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, Bombes Away*, and a travelogue, *A Russian Journal*. But in addition to these he did also produce his second play-novella, *The Moon in the Door* 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, unsavory 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 Ordan'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 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 Dar'm'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 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 do. 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
betray 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, Faulding's overgrown boy, Dummer 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 gross 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, miscreant and amoral people who really deserve to be
tricked and cheated. But the victims of the pearl's 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 canoes, 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 Suzy 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 situation and funny
climaxes. For example, Hazel breaks Doc's arm with a baseball
hat, Joe Elegant will never finish his novel, Johnny
Cariaga's striking Hazel with his rubber-tipped arrow
and his leaping in the air and falling on the overdoor
scattering crushed ice all over the floor.

H kèmous and fondling Ethan Allen Hawley, in The
Winter of Our Discontent is a real rogue, greedy, rapacious
and cruel, he is, like Faulkner's Flen 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 gain 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 un-redoubtable.
The heterogeneous passengers of The Wayward Bus—Mr. & Mrs. Pritchard and their daughter, a wealthy business family; Camille Oak, a blonde tease; Ernest Horton, an ex-serviceman and gadget seller; Van Brunt, a quarrelsome and disagreeable old man; Pimple 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. Pimple 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 Chicoy, 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 stirring 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 bogging 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 Sat-like regality 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 Mordean and Joe Saul. Strong and agile, he looks, like Lennie, Tularcito and Kino, intellectual capacity and is "unsocially refined" 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 Mordean he grows more troublesome, repeatedly asks Mordean to dope 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 went 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 Mordean.
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 Malby 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, beds 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 viliness 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 Haney Sniffle and Harris’s Sat Lovingood. Van Brunt, an old man over sixty in The Harvard Bug is equally repellent:

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 channeled 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).

Pimples 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 rivelated 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, 9-10).

The humour 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 Wayward 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 crinkled, 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, Tularecito and Hilday 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 abysmally timid of girls."
the whom were "grandly called courtesans," after a pint of rum. Adam "felt gloriously warm and safe," over Doc and Mack "a golden melancholy settled." 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 "hissed 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 here 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." (WB, 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" (WB, p.24). Samuel Hamilton who loves his profession "the way a bitch loves her runty pup" is "a coyote sniffing around a dead cow" (BE, p.262); Adam "sat like a contended cat on his land" (BE, p.135); and "he snoops around her like a sick duck" (BE, p.176). Lisa Hamilton "moved like a cage leopard in front of the stove" (BE, p.158); Lee "flopped about on his mount like tied chicken... his elbows waving like wings, his queue lashing about like a snake" (BE, p.165); Mary "spurs anger the way an octopus spruts ink" and she is "like a gull that uses the wind to stay aloft and never beats a wing". (MOD, p.271). Sut's John Bollen besides being a ground-hog, the mud-turtle and the crazy old elephant acts like an animal: he vigorously rubs himself "wher a horses tail sprouts" (SLY, p.154); "like a hog scratches himself agin a stump," "es ef 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 entu two buckeyess flung agin a mud wall, an' he wer a-cuttin up more shines nor a cockroach in a hot skilet!" (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 unsouth. 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. ( *WE*, 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 ass 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 to 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 Lippo's declamatory introduction of Himiltons 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." ( SE, p. 120 ).

This kind of richer and more racy language that can naturally be expected of Louis Lippo 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 out of 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." ( SE, p. 74 ).

Victor also breaks out in the same strain of impassioned eloquence when Mordeen 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." (BB, 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:

"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 hyperbole:

"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).

Mack's eyes brimmed with compassion. "Well, you Mack 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.' ( WOD, 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 blends 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, Cal—all of us. You aren't very different."

( EE, pp.504-505 )

Adams'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 flowers. 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. . . . "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 roaring 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 Brom Bones whereas there seems no such outside agency to be at work to cause Labov's failure in The Haunted. It is Eula 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 Girl 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.' Well, 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. 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 Cortez 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 wove 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 bouncing 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. (SS, p.419).

Chapter 34 (pp.366-368), 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 Rogue 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 Lovin' Yarns* and Melville's *The Confidence-Man*. If the rambling manner and incoherent 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 sham 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 paisanos' 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 squeezers of the poor, ignorant and gullible fishermen who were frequently subjected to indignity. The Pearl shows how these brutes, like the early Italian businessmen, Torrello, 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:
'Kino . . . 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 Liza Hamilton's religious temperament: "It was well known that Liza 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 [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).

Like Elizabeth, Liza 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 its 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 chronically 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 bleakness 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 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, boots 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 hock-ebber time, the sister evangelist, with release and joy for the body, crept in silently and grayly, with its head bowed and its face covered. (EE, pp. 191-192).

Such an open mockery of religion is further evidenced in

*The Hayward Sun* also. It is really difficult to understand how Warren French finds Steinbeck in *The Hayward Sun* "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 Chicoy'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 surrealistic 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 Shop." (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 navy revolver; silver mounted, a 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 coin.
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 Norton'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 H Wendy Buss, 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. Fritchard possess--hypocrisy and self-deception. In comparison to them Juan is true to himself and has the ability, like the paisanos and the American bums, 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 Hinter 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. Malloy 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." ( WOD, 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. ( WOD, 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 thus lose his individuality and his cræ 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," 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 programme 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.287).

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 cynicism can 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 panacea 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 monomaniacal 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 every man 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 set-up. 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, satisfactory,
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.


