JOHN STEINBECK:
A STUDY OF HIS HUMOUR

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SUBMITTED BY:
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Certified that Mr. Mashkoor Ali MSc registered as a research scholar (Ph.D.) under the supervision of Dr. S.U. Khan and he completed a major portion of his work on 'John Steinbeck: A Study of his Humour' under Mr. Khan's supervision.

To the best of my knowledge the thesis is Mr. Mashkoor Ali's own work, and it has not been submitted for the award of any other degree.

Professor Masoodul Hasan
Supervisor and Chairman
P R E F A C E

As Stevenson is Junius Maltby's favourite reading in *The Pastures of Heaven*, John Steinbeck is my favourite writer. His mode of writing appeals me, his 'cunning little living dolls' amuse me and his way of thinking fascinates me.

It did not take me long to notice, after reading his *Tortilla Flat*, that humour is a prominent element in his art, which makes his works a pleasant reading and so enduringly alive.

In bestowing its 1962 Nobel Prize for literature on Steinbeck, Swedish Academy has aptly cited his 'sympathetic humour' as a distinctive feature of his strength and individuality. Nevertheless, nothing has specifically been said about it.

Hence, the purpose of the present study is to examine and analyse Steinbeck's humour in his novels in relation to an important American comic tradition of the Southwest.

With this aim in mind, the present thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter, "Comic Muse and the American Tradition," is a brief and general analysis of American humour from the colonial days to this day highlighting
the theme, characters, language and other comic modes
employed by the major American humorists down through the
times showing Steinbeck's relevance to them which is explored
in detail in the subsequent chapters. I have limited the
discussion to a relatively small number of the most
representative humorists. The choice has been guided
partly by technical aspects of comic devices, but it has,
however, been somewhat arbitrary and subjective also.

Chapter two, "Beginnings," discusses Steinbeck's humor
in his early works detailing his strong and unmistakable
ties with the humor of the American Southwest in terms of
class, theme, language and structure which he exploits
on a larger scale in his more mature works.

Chapter three, "Celebrity," treats the works of his
middle period which made him known in America, showing him as
a good humorist employing the early comic modes and
patterns more successfully and effectively. I have slightly
moved away, here, from chronological order in including
_Cannery Row_ for it seems to be more related to me to this
group of writing in its tone and spirit than Steinbeck's
later writings of the post-war period.

Chapter four, "Decadence," deals with the works of the
last phase of his literary career. It shows that the older
comic devices—oral tall tales, exaggeration, grotesquerie, irony, roguery—are still the integral part of his comic art, his humour has, nevertheless, lost its early spirit of gaiety and sprightliness.

The "Round Up" is a sort of conclusion that in addition to attesting his debt to Southwestern humorists, attempts to establish Steinbeck, like them all, a strictly regional writer with typically American sensibility who found his native life a rich mine for comic writings.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Personal thanks are rather difficult to express adequately in formal words. Yet it pleases me to avail this opportunity to thank all those Steinbeck studies and scholars who have greatly benefited me.

I gratefully acknowledge my greatest debt to Mr. M.M. Rai Jami of Rajasthan University, Jaipur, for having initiated me into the study of American humour to Professor Walter Blair (Chicago), Hamlin Hill (New Mexico), and Brom Weber (California), the eminent scholars of American humour, who had been kind enough to me in replying my queries and explaining me the intricate and typically American tendencies of their humour—a field to which I was not fully exposed.

The present work was originally started under the able supervision of the late Dr. Salamatullah Khan, whose sudden and demise greatly deprived me of his experienced guidance and critical insight. I owe him a deep sense of gratitude.

This work could not have been completed, had I Professor Warren G. French not come to my rescue. In him, I had a sort of extra-guide and gentle mentor. Not only that he simply went through the chapters of my thesis, but also, as he is a distinguished Steinbeck scholar, suggested
me some specific references to improve the quality of my endeavour that would have otherwise eluded me. I am really thankful to him for his generous and untiring help and for his sustained interest in my work.

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Mashkoor Ali
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"Laughter comes later, like wisdom teeth, and laughter at yourself comes last of all in a mad race with death, and sometimes it isn't in time."

_East of Eden, p.438._
CHAPTER 1

COMIC MUSE AND THE AMERICAN TRADITION
The beginnings of humour in America are closely connected with the growth and development of the national character, the gradual evolution of America as a nation. The growth of the American nation and that of the laughter went hand in hand.

The Newfoundland was regarded as a wonderful place, an El Dorado, a land of unlimited potentialities and plenty of opportunities for those who wanted to acquire wealth and honour. It was a land flowing with milk and honey where precious jewels and diamonds were in abundance and could easily be found anywhere anytime. Beneath the earth were concealed silver and gold which could be unearthed at one's own convenience. The plants, herbs and roots had medical properties which could cure even fatal and incurable ailments, and wild animals were in plenty for food, and fish, easily obtainable. No one was probably more eloquent about America's salubrious climate and richness of her soil and natural resources than Francis Higginson in his New England's Plantation.

Many that have been weak and sickly in old England, by coming hither have been thoroughly healed, and grown healthful and strong. None can more truly speak hereof than myself. My friends that knew me can well tell how very sickly I have been, and continually in physic, being much troubled with tormenting pain and abundance of melancholic humours. But since I came hither... I thank God I have had perfect health, and freed from pain and whereas before time I clothed myself with double clothes and thick waistcoats to keep me warm, even in summer time, I do now go as thin clad as any... a sun of New England's air is better than a whole draught of old England's ale.
Of the Air of New-England with the Temper and Creatures in it.

The Temper of the Air of New-England is one special thing that commends this place. Experience doth manifest that there is hardly a more healthful place to be found in the World that agreeeth better with our English Bodies. Many that have been weak and sickly in old England, by coming hither have been thoroughly healed and grown healthful and strong. For here is an extraordinary clear and dry Air that is of a most healing nature to all such as are of a Cold, Melancholy, Phlegmatick, Rheumatick temper of body. None can more truly speak hereof by their own experience than myself. My friends that knew me well tell how very sickly I have been and continually in Physick, being much troubled with a tormenting pain through an extraordinary weakness of my Stomach, and abundance of Melancholy humour; but since I came hither on this Voyage, I thank God I have had perfect health.

Facsimile copy of the extract from Francis Higginson's
New England's Plantation.
New-England's Plantation.

and freed from paine and vomittings, having a
Stomacke to digest the hardest and coursest
fare, who before could not eat his car meat, and
whereas my Stomacke could onely digest, and
did require such drinkes as was both strong
and flate, now kean and doe often times drink
New-England winne very well, and I that have
not gone without a Cap for many yeares to-
gether, neither dust leave off the fame, have
now cast away my Cap, and doe wear none
at all in the day time: and whereas before-
time I cloathed my felle with double cloathes
and thickke Waistcoats to keep me warme,
even in the Summer time, I doe now goe as
thin clad as any, onely wearing a light Stuffe
Cofflete upon my Shirt and Stuffe Breeches
of one thickness without Linings. Besides,
I have one of my Children that was formerly
most lamentably handled with force breaking
out of both his hands and feet of the
...Euill, but since he came hither he is very well
over he was, and there is hope of perfect
recoverie shortly, even by the verie whole comple-
ment of the Aire, alturing, digesting and dry-
ing vp the cold and crude humors of the Body:
and therefore I think it is wise course
for all cold complections to come to take Phy-
sicke in New-England: for a cup of New-Eng-
land's Aire is better then a whole draught of old
Englands Ale.
This was essentially the exaggerated picture of America presented by the early settlers and similar examples of this kind of glorified America can endlessly be cited from the pages of Alasop, Morton and Ward. Such a comic magnification and grotesque exaggeration have always been the essential part of the unconscious humour of the colonial promotional tracts from the beginning.

Although America's colonial heterogeneous population, the comingle of miscellaneous ethnic and cultural groups of different countries fighting their way against adverse forces of nature and social adjustment, establishing in new situations and acclimatizing themselves to an altogether an untamed climate, provided them plenty of incongruities of life, thereby abundant and rich material for humour writing; the early settlers had little or no time at all to notice and realize the comic possibilities of these socio-ludicrous aspects available at hand. It took them nearly about two centuries.

The moment they were settled, and found themselves more secured and free, their attention was automatically shifted from the geographical, topographical and hostile environmental description of wilderness, savage creatures and animals to more pleasant aspect of individual character. Sarah Kemble Knight portrayed a gawky Connecticut Yankee and his rough and vulgar Joan whom she once met in a merchant's house in her *Private Journal of a Journey from Boston to New York* as
a tall country fellow, with his alfogoes full of
tobacco; for they seldom lose their Gudd, but keep
chewing and Spitting as long as they're eyes are open; he
advanc'd to the middle of the room, makes an awkward stretch,
and spitting a large deal of Aromatick Tincture, he gave a
scrape with his shovel like shoe . . . Hugging his own
pretty Body with his hands under his arms, stood staring
round'd him, like a Catt let out of a Basket. At last . . .
he opened his mouth and saids have you any Ribbin for
Hatbands to sell I pray? The Questions and Answers about
the pay being past, the Ribbin is bro't and opened. Pumpkin
Simpson, cries its confounded Gay I vow; and beckning to the
doors, in comes Jane Tawdry, dropping about 50 curtseys, and
stands by him; hee shows her the Ribbin. Law! Young, sais shee,
its right Gent, do you, take it, its dreadfull pretty.2

Much in the same mode, William Byrd II offered an account
of the poor whites he met on his trip to North Carolina, in his

History of the Dividing Line:

Surely there is no place in the World where the Inhabitants
live with less Labour than in N Carolina . . . The Men, for
their Parts, just like the Indians, impose all the Work upon
the poor Women. They make their Wives rise out of their
beds early in the morning, at the same time that they lie
and Snore till the Sun has run one third of his course,
and disperset all the unwholesome Damps. Then, after
Stretching and Yawning for half an Hour, they light their
pipes, and under the Protection of a cloud of Smoke
venture out into the open Air; tho' if it happens to be
never so little cold, they quickly return Shivering into
the Chimney corner. When the weather is mild, they stand
leaning with both their arms upon the corn-field fence, and
gravely consider whether they had best go and take a Small
Heat at the Rough; but generally find reasons to put it off
till another time.

Thus they lead or away their Lives like Solomon's
Sluggard, with their Arms across, and at the winding up
of the Year Scarcely have Bread to Eat.

To speak the Truth, tis a thorough Aversion to Labor
that makes People file off to N Carolina, where Plenty and
Warm Sun confirm them in their Disposition to Laziness for
their whole Lives.3
Both the passages are the admirable limnings of the
life and the modus vivendi of the rustics in colonial
America: their peculiar indiosyncrasies, their odd manners,
queer ways, uncouth living and unhygienic conditions; their
strange ascents and curious and unusual use of regional patois;
which mark the beginning of the real comedy in America later
popularised by Southwestern group of writers. 4

The writers in America now began to capitalize more on
those individualistic traits and local manners of the character
which they often found annoying but entertaining. Jonathan, in
Royall Tyler's The Contrast, is boorish, rough and loud,
ignorant and unpolished.

Washington Irving's Knickerbocker's History of New York
contains many good comic portraits of this sort. Hendrick
Hudson is

... a short, square, brawny old gentleman, with a double
chin, a mastiff mouth, and a broad copper nose which
was supposed in those days to have acquired its fiery
hue from the constant neighborhood of his tobacco-pipe. 5

The physical grotesquerie is rendered equally amusing
in Irving's portrayal of Old Governor Wouter Van Twiller of
the province of Nieuw Nederlandts when he describes him as

.... exactly five feet six inches in height, and six feet
five inches in circumference. ... His body was oblong
and particularly capacious at bottom .... His legs were
short, but sturdy in proportion to the weight they had to
sustain; so that when erect he had not a little the
appearance of a beer-barrel on skids. ( NH, p.161 )....
But more amusing is the portrait of the Connecticut Yankee school teacher in his "The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow":

He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green grassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weather-cock, perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew. To see him striding along the profile of a hill on a windy day, with his clothes bagging and fluttering about him, one might have mistaken him for the genius of famine descending upon the earth, or some scarecrow sloped from a corn-field.

Temperamentally lazy, fun-loving, idler and the neglector of family liabilities, Rip Van Winkle, the paradigm of all American males, is the most interesting. Hunting, fishing and wandering through the forests are the only pleasures he knows best. What actually distinguishes him from the early comic portraits and qualifies him as the forerunner of Southwestern prototypes is his habit of story telling. Sitting "in the shade through a long, lazy summer's day" he would talk "listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing" (CME, p.5).

Irving was the first writer who furnished the workable frame-work to his story, "Rip Van Winkle." Early promotional tracts had almost all the characteristic traits of a tall tale—gigantic exaggeration, outlandish descriptions. Sarah Kemble Knight and William Byrd's comic descriptions of their characters also contain grotesque dialect and incredible
Characters of a tall tale. Benjamin Franklin's eloquence about the prodigality of American sheep in supplying the wool is a good plot for a tall tale.

The very tails of the American Sheep are so laden with wool, that each has a little car or wagon on four little wheels, to support & keep it from trailing on the ground.7

But it needed to be properly worked out in a systematic framework which Irving introduced in his "Rip Van Winkle."

In its essential characteristics and basic structure "Rip Van Winkle" resembles everything in a way that is best in being it a tall tale later practised by the Southwestern humorists. He prefaced his "Rip Van Winkle" and appended a note and postscript to it. Much attention has been given to the authenticity of the story as proclaimed in the epigraph: 'Truth is a thing that ever I will keep' (CTNI, p.1). Hence, he has introduced two narrators within a single story. The story moves slowly with a leisurely pace, introducing Rip Van Winkle, his usual haunts in forest and village, his habits, attitude, behaviour and background returning to village and simple village life with the narrator leading his incredible yarn the characteristic authenticity:

I have even talked with Rip Van Winkle myself, who, when last I saw him, was a very venerable old man, and so perfectly rational and consistent on every other point, that I think no conscientious person could refuse to take this into the bargain . . . The story therefore, is beyond the possibility of doubt. (CTNI, p.15).
Besides Rip Van Winkle, the comic writers of this period introduced a variety of comic characters who later dominated the literary scene in the Southwestern comic writings: Irving's Ichabod Crane in "The Legend of Sleep Hollow" is mean and selfish—the greed and gluttony incarnate. Brom Bones, the rastipole is a rogue who outruns Ichabod by the frightening him out of his wits. Thomas Chandler Haliburton's Sam Slick is an immoral trickster who sells unusable clock for forty dollars, and wins admiration of a hostess by loving and kissing her children. Lowell's Birdofredom is another rogue who uses his missing limbs, lost in war, as a proof of his patriotism in his campaign for Presidency.

With the realistic portrayals of their characters, the writers of this period never hesitated in recording the ignorant folk's real and vulgar speech. There are many rural and ribald expressions and indecent phrases interspersed in Royall Tyler's The Contract: "tearing fine," "wasted pekily, " "feeling Gor," "you look so topping," "by the living jingo" and "he is gone to stretch his leg."

Seba Smith's Jack also narrates in his letter how he shakes hands for the President at Philadelphia in his New Englandese:

I took hold and shook for him once in awhile to help him along, but at last he got so tired he had to lay down on a soft bench covered with cloth and shake as well as he could and when he couldn't shake he'd nod to 'em as they came along. And at last he got so beat out, he couldn't only wrinkle his forehead and wink. Then I kind of stood behind him and reached my arm round under his, and shook for him about a half an hour as tight as I could spring. (CFA, p.95)
The speech of Franklin's Poor Richard is made up of wise saws and pithy sayings:

"Sloth makes all things difficult, but industry all things easy," as poor Richard says; and "He that riseth late must trot all day, and shall scarce overtake his business at night," while "Laziness travels so slowly that Poverty soon overtakes him," as we read in Poor Richard, who adds, "Drive thy business, let not that drive thee;" and "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." 8

The best example of this kind of speech is found in the epigrammatical conversation between Franklin and the Gout:

Franklin: I am convinced now of the justness of poor Richard's remark, that "Our debts and our sins are always greater than we think for."

Gout: So it is. You philosophers are sages in your maxims, and fools in your conduct. ( CFA, p.17 )

Irving also adopted the similar mode of writing in such sentences: "Rip "would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound," "Times grew worse and worse;" and "a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use" ( CRN, p.4 ).

Lowell is probably a better recorder of native speech than any one else. See how carefully he has reproduced New Englandese in the following stanza from his The Courtin':

"You want to see my Pa, I s'pose?"
"Na - - no - - I come dazumin'--"
"To se my Ma? She's sprinklin' clo'es
Agin to-morrer's i' nin' "9

Their speech is rich in the use of comic metaphors, similes, evocative images and picturesque phrasings:
JR. RIP "had much ado to hold up his father's cast-off galligaskins, with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather" (CTWI, p.4). "low murmur of his [Ichabod Crane's pupils'] voice... might be heard... like the hum of a beehive" (CTWI, p.34). Ichabod's "sharp elbows stuck out like grasshoppers" (CTWI, p.44). Ichabod's "Spirits Rose with eating as some men's do with drink" (CTWI, p.46). Lowell also admired the lady in terms of comic imagery that "she looked full ez rosy agin'as the apple she was pealin'" (CPWJML, p.219). "Then her red come back like the tide/Down to the bay o' Fundy." (CPWJML, p.220).

The writings of this period are clearly marked by the element of misogyny. The writers capitalised on the universal subject of husband and wife relationship; both engaged in trying to make each other feel ashamed. William Byrd's description of the North Carolinians quoted above presents husbands imposing all the work upon the poor women folk, make them rise out of their beds early in the morning while they stretch, yawn and smoke till noon. Irving's Rip Van Winkle is, in fact, representative one of the archetypal American males; the husband who neglects family liabilities. He drifts away into the forest when Dame Van Winkle sets him to work. The following stanza from Lowell's The Courtin' has the echoes of the same misogynic tendencies:
To say why gals act so and so,
Or don't, 'tould be persumably
Nabby to mean yes an' say no
Comes natural to women. ( CPMBRL, p. 220 ).

The use of a mask is an invariable practice with almost all the American humorists. The educated writers projected themselves through their surrogates. William Byrd created a literate narrator to comment upon the uninhibited and rough activities of the North Carolinians and made them look absurd and ridiculous through antithetical phrasing. He described their vulgar activities in a highly poetic diction: they "stand leaning with both their arms upon the corn-field fence, and greatly consider they had best go and take a small heat at the Rough." [Italics mine] . Franklin's Poor Richard is a literary persona; he also introduced Silence Dogood to throw sly thrusts on Bostonian life. Seba Smith's Jack Downing is the author's persona and many of his ideas are familiar Smith notions. Through Birdofreedom and Moses, Lowell criticizes war sentiments. Irving put on the mask of an old narrator when he speaks about the upliftment of poor rustics by white men in the following paragraph: The Whiteman

introduced among them rum, gin, brandy and the other comforts of life,-- and it is astonishing to read how soon the poor savages learned to estimate those blessings . . . . By these and a variety of other methods was the condition of those poor savages wonderfully improved; they had before been ignorant. ( RH, pp. 72-73 ).

Irving's anti-religious sentiments, his irreverence for organized churches are reflected in his incidental cynical remarks in Knickerbocker's History :
But the most important branch of civilization, and which has most strenuously been extolled by the zealous and pious fathers of the Roman Church, is the introduction of the Christian faith. It was truly a sight that might well inspire horror, to behold these savages tumbling among the dark mountains of paganism, and guilty of the most horrible ignorance of religion. It is true, they neighter stole nor defrauded; they were sober, frugal, continent, and faithful to their word; but they acted right habitually, it was all in vain, unless they acted so from precept. The new comers, therefore, used every method to induce them to embrace and practise the true religion—except indeed that of setting them the example. (KH, p.73).

Franklin's identical attitude is well displayed when he advises the priest to provide whisky after every mass as a way to attract larger masses in the place of worship. This undoubtedly lends a touch of black humour to the writings of this period. It is further reinforced by the visitation of Nemesis on Lowell's Bardofredom while he, attempting to capture a black family and sell them as slaves, is himself caught and made to slave. The readers roar with laughter at the sudden reversal of Bardofredom's fortunes. Thus there is always an undercurrent of bitterness. The anguish and pain have in this way been the double foundation of comedy in America down the ages. Americans have thus learned laughing at what is not funny and laughable.
The publication of Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes* in 1835 opened altogether a new era in the field of American humour. It revealed the kind of comedy which was to develop in the Southern states of America—Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas and Missouri. Its subtitle: "Characters, Incidents &c. in the first Half Century of the Republic" reveals their interest in a single episode or incident rather than in a consistent or integrated novel-like plot.

The fight, eye gouging, gender pulling, horse-swapping, fox-hunting are some of the incidents recorded in Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes*. George Washington Harris's *Sut Lovingood Yarns* is about drinking, wedding, fighting and religious meetings. Johnson J. Hooper's *Some Adventures of Captain Simon Sugg* deals with cheating, gambling, law circuits, religious camps etc.; Thompson's *Major Jones's Sketches of Travel* is a record of his travel incidents at various places.

In addition to giving their method of writing, the subtitle also claims the beginning of the realistic tradition in American literature. It has been reinforced in the preface to *Georgia Scenes* when Longstreet rightly claims that the
sketches "consist of nothing more than fanciful combinations of real incidents and characters ... Some of the scenes are as literally true, as the frailties of memory would allow them to be." 11

Baldwin's *Flush Times in Alabama and Mississippi* was designed "to illustrate the periods, the characters, and the phases of the society; some notion of which is attempted to be given in this volume." 12 T. B. Thorpe's *The Mysteries of the Backwoods* too had for its subtitle: "Sketches of the Southwest including Characters, Scenery, and Rural Sports." The flattering reception of Thompson's earlier sketches, *Major Jones Courtship*, induced him to publish his next book *Major Jones Chronicles of Pineville*, with an idea "to present to the public a few more interesting specimens of genus 'Cracker'." 13

Hence, most of the characters and incidents depicted therein are directly taken from the real life. The sophisticated humorists soon found the poor whites of the South more entertaining. Rogues, rascallions, imposters, liars, trick-stores captured their attention for their queer ways and unusual personal idiosyncracies. Longstreet's *Hassy Sniffle* is a rogue who instigates two otherwise good friends with deep affinity to a fight. His "The Horse Swap" is about two unscrupulous horse traders out vying each other. Hooper's *Simon Suggs* is a supreme hypocrite, whose treachery does not spare even his parents. Harris's *'Nat'ral Burn'd Fool*, but *Lovingood*, is a greater rogue who likes gluttony, excessive
drinking, molesting and seducing country damsels and doasing people. Melville's *The Confidence-Man* is also about a trickster who manifests himself in multiple guises—a deaf mute, cripple Negro, President and transfer agent of Black Rapids Coal Company, travelling agent of the Widow and Orphan Asylum, a philanthropist, a herb doctor and cosmopolitan duping everyone he encounters. The literature of this period thus set the pattern for the literature of roguery.

Their much avowed object of presenting realism made the reproduction of local speech and dialect obligatory for them. Almost all of them put in the mouths of their rustic characters that local patois which unmistakably reveals their Rusticity. The following passage from Longstreet's "The Gander Pulling" is a good example of the lower class rustics' real speech:

"Come here, Neddy Prator," said he, with a triumphant smile, "let your Uncle Johnny put his potato stealer, (hand,) into that hat, and tickle the chins of them are shiners a little! Oh you little shining sons o' bitches! walk into your Mas' Johnny's pocket, and gingles .. ." ( *GS*, p.127 ).

Harris has allowed his Sut Lovingood to recount the outcome of his lousy tricks in his own eastern Tennessee patois which sometimes attains the characteristic vulgarity of the poor lower class people:

"Wants that rale low down, wolf mean? The durnd infunel, hiiperkritikil, pot-bellied, scaley-hided, whisky-wastin, stinkin ole ground-hog." 14

Similar passage of forbidden dialect may be cited from Longstreet's "The Fight":


Melville also recorded the ordinary American colloquial speech in his The Confidence-Man which is very emotive and effective in the following passage on instinctive living:

"When charmed by the beauty of that viper, did it never occur to you to change personalities with him? to feel what it was to be a snake? to glide unsuspected in grass? to sting, to kill at a touch; your whole beautiful body one iridescent scabbard of death? In short, did the wish never occur to you to feel yourself exempt from knowledge, and conscience and revel for a while in the care-free, joyous life of a perfectly instinctive, unscrupulous and irresponsible creature?" 15

It is the introduction of vernacular and its extensive use for comic purposes that makes them the forerunners of Mark Twain.

Nevertheless, one, however, comes across another mode of writing in their works which is strikingly contradictory to their much avowed objective of realism. See the following example from Longstreet's "The Turf":

"No," said I, "I take no interest in its amusement."
"Nor do I," rejoined he, "but I visit it to acquire a knowledge of the human character, as it exhibits itself in the various scenes of life, and with the hope of turning the knowledge thus acquired, to some good account, I am the more desirous that you should accompany me," continued he, "because, as one pair of eyes and ears cannot catch all that passes within a scene so spacious, I shall lose many instructing, interesting, or amusing incidents, without the assistance of a friend, and therefore I wish to enlist your services." ( GS, p.163 ).

This kind of antithetical mode of writing is much more evident in the comic description of their individual characters. Longstreet's description of degenerate Ransy Sniffle is quite amusing in this respect:
a sprout of Richmond, who, in his earlier days, had fed copiously upon red clay and blackberries. This diet had given to Ransay a complexion that a corpse would have disdained to own, and an abdominal rotundity that was quite unprepossessing. Long spells of the fever and ague, too, in Ransay's youth, had conspired with clay and blackberries, to throw him quite out of the order of nature. His shoulders were fleshless and translucent; and his arms, hands, fingers and feet were lengthened out of all proportion to the rest of his frame. His joints were large, and his limbs small; and as far flesh, he could not with propriety be said to have any. Those parts which nature usually supplies with most of this article—the calves of the legs for example—presented in him the appearance of so many well drawn blisters. His height was just eight feet, nothing; and his average weight in blackberry season, ninety-five. (CS, p.55).

Harris's Sut Lovingood is a queer looking, long legged, short bodied, small headed, white haired, hog eyed, funny sort of a genius, fresh from some bench-legged Jew's clothing store. (EL, p.33).

Hooper's Simon Juggs, Baldwin's Ovid Bolus Esq., have also been described in the same comic terms.

Melville also describes the characters on board to New Orleans in much the same identical terms. See his description of the miser:

The miser, a lean old man, whose flesh seemed salted cod-fish, dry as combustibles; head, like one whittled by an idiot out of a knot; flat, bony mouth, nipped between buzzard nose and chin; expression, flitting between hunch and imbecile—now one, now the other—he made no response. His eyes were closed, his cheek lay upon an old white moleskin coat, rolled under his head like a wizened apple upon a grimy snow-bank. (CM, p.76).

The same mode of writing seems to be at work in T.B.

Thorpe's description of American motley crowd on the Invincible in his "The Big Bear of Arkansas":
Here may be seen jostling together the wealthy
Southern planter, and the pedlar of tin-ware from
New England—the Northern merchant, and the
Southern jockey—a venerable bishop, and a desperate
gambler—the land speculator, and the honest
farmer—professional men of all creeds and
characters—Wolvereens, Suckers, Hoosiers, Buckeyes
and Corn-crackers, beside a "plentiful sprinkling"
of the half-horse and half-alligator species of men,
who are peculiar to "old Mississippi," and who appear
to gain a livelihood simply by going up and down the
river. (CTA, p.123).

Such blending of two modes of writing—aristocratic
and vernacular—not only reduce their characters to comic
level but also serve as a mask for the literate narrator
to keep himself detached from the narrated—a characteristic
feature of a tall tale. And it should be remembered that
Thorpe's present story "The Big Bear of Arkansaw" is the
superb example of a tall tale. After the general background
of heterogeneous passengers on board, the narrator introduces
Jim Doggett, his loud hoop, his singular manner and habits,
his entry into the cabin and his behaviour. Then the
vernacular yarn spinner, Jim Doggett, unfolds his superb lie
about his big bear hunt in vernacular in a leisurely pace
and meandering manner: "planting in Arkansaw is dangerous... I
don't plant any more; natur intended Arkansaw for a hunting
ground and I go according to natur" (CTA, p.131), boasting
of his own hunting skill: "In bar hunts I am numeroos" (CTA, p.131),
and his hyperbolic monomania: "missing that bar so often
took hold of my vitals, and I wasted away. The thing had
been carried too far, and it reduced me in flesh faster than
an ager" ( CTA, p.133 ), until the end of the story is reached: "My private opinion is, that that bear was an unhuntable bear, and died when his time come" ( CTA, p.137 ). And the literate narrator describes Jim Doggett sitting in a grave silence for the death of the bear "had evidently made a strong impression on his mind" ( CTA, p.137 ).

Among other comic devices, the use of comic metaphors and similes was their favourite: "Ole Bullin's eyes war a-stickin out like unto two buckeyes flung agin a mud wall, an' he war a-cuttin up more shines nor a cockroach in a hot skillet." (SLY, p.55). Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas" is specially notable for comic similies: the bear "loomed up like a black mist" ( CTA, p.136); and after shot "the varmint wheeled, gave a yell, and walked through the fence like a falling tree would through a cobweb" ( CTA, p.136) and "shook his head as the ball struck it and then walked down from that tree as gently as a lady would from a carriage" ( CTA, p.134) and he groaned" in a thicket near by, like a thousand sinners" ( CTA, p.136 ).

Among other things of life that greatly fascinated the humorists in America, religion was the most important. Camp-meetings, churches and preachers held no reverence for them. They frequently satirized and ridiculed religion and the priests who distorted Christian values and doctrines just to suit their requirements for their own aggrandizement. Harris's Sat exposes Parson's false morality in "Parson John Bullin's Lizards" by surreptitiously inserting lizards into his trousers
when he was sermonising. Hooper also ridicules religion in
the following extract from his "Simon Suggs Attends a Camp-Meeting":

The excitement was intense. Men and women rolled about
on the ground, or lay sobbing or shouting in promiscuous
heaps. More than all, the negroes sang and screamed
and prayed. Several under the influence of what is
technically called 'the jerks' were plunging and
pitching about with convulsive energy. The great object
of all seemed to be, to see who could make the greatest
noise—. . . "Bless my poor old soul!" screamed the
preacher in the pulpit . . . "Keep the thing warm!" roared
a sensual seeming man, of stout mould and florid countenance,
who was exhorting among a bevy of young women, upon whom he
was lavishing caresses. "Keep the thing warm,
breathering!—come to the Lord, honey!" he added, as he
vigorously hugged one of the damsels he sought to
save. ( SASS, pp.119-120 ).

Such sacrilege was always less censored in America. There
has always been—and still remains—a very strong anti-Roman
Catholic sentiment because of their rejection of priest-ridden
cultures.

However, a distinctive tendency of American humour to
laugh at the suffering of other human beings is abundantly
present in the writings of this period. The readers cannot
resist laughter when Sut is blown up with soap; when two horse
traders in Longstreet's "The Horse Swap" vying with each other
to outwit, get themselves duped in tricky commercial transaction
or when two combatants fighting each other get irreparably
maimed or when an old woman dies by getting in the way of a
scared horse. All these are tragic incidents and instead of
feeling compassion and pity, the readers laugh which makes the
comedy of these incidents strikingly black,
These humorists would have actually been forgotten had Mark Twain not appeared on American literary scene and revived that kind of folk comedy which they so successfully had developed. This period is indeed a seminal phase in the history of American humour and the writers are native sons of American subsoil.

III

American humour after the Civil War made great strides unexampled before in the history of American literature. The professional "Phunny Phellows" introduced linguistic humour, a great deal of which depended on linguistic devices—quaint spellings, queer sentences, neologism, alliteration, anticlimaxes and parody. The following extract from Artemus Ward is a good example of misspellings and fractured grammar:

"Gents, it greeves me heart in my old age, when I'm in "the Sheer & Yeller leeve" ( to cote from Irishf frend Mister McBeth ) to see that the Show bizness is pretty much plade out."18

Josh Billings' neologism: "The haw is a karnivorous foul, and a chickinivorous one too, every good chace he can git;"19 Smith's use of alliteration: "what a proud kulmination and konsumation and koruskation of your politikal hospele,"20
all essentially point to their excessive fondness of linguistic acrobatics.

Almost all the literary comedians were keenly interested in the use of anticlimaxes for comic purposes. But the following two examples from Artemus Ward and Josh Billings will probably suffice to establish the points:

Artemus Ward: There's a king in the room who is mounted onto a foamie steed, his right hand grasping a barber's pole. I didn't learn his name.21

Josh Billings: When I see people ov shaller understandings extravagantly clothed, I always feel sorry—for the clothes.22

Parody is better represented in Josh Billings' following reversal of the familiar proverb:

Rise arly, work hard, and late, live on what you kant sell, giv nothing awa, and if you don't die rich, and go tu the devil, yu ma sue me for damages. (JBS, p.310 ).

Contemporaneous with literary comedians, local colorists made their beginning whose comedy shows the obvious strain of Southwestern humour in their writings being true and realistic presentation of regional life of a particular time and place. Like Southwestern writers they had a schematic purpose behind their works which they pronounced in their prefaces over and again. Harte wrote "The Luck of Roaring Camp" just to illustrate an era of which California history has preserved the incidents more often than the character of the actors ... an era still so recent that in attempting to revive its poetry, I am conscious also of awakening the more prosaic recollections of survivors.23
Similarly Stowe wrote *Oldtown Folks*:

to interpret to the world the New England life and
caracter in that particular time of its history
which may be called the seminal period. I would
endeavor to show you New England in its seed-bed . . .
I desire that you should see the characteristic
persons of those times, and hear them talk . . . My
studies for this object have been . . . taken from
real characters, real scenes, and real incidents.24

*Her Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is a realistic evocation of
Southern plantation life.

And so the language. Bret Harte’s characters speak
Pike dialect; Stowe’s characters can be heard speaking New
Englandese and Southern plantation colloquial idiom. The
misspelt language of the literary comedians is also the
phonetic transcription of a spoken dialect.

The literary comedians also bear close affinity with
the earlier school of American humour in their misogynic
tendencies. The works of Bill Arp and Josh Billings contain
many good examples of it.

**Bill Arp:** This wife business is a very serious
business. It is right hard work to play a wife.25

There are many good remarks on women’s temperament and
behaviour in Josh Billings’s sayings:

**Tongue-tied wimmin are very scarce and very
valuable** (*JBS*, p.258).

**A good wife is a sweet smile from heaven** (*JBS*, p.273).
The heart is wise on the head, and we, (who have tried it) all know how persuasively the wife is—especially when she wants something (JBE, p.207).

The humour of exaggeration of oral tradition gets good representation in the following description of the gamblers in Bret Harte’s "The Luck of Roaring Camp":

The assemblage numbered about a hundred men. One or two of these were actual fugitives from justice, some were criminal, and all were reckless. Physically they exhibited no indication of their past lives and character. The greatest scamp had a Raphael face, with a profusion of blond hair; Oakhurst, a gambler, had the melancholy air and intellectual abstraction of a Hamlet; the coolest and most courageous man was scarcely over five feet in height, with a soft voice and an embarrassed, timid manner. The term “roughs" applied to them was a distinction rather than a definition. Perhaps in the minor detail of fingers, toes, ears, etc., the camp may have been deficient, but these slight omissions did not detract from their aggregate force. The strongest man had but three fingers on his right hand; the best shot had but one eye. (SPHM, p.56).

The description of the gamblers is very much like Thorpe’s description of motley crowd on invincible in "The Big Bear of Arkansas"; in its grotesquerie and absurdity it resembles Longstreet’s comic description of Henry snifter; its ornate diction represents framework device, a literary mask for the author practised by the Southwestern humorists.

Literary comedians also speak from behind their pseudonym talkers. Charles Farrar Browne put on the mask of Artemus Ward, David Ross Locke’s was Petroleum Vesuvius Nasby, Henry Ward Shaw adopted Josh Billings and Charles Henry Smith spoke from behind Bill Arp.
The literary mask was a disguise that provided them
a wide scope to comment upon the aspects of contemporary
life—its pretensions and hypocrisy, pride and false values—as in Bill Arp's comment:

Didn't our four fathers fight, bleed and die about
a little tax on tea when not one in a thousand drank
it? Because they succeeded, wasn't it glory? But if
they hadn't, I suppose it would have been treason,
and they would have been bowin' and scrapin' round
King George for pardon. (FUMD, p.90).

The cynical ethics of success finds an expression when
Artemus Ward adds the following sentence as postscript in
"One of MR. Ward's Business Letters" to an editor: "You
scratch my back & I'll scratch your back." (AMHS, p.19).
His satire becomes more pungent and his cynicism bitter
when he equates politicians and profiteers with actors, and
advises showmen to take up politics in "A Romance—William
Baker, The Young Patriot."

Josh Billings' remarks about men are full of bitterness
and reflect his cynicism:

"Man is a silly addikated animal." (JBS, p.258).

Or:

"Vain men should be treated as boys treat bladders,
blo them up till they bust." (JBS, p.258).

Smith's identical attitude and cynical tone is
reflected when his Bill Arp speaks for the defeated South:
Looks like there is always somethin' preyin' on somethin', and nothin' is safe from disaster in this subloony world. Flies and bugs and rust prey on the green wheat. Weevils eat it up when it's cut and put away. Rats eat the corn--moles east the gubbers--hawks eat the chickens--the minks killed three of our ducks in one night--Cholera kills the hogs--and the other night one of my nabor's mules cum along with the blind stagers and fell up a pair of seven steps right into my front gate and died without kickin'. Then there is briars and nettles and tread safts and smartweed and poison that's always in the way on a farm, and must be looked after keerfully, especially snakes, which are my eternal horror, and I shall always believe are sum kin to the devil himself. I can't tolerate such long insects. But we farmers hav to take the bad with the good, and there is more good than bad with me up to the present time. (FUWD, p.92).

The remark is indeed reminiscent of Sut's rationalization about universal evil in Harris's "Rare Rip Garden Seed":

Whar thar ain't enuf feed, big childer roots littil childer outen the troff, an' gobbils up thar part Jis' so the yeath' over; bishops eats elders, elders eats common peopil, they eats such cattil es me, I eats possuma, possuma eats chickins swaller, wums, an' wums am content tu eat dus, an' the dus am the aind ove hit all. (SLY,pp.174-175) all. (SLY, pp.174-1975).

They did not spare religion also. The following extract from Artemus Ward's "The Shakers" ridicules the basic concept of chosenness:

The Sperret, as they called it, then moved a short fat Shaker to say a few remarks. He sed they was Shakers and all was eskal. They was the purest and seleckest peple on the yearth. Other peple was sinful as they could be, but Shakers was
all right. Shakers was all goin kerslap to the Promist Land, and nobody want goin to stand at the gate to bar 'em out, if they did they'd git run over. ( AWBB, p. 31).

Josh Billings satiric tone and irreverence for religion can be evidenced in his following satirical gibes:

"The mouse kan live anywhere tew advantage, except in a church. They phatt very slow in a church. This goes tew show that they kant live on religion eny more than a minister kan. Religion is excellent for digestion." ( JBS, p. 109).

Or:

"It takes more time and talent tew be a successful hypokrit than it dus tew be a christian." ( JBS, p. 261).

Such remarks of the literary comedians replete with shrewd and cynical observation on contemporary life and religion, carrying subdued satiric overtones, lend their humour that quality of blackness which is typical of black humour. Whereas their high flown diction, exaggeration, mask or pseudonym talkers, phonetic speech relate their writings to the well established antecedent American comic tradition of the Southwest.
IV

The writings of the modern period extending from Mark Twain to this day show a strong strain of influence of the older comic tradition. It is especially more evident in the following extract from Mark Twain’s *Tom Sawyer* which shows Sawyer practising the way he would behave with his rival when he meets him:

And he went through the motions of thrashing an imaginary boy—pummeling the air, and kicking and gouging. "Oh, you do, do you? You holler nough, do you? Now, then, let that learn you!" And so the imaginary flogging was finished to his satisfaction.26

See the following scene from Longstreet’s "Georgia Theatrics" where a boy practising the art of eye gouging abouts the dialogue of his opponent too:

"You kin, kin you?"
"Yes, I kin, and an able to do it! Boo-oo-ool Oh, wake snakes, and walk your chokel! Brimstone and—fire! Don’t hold me, Nick Stovall! The fight’s made up and let’s go at it—my soul if I don’t jump down his throat, and gallop every chitterling out of him before you can say 'quit'!" (GS, p.6).

Then the boy rising from the fray tells the observer, "you need n’t kick before you’re spurr’d. There a’t nobody there, nor he’nt been nother. I was jist seerin’ how I could 'a' fout. (GS, p.7)."
Similarly Faulkner's relationship with the earlier group of writers is also clear in his "Spotted Horses" episode in The Hamlet:

They saw the horse...whirl and dash back and rush through the gate into Mrs. Littlejohn's yard and run up the front steps and crash once on the wooden veranda and vanish through the front door...A lamp set on a table just inside the door. In its yellow light they saw the horse fill the long hallway like a pinwheel, gaudy, furious and thunderous. A little farther down the hall there was a varnished yellow melodeon. The horse crashed into it; it produced a single note, almost a chord, in bass, resonant and grave, of deep and sober astonishment; the horse with its monstrous and antic shadow whirled again and vanished through another door. It was a bedroom; Ratliff, in his underclothes and once sock and with the other sock in his hand and his back to the door, was leaning out the open window facing the lane, the lot. He looked back over his shoulder. For an instant he and the horse glared at one another. Then he sprang through the window as the horse backed out of the room and into the hall again and whirled and saw Eek and the little boy just entering the front door. Eek still carrying his rope. It whirled again and rushed on down the hall and onto the back porch just as Mrs. Littlejohn, carrying an armful of clothes from the line and the washboard, mounted the steps.

The scene is very much reminiscent of breaking of Sicily Burns' wedding by a blinded bull in Harris's Sat

Lovingood Yarns:

"He cam tail fust agin the ole two story Dutch clock, an' focht hit, bustin' hits runnin goose often hit, the littil wheels a-strundlin over the floor, an' the bees even chasin them. Nex pass, he focht up agin the foot ove a big dubbil ijine bedstead, rarin hit on aind an' punchin one ove the posts thru a glass winder. . . . Clasphaw's ole man war as deaf as a dogiron, an' not at the aind ove the tabil, nex tu whar ole Sock bunted thru the wall; tall fust he cam agin her cheer, a-hisfin her an' hit onto the tabil. . . . an' ther not ole Misses Clasphaw, a-straddlin ove the top ove the pile, a-fitin bees like a mad wind-mill, wif her calliker cap in one han, fur a wapun, an' a cract frame in tuther, an' a-kickin, an' a-spurrin like she war ridin a lazy hose arter the doctor, an' a-screamin rape, fire, an' murder, as fas' es she could name 'em eva." (S+E, pp.79-80).
Thus much of the humour of Twain and Faulkner is folk comedy of oral tradition—a technique so popular and beloved to the Southwestern humorists. There are many good examples of tall tales both in Twain and Faulkner. The incidents about buffalo-hunt in Roughing It, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," and "Jim Baker's Blue-Jay Yarn," in Mark Twain; the anecdote about Andrew Jackson's descendants in The Mosquitoes. Pat Steamer outtricking Ab Snopes in horse trading in The Hamlet—a favourite subject for humour writing to Southwestern humorists—in Faulkner are some of the good tall tale plots.

Like the Southwestern writers whose leading characters are usually the lower-class white settlers, Twain and his contemporaries preferred to write about the poor whites. Twain's loafers of the Arkansas village in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn are lazy, shiftless, brutal and sadistic; Pap Finn is a tramp, a thief and drunkard, the King and the Duke are the imposters; in excellence. Faulkner's protagonists are usually those who rank lowest in society. Flem Snopes in The Hamlet is unredoubtable rogue, greed and avarice incarnate. V.K. Ratliff is a shrewd paddler. Erskin Caldwell's characters in Tobacco Road are Southern degenerate farmers and share croppers who are often brutal and lazy, rough and vulgar.
Another legacy of the earlier school of humour is the realistic reproduction of odd folk's real speech. In this respect Mark Twain reigns supreme. His Huckleberry Finn, according to his own admission in the Preface, is an amalgamation of different dialects spoken in the South: "the Missouri Negro dialect, the extreme form of the backwoods Southwestern dialect, the ordinary "Pike County" dialect, and four modified varieties of this last." 28

His characters are made to reveal themselves in a speech which can be called their own. See in the following extract Jim’s growing impatience at the idea of his being free on reaching Cairo:

"Pooty soon I'll be a-shoot'ning for joy, en I'll say, it's all on account o' Hucky; it's a free man, en I couldn't ever been free if it hadn't ben for Hucky. Hucky done it. Jim won't ever forget you, Hucky; you's de bes' fren' Jim's ever had; en you's de only fren' ole Jim's got now." (HF, p.309).

Faulkner is also a true recorder of native speech of the Southern poor whites. His characters can also be heard speaking rustic colloquial idiom. See V.K. Ratliff narrating Ab’s being gyped in the art of horse trading in his own words:

"The "l'ashorse" I hollered. "He's changin' color!"

"He was sober then. He was both out of the wagon then and Ab's eyes poppin' and a bay horse standin' in the traces where he had went to sleep . . . a black one. He put his hand out like he couldn't believe it was even a horse and touched it at a spot where the reins must every now and then just barely touched it . . . and next I knew that horse was plunging and swerving . . . Then there was the sound like a nail jabbed into a big bicycle tire.
It went whishhhhhhhhhhhhh and then the rest of that shiny fat black horse we had got from Pat Stamper vanished. I don't mean me and Ab was standing there with just the mule left. He had a horse too. Only it was the same horse we had ... swapped Beasley Kemp the sorghum mill and the straight stock for two weeks ago. (The Hamlet, p. 41).

Caldwell's degenerate Jester Lesters speak a language most befitting to their status which abounds in ribald expressions and vulgar phrases. Listen Duke talking to Jester about Ellie May:

"Ellie May's acting like your old hound used to do when he got the itch ... look at her scrape her bottom on the sand. That old hound used to make the same kind of sound Ellie May's making, too. It sounds just like a little pig squealing, don't it?" 29

Mark Twain who began his career and first got recognition as a literary comedian, his works naturally contain the elements of verbal humour typical of literary comedians. The following one example from his A Tramp Abroad is enough to show his indebtedness:

The captain of the raft, who was as full of history as he could stick, said that in the Middle Ages a most prodigious fire-breathing dragon used to live in that region, and made more trouble than a tax collector. He was as long as a railway train ... (comic simile). His breath bred pestilence and conflagration, and his appetite bred famines (exaggeration). He ate male and female impartially, and was exceedingly unpopular. ... (anticlimax and understatement) So the most renowned knights came from the four corners of the earth and retired down the dragon's throat one after the other." (anticlimax). 30

Faulkner's works also abound in comic similes:

Houston "could see her now, tall, tall like chimney and with little more shape, standing at the fence" (The Hamlet, p. 176)

Snope had "a short scrabbled of iron-grey beard as tight
and knotted as a sheep's coat" (The Hamlet, p. 7); Sula's exposed "thighs between dress and stocking-top looking as gigantically and profoundly naked as the dome of an observatory" (The Hamlet, p. 95).

Parody is widely practised by James Thurber. His morals appended at the end of his tales and fables are the deliberate reversalism of familiar proverbs: "Early to rise and early to bed makes a man healthy and wealthy and dead!" No who sometimes hesitate is saved" (VT, I, p. 179), "Don't count your boobies until they are hatched" (VT, I, p. 185), and "You can fool too many of the people too much of the time" (VT, I, p. 159).

The affinity of Twain and Thurber with Southwestern writers is further strengthened in their sly thrusts at Catholicism and conventional religiosity—a subject so favourite to Harris, Hooper and Longstreet. The following confession scene in Huckleberry Finn recreates in spirit and tone Hooper and Harris's camp meeting scenes quoted earlier:

"It's the brazen serpent in the wilderness! Look upon it and live!" And people would shout out, 'Glory! Amen!' And so he (preacher) went on, and the people groaning and crying and saying amen:

"Oh, Come to the mourners' bench! Come, black with sin! (amen) come, sick and sore! (amen) come, lame and halt, and blind! (amen) come, pore and needy, sunk in shame! (amen) come, all that's worn, and spoiled, and suffering!—come with a broken spirit! Come with a contrite heart! Come in your rags and sin and dirt! the waters that cleanse is free, the door of heaven stands open—oh, enter in and be at rest!" (amen, glory, glory hallelujah)" (HF, p. 357)."
Thurber's flippancy about religiosity becomes more evident in such incidental remark from his fable, "The Bat Who Got the Hell Out":

a best-selling inspirationalist was dragging God down to the people's level. Ushers moved silently among the rapt listeners, selling copies of the speaker's books: Shake Hands with the Almighty. You Can be Jehovah's Pal and Have You Taken Our Eternity Insurance? The speaker was saying 'Have a little talk with the Lord while you're waiting for a bus, or riding to work, or sitting in the dentist's chair. Have comfy chats with the Lord in the cosypomors of spare time.' (VT, II, p.368).

Another important subject for comedy--husband-wife antagonism--assumes alarming dimensions in the writings of the present day. Many of Thurber's morals: "The male was made to lie and roam, but woman's place is in the home" (IV, I, p.163); "Never allow a nervous female to have access to a pistol, no matter what you're wearing" (IV, I, p.143); reflect his misogynic tendencies.

His tales: "A Couple of Hamburgers" "The Breaking Up of the Winships", "The Shrike and the Chipmunks" present men suffering at the hands of cantankerous and aggressive wives.


The meek and innocent looking husbands ultimately turning the tables on their tormenting wives delighted thousands of the readers. The humour of Twain and Faulkner is also of upset expectations. The readers heartily laugh
when the King and the Duke in Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* are caught red-handed in their attempts to rob the three sisters of their cash money or when the redoubtable Flee Snopes is finally outtricked by the Negroes in Faulkner's *The Town*, as they do when Sut is blown up with soda or Birdofredom is slain by the Negro family.

Nevertheless, the moments of black humour are hardly missing from their writings. The blind hero worship of the owl in Thurber's "The Owl Who Was God" and the moral of "The Truth About Toads": "Open most heads and you will find nothing shining, not even a mind"; (TV, II, p.363), are replete with irony and contempt which made Twain call humanity "the damned human race." Twain, soon after finishing *Huckleberry Finn*, wrote to Dean Howells: "Isn't human nature the most consummate sham and lie that ever was invented? Isn't man a creature to be ashamed of in pretty much all his aspects? Is he really fit for anything but to be stood up on a street corner as a convenience for dogs?"32

Twain's such universal condemnation of mankind finds expression in Huck's denunciation to be civilized. It is further intensified in his "The Car Soliloquy" when he provides Nicholas II keen and painful insight into human nature who having stripped off his dress stands before a looking-mirror and finds himself shockingly repulsive;
A lank, skinny, spider-legged libel on the image of God! . . . waxwork head—the face, with the expression of a melon—the projecting ears—the knotted elbows—the dished out breast—the knife-edged shins—and then the feet, all beads and joints and bone-sprays, and imitation X-ray photograph! 33

The grotesque description of the Czar is very much in conformity with the earlier comic descriptions of Pussy and Sut, which is concealed under the imperial garb and titles which confer on him, the authority, dignity, respect and status befitting to the Czar:

"Clothes and title are the most potent thing, the most formidable influence, in the earth. They move the human race to willing and spontaneous respect for the judge, the general, the admiral, the bishop, the ambassador, the frivolous earl, the idiot duke, the sultan, the king, the emperor." (TCS, p. 322).

Hence he decides: "There is but one restorative—clothes I will put them on" (TCS, p. 326).

His A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court portrays Hank Morgan's helplessness to uplift the English people who, in spite of his best efforts, continue the same sort of life rooted in superstition, ignorance, violence and cruelty. In Pudd'nhead Wilson, David Wilson is shocked to find caste system taking place of democracy on Dawson's Landing.
Faulkner also shows plundering, robbing, hypocrisy, and violence as characteristically the essential human traits in such remarks in *The Reivers*:

... who serves Virtue works alone, unaided in a chilly vacuum of reserved judgement; where pledge yourself to Non- Virtue and the whole countryside boils with volunteers to help you.34

Faulkner's cynicism can not, however, be identified with Twain's later pessimism, yet he has presented a man in his true colours. For this purpose he has contrasted his low characters to high folks in *The Sanctuary*, but his prostitutes and drunkards, the depraved people are better than the respectable aristocratic daughter of Mississippi Judge.

Caldwell has also treated cruelty and grotesquerie comically in his *Tobacco Road* in Dude's exhumation of his grandfather's corpse from his grave, in his light hearted amusement at the half flesh covered skull which shows his irreverence for the elderly dead.

Such a light treatment of the grotesque and the painful as well springs of laughter imparts their writings
that wryness which is typical of black humour.
But in respect of other technical devices—language, characters, framework narrative, comic similes—the relationship of Twain, Faulkner, Caldwell and Thurber with the Southwestern humorists is clear and unmistakable.

Comedy in Steinbeck's works especially those which are about the poor whites of California: The Pastures of Heaven, To a God Unknown, Tortilla Flat, Of Mice and Men, In Dubious Battle, The Grapes of Wrath, Cannery Row, East of Eden and Sweet Thursday manifest similar strong strain of folk comedy and traditional humour popularised by Southern or Southwestern writers. How much of the material and techniques of the frontier humour Steinbeck has exploited for comic effects is the subject to be discussed here in the subsequent chapters.
NOTES


10 Walter Blair and Hamlin Hill, America's Humor, p.179.


12 Joseph C. Baldwin, Flash Times of Alabama and Mississippi (New York: Appleton, 1854), p. V.


17 Baldwin, *Flush Times*, pp. 3-7.


In bestowing its 1962 Nobel Prize for literature on John Steinbeck, the Swedish Academy aptly cited "his realistic as well as his imaginative writings, distinguished by a sympathetic humor and a keen social perception" as the sources of Steinbeck's strength and individuality. It could have added other features, the deliberate simplicity of his style, the unpretentiousness of his technique, intensity of his thought, originality and seriousness of his themes and the perfect blending of his narrative and philosophical elements enlivened by his condescending humor toward pompous characters and inflexible institutions.

That Steinbeck wrote in a native tradition and used much of the material and techniques of frontier humor was first pointed by Walter Blair who wrote in his introduction to *Native American Humor*:

Krakin Caldwell, Jesse Stuart, Mac Hyman, and on occasion William Faulkner exploited comedy like that in old time Southern humorists' portrayals of shiftless poor whites. John Steinbeck's light books about California's paupers, though they dealt with folk of mixed Spanish, Indian, Mexicans and assorted Caucasian blood showed similar delight in human fecklessness.
Steinbeck embarked upon his career of a literary artist with the publication of his two short stories and three comic poems in *The Stanford Spectator* and *Stanford Lit* respectively. There is a curious blending of grotesque and realistic in these stories. In "Fingers of Cloud: A Satire on College Prodigality" he recalls how a subnormal girl having married a migrant Filipino soon divorces him for he wanted horse heads to be kept in the rain barrel. This is one of the mild witticisms of Steinbeck in his formative years of his beginnings of a comic writer. From this whimsical beginning he launched himself on the most devastating forms of the typical rugged Southern humour. The other story, "Adventures in Arcady: A journey into the Ridiculous" is an allegory with satirical overtones in which different faculties and subjects in which Stanford provided instructions. His three poems "If Eddie Guest Had Written the Book of Job: HAPPY BIRTHDAY," "If John A. Weaver Had Written Keats' Sonnet in the American Language: ON LOOKING AT NEW BOOK BY HAROLD BELL WRIGHT," and "Atropos: Study of a Very Feminine Obituary Editor" are also comic satires which provide a substantial proof of the humble beginning of a future writer.

Like Southwestern prototypes in Southwestern fables most of Steinbeck's protagonists are cheats, hypocrites,
rogues, imposters, impersonators, murderers, oddballs, brawlers, rowdies, notorious, fornicators, savage, sadist, perverts or even worse, sharing traits that Randy Sniffle, Sut Lovingood and Simon Suggs had already established as literary prototypes for comic purposes.

True to tradition, Steinbeck's first novel, *Cup of Gold*, is a story about an irresponsible, lecherous, amoral and dishonest group of buccaneers. From this amorphous band of ragamuffin heroes, Henry Morgan stands out as more cruel and violent, more shrewd and fierce, more avaricious and dishonest and more conceited and erratic, the traits he shares with the earlier Southwestern confidence men who victimized their more credulous fellows.

In his love for adventures and cruelty Morgan has even surpassed his more violent pirate predecessors whose names had been a terror on the sea—Bartolomeo Portuguez, Roche Brasiliano, L'Ollonais, Bras de Fer and Edward Mansveldt. Legend depicted him as a monster, and many blood-curdling horrible stories were told of his ferocity, his love for cruelty and slaughter for its own sake. His brutishness has been reinforced in the hyperbolic language that he "has three arms and wields a sword in each?"3 and "that Morgan could fire bullets from his finger-tips—that he breathed out sulphurous flames (CG, p.96). He has fought, plundered and burnt many cities; the mere mention
of his name is enough to make his wealthy Spanish enemies shudder in their pants. His cold-blooded killing of Coeur de Gris whom he claims to be his friend, ostensibly for no reason, devoid of love, sympathy, remorse, are the ingredients which continue to reinforce his sense of ingratitude and moral depravity.

As an unabashed and a clever country bumpkin his supreme motive in life is his own self-aggrandizement. His dreams are made of heading a buccaneering empire and becoming respectable by achieving La Santa Roga—the paragon of womanhood. He would stop at nothing to acquire power and wealth nor hesitate to adopt the foulest means in pursuit of that objective. His outrageous lying about Elizabeth, telling concocted different versions of her story to all kinds of people, are all in the same game. He even declines his buccaneers who shed their blood and staked their lives at his command and escapes with all the plunder and ransom when they lay dead drunk after the violence. Although Welsh, to connect him to Arthurian tradition his heritage can not conceal how deeply he is steeped in native American traits which mark him out as a worthy descendent of other mythical American comic personas.
Not only is *To A God Unknown* a far-fetched and eccentric, its characters, too, are strange and despite their often tragic experiences resemble Southwestern heroes in a number of ways. Their indefatigable rural behaviour, queer and uninhibited ways, uncouth manners and slovenliness all reflect the traits of earlier prototypes. In being dissolute, dishonest, undependable, irresponsible and moral, Benjamin, the youngest of the four brothers, resembles But Lovingood. He steals when necessary, knows little restraint in drinking, cheats the people, breaks promises, avoids work where possible and seduces the mobile country girls. He even does not spare the women who mother him and gets killed when he is caught *flagrante delicto* with Juanito's wife.

Strange things happen in *To A God Unknown*. The death of John Wayne, the head of the clan, sets the pattern for the grotesque situations in the novel. In his attempts to establish his patriarchy Joseph indulges in "devilish heathen practices" and 'unclean devil worship.' Having thought his father's soul to have been perpetuated in an oak tree, he becomes excessively devoted to it. So strongly does he love it that he worships it almost to the point of idolatry. He hangs sacrifices and secretly offers blood, meat and wine to it, talks to it and sets the baby in it believing it will never let him fall.
For land's fertility's sake brother seduces
brother's wife. Death is something natural for
them; they hardly weep or cry for the dead and
the dead one ceases to be the object of sorrow or
worry. They respect living, not the dead. They
react to Benjy's death with the indifference one
often notices in Southwestern comedy. They regret
it no more than an insignificant insect although
"everyone loved Benjy and excused and guarded him."5
Joseph is neither "glad nor sorry. There is no reason
for it to me. It is just so" (GU, p.62). For Rama
it was inevitable: "If you throw a great handful of
beans at an upturned thimble, one is pretty sure to go
in. Now do you see?" (GU, p.63).

Their much lack of appropriate concern for the
dead resembles Sut's lack of appropriate concern over
the death of his "King Fool" Dad which is better
manifested in the opening lines of Harris's yarn,
"Nelli Dad's Dead":

"Thar never war a man yet, so mean, but
what some time or other, done at least one
good thing. Now, my Dad, put off doin' his
good thing for an awful long time, but at last
he did hit, like a white man. He died, by
golly! Perfectly square-strait out, an' for
keep. Ain't you glad?" (SLY, p.321).
Sut's mother, too, possesses no respect for her dying husband which can be evidenced when she complains that he didn't "ketch the idear twenty years sooner, for then, she mout 'a done sumthin.' But no, he hilt on, gist to spite her, until she broke off her last tooth, crackin' a corn bread crust, an' then he immediatly went (SLY, p.321). And like Steinbeck's Junius Maltby in *The Pastures of Heaven* who keeps himself engaged in reading his favourite Stevenson when his wife died, she also is engaged in fighting with her neighbour, when her husband is breathing his last.

Henry Morgan in *Cup of Gold* is likewise equally unconcerned over his killing of Coeur de Gris for no reason and for none of his faults. The whole scene is highly reminiscent of Twain's Boggs murder scene in *Huckleberry Finn*. The act of killing of Gris is as deliberate as Boggs's murder at the hands of Sherburn:

"I do not know . . . I must have known, but I have forgotten. I killed a dog once—and I have just killed Jones. I do not know why." (CS, p.124).

The analogy of dog is suggestive of Morgan's arrogance and lack of concern over Gris's death. It is the same kind of experience for Henry Morgan that wine is for his colleagues, or book reading is for Junius Maltby or torturing a cow or setting fire to stray dogs, or tying tins to their tails are to the loafers of Bricksville in Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. 
Like Sherburn, Morgan feels no love, no compassion, no remorse and no repentance for his cruel act, but a strong hatred for Griss:

"This is a dead thing," he said musingly. "This is only a dead thing. It will bring flies and sickness. I must have it taken away at once. It will bring the flies into this room! (CG, p. 125).

One is here, of course, reminded of Sut's father being wrapped in an old black bed and put into a coffin converted from a box. Faulkner has also shown such an indifference on the part of the mourners for the dead in his As I Lay Dying in Cora Tully's articulation of her wish of not dying the death of Addie Bundren:

Not like Addie Bundren dying alone, hiding her pride and her broken heart. Glad to lying there with her head propped up so she could watch Cash building the coffin, having to watch him so he would not skimp on it, like as not, with those men not worrying about anything except if there was time to earn another three dollars before the rain come and the river got too high to get across it.

The illiterate Mexican aborigines who have embraced Catholicism, continue to cling to their superstitions in To A God Unknown, are unconsciously steeped in the pagan practices. They continue to believe in invoking rain gods through magical incantations and heathen tricks. They are delighted by the protracted rain after prolonged drought and celebrate through non-Christian rites in gay abandon:
The priest could see in his mind how the people were dancing, beating the soft earth to slush with their bare feet. He knew how they would be wearing the skins of animals, although they didn't know why they wore them. The pounding rhythm grew louder and more insistent, and the chanting voices shrill and hysterical. "They'll be taking off their clothes," the priest whispered, "and they'll roll in the mud." (GU, p. 180).

No Christian would countenance the above scene without an admixture of contempt and irreverence. The language of the passage itself demonstrates pristine hatred for pagan practices. The use of words 'roll' and 'rutting' stand out hard and separate with the comparison of the participants with pigs precisely hinting rejection of pagan mess dancing and barbarian culture.

Religion, priests and clergymen are among the oldest butts of ridicule common in all ages and countries. But they became a special focal point in America in the humorous writings of the Southwest with increasing attacks reflecting a freedom from censorship and public appetite for attacks on sanctimoniousness associated with the European tradition. And Steinbeck in such scenes is merely making capital of these aspects that Americans always found ingratiating. His moderation in all matters displays his sneering dislike against all sorts of rigidity. He hardly loses any opportunity to attack those whose advocate orthodoxy in religion. However, his satanic tone of humour makes itself more explicit in his comments on priests and blind adherents. Burton to whom even thunderstorm "is God's voice in anger" has come in for crisp comment in mild comic terms:
Burton was one whom nature had constituted for a religious life. He kept himself from evil and he found evil in nearly all close human contacts. Once, after a service to the church, he had been praised from the pulpit, "A strong man in the Lord," the pastor called him, and Thomas bent close to Joseph's ear and whispered, "A weak man in the stomach." Burton had embraced his wife four times. He had two children. Celibacy was a natural state for him. Burton was never well. His cheeks were drawn and lean, and his eyes hungry for a pleasure he did not expect this side of heaven. In a way it gratified him that his health was bad, for it proved that God thought of him enough to make him suffer. Burton had the powerful resistance of the chronically ill. His lean arms and legs were strong as braided ropes. (GU, p. 20).

The whole description has an amount of sneaking but smiling irreverence. Although Protestant in belief, Burton is made to represent Catholic traits, celibacy and avoidance of human contacts that is to say renunciation. Burton's pious activities and strict ascetic life are undercut by his defects thereby deflating his personality. "A strong man in the Lord" is "A weak man in stomach." "Celibacy was a natural state for him" because he could not help the matter since he "was never well." He "embraced his wife four times" is undercut by his hungry eyes "for a pleasure he did not expect this side of heaven." He was happy for it was God's will "to make him suffer."
Weaker in stomach than Burton is Father Angelo, the priest. Having forsaken the pristine holiness expected of him, he has become too wordly. He was a stern man where the church was concerned, but once out of the church, and with the matters of the church out of the way, he was a tender and humorous man. Let him get a mouthful of meat, and a cup of wine in his hand, and there were no eyes that could twinkle more brightly than his. (GU, p. 85).

But Steinbeck's mockery of religion appears more noticeably in his occasional gibes at Catholicism such as "Saint Katy" and in Cup of Gold. "Already two saints had lived and died in Panama—not major saints, perhaps, but of enough importance to make their bones valuable" (GU, p. 304). Although Steinbeck can not, however, be identified with skepticism one often notices in Twain and other American humorists, one can not ignore the flippancy of these remarks. Yet Steinbeck's lack of proper reverence for religion becomes more strongly pronounced in his satire on conventional religiosity and organized church in Cup of Gold. The concluding confession scene in the novel becomes comic with Steinbeck. Henry Morgan's complete disassociation from religion and his outright denial of confession and penance rituals seem to be mild satire on Catholicism:

The stroking continued, but more harshly. The vicar's voice became more loud and authoritative. It was as though, after years of patient waiting,
the Church had at last got Henry Morgan within its power. There was something almost gloating about the voice. (CG, p. 155).

Henry Morgan's reluctance to repent:

"... How may I repent, sir? I might go over my whole life, naming and repenting every act from the shattering of my first teething ring to my last visit to a brothel. I might repent everything I could remember, but if I forgot one single sin, the whole process would be wasted" (CG, p. 155);

and his nonchalant response to the vicar's repeated warnings of not to die as a heretic: "I am too tired, sir, or too lazy, to consider problems of heresy" (CG, p. 155); record Henry Morgan's total disregard for the Christian rites and rituals. One can not miss the flippancy of such sardonic remarks as, "She [Elizabeth] was going to see that some compact was made with the Almighty if she could (CG, p. 154);

"There was she [Elizabeth] again, intent on making a contract with God" (CG, p. 156), or that Henry prayed only once that too for his mother's sake because

"... She would have wanted me to pray at least once, more as a proof of her training than for any other reason, a reassurance to her that she had done her duty by me." (CG, p. 155).

The whole confession scene of Cup of Gold, with Morgan lying on death-bed being forced by the vicar to confess and repent his sins through penance, to pray to God for His forgiveness, is more of a mock confession scene than anything serious. It may be shocking to the believers but amusing to others.
More amusing is the irreverent depiction of the Church in his short story "Saint Katy the Virgin." Replete with ribaldry, fantasy, satire and rough fun, it is almost hilarious and seems to have belonged to his Stanford sketches typical of Steinbeck's school days. Although not published until 1936, the stylistic evidence shows that this must be an early story from the same period as *Cup of Gold.* It may have been finished long before 1932 and was sent to his agent in that year which becomes more clear from his letter to McEntosh and Otis of May 17, 1932:

As for St. Katy—I shall send you a copy, and this time keep her if you want her. She was a pleasant afternoon to me. . . ."9

Apparently, it had already been seen and read by his agent.

As a story about a bad cow, Katy, who after a long sinful life gets converted, works miracles, cures incurable diseases and is ultimately glorified as a saint and included in the "Calendar of the Elect," it is an open mockery of hagiolatry. Her bones after her death become 'holy relic' and are carefully preserved and reposed "on a bed of crimson satin" inside "a gold-bound jeweled reliquary." to be revered, kissed and rubbed by the believers.
People come great distances to kiss the little box, and such as do, go away leaving their troubles behind them. This holy relic has been found to cure female troubles and ringworm. There is a record left by a woman who visited the chapel to be cured of both. She deposes that she rubbed the reliquary against her cheek, and at the moment her face touched the holy object, a hair mole she had possessed from birth immediately vanished and has never returned.

Perhaps, Alymer, the scientist in Hawthorne's story "The Birthmark," who tried to remove from his beautiful wife's face the tiny birthmark which he believed to have marred her beauty, did not know of Saint Katy, he would have otherwise saved her from succumbing to untimely death.

The mocking tone of the story is condescending toward religious sentimentality, canonization, holy relics, rites and rituals featured in almost equal measure in his parody of Arthurian legends in Tortilla Flat where Pirate's dogs have mystical vision of Saint Francis, and Danny, after his escape from prison, performs escape rituals necessary for a run away prisoner:

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.

"Saint Katy the Virgin" contains unmistakable parodies of the long standing medieval belief of exorcism; the condescending tone is set from the very start in Steinbeck's suggestion that the church has become more worldly, a symbol of social status and respectability than religious when it
considers Roark "a bad man because he laughed too much at the wrong times and at the wrong people" (LV, p.128).
The "two great tears squeezed out of the eyes of Katy" (LV, p.133) parodies the crucifix; lion's nobility is undercut by "a beast built for parables;" "there is nothing to differentiate between the Grace of God knocking it [the hymen] out from the inside or the wickedness of man from the outside" (LV, p.136) ridicules virginity; whereas the monk scandal is parodied in these words: "For a while it was thought that, because of her sex, she should leave the monastery and enter a nunery" (LV, p.135).
The problem of Katy's virginity resolved by the traditionally shrewd barber—Katy was "a virgin by intent" if not physically—obliquely ridicules those selfish priests and religious authorities who bent religious practice into conformity with their own theories and interest. They are represented by Father Angelo in To a God Unknown as well as the priests figuring in the story itself. This materialistic concern of the church and its priests is most explicitly satirised in Abbot's scolding of Brother Paul for his good act of converting the pig: "There are plenty of Christians. This year there's a great shortage of pigs" (LV, p.135). Since the pig is now Christian, they cannot slaughter it.
This gross comedy of the beatification of a cow combining all the elements of grotesquerie and absurd, bawdry and satire, parody and beast-epic genre, although allows Steinbeck to direct his satire against hagiolatry, "religious expediency" and Catholic rituals; the incident of the conversion of Katy is entered into with such comic extravagance that the writer's satiric vehemence is almost minimised.

Much of the satire on religion in American literature is an attack on the Protestant 'work ethic' popularized by Benjamin Franklin in his writings about Poor Richard in Eighteenth century. It is interesting to note that Steinbeck's humour here is also an attack like Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, from the loafer's point of view on Franklin's 'early to bed, early to rise' philosophy from "The Way to Wealth" the only defense open to "good old boys" like the lazy Rip Van Winkle, the bums, loafers and outcasts that reaches culmination in Cannery Row.

Qualities other than conventionally virtuous ones endear Steinbeck's characters as well as liken them to the established comic prototypes. Jimmie Munroe in The Pastures of Heaven is "enormously cynical" and seducer of young girls; Edward Wicks is a hypocrite, who although "had never had more than five hundred dollars at one time in his life" created a false impression of his being
very rich, and commanded respect through his fictitious accounts and false sales and purchases of bonds and shares duly entered in his big ledger; Raymond Bank is a company-loving unimaginative man but enormously interested in witnessing violence, death and hangings; Miss Molly Morgan, the new school teacher, is an unconscious rogue largely but indirectly responsible for Talarecito's confinement to Napa Sanatorium; Vasquez is a thief and a murderer and Molly's father is a rough, hard and suffering drunkard while Molly herself is an example of supreme hypocrite who always makes a false show of her emotion for her father but when she encounters him she gives up the job without experiencing even the slightest emotion of affection for him. Junius Maltby, though not a rogue, is lazy and slothful.

Among the subjects most favoured in American humour is idleness. Writers had turned to laziness over and again for the portrayals of their characters. Of all the cast of lazy characters in American humour, the absent-minded and irresponsible Junius Maltby in The Pastures of Heaven is probably the laziest. He surpasses even many of the prototypes of the frontier man with whom he bears unmistakable affinities. He is, in his laziness, a composite of William Byrd's 'lubbers' and Washington Irving's' Rip Van Winkle. Stories were told of his idleness in his neighbourhood; that his slothfulness killed his wife, that he was reading when she died.
Over a period of ten years of his stay in the valley, its warm and salubrious climate made him grow "superbly lazy." His talents, like that of Rip Van Winkle who "was ready to attend anybody's business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible" (CTWI, p.3), lie in deliberate avoidance of work. Mrs. Maltby although makes him work in the kitchen garden he soon retires in the shade of sycamore tree and was content to sit in the sun and dangle his feet in the stream much in the manner as Rip drifts away to the forest or to the tavern where he sits "in the shade through a long, lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing" (CTWI, p.5). Maltby hires a servant, Jakob, to work on the farm, but he too, following his master's footsteps grows equally lazy and "did no more work than his employer." Hence Maltby farm, like that of Rip's, begins to dwindle under his mismanagement.

As relaxed hunting is Rip's chief pleasure, reading Stevenson and talking on a variety of subjects is Maltby's favourite activity:

They didn't make conversation; rather they let a seedling of thought sprout by itself, and then watched with wonder while it sent out branching limbs. They were surprised at the strange fruit their conversation bore, for they didn't direct their thinking, nor trellis nor trim it the way so many people do. (PH, p.52).
Even in his mode of living Junius shares common traits with Rip. Rip has a precarious living and violates the principles of thrift, prosperity and material comfort. He is one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. (CTW, p.4).

Sunk in sloth, Junius Malthus, his son and the servant, Jakob, live in utter poverty. While other settlers in the valley prosper he grows poorer and poorer. His farm, with its overgrown weeds, untrimmed fruit trees and fallen fences, look abandoned. His house too is unclean, door-yard littered and windows dirty. They casually threw seeds and were content with things they got without efforts. Often they were without food when a hen's nest was not found on the farm at supper time. For a long time Junius did not have new clothes; his overalls were torn at many places, and he had no shoes. His blond hair was unkempt, his long beard metted and untrimmed. And like Rip, he passes the legacy of his disposition to his son, Robbie, who equally evinced a hereditary penchant for laziness. He wore "an ancient pair of overalls, cut at the knees and seat, a blue shirt from which the collar was gone, and nothing else. His long hair hung over his grey eyes like the forelock of a range pony." (PH, p.54).

Other characters in Steinbeck's short stories, if not lazy, display other traits of comic heroes of the Southwestern tradition that the virtuous find unsavoury. The itinerant
tinker in "The Chrysanthemums" is a confidence man who having evinced false interest in Elisa's gardening and flowers becomes a welcome guest and departs with the money she was formerly reluctant to give for mending the posts and flower pots that he cheats her out of by pretending he wanted the seedlings they contained. The husband in "The White Stallion" kills the white stallion his wife loves seemingly accidentally to relieve his own frustrations; the lady in "The Snake" is a sadist who unconsciously derives pleasure from watching a big male snake devouring a white rat. And those who offer Johnny Bear 'whiskey' in the bar to encourage his mimicry are rogues. The barber, traditionally known for his shrewdness, who solves the problem of Katy's virginity in "Saint Katy the Virgin" is a true epitome of roguery. Jelka's cousin who tries to disrupt her married life in "The Murder" is another version of Sut, whereas her father is a misogynist whose wedding advice to his son-in-law is to continue beating the wife to save the marriage and avert a certain divorce:

"Don't be big fool, now," he said. "Jelka is a Slav girl. He's not like American girl. If he is bad, beat him. If he's good too long, beat him too. I beat his mama. Papa beat my mama. Slav girl! He's not like a man that don't beat hell out of him." (LV, p. 116).

The passage points to the element of misogyny and male superiority which had been a source of consistent
comment and laughter and can be perceived throughout the entire canvas of American comic writings from the earliest days to the present. The theme is present from the days of William Byrd's male North Carolinians leaving the household responsibilities to their females while they smoked and led a carefree life through to Washington Irving's Rip Van Winkle who drifted to the forest when Mrs. Winkle tried to shame him into working up, to the cantankerous wives in James Thurber's "Unicorn in the Garden," "The Life of "alter Mitty," "The Catbird Seat" and "The Battle Between the Sexes". Based on the moral that to treat a wife unsympathetically and subject her to beatings at intervals is necessary to maintain a marriage, the story has a lot of resemblance to the writings of Byrd, Irving and Thurber. Junius Maltby also symbolises that hatred for woman in his aversion to work that asserts itself after his wife's untimely death. In this story woman suffers and is hurt by her husband's callousness and slothfulness much in the manner Mrs. Winkle does in Irving's story. In other stories wives have been the source of untold miseries to their husbands. Mary Teller, the selfish and narcissistic wife, in "The White Quail" has almost estranged her husband from her life and constantly keeps on nagging him to kill the cat whose presence was dangerous for her albino bird, the beautiful object of her garden. And the simple husband, having not known to cope with the impatient wife, ultimately frees
himself from this bondage of affectionate nagging in much the same manner as does the poor husband in Thurber's "Unicorn in the Garden." Instead of the cat, Harry kills the quail itself. The curtain is drawn on fear and nagging reminders of the wife about the safety of the bird.

"The Vigilante" is another variation of the same theme; it shows how a wife's shrewishness and irrational suspicion can convert an otherwise peaceful life of a husband into a hell. From Mike's look of blissful gratification caused by his participation in lynching a negro, his slick and petulant wife accuses him of having been with a woman. The story ends with the husband, looking into a mirror at his face and surprised "By God, she was right," he thought. "That's just exactly how I do feel" (LV, p.95).

An even more frightening bondage of married life is depicted in "The Harness" through Peter Randall's failure to assert himself even against his dead wife. Not only does the wife wreak fury and havoc and cause troubles to a husband during her life time, but she even continues doing so after she is dead. Peter Randall is a sympathetically portrayed henpecked husband, who decides to throw off the chest harness and elastic belts, he had been kept in, in order to be shapely, much against his wish by his wife, after her death. By the time, she dies, however, he is grown so much used to his bondage that he finds it not just difficult to discard the harness but impossible to live without it.
"She didn't die dead," he said thickly. "She won't let me do things. She's worried me all year about those peas." His eyes were wondering. "I don't know how she does it." Then he frowned. His palm came out, and he tapped it again. "But you mark, Ed Chappell, I won't wear that harness, and I damn well won't ever wear it. You remember that." His head dropped forward again. But in a moment he looked up. "I been drunk," he said seriously. "I been to fancy houses." He edged out confidently toward Ed. His voice dropped to a heavy whisper. "But it's all right, I'll fix it. When I get back, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to put in electric lights. Emma always wanted electric lights." (LV, p.88).

The constant nagging and demands of the wife make him virtually and mentally a slave and later he finds himself unable to do away with the mental shackles. For Peter Randall his wife had become a part and parcel of himself, and she had so deeply embedded his emotions that he becomes extremely miserable when she was no more. The wife is thus made to look tyrannical through the depiction of husband's discomfiture and helplessness.

But these compassionately portrayed countrymen, rural and uncouth and hardly educated, speak a language rich and racy in folk idiom which can hardly be called their own. *Cup of Gold* abounds in lyrical outbursts and grandiloquence; *To A God Unknown* is full of formalised idioms and elevated poetic speech often amounting to rhetoric heights. Characters in *The Pastures of Heaven* and *The Long Valley* often speak biblical language. The Bible had been a great influence on Steinbeck, he read it several times imbibing its lyrical beauty. Probably no other writer had a more keen and accurate ear for biblical rhythmic cadences than
Steinbeck:

"And thou—often has Anunn set its fanged maw to entrap the little pinch of life thou carriest about, but thou hast made thy path to go around its snaring. A thousand centuries hast thou lived since earth and sea struggled in thy generation, and a thousand Sons shall Thou carry about the little pinch of life that was given thee, so only thou shalt bear from Anunn, the Chaos." ( CG, p.29).

In this passage Gwenliane in Cup of Gold is making a prophecy and, quite naturally, her predictions should be in profoundly mystic language in order to be more effective and should be clothed in the garb of biblical phraseology. Moreover, she is a minor character who makes a fleeting appearance in the beginning of the novel only. But the same may be true of Steinbeck's major characters also; they can be seen frequently and unfailingly using the same refined and over-elegant diction. For instance, the lyrical and biblical overtones of the following passage comes from Gomez's Mexican Indian hiredman, Pancho, who asks Tularcito:

"Where goest thou, little Frog? . . . "But why takest thou the shovel?" (PH, p.35).

And he advises Tularcito not to go in search of his people living under the earth:

"Do not go, Little Frog! Listen to your old friend, your father in God, and do not go! But in the sages I found thee and saved thee from the devils, thy relatives. Thou art a little brother of Jesus now. Go not back to thine own people! Listen to an old man, Little Frog!" (PH, p.35).
Tularacito also responds in the same sort of language:

"Thou hast said they are my people," he exclaimed. Pancho warned him, "Go back to the devil, thy father, then. I am not good enough to fight this evil. It would take a saint. But see! At last I make the sign against thee and against all thy race." (PH, p.35).

Mama Torres too in the story, "The Flight" is often heard speaking:

"Some lazy cow must have got into thy father's family, else how could I have a son like thee?"
And she said, "When I carried thee, a sneaking lazy coyote came out of the brush and looked at me one day. That must have made thee so." (LV, p.27).

And those who do not indulge in this biblical language often go into rhapsodies when their sentiments are aroused by the strong emotion of joy or sorrow. Henry Morgan in Cup of Gold suddenly breaks out in lyrical and impassioned eloquence when he evokes his colleagues' avarice, hunger, lust and vanity:

"Gold and jewels past hope of counting are in the city. Every man of you will be rich if we succeed."
"Think of the roasted meats, the barrels of wine in the cellars, the spiced puddings. Imagine them!"
"Woman slaves there are in the city, and thousands of other women. God knows! Your difficulty will be only in judging which to choose from the multitude that will fall to us. These are not grubby field women, but great ladies who lie in silken beds. How will your skins feel in beds like those, do you suppose?"
"The names of those who take part in this flight will climb the stairs of history. This is no pillage, but glorious war. Imagine to yourselves the people of Tortuga pointing to you and saying, 'That man was in the flight at Panama. That man is a hero, and rich.' Think of how the women of Goeves will run after you when you go home again. There is the Cup of Gold before you." (CG, p.108).
Joseph Wayne in *To A God Unknown* also speaks in the similar strain; his speech too often attains rhetoric heights when he tries to philosophize things:

“This is a space between the real and the clean, unavering real, undistored by the senses. Here is a boundary. Yesterday we were married and it was no marriage. This is four marriage—through the pass-entering the passage like sperm and egg that have become a single unit of pregnancy. This is a symbol of the undistorted real. I have a moment in my heart, different in shape, in texture, in duration from any other moment.” (GU, p. 52).

Despite it all, Steinbeck maintains spectatorial distance, he never allows his objectivity to be contaminated. The narrator takes on a gentlemanly mask and his tone becomes increasingly infilted in the thumb-nail sketches of his poor rustic characters living at the lowest level of sentience when he describes their wild and mundane activities in the most refined language. Benjy’s frivolous minstrelsy in *To A God Unknown* is described as “singing gloriously.” Junius Maltby in *The Pastures of Heaven* grows “superbly lazy” and is “gloriously happy” and people succumbed before Robbie’s “glorious diction,” the destruction and pillage of Panama in *Cup of Gold* becomes “glorious war”...a technique which Steinbeck employed more frequently and on a larger scale in his *Tortilla Flat*. The condescending tone of these remarks bears close affinity to a similar technique.
the writings of the humorists of the old nineteenth century
Southern frontier. This kind of felicitous incongruity arising
from the antithetical phrasing seems to be at work when William
Byrd's 'lubbers' 'gravely consider' whether to go and take a
small heat at the hoe. Jim Doggett in T.B.Thorpe's "The Big
Bear of Arkansas, is reported by the narrator to be sitting
in "a grave silence." Not long back, Faulkner has, too,
incorporated the same antithetical phrasing into comic art
when he described the hoodwinked farmers in The Hamlet chasin
the wild horses:

They went out; they didn't look back. They tiptoed
up the hall and crossed the veranda and descended
into the moonlight. Now that they could pay attention
to it, the silver air seemed to be filled with faint
and sourceless sounds—shouts, thin and distant, again
a brief thunder of hooves on a wooden bridge, more
shouts faint and thin and earnest and clear as bells;
once they even distinguished the words: "Whoey. Read
him." ( The Hamlet, p. 275 )

It is an obvious example of the juxtaposition of high
and low style, elegance and vernacular antics.

Through this manipulation of language Steinbeck has come
upon a doubly advantageous comic formula: instead of lifting
his characters, their use of such language renders them look
absurd and ridiculous. On the other hand, this usage
burlesques, the highfautin'diction of the aristocratic whites.
It turns the table on the sophisticated society and
the elite's use of language.

This kind of narrator's highbrow attitude is more
evidently displayed in the comic portrayals of his individual
characters. He has described them in comic terms, as Byrd II
Longstreet. Hooper Harris and Baldwin had earlier done. See
the description of two inseparable Burgundians in Sun of Gold:

The first was a little fat man with a face like a
red bloated man. He was nervous and excitable. The
slightest public attention threw him into a fit of
embarrassment. When he was spoken to his face became
redder, and he gave the impression of a bug frantically
looking for a board under which to hide. His companion,
The Other Burgadian, was his defender and guide. The
Other Burgadian was taller and more powerfully made,
although his left arm was gone at the elbow (CG, p.99).

This 'incongruous pair' in their physical appearance
and mutual interdependence, anticipate Steinbeck's another
pair of George and Lennie of Of Mice and Men. Very much like
them, these inseparable Burgundians are hardly seen away from
each other. They sit, talk and eat together and like George's
protecting care to Lennie, The Other Burgadian kept his
sheltering arm "about the shoulders of his dumpy friend in a
gesture of protection" (CG, p.99).

Willie's twisted, dirty and white face caused by illness,
looking unconnected to his body, his furtive and frightened eyes,
grimaced and contracted mouth curved at the end almost like
parrot's beak and his pinched and bony nose make him equally
an ugly character in To A God Unknown.

But The Pastures of Heaven offers some of Steinbeck's
ugliest and the most repulsive characters. Gangling, bignosed
and heavy-jawed Pat "looked very much like Lincoln as a young
man. His figure was as unfitted for clothes as Lincoln's was.
His nostrils and ears were large and full of hair. They looked as though furry little animals were hiding in them. (PH, p.99).

Not only in his shambling ape-like stride Allen Huenecker is a queer and grotesque monster but he is almost a living clod of clay: "Little boys who wanted to insult their friends did so by pointing to Allen and saying, 'There goes your brother.'" (PH, p. 68). He himself did not like his hobgoblin appearance and in order to hide his ugliness under the tangled growth of hair he began to grow whiskers. But nature too, seemed to have conspired against him and, instead of full growth of beard only the coarse, sparse stubble grew and that too in the wrong places which helped to intensify "his simian appearance" all the more.

The nineteen-year-old boy, Pepe, in "The Flight," although otherwise gentle and affectionate, has a loose and gagling eagle nose and "a tall head, pointed at the top, and from its peak, coarse black hair grew down like a thatch all around. Over his smiling little eyes Nana cut a straight bang so he could see" (LV, p.26), which belongs to fantasy rather than to actuality.

Tularcito "whom God has not completely finished" is a cretin, queer, misshapen and erratic, a supreme example of grotesquerie both in appearance and behaviour. His ancient and dry eyes, his face, physical strength and oddity all give an impression of his being a prehistoric troglodyte. As a baby he
had short, chubby arms, and long, loose-jointed legs. Its large head sat without interval of neck between deformedly broad shoulders. The baby’s flat face, together with its peculiar body, caused it automatically to be called Tularecito, Little Frog, although Franklin Gomes often called it Coyote. "For," he said, "there is in this boy’s face that ancient wisdom one finds in the face of a coyote." (PH, p. 29).

Though a peaceable sort of careless fellow in the main, who chooses to quarrel with nobody, he is occasionally likely to be saucy, terribly erratic and almost mad when his drawings are erased and his products are broken. Once his anger is aroused, it can hardly be abated. His physical strength combined with the violence of his unrestrained anger which could wreck the school and kill innocent people ultimately requires his confinement to an asylum after his murderous assault on Bert Monroe.

Clumsiest among the cast of repulsive characters is Johnny Bear in the story "Johnny Bear." He is a true picture of deformity, almost a premordial monster. With his bobbed forward black matted head, long loosely hung out arms, short and bowed legs and strange square feet, he appears to have been made "standing upright as a trick." His movements were creeping and prowling and he swung his arms jerkily.

All these thumbnail sketches produce comedy, reminiscent of the earlier humorists which reaches back to the beginnings of American history. William Byrd II described the poor rustics and Longstreet described Ransy Snipple, Harris described Sut Lovingood in much the same grotesque comic terms as does Steinbeck here.
Other comic devices—comic metaphors, vivid imagery and hyperbole which are apparently the legacies of the earlier humor—are not lacking in these works. Steinbeck has rather a natural flair for such devices; they are rather his forte for they help him render the intended comic effects more effectively. His vivid imagery based upon a frequent, wild and complex use of epithets, similes and metaphors are strikingly lively and appealing. “He swooped like a lazy hawk” (PH, p.23); Jelka “whined softly like a cold puppy” (LV, p.125); Elisa “crouched low like a faming dog” (LV, p.9); Mary Teller “sat as still as a mouse” (LV, p.22); Johnny Bear’s “arms enfolded Alex as the tentacles of an anemone enfolded a crab” (LV, p.113); Thomas Wayne “was afraid of the wild emotion as an animal is afraid of thunder” (CU, p. 24); “The men looked fearfully at him, as small birds gaze at an approaching snake” (CG, p.42); and “on the deck the seaman swarmed like the angry populace of a broken hive” (CG, p.40). It is clear how the bird and animal imagery suggested by the words like ‘swooped’, ‘whined’, ‘whispered’, ‘swarmed’, and similes “looked fearfully at him, as small birds gaze at an approaching snake”, “sat as still as a mouse” evoke a live picture adding momentum and intensity to the intended effect with rare economy of words.

Steinbeck also draws heavily upon nature to depict the beauty of his female characters: “Jelk had eyes as large and questioning as a doe’s eye” (LV, p.116); “Katherine had
the firm freshness of a new weed, and the bristling vigour of a mare" which "she lost . . . as a flower does once it has received pollen" (PH, p. 117); La Santa Roja "is lovely as the sun" (CG, p. 76); are very much reminiscent of the colourful and vivid imagery employed by Harris to suggest Sicily's seductive charms:

She shows among women like a sunflower among dorg fennel, or a hollyhock in a patch ove smartweed. Such a buzzimi! Jis' think ove two snow balls wif a strawberry stuck but-sind'ed intu bof on an (SLY, p. 69).

Or when Sut describes her beauty:

Her har'se es black as a crow's wing at midnite . . . an' her cheeks an' lips as rosey as a pearch's gills in dorgwood blossom time—an' such a smile! Why, when hit struck tu far an' squar hit felt jis' like a big he'an ove unrectified ole Munongahailey . . . (SLY, pp. 69-70).

Faulkner too compares Rule, o'er fertile land:

The fine land rich and fecund and foul: eternal and impervious to him who claimed title to it, oblivious, drawing to itself tenfold the quality of living seed its owner's whole life could have secreted and compounded, producing a thousandfold the harvest he could ever hope to gather and save. (The Hamlet, p. 111).

But it is in terms of the effects La Santa Roja has on Henry Morgan and men in general that Steinbeck comes closer to Harris. Sut speaks of Sicily's effect on men:

Sich an 'oman cud du more devilmint nur a loose stud hoss et a muster ground', ef she only know'd what tools she totes, an' I'ee sorter beginin tu think she no's the use ove the las' durnd won, tu a dot. (SLY, p. 70).
Steinbeck also describes the effect of La Santa Roja in almost identical terms when Henry Morgan says: "she is a danger to the peace of nations and to the peace of men's minds." (CG, p.81). The effects which her beauty exercises on Henry Morgan are presented in "motion-picture's impressionistic technique" in intermittent statements enclosed in parenthesis during descriptive passages and dialogues: "(There is a woman in the Cup of Gold, and they worship her for unnameable beauties.)" (CG, p.82); "(There is a woman in the Cup of Gold, and she is lovely as the sun.)" (CG,p.83); "(La Santa Roja is in Panama.)" (CG,p.83); "(There is a woman in Panama.)" (CG,p.83); "(—She is lovely as the sun.)" (CG,p.83).

On reaching Panama, Coer de Gris believes, that "everyone will be at his friend's throat over the Red Saint" (CG,p.84). That's why to avoid general suicide she wears veil:

... in the streets she wears a thick veil that none may see her face. Some think she does this so that the poor men who meet her will not kill themselves for love. (CG,p.77).

Such an extravagant portrayal of La Santa Roja's beauty is in accord with the native habit of exaggeration of oral tales. That Steinbeck was an American rather a strictly regional writer with typically American sensibility, his penchant for wild American extravagance bears testimony to it. His comic extravagance reaches its piquancy and fantastic heights in his descriptions of the exploits of the old buccaneers, the sea heroes of
past days whom Henry Morgan wanted and set out to
overshadow. Bartolomeo Portugues having been arrested
near Campeche the
gibbet was erected on the shore for his hanging.
He watched them put it up from his prison aboard
ship. And in the night before his execution, he
stabbed his guard and swam away, supported by a
kag. Before eight days had passed, he came again
with pirates in a long canoe and stole the same
ship away from the harbour of Campeche. (CG, p.71).

The tone is of inflation and the anecdote contains
tall-tale effects. Better than this, there are anecdotes
about Roche Brazilian and L'Ollonais whose comic
exaggeration gains high point. The following passages
describe their real hatred for Spain and their strong and
fierce love of cruelty in hyperbolic language:

Once when his (Roche Brazilian's) ship was
wrecked in Castilla de Oro, he killed most of
a troop of Spanish horse and used their beasts
to ride off on. When the men of Spain were
near him, Roche was a foaming beast. It was told
that once he roasted prisoners on green spits
over a slow fire. (CG, p.71).

But the most cruel and the most feared man in the
western ocean was L'Ollonais whose arrival in Yucatan
converted it into "heaps of stones and ashes" and made
the mice fled into the jungle.

The comic extravagance, crudity and ferocity highly
characteristic of American oral yarns are unmistakably
present in these anecdotes. To build up a picture of
horror and fright, to portray buccaneers' ferocity and unrelenting habits, to demonstrate their brutish monstrosity, the details are exaggerated and piled upon details until they become laughable. They are rather tall tales in miniature. A joke reported to be true about Junius Maltby's purchase of a goat is more funny than anyone of these anecdotes. After his wife's death, Maltby, in order to feed his child, goes to purchase a she-goat; he instead bought a he-goat. This made the people of the valley roar with laughter and have profound discussions—clearly storyteller's exuberant elaborations:

They told how, on a doctor's advice, Junius bought a goat to milk for the baby. He didn't inquire into the sex of his purchase nor give his reason for wanting a goat. When it arrived he looked under it, and very seriously asked, "Is this a normal goat?"

"Sure" said the owner.

"But shouldn't there be a bag or something immediately between the hind legs?—for the milk, I mean." (PH, pp.50-51).

Marked by utmost gravity on Maltby's part, his ignorance about the difference of sex, masculinity of tone make the anecdote a good plot for a tall tale. It amused Miss Morgan, the school teacher, so much that she later developed it into a story that was never published.

The tall tales, however, are not wholly absent in these works of Steinbeck. The best and the most notable is one in Cup of Gold that tells how a drowned woman returned to ship to wreak vengeance upon its crew. Like the Mississippi steamboat scene of Thorpe's "The Big Bear
of Arkansas", the scene here too is a ship, Bristol Girl.
The following typical passage evokes admirably well the
situation and the circumstances appropriate to a tall tale:

And in the nights he lay back quietly while
the men talked of wonders seen and imagined of
mile-long serpents which coiled about ships and
swallowed them, and of turtles so huge that they
had trees and streams and whole villages on their
backs and only sank once in five hundred years.
Under the swinging lamps they told how Finns
could whistle up a deadly storm for their revenge;
how there were sea-rats that swam to the ships and
gnawed holes through the planking until the ships
sink. They spoke shudderingly of how one, sighting
the dread, slimy kraken, might never see land again
for the curse that was on him. Water spouts were in
their speech, and mooing cows that lived in the seas
and suckled their calves like land cows; and ghost
ships sailing endlessly about the ocean looking for
a lost port, their gear worked by seamen who were
bleached skeletons. (CS, p. 43).

The gathering of the pirates and relating past
stories of horror of almost incredible happenings is very
much reminiscent of the night time gatherings of story
telling session of fireside yarn spinning. Against
this background is the narrator introduced—"On such a
night, Tim stretched himself and said"—in a single
sentence who in a familiar and apologetic tone declares
with great theatrically:

"I know nothing of your big snakes at all, nor
have I seen the kraken, God save me! But I've
bit of a tale myself if you'll be listening" (CS, p. 43).

With this assertion he begins much in the rambling
manner of Southwestern oral stories to unfold his tale
straying away from his original story:
"'Twas when I was a boy like this one here and I sailing in a free ship that tuck'd about the ocean picking up here and there—sometimes a few black slaves and now and then a gold ring from a Spanish craft that couldn't help itself—whatever we could get. We had a master by election and no papers at all, but there were different kinds of flags, and they on the bridge. If we did be picking out a man of war in the glass, then we ran for it." (CG, p. 43).

Having thus kindled the curiosity of his listeners and thereby getting them fully prepared for his yarn, Tim launches into comic extravagant monologue almost uninterrupted, dominating the whole company with his tale till the end.

Told in toothsome vernacular and narrator's salty language and drawling voice, most suited to a tall tale, enliven his character. Narrator's affected gravity coupled with conversational style, ungramatical structure and common expressions impart an otherwise incredible fantasy a pleasant quality. Vivid phrases catch the action: "and they [hands] came through the side and started to ripping the planks off like they were paper."

Day to day racy expressions: "Well, any way as I'm telling you," we are a free crew . . . and you the master by election," "we want the woman . . . and if we don't be getting her there'll be a bit mutiny in a minute," "That was all," "I seen it Oh, my God I seen it," "Oh my God! Save me!" (CG, pp. 43-44); one often comes across.
It also ends in the manner of an anecdote; in a voice full of surprising feeling, the narrator passes judgement:

"... But they say on clear nights in the Indian Ocean you can see the poor murdered Hindu ghosts chasing the dead da Gama about in the sky. And I have heard that these same Hindus are a very unfruitful people to pick out, and you going in for murder." (CG, p. 44).

It is indeed Tim's singular manner of recounting a tale that makes the anecdote interesting and leaves his audiences fully convinced.

Most of Steinbeck's novels and many of his stories of this period end on a tragic note. The *Cup of Gold* is a novel about a man, Henry Morgan, who has although achieved material success, fails in his prime achievement—the possession of La Santa Rosalía's legendary beauty. He grows almost monomaniacal in his desire for her, just as Joseph Wayne in *To A God Unknown* is fanatically concerned with establishing a patriarchy. Morgan, from the very beginning, is very much aware of his desire's accompanying failure: "But I fear I go to my death. It is a dreadful thing to be attempting. If this is my desire, I must, though I die." (CG, p.83). The irony does not lie in his failure, it rather resides in La Santa Rosalía's unnameable beauty turning out, quite contrary to his expectation, nothing more than ordinary and her refusal to live under his banner as his wife. The ironic point is that a man in spite of his outward seeming happiness may be inwardly miserable, that his material success can not, however, be equated with his happiness.
Similarly, Edward Hicks', popularly known as Sharks, long-cherished dream of affluence in *The Pastures of Heaven* is climatically destroyed, and he is made to accept humiliation and the harsh realities of life. The half-wit Tulepecito, otherwise an innocent and harmless creature is finally sent to Napa asylum for attacking Bert Munroe. Mrs. Helen Van Deventer has ultimately to leave her neurotic daughter, Hilda, whom she has to affectionately fostered and guarded against every evil. Mr. Junius Maltby's peaceful and carefree living is jeopardized when he is made to realize his impoverished state by the neighbors offering his son, Robbie, new and decent clothes. Giving up the blissful life of the valley he moves to town to resume his former job of an accountant for better prospects and good living. Miss Morgan, the school teacher, who very much loves her father and often recollects her childhood days—when her father returned home from long tours with many presents and stories to tell—leaves the valley to save her illusion of her father's greatness when she suspects the drunken hired man in the car to be her old man whom she so affectionately venerated. Lopez sisters' so called respectable and peaceful living is threatened when Mrs. Munroe jokingly remarks, quite unaware of its far graver consequences, about one of the sisters going with a man in a buggy. Having discarded the valley life they move to town to lead a brothel life and accept "the money of shame." Mr. Raymond Banks who likes
and often attends executions at the invitation of his San Quentin's ward friend quite unconscious of the suffering and the violence caused to the hanged, discontinues doing so when Munroe kindles his soft human emotions. He Munroe’s passing adoration of Pat Humbert’s house instills in him a desire to live a decent life and to marry the admirer. He arranges his house on Vermont style but he becomes soon desperate “on the point of realising life” on learning that Mae Munroe was to marry another man. Richard Whiteside’s dream of establishing a dynasty, like that of Joseph Wayne’s patriarchal monomania in To A God Unknown, is shattered when he marries Mae Munroe and leaves the valley with his burnt mansion behind.

All of them, even Henry Morgan of the Cup of Gold who had his own illusion of idealistic fantasies of feminine charm, have been the victims of their fostered illusions one after another; but they survived them all by resigning themselves to the resultant disillusionment. This irony and disillusionment has been reinforced in the opening pages of the prologue and the epilogue to The Pastures of Heaven. About 1776 a Spanish Corporal in search of an Indian worker happened to visit the title valley from the mountain ridge and was greatly amazed to see it’s unspoiled beauty: “Here are the green Pastures of Heaven to which our Lord leadeth us.” (PH, p. 6). This increasing irony has
again been suggested by Bert Monroe's jovial remarks concerning his past successful business ventures after his taking possession of the cursed Battle Farm:

"Well, I just happened to think, maybe my curse and the farm's curse got to fighting and killed each other off. I'm dead certain they've gone, anyway." (PH, p.15).

But T. B. Allen did one better saying:

"... Maybe your curse and the farm's curse has nestled and gone into a gopher hole like a pair of rattlesnakes. Maybe they'll be a lot of baby curses crawling around the Pastures the first thing we know." (PH, p.15).

And, that is precisely true as the irony is revealed during the course of each story contained in The Pastures of Heaven.

The resulting disillusionment is emphasized in the epilogue, too, when looking down into the valley some tourists wish to have the peace of the valley in their busy and noisy life, and also in the bus driver's remarks:

"I guess it sounds kind of funny to you folks, but I always like to look down there and think how quiet and easy a man could live on a little place." (PH, p.127).

But, by the time the end is reached the reader becomes fully aware that the valley's seemingly attractive quietude and tranquility is nothing but a mirage; that it like Matthew Arnold's Dover Beach offers "neither joy, nor love, nor light, Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help, for pain. ..."
The bitterness, which the catastrophic end of these ironic tales carries leaves the reader in a confused state of mind. Unable to react to the exposure to the characters and their emotions, he is half amused and half pained. But, when a character suffers climatically or Nemesis visits him without causing him physical harm or serious injury, one’s normal reaction is naturally laughter. The catastrophic end of Steinbeck’s novels and stories thus makes his humor grim imparting it the characteristic blackness of American comic tradition. His characters live in a world of illusion which probably does not exist, and they are impractical, rather foolish enough, to understand life itself, that life does not move the way one wishes.

Many of the tales collected in *The Long Valley* too are built on the same kind of typical irony and have the same ring of black humour of the earlier volume, although some of them have little or no humour at all. “Breakfast” is merely a sketch about a family of cotton pickers sharing their lousy breakfast with another stranger family of Joads which was later incorporated into Chapter 22 of *The Grapes of Wrath*. “The Raid” is an account of a communist leader, older Dick and his inexperienced, undertraining and underage neophyte, Root. It is a germ story for a longer novel *In Dubious Battle* which, like the novel, portrays communist organisers’ little concern for individuals and their utmost devotion to their cause
and irreverence for religion: "You lay off that religion stuff, kid... Religion is the opium of the people" (LV, p. 73). Both are good rogues, like Mac and Jim of In Dubious Battle, with their false communism. The irony is that their practice militates against their avowed principles; they hardly practice what they preach. Although Dick rebuffs Root for his religious sentimentality for quoting from the Bible, he is actually trying indirectly to be known as a martyr after his death. By pointing to the red portrait of a communist who never feared anyone he makes Root stick to the party and its rules and be beaten up.

Written in the same ironic mode as The Pastures of Heaven, the most tragic tales are "The Murder" and "The Harness". The hapless husband Peter Randall decides to throw off the harness he was made to put on unwillingly by his wife after her death. Her death should have heralded freedom for him which he had longed for years. Now that she has gone out of his life forever, he just can not brook the idea of surviving without her. The Anglo Saxon husband in "The Murder" whose confidence was such in his silent loyal and most obedient Yugoslavian wife that not a single syllable he would credit against her till chancing one night to return unexpectedly from the journey finds her sleeping with her cousin paramour during his absence. Having rejected his father-in-law's advice of beating a wife, he has ultimately to act upon his advice; he beats Jelka and kills her cousin to save his own married life.
Based on the theme most favoured by the southwestern humorists—of tricksters manipulating things for selfish motives—Eliza Allen in "The Chrysanthemums" is greatly shocked to know about her being duped by a garrulous itinerant tinker who throws away the chrysanthemums flowers she had given him so affectionately. She is later seen sobbing and crying weakly. Mary Teller, in "The White Quail", who wants to enjoy the pleasure of her unchanging garden likes her husband only because he can afford a garden for her. For the garden's sake she has sacrificed her feminine instinct of attaining motherhood, she does not allow her husband to have an Irish terrier pup, she even hates the rough and wild hillside outside her garden hedge nor the wind that would destroy it. In spite of her best efforts she could not avoid the outside world, "all rough and tangled and unkempt" symbolised by the cat when her husband kills her favourite quail instead of the cat.

Johnny Bear, the title character of the story "Johnny Bear," like Tularacito of The Painted Desert, is a half wit monster, but peaceable and harmless, proves dangerous when he acts out the secret love affairs of one of the spinster sisters, the paragon of "good people," with a chinaman for some measure of 'whiskey'.
"The Vigilante," "The Flight" and "The Snake" are grim stories almost devoid of humour. The last is merely a sketch based on an incident that happened in Edward Ricketts' laboratory. The ironic point is that Dr. Phillips who "could kill a thousand animals for knowledge, but not an insect for pleasure" and "hated people who made sport of natural processes" (LV, p.53) has to kill a rat for enigmatic lady's sadistic pleasure. This futile exercise to please the lady makes painful mockery of all his beliefs and natural process. The woman's demand reverses the whole situation and ironically forces him to act contrary to his beliefs and principles he has cherished so long.

Although not as gay as Steinbeck's other stories, "The Flight" is too built on a powerful irony. Mama Torres is pleased to see her nineteen-year-old boy, Pepe—"to have a man in the house again"—ready to accept adult responsibilities. But, their hopes are ultimately frustrated when Pepe's is killed by his avengers at the time when he was greatly needed.

Based on how man's plans are often thwarted by the malignant forces working against him, are the four loosely-connected stories of The Red Pony which depict the stages in a boy's initiation into manhood and teach Jody, the hero of the stories, that pain, suffering and death, age and birth are the natural phenomena of life. In the first
story "The Gift" Jody's father, presents him a pony to ride and the boy eagerly awaits the day he will ride it. But before he could do so, the pony due to his own carelessness and Billy Buck's, catches cold and dies. The second story "The Mountains" begins with the return of an old paisano to Tiffin ranch to die where he was born long back. But Tiffin's unsympathetic remarks equating Cipano and the old horse, Sasser, disheartens him and his hopes of dying on a ranch remain unfulfilled as he escapes with the old horse to die in the mountains.

Closely related in theme and sequence to the first story is the third story "The Promise!" The father offers Jody another pony provided he tends her during gestation. Again something untoward happens and the tragedy occurs. Billy has to kill the pony to save its colt as promised to Jody.

The last story "The Leader of the People" is an account of the grandfather's old heroic feats of westering. In his being temperamentally touchy and garrulous always repeating the old uninteresting tales of his past in the most jejune manner, the grandfader is obviously a representative of poor whites as Pepe's only pleasure of throwing his dead father's knife unerringly to the wooden post likens him to the shiftless Arkansas loafers in Twain's Huckleberry Finn and Junius Maltby of The Pastures of Heaven. But the old man is greatly frustrated when he overhears his son-in-law's unkind remarks.
"Well, how many times do I have to listen to the story of the iron plates, and the thirty-five horses? That time's done. Why can't he forget it, now it's done?" He grew angrier while he talked, and his voice rose. "Why does he have to tell them over and over? He came across the plains. All right! Now it's finished. Nobody wants to hear about it over and over." (LV, p.211).

This cruel comedy of human existence—how men's plans are thwarted and he standing helpless sees with his own eyes the shattering of his hopes and dreams—often resulting in frustration, despair, sadness, disillusionment and the 'ironic reversal of fortune' though undoubtedly compel reader's sympathy for the suffering victim, it also imparts these stories the ring of blackness of contemporary black humour.

Not only The Red Pony is episodic in structure, many of Steinbeck's other works are very loosely structured. His all structural components do not hang as tightly together as that of many twentieth century novels, steadily toward a single climax; digressions, intrusions and diversions are the qualities that make his novels disjointed and loosely structured. His earlier novel The Pastures of Heaven is too a collection of ten diverse stories of different families held together by a common locale, a common theme and an ironical vision. Each of the ten stories is independent in itself and can be read separately.
without distorting its meaning and vision but the
Monroe family provides the connecting thread as is
trickster manifesting himself in many guises a
unifying figure in Melville's *The Confidence-Man*
or *Huck Finn* provides a physical link to the
episodes of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. According
to Steinbeck's own admission concerning *The Pastures
of Heaven* he always thought of his novels in terms
of episodes. While working on *The Pastures of
Heaven* he wrote to his agent in 1931:

The manuscript is made up of stories each
one complete in itself, having its rise, climax and ending. Each story deals with
a family or individual. They are tied
together only by the common locality and
by the contact with the Monroes.18

The letter obviously provides a clue for the
proper understanding of his writing methods; his
novels first came to him in episodes and were later
embellished during the course of writing and developed
into full-length books. The episodic structure of
these books thus attests once again Steinbeck's debt
to the earlier humorists of America, especially of
the Southwestern writers, who preferred more
reporting incidents and anecdotes than writing
The novels of Steinbeck's early period of apprenticeship are thus folk comedy embodying tragedy, despair, futility, disillusionment, the overtones which are characteristic of black humour and Southwestern folk comedy, which was noted for its grotesque characters, deviltries of its prototypes, masculinity, rough and absurd humour of rhetoric and exaggeration. Although they are not regarded as his best novels, they were a good beginning for an "aspiring novelist," for in these works Steinbeck inaugurated and effectively demonstrates his talent and skill in creating a vital fictional form; they also set up, or rather reveal certain comic pattern of theme and design, native devices of comedy, tall tales, exaggeration, oral tradition which he employs quite consistently and more successfully on a larger scale in his later works.
NOTES

Nobel Prize Library Series (New York: Alexis Gregory; Del

2 Walter Blair, Native American Humor, p. 167.

3 John Steinbeck, Cup of Gold (1929; rpt. London: Corgi


5 John Steinbeck, To A God Unknown (1933; rpt. New

6 William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (New York: Random

7 Warren French, John Steinbeck (New York: Twayne

8 Peter Lisca, "John Steinbeck: A Literary Biography"
Steinbeck and His Critics, ed. E. W. Tedlock and C. V. Nicker
(Albuquerque: N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1957),
p. 11.


13 Kenneth S. Lynn, *Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor*, p.32.

14 *Steinbeck and His Critics*, p.5.


16 The term is Peter Lisca's describing Steinbeck's technique in *Cup of Gold* in his *The Wide World*, p.30.


CHAPTER III

CELEBRITY
From *Cup of Gold* to *Tortilla Flat* are actually the works of Steinbeck's apprenticeship as a writer who was still groping for a career as a fictionist. With the publication of *Tortilla Flat*, which is in a mould quite different from anything he had done before, came a surprising turn in his development. Marking the end of his apprenticeship, it too demarcated a complete departure in style, tone, form, ideas. The first thing to go was his early melancholy and it exhibited for the first time his large gift for comic writing. Also, it opened new possibilities if he continued writing in the same light vein. But Steinbeck reacted quite unexpectedly differently and published subsequently some of his most successful proletarian novels—*In Dubious Battle*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Cannery Row*—which later culminated in his Nobel Prize for literature. Since all these novels were rooted in contemporary socio-economic problems, more attention was focussed on Steinbeck's social philosophy, and critics, in their attempts to identify these books which the proletarian movement of the thirties, have quite surprisingly ignored the most endearing quality of humour of these works.

Another reason for Steinbeck's humour having gone unnoticed seems to be his denial of his being identified as a humorist: "It [ *Tortilla Flat* ] has ruined everyone I know. That's one of the reasons I would like *In Dubious*
Battle printed next. Myths form quickly and I want no
tag of humorist on me, nor any other kind.¹

The remark is, indeed, characteristic of his attitude
to fiction and essentially refers to a paradox in his works.
Besides exhibiting his keen interest in the novel both as
a tradition and form, it also shows that he was basically
a novelist with a serious purpose, and not a humorist.
Quite ironically, most of his works—Tortilla Flat,
Cannery Row—suffer from the lack of a definite plot and
coherent structure; The Pastures of Heaven and The Red Pony
being the most obvious early examples.

But Steinbeck is at his best and seems to be very at
home in his comic portraits and in the creation of some of
the most unforgettable comic characters in American
literature. Looking to the variety of these comic
characters, the imperfect and loose structure becomes
relatively less important than the wonderful characters,
who inhabit his novels.

No wonder, his early comedy of physical deformity
still persists in these novels in his more individualized
and localized thumb-nail portraits of the poor American
whites. Here also, they are equally grotesque and
curiously strange in their appearance. See the description
of "the poor little half-formed" Pirate in Tortilla Flat
whom "God did not give him all the brain he should have":

He was a huge, broad man, with a tremendous black and bushy beard. He wore jeans and a blue shirt, and he had no hat. In town he wore shoes. There was a shrinking in the Pirate's eyes when he confronted any grown person, the secret look of an animal that would like to run away if it dared turn its back long enough. Because of this expression, the paolances of Monterey knew that his head had not grown up with the rest of his body. They called him The Pirate because of his beard. Every day people saw him wheeling his barrow of pitchwood about the streets until he sold the load. And always in a cluster at his heels walked his five dogs. ( TF, p.59 ).

The crazy radical Joy in *In Dubious Battle* with "no more sense than a bull dog" who "never learned to keep his mouth shut" had a "wizened and battered face" with "nose crushed flat against his face." He never shakes hands with anyone, for his "crushed and scarred" hands cause him pain.

The inarticulate giant Lennie of *Of Mice and Men* and the dreamy and torpid Noah Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath* belong to the early group of John Steinbeck's comic sketches, *Johnny Bear* and *Tularecito* of his early stories.

About Lennie writes Steinbeck:

Behind him walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders, and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely and only moved because the heavy hands were pendula.2

Similar comedy of physical deformity is again well brought out by Steinbeck in his description of the lumberman in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Behind the door of the sheds:
A spectre of a man came through the dark shed.
Thin, dirty, oily skin tight against stringy muscles. One eye was gone, and the raw, uncovered socket squirmed with eye muscles when his good eye moved. His jeans and shirt were thick and shiny with old grease, and his hands cracked and lined and cut. His heavy, pouting underlip hung out sullenly.

The most odd-looking and the strangest of them all is Noah Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath*. He is

the first-born, tall and strange, walking always with a wondering look on his face, calm and puzzled. He had never been angry in his life. He looked in wonder at angry people, wonder and uneasiness, as normal people look at the insane. Noah moved slowly, spoke seldom, and then so slowly that people who did not know him often thought him stupid. He was not stupid, but he was strange. He had little pride, no sexual urge. He worked and slept in a curious rhythm that nevertheless sufficed him. He was fond of his folks, but never showed it in any way. Although an observer could not have told why, Noah left the impression of being misshapen, his head or his body or his legs or his mind, but no misshapen member could be recalled.

Pa thought he knew why Noah was strange, but Pa was ashamed, and never told. For on the night when Noah was born, Pa, frightened at the spreading thighs, alone in the house, and horrified at the screaming wretch his wife had become, went mad with apprehension. Using his hands, his strong fingers for forceps, he had pulled and twisted the baby. The midwife, arriving late, had found the baby's head pulled out of shape, its neck stretched, its body warped; and she had pushed the head back and moulded the body with her hands. But Pa always remembered, and was ashamed. And he was kinder to Noah than to the others. In Noah's broad face, eyes too far apart, and long fragile jaw Pa thought he saw the twisted warped skull of the baby. Noah could do all that was required of him, could read and write, could work and figure, but he didn't seem to care; there was a listlessness in him toward things people wanted and needed. He lived in a strange silent house and looked out of it through calm eyes. He was a stranger to all the world, but he was not lonely. (*GW*, pp. 72-73).
Steinbeck has used the word 'strange' five times in the above extract to emphasize and reassure that Noah was the strangest of all his comic sketches. The number of such comic sketches which could, however, be cited from the pages of Steinbeck's works is almost endless. Those cited thus far, suggest, indeed, his keen interest in the portrayal of his characters in comic terms. Frankie in Cannery Row is another example of both physically and mentally grotesque character. These individualized and localized comic portrayals bear, of course, some relation to those derisive portraits of poor whites which had already had American flavour.

This kind of comic *reductio ad absurdum* besides making his characters look absurd, also provides Steinbeck, in spite of his sympathies with them, that element of detachment from his material which is so typical of Southern and Southwestern humorists. He could achieve it through language and can further be evidenced in the narrator's use of high flown poetic diction when he describes the rough activities of the paisanos: they are "stupendously drunk," "spend riotous nights," have really "fine fights," or short but "glorious fights," and receive "glorious cuts and bruises," in "roaring battles that raged through whole clots of men." Even stealing food for Teresina is described as a "glorious game" and Danny's death as "one last glorious, helpless assault on the Gods."
But for major protagonists Steinbeck has again chosen in these works types recurrent throughout American comedy. His leading characters are lower class whites; the social outcasts, shiftless, vulgar, undignified, immodest, ne'er-do-wells, rascallions, liars, scalwags, quirky, imposters, rogues, scoundrels, rascals, and spendthrifts of time, money and love. Nothing has been said about the external appearance of the paisanos of Tortilla Flat, or the Joeds of The Grapes of Wrath, or Mack and the boys of Cannery Row, or Mac and Jim of In Dubious Battle. Very little is known about what they look like, they often reveal themselves only through their talks, and behaviour; through their relations to other characters.

With their uncouth manners, shabbily dressed paisanos swaggering down the Monterey street in Tortilla Flat are unmistakably the very picture of the Southwestern prototypes already created by Hooper and Harris. The mode of living of these paisanos—Danny, Pilon, Pablo, Jesus Maria and Big Joe Portagee—is much the same as that of Simon Suggs and Sut Lovingood. They "live in old wooden houses out in infertile forest set in weedy yards, and the pine trees from the forest are about the houses" (TF, p.10). Their window panes have been obscured with cobwebs, with dust and with the neat marks of raindrops. Through it the
sunlight can hardly penetrate even during mid day. None except for Danny has a bed. Pablo sleeps on the mat of three sheepskins stitched together, Jesus Maria having nothing to spread under him on the floor uses one of old overcoats through the sleeves of which he puts his arms and his legs through the sleeves of another. Pilon sleeps wrapped in a big piece of carpet, whereas Big Joe sleeps simply in his clothes.

Paisanos are lazy and careless; without culture, refinement, ambition or wealth. More surprising is that they hardly realize the importance of these things in life. They are seldom seen working; they have nothing of their own in the world; but if they get something by miracle or inherit a house they spoil it by their careless handling. Aversion to work being their chief pleasure, they usually depend for their subsistence upon chance and accept and are usually content with what they procure with least possible efforts. Though they advise Pirate to live a decent life and not to eat the cast out food, they themselves, much contradictory to their advice, depend upon the cast out pickings which the Pirate collects at the backdoors of the restaurants. Their very existence is without motive and life, a kind of enigma. No one knows how they can live so happily without basic necessities.
These not-a-care-in-the-world sort of boys are the pleasant rogues whose roguery chiefly consists in manipulating a free dinner for themselves, in stealing a chicken, pine sticks, hand sandwiches, wine, food and getting drunk all their lives at the cost of others. They lie outrageously, steal whatever they can lay their hands on and cheat everyone whoever they happen to encounter and thus coolly betray the trust reposed in them. Their activities centre around good wine and women.

They usually do not have money but if it is incidentally obtained, somehow or the other, through trickery or miracle, they squander it frivolously either on wine or on purchasing presents for women, which too, they often steal back and trade to Torreilli for some measure of wine. In drinking they know little restraint and can empty gallons of wine at a time.

Again, in their lack of shame and modesty and family feeling, païsans proclaim their identity with the Southwestern legendary heroes. None of them is very moral; hence they have no revulsion for amorality. They consider little love affair right and healthy. Uninhibited as they are, nothing can restrain their actions. They are lecherous who like to look at the naked legs of the girls, and unhesitatingly go to sluts, whores and harpies to commit adultery and satisfy their carnal urges. They take improper
liberties with Torrelli's wife and impregnate Senora Teresina Cortes whom they help in distress.

Rough and dirty, dressed in jeans and open shirt, Mac and Jim in *Dubious Battle*, in their gogury and single principle: "We've got to use everything," belong to the long line of genus rogues and especially resemble Hooper's Simon Sugar whose maxim is "it is good to be shifty in a new country." They are shrewd and sagacious imposters who dupe successfully everyone whom they happen to meet. In order to befoul others they use everything, every means at hand. To win the strikers' confidence, Mac helps deliver a child to Lisa without any training and knowledge of delivery endangering the life of both mother and the child; they take full advantage of old Dan's falling from the tree and his broken hip as a means to initiate the strike, the dead and beaten body of their ceased radical comrade, Joy, is put on the public funeral to rekindle the slowed down spirit of the strikers to continue the strike, Jim's mangled body is also used for the similar purpose. Instead of helping the poor workers they are all the time seen exploiting them. Mac teaches London the trick not only how to make strikers simply vote but to vote in his own favour. Harsh, brutal, manipulating and dangerous they are immune to love and affection. Jim is admonished for his liking for Anderson: "Don't go on people liking Jim."
We can’t waste time liking people.”* They are so shrewd that they do not reveal their true identity until the end is reached and make very carefully the plan for their clandestine escape after having ruined everyone.

Steinbeck’s choice of a lanky and uncouth, savage and brute Lennie in *Of Mice and Men is once again in keeping with the older comic tradition of the Southwest. Most of the characters in American literature in general and Southwestern humorous literature in particular—down from the boy Quixote of “Georgia Theatrics” to Sut Lovingood and from Huck Finn to Nick Adams and Maulden Caulfield—were either infant themselves or infant-like. Even William Byrd II depicted lubbers as childish in his *History of the Dividing Line.* Jim Doggett is called a child of the woods by Porter in his “The Big Bear of Arkansas,” and Paulding’s Nimrod Wildfire is an “overgrown boy.” Benjy, in Faulkner’s *The Sound and Fury,* is an idiot boy. In short, the clown in Southwestern literature was funny merely for his being “unselfconsciously infantile, even when he was technically an adult.”

Lennie has equally nicely been portrayed with almost all the possible traditional vestiges of the Southwestern comedy. Slow-witted as an overgrown boy, he is equally “unselfconsciously infantile” both in spirit and behaviour. Unable to act independently, he is looked after by his friend,
George. His existence without George is rather impossible. If let alone, he would unwittingly crush Curley's hand, break his wife's neck or molest a lonely girl. Unconscious of his enormous physical strength, he often kills the things he likes most—puppy, rabbit, mouse, or any soft and furry objects—in his attempts to pet them. Hence, though simple and kind, innocent and gentle, he is not allowed by George to touch any soft and furry thing like a woman's dress or hair.

Steinbeck has so much dehumanized Lennie that one hardly feels compassion for him. He is quite incapable of any recognizable human response; his response to every situation is alike even when it demands compassion or grief; his behaviour is quite unpredictable. He is so fearsome a figure that he can do any damn thing any time. Even he has been deprived of sexual urge that hardly qualifies him what to speak of the human world, but for an animal kingdom too. George, having shot Lennie moves away with Slim for a drink; he too feels no sense of grief for Lennie, experiences no strong emotion or remorse, as if Lennie was merely a vermin. The only thing that sets Lennie apart from all other animals and qualifies him as a human being is his agrarian dream of owning a piece of land and of raising rabbits and cows and pigs and chickens, which he shares with George and, which more than anything
else in life, keeps them both bound together. But
that is too, in the general context of their present
shiftlessness, seems to be out of place and meaningless,
although they have been joined by others in it, and
have 300 bucks at their disposal, the dream is never
realized.

Like Steinbeck’s early works, The Grapes of Wrath
too is about the poor whites of the South, who are in
no way well off than the paupers of Tortilla Flat and
Steinbeck’s other prototypes. In his shambling gait
and with his “little bright eyes” and “a lean excitable”
and “cantankerous, complaining, mischievous, laughing
face” Grampa appears to be a direct descendent of the
erly heroes of the Southwest. What Steinbeck writes
about him may very well be applied to all other Joads:

He fought and argued, told dirty stories. He was
as lecherous as always. Vicious and cruel and
impatient, like a frantic child, and the whole
structure overlaid with amusement. He drank too
much when he could get it, ate too much when it
was there, talked too much all the time. (GW, p.72).

Like the degenerate prototypes of Southwestern
writings, honest, wise and courageous Joads are lazy,
ignorant, sloven, untidy, immoral, child-like, impulsive,
lecherous and natural. The exhibit no inhibitions and
move about with their pants unbuttoned and scratching
contentedly under their testicles with the women folk
moving around. Gossiping, gluttony, drinking, loving
and chitchatting are their chief pleasures. Like paisanos
they drink and eat too much whenever they get a chance,
like to tell and listen to dirty stories.

Keenly interested in sex, the Joads like paisanos
and other Southwestern prototypes, hardly exhibit any
normative sexual inhibition. Whenever and wherever
sex activity is in prospect, the Joads watch it unmindful
of the passerby. Tom Joad and Casey, one-time preacher,
stop and observe, like Mark Twain's loafers of Bricksville
in *Huckleberry Finn*, a dog mounting over a bitch in the
market place, and Willy took a heifer over to Graves' bull
and both Graves and Willy watched their copulation sitting
on the fence.

Controlling sexual urge is quite contrary to the
mode of living of the poor peasants of Oklahoma; they
go and freely enjoy sex with a whore if they feel like
that. Once Uncle John, raven with lust visited Cheyenne
in Sallisaw and "hired three whores in one bed and snorted
and rutted on their unresponsive bodies for an
hour." ( *GW*, p.89 ). Joad also, just after his release
from the Mc Alester prison, where life without a woman
for him, had been tedious and miserable, went to a whore.
No less irresponsible and parasitic, gay and carefree than the paisanos of Tortilla Flat are the indolent bums of Cannery Row—Mack and the boys. Much like paisanos, they too live in an old dilapidated and badly smelling Abbeville shed whose windows are small and the walls unpainted which they call the Palace Flophouse Grill, which can hardly be called home. Carefully demarcated portions of the Palace Flophouse, five oblong lines, each seven feet long and five feet wide, drawn by Mac on the floor with a piece of chalk, serve as their simulated beds.

The rough activities of these ne'er-do-wells and their mode of living not only liken them to paisanos but to the heroes of the Southwestern comic literature. They make a mess of everything, like Harris's Sut Lovingood, may it be a party thrown in honour of Doc or a frog-hunt for Doc's cancer research. In their laziness and zest, in their habit of loafing, they seem to have directly descended from Mark Twain's loafers of Arkansas village. The pursuit of industry seems remote in their world and chitchatting and loafing fill the vacant hours of their meagre existence. As for their amusement Steinbeck writes:

Through the window he [William, the watchman] could see Mack and the boys sitting on the pipes in the vacant lot, dangling their feet in the mellow weeds and take the sun while they discoursed slowly and philosophically of matters of interest but of no importance.6
It recalls to mind the loafing activities of Mark Twain's shiftless loafers of Arkansas village in *Huckleberry Finn*:

"There couldn't anything wake them up all over, and make them happy all over, like a dog-fight—unless it might be putting turpentine on a stray dog and setting fire to him, or tying a tine pan to his tail and see him run himself to death." (HF, p.367).

None of these American bums of *Cannery Row* has a family, or money, or ambition and are normally content with food and drink. But they are all very shrewd and clever if they want something. They threaten Lee Chong with dire consequences if he does not let them use his storage shed:

"••• Kids might knock out the windows, you know •••" Mack suggested. "Place might burn down if somebody don't keep an eye on it." (CR, p.107).

And though they have hired *Palace Flaphouse* from Lee Chong for five dollars a week, the rent as such has hardly been paid to him; although most of their money usually goes to his grocery for wine. Equally shrewd and cunning they are when they need wine or furniture for the house or a can of red paint or a present for Doc or money for the parry or a truck for the frog-hunt or frogs for Doc's laboratory. They are the talkers *par excellence* whose gift of the gab, Mack's admiration of the captain's bitch, like Sam Slick's pleasing the hostess by kissing and admiring her kids and Mac's prevailing over Anderson by praising his pointer in *In Dubious Battle*, helps them prevail upon the captain to allow them to catch the frogs from his pond.
'You know, I've got a pond up by the house that's so full of frogs I can't sleep nights. Why don't you look up there? They bellow all night. I'd be glad to get rid of them.' (CR, p.163).

Dealing with such people often lacking in culture and refinement, Steinbeck made them reveal themselves through a speech which is often rough and vulgar and which unmistakably betrays their true identity. Their talk carries a familiar conversational tone, abounding in local accents and in racy and pithy sayings, ungrammatical phrases and everyday ribald expressions: 'You damn squirts,' 'lazy bastard,' 'the poor damn rats,' 'dirty son-of-a-bitch,' 'cold blooded bastard,' 'the bunch of lice,' 'dung-heap chicken,' 'thy mothers were udderless cows,' and 'sinful ol' goat'.

Though natural, the language of In Dubious Battle which many including Steinbeck's agent considered profane and offending. The Grapes of Wrath too posed the same problem of the profane and ' printable language.' Longstreet, if not very much ashamed of his authorship of Georgia Scenes, was not very happy of the profanity which his historical truthfulness made obligatory for him to record and which later made him describe his sketches as "literary bagatelles, the amusement of idle hours."
But Steinbeck's reply to his agent in respect of the changes suggested in the *In Dubious Battle* manuscript instead of expressing his shame strongly voices, on the other hand, his justification of his deliberate profanity:

I should like the speech of the men to remain intact if that is possible. A working man bereft of his profanity is a silent man. I've used only those expressions that are commonly used. I hope it won't be necessary to remove them. To try to reproduce the speech of these people and to clean it up, is to make it sound stiff, unnatural and emasculated. I think it is vulgar only in the Latin sense. 8

He was equally adamant about the language of *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Steinbeck was a conscious writer and nothing that he wrote can be called accidental. Explaining this use of common speech he once wrote to his literary agent:

The speech of working men may seem a little bit racy to ladies' clubs, but, since ladies' clubs won't believe that such things go on anyway, it doesn't matter. I know this speech and I'm sick of working men being gilded of their natural expression until they talk with a fine Oxonian flavor.

There are curious things about the language of working men. I do not mean the local idioms, but the speech which is universal in this country among traveling workers. Nearly every man uses it individually, but it has universal rules. It is not grammatical error but a highly developed speech form. The use of the final "g" in "ing" is tricky, too. The "g" is put on for emphasis and often to finish a short hard sentence. It is sometimes used for purpose of elision but not always. Certain words like "something" rarely lose the final "g" or if they do, the word becomes "somatin" or "sompin." A man who says "thinkin'"
will say "morning" if it comes on the end of a sentence. I tell you these things so you will understand why, in one sentence having two present participles, one "g" will be there and the other left off. This is a pretty carefully done mess. If you will read such a sentence over, aloud, you will see that it naturally falls that way.9

Steinbeck was not unaware of the importance of language in society and his attitude toward a language is better expressed when he has Mac say in *In Dubious Battle*:

"No," said Mac. "I'm not an actor at all. Speech has a kind of feel about it. I get the feel, and it comes out, perfectly naturally. I don't try to do it. I don't think I could help doing it. You know, Doc, men are suspicious of a man who doesn't talk their way. You can insult a man pretty badly by using a word he doesn't understand." Maybe he won't say anything, but he'll hate you for it." (IDS, p.142).

It was probably this urge of talking their way and never to be hated that Steinbeck, like most of the Southwestern humorists, put in the mouths of his characters a language most suited to them. He has, indeed, very carefully and commendably well recaptured the ordinary speech of semiliterate and uncultivated migrant workers.

Nevertheless, his characters occasionally become rhetoric in their speech. See Mac in *In Dubious Battle* delivering his lecture using the dead body of his friend, Joy, to stir the strikers to continue their strike:
"Sure I'll 'em," he cried passionately. "The guy's name was Joy. He was a radical! Get it? A radical. He wanted guys like you to have enough to eat and a place to sleep where you wouldn't get wet. He didn't want nothing for himself. He was a radical!" Mac cried. "D'ye see what he was? A dirty bastard, a danger to the government. I don't know if you saw his face, all beat to rag. The cops done that because he was a radical. His hands were broke, an' his jaw was broke. One time he got that jaw broke in a picket line. They put him in the can. Then a doctor come an' looked at him. 'I won't treat a God-darned red,' the doctor says. So Joy lies there with a busted jaw. He was dangerous—he wanted guys like you to get enough to eat." . . . "I knew him." . . . "What are you going to do about it? Dump him in a mud-hole, cover him with slush. Forget him." . . . "He was fightin' for you." Mac shouted. "You goin' to forget it?" . . .

Mac hammered on, "Goin' to let him get killed, while you lie down and take it?" . . .

Mac's voice dropped into a sing-song. "Goin' to dump him in the mud?"

"O.K.," Mac said shortly. "We're going to throw the dirty radical in the mud, but he's going to stay with us, too. God help anybody that tried to stop us." (IDB, pp. 225-227).

This eulogy according to the dead Joy is a kind of trick, a claptrap to get the responses of the audiences recorded in his favour and Mac did "get a hell of a lot of people" on his side thus by putting Joy on a public funeral.

Tom Joad, too, in The Grapes of Wrath, becomes eloquent when he talks philosophically to Ma in his last farewell:
Ma said: 'How'm I gonna know 'bout you? They might kill ya an' I wouldn' know. They might hurt ya. How'm I gonna know?'

Tom laughed uneasily. 'Well, maybe like Casey says, a fella aint got a soul of his own, but only a piece of a big one--an' then--'

'Then what, Tom?'

'Then it don' matter. Then I'll be aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where--wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. If Casey knewed, why, I'll be in the way guys yell when they're man an'--I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build--why, I'll be there. See? * * * ' (GN, p. 385).

They all seem, indeed, to have possessed an unfailing native passion for virile eloquence; they are often seen going into rhapsodies over the things of their chief interest and their speech often attaining that earthy eloquence which belongs to the West. Lennie's rhapsody in Of Mice and Men is nowhere more evident than in his strong agrarian desire. When George narrates the ritualistic dream of owning a piece of land of their own, Lennie, too, reacts with the equal earthy eloquence:

'An' live off the fatta the lan', ' Lennie shouted. 'An' have rabbits. Go on, George! Tell about what we're gonna have in the garden and about the rabbits in the cages and about the rain in the winter and the stove, and how thick the cream is on the milk like you can hardly cut it. Tell about that, George.' (OMM, p. 18).
This tone of inflation, the verbiage appears to be at its fullest display again in the following extract from *The Grapes of Wrath* when Grampa talks about the plenty of grapes in California:

"Well, sir," he said, "we'll be a-strainin' 'fore long now. An', by God, they's grapes out there, just a-hangin' over into the road. Know what I'm a-gonna do? I'm gonna pick me a wash tub full a grapes, an' I'm gonna set in on, an' scrooge around, an' let the juice run down my pants." (GW, p. 85).

Passages of this sort where the humour of exaggeration of the western tall talk attains highly fantastic heights, may endlessly be cited from the works of Steinbeck.

The language which the paisanos speak in *Tortilla Flat* is remarkably distinct from the racy common speech of the uncivilized folk of *In Dubious Battle*, *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. Deliberately based on Malory's Arthurian legends, Steinbeck has purposefully put a poetic and more formalized English into the mouths of his characters:

"Now that great times are done. Thy friends will mourn, but nothing will come of their mourning."

"When one is poor, one thinks, "If I had money I would share it with my good friends." But let that money come and charity flies away, so it is with thee, my once-friend. Thou art lifted above thy friends. Thou art a man of property. Thou wilt forget thy friends who shared everything with thee, even their brandy." (TF, p. 10).
The tone of the speaker has consciously been elevated and Steinbeck seems here to be burlesquing the language of civilized people. All the obvious comic elements and necessary tactics of burlesque have properly been employed by the author. Laughable things have been seriously presented and silly absurdities have equally been raised to the level of dignity. Noble feelings and heroic deeds of the King Arthur and his knights are attributed here to the paisanos of low birth.

The tone of burlesque is more evident in the chapter headings: "How Danny's Friends threw themselves to the aid of a distressed lady? "How Danny was Translated" and "How Danny's Friends sought Mystic Treasure."

But even more influences of the older humour of the Southwest are clearly evident in his fictional technique of reporting the anecdotes. Exaggeration is again better represented in the following anecdote which Tom Joad in The Grapes of Wrath narrated to the depressed one-eyed lumberman to show the proper advantage of his missing eye which he regrets for he can not "see stuff the way other fellas can."

To which Tom retorts:

"Ya full a crap. Why, I knowed a one-legged whore one time. Think she was takin' two-bits in a alley? No, by God! She's gettin' half a dollar extra. She says: "How many one-legged women you sleep' with?"
None!" she says. "O.K.," she says. "You got some spin pretty special here, an' it's gonna cos' ya half a buck entry." An' by God, she was gettin' 'em, too, an' the fellas comin' out thinkin' they're pretty lucky. She says she's good luck... * (GW, pp. 164-165).

Here the masculinity of tone and spirit is highly reminiscent of the mock oral tales popularized by the *Spirit of the Times* and so is the manner quite unmistakable. Making capital of the grotesque humour known typically American, Steinbeck takes his imagination to the unimagined heights rarely excelled by any other writer in America. Told in toothsome veraculcar the anecdote swiftly moves along in a racy narrative and re-echoes early campfire talk.

It would not, however, be wrong to say that much of Steinbeck's humour is oral and has the flavour of frontier oral humour. Many of his jokes, incidents and anecdotes have the plots similar to the tales told around the fireside of the Southwest. Tom Joad's joke about a hump-back man in *The Grapes of Wrath* is a good plot for tall tale.

The entire chapter fourteen of *Tortilla Flat* consists of such charming interludes—of how Tall Bob having been fully fed up of the public laugh attempts to commit suicide and becomes an object of even greater laughter when his suicide results in getting the end of his nose shot off, of how the old Viejo Ravanno unexpectedly dies by hanging
himself in attempting a reluctant suicide in order to
win the love of Tina, and of how Cornelia gets all her
furniture broken and dishes smashed when the big sow
enters her house to take her young pig.

These are, indeed, some of the best anecdotes to
have come out from the pen of a Californian writer.
Done in slapstick tradition of the native humour, these
tales are told with some of the flourishes of the
western tall tale.

The following scene from the story of Cornelia and
her gift pig is probably the most amusing:

'Some ladies came in to see her, then, and
Cornelia let them hold the little pig and pet it.
After a while Sweets Ramirez stepped on that
pig's tail. Oh! It squealed like a steam whistle.
The front door was open. That big sow she came in
for her little pig again. All the tables and all
the dishes were smashed. All the chairs, they were
broken. And that big sow bit Sweets Ramirez, and
pulled off Cornelia's skirt, and then, when those
ladies were in the kitchen and the door locked, the
sow went away, and that little pig went
too. . . . ' (TF, pp. 146-147).

In its savagery and the havoc caused by the sow, the
scene is highly reminiscent of breaking of Sicily Burns's
wedding by a blinded bull in Harris's Sut Lovingood Yarns
cited above.
Not only in spirit but in manner too, his works are equally well in the long established tradition of American humour. *Tortilla Flat* is episodic in structure. These sketches about the paisanos are provided a physical link by its central characters, Danny. Here, again, Steinbeck's early technique of thinking of his material in terms of episode invariably growing into novels seems to be at work. The tales of Longstreet, Harris and Hooper are too loosely linked together for oral narrative usually favoured and developed "episodes and anecdotes rather than thoroughly integrated plots."10 The use of 'interchapters' in *Cannery Row* and *The Grapes of Wrath* serve much the same purpose and hinder the smooth narrative; incidents and events are brought at a halt.

Although Steinbeck surely has used the forms and materials of the older tradition, he need not have read them. Longstreet mentioned the sources of his masterpiece sketches "*The Gander Pulling,*" "*The Wax Works,*" and "*The Fight,*" in his preface to *Georgia Scenes*:

"The Gander Pulling" actually occurred at the very place where I locate it. The names of the persons who figure in it are such as were well known in Richmond County at that time, and the language which I put in the mouths of my actors was just such as was common at such exhibitions. . . . Again, take "*The Wax Works.*" The exhibition actually came off in Waynesboro, Burke County, Ga. Every character introduced actually existed . . . performing precisely the part ascribed to him. . . . "*The Fight*" . . . is a description of a combat which was not uncommon in almost every county in Georgia, at almost every one of which there was a Ramay Sniffle, a little more ludicrous in form and figure, and made rather more
conspicuous in this fight than the real Ranays were. In person, however, he answered very well to many of the poor class whom all Georgians have seen in the sterile pine woods of that State. These may serve as examples of how far the sketches were actually true and how far fanciful.11

The preface asserts that his sketches are based on real incidents and characters. And quite interestingly, Steinbeck’s writings too, like that of Longstreet’s, had a similar sense of locality and authenticity when he mentioned the germ anecdotes of two of his Tortilla Flat stories—of Corporal and his son whom Jesus Maria rescues from the policeman and brings to paissanos and, of the thwarted love of the Veijo Ravanno:

I think that when this is sent off (To A God Unknown) I shall do some short stories. I always think I will and they invariably grow into novels but I’ll try anyway. There are some fine little things that happened in a big sugar mill where I was assistant chief chemist and Majordomo of about sixty Mexicans and Yankis taken from the jails of northern Mexico. . . .

There was the ex-corporal of Mexican cavalry, whose wife had been stolen by a captain and who was training his baby to be a general so he could get even better woman. . . . There is the saga of the C——family. The son hanged himself for the love of a chippy and was cut down and married to the girl. His father aged sixty-five fell in love with a fourteen year old girl and tried the same thing, but a door with a spring lock fell shut and he didn’t cut down. . . . These are a few as they really happened. I could make some little stories of them I think.12

And he did.
Steinbeck's works are thus usually based on factual incidents and information. In *Dubious Battle* has the Fresno strike at its back, and the Salinas lettuce strike of 1936 is much in the background of the composition of *The Grapes of Wrath*. In order to collect the factual material for *The Grapes of Wrath* he had been to Oklahoma, joined westward migrant workers, stayed with them in their hutsments and worked and moved with them. Explaining his method of writing *The Grapes of Wrath* Steinbeck once wrote to his publisher: "I have tried to write this book the way lives are lived, not the way books are written." In another letter to his agent he described that his motivation behind writing of *Tortilla Flat* was "to present a little and, to me delightful peoples" echoe almost the same end which Southwestern humorists, Longstreet and his contemporaries, had in mind a century earlier.

But there is much more to his work than their seeming comic exuberance and playfulness. Beneath this youthful atmosphere marked by gaiety, laughter and sprightliness, there are sporadic subdued overtones of satire. His poor whites are free and careless people whose entire existence revolves round about do's and don'ts, loafing and indolence; they exchange gossip and enjoy life *ad libitum*. Intertwined with their existence is another world, one of commercialized people and businessmen who are bad and destructive while these uncivilized folks are good and kind-hearted.
Tortilla Flat is a study in degeneration.

Through the streets of the town, fat ladies, in whose eyes lay the weakness and the wisdom one sees so often in the eyes of pigs, were trundled in overpowered motor cars towards tea and gin fizzes at the Hotel Del Monte. (TF, p. 43).

The details, of course, build up a picture of degeneration. The comparison of fat ladies to the pigs provides Steinbeck ample scope to express his contempt, to poke fun at the contemporary bourgeois society—its false conventions and indiosyncrasies, its vanity and pretensions, its false values and morality.

Unaffected by the life around them, "having nothing that can be stolen, exploited or mortgaged" (TF, p. 10), the paisanos are a free and happy lot. This is better exemplified in their attitude toward property. For them material possessions actually hold no charm, no fascination and whatever is forced upon them is rather burdensome.

Modern amenities and convenient living actually have no meaning for them. With the two inherited houses Filon notices the worry of property settling on Danny's face and the heavy burden pressing hard upon his slender shoulders. Setting one of the houses to fire not only relieves Danny from such responsibility, it also suggests society's undue over-valuation of the material possessions.
Paisanos are the people with their own values, with their own code of conduct. Grown up in natural freedom, they dare not deviate from their traditional path. In their world there is a strict code of discipline. Although they are noble thieves, it is against their principle to steal Pirate's bag when he himself offers it to them for safe keeping. Such acts of indiscipline are strictly dealt with and the doer is vigorously punished. Even they do not approve very much of Danny's act of stealing Pilon's tethered shoes in his madness:

"This is crime. They were not very good shoes, but it is a crime against friendship to take them. And that is the worst kind of crime. If Danny will steal the shoes of his friends, there is no crime he will stop at." (TF, p.162).

Generous, altruistic and charitable as they are, paisanos offer shelter to the Mexican corporal who is training his baby to be a general. Also, they readily offer their help to Senora Teresina Cortes and save her eight children in distress by stealing but making the food available to them during the bean crop failure. They also assist the Pirate by offering him clothes to attend Mass.

Steinbeck has thus for the purpose of satire contrasted the contemporary morality with paisanos' natural goodness. Ironically, *The Design of Tortilla Flat* was misapprehended
like that of Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes*. It was received as a mere collection of sketches about piaznas with no higher object than sheer entertainment and fun. It was greatly enjoyed and read for its quaintness and fun of piaznas' irresponsible behaviour. In doing so, the socio-economic implications of the book were often missed. This lack of proper recognition and its evaluation in its true spirit and perspective was greatly regretted by Steinbeck. He wrote to his literary agent that he wished to explore "the strong but different philosophico-moral system" of these piaznas. Also, he strongly registered his remonstrance against the literary critics in his foreword to the Modern Library edition by calling them 'literary slummers,' much in the manner Longstreet did in the preface to his *Georgia Scenes*:

The design of *Georgia Scenes* has been wholly misapprehended by the public. It has been invariably received as a mere collection of fancy sketches, with no higher object than **entertainment** whereas the aim of the author was to supply a chapter in history which has always been overlooked—the manners, customs, amusements, wit dialect, as they appear in all grades of society to an ear and eye witness to them.16

Steinbeck's letter to his agents:

The book has a very definite theme. I thought it was clear enough. I had expected that the plan of the Arthurian cycle would be recognized,
that my Gawaine and Launcelot that my Arthur and Galahad would be recognised. Even the incident of the Sangreal in the search of the forest is not clear enough I guess ... However, I seem not to have made any of this clear. The main issue was to present a little known and, to me delightful people. Is not this cycle story or theme enough? Perhaps it is not enough because I have not made it clear enough."

The letter echoes the spirit of Longstreet's above quoted extract.

_In Dubious Battle_ was the first novel to type Steinbeck as a proletarian writer. It is an open and bitter onslaught on both the communist party workers and the rich ranchers. Its brutality can be perceived in its socio-economic implications, in the depiction of the poor migrant workers' plight and the subdued satirical overtones.

Steinbeck directs his anger here at the rich harvesters who exploit and make the poor and gullible workers their dupe. The Torgas Valley is fully organised, with the working conditions amazingly unsatisfactory and horrible. The workers brought over here on false promises are soon disillusioned to find themselves to have been caught in the net of their lousy tricks when they are not fully paid. Their protests against the cruelty and injustice often result in violence. The rich ranchers misinterpret their good intentions, bribe the strikers, break the strike, kill workers and cause damages to their sympathisers, until they succeed in imposing their whims upon the workers.
Compounded of the same material, Of Mice and Men deals with the agricultural labour in California, the rich employers and bunkhouse workers; it is not as bitter as In Dubious Battle was. Here the workers are not troubled and killed, there are no wage cuts, no Growers' Association, still, however, the workers are not better off. They are paid less. Steinbeck's antipathy towards the middle-class society is revealed through his compassion for George and Lennie and his deep concern with the contemporary social issues in bindlestiffs' strong agrarian dream to be their own master ultimately remains unrealized, in spite of their possessing 300 bucks for it.

As people more loyal and honest, chaste and celibate, George and Lennie are superior beings. They are deliberately set in sharp contrast to the civilized class of society represented by Curley and his wife who get married the same night they meet. Steinbeck appears here to be cynically equating the best and the worst of society as he had done earlier in Tortilla Flat, and which reaches culmination in Cannery Row. What makes them better is their belief in certain proprieties of behaviour. George does not very much approve of Curley's loose talk about having his gloves always vaseline-smeared to keep his hands soft and delicate for his wife. Also he declines to join the night trip to a nearby whore house.
Equally honest and simple are the migrant workers, the Joads, in The Grapes of Wrath. Hardly touched by the traits of American sophistication, with no sense of propriety and decorum usually associated with the superior white class, these poor southern peasants are true to themselves. They are not hypocrites; there is a kind of candour, a sense of honesty in their speech and behaviour, in the expression of their elemental passions.

The Grapes of Wrath is a more bitter and pessimistic book, a slap in the face of ideal America as a land of opportunity. Steinbeck, once again, directs his anger against the middle class society, its ambition and money values. Like In Dubious Battle and Of Mice and Men, it is a straightforward record of the poor migrant workers' living conditions which for its socio-economic implications raised instant hue and cry.

Once again, ranch owners are portrayed as villains, inhuman and cruel who cheat the workers and treat them shabbily. Their salaries are cut, they are hated, ridiculed and made to feel alienated when they are referred as Okies. They create the shortage of every commodity and while the poor stand, they silently watch standing. Nothing is wrong with the land; Chapter XXV describes land's fertility in eloquent terms:
The spring is beautiful in California Valleys in which the fruit blossoms are fragrant pink and white, while the seas in a shallow sea. The first tendrils of the grapes, swelling from the sunbaked vines, cascade down to cover the trunk. The full green hills are round and soft as breasts. And on the level vegetable lands are the mile-long rows of pale green lettuce and the spindly little cauliflowers, the grey-green unearthly artichoke plants (MO, p.317).

Here and at many other places like the concluding scene with Rose of Sharon feeding an old man on her breast, with which the novel closes, is not the "symbolism gone sentimental" as Bernard De Voto thinks, but the whole society seems to have gone berserk which is evident from the incident that Tom Joad relates to Casy that happened in McAlester jail:

"How they treat you in McAlester?" Casy asked.

"Oh, awright. You eat regular, an' get clean clothes, and there's places to take a bath. It's pretty nice some ways. Makes it hard not havin' no women." Suddenly he laughed. "They was a guy paroled," he said. "But a month he's back for breakin' parole. A guy ask him why he bust his parole. "Well, hell," he says. "They got no conveniences at my old man's place. Got no electric lights, got no shower baths. There ain't no books, an' the food's lousy." Says he come back where they got a few conveniences an' he eats regular. He says it makes him feel lonesome out there in the open havin' to think what to do next. So he stole a car an' come back." (CG, p.26).

Business community—its vanity, its pretensions, its illusions, its hypocrisy and its relation with other fellows—had always been the target of Steinbeck's satire.
In *Tortilla Flat*, Torrelli was introduced as a shrewd businessman. Here again, Steinbeck directs his satire at the shrewd dishonesty of the business community. When Tom Joad asks the price of a con-rod and piston, the servant of the shop replies:

"Well, sir, I just dunno. If the boss was here, he’d go to a parts books an’ he’d find out how much is a new one, an’ while you was workin’, he’d be findin’ out how bad you’re hung up, and’ how much jack ya got, an’ then he’d—well, say it’s eight bucks in the part book—he’d make a price a five bucks. An’ if you put up a squawk, you’d get it for three. You say it’s all me, but, by God, he’s a son-of-a-bitch. Figgers how bad ya need it. I seen him git more for a ring gear than he give for the whole car." (CG, p.166).

Lee Chong in *Cannery Row* represents the whole business class. Equally shrewd, rather more shrewd than others, he never considers the renting out of his shed to the bums as a loss from whom he never expects rent. But he knows it very well that the bums though will not pay him the rent, yet if they “ever had any money, and quite often they did have, it never occured to them to spend it anywhere except at Lee Chong’s grocery.” (CR, p.108).

Written for a group of soldiers with a view to relieving their post-war tension, *Cannery Row* is his funniest book. It is, nevertheless, his grimest book, which Steinbeck himself agreeing with Malcolm Cowley’s remark, considered it something more than ‘very poisoned cream-puff.’ There are many sly and bitter thrusts against businessmen and politicised women; bourgeois society, its relaxed morality and false values, its hypocrisy and pretensions, are still the central concern of the book.
There is Mrs. Malloy whose hypocrisy is reflected in her desire to have curtains for her windowless boilers as much as of Senora Ramires’s regularly pushing a motorless vacuum cleaner in her house with no electricity just in an action to show herself off cleaning the floor in *Tortilla Flat*.

Directly opposed to this sort of life deeply rooted in hypocrisy and affection, arrogance and vanity, is the simple and natural life of the depraved American bums—Mack and his companions—who in spite of their poverty are true to themselves, like Steinbeck’s other protagonists—paissanos, Joeds and George and Lennie—they too succeed in enlisting the sympathy of the readers in their favour for their natural goodness, simplicity and innocence. What makes them all the more attractive is their reverence for life. While most of the people talk about honesty, about decency and loyalty, about honour and gratitude, Mack and the boys do not talk about all these things; they live them. Although clever enough, quite capable of doing anything if they want something, they are still healthy and curiously clean in their dealings. Others may desert one in adversity but they will not, if once befriended. It is better exemplified in their relationship with Lee Chong. Once they are allowed to use Palace Flathouse by Lee Chong, it was safe from every damage—safe from fire, and from windows being broken. In addition to it, they were
always ready to rush to their benefactor's aid if a drunk caused some trouble in the grocery; Lee Chong is not further cheated, his things are not stolen, for it is against their principle to deceive their benefactor.

It is this moral goodness of these bums, their belief in certain proprieties of behaviour and discipline which forbids them to accept temporary jobs:

"No," said Mack quickly. "We got good reputations and we don't want to spoil them. Every one of us keeps a job for a month or more when we take one. That's why we can always get a job when we need one. Suppose we take a job for a day or so—why we'll lose our reputation for sticking. Then if we needed a job there wouldn't nobody have us." (CR, p. 123).

It is in this respect that the indolent loafers of Cannery Row often referred as "no-goods, come-to-bad-ends, blots-on-the-town, thieves, rascals, bums" (CR, p.110), by the more civilized folks become superior beings, "the Virtues, the Graces, the Beauties of the hurried mangled craziness of Monterey" (CR, p.110).

This shows that good clothes and serious mien do not guarantee affluence and civilization; that intelligence and reason are no check on the innate evil. The duality of bourgeois life is what Steinbeck attempts to project through his 'ethical paradox' in the following extracts:
The things we admire in men, kindness and
generosity, openness, honesty, understanding
and feeling are the concomitants of failure
in our system. And those traits we detest,
sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness,
egotism and self interest are the traits of
success. And while men admire the quality
of the first they love the produce of the
second. (CR, p.208).

The attitude is an obvious presentation of a
similar thought already projected in the Sea of Cortez:

of the good, we think always of wisdom, tolerance,
kindliness, generosity, humility; and the qualities
of cruelty, greed, self-interest, graspingness, and
rapacity are universally considered undesirable.
And yet in our structure of society, the so-called
and considered good qualities are invariable
concomitants of failure, while the bad ones are the
cornerstones of success. A man—a viewing-point
man—while he will love the abstract good qualities
and detest the abstract bad, will nevertheless envy
and admire the person who through possessing the bad
qualities has succeeded economically and socially,
and will hold in contempt that person whose good
qualities have caused failure.

And if the hypothesis of Steinbeck's cynical 'ethical
paradox' is correct, then, his humour has significant
flavour of contemporary humour. Besides, the Joad family's
sufferings in California, the notorious last image with
which The Grapes of Wrath closes, George and Lennie's failure
in realising the rituality of dream of having a piece of land of their own, in spite of their having sufficient amount for it in *Of Mice and Men* Danny's unexpected and untimely death in *Tortilla Flat* are the tragic incidents that arouse readers' pity rather than amusement. The laughter naturally becomes wry and bitter and thus make Steinbeck's humour of this period all the more black.

Whereas his animal-like characters with no ambition, no higher objects in life, capable of theft, violence and sin, who are like some fabled beast-man together with other technical any stylistic devices—the common folks' speech, loose and episodic structure, masculinity of tone of these novels—all go a long way to fit his works possibly well into the highly influential comic tradition of the Southwest. Steinbeck never surpassed these works in humour for in them he not only created myth but presented the best possible comedy of his literary career.
NOTES


9. Ibid., pp.110-111.


15 Ibid., p. 82.


CHAPTER IV
DECADENCE
Fortunately or unfortunately the last phase of Steinbeck's literary career coincided with the exceptionally eventful period of the World War-II. For a writer like Steinbeck who was chiefly concerned with the life around him, the war pressure was rather impossible to ignore. Even otherwise also, reportage, editorials describing the horrifying the scene of the war-affected areas formed the staple of every newspaper and poured from every corner of the country. Following the current trend, Steinbeck, too, wrote some books of non-fiction based on his war experiences as a newspaper correspondent: *Once There Was a War*; *Bombs Away*, and a travelogue, *A Russian Journal*. But in addition to these he did also produce his second play-novelette, *The Moon Is Down*, on Nazi-occupied Norway along with his other nine books of fiction to be discussed here in these pages, which essentially carry the familiar gloom and melancholy so characteristic of the post-war era.

It need hardly be remarked that many of his early characters—hypocrites, rogues, sadists, swindlers and scoundrels, who are dirty, unsound and rough, callous and unfeeling ignoble and mean and whose want of learning given them the more opportunities to show their natural habits—reappear. And whatever little humour is present
in an otherwise pathetically tragic novel, *The Moon Is Down*, it is provided by the self-willed cook's treatment of the Nazi invaders. The rough and arrogant Annie, Major Orden's cook, treats the foreign soldiers spitefully and throws boiling water on them when they stare and attempt to offend her modesty. Such a spunky and common sense servant who sees things as they are and will not be cowed even by the masters maybe, is not new in American literature. It has rather a long tradition on American stage and is so old that it appears new. In the first American play to enjoy any success, *The Contrast*, Royall Tyler introduced the figure of the serving man, Brother Jonathan, who was before Uncle Sam, the emblem of the United States, a model of local virtues, like Annie, in the face of foreign influences. And it should, however, be remembered that *The Moon Is Down* was primarily intended and written for the stage. The figure of a serving man who is wiser than his master turns up over and over in American literature, particularly a notable example is provided by the two devoted black servants in D.W. Griffith's famous film, *The Birth of a Nation*. Annie, too, is very much devoted to Mayor and his family and shows a deep concern over anything that concerns Mayor. She sneaks out at night to Molly's house to inform her about the Mayor's coming and Anders' secret escape to England.
Another important character in *The Moon Is Down*, who finds his prototype in the long line of American genus rogues, is the local storekeeper, Corell, the well wisher turned quisling. Like the 'Nat’ral Born Darn’d Fool' Sut Lovingood who believes in being shifty in a new country and lives up to it, Corell considers it honourable to work for what he believes in: "I work for what I believe in! That is honourable."² And like Mac of *In Dubious Battle*, he is a scoundrel, whose prime motivation is to exploit the credulous people as much as Mac or Melville's confidence man did. It becomes evident when he tells Dr. Winters:

'Doctor, you don't understand. This thing was bound to come. It's a good thing. You don't understand it yet, but when you do, you will thank me. The democracy was rotten and inefficient. Things will be better now. Believe me. [Almost fanatic in his belief.] When you understand the new order you will know I am right.'³

Although an outsider, he has, nevertheless, created in his fellow citizens sufficient confidence in himself like Melville's confidence man, much in the same manner as Mac does to win the local favour among the working people in *In Dubious Battle* by employing the same 'Madison Avenue techniques.'⁴ He donates lunch, targets, cartridges and prizes for a shooting competition in the hills, he offers his boat to Anders boys for their clandestine nocturnal escape to England, without, even slightly betraying
his town through treachery and deceit prepares for the Nazi invasion and victory. He is an opportunist who betrays the whole community to the invaders for his personal gains—acquiring the position of local authority.

Kino, in *The Pearl*, is poor, lazy, ignorant, short-tempered who reacts frantically and irrationally to every insult and situation. For many readers there is little or no humour at all in the total effect of this book, since both in material and tone, it is predominantly tragic. Nevertheless, at several places Kino’s behaviour is absurd and quite amusing, especially in his desire of retaining the pearl which has been reduced to such a child level that it almost becomes a comic action. Like Lennie in *Of Mice and Men*, Paulding’s overgrown boy, *Schoolmarm Wildfire*, *Faulkner’s idiot Benjy and William Byrd II’s childish North Carolinians*, Kino though an adult, is no better than a grown-up child—rather tragically so—both in his spirit and his actions.

Whereas the genius rogue type, who appears again and again in American comic literature, finds his counterpart in the dishonest pearl buyers and greedy doctor who, much in the manner of *Sut, Suggs, Twain’s Duke and Dauphin and Melville’s confidence man, cheat and exploit the ignorant and the credulous community of the fishermen. They have no streak of humanity in them. The doctor will not cure Coyotito until he is paid and the pearl buyers force Kino a cheap price for his enormous pearl and try to cheat him by calling it “a sheer curiosity,” “a fool’s gold,” thereby
quite unworthy for purchase. They are no soulless commercial men that they have even surpassed the supreme rogues like Sut Lovingood and Simon Suggs in their treachery and deceit. The world in which Sut moves about is a treacherous world full of greedy, miserly and amoral people who really deserve to be tricked and cheated. But the victims of the pearl buyers are generally the poor and the innocent, the gullible and the helpless fishermen. They are indeed the composite of Faulkner's Flem Snopes and Twain's Duke and Dauphin. They knock a great hole in Kino's canoe, send trackers to waylay, torture, attack, beat and kill his child until they succeed in depriving him of his pearl.

*Sweet Thursday* shows again Steinbeck's preoccupation with the Cannery Row world. Although times have changed and many things with it in Cannery Row, Mack and the boys are still bums, still lazy and ignorant, social, sexual and alcoholic. Their *modus vivendi* is little changed, though their *joie de vivre* is considerably affected. Their interest in parties and loafing activities still continue. Instead of giving a birthday present to Doc they now seek to make Doc and Susy union possible and also try to provide him with a microscope for his paper. With a view to collecting money they arrange a costume party, which doesn't end in a mess but the plot presents a number of hilarious situations and funny climaxes. For example, Hazel breaks Doc's arm with a baseball
but, Joe Elegant will never finish his novel, Johnny Caraga's striking Hazel with his rubber-tipped arrow and his leaping in the air and falling on the overhead scattering crushed ice all over the floor.

Humorous and fondling Ethan Allen Hawley, in The Winter of Our Discontent is a real rogue, greedy, rapacious and cruel, he is, like Faulkner's Flee Snopes in The Hamlet, a monster of avarice. To restore his former ancestral dignity of the New England family and also to achieve upward social mobility, he deliberately resigns his scrupulous morality to his unscrupulous need. His trickery even does not spare the poor, sometimes his helpless and deprived friends too. For financial gains, he betrays his employer, deceives his alcoholic boyhood friend, Danny and plans to rob the bank.

Mr. Baker is also equally an unscrupulous rogue who tries to grab Danny's property for some measure of whisky. But Ethan and Baker vying with each other for getting Danny's property recreates a basic and the most common situation of the traditional folk humour—the truckster tricked—of Longstreet's tale, "The Horse Swap," two unscrupulous rogues competing with each other in the art of horse trading. Mr. Baker looses because he is fallible, more human and attractive as a person, while Ethan is unvulnerable because he is shrewd and unredoubtable.
The heterogeneous passengers of The Wayward Bus—Mr. & Mrs. Pritchard and their daughter, a wealthy business family; Camille Oak, a blond tease; Ernest Horton, an ex-serviceman and gadget seller; Van Brunt, a quarrelsome and disagreeable old man; Pimples Carson, Juan Chico's adolescent and concupiscent assistant; Alice, Juan's wife and Norma, a homely waitress—recall the heterogeneous character of Melville's passengers aboard the "favourite steamer Fidèle" bound from St. Louis to New Orleans and the "motley steamboat crowd" on the Invincible in Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas".

Like Shark Wicks and Holly Morgan, the school teacher, in The Pastures of Heaven, most of the characters in The Wayward Bus are hypocrites and live in a world of illusions based on movies, radio and magazines. Norma enjoys living in a glamour world of Hollywood, Pimples Carson borrowed his ideas from movies and radio, fosters reveries of filmdom, Van Brunt is expecting a lottery any time; Camille Oak fosters an illusion of being the wife of a man whom she can not see.

Both Mr. & Mrs. Pritchard, are superb hypocrites. Mr. Pritchard is artificial and dishonest, there is little or no difference between his personal and business life. He treats everything in commercial terms while his wife, though poses herself as dispassionate about sex, finds sexual gratification in the amusing letters she writes to her friends. Alice Juan's wife is sexually starved, lustful and a debauch.
Louie, the bus driver who brings Camille Oak to Rebel Corners, is cheap and vulgar, rough and uncouth. Vulgar books and magazines have been his guide which have provided him the insight into life—wide set eyes is all sensuality and you can bait a girl by constantly looking into her eyes. Enormously interested in sex he always thinks of outraging girls falling in love with him. He delights in exchanging glances with Camille and likes to look at her fine well filled legs up to her smooth and rounded thighs in everyone's presence.

But Juan Chávez, the Deus Ex Machina, is the supreme hypocrite of all. Lecherous and amoral, his sexual desires are never open and straight forward. Always posing as dispassionate about sex, he delights in teasing, philandering and kidding clandestinely around Mildred. Though always silent, he uses the language of signs and talks through eyes. His darting eyes exchange innumerable quick glances with Mildred and silently admires her beautiful naked legs by looking at them and evidently succeed in arousing her sexual ardours, in tingling her body with desire aroused and unsatisfied. His warm eyes seemed to surround her and caress her;

Juan's eyes were playing with Mildred, touching her breasts and sliding down over her hips. He saw her sigh and arch her back a little, and deep in Juan an imp of hatred stirred. . . . Juan felt the stirrings like a little heat lightning, and he felt a glow of pleasure knowing that he could take this girl and twist her and outrage her if he wanted to. He could disturb her and seduce her mentally, and physically too, and then throw her away. The cruelty stirred and he let it mount in him. His voice grew softer and more rich. He spoke directly into Mildred's violet eyes.
It is indeed a virtual rape. He has been philandering all through the novel just to seduce her until the bagging down of the bus in the mire provides him an opportunity for it. He deliberately leaves the bus hoping that she would follow him into the barn which he later admits to her: "I came down here because I hoped you would go for a walk and then I thought I might—I might even get you" (WB, p.198).

He is a woman baiter par excellence, with Sut-like ruggedness and hypocrisy.

The hard-boiled and insensitive Victor in *Burning Bright* is, like Jelka's cousin in "The Murder," a rogue, a filthy fellow, who tries to disrupt the married life of Mordeen and Joe Saul. Strong and agile, he lacks, like Lennie, Tularecito and Kino, intellectual capacity and is "unselfconsciously infantile" like Faulkner's "enjoy and Paulding's Nimrod Wildfire. His "unfortunate choice" was "always to bring his malformed wisdom, his poolhall locker-room jokebook wisdom to the front." Mean and vulgar, he is difficult to be tackled. Having impregnated Mordeen he grows more troublesome, repeatedly asks Mordeen to elope with him, leaving her husband and when his persuasions fail to prevail upon her he even plans of murdering Joe. He is so selfish, so callous and unfeeling that he bent upon destroying three lives for his own selfish motive. It is really he who ultimately tells Joe about his sterility and reports about his illicit relation with Mordeen.
Cyrus Trask, the father of Adam Trask, in *East of Eden*, being wild in nature, is, like Sut Lovingood, enormously interested in drinking, gambling, whoring, stealing chickens and chasing rebel girls into haystack. He mourns his first wife with a keg of whisky no more than Junius Malthy does in *The Pastures of Heaven* with his favourite Stevenson in his hand. Within a month after his wife's death, Cyrus Trask woos Alice, a seventeen year daughter of a neighbouring farmer, weds her, beds her and impregnates her.

His eldest son, Charles Trask, like Benjy in *To A God Unknown* is equally interested in wine and sex and seduces his brother's wife, Cathy. Lecherous as he is, he frequently visits whore houses for his physical gratification, he drinks and dances with girls and enjoys their company.

But the character who resembles the Southwestern heroes most in *East of Eden* is Cathy, the wayward wife of Adam Trask and a successful brother keeper. Like Henry Morgan in *One of God*, she is selfish, callous, inhuman, ungrateful and the victim of her monomania. More concerned with power and money she has none of the human virtues which can identify her as a human being. Lacking in kindness and conscience, she trusts no one and confides in none—the quality of a successful American prototype. Her talents, like that of Henry Morgan, lie in her infinite capacity to make other people work for her. She is shrewd, manipulative, ruthless and dangerous and will stop at nothing to gain what she thinks is hers.
"Smarter than humans" and possessed by a devil she is a psychic monster or a good match for a monster himself. She is almost unbeatable and when Joe Valery, the pimp, appears on the scene against her the readers are rather delighted for they would be able to see the spectacle of the shrewdest of human beings contending against the devil incarnate. But nobody can hurt her and Joe loses, as Ratliff loses before Flem Snopes in Faulkner's *The Hamlet*; because he is more human and vulnerable. And Cathy wins because she is, like Flem Snopes, mean, harsh and brutal and as immune to love and compassion as she is to any other human emotion. Her williness knows no bounds; she is more treacherous and deceitful than Sut Lovingood himself. Sut's victims are usually hypocrites, misers, presumptuous, amoral and egotists who really deserve the punishment they get. But Cathy's victims can be innocent, gullible and helpless. She murders her parents, brands her first whore master, Edward, adds sleeping pills to her husband's tea and shares bed with her brother-in-law, shoots and deserts her husband, the man who nurses and shelters her, abandons her child, poisons Faye and tries to tarnish the image of the respectable citizens by blackmailing them. None of the endearing qualities of the most outrageous Southern prototypes can be found in Cathy.
Even her whole anatomy suggests treachery and deceit, an evil incarnation; she has heart shaped face, boyish body, small mouth, a little pointed tongue, small sharp teeth, canine teeth longer and more pointed, tiny ears without lobes pressed close to her head and unblinking wide-set eyes, narrow hips, a scar on her forehead and small round hoof-like feet.

The description shows that Cathy is not so beautiful but her command of sexual forces makes her ugliness itself to contribute to her beauty. Such a grotesque portraiture of Cathy finds the closest analogue in the earlier comic portraits of Longstreet's Malay Snuffle and Harris's Dut Lovingood. Van Brunt, an old man over sixty in The Mayward Bug is equally repulsive:

He had his head bent permanently forward on the arthritic stalk of his neck so that the tip of his nose pointed straight at the ground. He was well over sixty, and his eyebrows overhung his eyes like that of a Skye terrier. His long, deeply channelled upper lip was raised over his teeth like the little trunk of a tapir. The point over his middle teeth seemed to be almost prehensile. His eyes were yellowish gold, so that he looked fierce. (WB, pp. 51-52).

Pimple Carson, Juan Chicoy's assistant, has also been described in much the same comic terms:

He was a lank and slender-waisted boy of seventeen, with narrow shoulders and a long foxy nose and eyes that were pale in the morning and became greenish-brown later in the day. A golden fuzz was on his cheeks,
and his cheeks were rivuleted and rooted and eroded with acne. Among the old scars new pustules formed, purple and red, some rising and some waning. The skin was shiny with the medicines that were sold for this condition and which do no good whatever. (WB, 99-10).

The humor of physical deformity and unpleasant appearance has again been represented in those characters who have a scar of one kind or the other which contribute to their ugliness. Juan Chicoy in The Hayward Bus has one joint missing from his third finger of his left hand [like Bird-o-Fredon] and a scar alongside his nose, and a scar on his lip; Camille Oaks has deep forceps marks along her jaws; Earnest Horton's scars are not clearly and easily visible; Charles Trask in East of Eden bears a long wrinkled, tattoo-like dark brown scar on his forehead "from a hairline to a point between the eyebrows." Hazel in Sweet Thursday is a sub-normal character like Lennie, Tularcito and Hildy; and alcoholic Danny in The Winter of Our Discontent is equally a mentally demented:

Danny's a night wanderer, now, an early-morning man, a lonely, dragging thing. When he asks for a quarter for skull-buster his eyes beg you to forgive him because he can't forgive himself. He sleeps in a shack in back of the boat works where Taylors used to be shipbuilders.?

Both language modes of the earlier school of writers, once again, are at work when Steinbeck writes that Charles Trask in East of Eden "was abnormally timid of girls."
the whores were "grandly called courtesans," after a pint of rum Adam "felt gloriously warm and safe," over Doc and Mack "a golden melancholy settled," in Mack's "golden mood held." Cacahuete, the Patron's nephew "flashed a gold smile at Suzy," Ethan Hawley "picked a bouquet of microscopic filled flowers to grace the royal breakfast" of his wife.

Besides making them look ridiculous such a solicitors incongruity provides Steinbeck the spectatorial distance of the earlier highbrow writers of the Southwest.

This attempt at dehumanization can further be evidenced in Steinbeck's use of imagery and comic similes. Not only in their physiognomy that Steinbeck's characters look animal-like but their actions and behaviour described in terms of animal imagery reduce them almost to the bestial level much in the manner Sut's victims are made to look ridiculous and absurd. Juana "froze with terror for a moment, and then her lips drew back from her teeth like a cat's lips," Kino "nixed at her like a snake and Juana stared at him with wide unfrightened eyes, like a sheep before the butcher" (TP, p.64); the doctor "scattered the old women like chickens" (TP, p.40); Pimples eyes were "long and narrow and slanted like the eyes of a sleepy wolf" (WB, p.10) and he seemed to shake himself like a dog" (WB, p.11); Norma kept her eyes "too wide, like a rabbit" (WB, p.132) and "had become as intent as a setter pup watching a bug" (WB, p.135); Alice "lowered her head like an angry milk-cow" (WB, p.25); Juan "moved toward
her as lightly as a creeping cat." (WA, p.40). Mr. Pritchard has almost been described in terms of animal imagery. His face was "sharp, like a puppy's face, and his eyes were bright and questioning, like a puppy's eyes. A small carefully trimmed mustache rode his upper lip like a caterpillar" (WA, p.24). Samuel Hamilton who loves his profession "the way a bitch loves her runty pup" is "a coyote sniffing around a dead cow" (EE, p.262); Adam "sat like a contended cat on his land" (EE, p.135); and "he snoops around her like a sick duck" (EE, p.176). Lisa Hamilton "moved like a cage leopards in front of the stove" (EE, p.158); Lee "flopped about on his mount like tied chicken... his elbows waving like wings, his queue lashing about like a snake" (EE, p.165); Mary "spurts anger the way an octopus spurs ink" and she is "like a gull that uses the wind to stay aloft and never beats a wing" (MDO, p.271). Sut's John B Allen besides being a ground-hog, the mud-turtle and the crazy old elephant acts like an animal: he vigorously rubs himself "whar a hossess tail sprouts" (SLY, p.154); "like a hog scratches hisself agin a stump." "as if he'd slept in a dorg bed" (SLY, p.55); runs with "a heavy lumberin gallop, like a ole fat waggon hoss, skared at a locomotive" (SLY, p.56). He was terrifed out of his wits and his "eyes were a-stickin out like unto two buckeyess flung agin a mud wall, an' he wer a-cuttin up more shines nor a cockroach in a hot skillet" (SLY, p.57).
As it is seen that this animalizing and dehumanizing tendency extends even to those characters Steinbeck has greatly sympathized with and lavished his love on, like Juana and Kino, Juan and Alice—Tularecito, Lennie, paisanos, American bums and Joads being the early notable examples.

Since most of Steinbeck's characters are country bumpkins, farmers of rural community, disreputables, immoral, and untidy, their speech too, like their dress and modus vivendi, is tattered and uncouth. It abounds in dialectic forms and ungrammatical phrases. See Louie and Edgar, the driver and the ticket-clerk, talking in The Hayward Bus:

"Where's the pig going?" Louie asked.
" Pig?"
"Yeah. The broad. The blonde."
"Oh, yes." Edgar exchanged a secret man-lock with Louie.
"South," he said.
"In my wagon?"
"Yeah." . . .
"Figure to make some time with the—pig?"
"No harm trying," said Louie. "Probably a hustler."
"Well, what's wrong with a good hustler?" Edgar's eyes flicked up. The girl had recrossed her legs. ( WB, pp.68-69 ).

"my flying squirrel," "my lovely insect-wife," "my fancy,
and "my holy quail." Nothing can restrain their language
from going beyond the limits of decency when they are angry.
In the following conversation between Danny and Hawley, see
Danny's speech attaining profanity when Hawley advises him
to restore his past ancestral dignity by selling his
property:

"Listen to me, Danny."
"What for? Why, I'm better off than you are. I've
go my ace in the hole. Remember our country place?"
"Where the house burned down? Where we used to play
in the cellar hole?"
"You remember it all right. It's mine."
"Danny, you could sell it and get a new start."
"I won't sell it. The country takes a little bit
of it for taxes every year. The big meadow is still
mine."
"Why won't you sell it?"
"Because it's me. It's Daniel Taylor. Long as I
have no Christy sons of bitches can tell me what to do
and no bastards can lock me up for my own good. Do you
get it?"
"Listen, Danny—"
"I won't listen. If you think this dollar gives
you the right to preach to me—here! Take it back."
"Keep it."
"I will. You don't know what you're talking about.
You've never been a—drunk. I don't tell you how to
wrap bacon, do I? Now if you'll go your own way, I'll
knock on a window and get some skull-busters. And don't
forget—I'm better off than you are. I'm not a
clerk." ( WOB, p.54 )

But nothing can be more filthy and vulgar than Louis
Lippé's declamatory introduction of Himltons to Adam in
East of Eden.
"I'm talking the long way around," said Louis. "When Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton came into the valley they didn't have a pot to piss in. They had to take what was left—government land that nobody else wanted. Twenty-five acres of it won't keep a cow alive even in good years, and they say the coyotes move away in bad years. There's people say they don't know how the Hamiltons lived. But of course Mr. Hamilton went right to work—that's how they lived. Worked as a hired hand till he got his threshing machine built." ( BB, p. 120 ).

This kind of richer and more racy language that can naturally be expected of Louis Bippo is very much in keeping with the comic exaggeration of the Southwestern humorists. Almost all of Steinbeck's characters seem to have a passion or rather a flair for coarse and earthy eloquence when they are taken over by anger or feeling of joy. For example, Joe Saul, in Burning Bright, is very eloquent in voicing his desire for his unborn child to Victor:

Then Joe Saul whirled on him. "You heard. We have a child," he shouted. "There's going to be a baby in this house. There's going to be a child playing in that dust. There's going to be a growing thing discovering the sky and kicking the chickens aside and finding eggs!" Joe Saul's body moved from side to side. He laughed hysterically in a surge of great joy. "There'll be great questions asked and answered. Do you understand that? We will rediscover the whole world. Can you hear that? This land will have its own plant growing out of it—born to it, knowing it". . . "Our child will lie chest-flat, cheek-flat, against the ground. His toes will kick the dirt and his ear will listen and the earth will speak to him." ( BB, p. 74 ).

Victor also breaks out in the same strain of impassioned eloquence when Mordean asks him to leave and forget her:
"I've thought of that too," Victor said. "I can say with my mind that I will go—but I would refuse it. That I know. For I think of the summer of ending now and the stubble on the ground and the hay brushing the ridge pole in the barn and windfall apples on the orchard earth. And you—a swelling below your breasts and my child kicking against the soft wall, and turning, and I not able to put my hand there and feel its moving life." (AB, pp.86-89).

Now eloquent grows Kino in The Pearl when he is overcome by the feeling of joy over the bright future which his newly acquired pearl promises him:

"And in the pearl,

'If my son will read and open the books, and my son will write and will know writing. And my son will make numbers, and these things will make us free because he will know—he will know and through him we will know— This is what the pearl will do,'" said Kino. (TP, pp.31-32).

But Juana was afraid that it would get them into trouble, what might happen to them, and when she asks him to get rid of this Pandora’s box which has brought evil, miseries and sufferings and misfortunes in their otherwise peaceful life, by throwing it back into the sea, Kino flares up raising his voice in rural hyperboles:

"No," he said. "I will fight this thing. I will win over it. We will have our chance... We shall take our good fortune from us... Believe me," he said. "I am a man... In the morning we will take our canoe and will go over the sea and over the mountains to the capital, you and I. We will not be cheated. I am a man." (TP, p.62).

Nack’s eyes brimmned with compassion; "Well, you Nack in Sweet Thursday grows equally impassioned in his appreciation of Hazel’s role played in the festival:
"Well, you sweet bastard," he said. "You poor little rabbit. Don't you worry. Ain't nobody going to force you. You done noble stuff. Wasn't nobody with guts but you."10

The Winter of Our Discontent also contains several passages of this kind, the following being the best when Ethan Hawley speaks to his wife:

'Let us emulate them, then. When I saw your barge slide near, O Nile serpent, I knew it was our day. Octavian will beg his bread tonight from some Greek goatherd.' ( WOB, pp.240-241 ).

Charles in East of Eden goes into rhapsody on having discovered himself as an inheritor of his father's money after his death:

"It's a lot of money... It's a fortune left to us. We can live the rest of our lives on it, or we can buy a hell of a lot of land and make it pay. Maybe you didn't think about it, but we're rich. We're richer than anybody hereabouts." ( EE, p.59 ).

Lee's pigtails and pidgin English also attains rhetoric heights and grows more poetic in East of Eden when near the end of the novel he, like Tom Joad of The Grapes of Wrath, talks philosophically:

"We're a violent people, Cal. Does it seem strange to you that I include myself? Maybe it's true that we are all descended from the restless, the nervous, the criminals, the arguers and brawlers, but also the brave and independent and generous. If our ancestors had not been that, they would have stayed in their home plots in the other world and starved over the squeezed-out soil... That's why I include myself. We all have that heritage, no matter what old land our fathers left. All colors and breeds of Americans have somewhat the same tendencies. It's a breed--selected out by accident. And so we're overbrave and overfearful--we're kind and cruel as children. We're overfriendly and at the same
time frightened of strangers. We boast and are impressed. We’re oversentimental and realistic. We are mundane and materialistic—and do you know of any other nation that acts for ideals? We eat too much. We have no taste, no sense of proportion. We throw our energy about like waste. In the old lands they say of us that we go from barbarism to decadence without an intervening culture. Can it be that our critics have not the key or the language of our culture? That’s what we are, Cain—all of us. You aren’t very different.” (EE, pp.504-505).

Adam’s joys, like that of Lennie in Of Mice and Men, know no bounds when he talks of the garden to Samuel Hamilton in East of Eden:

“That land out there—would you help me make the garden we talked of, the windmills and the wells and the flats of alfalfa? We could raise flower seeds. There’s money in that. Think what it would be like, acres of sweet peas and gold squares of calendulas. Maybe ten acres of roses for the gardens of the West. Think how they would smell on the west wind!” (EE, p.264).

Samuel Hamilton also answers in the same declamatory strain:

“You’re going to make me cry,” Samuel said, “and that would be an unseemly thing in an old man.” But I thank you, Adam,” he said. “The sweetness of your offer is a good smell on the west wind.” (EE, p.264).

Samuel Hamilton is garrulous, a comical genius and a good story teller whose stories the villagers carry home carefully and always cherish. About his gift of story telling Steinbeck writes:
It was a bad day when three or four men were not standing around the forge, listening to Samuel's hammer and his talk. They called him a comical genius and carried his stories carefully home, and they wondered at how the stories spilled out on the way, for they never sounded the same repeated in their own kitchens. (EE, p. 7).

Naturally, Steinbeck has endowed him, like Irving and Faulkner and the earlier Southwestern humorists tended to do with many of their gifted tale tellers, with a gift beyond his capacity in order to achieve the comic exaggeration of the western yarn spinners. He is rather more capable of the flights of rhetoric than many of the Southwestern yarn spinners. He narrates even an ordinary incident in a bewitching manner so characteristic of an oral tale. See him narrating to his children the possibility of some metal hidden underneath the ground:

"It must have been long thousand centuries ago . . . Maybe it was all water here—an inland sea with the seabirds circling and crying. And it would have been a pretty thing if it happened at night. There would come a line of light and then a pencil of white light and then a tree of blinding light drawn in a long arc from heaven. Then there'd be a great water spout and a big mushroom of steam. And your ears would be staggered by the sound because the soaring cry of its coming would be on you at the same time the water exploded. And then it would be black night again, because of the blinding light. And gradually you'd see the killed fish coming up, showing silver in the starlight, and crying birds would come to eat them. It's a lonely, lovely thing to think about, isn't it?" (EE, p. 164).

And the narrator adds "He made them see it as he always did."
The tale begins in a traditional manner: "It must have been long thousand centuries ago": reminiscent of a drawing tone of the Southwestern yarn spinners. Told in his characteristic porcupine manner, the narration swiftly goes along uninterrupted embracing colloquial idiom and staccato prose and curiosity which keep his sons spell bound until the narrator's final remark.

Even otherwise there are many good tall tale plots in these works. The story of James Grew's suicide in East of Eden (pp. 69-71) is a good one that recalls to mind Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and Faulkner's Eula-Labov episode in The Hamlet. The streak of similarity among them is unique and unmistakable since all the three deal with the theme of thwarted love. James Grew, like Irving's Ichabod and Faulkner's Labov, is a school teacher and they all are in love with their female students and the daughters of substantial parents. The beauty of Eula makes Labov abandon his law career and Irving's Ichabod sang songs for Catrina. Similar powerful effect Cathy's beauty exercises on Grew when he is smitten by her "delicate blooming skin, golden hair, the wide-set modest and yet promising eyes, the little mouth full of sweetness." James Grew, like both Ichabod and Labov, also wants to marry Cathy but with no evil intention of their self-aggrandizement and he also ultimately suffers, like them, similar disillusionment when Cathy's father asks him to "come down to the tannery in the morning." It is his manner
of disappearance that marks all the difference. Ichabod is actually terrified by burly Broom Bones whereas there seems no such outside agency to be at work to cause Labov’s failure in *The Hamlet*: it is Elsa herself who flatly declines his love proposal. But while Labov survives by resigning himself to the resultant disillusionment, James Grew can not. He commits suicide and the people find the “whole top of his head completely blown off.” The ending of the story is different, yet the general outline of the incident is very similar in these episodes.

*The Harvard Baa* also contains a very good and interesting plot for a tall tale which Juan narrates as follows:

“He used to tell one about *Pancho Villa.* He said a poor woman came to Villa and said, ‘You have shot my husband and now I and the little ones will starve.’ Villa had plenty of money then. He had the presses and he was printing his own. He turned to his treasurer and said, ‘Roll out five kilos of twenty-peso bills for this poor woman.’ He wasn’t even counting it, he had so much. So they did and they tied the bills together with wire and that woman went out. Well, then a sergeant said to Villa, ‘There was a mistake, my general. We did not shoot that woman’s husband. He got drunk and we put him in jail.’ Then *Pancho* said, ‘Go immediately and shoot him. We cannot disappoint that poor woman.’”(MB,p.126).

Although short, it contains all the elements of a good tall tale: colloquial idiom: “had plenty of money,” “he wasn’t even counting it, he had so much,” comic extravagance: “Roll out five kilos of twenty-peso bills” which were “tied
together with a wire" symbolizing abundance and, the quiet unpredictable ending ordering her husband to be shot not to "disappoint that poor woman."

Where Steinbeck heard this story nothing can be said with certainty, but he grew so fond of it that he repeated it in his *The Winter of Our Discontent* (pp. 182-193). In addition to comic exaggeration, curiosity, suspense and toothnail vernacular, the listeners are made alive in *The Winter of Our Discontent* version by the intrusion of their doubts and questions: "Joey, you can't resist autobiography," "you got no mortgage, Joey" "Joey you are impossible"; and Joey pursuing his listeners—"It's a true story I believe it"—much in the manner the narrator of Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" does, that he directly got the story from Rip, hence it is beyond the possibility of any doubt.

These anecdotes bear testimony to Steinbeck's style of writing that the material of his novels came to him in bits and pieces invariably growing into novels. His short story "How Mr. Hoggan Robbed a Bank" has been incorporated as Ethan's abortive bank robbing plot in *The Winter of Our Discontent*. *The Pearl* is a notable example which was inspired by an incident that happened in La Paz which he heard and picked up from his Sea of Cortez expedition and later reported:
An event which happened at La Paz in recent years is
typical of such places. An Indian boy by accident found
a pearl of great size, an unbelievable pearl. He knew
its value was so great that he need never work again. In
his one pearl he had the ability to be drunk as long as
he wished, to marry any one of a number of girls, and to
make many more a little happy too. In his great pearl lay
salvation, for he could in advance purchase masses sufficient
to pop him out of Purgatory like a squeezed water-melon
seed, and in addition he could shift a number of dead relatives
a little nearer to Paradise. He went to La Paz with his
pearl in his hand and his future clear into eternity in
his heart. He took his pearl to a broker and was offered
so little that he grew angry, for he knew he was cheated.
Then he carried his pearl to another broker and was
offered the same amount. After a few more visits he came
to know that the brokers were only the many hands of one
head and that he could not sell his pearl for more. He
took it to the beach and hid it under a stone, and that
night he was clubbed into unconsciousness and his
clothing was searched. The next night he slept at the
house of a friend and his friend and he were injured and
bound and the whole house searched. Then he went inland
to lose his pursuers and he was waylaid and tortured.
But he was very angry and he knew what he must do. Hurt
as he was he crept back to La Paz in the night and he
skulked like a hunted fox to the beach and took out his
pearl from under the stone. Then he cursed it and threw it
as far as he could into the channel. He was a free man
again with his soul in danger and his food and shelter
insecure. And he laughed a great deal about it. (LSC, pp. 162-163).

In general outline The Pearl remains unchanged, but the
doctor and priest episodes are Steinbeck’s own. The setting
and the characters are drawn from his Sea of Cortes expedition
which offer like the writings of Southwestern writers,
Longstreet and others how much of it is fact and how much of
it is fiction. His most ambitious novel East of Eden is,
too, a family saga of his own family with facts and fiction
mixed together.
Besides such anecdotal digressions there are biographical extravagant descriptive and authorial intrusions also. The following descriptive passage breaks the continuity of the

**The Pearl:**

Out in the estuary a tight woven school of small fishes glittered and broke water to escape a school of great fishes that drove in to eat them. And in the houses the people could hear the swish of the small ones and the bounding splash of the great ones as the slaughter went on. The dampness arose out of the Gulf and was deposited on the bushes and cacti and on little trees in salty drops. And the night mice crept about on the ground and the little night hawks hunted them silently. (TP, pp.38-39).

**The Hayward Bus** is "intolerably meandering and pointless" its "descriptions of the characters and scenery overlong and often irrelevant." Examples of authorial intrusions into the flow of the narrative abound in East of Eden also:

The nation slid imperceptibly toward war, frightened and at the same time attracted. People had not felt the shaking emotion of war in nearly sixty years. The Spanish affair was more nearly an expedition than a war. Mr. Wilson was re-elected President in November on his platform promise to keep us out of war, and at the same time he was instructed to take a firm hand, which inevitably meant war. Business picked up and prices began to rise. British purchasing agents roved about the country, buying food and cloth and metals and chemicals. A charge of excitement ran through the country. People didn't really believe in war even while they planned it. The Salinas Valley lived about as it always had. (25, p.419).

Chapter 34 (pp.366-369), 46 (pp.456-459), 47 (III, pp.462-463) of East of Eden are other examples of such digressions and irrelevancies. The biographical account of Joseph and Mary Rivas in Sweet Thursday which runs into
four pages serves much the same purpose of narrative
disruption. Even the interchapters "The Great Roque War"
and "The Butterfly Festival" in Sweet Thursday are writer's
deliberate intrusions as they are not directly related to
the main story. 12

All these anecdotal, authorial, biographical and
descriptive intrusions and interchapters give Steinbeck's
works that disjointed quality, that basic episodic structure,
which is the characteristic structural design of Longstreet's
Georgia Scenes, Harris's Salt Lovingood Yarns and Melville's
The Confidence-Man. If the rambling manner and incumherent
structure is a weakness at all, it is indeed a legacy to
Steinbeck from the older tradition of the Southwestern writers.
But they are so neatly fit in and closely integrated into the
total structure of his books that they hardly appear as a
weakness or tend to be descriptive at all.

Like his early and middle works, these books, once again,
show Steinbeck's preoccupation with the society and its
problems, its ills and foibles, its shame and vanities, its
false morality and hypocrisy. For the purpose of dramatizing
the dehumanization that takes place when a whole class of
people is made to deprive of proper social status in society,
Steinbeck has contrasted Kino's natural goodness and simplicity,
like that of paizanos' and Torelli's in Tortilla Flat, and
of American bums and respectable people in Cannery Row.
he had earlier done, with the greedy doctor and dishonest pearl buyers. For Kino the pearl offers some more advantages for himself and his family he has been deprived of so far; for the doctor it embodies luxury and riches, 'a civilized living' of keeping a mistress and eating in expensive restaurants. His luxurious and well furnished house and the aristocratic way of life have been drawn in sharp contrast to Kino's humble brush hut. Through the opening of the door

Kino could see the green coolness of the garden and little splashing fountain. In his chamber the doctor sat up in his high bed. He had on his dressing gown of red watered silk that had come from Paris, a little tight over the chest now if it was buttoned. On his lap was a silver tray with a silver chocolate pot and a tiny cup of egg-shell china, so delicate that it looked silly when he lifted it with his big hand, lifted it with the tips of thumb and forefinger and spread the other three fingers wide to get them out of the way. His eyes rested in puffy little hammocks of flesh and his mouth dropped with discontent. He was growing very stout, and his voice was hoarse with the fat that pressed on his throat. Beside him on a table was a small Oriental gong and a bowl of cigarettes. He poured his second cup of chocolate and crumbled a sweet biscuit in his fingers. (TP, pp. 16-17).

The pearl buyers are the squeevers of the poor, ignorant and gullible fishermen who were frequently subjected to indignity. The Pearl shows how these brutes, like the early Italian businessmen, Torrelli, in Tortilla Flat and Lee Chong in Cannery Row, thrive on exploitation and hypocrisy; the oppression of the fishermen community has become the way of their lives. Though they were supposed to be individuals
acting alone, yet they are not. Although each one was sitting alone with his black velvet tray for financial gains, he was rather "only one pearl buyer with many hands":

Like Father Angelo of To A God Unknown and Father Adolf in Mark Twain's The Mysterious Stranger, the Father in The Pearl is equally greedy and selfish. Here Steinbeck again returns to matters of religion that had excited him at the beginning of his career. His sneering dislike against the falseness of conventional religion and organized church noticeable in Henry Morgan's mock confession scene in Cup of Gold, in Pirate's dogs' having mystical visions of St. Francis in Tortilla Flat and in people's kissing and embracing the relics of the St. Katy the Virgin, is represented again in The Pearl, in his incidental remarks like the following:

The pictures were religious, even the large tinted photograph of his dead wife, who, if Masses willed and paid for out of her own estate could do it, was in Heaven. (TP, p.16).

And:

The loss of the pearl was a punishment visited on those who tried to leave their station. And the Father made it clear that each man and woman is like a soldier sent by God to guard some part of the castle of the Universe. (TP, p.51).

Father's rushing to Kino's hut and his persuasion of Kino to contribute his mite for the religious cause which he makes sound like benedictions:
'Kins, . . . thou art named after a great man—and a great Father of the Church. . . . Thy namesake tamed the desert, and sweetened the minds of thy people, didst thou know that? It is in the books.' (TP, p.33).

Has a reflection on his greedy and selfish personality.

Even the grim book like *East of Eden* contains much antireligious satire when Steinbeck describes Lisa Hamilton's religious temperament: "It was well known that Lisa Hamilton and the Lord God held similar convictions on nearly every subject" (SE, p.159). The remark is essentially similar in its spirit and language mode to the earlier description of Henry Morgan's Elizabeth in *Cup of Gold*: "She was going to see that some compact was made with the Almighty if she could" (CG, p.154); "There was she again, intent on making a contract with God" (CG, p.156).

Like Elizabeth, Lisa also tried to defend her husband against all evil:

Liza felt that people having a good time were wide open to the devil. And this was a shame... for Samuel was a laughing man, but I guess Samuel was wide open to the devil. His wife protected him whenever she could. . . . She suffered bravely and uncomplainingly through life, convinced that that was the way her God wanted everyone to live. She felt that rewards came later. (SE, p.9).

It need hardly be remarked that the whole description of Liza's personality is clearly identical in its essential nature and temperament and also in terms of spirit, language and tone with that of Burton's of *To A God Unknown*.
Burton was one whom nature has constituted for a religious life. He kept himself from evil and he found evil in nearly all close human contacts... In a way it gratified him that his health was bad, for it proved that God thought of him enough to make him suffer. Burton has the powerful resistance of the chronologically ill. (GU, p. 20).

No doubt the apotheosis of both Lisa and Burton are exactly alike. Both Burton and Lisa are quietists and do not believe in close human contacts—the dancing, signing or even laughter in the case of Lisa and embracing and caressing his wife in the case of Burton are evil and wide open to the devil. They have almost abandoned all desires with a passive acceptance of whatever comes; they prefer to suffer bravely and silently in order to please their respective Gods.

Steinbeck's flippant attitude to religion and the established churches is further reflected in his cynically equating them with the whore houses in East of Eden.

The church and the whorehouse arrived in the Far West simultaneously. And each would have been horrified to think it was a different facet of the same thing. But surely they were both intended to accomplish the same things: the signing, the devotion, the poetry of the churches took a man out of his weakness for a time, and so did the brothels. The sectarian churches came in singing, cocky and loud and confident. Ignoring the laws of debt and repayment, they built churches which couldn't be paid for in a hundred years. The sects fought evil, true enough, but they also fought each other with a fine lustiness. They fought at the turn of a doctrine. Each happily believed all the others were bound for hell in a basket. And each for all its bumptiousness brought with it the same things: the Scripture on which our ethics, our art and poetry, and our relationships are built. It took a smart man to know where the difference lay between the sects, but anyone could see what they had in common. And they brought music—maybe not the best, but the form and
sense of it. And they brought conscience, or, rather, nudged the dozing conscience. They were not pure, but they had a potential of purity, like a soiled white shirt. And any man could make something pretty fine of it within himself. True enough, the Reverend Billing, when they caught up with him, turned out to be a thief, an adulterer, a libertine, and a zoophilist, but that didn't change the fact that he had communicated some good things to a great number of receptive people. Billing went to jail, but no one ever arrested the good things he had released. And it doesn't matter much that his motive was impure. He used good material and saw some of it stuck. I use Billing only as an outrageous example. The honest preachers had energy and go. They fought the devil, no holds barred, hoists and eye-gouging permitted. You might get the idea that they howled truth and beauty the way a seal bites out the National Anthem on a row of circus horns. But some of the truth and beauty remained, and the anthem was recognizable. The sects did more than this, though. They built the structure of social life in the Salinas Valley. The church supper is the grandfather of the country club, just as the Thursday poetry reading in the basement under the vestry aired the little theater.

While the churches, bringing the sweet smell of piety for the soul, came in prancing and farting like brewery horses in bock-beer time, the sister evangelists, with release and joy for the body, crept in silently and grayly, with its head bowed and its face covered. (BE, pp. 191-192).

Such an open mockery of religion is further evidenced in The Hayward Sue also. It is really difficult to understand how Warren French finds Steinbeck in The Hayward Sue "an unlikely defender of the faith" in such incidental remarks about traditional religion:

Juan "believed in the Virgin's power as little children believe in the power of their uncles. She was a doll and a goddess and a good-luck piece and a relative. His mother—that Irish woman—had married into the Virgin's family and had accepted her as she had accepted her husband's mother and grandmother. The Guadalupana became her family and her goddess. (WB, p. 149)."
Juan's mother admired her Virgin, whose day is celebrated with exploding skyrockets, and, of course, Juan Chico's Mexican father didn't think of it one way or another. Skyrockets were by nature the way to celebrate Saints' Days. Who could think otherwise? The rising, hissing tube was obviously the spirit rising to Heaven, and the big, flashing bang at the top was the dramatic entrance to the throne of Heaven. (WB, p.13).

The quality of his satire is heightened by his essential surrealist style in his cynically equating religion with unimportant materialistic things, which produces incongruity of the highest orders:

Walking men burning with messages came by and painted their messages on the planks. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." "Sinner, come to God." "It is late." "Therefore shall it profit a man..." "Come to Jesus." And other men put other signs on the fence with stencils: "Jay's Drugs." "Cyrus Noble." "The Doctors' Whisky." "San Ysidro Bicycle Shops." (WB, pp.146-147).

It is an obvious example of juxtaposing the sublime and the low things thereby belittling religion in a way reminiscent of the incongruous catalogue of heterogeneous presents offered to orphan Luck in Bret Harte's "The Luck of Roaring Camp":

- A silver tobacco-box;
- A doubloon;
- A silver mounted, gold specimen;
- A very beautifully embroidered lady's handkerchief;
- A diamond breastpin;
- A diamond ring;
- A slung shot;
- A Bible;
- A golden spur;
- A silver tea spoon;
- A pair of surgeon's shears;
- A lancet;
- A Bank of England note for £5;
- And about $200 in loose gold and silver coins.
The faded inscription "Repent" on the side of a cliff is antichristian which essentially points to the evil paradox in life, a favourite Steinbeck subject. It is further carried in Horton's explanation that what to talk of "honesty and thrift" almost all other virtues—kindness, generosity, simplicity, openness, understanding and feeling—having all been long worn out; they hardly qualify a man for modern living for "the most admired people weren't honest at all." (WB, p. 188).

It is this thesis that Steinbeck seeks to elaborate in The Wayward Bus, and in all other novels, when he admires Juan Chicoy as a bus driver, because he lacks all those things which his unattractive bourgeois counterparts especially Mr. and Mrs. Pritchard possess—hypocrisy and self-deception. In comparison to them Juan is true to himself and has the ability, like the paisanos and the American buses, of living comfortably well in his environment and getting along with others quite happily.

Steinbeck returned to this theme of evil paradox over and again. His The Winter of Our Discontent is also built on the same paradox. Ethan Hawley, the chief protagonist, is a poor father and lousy husband for he is honest and unable to provide his children a motor-bike which is as much a symbol of social prestige as motorless vacuum cleaner is in Tortilla Flat and window curtains for the windowless boiler are to Mr. Malley in Cannery Row. And once he abandons his good qualities, "weak
survival quotient", and adopts devious means, "strong survival quotient", such as rapacity, greediness, and cruelty, he wonderfully succeeds and accumulates fabulous wealth.

Then there are many satirical thrusts on various aspects, especially money values and business community, of bourgeois society: "A grand gentleman without money is a bum." "Business is money. Money is not friendly. Kids, maybe you too friendly—too nice. Money is not nice. Money got no friends, but more money." (MOD, pp. 39, 28).

Marullo's cynical assertion is further carried in the narrator's words:

You can't know people like the Bakers unless you are born knowing them. Acquaintance, even friendship, is a different matter. I know them because Hawley's and Bakers were alike in blood, place of origin, experience, and past fortune. This makes for a kind of nucleus walled and moated against outsiders. When my father lost our money, I was not edged completely out. I am still acceptable as a Hawley to Bakers for perhaps my lifetime because they feel related to me. But I am a poor relation. Gentry without money gradually cease to be gentry. Without money, Allen, my son, will not know Bakers and his son will be an outsider, not matter what his name and antecedents. We have become ranchers without land, commanders without troops, horsemen on foot. We can't survive... I do not want, never have wanted, money for itself. But money is necessary to keep my place in a category I am used to and comfortable in. (MOD, p. 109).

The above passage reveals admirably well the importance of money in society, what money can do and how it forms classes and refines manners already elaborated in *The Pearl*. 
The two chapters "The Great Roque War" and "The Butterfly" Festivals in *Sweet Thursday* are again malicious attacks on mores and drives and California life. More pungent is Jingleballick's speech on income tax:

"The only creative thing we have is the individual, but the law doesn't permit me to give money to an individual. I must give it to a group, an organisation—and the only thing a group has ever created is book-keeping. To participate in my gift the individual must become part of the group and lose his individuality and his cre creativeness. . . . \* Why, if you, through creative work should win a prize, most of the money would go in taxes." (ST, p.141).

The passage unmistakably reveals Steinbeck's hatred for "philanthropical bureaucracies" of the post-war era. Since Steinbeck by this time has grown rich and prosperous it actually reduces its satirical bite. Steinbeck's familiar notion seems here assuming the form of the self-defence and apology. 15

But Steinbeck's condemnation of human race—"I find it valid to understand man as an animal before I am prepared to know him as a man" 16 a feeling generated by World War II, finds its deadliest and the fullest expression in his "frothy extravaganza," *The Short Reign of Pippin IV*, which is, like Mark Twain's "The Czar Soliloquy," a delightful commentary on contemporary mores and political hypocrisy. Besides, allowing Steinbeck many satirical thrusts at French political instability, monarchy, profiteers, tax evaders and hypocritical American
policy "to distrust liberal governments and strongly to favour the more authoritarian, which it considers the more responsible." It provides a keen and painful insight into the human nature. The trouble arises when Pippin, having sensed their sinister plot, deliberately sets out, like Hank Morgan in Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, to reform them, to tell them the truth about their self-caused troubles and ceases to be a 'pasty' and behaves like a monarch wholly unexpected of him, much in the manner of Twain's Hank Morgan attempts English people to uplift them from their superstitions and primitive life by establishing industries and man factories. Ironically enough, Pippin is humiliated and dethroned when he introduces idealistic, humanitarian and socialist programmes of price control, low taxes, social insurance, large-land holdings break up in his address from the throne. They continue or like to lead the same kind of selfish, rapacious, hypocritical life full of oppression and exploitation as English people in Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee* are contended with their primitive and superstitious life despite Hank's best efforts to improve it. While *A Connecticut Yankee* ends in a holocaust with Hank Morgan deliberately bent upon wiping out the whole human civilization from the face of the earth, Steinbeck's *Pippin IV* ends in a fiasco with astronomer-converted-emperor. Pippin, happily returning home to continue with his astronomy, telescope, celestial stars and photographs.
The savagely muted assertion assumes alarming dimension and greater significance when looked in the light of Cathy’s unspiring remark on the respectable citizens in *East of Eden*:

"Do you think I want to be human? Look at those pictures! I’d rather be a dog than a human. But I’m not a dog..." (ES, p. 267).

The remark has the unmistakable echoes of Mark Twain’s later pessimism and nihilistic tendencies expressed in his letter to Howell:

*Isn’t human nature a consummate shame and lie that ever was invented? Isn’t man a creature to be ashamed of in pretty much all his aspects? Is he really fit for anything but to be stood up on a street corner as a convenience for dogs?*

But Steinbeck is not Twain, his smiling cynic is not, however, be identified with Twain’s bitter and cynical pessimism, although Steinbeck too might have occasionally been given to vile moods, indulged in vicious invective, he had, nevertheless, like that of Twain’s, no general hatred for humanity. Conversely, he had deep faith in man’s nobility. His satire becomes biting and pungent only in his persistent hostility to bourgeois values—ambition, money, material success, property, false morality, hypocrisy and self-deception.

Many of Steinbeck’s novels end on altogether a different note from the beginning. *Kino* in *The Pearl* almost grows monomaniacal in his desire of retaining the precious pearl just as *Henry Morgan* in *Cup of Gold* is frantically concerned with
possessing La Santa Roja's legendary beauty and Joseph Wayne in *To A God Unknown* with establishing patriarchy. Having decided to keep the pearl—"This pearl has become my soul. If I give it up I shall lose my soul" (TP, p. 72)—Kino did give it up; he had to accept the life he was assiduously trying to escape. He fails to provide a palliative against illness, education to his child and closing a door on hunger and insult to his family and himself.

In *Burning Bright* Joe Saul is equally monomaniical over his getting a child like Joseph Wayne of *To A God Unknown*. Though capable of "gentleness and affection," "a master of his traditional skill" and craft, like Kino, and a self-important man proud of his ancestry and blood, Joe Saul suffers a great blow when he discovers himself incapable of generating a child and finds himself to be the father of his assistant's child. But he survives it, like Kino and Henry Morgan, by resigning himself to the resultant disillusionment in his acceptance of the larger view that life is scared and "that everyman is father to all children and every child must have all men as father" (BB, p. 130).

Ethan Hawley in *The Winter of Our Discontent* suffers a similar cruel blow when he learns that his children are also growing mean and selfish, acquisitive and rapacious, greedy, treacherous, dishonest and snobbish. In spite of fabulous wealth he ends up, like Henry Morgan of *Cup of Gold*, as a lo
men completely cut off from the society which Kino escapes in The Pearl by throwing his pearl back into the sea.

In the same manner does Pippin IV end in a whisper. Ironically enough, Pippin is dethroned when he attempts to bring a revolutionary and radical change in the existing social setup. People are actually not prepared to accept reality and want to continue unchanged since meanness and selfishness, arrogance and hypocrisy, rapacity and graspingness, greed and corruption are essentially inborn human traits.

Cathy's climactic suicide in East of Eden is another example of a monomaniac bent upon taking vengeance on a society she hated. Her death is a blessing in disguise to the community and the readers take a sigh of relief. They find themselves as much gripped with pleasure on her death as they feel when they find Sut being blown up with soda or skinned by an overstarched shirt or when they see Birdofredum suffering at the hands of a black family he wanted to sell into slavery or when they find Twain's King and Duke in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn caught red-handed by the three sisters whom they wanted to cheat of their cash and property.

In his savagely muted satirical thrusts against businessmen, political hypocrisy, bourgeois false morality coupled with unexpected end of his books which make his humour
bitter and wry, his novels share the characteristic of black humour of American comic tradition one so often sees in the writings of the Southwest. And his ignoble characters who are often perverts, sadists, lacking in culture and ambition, in his American colloquialism suffused with racy and pithy sayings, in his felicitous incongruity and comic magnification, in his loose and incoherent structure with rambling tone and narrative provided by his authorial, biographical, descriptive and anecdotal intrusions are obviously something of the legacy of the comic tradition of the Southwest.

The novels of this period are not, however, satisfying, although some of them are interesting and ambitious. They show a gradual and steady decline in his fictional technique and literary style and skill. With this general decay, his humour also seems to be declining; his comedy has lost the early comic vigour, early sprightliness and mirth diminished; early boisterous laughter vanished; *Sweet Thursday* is not as humourous, as gay as *Tortilla Flat* and *Cannery Row*, were. Because Steinbeck had given up native country and began to walk on "alien soil," he had abandoned regional comic possibilities in favour of urban life and large audience, he had become a book club favourite and was increasingly associated with the film life of Hollywood. Faulkner, who once had 'great hopes' for Steinbeck and mentioned him among his five favourite authors, meant the same when he later rejected in 1955, as a reporter and newspaperman. Steinbeck has seemingly exhausted the material of his rural life for he has never since recaptured the spirit that makes his humour pleasant and hilarious.

12 Ibid., p.158.

13 Ibid., p.145.


16 *Steinbeck and His Critics*, p.307.


NOTES


4 Warren French, John Steinbeck, p. 118.


CHAPTER V

ROUND UP
Obviously, then, much of Steinbeck's humour is folk comedy, ranging from grotesquerie and obscenity to satire, a rustic and masculine humour, frequently bawdy, sometimes cruel, macabre and grim, often ironic and satiric. Basically a novelist, and not a humorist as Longstreet Harris and others had been, Steinbeck showed from the very first of his novel that he was just as interested in comic effects as in tragic. Equally varied are his comic modes: melodrama (Cup of God), realistic ironies with almost tragic overtones of any humour (The Pastures of Heaven), mock-heroic (Tortilla Flat), blending of fantasy and satire (Saint Katy the Virgin, and The Short Reign of Pippin IV), satire (In Dubious Battle, The Grapes of Wrath, Cannery Row). Nevertheless, he is no innovator in this field.

Humour cannot be practised in a vacuum, for it needs the raw material of actions and experiences to work upon in order to perfect it into the finished product, that is comedy. Whether Steinbeck ever read any of the sketches of August Baldwin Longstreet, Johnson Jones Hooper, Joseph Baldwin, George Washington Harris, Thomas Bange Thorpe, William Tappan Thompson, or any of the other Southwestern humorists, very little is known. Possible influences on Steinbeck notably of the Bible and Malory (which he read during his childhood) and of the writers like Maupassant, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy...
Proust, Milton, Browning, George Eliot, Hardy and
Jeffers have been suggested by various critics.\(^1\) He
greatly admired Hemingway\(^2\) James Branch Cabell,\(^3\)
Willa Cather and Sherwood Anderson, Thackeray, Lawrence,
Nestor Douglas and Carl Van Vechten were his favourite
reading.\(^4\) His realistic and naturalistic technique
brings him closer to Crane, Garland, Dresier, London,
Morris and Sinclair.\(^5\) Farrell’s *Stud Lonigan* is
reported to have been with him during his Sea of Cortez
expedition.

Many a great critic, in discussing how he developed
his own unique style, frankly confessed his debt in terms
of material, theme, characters and style to the authors
he had studied in the early stages of his career.
Comparisons have been made between Steinbeck and Dickens\(^7,\)
between Steinbeck and Faulkner,\(^8\) and between Steinbeck
and Hemingway [though he did not read him until 1954 for
the fear of being influenced by him. \(^9\) Sydney J.Krause
has detected some penetrative parallels between Steinbeck
and Mark Twain.\(^10\) Points of likenesses between his Jim
Nolan of *In Dubious Battle* and Milton’s Satan have been
noticed.\(^11\) His *The Grapes of Wrath* has been compared with
Sandburg’s "The People, Yes." \(^12\) Similarity between the
last notorious image of Rose of Sharon in *The Grapes of
Wrath* and the nurse’s breast feeding in the moving train
in Guy de Maupassant’s short story "L’Idylle"
has been discussed. The list hardly includes the
mention of any of the Southwestern humorists whom Steinbeck might have possibly read with perceivable borrowings. Yet the echoes of even greater significance and depth do exist between the works, characters, and comic modes of Steinbeck and the Southwestern humorists like Longstreet, Harris, Melville, Twain, Faulkner and others even without his having read any of them.

From where, then could he have got the raw material for his comedy? Not necessarily from books, but from real life. Inevitably, in such a critical study like the present one, only the characters, language, and comic devices serve as direct evidence.

For the proper understanding of this brand of humour in general, it should, however, be borne in mind that Steinbeck was basically a labourer, never known for his deep scholarship and never interested in scholastic pursuits. His upbringing has much to do with the Southwestern comic tradition in the works. He was born in a small but a thriving country town of Salinas, a county seat and a trading and shipping centre with cattle-raising and vegetable cultivation as the main occupation of most of the people of the valley. His father was an ordinary Treasurer of Monterey County and his mother, a simple school teacher. As a boy during his school holidays, he worked on neighbouring farms and he thus, in his boyhood, imbibed many rural images which he later
turned to fiction. His twelve out of seventeen books of fiction are set in and around Salinas, they are the poetic and creative evocation of Salinas Valley—he generically called "the long valley"—its life and people. Although he went to New York in later years, bought a house and settled there, he was rarely out of sight of green fields and hills of California when he wrote in *East of Eden*:

I remember my childhood names for grasses and secret flowers. I remember where a toad may live and what time the birds awaken in the summer—and what trees and season smelled like—how people looked and walked and smelled even. The memory of odours is very rich.

Thus from the impressionable years he was brought up in close contact with the ordinary poor Americans. The heterogeneous population of Monterey made up of Italian, Chinese and Mexican Indian sardine-fishermen, canny-workers, and hangers-on and loafers provided him an opportunity to see humanity in all its varieties. And also afterwards, during his youth, his contact with them remained unbroken when he worked as a bricklayer, ranch-hand, deck-hand, chemist, watchman, fisherman, newspaper reporter and lastly as a care-taker of an estate until he became a writer.

This fact is important for it was largely responsible for his outlook on life. It is quite interesting to note how Steinbeck during this period learned low and masculine humour and assimilated some of the strikingly peculiar ideas and crude concepts of the southwestern comedy from the real life
of men, and, not from any book. His was intimate participation in the everyday life of poor people—in their dances and weddings, in their everyday joys and sorrows, in their religious meetings and cultural social life—that provided him an opportunity of almost thoroughly knowing their *modus vivendi*, their language and manners, their queer habits and quaint ideas of the country folk whom he later sketched so amazingly well in down-to-earth manner in his short stories and novels.

If watching the life of poor white people around him offered Longstreet and his contemporaries necessary raw material for their writings and, if listening the other people talking could make Faulkner a great writer, or if the men and women of the waterside town of Hannibal could serve as the model and boiler deck could provide a great deal of material for Twain’s writings, naturally enough, Steinbeck would have equally been benefited with the life and company of the poor migrant workers and bums, he had loved, worked and stayed with. Steinbeck is doing as much as they did; he has utilized the material available at hand. It should not be, therefore, surprising at all that his works should contain the characters and the devices reminiscent of the country humour with which the youth from Salinas was familiar. Not that Steinbeck is
imitating Longstreet, Harris, Twain and Faulkner, but born in a region almost as rich and fascinating as Faulkner's South, he learned to exploit the comic possibilities of the life and places he knew best. Like them all, he is also a true American rather a strictly regional writer with typically American sensibilities and he wrote out of the same kind of sensibility specifically developed by the conditions of the American frontier. Although, Steinbeck's life was unsettled and precarious for quite a long time, nonetheless, his experiences coupled with his temperament provided him with the foundation responsible for his distinctive humour. He would not have been probably what he is today, had he missed their rude existence. He is, indeed, like all the Southwestern humorists, a true son of the American subsoil and in addition to that, something quite phenomenal.
NOTES


3 Peter Lisca, The Wide World, p.51; Moore, Novels of Steinbeck, p.92.

4 Peter Lisca, "John Steinbeck: A Literary Biography," Steinbeck and His Critics, p.5; Moore, p.92.

5 F.W. Watt, John Steinbeck, p.106.

6 Ibid., p.106.


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