CHAPTER- II

TORTILLA FLAT : A FAIR PORTRAYAL OF DENIENS FACING SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION
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The novel, *Tortilla Flat* was published just five days after Steinbeck’s father died. Steinbeck’s Mexican American denizens lived marginally in a wooded area on the edge of Monterey seeking diverting relief from the great depression, found in James Thurber’s *My life and hard time* and George’s Kaufman and Moss Hart’s play *You can’t take it with you*. He tried to write an unbiased story based on the experience of strike organizer Pat Chambers. The novel gave Steinbeck immense popularity. The novel’s setting is in Monterey, California. Its major character is called denizens, (known as Chicanos). The story begins with Danny returning from World War I, who finds himself heir to an old house that becomes domicile and spiritual centre for him and circle of friend-Pilon, Pable, Jesus Maria, Big Joe Portagee, the Pirate. The group flourishes for a while, sharing a marginal existence and participating in a variety of unrelated adventures courtships, thefts, good deeds, swindles and then dissolves after the death of Danny. Steinbeck has loved no town so much as Monterey fighting a losing battle against twenty-eighth century civilization. Monterey sits on the slop of the hill inhabited by Americans, Italians, Catchers and canners of fish. On the hill, the forest and the town intermingle. Streets are innocent of asphalt corners, free of street lights, old inhabitants of Monterey embattled as the Ancient Britons are embattled in Wales. These are denizens, a mixture of Spanish, Indian, Mexican and assorted Caucasian bloods. Their ancestors have lived in California for a hundred or two years.
Steinbeck is sympathetic to the denizens. He himself knew them, talked and drank with them, to whom *Tortilla Flat* is dedicated. He puts these people in a picaresque novel *Tortilla Flat*. Danny and his friend are pleasant rogues who never work unless extremity drives them. They pick up food, drink and fun as chance offers, thinking of Petty theft, prevarication and trickery and get along quite well without running water, electricity light and a change of clothes. All they want is enough to eat, plenty of red wine, a cozy place to sit and talk on occasional amour or brawl. Love, fighting and little wine that’s all they want to be happy.

Denizens use money and barterable goods mainly for buying wine or presents for women. They literally break the law but are not criminals. They have moral feeling and conscience. They are great moralizers, finding noble reasons for satisfying desires at a friend’s expenses wanting wine etc. The novel is an entertaining account of amiable rascals and Steinbeck sets them in contrast to the commercial civilization that surrounds them. They are clean of commercialism, free of the complicated systems of American business. The values of simple people are opposed, as more healthy and viable to the values of a competitive society. Steinbeck for the first time makes deliberate humorous use of the conception of the group as organism. It is the story of Danny, his friends and his house, which not only means a structure of wood flaked with old whitewash, but a unit from which comes sweetness and Joy, philanthropy and in the end a mystic sorrow of discrimination.

The novel *Tortilla Flat* as a whole has qualities of fellowship, as whole denizens characteristics which mingle with other kinds. The group organisms nervous system carries information and emotions through the whole collective body. The denizens illustrate the ecological principal that every niche in the environment is likely to be filled and that some kind of creature adapt itself to every possible source of subsistence. Steinbeck says that the denizens
are people who merge successfully with their habitat. In men this is called philosophy and it is a fine thing. They are symbiotics or commensals but some say that they are Parasites on the Monterey community, depending upon others for their food, living on pickings, trying to preserve their own values, pushed into a corner of the habitat and are forced to become scavengers and Jackals-- snatchers of other’s food.

It is story of a low group who come into being, flourishes and grow to be an organization beautiful and wise, with the good they do, their thought and endeavors. Steinbeck started with tales, true and legendry about denizens. Like the knights of old Danny, Pilon and Joe, Portagee, having enlisted in the American army in the First World War. Danny is a horseman. At twenty-five his legs are bent to the exact curves of a horse’s sides. Both denizens and knights fight over women. “Danny said, here we sit homeless. We gave our lives for our country and now we have no roof over our head.” (TF 10)

The novel Tortilla Flat begins with Danny’s friends, and Danny’s house in Tortilla Flat, a district on a hill above the town of Monterey, California. From Danny’s group of friends come sweetness and joy, philanthropy, and, in the end, sorrow due to social discrimination. The author compares Danny and his friends to the Knights of the Round Table in King Arthur’s time and explains the reader how Danny’s group came into being, flourished and how the group eventually disintegrated. Tortilla Flat is a poor part of a town. The denizens lived in California for well over a hundred years. Danny himself grows up in Tortilla Flat. When the United States declared war on Germany in World War I in 1917, Danny and his friend Pilon, Big Joe and Portagee go to the enlistment station in Monterey. Pilon and Big Joe are assigned to the infantry, while Danny as a mule skinner, is sent to break mules in Texas Pilon which end up in Oregon with the infantry, while Big Joe goes to jail.
After the war, Danny learns that his grandfather has died and that he has inherited two small houses on Tortilla Flat. At first he is weighed down by the responsibility of ownership. He gets drunk on wine, starts a fight in poolroom, and breaks some windows in town. He gets sentenced to a month in the city jail. One night a friend named Tito Ralph visits Danny with wine. When that is finished, Tito Ralph leaves to get some more, and Danny goes with him. Later, Danny sleeps among the pines while Tito Ralph goes back and reports Danny’s escape. Danny hides all the next day, and in the evening begs some scraps from a restaurant, and steals a lot more food:

“Then they counted the quarters out in piles of ten, and excitedly counted again. Pirate, Danny cried, there are seven over a thousand! Thy time is done! The day is come for thee to buy thy candlestick for San-Francisco! Even the enemies of our savior gave him a little comfort, he excused himself.” (TF 133)

In the woods that night, Danny meets Pilon and offers to share his food with him. Pilon agrees to share his brandy with Danny. They build a fire, cook the ham, eat the bread and drink the brandy:

“No, this is not a peom,” Danny said. “Here we sit homeless. We gave our lives for our country, and now we have no roof our head.” “We never did have, “Pilon added helpfully. Danny drank dreamily until Pilon touched his elbow and took the bottle.” That reminds me, “ Danny said, “of a story of a man who owned two whorehouses” (TF 10).
Danny thinks of the friends he lost in the war. He wonders about his friend Pablo, and Pilon tells him that Pablo has stolen a goose and is in jail for six months. Danny suddenly remembers that he is the owner of two houses. This surprising news makes Pilon sad. He says that now Danny is man of property, he will forget his friends. Danny denies this, and shares his house with Pilon:

“If all the dew were diamonds, Pablo said, we would be very rich. We would be drunk all our lives. Pilon was uneasy with curse of realism, added, Everybody would have too many diamonds. There would be no prize for them, but wine always cost money. If only it would rain wine for a day, now, and we had a tank to catch in it.” (TF 27)

Danny’s first thought when he inherits the houses is to be weighed down with the responsibilities of a man of property that he does not really want. Danny and Pilon enter the bigger of two houses, which is rather run-down, with weeds in the yard. Pilon is delighted, but Danny seems daunted by the responsibility of ownership. Danny goes to town and finds out in his annoyance that it will take a three-dollar deposit for the water company to turn on their water. Neither Danny nor Pilon have three dollars, and if they have, they will spend it on wine, not utility deposit.

Danny collects some wood and sends Pilon out to get something for dinner. Pilon captures and kills a chicken in the wood. He and Danny build a fire and cook the chicken. Pilon suggests that Danny rent his other house, adding that he will rent it himself. They agree on a rent of fifteen dollars a month. Pilon expects for his year in the army, has never possessed fifteen dollars in his life, but he thinks that anything can happen during that time. They spend the test of
the evening drinking wine, and then fall asleep on the floor. Pilon’s renting a house has risen him in the social scale. As for the rent, Danny never asks, and Pilon never pays, since he never has any money. The two friends spend much time together. One night a man gives Pilon a dollar to buy some ginger ale because the hotel has none. Pilon buys wine instead and also takes two plump girls to Danny’s house. As they drink, Danny and Pilon get into a fight, while the girls shriek. Danny hits one of the girls in the stomach and she leaves while the other girl follows her, stealing two cooking pots. Danny and Pilon complain about the perfidy of women, and then quarrel and fight again.

Months pass, Pilon worries, does a whole day’s work and earns two dollars. He intends to give the money to Danny but buys wine instead. He feels pure and at peace as dusk falls, but the desire to drink all the wine in himself grows. He meets his friend Pablo, who has been paroled from jail. Pilon hits on the idea of letting Pablo rent part of his house, for fifteen dollars a month. Pablo agrees, and Pilon is relieved. If Danny ever asks him for the rent, he can say that he will pay when Pablo pays.

Like the Knights of the Round Table, Danny’s friends suffer from various temptations that threaten to lead them away from their true values. Pilon is tempted by the prospects of elevating himself in the social scale of Monterey by becoming a man who rents an entire house. He longs for this rise in status, which leads him away from the simple generosity and friendship involved in sharing Danny’s house. The philosophy of the men is revealed. They like to keep their lives simple, free of possessions. As Pilon puts it, after he removes some breakable items from the bedroom that it is not good to have so many breakable things around because when they are broken one becomes sad. Instead it is much better never to have them.
The men dislike anything that connects them materially to the wider social system. They don’t want to pay three dollars to the utility company that would enable them to have running water. They sooner have wine because wine enables them to enjoy their lives more fully, with out any monetary contracts and obligations. They tend to behave in ways that are to their own advantage, convincing themselves that they are acting form the purest of motives, and with the welfare of the others in mind. They set their life with the specious logic.

Pilon and Pablo are happy as they idle their days away together, drinking wine and discussing local happenings, such as when a woman named Cornelia Ruiz attack her former boyfriend, a black Mexican, when she finds a new man and wants to keep the one out of her house. They are worried about Danny’s girlfriend called Rosa Martin, that Danny will marry and will need money to keep his wife happy and will therefore start bothering them for rent. They are relieved when Danny makes it clear that he has little serious interest in Rosa. They sit down in a ditch beside the road, where they discover Jesus Maria Corcoran, a friend of theirs, who is drunk under a bush. Jesus Maria has some wine with him and he offers it to the others. He tells them that he got seven dollars for selling a rowboat that has washed ashore, and he bought some wine as well as a gift for his friend Arabella Gross. But she went off with a group of soldiers they met, leaving him on his own to drink and sleep under the bush. He has three dollars left. Jesus Maria, coughs, and Pilon becomes concerned about his health. He and Pablo take Jesus Maria home with them, saying it is not good for him to sleep out under the stars. They offer to rent him their house fifteen dollars a month. Jesus Maria readily agrees and asks him for three dollars on account. He agrees to hand over two dollars. They talk about taking the two dollars to Danny. They agree that wine would be a better gift and they have something to eat, with some wine.
Pablo and Pilon sit in torrelli’s yard and drink it themselves, thinking it is bad for Danny’s health. Pirate lives in a deserted chicken house in the yard of a deserted house on Tortilla Flat. The dogs live around and on top of him, for his dog keep him warm on the coldest nights. Pilon says to pirate:

“The friends are poor. They would like to help thee, but they have no money. If thou hast money hidden, bring it out into the open. Buy thyself some clothes. Eat food that is not cast out by other people. A gallon of wine makes a nice present for a lady, he suggested in a musing tone.” (TF 35)

In the evening, they return to their house. As they drink more wine, their spirits return. They fall asleep, but during the night a burning candle ignites a bundle of newspapers, and the house catches fire. The house burns to the ground as half the town, including Pilon, Pablo and Jesus Maria, watch. The three men then go off into the pine forest, thinking that they should steer clear of Danny for a while. Danny’s clam reaction to the news that his house is burning suggests that he realizes immediately that losing a house is not such a bad thing.

After his initial anger and dismay, Danny is pleased to have lost his house, as it removes the burden of responsibility. He decides not to appear soft but so must say something to his friends before he lets them back into his affections. Pablo, Pilon and Jesus Maria agree to go back to Danny’s house and apologize for their negligence. Danny abuses them for a while, but soon he forgives them and they are all friends again. Pilon sighs with pleasure to be relieved of the burden of paying rent (even though he never paid it). But then Jesus Maria makes a rash promise for Danny’s hospitality that it is their duty to see that Danny never goes hungry and that
there is always food in the house for him. There is another story of a man named the Pirate, a huge man with the mind of a child. He lives with his five dogs in a deserted chicken house in the yard of a deserted house. He scrounges food from restaurants and eats it with his dogs in a vacant lot. He takes his wheel barrow into the woods, finds a dead tree full of pitch. He walks around town until he sells the load for twenty five cents. He goes to the woods at night and buries his quarter somewhere:

God did not give him all the brain he should have. That poor little Pirate cannot look after himself. For see, he lives in filth in an old chicken house. He feeds upon scraps fit only for his dogs. His cloths are thin and ragged. And because his brain is not a good one, he hides his money (TF 60-61).

The Pirate collects hording money. He has at least a hundred dollars stashed away. Pilon who is concerned about the promise they make to Danny to keep him in food, would like to help him but of course he has no money. He realizes that way to do so is to use the Pirate’s money to help him.

Pilon follows the Pirate into the forest and lies in wait for him. But he has no success in finding the hoard, so he consults his friends. They agree that Pilon’s idea to help the Pirate with his own money is a wonderful one. Jesus Maria suggests they invite the Pirate to live at their house. They all go to visit the Pirate and tell him that the worry they feel about him is killing them. They persuade the surprised man to come and live with them. The Pirate is convinced that his new friends do indeed love him. He does notice that at least one of them is always watching him, or accompanying him wherever he goes.
The friends bring up the issue of the desirability of hiding one’s money. The Pirate is terrified. He creeps out of the house, followed by his dogs. They see on the living room table a large canvas bag. The Pirate admits that he has money in the bag. No one will steal it from him now. He says he is saying up to buy a gold candlestick for St. Francis of Assisi. The Pirate is very happy, but the four friends know that they forfeited their chance of ever getting their hands on his money:

“Do not be ashamed, it is no sin to be loved by your dog, no sin to love them. See how Saint Francis loved the beasts. Then he told more stories of that good saint. The embarrassment left the Pirate. His lips moved. “Oh,” he thought, “if the dog could only hear this. They would be glad if they could know all of this.”(TF 141-142)

The loyalty of the friends to one another is part of that spiritual property that is only spoiled by material attachments. The motives of the four friends in inviting the Pirate to live with them are less altruistic. The friendship they extend to him is genuine. They are bound by their own code of honor.

The story of Big Joe Portagee is a lay about who spends eighteen months of his two years of military service in military jail. After World War I ends, he returns to Monterey and searches for his friends. He finds his way to Torrelli, the wine merchant and Torrelli tells him where Danny and friends live. On his way there he meets Pilon, who tells Big Joe that he wants the treasure not for himself but for Danny, because he has been so kind to them all. Pilon is angry with Big Joe when he discovers that Joe had gone into the town that afternoon and had sold a blanket of Danny’s for a gallon of wine. As a punishment, he makes Big Joe do all the digging.
They have dug up in a metal container that turns out to be a government geodetic survey placed there in 1915.

Danny goes to Tortilla’s meeting Pablo on the way. Tortelli was not friendly towards men who had neither money nor barterable property. Danny buys a vacuum cleaner for two dollars for Dolores as a gift. She loves the vacuum cleaner and pushes it around, making a humming sound to imitate a motor. She rises in *Tortilla Flat*’s social scale. Pilon goes to Dolores’s house when she is out and puts the vacuum cleaner in a sack. Pilon goes Torrelli’s where he exchanges the vacuum cleaner for two gallons of wine. Danny admits that he is getting sick of Dolores. The vacuum cleaner is worth more wine then Torrelli gives him.

The search by the Knights of the Round Table for the Holy Grail starts. The Holy Grail is the cup of vessel used by Christ at the last Supper, and is said to have miraculous power. In this instance, the Holy Grail is treasure buried in the forest, and the forest has a supernatural flavor. Pilon invokes the name of Jesus to keep evil spirits away, and says that his heart is clean of selfishness that he can find the treasure. He echoes one of the conditions for the knights. The coming of Big Joe to Danny’s house completes the mock Round Table with its six knights.

It is satirical and foolishness of being attached to possessions and social status. The pretentious nature of such social one-upmanship is well made when it turns out that there is literally, the supposed superiority of one person over another due to material possessions and status is nothing but an illusion. Danny almost gets caught in the consumer trap, whereby possession of one thing leads inevitably to the desire for possession of another thing. The freedom he cherishes would be lost. His friends are able to rescue and eventually try to save him from discrimination.
Jesus Maria is always on the lookout to do some kindness for someone. One day near the post office, she sees a policeman with a young boy of about sixteen who is carrying a baby. The Spanish boy came from México looking for work but has found noon. He was just sitting on the street, resting, when the policeman comes and took him away. Jesus Maria tells the policeman that the boy is a friend. Danny and his friends do everything they can to help. They make the baby comfortable in a box padded with dry grass and lined with a sheepskin coat. The corporal says his wife is in Mexico. She has been stolen from him by a captain. He moans for the baby and says that now the baby can never become a general. He plans to return to Mexico. He is a soldier at heart. The six friends look admiringly at him. They are proud to have known him.

The harm is always done by the existence of social hierarchies based on power rather then the benevolent egalitarianism based on friendship that the knights do. The social system is therefore shown to be a corrupt one, in which the powerful exploit the week. The ideals of the band of brothers are decided to friendship and mutual aid, not exploitation of one by the other.

One evening, Danny, Pablo, Pilon, Jesus Maria and the Pirate go to the beach after they hear that a Coast Guard cutter has gone aground near Carmel. When they return, Danny goes to put the Pirate’s quarter in the canvas bag as but he finds that the bag has gone. They all know the culprit is Big Joe Protégée. They prepare for their revenge. When Joe returns, they beat him severely with sticks. On the way back home, all the men are happy. Once in the church of San Carlos, the Pirate sees a beautiful golden candlestick, and in it a tall candle is burning. He is excited, and cannot stop looking at it.

Teresina Cortez lives with her mother Angelica in cottage on Tortilla Flat. Teresina is about thirty years old with nine children. She has been deserted by her husband Alfred shortly
after her marriage at the age of sixteen. A doctor visits the family and examines the children, but finds that they are in excellent health. One year, however, the bean crop fail. Teresina and her family are terrified that they may all starve.

Jesus Maria learns of the situation. His compassion is aroused, and when he returns home, he inspires his friends to join together to help the unfortunate family, with food, vegetable, fruits. The bond of friendship between the denizens transcends the considerable lure of the canvas bag full of the Pirate’s money. A thousand quarters is very large amount of money for these poor men. They show their loyalty to one another and also their devotion to the Pirate. The attitude to the Pirate’s money also shows the religious faith of the men. Since the money is to be used to buy a candlestick dedicated to St.Francis, they regard the treasure as in effect belonging to the saint. The money serves a spiritual rather than a material cause given by Jesus in the New Testament not to store up your treasure on earth.

Like the good knights, the friends also go to the aid of a damsel in distress. The story shows Jesus Maria, the humanitarian, in a good light, because he cannot bear to see anyone in pain or distress without trying to help. Jesus Maria appears to have learned a lesson from Pilon’s playbook in the sense that his motives are not quite as pure as they seem. The form of comfort that Jesus Maria offers will likely includes his sexual attentions, a guess that is confirmed at the end of the chapter when it is revealed that Teresina is pregnant once again. The friends sleeping in the same room, except for the Pirate who rises late, and then sit in the sun on the porch discussing local events and people, telling stories, enjoying the lazy rhythms of their lives.

Danny gets bored with the same old routine, after day. He feels that he has given up his freedom and he longs to get it back and live a more adventurous life. One morning the friends
awake to find Danny gone. They search for him. The friends are worried and fear that something bad will happen to Danny unless they find him. Torrelli complains that Danny has behaved outrageously towards him. He calls him a seducer, a thief and a drunkard. The friends respond aggressively, insulting Torrelli. One night Danny comes into the house. But he escapes before they can catch him. They all decide to catch Danny, tie him to the bed and try to cure him of his sickness.

In the morning, Torrelli walks to Danny’s house & says that the house now belongs to him. Danny has sold it to him for twenty-five dollars. The men protest, saying that Danny must have been drunk, but Torrelli is adamant. They knock him down, take the paper, and then pretend that no such paper exists. Torrelli has no other proof of the sale, depart, defeated. Danny and Tito Ralph, formerly the town jailer, arrives. Danny denies that he has signed any paper of Torrelli’s.

The denizens of Tortilla Flat do not use clocks or watches. They live according to the natural rhythm dictated by the sun. They never feel the pressure exerted on people by society’s idea. They remain outside society’s rules and assumptions. Tall Bob Smoke and man Ravanno reveal some of the traps in life that the denizens with their more relaxed attitude, tend to avoid. This is an example of an irrational emotional attachment that the denizens take care to avoid especially with women. They are willing to have sex with the local women when opportunity comes their way, but their commitments and entanglements that lead to the kind of fate is suffered by Ravanno.

After his return, Danny lives listlessly with his friends. The friends worry about him and try to draw him out. But nothing works. Danny seems old and there is no light in his eyes. To raise the money, they decide that for once in their lives they will get a job for a day. A party is
going to held for Danny. Everyone joins in with the preparations and there is great excitement. When Danny goes out in the afternoon, people come to decorate the house and bring food. The friends return from their job happy. When darkness begins to fall, Danny, who has been wandering aimlessly around Monterey, still does not return. His friends go out to look for him. Danny seems excited by the prospect of the party, and they hurry home. The party is a wild one, with drinking, dancing, fighting and love-making. Danny rush to the fray. Then there is a cry of defiance from Danny, a thump, and then silence. Pilon and the others rush out to search for Danny & finds him at the bottom of a gulch. He is fallen forty feet. He is still alive, and doctors are summoned as well as father Ramon. Danny is carried up the hill and laid on his on his bed, where he dies.

Danny’s body is embalmed, and elaborate arrangements are made for his funeral. Danny’s friends are in despair because their clothes are so old and ragged. Everyone else is planning on wearing their best clothes. On the morning of the funeral, the friends tell one another stories about Danny, praising his goodness, courage and piety. A kind of tragicomic conclusion to the tale is presented. Comedy always ends with festivities and celebrations so the need for the great party at the end. Danny’s death is presented as a parody of a heroic death. His death really is heroic in the sense that at the party he overcome, in one brilliant burst, his lethargy and despair and lives life, for one last time, to the full. His death is one last glorious, hopeless assault on the gods, means that the group of friends must part and go their own separate ways:

“And strong,” said Pablo. He was as strong as a mule! He could lift a bale of hay”. They told little stories of Danny, of his goodness, his courage, his piety. Everyone was there, Cornelia Ruiz, Mrs. Morales, Galvez, Torrelli and his plump wife, Mrs. Palochico, Tito Ralph the traitor, Sweets
Steinbeck commented on the different philosophical-moral system of the denizens. He meant that Danny’s group of friends place the highest value of friendship, on the maintenance of the simple values that uphold their group. They avoid materialism and social hierarchies, which undermine the values they live by. They stand for an egalitarian approach to life in which possessions are shared. They live with ethical values and there is a glorious ending of their life. Throughout their life they suffer discrimination because they are denizens and they do not belong to the place where they have lived for more than hundred years. This is their pathetic story.

The values of friendship rather than materialism are apparent when Danny inherits two houses from his grandfather. While most people might be glad of this, for Danny the responsibility of ownership is something of a burden. In contrast to it, the friendship and sharing is first touched, when Danny and Pilon share Pilon’s bottle of brandy. Friends have obligations to one another, and these are more important than any obligation a man might have to his personal property. Pilon fears that now Danny has property, he will forget his friends, but Danny reassures him that “what I have is thine?

Thus, the contrast between the demands of friendship and those of materials belongings, as well as social status is established and friendship takes the primary position. This is emphasized very well. The greatest joy for the small group of brothers is in helping one another, and showing friendship, because this is a bulwark against loneliness and isolation. Giving presents of too great value, excites greed:
Things that happen are of no importance. But from everything that happens, there is a lesson to be learned. By this we learn that a present especially to a lady, should have no quality that will require a further present. Also we learn that it is sinful to give presence of too great value, for they may excite greed (TF 109).

The pirate is astonished and overjoyed when he finds out that he has some friends. Initially the men have an ulterior motive for befriending him—they want the treasure but do not obscure the genuineness of the friendship that emerges. Poor little lonely man, says Danny the day the Pirate moves in with them, “It is better to keep one’s money close, to spend some now and then, to give a little to one’s friends,” (TF73). If I had known I would have asked him long ago, even if he had no treasure. When he says this, a flame of joy burns in all of them. This is really they live for, the feeling that they are fulfilling their own social code by acting in friendship to others whilst remaining free of economic obligations.

The groups of friends consistently repudiate the normal ways which a man makes a living. They do not want to tread on even the lowest rungs of the economic ladder. There seems to be plenty of work available at the squid yard, but they are really interested in doing what others would regard as a fair day’s work. They also have a fear of getting in material debt to someone, because that will restrict their freedom. When Pilon, and then Pablo and Jesus Maria as well, live in Danny’s second house, the issues of the payment of rent seems about to create insoluble divisions between the men until the house burns down, which turns out to be the best solution. Despite the materials loss, everyone is happy because a source of harmony has been created.
Dolores and her sweeping machine of the corporal and his son, expose the folly of a society in which the strong lord it over the weak and bestow higher status on those who have prestigious gadgets that cost money to acquire. They are so set against what economic slavery or social snobbery, the friends take a fierce pride in their own, alternative set of values. Their commitment to one other and their code of ethics is such that involves severe punishment for anyone in the group who breaks them-as in the punishments meted out to Big Joe portage. The friends sleep on the floor with bedding unusual. Pilon wraps himself in a big strip of carpet. Big Joe mostly curl up like a dog and slept in his clothes. He has no ability to keep any possession for very long, has a well developed genius for trading everything that comes into his hands, little wine, “no curtains cover the windows, generous nature has obscured glass with cobwebs, dust and the neat marks of raindrops.” (TF 155)

The denizens community is a catholic one, and Danny’s group of friends, tend to see life through a religious lens. Their respect for the church seems to be almost infinite. They prepare the Pirate so he can look respectable enough to go to church to see the gold candlestick bought with his money dedicated to St.Francis. The money the Pirate puts away in order that he can buy the candlestick is treated as sacrosanct by the men. They consider the money belongs to St.Francis, and would never touch it for it is far worse to defraud a saint than it is to take liberties with the law:

They were proud of the money that they had never tampered with it. About the guardianship of the Pirate’s money there had grown a structure of self respect and not a little complacency (TF 129)
The Pirate is most mystical of the men. He claims once to have had a holy vision. Pilon is the theologian. He is always ready with an explanation about religious matters. When Pablo wonders whether the effectiveness of the masses that Cornelia arranges for her dead father is compromised by the fact that they are paid for by money. Cornelia steals from her men when they lie in a drunken sleep. Pilon explains that a mass is a mass and it doesn’t make any difference where it comes from. It is Pilon who tells Jesus Maria that when a rowboat washed up on shore, enabling him to sell it for seven dollars, it was God who sent him the boat. While the men believe in supernatural causes of earthly events, are not much interested in applying religious ethics to their actions. The petty larceny does not seem like a sin to them.

Others denizens outside Danny’s group also ascribe mundane events to supernatural causes. Teresina’s mother, Angelica, when supply of foods dries up, complains that although she burned four candles to the virgin, the virgin took no action on her behalf. But when the food arrives, courtesy of Jesus Maria and the others, Angelica repents and offers thanks to the virgin. She and her daughter regard the arrival of the food as a miracle. They attribute good and bad events not to human acts or the cycles of nature but to supernatural intervention or the lack of it.

The novel Tortilla Flat is a combination of many places, location on the Monterey peninsula. Steinbeck seems to have picked up some part of the story about the denizens from an old friend, Sue Gregory, who taught journalism at Monterey high school. Across the quarry gulch from the school, along Johnson street, there was row of little denizens shacks that has inspired the first story about Danny’s two inherited houses.

Danny is tall, dark, intent, is the leader of group of denizens, his house serving as the symbolic Round table of King Arthur and his knights. Danny, who is dark and small is born and
raised in tortilla flat. At the age of twenty five his legs are bent to the exact curves of a horse’s sides. He joins the army to fight World War I. He is discharged from the army. He begins the beating of times, wants to be free, although he ends up in Texas breaking mules. After the war, he is fortunate enough to inherit two houses after his grandfather dies, but he does not really want the burden of being a property owner. For month he broods, gives up his longing. He wants to be free to continue his usual carefree lifestyle of drinking, fighting and petty larceny. Danny is a generous and kind man who is capable of deep and lasting friendship. Five of his friends end up living at his house. They are all devoted to him. Danny eventually is tired of the monotonous life he leads and tries to recapture the wild spirit of his former days. He grows huge and terrible. His eyes flare like the head lights of an automobile, something fearsome. Peace has gone from Danny’s house and there is worry and sadness. When he disappears into the pine woods, from their home, his friends think he has gone mad and tries to capture him and cure him. When he returns of his own free will the friends throw one final, stupendous party in Danny’s honor that becomes legendary in Tortilla Flat. But Danny’s does not survive it. Going out of the house drunk he falls down a cliff.

Pablo is one of the knights who live in Danny’s house initially. He is invited by his friend Pilon to share the house Pilon rents. When the house burns down he goes with Pilon to live with Danny. Pablo is a mild, good –natured man, is not a leader. He is not shown as having any adventures of his own. He tends to go along with what the others say.

Pilon is the brain of Danny’s group of denizens. He and Danny have been friends for a long time and Pilon is the first to join up Danny in Danny’s house. Pilon is a Willy, cunning, and resourceful man who always has a plan of action. Most of the initiatives taken by the men begin with Pilon, such as the attempt with Big Joe to find the treasure in the forest and the reclaiming
of the vacuum cleaner from Dolores. Pilon possesses a strong personality and takes charge in
difficult situations. He is also a generous and kind-hearted soul. He shows his generosity when
he is willing to share his brandy with Danny. Pilon is a lover of beauty and a mystic. He feels his
connection to God through the beauty of nature. He is also aware of his dual personality—he has
good side and a less-than-good side. He can be pure hearted and selfless and he can also be “that
not too perfect Pilon, who plotted and fought, who drank and cursed.

Jesus Maria Corcoran is one of Danny’s friends. He is a humanitarian, and kindness is
always in him. It is Jesus Maria who makes the rash promise that the friends will ensure that
there is always food in the house for Danny. He readily comes to the aid of the corporal with the
sick baby. He also befriends and helps Teresina Cortez when he discovers that she and her young
children do not have anything to eat:

He is irresistibly drawn to relieve pain suffering. He was a pathway for
the humanities. He once picked Charlie Marsh out of a ditch, lay in his
own filth, a deed which requires a warm heart and a strong stomach. He
had a gift for coming in contact with situations where good wanted doing.
His capacity for doing good is great. Such is his reputation. (TF 112)

If that Jesus Maria had gone into the church, Monterey would have had a
saint for the calendar. (TF 113)

The Corporal is a young boy of sixteen, a soldier in Chihuahua. He is diligent, clean and
keeps oil in his rifle. He is married to a beautiful, young girl with bright eyes, good white teeth,
hair long and shining, who flees with his sick baby to Monterey from Mexico after a captain in
the army steals his wife. Jesus Maria befriends him. The boy has no thoughts of revenge against
the officer. He merely wants the best for his son. Unfortunately, the baby dies. Angelica Cortez is the mother of Teresina. Teresina Cortez is a young woman of about thirty with nine children, a good figure of a mature woman. Her husband had left her when she was about sixteen, and the babies have been fathered by a number of different men. Teresina feeds her family entirely on beans and tortillas, but they are healthy in spite of their limited diet:

Senora Teresina Cortez and her eight children and ancient mother lived in a pleasant cottage on the edge of the deep gulch that defines the southern frontier of Tortilla Flat. Her mother that ancient, dried, toothless one, relict of a past generation was nearly fifty. (TF 144)

The Pirate is a huge man physically but mentally he is childlike. He survives by cutting wood and selling it around town. He buries the quarters he earns each day at secret hiding place in the forest. The pirate’s goal is to save a thousand quarters so he can buy a gold candlestick for St.Francis. He is devoted to the saint because he believes that St.Francis once saved the life of his dog. The pirate is always accompanied by his five dogs who are fiercely loyal to him and protect him. Danny’s men at first want to get his money, but they have no success, and when he brings the treasure in from the forest and puts it under Danny’s pillow, his innocence and simplicity win them over. He becomes one of the groups, and no one touches his money. In fact, Danny and his friends do everything they can to help him reach his goal. He eventually gets his goal fulfilled and is in church to see his gold candlestick alight and dedicated to St.Francis. He even believes that his dogs are granted a vision of the saint.

Big Joe Portagee is the last of the knights to come and live at Danny’s house. This makes a welcome change for him, since as a good-for-nothing who spends most of the time drinking,
fighting, and whoring, he is more familiar with being in jail than living in normal society. To an extent, big Joe is the black sheep of the group and has to be kept inline by others. Big Joe is not very bright, is easily dominated and outwitted by the wily Pilon. Big Joe’s biggest transgression is when he tries to steal the pirate’s bag full of money, and the men give him a severe beating to make sure he never does such a thing again.

Tito Ralph is the jailer in Monterey, a position he attains because he has been in jail so often he know exactly how the jail should be run. He loses his job because when he drinks wine he forgets he is the jailer, and not only allows the prisoners to escape, he escapes too.

Dolores Engracia Ramirez lives in her own house on the upper edge of Tortilla Flat. She is not pretty because of her voice, the way she moves and her throaty, some men find her attractive. She is known as sweets because she often shows amorous intent toward men. Her eyes burn behind a mist with a sleepy passion with those men to whom the flesh is important find attractive and downright inviting. She is not desirable and is called sweet Ramirez her voice is, shrill, her face hard, sharp as a hatchet, her figure lumpy, with selfish intentions Dolores sets her sights on Danny when she hears he has becomes a property owner.

Father Ramón is the priest who buys the gold candlestick on behalf of pirate.

Cornelia Ruiz is a lively unstable woman who has lots of men friends. Danny and his friends often talk about her and find much to criticize in her behavior. Danny thinks she changes her mind too quickly. Pablo thinks that all she is interested in love and fighting.

Torrelli is the wine merchant in town. The denizens do not like him and enjoy cheating him whenever they can. They also flirt with his wife. Torrelli an Italian is often furious with them. He thinks he has finally got his revenge on them when a drunken Danny sells him his
house for twenty-five dollars. But Danny’s friend outwits Torrelli yet again and sends him home empty.

Tall Bob smoke has thin, long legs. He wants to admired. He is man born to be laughed at. People pity him. Laughter and pity stabs him. Tell Bob Smoke tried to kill himself. Bob was incompetent man who desperately wanted to be admired by others. But whenever he tried to impress people, something always went wrong and everyone laughed at him. He got depressed and decided to commit suicide. But then he realized that he would be dead and would not know how sorry they were. So he decided to hold a gun to his head and wait for some one to come along and persuade him not to kill himself. People drove him to kill himself:

“They poor unfortunate one, he is a man born to be laughed at. Some people pity him, but most of them just laugh at him. And laughter stabs that Tall Bob Smoke. Maybe you remember that time in the parade when he carried the flag. Very straight Bob sat, on a big white horse.” (TF 159)

Tia Ignacia is a middle aged widow, about forty five, of long standing and some success, a taciturn and harsh woman with more Indian blood in her veins. She takes a fancy to Big Joe Portagee when he runs into her house to escape the rain.

Danny and his friends seem to be perpetually drinking wine, they enjoy most doing. They can spend hours together talking and swapping stories over wine. Even though they have little money they seem always able to obtain some wine from somewhere. They are merely drunks and layabouts, who drink to escape their responsibilities in life. The drinking of wine really symbolizes the joy of life and value of friendship. When Danny’s groups drink wine together, the bond between them is strengthened. Set against wine, understood as the joy of life, is the burden
of responsibility, of taking part in an oppressive and unjust society that emphasizes power relations and material possessions.

Danny’s house is the symbolic center of the friendship that exists between the groups of men. It is equivalent of the Round Table of the Arthurian knights, a visible structure in which the fraternity can meet and flourish.

Within the house, hidden under the pillow on Danny’s bed, is the canvas bag that contains the pirate’s treasures. Each day, the pirate hands over the quarter he has earned to Danny, and Danny solemnly places it in the canvas bag. This is a kind of daily ritual:

The bag of money, becomes the symbolic center of the friendship, the point of trust about which the fraternity revolved. They were proud of the money, proud that they had never tampered with it. About the guardianship of the Pirate’s money their had grown a structure of self respect and not a little complacency. This money had long ceased, in the minds of the friends, to be currency. (TF 128-129)

It gives meaning to the man’s lives, since they know they are saving the money for a worthy and holy cause, the buying of gold candlestick for dedication to St.Francis. The canvas bag therefore symbolizes the spiritual underpinnings of men’s lives. They are despite the oddness and apparent aimlessness of their daily lives, devoted to a spiritual cause that holds deep meaning for them. It is fine thing for a man to be trusted. This money has long ceased in the minds of the friends, to be currency.

Steinbeck was a nonteleologist, during the peak of his carrier, strictly, for all evidence points to his devotion to experimentation as he can’t be tied to any one method. A key theory
appears in his best writing is ‘is’ thinking during 1930’s, 1940’s, and 1950’s especially in drawing his Mexican-American characters, as in *The Pastures in haven*, *To a God unknown*, *Tortilla Flat*, *Cannery Row*, *The wayward bus* and *Sweet Thursday*.

The novel *Tortilla Flat* is built totally around this ethnic group. It is a humorous novel, concentrating on the simple Pastoral life touches on the struggle between men as an entity and as a member of a group. It is the story of a group of denizens, who are very poor inhabitants of a hilly district of Monterey. Their life style is characteristic by freedom, acceptance, living for the moment, nonmaterialism, oneness with nature and natural friendship, extended to include one’s true friends. They learn that personal freedom is their only possession in conflict with economics. The denizens survive because they have learn to accept the world as being good enough for their purpose.

The key idea of “is” which is a love of freedom which is the cornerstone of the denizens life style. They resists responsibility of any type, usually means some loss of freedom. They have sparse possessions nothing that could be stolen exploited or mortgaged. None of the denizens gives up their freedom except Danny who inherits two old house of his grandfather that causes major conflict in the story and eventually causes his death. His loss of freedom begins to prey upon his mind. He is too integrated into the group. He remembers his life before he own the house, finally leaves his house and friend, free from his burden of responsibility and sells his house to Torelli, a local wine merchant, for twenty five dollars.

A second nonteological aspect in *Tortilla Flat* is an acceptance of things as they are. Experience has taught that the world is good enough for their purpose. They have learned to avoid the situations beyond their control. Frederick Bracher a critic added, The inhabitants of
Tortilla Flat have wish to become involved in the contradictions of a civilization which drives it self to the verge of nervous breakdown finding new way’s to cure the sick and kill the healthy to pamper the body and stultify the spirit.

Acceptance is as much part of the denizens life style as it is a part of “is” thinking. Nonteological thinking stresses living for the present. Steinbeck’s denizens successfully accept their situation and live for the moment. They are nonmaterialistic. Having wine at the moment is important. It is not something to be kept for the future. They are often tempted by the things of the world but survive each temptation. When Danny learns of his inheritance, the worry of his property settles on his face. His shoulder straightens to withstand the complexities of life.

Steinbeck presents the denizens as natural part of their surroundings. They need not beautify nature. They are nature. They are careful to protect integrity of the friendship within the group. Steinbeck balances the freedom of the individual and strength of friendship within the group. Their philosophy is to share with friends, not to divide with the group. To be a friend to others is of prime importance for the denizens. Pilon is the representative who has neither the stupidity the self righteousness, nor the greediness for reward ever to become a saint. Enough for Pilon to do good and to be rewarded by the grow of human brotherhood accomplished.

Middle class values take bearing in Tortilla Flat, in which the intrusion of property ownership disrupts the laid back life style of denizens to live by their wits, in the semi wooded area around Monterey coping which proves too much for Danny, who meets his death. He is driven to challenge an unknown foe and the small community that has grown up around him before two houses, he has inherited have been, destroyed breaking up with former participants going their sprats way. It show a considerable advance denizens of whole community The
talisman is the last and the group disintegrates to give this community a distinct identity or group character. Pilon cries:

“Then look we are having a party for you at your house. Every body in *Tortilla Flat* in them and music and wine and chicken! There are may be twenty of thirty Gallons of wine. A dying organism is often observed to be capable of extraordinary endurance and strength”. (TF 193-194)

The novel *Tortilla Flat* proved hard to the market. The form is of the Mallory Version-the coming of Arthur, the mystic quality of owning a house, the forming of Round Table, the adventures of the Knights and finally the mystic translation of Danny. The main issue was to present a little known and delightful people. Each incident interprets the incident morally, aesthetically, historically in the manner of the denizens themselves. It is a tragic-comic, the different philosophic-moral system of these people and one of the intents is to show that rarely does anything in the lives of these people survive the night.

Steinbeck’s future changed dramatically for the better, with almost immediate popular acclaim about the denizens of Monterey. His future seemed assured. There is an implied criticism of the western society, an observation on the nature of man. The novel holds a critical mirror to conventional American society. Modern society is implicit in the denizens frequent sequences of elaborate rationalization to make the most selfish motives seem altruistic, a rationalization that is honestly and openly admired and practiced. The denizens participation in social rituals, is viewed as game rather then serious affair, like their role in Danny’s funeral is a burlesque of social conventions.
One of the major episodes in *Tortilla Flat* alludes to the of St. Francis. Steinbeck presents an idealized, although comic, alternative to the materialistic and complicated values of conventional society, through Pirate, whose life of poverty and dedication to that saint culminates in a holy vision and by the other denizens. In *Tortilla Flat* the successful melding of denizens and the knight of the Round Table is an accomplishment of Steinbeck’s protean style. It is a language which keeps aware of the novel’s basic ground. Danny comes home from the war, finds himself an heir, swears to protect the helpless. His friends find mystics treasure on Saint Andrew’s Eve, Pilon finds it and a pair of serge trousers changed ownership twice. The masterful control of tone, made *Tortilla Flat*, Steinbeck’s first commercially successful novel. The novel is definitely a fair portrayal of the denizens who have to face social discrimination which makes them feel unwanted on the earth. It thus mingles seriousness with jest, enjoyment but with deeper meanings. Its tone blends humor, bitter sweet pathos, and the objectivity of a sympathetic and amused narrator of legendary events in a language just different enough from ordinary speech to be distinctive and removed from the common place.