



Isolated Dreams: Loneliness and the Human Condition in *Of Mice and Men*

Twinkle

M.A. English
NET

Abstract : *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck is a book full of simplicity and has an emotional impact upon readers. This article will examine the loneliness primarily through the nature of the relationship between George and Lennie, the protagonists, and the function of their dream as a means of escaping their societal circumstances. This escapism is also evident in other characters. Their circumstances will show how loneliness is a normal part of human lives and almost every being suffers from it at various instances of life. Irrespective of how sadistic and painful it is, loneliness is an inevitable part of human lives.

IndexTerms – Loneliness, Steinbeck, Hope, Of Mice and Men

I. INTRODUCTION

John Ernst Steinbeck (1902–1968) was one of the most prominent American authors. The American people were deeply moved by his work. Today, many think of him as a great writer because he wrote mostly about his own life, yet unlike most of his contemporaries, John Steinbeck fought for the working class throughout his career. Class and other groups that are often left out, so that people all throughout the world can see their tales. Steinbeck is a writer who can do many things. People have called him a journalist, a social protest writer, a realist, a naturalist, and a playwright. His works have a lot of powerful themes that run through them. The most important ones are the family's strengths, how the environment affects people, and social protest. He tried out a lot of different ways to write and see things. These qualities all work together to explain why Steinbeck is still a powerful writer today. No matter how much he knew about writing fiction or journalism, he wrote with kindness, understanding, and clarity: "In every bit of honest writing in the world," he noted in 1938 journal entry, "... there is a base theme. Try to understand men, if you understand each other you will be kind to each other. Knowing a man well never leads to hate and nearly always leads to love." (Steinbeck pg. 14)

Many of John Steinbeck's books are on different forms of relationships between people. The interactions between people in John Steinbeck's works are one-of-a-kind, amazing, and real. Steinbeck attempts to introduce novel approaches and styles in his literary form, language, and story creation. His works are remarkable because of the way he writes about difficult human relationships and themes that are important to everyone. His works are outstanding because they deal with relationships and ideas that are important to everyone. *Of Mice and Men* shows how loneliness is a part of being human. Everyone feels lonely at some point, but in Steinbeck's book *Of Mice and Men*, he demonstrates how lonely ranch life was in the early 1930s and how people tried to find friends to get away from being alone. Steinbeck often makes the novel feel lonely and sad. He utilises terms and titles like Soledad, which meaning "loneliness," and the card game.

Patience, which means "by oneself." He makes it plain that all the guys on the ranch are lonely, but some are lonelier than others. In the first chapter, Steinbeck talks about loneliness and how ranch workers live short lives without any goals. Steinbeck uses the setting to show these themes. Steinbeck's description of the bunkhouse shows how lonely their lives are. Also, the fact that they only have two shelves for their personal things demonstrates how lonely and insecure they are. But there are certain people on the ranch who are lonelier than others. Crooks is the loneliest guy on the ranch because he is black and lives in a racist environment. He lives alone since the other males don't like him. He doesn't do any of the ranch's social events and is entirely left out. He is so lonely that he reads novels, but that gets dull quickly and he will be lonely again. He actually wants to be around people and talk to someone, even though he doesn't show it. He talked to Lennie when he came into his room and didn't care if Lennie was listening or not since he was so desperate. Friendship is the need all the men on the ranch but they are unable to have it. True friendship, rather than a right, is a blessing; and not everyone is blessed. George and Lennie, on the contrary, are really good friends. Crooks thinks Lennie is crazy. He doesn't think Lennie will own land with George and Candy. He yells, "An ,, never a God damn one of 'em ever gets it. Just like heaven. Everybody wants a little piece of lan'. It's just in their head" (Steinbeck pg.106).

George thought he would have a better life without Lennie after he killed him, but in reality, he would have a poorer life and end up like the other ranch labourers. He will be all alone without any real friends. His desire will never become a reality as he can't do it without Lennie. Steinbeck masterfully shows the two sides of loneliness through George. This dichotomy is exemplified by perceiving loneliness as both a privilege and a curse. George would free himself from a load by freeing Lennie. This loneliness would provide George the chance to "live so easy and maybe have a girl" (Steinbeck pg. 9). The opposite is true: freedom would make people feel lonely since they would lose a friend. George realises he is needed when Lennie, who is emotionally dependent

on him, holds on to him. Lennie's reliance on George essentially validates his own existence. The bond between Lennie and George is beneficial since it keeps them safe from outside threats: "Because I've got you and you've got me to look after you" (Steinbeck pg. 15).

Lennie and George have a bond that is really special. Other lonely and isolated people on the ranch can only dream of having friends like them. Crooks, the black stable buck, shows Steinbeck's duality of loneliness because he needs it but also suffers from it. This dualism also indicates Steinbeck's personal experience of solitude and loneliness. Crooks shows that there is some confusion regarding being alone. We can realize Crook's duality of nature. It is not something he appreciates for himself. Rather, he is habitual to it. Crooks says, " "You got no right to come into my room. This here's my room. Nobody got the right to be here but me" (Steinbeck pg. 67-68). Crooks is a person who has been alone for a long time and is now content with it. Any way to get in touch with him is an offence. Meyer says, "[Crooks] resigns [due to] the lack of acceptance he experiences from his fellow farmhands" (Steinbeck pg. 299). This means that the other farm workers do not see Crooks as equal to themselves, so they isolate him in his own room in the bunkhouse.

When Candy walks into Crooks' room, we get to understand that Steinbeck's idea of loneliness is dual sided. Candy might be jealous of the privacy that Crooks has because he has his own house. He doesn't know that privacy is also what makes Crooks feel lonely. Candy tells Crooks, " You got a nice cozy place here...must be nice to have a room all to yourself this way " (Steinbeck pg. 74). Candy, a white farmhand, doesn't know that Crooks is doomed with loneliness. Crooks replies to Candy's comment, saying, "Sure...and a pile of manure under the window. Sure it's swell" (Steinbeck pg. 74). Unlike Candy's perspective, Crooks doesn't see being alone as a luxury. He knows that having his own room means he is being kept secluded from the other farm workers and is taken as an outcast. Crooks' separation from others and general coldness make it impossible for other farmhands to talk to him. The only woman in the book who is alone is Curley's wife. The first thing that comes to mind is that she is the only woman on the ranch, thus she is the only one who represents her sex. She is naturally isolated because the only way she can find companionship is to talk to guys. Curley's wife is stuck in her own gender because The men farmhands think that what she's doing is just looking for sex. When Lennie and George get to the ranch, Candy says, "I seen her give Slim the eye...An" I seen her give Carlson the eye " (Steinbeck pg. 29). Curley's wife is called a "tart" (Steinbeck pg. 29), a "bitch" (Steinbeck pg. 33), and a "floozy" (Steinbeck pg. 78) throughout the book. We notice that Curley's wife is stuck in her own sexuality and she can't get out. Curley's wife is clear about her sexuality: " She had full, rouged lips, and wide spaced eyes, heavily made up. Her finger nails were red" (Steinbeck pg. 32). In *Life in Letters*, Steinbeck tells us something about Curley's wife:

"No man has ever considered her as anything except a girl to try to make. She has never talked to a man except in the sexual fencing conversation. She is not highly sexed particularly but knows instinctively that if she is to be noticed at all, it will be because one finds her sexually desirable" (Steinbeck pg. 154).

Curley's wife expresses her loneliness to Lennie while talking to him: "Why can't I talk to you. I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely" (Steinbeck pg. 85). Curley's wife is emotionally hungry, and her husband can't do anything to make her feel better. Curley stops his wife from talking to the field workers, thus pushing her aside:

" I can't talk to nobody but Curley, else he gets mad" (Steinbeck pg. 85). The whole book is about the rat race between Curley and his wife, who are always looking for each other. Curley's wife simply wants to talk to her husband as a way to start a conversation. Curley, on the other hand, is looking for his wife because he thinks she is cheating on him. This unhealthy feeling leads the married pair to partition and makes them feel alone.

II. CONCLUSION

Steinbeck's depiction of the duality of loneliness in *Of Mice and Men* is a product of his philosophical beliefs. In a letter to his editor, Pascal Covici, in 1941, he says, "It seems fairly obvious that two sides of a mirror are required before one has a mirror, that two forces are necessary in man before he is a man" (Covici pg. 221). With this, Steinbeck clears how different people are. *Of Mice and Men* shows quite clearly how attitudes and feelings can be unclear. Steinbeck's characters are not one-dimensional; they embody entities characterised by conflicting dualities.

Crooks doesn't like the idea of race segregation, but he also likes being alone. Curley's wife is at odds with her gender, but she also toys with it. Candy adheres to his elderly dog, but he also understands that killing it will make it feel better. George is torn between valuing his companionship and wanting to be alone. Lennie is at odds with himself because he can't make up his mind. This odd circumstance is a celebration of Steinbeck's own inner battle with being alone and lonely.

REFERENCES

- Bloom, Harold. *Of Mice and Men: Bloom's Notes*. New York: Chelsea House, 1996. Print.
- Giménez, Ariadna. "Loneliness." Scribd, www.scribd.com/document/71941215/Loneliness.
- Hart, Richard E. "Steinbeck on Man and Nature." *Steinbeck and the Environment: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. ed. Susan Beegel, Susan Shillinglaw. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2007. Print.
- Of Mice and Men: Quotes — the Greatest Literature of All Time*. www.editoreric.com/greatlit/books/Of-Mice-and-Men-quotes.html.
- Popova, Maria. "John Steinbeck on Good and Evil, the Necessary Contradictions of the Human Nature, and Our Grounds for Lucid Hope." *The Marginalian*, 12 Nov. 2024, www.themarginalian.org/2016/12/30/john-steinbeck-new-year.
- QuotesCosmos.com. "'Try to Understand Men, if You...' John Steinbeck Quote." QuotesCosmos, 31 July 2021, www.quotescosmos.com/quotes/John-Steinbeck-quote-2.html.
- Shillinglaw, Susan. "Introduction: A Steinbeck Scholar's Perspective." *Steinbeck and the Environment*. ed. Susan Beegel, Susan Shillinglaw. London: The University of Alabama Press, 1997. Print.
- Shillinglaw, Susan. *John Steinbeck, American Writer*. Web. 21 Aug 2008.
- Shillinglaw, Susan. *Thoughts on John Steinbeck's Spirituality*. Web. 05. Sep, 2014. Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. London: Penguin Books, 1994. Print.

Steinbeck, John. *Journal of a Novel: The East of Eden Letters*. New York: Penguin, 1990. Print.

Steinbeck, John and Edward F. Ricketts. *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*. New York: Viking Press, 1951. Print.

Suruthi, S. "Projection of Loneliness in John Steinbeck's of Mice and Men." *IJCRT*, vol. 5, no. 4, Dec. 2017.

Umadevi V, and Saranya V.M. "Economic Crisis in the Novel of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 2.7 (2016): 53-55. Print.

