

## CHAPTER III

### THE EFFECT OF MODERNIZATION ON MAN'S MIND

The world today is becoming increasingly impersonal because it is full of self-concern and competition which makes it difficult to know and care for each other. Modern compulsion for the "how" to live and the subsequent loss of the "why" leads to an impersonal world where men cease to communicate with or understand each other. A personal relationship contains a sense of warmth, friendly contact and sympathetic understanding. A personal relationship is a relationship that lets each person know that he is valued as an individual. To be impersonal is the opposite. There is no feeling of kinship and there is an implied denial of individual worth. Man is regarded as an object, a number. The impersonal world can be seen everywhere today in big cities where each is out for himself. When people live close together in crowded conditions there is not much chance for privacy. This is one reason that man is obliged to live in an impersonal world. In order to gain privacy, one must ignore others and when people get used to ignoring each other, the sense of warmth of a personal relationship disappears. Crowded together in buses, cinemas, restaurants and on streets, they ignore each other. It seems to be normal in congested urban areas that people live close together in houses or apartments without knowing their neighbors. Another reason may be that the rapidity and

pressure of earning one's living in large cities do not let anyone have much time to care for his neighbors. Very often when accidents happen to someone in a large city, no one rushes to help. Few wish to take the responsibility in a situation in which there is no profit or in which one may become legally responsible for the person one assists. So one tends to mind his own business and to look out for himself. "Love thy neighbors as thyself" does bring very heavy responsibility to the man who cares - in terms of time, energy and often money.

Steinbeck is a personal writer. His concern for the human condition is seen in his works. The impersonality of the modern world comes partly because of the world of machines, of mass production which makes men live apart and become alienated from each other. In Travels with Charley in Search of America, Steinbeck travels through America in order to establish contact with his fellow men and to know them better. At one point during the trip he says that he feels like a stranger alone in the world. He says, "Now I began to experience a tendency in the West that perhaps I am too old to accept. It is the principle of do it yourself."<sup>92</sup> Steinbeck sees this principle as one which destroys human relationships. In a hotel, after the newcomer is shown to a room for which he has paid in advance, further human contact seems unnecessary. If he wants ice, there is a machine. If he wants toast, a

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p.182.



toaster is already there on the table. "Everything is convenient, centrally located and lonesome. I lived in the utmost luxury. Other guests came and went silently. If one confronted them with 'Good evening', they looked a little confused and then responded, 'Good evening'. It seems to me that they looked at me for a place to insert a coin."<sup>93</sup> It seems to be common to be impersonal to each other in the world of machines. When this impersonality is practiced for a long time, people cease to see their fellow men at all.

People who are disturbed by the impersonality are mostly those little people who cannot cope with the system. Steinbeck's heroes are for the most part simple, uneducated people who fail to understand the changing environment. George and Lennie in Of Mice and Men are migratory workers who have no knowledge of modern agriculture, its methods or machines. They are, therefore, forced by this failure to go from place to place asking for a job, any job to earn a small amount of money. They can do nothing better as they have no skills. One must know and understand the nature of the rapidly changing environment in order to adjust. One cannot live as in the old days and expect time to assimilate. For instance, to be a farmer nowadays, it is inadequate to know only how to grow rice; one needs to have knowledge about the demands of the market, the middle man and modern technology that will

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<sup>93</sup>Loc.cit.

make the product more effective. If one knows nothing about the nature and demension of technological change and opportunity, he will be unable to compete with those who do. Finally, he will fall frustratingly, ruinously behind the pace of modern times and will become keenly aware of his inadequacy, knowing his best effort is inadequate. He finds himself in a dilemma. He must live in a world into which he cannot fit because he cannot understand it. There are two choices he can make: he can have patience and bear in silence the condition of being crushed by the environment he does not understand or he may defy society and struggle against it only to be beaten in the end because no individual can win over society.

The Joads in The Grapes Of Wrath are "... agrarian folk who had not changed with industry, who had not formed with machines or known the power and danger of machines in private hands. They had not grown up in the paradoxes of industry. Their sense was still sharp to the ridiculousness of the industrial life."<sup>94</sup> These people are forced by their environment and by society into new directions, new methods with which they are unfamiliar. They are forced to leave the farm they rent because the land is no longer fertile and the owner does not receive any profit. There are no alternatives; the Joads

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<sup>94</sup>John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 385.

cannot remain on the farm anymore. They decide to go to California to look for a work, to have the economic security everyone wants. They are caught in the situation of the helpless and the innocent.

One of the stories from The Long Valley, "The Raid," shows another example of an impersonal world - the importance of the -ism or the system rather than the individual. The two communist agitators: Dick, the professional, and Root, the beginner, prepare for a meeting. From the conversation of these two men, it is clear that Root is afraid of being beaten by the mob. Dick comforts him by telling Root that it is the System that is important, not the individual. "Listen to me; if someone busts you, it isn't him that is doing it, it's the System."<sup>95</sup> It is therefore System against System but the victim is the individual.

In Dubious Battle is a novel developed from "The Raid" which pursues the theme of an impersonal world. Steinbeck sympathizes with the apple pickers who are treated badly by society. They are like the Joad family - the little people who are caught in a hostile, complex modern environment. They are cheated by the plantation owners who exploit them for selfish reasons. All the workers ask for is justice, work and a fair wage. They have no power while the owners have the force

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<sup>95</sup>John Steinbeck, The Long Valley (New York : Dutton Books, Inc., 1967), p.69.

of law and order as weapons to beat them. Having no other means, the workers form a group to do all they can do, to refuse to pick the fruits and to win the strike. Steinbeck shows the reader that even though they form a group and have the same goal, there is still a lack of communication and a suspicion of each other. They lack a true feeling of fraternity or brotherhood. They suspect their leader of hoarding the good food and giving them bad food. What they cannot know is that Mac, the assistant leader, while organizing the strike does not really want to help the apple pickers but is exploiting them at the same time. His real motive is a selfish desire for power; not an interest in human dignity. He uses their helplessness as a means to power. When Jim is killed and of no further advantage, he uses Jim's body to arouse the feeling of violence and bloodshed. The Party organizes for oneness but it is not a oneness that Steinbeck approves of. It is the oneness of "ism" which is entirely different from an interest in human welfare.

The individual in In Dubious Battle is merely a number, a part which helps the group to the end. As an individual he has no importance. Steinbeck expresses this impersonality by comparing group men and the individual. He says this through Doc Burton, a character whom he admires: "I want to watch these group-men, for they seem to me a new individual, not at all like single men. A man in a group isn't himself at all. He is a cell in an organism that isn't like himself anymore than the

~~He's~~ cells in your body are like you."<sup>96</sup>

Again in Of Mice and Men, the ranch is a microcosm of the impersonal world, a place where men care little for each other. The men work side by side and share common quarters but they never share their lives. The ranch workers communicate as little as possible with each other. When George tells Candy, a ranch worker, that he likes no one to interfere when he talks to Lennie, Candy answers, "I didn't hear nothing you guys was sayin'. I ain't interested in nothing you was sayin'. A guy on the ranch don't never listen nor he don't ask no questions."<sup>97</sup> This is the modern world in which everyone is alone and hiding within himself.

Slim, another ranch hand, tells George, "Hardly none of the guys ever travel together ... they just come in and get their bunk and work a month, and then they quit and go alone..."<sup>98</sup> What Steinbeck suggests is that it is a depressing, empty life these men have. They go from town to town, alone, finding new jobs, making no real friends. It is a life with no future and no relationships with other people. Each man is ultimately alone and his friendships with others are superficial and for convenience only.

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<sup>96</sup>John Steinbeck, In Dubious Battle (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1966), p.104.

<sup>97</sup>John Steinbeck, Of Mice and Men (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1967), p.24

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p.36.

The related problem of an impersonal world is the loss of communication which is a major problem of our time. This loss does not mean concrete communication. It is the loss of understanding among humans. It seems to be felt everywhere: between parent and child, teacher and student, governed and government, nation and nation. The communication crisis is found in many of Steinbeck's novels. The members of the Trask family in East of Eden scarcely know each other though they live together. Alice Trask cannot communicate with her husband or her son. Each holds himself from the other despite his craving for affection. In order to communicate there must be a desire for communication on both sides and also an absence of fear and uncertainty. The rest depends upon knowing how to communicate knowledge and understanding of human welfare. Each member of the Trask family does not show this desire, indeed does not know how to do. Grandfather in The Red Pony wants to communicate his feeling about westering to the next generation but does not know how. Lennie in Of Mice and Men wants to communicate with others; he tries to be friendly but always his gestures are somehow inadequate and things turn wrong.

Mr. Pritchard has ceased to communicate with his wife. Their relationship has become superficial. His absorbing interest in business has alienated him from her and she has given up trying to share it with him. "Business was her husband's magic circle. She had no right to go near him when it was his business. She had no knowledge nor interest in



business. It was his privacy and she respected it."<sup>99</sup>

With increasing loss of communication, frustration and isolation may follow. Frustration may produce a feeling of rejection which in turn invites the feeling of indifference or retaliation. It is hard with the existing pace and pressure for modern men to care for each other or really have time to help each other. In a family where loss of communication between parent and child takes place, the feeling of rejection follows. Steinbeck in East of Eden discusses rejection through Lee, a Chinese servant when he talks with Samuel and Asam:

The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved and rejection is the hell he fears. I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection and with the crime guilt and there is the story of mankind.<sup>100</sup>

Rejection denies love and affection and the individual as well. Charles is rejected by his father despite his doing everything to win his father's love. Once in anger, he almost kills Adam, his half brother. This is an act of revenge out of his jealousy of Adam whom the father loves. In the second generation Cal wants to hurt Aron, his brother, because he is rejected by Adam, his father.

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<sup>99</sup>John Steinbeck, The Wayward Bus (London: Corgi Books, Ltd., 1966), p.100.

<sup>100</sup>John Steinbeck, East of Eden (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1962), p.240.

One child refused the love he craves, kicks the cat, and hides his secret guilt; and another steals so that money will make him loved; and a third conquers the world - and always the guilt and revenge and more guilt. The human is the only guilty animal ... I think this old and terrible story is important because it is a chart of the soul - the secret, rejected, guilty soul.<sup>101</sup>



The loss of communication between age levels is called a generation gap. This is an inability to understand or to communicate. Parents seem unable to reach their children and children are disinterested in the attitudes of their parents. They live together in the same house and apparently in the same environment but feel as if they were living in different worlds. The generation gap takes place primarily because the environment in each generation is not the same. Because of the rapid change in modern times many of the older generation may not be able to adapt themselves to these changes. Changes are not only material but also of values and belief. Youth by nature does not look back nor attach itself to the values that the older generation accepts. They therefore build a wall of isolation and cease to communicate.

The grandfather in "The Leader of the People", a story from The Red Pony, pays a visit to his family. Mr. Tiflin does not welcome the visit because he is annoyed by the old man's unending talk about his adventures when he led a wagon train across the plain to the West. When the old man arrives and tells his story again, Mr. Tiflin asks his wife with

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<sup>101</sup> Loc. cit.

annoyance, "Why does he have to tell it over and over? He came across the plains. All right! Now it's finished. Nobody wants to hear about it over and over."<sup>102</sup> Unfortunately, grandfather overhears this remark and it hurts his feelings. He apologizes to his son-in-law and goes to sit alone on the porch. His grandson, Jody, is with him and he says to the boy, "I tell these old stories, ... but they are not what I want to tell them ... It wasn't getting here that mattered, it was movement and westering ... Then we came down to the sea, and it was done. That's what I should be telling instead of stories."<sup>103</sup> The tragedy indicated is that the old man cannot communicate his feeling to the younger generation. He is lonely, his world has disappeared; he no longer fits in as a part of the modern scene. He wants the younger generation to appreciate his experiences which were the big things in his life. His son-in-law does not understand the old man's feeling and does not care about his loneliness. To him it is just a boring story.

The generation gap is reflected again in The Wayward Bus. The Fritchard family seems to be a happy family in the eyes of those who know them superficially. Mildred, the daughter, does not understand her parents at all. She "...kept her own counsel, thought her own thoughts and waited for the time when

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<sup>102</sup>John Steinbeck, The Red Pony (New York: The Viking Press, 1967), pp.114-115.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p.118.

death, marriage or accident would free her from her parents. But she loved her parents and she would have been frightened at herself had it ever come to the surface of her mind that she wished them dead."<sup>104</sup> Mildred wants freedom but at the same time she feels guilty when she dreams of her parent's death. She wants warmth, friendship and understanding but she does not get these things from her parents. The result is that she tries to find them elsewhere. It is true that her parents give her everything - good education and the material things she wants but still she feels something is missing. Perhaps she is trying to search for something more worthwhile, something to give a meaning to life. She understands something beyond material things such as the beauty in love, friendship and other abstract qualities which her father does not see. Once Juan told her a story about an Indian who gives up property for joy and happiness. Her father sees it as a nonsense story. Mildred is ashamed for him and she finds him "...stupid to the point of nausea."<sup>105</sup> and wonders why her father cannot see the beauty in this story.

The gap between Mildred and her father is wide but it is much wider <sup>between her and</sup> ~~with~~ her mother. Steinbeck calls the gap between Mildred and her father "a chasm", and between her mother "a

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<sup>104</sup>John Steinbeck, The Wayward Bus (London: Corgi Books, Ltd., 1966).

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p.57.

great gulf". "An early attempt on Mildred's part to share her strong ecstasies with her mother and to receive confirmation had met with a blankness, a failure to comprehend, which hurled Mildred back inside herself."<sup>106</sup> Steinbeck describes the cause of this gap later, "Mildred felt a little shiver of fear at this woman who was her mother - at her power and her ruthlessness. It must be unconscious."<sup>107</sup> When fear exists, a gap can never be filled. This family, too, lives close together but "... there had never been any close association among these three although they went through the forms. They were dear and darling and sweet."<sup>108</sup> Actually they have little interest and understanding for one another.

The cause of this loss of communication is given by Steinbeck through Slim, a ranch hand in Of Mice and Men. Steinbeck indicates that men are impersonal because they do not trust each other, because they are afraid of each other. Slim says to George, "Ain't many guys travel around together. I don't know why. Maybe ever'body in the whole damn world is scared of each other."<sup>109</sup> Curley's wife says to a group of ranch hands, "... you are all scared of each other, that's what. Ever'one of you's scared that the rest is goin' to get something

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid., pp.44-45.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., p.144.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p.45

<sup>109</sup>John Steinbeck, Of Mice and Men (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1967), p.33.

on you."<sup>110</sup> Lacking any close relationships, any real friends, the men are scared and distrust one another because they are afraid of being exploited. Finally, out of distrust and fear comes deeper isolation and perhaps hatred. Fear can make a man dishonest, and it relates to the feeling of insecurity. This insecurity is the fear of being crushed by society. In a society where everyone is out for himself, the important thing in life is to be strong and self-sufficient - to be strong in order to compete successfully and to protect oneself.

Another <sup>reason</sup> for fear and distrust is the exploitation of communication for selfish purposes. In Steinbeck's short story "Chrysanthemums", Elisa Allen is a character who loves to grow chrysanthemums. Her attention to them shows her love of nature. A pedlar passes her farm one day while she is working in her garden but she pays no attention to him. The pedlar observes her love for the flowers and uses it to achieve his own gain. He pretends to admire them and says that a lady he met ~~last time~~ would love to have a chrysanthemum plant. Elisa gives him some pots to mend and gives him the plant. She tells him to take good care of it but she later finds the plant discarded by the roadside where the pedlar threw it as soon as she was out of sight. It is not merely a plant Elisa gives and finds discarded; it is herself. This exploitation hurts her and also drives her to anger and

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., pp.65-66.

distrust of others.

Again in In Dubious Battle, when Mac helps London's daughter-in-law he has a selfish reason, not a sincere desire to help. He helps her while she is giving birth in spite of knowing nothing about the right treatment. He helps her because he knows that London is the head of the group which he wants to join. He tells Jim afterwards, "... course it was nice to help the girl, but hell, even if it killed her - we've got to use anything."<sup>111</sup> Mac will do anything in order to get what he wants. He often says to Jim, "We've got to use whatever material comes to us."<sup>112</sup> This calculated impersonal attitude toward one's fellow man is found throughout this novel. Again when Dan, an old worker, falls from the tree and breaks his hip, Mac sees as an opportunity to start the strike. "The old buzzard was worth something after all... We can use him now."<sup>113</sup> When Joy, one of the Party men is killed, Mac uses Joy's body as a means to arouse hatred in other workers. Later, when he wants Anderson to permit his men to stay at the farm, Mac pretends to like Anderson's dogs in order to win the man's trust. When Jim asks him later if he likes dogs, Mac retorts irritably that he likes anything which will serve his purpose.

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<sup>111</sup>John Steinbeck, In Dubious Battle (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1966), p.42.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p.72.

Jim tells Mac that he likes Anderson, but Mac replies, "Don't you go liking people, Jim. We can't waste time liking people."<sup>114</sup> Not even Jim can feel any real sincerity in Mac's friendship.

When Anderson is attacked by the orchard owners for letting the strikers stay at his place, his barn and dogs are burned. Instead of having sympathy Mac does not feel any responsibility at all even though he is the cause of the trouble. Mac says to Doc who tells him that he feels sorry for Anderson, "We can't help it, Doc. He happens to be the one that's sacrificed for the men. We can't think about the hurt of one man. It's necessary, Doc ... I can't take time to think about the feelings of one man ... I'm too busy with big bunches of men."<sup>115</sup> He continues, "Don't you get lost in a lot of sentimental foolishness. There's an end to be gained; it's a real end, hasn't anything to do with people losing respect."<sup>116</sup> Mac cares only for the end, not the means to that end.

Steinbeck's care for the means to the end is seen in The Winter of Our Discontent. This concern is expressed again in In Dubious Battle through Doc Burton who says to Jim, "Jim, I wish I knew it. But in my little experience the end is never very different in its nature from the means ... You can only

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p.82.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., p.146.

<sup>116</sup>Loc.cit.



build a violent thing with violence."<sup>117</sup>

In The Wayward Bus, Steinbeck presents each character in an objective way. Mr.Fritchard - a modern businessman communicates only to obtain his own advantage. He finds in Ernest Horton, a passenger, a marketable idea. Mr.Fritchard tries to use this man as a means to a successful business in the future. He sees Horton not as a person but as a tool. He establishes a relationship for the sake of money, not for friendship. Steinbeck says pointedly that Mr.Fritchard "... never forgot the name of a man richer or more powerful than he, and he never knew the name of a man less powerful."<sup>118</sup>

Loneliness is the natural result of loss of communication. It can be found almost everywhere in Steinbeck's novels from the beginning. There are many causes of loneliness. In Cup of Gold, Steinbeck's first novel, Henry Morgan is lonely because he is so absorbed by his search for wealth and power that he forgets human relationships. He tries to compensate for his loneliness by trying even harder but it does not work. Finally he realizes that success and wealth have not much meaning for him. He says to his subordinate, Cœur de Gris, "For ten years I have ravaged the seas like a silent

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid., p.184.

<sup>118</sup>John Steinbeck, The Wayward Bus (London: Corgi Books, Ltd., 1966), p.103.

wolf, and I have no friend anywhere ... I have no motive save my loneliness."<sup>119</sup>

James Flower, the owner of the plantation who has Henry as his slave is also lonely because he lacks companionship. He treats Henry as a son. He explains to Henry his loneliness and his desire for communication and companionship. "I wanted a - a kind of companion who would talk with me and hear me talk. The other planters come to the house and drink my wine, but when they leave I think they laugh at me and laugh at my books - my lovely books."<sup>120</sup>

In The Pastures of Heaven, many characters are lonely. Everyone in the Wicks family is lonely because they are afraid to offend Shark Wicks. Pat Humbert is lonely because he is not accepted as a part of society. Although he always helps the neighbors, he feels himself an outsider.

Doc Burton in In Dubious Battle is also lonely. His sympathy and feeling for the dignity of the human being are in contrast <sup>to</sup> ~~with~~ the impersonal world. His loneliness comes from the conflict between spiritual values and material values. The exploitation of the individual, the mechanization and lack of sympathy and understanding in society sadden him very much. He is an idealistic person with whom Steinbeck sympathizes and

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<sup>119</sup>John Steinbeck, Gap of Gold (London: Corgi Books, Ltd., p.79.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., p.51.

whom he portrays as very lonely. He often helps those who need help, not because of any advantage to himself but because he likes to help. He once said to Jim and Mac, "I'm lonely. I guess. I'm awfully lonely. I'm working all alone, towards nothing."<sup>121</sup> What makes him lonely is the experience of the exploitation and mechanization of man. He talks about his experience in wartime. "I was in the army in the war. Just out of school. They'd bring in a big-eyed German with his leg splintered off. I worked on 'em just as though they were wood. But sometimes, after it was all over, when I wasn't working, it made me unhappy like this. It made me lonely."<sup>122</sup> The impersonal world and the neglect of human dignity make him feel lonely and isolated. He sees brutality and meaninglessness in war and in the strike.

Loneliness may come from an inability to fit into society resulting in the problem of the misfit. It may also result from a failure to grasp the changing nature of a technically oriented world with its increasing automation. Crooks, a character in Of Mice and Men is lonely because he is an outcast from society. His isolation comes from racial injustice. He is rejected by society not because he is bad or dangerous but because he is a Negro. In his loneliness, he turns to books.

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<sup>121</sup>John Steinbeck, In Dubious Battle (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1966), p.186.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., p.184.

He is interested in law which is an irony because no matter what the law says Crooks is not protected by it. Even his fellow workers ignore him. He does not live where the other workers live; no one enters his room because he is regarded as an outsider. In fact, the workers do not hate him, they have no more reason to than does society itself. Candy, for example, does not enter Crook's room because no one else enters. In the conversation among Crooks, Candy and Lennie, Crooks' isolation and loneliness are clearly stated. He really wants someone to talk to, and he wants to be noticed. Crooks is not a main character in Of Mice and Men; Steinbeck simply wants to give an example of individual loneliness resulting from the injustice of society and its lack of sympathy. An interesting thing Steinbeck also points out is that the misfits, rejected by society, instead of having sympathy towards other misfits, often reject them in turn. They are outside the main stream of society but at the same time they follow its pattern. It seems to be natural that each level has its own misfits.

Curley's wife is another example of loneliness. She is the only woman among the ranch workers in Of Mice and Men. First, we see her only as a trouble maker but later we come to understand her loneliness and have some sympathy for her. She like others, has had hope and a goal in life but it has eluded her. In the eyes of the ranch workers she is a nuisance. She often shows up among them saying that she is looking for Curley, her husband, who is the boss's son. The reader soon

discovers that she really shows up because she wants attention, appreciation from someone. She, like Crooks, wants someone to talk to. When Crooks, Candy and Lennie are talking together, she comes in but no one asks her to join the conversation. Crooks tells her to go home but she replies, "...Well, I ain't giving you no trouble. Think I don't like to talk to somebody ever'once in a while?"<sup>123</sup>

What she says indicates that she too, feels lonely and isolated. She once said to Lennie, "Why can't I talk to you: I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely ... I get lonely. You can talk to people, but I can't talk to nobody but Curley."<sup>124</sup> She says that her husband "Spends all his time saying what he is gonna do to guys he don't like and he don't like nobody..."<sup>125</sup> Her marriage to Curley is a failure though they still live together. Neither of them feels any love nor understanding; both are frustrated<sup>and</sup> unhappy but unable to reach one another.

The ultimate loneliness seems to take place in wartime. Loneliness is a constantly recurring theme in Steinbeck's war writings. He states in Once There Was a War that "There are times in war when the sharpest emotion is not fear, but

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<sup>123</sup>John Steinbeck, Of Mice and Men (London, Penguin Books, Ltd., 1967), p.66.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., p.72.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., p.66.

loneliness and littleness."<sup>126</sup> In one episode a body floating in the sea becomes the subject for a comment on great loneliness. Seeing the body, a soldier says to the captain, "I think that's the loneliest thing in the world. A body floating at sea. I don't know anything that looks so alone."<sup>127</sup>

In The Moon Is Down, the Nazis are conquerors in a Norwegian town. Steinbeck indicates that psychologically the conquerors are themselves the conquered. They are treated as outcasts by the local residents whose hatred and indifference toward them provoke feelings of deep loneliness. The conditions of war and military occupation make both sides suspicious and nervous. Human beings need human contact and such a situation is against <sup>the</sup> nature of man.

Their talk was of friends and relatives who loved them and their longings were for warmth and love, because a man can be a soldier for only so many hours a day and for only so many months in a year, and then he wants to be a man again, wants girls and drinks and music and laughter and ease, and when these are cut off, they become irresistably desirable.<sup>128</sup>

Tonder, one of the young Nazi officers, driven by loneliness, goes to see Molly, an attractive young girl whose husband was executed by the Nazis. Lieutenant Tonder headed the firing squad. He does not know Molly but she knows him.

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<sup>126</sup>John Steinbeck, Once There Was a War (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1969), p.146.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., p.121.

<sup>128</sup>John Steinbeck, The Moon Is Down (London: Pan Books, Ltd., 1969), p.74.

He just wants to talk to someone. He explains to Molly, "I only want to talk, that's all. I want to hear you talk... Can you believe this? Just for a while, can't you forget this war... Can't we talk together like people - together... I'm lonely to the point of illness. I am lonely in the quiet and hatred, can't we talk just a little bit?"<sup>129</sup>

In many of Steinbeck's novels, the reader finds this deep concern with loneliness at many levels and in different aspects, emphasized by particular use of minor characters. In Cannery Row, William, for example, is a watchman who commits suicide because he feels unwanted and rejected by society. An old Chinaman in the same book is described as a man who walks down the street of Cannery Row very early every morning. He is familiar to everyone but still no one knows him. "Some people thought he was a very funny old Chinaman... he carried a little cloud of fear about with him."<sup>130</sup> One day when a boy teased him, the old man stared at him and the boy saw in the eyes " ...the loneliness - the desolate cold aloneness of the landscape... there wasn't anybody at all in the world and he was left..."<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>ibid., p.94.

<sup>130</sup>John Steinbeck, Cannery Row (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1967), p.105.

<sup>131</sup>Loc.cit.

In East of Eden, everyone in the Trask family is lonely in his own way. Steinbeck seems to say that being near to one another physically is not an automatic guarantee of friendliness and love. He is concerned with something much deeper that comes from the heart. He means an active concern for the condition and individuality of one's fellowman. Proximity plays no part.

In The Wayward Bus, every passenger in the bus is lonely. Mildred and her parents cannot understand each other. Mr. Pritchard's loneliness is clearly expressed by Steinbeck when he talks to Mrs. Bernice Pritchard, his wife in the cave.

He felt the sudden lonely sorrow that came so often. He remembered, really remembered, the first time it had happened. He had been five when his little sister was born, and suddenly there were doors closed against him and he couldn't go into the nursery...he was always a little dirty and noisy and unworthy and his mother was always busy. And then the cold loneliness has fallen on him, the cold loneliness that still comes to him sometimes, that came to him now. The little smile meant that Bernice had retired from the world into her own room, and he could not follow her. 132

Camille Oaks, another passenger is attractive to many men. She is lonely because she is regarded as only a plaything. She wants to be accepted as an individual, not only a plaything. Norma, a waitress at the restaurant of the Chicoy's is also lonely. She compensates for this loneliness by dreaming about

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<sup>132</sup>John Steinbeck, The Wayward Bus (London: Corgi Books, Ltd., 1968), pp.186-187.



being in Hollywood and knowing Clark Gable. When she meets Camille Oaks, she tries to be friendly to her so that she can share the room in the city with her. She wants companionship. She says to Camille, "I haven't really got any family, like you'd call a family ... When you're alone you do such funny things ... I used to lie to people. I'd pretend things to myself."<sup>133</sup> She creates a world of her own, an illusion, peopled with the warmth and friendliness she so badly lacks in reality.

Van Brunt, an old man leads a tragic, lonely life. His loneliness comes from his fear of being old and useless. He has the same illness his father had and he is afraid of ending up like his father who, "... before he died he had lain like a gray, helpless worm in a bed for eleven months, and all the money he had saved for his old age was spent on doctor's bills,"<sup>134</sup> Van Brunt tried to kill himself once because he saw no bright tomorrow or hope left for him. He wants to die but at the same time is afraid of dying.

Alice, Juan's wife is also lonely and alienated. She is afraid that her husband will run away and she is frightened of being lonely. Juan at first plans to run away and leave the passengers in the bus. In the end he decides to come back

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<sup>133</sup>Ibid., p.155.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., p.199.

because he realizes that his wife needs him and that to be loved and to be needed by someone is the most important thing in life. Steinbeck admires Juan who finds contentment by giving and trying to understand others. Very often a lonely person does not see the loneliness of others. Steinbeck seems to say that if people learn to give and try to understand each other, their loneliness will be lessened. In Burning Bright, Mordeen is lonely and she talks about her feeling to Victor:

When I was a little girl I had a time of sharp loneliness. I guess everyone has. I felt unwanted and cold, rejected. I took all the pennies I had and bought presents... to myself. I thought that if the other children saw how I got presents they would know I was very popular and they would want to be my friends. But it didn't work. And then, Victor, an older girl got into trouble. She stole a ring, She was afraid...She came to me for help, and I helped her, and - listen, Victor - I felt warm and wanted. I felt good when I could give something so frantically needed, and I was not lonely anymore."<sup>135</sup>

Steinbeck suggests that many people are lonely and desire the warmth and security of human contact. Despite the need for them, they remain locked up in their own isolation, unable or unwilling to make the first move. To Steinbeck this is the tragic pattern of living. He seems to suggest that our fellow man can provide a meaning in our life if we would stop to look and listen to them instead of remaining isolated and caring only

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<sup>135</sup>John Steinbeck, Burning Bright (London: Pan Books, Ltd., 1968), p.111.

for ourselves.

Rejection, isolation, loneliness, all are attributes of an impersonal world, often referred to as the machine age and stem to a large degree from man's replacement by machines. A man naturally wants to create something that will affirm his identification. In the machine age, the individual is likely to be forgotten. Steinbeck points out that to be forgotten or to be ignored disturbs man's basic need for achievement and self respect. This need for recognition is pointed out in Steinbeck's first novel, Cup of Gold. Merlin, a mysterious character who isolates himself in the mountains, says to young Henry Morgan who goes to him seeking advice before he leaves the land "... tell them that I am a glorious creature with blue wings. I don't want to be forgotten, Henry. That is greater horror to an old man than death - to be forgotten."<sup>136</sup>

The need to create something and to be recognized is found again in The Pastures of Heaven through Molly Morgan, a teacher:

After the bare requisites to living and reproducing, man wants most to leave some record of himself, perhaps, that he has really existed. He leaves his proof on wood, on stone, or on the lives of other people. This deep desire exists in everyone, from the boy who writes dirty words in a public toilet to the Buddha who etches his image in the race mind. Life is so unreal. I think that we

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<sup>136</sup>John Steinbeck, Cup of Gold (London: Corgi Books, Ltd., 1966), p.24.

seriously doubt that we exist and go about trying to prove that we do. 137

The machine age makes the fulfillment of this need very difficult. In an impersonal world, men tend to ignore each other. Competition is stressed and life itself tends to take the aspects of a machine. Individuality is denied; basic human needs remain unfulfilled. No one likes to be a number, a nobody, a no person. When this need for recognition and achievement is unmet, it may well seek an outlet in negative form of recognition. The unrest, the turmoil of modern times must certainly come partly from this lack of recognition. Frustrated people may ultimately feel compelled to destroy others or themselves, perhaps both. Steinbeck understands this and the damage it causes to the entire social fabric.

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<sup>137</sup>John Steinbeck, The Pastures of Heaven (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1967), p.37.