

UDK 808.5

Baxtiyorova Durдона Ixtiyorovna

I st years master's degree

Bukhara State University

Uzbekistan, Bukhara

**INTERPRETATION OF THE PROTAGONISTS IN THE NOVELS
BY J.STEINBECK AND WRITER'S STYLE**

Annotation: John Steinbeck's art and career follow a typically American arc of the mid-twentieth century. The early hard-scrabble years of unadulterated talent giving creative and dignified voice to the downtrodden. The rise to iconic status as the conscience of a new mainstream. And an alcohol-facilitated decline into alienating self-indulgence and general crankiness.

But one thing remained constant: he wrote like no one else and he never repeated himself, always trying something new.

Key words: J.Steinbeck, literature, novel, writer's style.

While he was always at least interesting, nowadays however we choose to focus on the highlights of Steinbeck's writing career, especially the accomplished vision of his middle period. This is the period from the depths of the Great Depression to the booming post-war—from the mid-1930s to early 1950s—encompassing the twin peaks of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *East of Eden*, as well as two or three comparable heights of modern lit.

It's surprising then to discover Steinbeck produced over forty books in his lifetime. Before that golden middle period was launched with *Tortilla Flat* in 1935, Steinbeck had published three novels and two short story collections—largely based on his background as a native of the Monterey Bay area of California, his experience in marine biology, and various other odd jobs he held across the United States—all of which drew little attention.

His first publishing success, *Tortilla Flat*, is a somewhat fanciful account of a small gang of charming ne'er-do-wells in an impoverished settlement above

Monterey. The drinking, womanizing, thievery and more drinking of the paisanos (Spanish, Mexican, Indian and Caucasian bloods mixed together) is presented by Steinbeck as a take-off on King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, though most readers would be hard-pressed to see the connection. It's as Danny, Pilon and Pablo that the lumpen characters won the hearts of readers, thanks to Steinbeck's clever, philosophical and warm-spirited writing. They appeared as such also in the 1942 movie of Tortilla Flat. Tortilla Flat was followed by In Dubious Battle (1936), the story of a strike by migratory workers. And then by The Red Pony stories, published separately beginning in 1933. Collected in 1937, they became a Steinbeck favourite, telling the simple story of a young boy coming of age on a farm in Salinas Valley, California.

Also in 1937 he published the equally enduring *Of Mice and Men*, about the relationship of two itinerant ranch workers, the ambitious George and the strong but simple-minded Lenny, whose dreams are crushed by events beyond their control. Steinbeck produced both novel and play forms of the pathetic story and it became his biggest success to date. It's also been adapted three times into memorable movies. His style was set now. Ignoring the postmodern, stream-of-consciousness experiments of many more "literary" figures Steinbeck was a straightforward, natural writer in the Hemingway mould of "less is more"—though a little looser, more playful, and seemingly less cynical than his great contemporary. More sentimentally folksy. His best work was still to come. The monumental novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) relates the trek of the dispossessed Joad family from Oklahoma to California during the Depression. It's Steinbeck's most political novel, taking the side of the Okies as they come up against oppressive labour conditions, corrupt police, and vicious vigilantes. But, despite its near advocacy of socialist revolution, which many pundits attacked as anti-American, *The Grapes of Wrath* has so far stood the test of time as a modern classic, one of the top dozen novels of the twentieth century.

The popular 1940 movie version of *The Grapes of Wrath*, directed by John Ford and starring Henry Fonda as Tom Joad, further sharpened the polemics surrounding the novel, and Steinbeck fled briefly to Mexico to get away from it all and to film a documentary. Through the 1940s and into the 1950s he worked as a war correspondent in Europe, wrote a novel about anti-Nazi resistance (*The Moon is Down*, 1942), produced several notable scripts for Hollywood movies (including *Lifeboat*, 1944, and *Viva Zapata!*, 1952), and recounted a tour of the Soviet Union (*A Russian Journal*, 1948). His most outstanding publication of this period though was probably *Cannery Row* (1945), returning to two of his earliest loves: marine biology and Monterey. Offbeat biologist Doc Burton moves among the other eccentric and warmly drawn characters of the seaport. In some ways the novel is a reworking of *Tortilla Flat*, with a new group of lovable bums, Mack and his gang, providing the humour that Danny's friends offered earlier, including the organization of a party of almost mythical status. But the tone is more mature and the characterization more realistic, and the story offers surprising twists of genuine pathos. Some of Steinbeck's best writing is found in this minor masterpiece. The two-page prologue describing a typical day in the neighbourhood is itself worth the price of admission, witness the work's first lines:

Cannery Row in Monterey in California is a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit, a nostalgia, a dream.... Its inhabitants are, as the man once said, "whores, pimps, gamblers and sons of bitches," by which he meant Everybody. Had the man looked through another peephole he might have said, "Saints and angels and martyrs and holy men," and he would have meant the same thing.

Another classic Steinbeck from this period is *The Pearl* (1947), the semi-mythical story of a poor Mexican diver who discovers a great prize he hopes will ensure his family's wellbeing but instead reaps only tragedy. More than one

commentator has noted the story's similarity to Hemingway's great novella *The Old Man and the Sea* a few years later.

East of Eden (1952) marks the end of Steinbeck's prime period. The sprawling novel is partly a three-generation history of settlers in the Salinas Valley and partly a modern retelling of the biblical Cain and Abel story. Some critics consider *East of Eden* Steinbeck's best work, although others see it as flawed, a rambling account with some incredibly well-drawn segments that never quite coalesce as a novel. It was apparently Steinbeck's favourite of his novels and he considered it somewhat autobiographical. A movie adaptation of *East of Eden*, focusing on the Cain-Abel theme and with James Dean as Cal (the Cain character), raised the book's profile higher yet in 1955.

The following decade saw Steinbeck's usual diverse and prolific output continue, although with diminishing returns. Among his publications were *Sweet Thursday* (1954), a sequel to *Cannery Row*; the light satire *The Short Reign of Pippin IV* (1957); a collection of his wartime reporting, *Once There Was a War* (1958); the disappointing novel of middle-aged angst, *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1962); and *Travels With Charley* (1962), retelling a trip across America with his dog.

The critics were unkind to Steinbeck in his latter years, though his writing remained popular with the public—if not eliciting the excitement of his earlier works, which were still revered. In the swinging 1960s, the increasingly conservative Steinbeck appeared somewhat of an anachronism to the rebelling boomer generation, who had grown up with his earlier great progressive works.

As if to emphasize his growing irrelevance, when he died in 1968 he was at work on a story of King Arthur and his knights—undisguised this time.

Still, John Steinbeck's best works, and even his second-best, remain among the most beloved of American classics.

References:

1. Dave Stancliff (February 24, 2013). "Remembering John Steinbeck, a great American writer". Times-Standard. Archived from the original on June 29, 2014. Retrieved June 28, 2014.
2. Steinbeck and radicalism Archived February 4, 2004, at the Wayback Machine New Criterion. Retrieved 2007.
3. "Terijoen hallitus sai outoa tukea" [The Terijoki Government received odd support]. Helsingin Sanomat (in Finnish). November 29, 2009.
4. Brian Kannard, Steinbeck: Citizen Spy, Grave Distractions, 2013 ISBN 978-0-9890293-9-1, pp. 15–17. The correspondence is also available at "Archived copy". Archived from the original on March 1, 2014.
5. Coe, Alexis. "Recent Acquisitions: John Steinbeck's Cold War Armenian Legacy". SF Weekly. Retrieved May 2, 2021.
6. Jeanette Rumsby (2016). "Steinbeck's Influences". Steinbeck in the Schools. San Jose State University. Retrieved January 12, 2019.
7. Gladstein, Mimi R.; Meredith, James H. (March 2011). "John Steinbeck and the Tragedy of the Vietnam War". Steinbeck Review. **8** (1): 39–56. doi:10.1111/j.1754-6087.2011.01137.x.
8. "John Steinbeck biography". biographyonline.net. Retrieved January 12, 2019.
9. Steinbeck, Thomas (September 27, 2010). "John Steinbeck, Michael Moore, and the Burgeoning Role of Planetary Patriotism". Huffington Post. Archived from the original on September 30, 2010.
10. "John Steinbeck And The FBI's Wrath". The Smoking Gun. Archived from the original on October 22, 2005. Retrieved July 3, 2021.
11. Nolte, Carl (February 24, 2002). "In Steinbeck Country". Archived from the original on September 22, 2017.