939 and 1950. To support his view, Morsberger argues that Tom Joad is merely a rebel. Morsberger accepts Camus' definition of the rebel as "an independent nonconformist protesting regimentation and oppression." (Zapata, xi) And Morsberger also links Mac and Jim with the "revolutionist," Fernando Aguirre of Viva Zapata! But Steinbeck's Zapata differs significantly from Tom Joad, and Fernando hardly resembles

Mac or Jim. Rather than indicating continuity in Steinbeck's thought, the contrast in the characters suggests how much the author has changed.

A thesis of chapter four was that Mac was Steinbeck's "self-character" in In Dubious Battle. Certainly Steinbeck respected the "professional agitators" in that novel. But in Viva Zapata! the professional revolutionist, Fernando Aguirre, is cold and inhuman. Somewhat like Jim Nolan, he stays "cold sober" when everyone else is drinking. But unlike Mac or Jim, Fernando declares: "I'm a friend to no one--and to nothing except logic . . . . This is the time for killing!" (Zapata, 72) Zapata is never more favorably impressed with Fernando than the reader or movie viewer is likely to be, and near the end he turns on Fernando. "Now I know you. No wife, no woman, no home, no field. You do not gamble, drink, no friends, no love . . . . You only destroy . . . . I guess that's your love . . . . And I'll tell you what you will do now! You will go to Obregón or Carranza!" (Zapata, 102) And Zapata is right. Steinbeck's 1950 revolutionist betrays Zapata and joins his enemies. Fernando does not resemble either Mac or Jim, or the Steinbeck of the 1930's.

Some of the changes Steinbeck made from his sources on Zapata also suggest changes in Steinbeck's values. The role of Fernando itself is completely Steinbeck's fiction. John Womack, author of the recent comprehensive study, Zapata and The Mexican Revolution, observes that "intellectuals had very

little part in determining Zapatista policy, or in determining anything about the Mexican revolution."[27] The Fernando Steinbeck creates is an intellectual "textbook" revolutionist who comes from the United States.

One of the strengths of Steinbeck's film script is that he telescoped a complex revolution into a few episodes which are dramatic rather than documentary. But at the same time, Steinbeck also romanticized Zapata's life a great deal, and perhaps as significant as the addition of the character Fernando are Steinbeck's inclusion of Zapata's passionate love for his wife Josefa, which was discovered through Steinbeck's research, and Zapata's abdication of power, which is only partly true historically.[28] These fictional alterations reflect Steinbeck's growing disaffection with revolutionary change, his increasing devotion to romantic love, and his developing belief in individualism rather than collectivism.

Though the Mexican revolution (both historically and in Steinbeck's fictional treatment) was a collective movement, Zapata remains primarily an individualist. He exhibits a "natural insolence," and his early acts, the cutting of a fence, a prisoner's ropes, and the telegraph wires, represent primarily symbolic rebellion. Zapata at first rejects leadership because he has "private affairs. Besides, I don't want to be the conscience of the world." (Zapata, 34) Zapata is chosen by the people as a natural leader, but when the revolution is won, he rejects the presidency, surrendering the

country to the next generation of tyrants, to return to private life. Steinbeck's Zapata is admirable in most respects, but is an ardent individualist.

The theme of romantic love is important in Viva Zapata! as it is in almost every Steinbeck novel from The Wayward Bus on. Unlike the historical Zapata, who, according to Womack had several bastard children, Steinbeck's hero is faithfully and passionately in love with his wife, Josefa. This love is a key part of the personal life to which Zapata understandably longs to return.

As usual, the Steinbeckian lover is also an effectual worker. Zapata has the "best eye for a horse in the south of Mexico." (Zapata, 27) Though Steinbeck's Zapata cannot read, he is articulate in both Spanish and Aztec.

As in Steinbeck's "engaged" fiction, it is the farm working class that is in revolt. And again, land hunger and love of the land and of working the land are central motivational forces. Though the Indians have for centuries raised their food (corn) on the land, the Mexican version of the California Growers' Association believes the land "was made for sugar . . . made by God himself . . . . These animals [the Indians] can't be expected to understand the science of agriculture." (Zapata, 49) But the Indians are the ones who do "understand" and love the land. The old man, Lazaro, says, "The field is like a wife." (Zapata, 39) For Zapata, and for the people he reluctantly leads, love and work are one.

Though many of Steinbeck's central values were in obvious retreat in 1950, Viva Zapata! is still an honest work about a man Steinbeck considered "one of the greatest men who ever lived."[29] But the downward spiral of Steinbeck's great progressive spirit had begun, and by 1963 he would advocate a re-release of Viva Zapata! as a tool of counter-revolutionary propaganda. With the anticipated participation of the State Department, the USIA, and President Kennedy, Steinbeck wanted to alter the film script to "sharpen and clarify the tendency of the revolt to go Fascist as it has all over the world . . . . It would be a public service."[30] Steinbeck's decline would accelerate sharply throughout the fifties as his work became increasingly narrow, individualistic, and inconsequential, a feeble shadow of his great work of the thirties.

In 1950 Steinbeck completed his third play-novelette, Burning Bright. The language of this work is highly stylized and inflated. Steinbeck employed techniques of expressionistic drama in this latest "everyman" parable; a sense of universality is somewhat artificially attempted by changing the setting of each "act" of the novelette from circus to farm to sea, with their three corresponding ancient lines of work from which the characters draw a sense of pride and immortality.

In the first act of the drama, Joe Saul is distressed by his inability to give his wife, Mordeen, a child, which would ensure the perpetuation of his own long blood line. In act two, Mordeen, out of deep love for her husband, takes the

seed of young Victor in order to produce the child Joe wants so badly. In the final act, Friend Ed must kill Victor to prevent Victor from destroying the love between Mordeen and Joe. But like Oedipus, Joe insists on self-knowledge, and learns that his seed is dead, that the child cannot be his. The thematic climax is Joe Sauls's acceptance of the child, and his new awareness that "every man is father to all children and every child must have all men as father."[31]

The theme of Burning Bright is immortality, but it is not the individual life that is important. It is the life of the species. This is the lesson that Joe Saul must learn. Burning Bright is Steinbeck's last fictional celebration of collective organism. Mordeen has the same "mysterious smile" of motherhood as Rose of Sharon Joad. And perhaps the best statement of the theme of Burning Bright can be recalled from Ma Joad in The Grapes of Wrath: "We're the people--We go on."[32] Like Ma Joad, Joe Saul learns the insignificance of his own particular seed, and learns to embrace the family of man.

Like the typical Steinbeck hero, Saul is a man of love and work. He is tender, compassionate, and thoughtful. In each new setting he is a skilled performer--as trapeze artist, as farmer who loves his land, and as seaman. Fontenrose points out that it is not entirely clear why Victor should "be underprivileged and not have the right to life, love, and parenthood that is granted to Joe Saul."[33] The only apparent answer is that he is personally deficient in love and work.

At first Victor is surly, defensive, and without love. But Victor develops, and as the story progresses his growing love for Mordeen becomes convincing. Victor's death at the hands of Friend Ed seems to contradict the theme of brotherhood.

Friend Ed is yet another evocation of Steinbeck's now dead friend, Ed Ricketts. He is a shadowy and underdeveloped figure, almost Saul's alter-ego, who always appears when help or advice is needed.

The name of Joe Saul recalls both Joseph, the "father" of Jesus, and Saul, the first king of Israel.[34] But the initials may also suggest John Steinbeck. Steinbeck was forty-two when his first child was born, and his letters indicate his anxiety over the perpetuation of his family line. His mother's family name would end the next year with the death of the last male Hamilton, while Steinbeck was writing East of Eden. And being the only Steinbeck son, the perpetuation of his father's family name rested with John. Burning Bright may reflect the conflict between the author's personal desire for "immortality" and his lingering sense that the perpetuation of the species is more important. It is Friend Ed who helps Joe Saul accept the immersion of his individuality into species existence.

Following Burning Bright came the most personal novel of Steinbeck's career, East of Eden. In 1951 Steinbeck and his new wife, Elaine, were living in relative luxury and anonymity in a servant-run Manhatten apartment. Steinbeck was

writing occasional propaganda broadcasts for the Voice of America, but he had generally insulated himself from present reality by submersion in his family saga. More is known about the writing of East of Eden than about any other Steinbeck work, because during the ten months of composition, he addressed to Pascal Covici a daily journal which details both personal affairs and the evolution of the novel.

Steinbeck had been planning East of Eden ("Salinas Valley") in his mind for at least five years, and considered it his best and most important work, for which all his previous work had been "practice" and "preparation."[35] A major flaw of the book is that it is really two stories. The central fiction concerns three generations of the Trask family, but members of Steinbeck's own mother's family are also major characters, included, Steinbeck said, to provide balance and counterpoint. Even the author himself is a minor character, and the novel is a moralistic story addressed to Steinbeck's sons.

As Joseph Krutch points out, East of Eden functions on three levels--the personal, the cultural (another story of the westward movement) and the universal or symbolic (the story of mankind).[36] Steinbeck's desire to "put everything I know" in the novel detracts from the life of the story, for personalities are sometimes abstracted for the sake of their symbolic value. The story's structure is simple chronology, and the repetition of the Cain and Abel motif in each

generation provides a somewhat mechanical unity. The initials "C" and "A" appear in each generation of the Trask family: Cyrus and Alice, the parents; Charles and Adam, the sons; Adam and Cathy, husband and wife; and Caleb and Aron, their twin sons. On the universal level, Steinbeck is retelling the "oldest western story," the story of good and evil, of free will.

It is through the philosophic speculations of Steinbeck's grandfather, Samuel Hamilton, and Adam's Chinese servant, Lee, that the theme of free will is expressed. Late in the book the central characters finally reach the awareness that they have both freedom and responsibility for their choices. The Hebrew word "Timshel" in Genesis 4:7, which Lee's aged Chinese scholar friends translate "Thou Mayest," is the focal point of the theme of good and evil and free will. Adam's son Caleb, who indirectly kills his brother, is granted his existential choice. He may, if he will, "rule over sin."

Free will is not extended to Cathy, however; Steinbeck creates her as a "monster." The author explicitly states in introducing Cathy, "I believe there are monsters born in the world to human parents."[37] And in his Eden journal, Steinbeck describes Cathy as "by nature a whore." (Journal, p. 56) Choice is denied to Cathy. Though Steinbeck devotes twenty pages of the novel to her youth and adolescence (up to the time when she murders her parents and runs away) he does not account for her monstrousness. He later notes in

his journal, "You can't go into the mind of a monster because what happens there is completely foreign and might be gibberish." (Journal, 62) The believability of the free will theme is seriously weakened by the insertion of this unexamined stock character in a central role. Cathy is a loveless, workless, abusive person who somewhat resembles Steinbeck's first protagonist, Henry Morgan, and who, like Morgan, is not a believable human being.

Part of the source of this inconsistency (which seems not to have bothered Steinbeck) may stem from the fact that he himself seems to have seen his theme clearly only rather late in the writing. It is nearly three months after Cathy enters Steinbeck's journal as monster that Steinbeck settles on an interpretation of Genesis 4:7 in which "Timshel" means "Thou mayest" rather than "Thou shalt" or "Do thou" (rule over sin). (Journal, 38, 56, 136)

Most of the characters in East of Eden are weak in both love and work. Adam's father, Cyrus, loves no one, and amasses a fortune through theft instead of work. Adam uses this dirty money to buy a beautiful farm in the Salinas Valley, but he neither loves ncr works the land. Instead he moves to town and buys the ice plant, and tries to get rich quick by shipping fresh lettuce to New York. Instead of working on the farm, Adam's son Cal makes a small fortune through war profiteering. In partnership with Steinbeck's Uncle Will, Cal buys beans at the pre-World War I price of five cents per

pound and sells them to British purchasing agents for twelve and a half cents. Yet, at least Adam and Cal have Steinbeck's sympathy.

The only love/work heroes in the novel are Adam's Chinese servant, Lee, and Steinbeck's grandfather, Samuel Hamilton. Lee loves intensely, works hard in his menial job, and is a scholar and philosopher. And in Samuel we can see the man who was perhaps the source of Steinbeck's great respect for the skilled worker. The central figure in the Hamilton family saga, Samuel is the most admirable character in East of Eden. Samuel is lover, worker, thinker, drinker, philosopher, midwife, and master craftsman. But Samuel dies half way through the novel, and only his spirit lives on.

Though he seems never to fully come to life, Adam Trask is really the central character in the novel. But Adam does not command our respect as the previously typical Steinbeck protagonist does. Adam has, of course, been emotionally scarred by his father's perverse domination, which Cyrus called love. And Adam's spirit is further trampled by Cathy's rejection and scorn. The being Adam saves and restores and loves shoots him and runs away from him and their baby sons. Adam tells Cathy, "I never had energy or direction or--well, even a great desire to live before I had you." (Eden, 184) But Cathy cannot be touched by love, and she almost destroys Adam's newborn capacity to love too.

It is noteworthy that the fading of the love/work hero coincides with the death of collectivity in Steinbeck's fiction. The only collective action in East of Eden is the wartime mob harassment of the Steinbecks' German neighbor, Mr. Fenchel. In one of the three scenes in which the young Steinbeck is a character, he admits his own shame at having been a part of this vigilante action. All the positive actions of the novel are performed by individuals whose greatness seems to reside in their individualism. And Steinbeck mounts the soap box early in the book to denounce group man. He describes collectivity as the "danger" of the time. "Our species is the only creative species, and it has only one creative instrument, the individual mind and spirit of a man. Nothing was ever created by two men . . . . The group never invents anything . . . . The free, exploring mind of the individual human is the most valuable thing in the world." (Eden, 151) Steinbeck still believed in 1951 that the writer's job was "affirmative statement," and he still believed in the possibility of progress. He wrote in his journal, "Although East of Eden is not Eden, it is not insuperably far away." (Journal, 146) But Steinbeck had lost his faith in society, in collective action. And with that loss he also lost the ability to perceive the enemy of both the group and the individual. 1951 manifestations of Steinbeck's old enemy were the House UnAmerican Activities Committee and Senator McCarthy. But Steinbeck was too far removed from

present reality, too comfortable, too deeply compromised, and too far withdrawn into his personal world to see it. "I am so happy," he wrote in 1951. "Only the boys [his sons] trouble me--nothing else. Not the war in Korea--it seems remote. In fact, not anything." (Journal, 25) For the remainder of his faded career, only the individual would command Steinbeck's interest and respect.

Steinbeck wrote his last "Ed Ricketts" story, Sweet Thursday, in 1954. The shift from social to personal values continues. The death instinct, which would lead the protagonist of Steinbeck's last novel, The Winter of Our Discontent, to the brink of suicide, is a muted but important force in Sweet Thursday. And in Sweet Thursday Doc finds his final meaning in romantic love, just as the gopher of Cannery Row had. After the war, the detached Doc has returned to Monterrey to pursue his scientific investigations, now into a comparative study of the aggressive impulses of cephalopods and men. But his work is fruitless until he meets, and finally surrenders in romantic love, to Suzy, one of the hookers at Fauna's Bear Flag. Sweet Thursday is the only novel of Steinbeck's career in which the central plot is a love story. At last Steinbeck gives the aloof Doc the knowledge he withheld from him for so long. Though "Doc" could not involve himself directly with the workers of In Dubious Battle, he belatedly learns, at least, that "maybe you can't be wholly yourself because you've never given yourself wholly to someone else."[38]

As in Burning Bright and East of Eden, friendship love is also an important theme in Sweet Thursday. There is mutual love and respect between Fauna and her girls at the Bear Flag, and among Mack and the boys at the Palace Flophouse, still the two "communes" of Cannery Row. But everyone in the larger community also likes Doc, and all conspire to save him through romantic love. As in Steinbeck's two previous novels, friendship requires that one take responsibility for a friend, being willing even to hurt the friend if necessary to force the friend to face the truth about himself. In Sweet Thursday, the retarded Hazel (one of the boys) breaks Doc's arm and his pride, so that he will need, and can accept, Suzy's help and love.

Steinbeck's former celebration of work is hardly in evidence in Sweet Thursday. His former denunciations of the rich and their exploitation of workers gives way to a Rickettsian "understanding acceptance." Old Jingleballicks, who "was born so rich that he didn't know he was rich at all," but who free-loads off his friends, is treated with humorous affection. (ST, 144) And the writer who was outraged at the exploitation of American farm workers in the thirties now seems amused by--almost praises--the exploitation of Mexican workers by Joseph and Mary Rivas, the new owner of Lee Chong's grocery. Only Doc does honest work in Sweet Thursday; he is still the non-teleological scientist, now pursuing the source of man's apparent death instinct. But as with Steinbeck

himself, Doc's work is frustrated and ineffectual until he gives himself in love.

Steinbeck's long championship of group man receives a final denunciation in Sweet Thursday. Though Cannery Row is still a community characterized by "collective goodness and generosity," collectivity is blasted and repudiated by all the thinkers in the novel. Old Jay reiterates Steinbeck's 1950's sentiment concerning group man. "The only creative thing we have is the individual . . . . The only thing a group has ever created is bookkeeping." (ST, 162) And the "Seer," who seems to exist only to express the author's own opinions, is a complete individualist. He advises Doc to seek personal love, and Doc in return warns the Seer, "Don't ever gather disciples . . . . They'd have you on a cross in no time." (ST, 61) Steinbeck's key values, now and for the rest of his life, were individualism, individual work, and individual, personal love--friendship and romance.

The Short Reign of Pippin IV (1957) is perhaps Steinbeck's worst novel. Though he had recognized in 1938 that he could not write satire, Pippin is the vehicle for the satiric expression of a wide range of the author's views. Though it is at times funny, Pippin is a book without feeling; the tone is light, but cynical, humor. Pippin is void of lovers and workers, of love and work. All personal relationships are shallow, and most involve dishonesty and exploitation. And there is no group identity.

The plot of Pippin involves the reinstitution of the French monarchy with amateur astronomer, Pippin Héristal, descendent of Charlemagne, as king. Pippin's reign is short, for he calls for "radical" reforms, which sound much like the platform of the American Democratic party of 1956, whose convention Steinbeck covered as journalist. But Pippin is a pale hero indeed; he is a parody of Steinbeck's earlier social reformers. Pippin is wealthy and unthinking, detached and "apolitical;" he lacks deep feelings, including love, and he does not work. Yet Steinbeck presents Pippin sympathetically. When he is deposed from kingship, Pippin slips happily back into his comfortable private life, a move, we must assume, Steinbeck applauds.

None of the characters in Pippin is wholly believable, but Steinbeck uses several of them (Pippin, Uncle Charlie, Sister Hyacinthe, Tod Johnson, son of the American "Egg King," and an old man who pulls out things that other people push into a moat) to deliver cynical and reactionary sermons which the author would have done well to save for his two books of opinions, Travels with Charley and America and Americans. Among the objects of Steinbeck's satiric speeches are: Americans and their values, political parties, self-made men, Hollywood, and corporations. But while he criticizes them, Steinbeck now actually seems to think that the hope of salvation lies in what he sees as the efficiency, flexibility, and humanitarianism of corporations! Tod Johnson explains

to Pippin the advantages of executive fiat in getting things done.

It is not surprising that Steinbeck's most cynical and reactionary work followed the abandonment of his former values. Pippin was clearly an indulgence by a writer who had little left to say. Steinbeck described Pippin to friends as "a little book which could be amusing."[39] And his politics of the mid-fifties are perhaps best revealed by his defense of Pippin. "In our scowling era, laughter may well be the only counter-revolutionary weapon."[40] (italics mine)

For the last decade of his life, Steinbeck traveled widely, worked on his "translation" of Arthurian legend into American, dabbled in journalism and wrote two more journalistic books, Travels with Charley (1962) and America and Americans (1966), defended the Vietnam war as a correspondent for Newsday, and wrote one last novel, The Winter of Our Discontent (1961). In his last novel, Steinbeck seems honest, but defeated; Winter is his wasteland of individualism, materialism, rootlessness, and compromised love and work.

As I mentioned in chapter two, Winter was the product of Steinbeck's last efforts to save himself. In late 1959 he returned from England, collapsed, and almost willed himself to death. But from the depths of discontent and despair, he courageously welcomed the new decade with a New Year's letter to Elizabeth Otis which reveals acute self-knowledge. "I have to slough off nearly fifteen years and go back and

start again at the split path where I went wrong because it was easier."[41] After completing Winter, Steinbeck would set out on his travels with Charley, in search of America. But The Winter of Our Discontent seems to be Steinbeck's search for his lost self.

As suggested in chapter two, being uprooted from California cut Steinbeck off from the source of the truth he knew. But by 1960 he had tapped the soil of New York. Winter is not only his only novel set on his new turf, but it is also his only contemporary work since the 1940's. In fact, the book climaxes on July 1, 1960, the exact date on which that part of the book was written.[42] Steinbeck seems to have been grasping for a new hold on his current realities.

The Winter of Our Discontent is the story of Ethan Allen Hawley, grandson of a great whaling captain, now reduced to clerk in a grocery store once owned by his family. The story begins on Good Friday, a day on which the rather innocent Ethan is confronted with a series of temptations--to have sex with Margie Young-Hunt, his wife's best friend, to cheat his boss, Marullo, and even to rob the bank across the alley. Through personal temptation, Ethan is able to see clearly for the first time the extent of corruption among his own ancestors, his friends, and the town leaders of New Baytown. As the story unfolds, Ethan sees that even his own son, Allen, has accepted a code of amorality. Gradually Ethan comes to see himself as an obsolete fool, and decides to

compromise his principles just long enough to get ahead. Then he can resume his morality, he thinks. But free will is a weakened concept in Winter, and Ethan over-estimates his power to recover virtue. By the end of the novel he is suicidal, for his compromise has led to the betrayal and deportation of Marullo, an illegal alien, and the death of Ethan's boyhood "blood brother," Danny Taylor. Ethan has provided the money with which Danny, an alcoholic, drinks himself to death, and Ethan has received in exchange Danny's meadow, a valuable piece of real estate where the city fathers want to build an airport. In the end Ethan is saved from suicide only by the love of his daughter, Ellen, and by the knowledge that he must endure, "else another light might go out."[43]

The notion that Winter is Steinbeck's "last will and testament" is supported by the fact that the point of view of the novel, which is always omniscient, begins in third person, but shifts unexplainably to first person; much of the book is devoted to Ethan's (Steinbeck's?) inner monologues, speculations, rationalizations, soul-searching, and turmoil. And the self-analyzing narrator is both cynic and didactic moralist, who editorializes widely on subjects ranging from rather uncomplimentary generalizations about women, to expressions of dismay about universal corruption in all levels of the power structure, to the extinction of the American Dream. Even Steinbeck's last line of defense, faith in the individual, now seems shaky. Ethan's grandfather had

taught him that the only power is "one man alone. Can't depend on anything else." (Winter, 52) And in the last chapter Ethan tells us, "It isn't true that there's a community of light, a bonfire of the world. Everyone carries his own, his lonely own." But, Ethan continues, "My light is out." (Winter, 298) The only feeble hope left to Ethan, to Steinbeck, and to the reader, is that there may still be other individual lights, feebly burning.

The Winter of Our Discontent is primarily not a book of love and work. Many of the characters--banker Baker, Margie Young-Hunt, and even Ethan's son, Allen--neither love nor work. Ethan does love the few closest to him, he does work hard for them, and he even compromises his morality to provide material possessions for them. Ethan is saved, but barely, and only after he has profited handsomely by sacrificing others whom he supposedly loves. And he is saved, not by his own love or work, not by gallantry or virtue, but by a chance expression of personal love by his daughter.

This last novel is the winter, the wasteland, of Steinbeck's own discontent, and he holds out little of his former confidence. His vision of collectivity, the strength behind the best of his love and work, is dead. He is a man compromised and defeated, broken in spirit and stripped of hope. Yet Steinbeck, like Ethan, is last seen struggling back from the abyss, having decided, in Camus' terms, not to commit suicide, and so confronted with the imperative to

salvage the remaining fragments of his life, shored against his ruin.

Afterword

Apparent in all of Steinbeck's work is the recognition of the existence in man and in society of the counter tendencies of eros and thanatos. Love and death impulses are forever at odds. And in Steinbeck's later life and work, one finds discouragement, and sometimes virtual acceptance of the dominance of death forces over man and society. But Steinbeck's lasting greatness is found in the time and in the work in which he fervently rejected Freud's conclusion, that observed historical reality was a "natural" condition. Freud believed that work was ultimately detrimental to love, because the expenditure of love energy in work would deplete the worker's love resources, thus unbinding suppressed aggression. Because he did not recognize the complementary possibilities in love and work, Freud concluded that "the two processes of individual and of cultural development must stand in hostile opposition to each other." (See chap. 1, note 6) But Steinbeck believed, at least in the 1930's, in the possibility of a society based upon cooperation, a society in which the fulfillment of individual and group needs might occur simultaneously, a society in which group love might bind together individual energies into group work, work

consciously directed toward the satisfaction of the needs of all. Steinbeck's greatest strength was his vision of collectivity.

Underlying Steinbeck's vision of collectivity was his acute perception of what Marcuse calls the governing reality principle of the age, "performance," and its political implications. Social domination increased during the depression of the thirties, amplifying the normal isolation, inequalities, and exploitation upon which the capitalist superstructure functions. And though Steinbeck neither endorsed any particular alternative political structure nor proposed a comprehensive plan of his own, he clearly understood American capitalist domination systematically and universally. In books like In Dubious Battle and The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck makes clear his recognition and rejection of the basic individualistic, aggressive, and acquisitive values which underlie competitive capitalist society. He also recognized that, in Marcuse's terms, the "containment of social change" and the creation and maintenance of "one-dimensional man" were politically motivated, and could be countered only through collective political action. Steinbeck's engaged fiction exemplifies Marcuse's conclusion that "civilization is first of all progress in work . . . . Work in civilization is itself to a great extent social utilization of aggressive impulses and is thus work in the service of Eros." (See chapter one, note eighteen)

In his greatest work, collectivity is Steinbeck's key value. But because Steinbeck saw love and work so positively interrelated, his engaged fiction projects a reciprocating relationship in which group love is the unifying force behind collective action, which in turn enhances group identity and solidarity. According to Freud, we love those who are most like us and those in whom we can see our ideal selves. Steinbeck's greatest love/work heroes project an outreaching love, but ultimately this love encompasses only those with whom the love/work heroes identify. Thus there is a political basis to their class-oriented group love.

All of Steinbeck's greatest heroes are honest, skilled, and productive workers. They are men and women who work with their hands, often as carpenters, mechanics or farmers, in occupations in which workers interact directly with their media and in which their "purposeful activity" directly affects the material world. The worker's motive is typically collective love; and by productive work he or she both helps to create cooperative society and earns a place in it.

A central purpose of this study has been the examination of love and work in Steinbeck's fiction, and of the forces which were destructive of these values. But the ultimate value in Steinbeck's best fiction, that value to which even love and work were subsidiary, was collectivity. And Steinbeck's lasting contribution, as writer, political thinker, and humanitarian, is rooted in this vision of collectivity.

Chapter I

Notes

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[16]Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, p. 52.

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Chapter V

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