

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Co-existence of Humans, Animals and Land in Steinbeck's *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*

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Letter of Recommendation

Bharat Dhungel has completed his dissertation entitled “Co-existence of Humans, Animals and Land in Steinbeck’s *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from January 2023 to June 2024 and completed successfully. I hereby recommend his dissertation for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Co-existence of Humans, Animals and Land in Steinbeck’s *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Bharat Dhungel has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled “Co-existence of Humans, Animals and Land in Steinbeck’s *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*” submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu is an original work written under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota, Head, Central Department of English, Kirtipur. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English. No part of the study has ever been published in any form before, and has not been presented anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any other reasons. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

Bharat Dhungel

June 2024

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Abstract

This research examines ecological consciousness in the major characters from two fictions of John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat* from eco-critical perspective. Both fictions endeavor the interconnection of human and natural world through land and animal resources. The protagonists and other characters from both fictions show their concern about being ecologically conscious through their behavior. Their way of living fulfills the requirement of integration and harmony with the natural world. Due to this the selected primary texts *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat* focus on the ecological consciousness throughout the life of characters. The argument developed in this research is the interconnection among land, animals, and humans for their peaceful co-existence from the ecological consciousness of the major characters. Human beings' existence is dependent on the environment and animals. Similarly, animals' existences in the fictions rely upon land and nature. The separation of animals and human beings from the physical environment is almost impossible. Simultaneously, the existence of nature or land is insignificant without the existence of animals and human beings. For analysis, eco-critical theorists such as Aldo Leopold, Peter Singer, Lawrence Buell, Bill Devall and Paul Taylor's insights have been used as theoretical parameters to analyze the primary texts. Both primary texts, through their diverse narrative lenses, advocate for recognition of the natural world's inherent value and the requirement of ecological awareness.

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Chapter I

Harmonious Relation in Steinbeck's *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*

Introduction

This research examines ecological consciousness in the protagonists from two novels of John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony* (1937) and *Tortilla Flat* (1935). *The Red Pony* tells the story of a young boy named Jody Tiflin's ecological consciousness when he grows into manhood. *Tortilla Flat* examines the natural environment and its interactions between humans and their surroundings. Both fictions endeavor the interconnection of human and natural world through land and animal resources. The main characters and other characters from both fictions show their concern about being ecologically conscious through their behavior. In their daily activities, they speak for the requirement of integration and harmony with the natural world for the harmonious life of human beings.

This research work focuses on the ecological consciousness throughout the life of the main characters. For this, the ideas of Peter Singer's idea for a place of non-human, and Aldo Leopold's ideas for land ethics have been taken into consideration for analysis, and other eco-critical theorists such as William Rueckert, Lawrence Buell, and Paul W. Taylor have been taken as the theoretical insight. The argument developed in this research is the interconnection among land, animals, and humans for their peaceful co-existence. Human beings' existence is dependent on the environment and animals. Similarly, animals' existence has relied upon land and nature. The separation of animals and human beings from the physical environment is almost impossible. On the other hand, nature's or land's existence is almost insignificant in the absence of animals and human beings. There is symbiotic balance when land animals and human beings mutually exist.

Critical Summary as Per the Issue Raised

Steinbeck's *Red Pony* is coming-of-age novella about Jody Tiflin a young boy's life on his father's ranch in California's Salinas Valley. Through four interconnected stories; 'The Gift' 'The Great Mountain,' 'The Promise' and 'The Leader of the People,' the main character, Jody learns about responsibilities, mortality, and life's hardship. His red pony, Gabilan becomes ill and after some time dies which teaches young and innocent Jody about the loss of something loveable. Interactions with Gitano, an elderly man seeking to end his life on the ranch of Jody's family expands Jody's understanding of the aging legacy and ambition of human beings. The birth of a new foal following the death of mare Nellie focuses on the cyclical nature of life and death. Steinbeck's full depiction of the natural world and the bond between human and their environment underscores the narrative themes of growth, resilience and the transition from innocence to maturity.

Tortilla Flat is set in the post-World War I era in the coastal town of Monterey, California. The story centers on Danny, a paisano who inherits two houses from his grandfather. Danny's inheritance becomes a hub for his group of friends: Pilon, Pablo, Jesus, Maria Corcoran, and Big Joe. These friends characterized by their mixed Spanish Indian and Mexican heritage live a life of relatively poor but find joy in their friendship and simple pleasures. The novel is episodic, following the groups' various adventures and misadventures. Their experiences range from light-hearted thefts and drunken festivities to acts of genuine kindness and charity. Danny's generosity and open-heartedness often lead the group into trouble, but they remain fiercely loyal to one another. Each character brings a unique perspective and contributes to the dynamic of the group, reflecting broader themes of community and friendship. Throughout the novel, Steinbeck explores deeper themes such as loyalty, human condition, and search for meaning in a seemingly indifferent world. The paisanos' way of life, though unconventional, emphasize the importance of human

connection and the value of living in the present. Despite the flaws and the hardships most of the characters face, they maintain a sense of dignity and resilience. Steinbeck's rich description of the Monterey landscape and vivid depiction of the paisanos' lives provide an emotional and often sharp explanation on the involvedness of human nature.

This thesis postulates that in *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*, where John Steinbeck uses the natural environment not merely as a backdrop for human activities but as a central character in his narratives. It hypothesizes that Steinbeck's depiction of nature emphasizes ecological interconnectedness and critiques the anthropocentric attitudes of his time. By portraying nature as an active participant in the lives of his characters, Steinbeck underscores the importance of environmental stewardship and sustainability, making his work relevant to contemporary ecological discussions.

The primary objective of the study is to examine the two primary texts: Steinbeck's *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat* through the eco-critical perspective. Similarly, the specific objectives of this research work are to analyze ecological consciousness and place attachment of human beings highlighting the similarities in their attributes and roles to perform in the ecosphere. It also aims at bringing into the struggle of animals to cope with the adversities for survival. To spot the light on the material motive and the exploitation of natural resources by human beings underlies the research. Through the discussion of the non-human –human relation, the project plans to identify the differences between the human and non-human world and reality for its existence.

The proposed study limits in analyzing the fiction: *Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat* by John Steinbeck. Eco-criticism is the theoretical tool for textual analysis of the primary text. Mainly the issues of the interconnection among nature, animals, and humans are highlighted. The primary texts are analyzed with a special focus on the insights developed by Peter Singer, Paul W Taylor, and Aldo Leopold.

This research work is supposed to provide the readers a new insight into human and non-human relations and place attachment of the humans. This research suggests treating animals and land with respect so that the existence of human beings is also possible without any problems. If human beings keep on thinking from their perspective only then their existence will be questionable.

Theoretical Parameters

Eco-criticism is the literary study that theorizes the interconnectedness and harmonious relationship between literature and the physical environment. It portrays the interconnected relationships among human beings, the animal world and the natural world. It takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. This theory is emerged as a reaction to man's anthropocentric attitude of dominating nature and the other species of non-humans contributing to the ecosystem. Eco-criticism is not only the study of aesthetic aspects, but nature means the whole of the physical environment consisting of the human, non-humans, and landscape. The interconnection among these entities creates the harmonious bond which is the basis of ecocriticism. Cheryll Glotfelty in her book *The Ecocriticism Reader* defines ecocriticism as:

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (Introduction, xviii)

Glotfelty opines that ecocriticism shows the relation between biotic and abiotic things of nature. In this sense, ecocriticism focuses on the studies of how animals, landscapes and nature are portrayed in literature. It draws parallel line between human and other creature including land and speaks in favor of proper respect for each entities. Aldo Leopold in his

article "The Land Ethic" conveys, " [t]he land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively: the land" (39).

Leopold here means in the environment there is not a single component that has a remarkable role. Multiple elements constitute the environment and function as a whole ecosystem. Every element has its significance in its place. Land is not simply the meaning of soil but it is the inclusion of water plant and animals. When there is the inclusion of water, plants, and animals then only there is a remarkable presence of land.

The major concern of eco-criticism is on the symbiotic relation among the all species including human and nonhuman and the things living and non-living present in the earth. An eco-critic, Fredric Suresh says: "The modern ecological consciousness has the feeling that the balance between human and the natural world must be maintained. A perfect ecology is one in which plants, animals, birds and human beings live in such harmony that none dominates or destroys the other" (47). Fredric thinks that the existence of all the species is only possible if they respect and do not destroy the habitation of other with no specific purpose. It is human being who destroys the animal world and natural world for insatiable hunger of different kinds of desires. That's why human being has to understand that the earth is the place of every creature and plants for mutual existence. The human desire for accumulating riches has created disharmony between the human and non-human that has invited the ecological risks. Donald Worster in his book *The Wealth of The Nature* writes; "Besides losing so many of the larger animals, we have lost entire eco-logical communities, complete landscape, and with them have lost a considerable range of human feelings" (5). From this citation it is obvious that the time has come to think critically to preserve nature and save animals. If the exploitative activities of human beings are not checked timely, there will be difficult situation for human beings to continue their settlement in the earth. Due to various activities done by

human over nature hazardous condition arises and the earth will be unfavorable place to reside.

Lyn White claims as the “[f]ormerly man had been a part of nature, now he was the exploiter of the nature” (8). White accuses human beings as hostile beings to nature. Human beings are intoxicated with the power of thinking and taking control over everything on the earth, they consume the rest of the animals and nature carelessly as if they are there to fulfill their insatiable hunger. In this regard, Benton writes, “[m]embers of other animal species and rest of the non-human nature urgently need to be protected from destructive human activities” (149). He criticizes the haphazard manners of human beings against the other species and he suggests the need of co-existence for all. To support this idea eco theorist William Rueckert states the "conceptual and practical problem is to find the grounds upon which the two communities –the human, the natural- can coexist, cooperate, and flourish in the biosphere" (107). Existence of human beings depend upon the existence of different sorts of animals and vegetation in the environment. If human beings think from their side only and keep on abusing animals and vegetation it will cause problem on the existence of human beings as well.

The equal relationship of human species with others is neglected by human activities of exploiting them. Kate Rig points out, “[a]ll human beings meanwhile remain interwoven, albeit often invisibly, with the life of countless non-human beings, who continue as best they can pursue their own ends in the midst of an increasingly anthropogenic environment” (4). Therefore human –non human relation is long and essential for harmonious existence, though the stakeholders of nature like the animals have been put into danger by human intrusion. This pattern of human behavior to the non-humans shows the big difference between the need of being eco-friendly and reality of their attitude to the animals and the nature. Humans have taken control over animals and used as per there wish and interest. In this regard Peter Singer

in his book *Animal Liberation* writes; "If the argument for equality was sound when applied to women, why should it not be applied to dogs cats and horses" (28)? Peter Singer argues that there must be animals right equally as human beings. He means to say that as much as humans have right to live and enjoy in this earth the animals also have right to live and enjoy. It is not wise to use animals for the mere benefit of human beings.

An eco-critical theorist Paul W Taylor devises the idea of bio-centric egalitarianism, which accords great respect to nature since everything in the world has a purpose. The idea that animals and plants are equally entitled to coexist in the ecosphere as members of the biotic community is broadened by the bio-centric outlook. For the benefit of the ecosystem, we must conserve them. Since every living item in nature has intrinsic value, their existence seems necessary for an ecosystem to function properly. According to Taylor, humans should regard themselves as equal members of the earth community because every living thing is a "teleological center of life, depending on the healthy biological functioning of others" (76). The core of bio-centric egalitarianism is Taylor's argument, which refutes the idea that humans are superior to other species and is at the core of bio-centric egalitarianism. To put it another way, bio-centric egalitarianism is an extremely eco-centric philosophy that envisions a world in which people value all living things.

Ecologists consistently advocate for the innate functioning of ecosystems as essential to living a moral life on earth. This can only be achieved if humans stop troublemaking nature to gratify their unquenchable desires for the existence. Lawrence Buell argues for the "stable, harmonious, and homeostatic" (422) functioning of ecosystems. Buell highlights sustainable ecosystem function without human intervention, aligning with Taylor's view of nature. Taylor claims, "From the perspective of a life-centered theory, we have prima facie moral obligations that are owed to wild plants and animals themselves as members of the Earth's biotic community" (74). Recognizing the natural value of a biotic community

underscores the requirement of interconnectedness among human, animal and land on earth. Thus, balance and stability are fundamental conditions for living a moral life on earth.

Methodology

This research is based on qualitative research method for the selected primary texts *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*. This method becomes supportive for the textual analysis of the selected primary texts. The theoretical lens of eco-criticism is used as theoretical parameters to analyze these texts. The extensive library research and the guidance from the supervisor help to enhance critical insights into these texts. These insights become the theoretical parameters to examine, analyze, and interpret the primary texts. Published books, research journals, research articles, relevant authentic websites and unpublished dissertations serve as the secondary data for this research purpose. The arguments put forward by the critics like the arguments put forth by critics like Peter Singer, Paul W Taylor, Aldo Leopold and Lawrence Buell have been used to analyze relations among humans, animals and land guide in understanding the human-nature relationship.

The researcher reviews this research work with the interrelated literature by keeping the research questions and objectives in mind. Other researchers identified natural and human world separately that lacks harmony and co-existence. In doing so, the study makes an organized review of the primary concepts and theoretical approach of eco-criticism to identify the research gap which needs to be fulfilled. It also reviews the criticism of writer and the primary texts: *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*.

Literature Review

The Red Pony has gained surprising popularity after its publication, leading many researchers to focus on it as a primary subject of literary analysis. The extensive use of this story by scholars from various perspectives indicates that numerous references can support this research. Many previous researchers have applied the theory that will be utilized in this

study, providing valuable assistance. Numbers of writers have written on Steinbeck's *The Red Pony* from different critical approach. Here, for review few writers who have written from different perspective have been cited. There are various issues raised but ecological consciousness and significant of land attachment has not been discussed extensively in these fictional writing. In this regard Ben Ali in his writing talks about human and non-human relation in his article, *The Human and Animal Bond in Red Pony*. He talks about the power of human beings as powerful as powerless creature in nature. He writes, "Jody Tiflin lives on a ranch wherein there is an endless struggle between the powerful and the powerless" (1). According to Ali, little boy is presented as powerful being who can take control over animals. Struggle between human and animal is highlighted in his research article. But there is strong bond in which animals are depending upon human and human beings are depending upon animals for their survival.

Regarding place attachment in *The Red Pony*, Lahdenranta Fredrika is worth mentioning she writes place is not merely physical space that provides shelter for animal and human it is vast resources from where human can flourish their identity. She relates this idea, "It is not merely a physical space for him to inhabit, but a rich environment in which he can explore his own personality, his growth as human being, his moral landscape and role as an ethical being within the world" (56). Land is referred as vast resources where the lives of human being can thrive satisfying their basic needs. That's why the meaning of particular place should not be taken as physical space only there is emotional attachment of human being as well. From Fredrika's argument, it is said that people have significant attachment to the place where they have been living since it provides food and shelter for them. She has not discussed the relationship with animals in her research paper. In the fiction, two horses have a remarkable role in shaping the manhood of the boy Jody Tiflin. Similarly, Derek Gladwin writes about the connection with land in which he has highlighted the integration of

nature and environment into fiction where there is ecological observation of the main character and other characters. He writes; "The Gift, the first story in the cycle, opens with a description of Jody's inter-reliance with the parts of his surroundings farm community" (68). The argument raised by Gladwin clearly states that there is total dependence of human beings on land for their survival. So, it is not wise to overuse in the verge of decreasing the quality of the land. Land gives food for human beings for their survival but there is tendency to grab the resources over exploiting the nature. Though there is strong bond between human and animal this article is totally focused on land and its significance. Another researcher Arlita Widyaniza in her thesis writes about the main character's behavior of being mischievous. She has not described the cause of being so rude towards animals. Jody lost his red pony which he had received as a gift at that time he was in such mental state of loss of something he had loved. "Steinbeck describes Jody as a shy and timid boy who loved animals and treated them gently. However, Jody became mischievously violent towards animals after his pony died. Jody's contrasting behavior leads to a question, which is what motivated Jody to have a different attitude towards animals" (8). When human being is not in normal mental conditions they can be sometime violent but it shouldn't be concluded that with violent nature every time. Arlita has focused on psychological nature of teenager boy who showed mischievous behavior after the pony died which he had got as gift. It is also his love towards the animals and pain is revealed when he lost the loved one.

Tortilla Flat has also gained startling reputation that led many researchers to focus on it as a primary subject of literary analysis. The broad use of this story by researchers from various perspectives indicates that various references can support this research. Many previous researchers have applied the theory that will be utilized in this study, providing valuable assistance. Consequently, this research draws on several prior studies for support, as well as other sources like relevant articles and books. Siti Dwi Novita in her thesis examines

the signs of a depressed mental illness in one of the characters in *Tortilla Flat*, she writes. “Danny suffers from stress disorder in the form of depression caused by his problems after receiving a home inheritance” (Abstract). She focuses on psychoanalytical aspects of the main character. Danny is unaware about the houses that he inherited but when he knew all of sudden he suffers from depression regarding the problems he had been facing. Similarly another researcher Urszula Niewiadomska in his research article writes about human nature. Human nature is to find pleasure in simple things and they want more from society. He relates “...a man frequently survives, but does not succeed. Most likely passions survive as they expect a lot from society and they themselves only pursue simple pleasures. However, in the long run they do not succeed as they do not sacrifice anything treasure in the name of society’s pleasure” (33). The writer says it is difficult to get pleasure for long run when a person has not contributed anything for the sake of society’ pleasure. He means to say that if one works for society then he finds pleasure in long run.

Christian Troy Roemer in his thesis entitled *Finding Steinbeck’s Utopia in Cannery Row and Tortilla Flat* writes, *Tortilla flat* as Marxist point of view. He finds though the plot is not about the workers but can be interpreted through Marxist perspective. There is clear distinction between poor paisanos who does not own their house like Danny’s friends and who owns house like Danny himself. He relates:

Tortilla Flat is not a story about workers, however the novel displays a profound appreciation for the poor paisanos and reverence for their more simple and pure lifestyle. Steinbeck creates a communist community that exists in Danny’s household, and the friends become the image of what a more egalitarian society could entail outside of the restrictive confines of capitalism. (32)

Steinbeck in the novel *Tortilla Flat* creates a communist community presenting the main character as the owner of the two houses in the same time his other friends as homeless. One

has two houses as material possession and others have nothing. This kind of character's presentation creates communist community. To continue further Lauren Valerie LePera opines different thought in her thesis according to her there is not any kind of communist community. They have dismantled their capitalist interest and sought the important necessities of their survival which was wine. She writes; "Danny and his friends dismantle the capitalist desire for personal wealth and seek only the vital necessities for their survival mainly wine. Any number of goods can be exchanged for wine" (17). It shows alcoholic nature of main character, Danny and his other friends. They are so much attached with alcohol since they are ready to exchange with any valuable goods for the sake of wine. Michael Thomas Naceasserts states that the novel's shape, at its core, is a creation of the pure spirit of early human laughter, a creation that goes beyond the visceral, exhalable spirit that constitutes our immediate sense of humor. He relates:

Tortilla Flat is a comic novel explicitly constructed on spectacle one mishap or malfeasance almost systematically leads into the next. Consistently throughout this string of comic spectacles, the interior conditions of the novel's heroes fuel the comedy of the extrinsic spectacle; without the reader gaining access into the inner realities of the characters, the contradictory, deluded, and sometimes absurd external reactions of the heroes would not function comically. (21)

In this case, even the narrator serves to heighten the comedy, built specifically on spectacle, one disaster or act of wrongdoing nearly always leads to another. The internal circumstances of the novel's heroes continuously provide energy to the comedy of the extrinsic spectacle; in the absence of the reader's access to the inner realities of the characters, the heroes' inconsistent, delusional, and occasionally ridiculous outward reactions would not function comically. Another researcher Natalia Rud has written about man's relationships with property in the novel *Tortilla Flat*. She writes; "from his childhood Danny preferred not to be

burdened with his social status and the responsibilities of a man of property. He selected, most likely intuitively, careless and adventurous lifestyles with fewer responsibilities” (9). The above notion is understood from the perspective of ownership, where a single, insignificant detail the purchase of real estate can upend a person's entire way of life. The superficial interpretation of the work as lighthearted and enjoyable depictions of the lives of *paisanos* is seen. He views the property as one of the novel's main pillars. In another research article Mohammed and Abdul Karim discuss that, despite the striking uniformity that is both thematically and structurally unified, the issue of depravity and deprivation contained in *Tortilla Flat* cannot be easily appraised. The characters are presented as simultaneously naive, primitive, careless, compassionate, and vicious. Characters are distinguished by their carefree lifestyle, love of freedom, and idealism, all of which are accompanied by a negative attitude toward property and loneliness. They relate: “the most striking episode in *Tortilla Flat* bringing out at once the primitiveness of behavior for honour and virtue in the *paisanos* is that relating to the attempted stealing of the Pirate’s savings by Big Joe and its ultimate resolution” (202).

John Steinbeck consistently fascinated both in national and international level since his novels were published. A review of relevant literature reveals that their works have been examined from numerous angles, including eco-criticism. However, there has been limited discussion on the symbiotic relation among human, animal and land. While some critics have touched on these issues, they have not thoroughly defined, identified, explored, or analyzed these ideas. This research aims to address this gap by examining Steinbeck’s *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat* from an eco-critical perspective. It focuses on the interconnected relation among human, animal and land.

In this way, various researchers have studied the Steinbeck’s *The Red Pony* and the *Tortilla Flat* from various prominent perspectives including social, political, and economic

lenses. However, there is a growing need to explore his works from an eco-critical standpoint to better understand how his depiction of nature and environment speaks to current ecological concerns. As a researcher, I have not found any study from the perspective of an eco-critical focusing on ecological consciousness. This area is the demanded research to show the ecological consciousness and relations among human animal and the nature in the selected primary texts *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat* that attracts symbiotic relation among land, animals and humans with the sense of equality. Therefore, this research work endeavors to analyze from that perspective.

Texts in Context

John Steinbeck was a well-known American author, born on February 27, 1902, in Salinas, California. Growing up in the fertile region of California, Steinbeck was closely familiar with the lives of farm workers and the dynamics of rural life. The environment, along with the people and agricultural industry of the area, vibrantly influenced many of his works. Steinbeck's most significant works were produced during the Great Depression of the 1930s, a period of severe economic hardship in the United States. Additionally, The Dust Bowl migration which forced thousands of families moves to California in search of work. Growing up in an agricultural community, Steinbeck had firsthand experience with the lives of farm workers and the dynamics of rural life. His own financial difficulties during the Great Depression allowed him to write with genuine empathy and insight about the economic challenges faced by his characters.

John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat* are deeply rooted in the Californian landscape, using it not just as a backdrop but as a dynamic element that shapes the narratives and characters' lives. Furthermore, the presence of high capitalism within these settings plays a significant role in influencing the characters' environmental perspectives and interactions with their surroundings. Set in the Salinas Valley, California, *The Red Pony* uses the rural

ranch environment to explore themes of growth, responsibility, and the human connection to nature. The expansive and often harsh landscapes reflect the cycles of life and death, mirroring the protagonist Jody Tiflin's coming-of-age journey. The valley's natural beauty and challenges are integral to Jody's understanding of life, shaping his ecological consciousness as he navigates experiences of birth, growth, and loss. Similarly in *Tortilla Flat*, Monterey, California, provides a contrasting setting with its coastal beauty and culturally diverse community. The vibrant town California is depicted as both picturesque and economically challenged, reflecting the lives of the paisanos, who inhabit there. Monterey's setting allows Steinbeck to explore themes of community, survival, and the intrinsic value of the natural world, as the characters live in close harmony with their environment despite their poverty.

In *The Red Pony*, the high form of capitalism is embodied by the Tiflin ranch, where economic imperatives often overshadow a deeper ecological consciousness. Carl Tiflin, Jody's father, represents the practical, profit-driven approach to ranching. His decisions are influenced by the need to maintain productivity and economic stability, often at the expense of a more holistic understanding of the environment. The ranch's operations reflect the capitalist ethos of efficiency and resource management. This approach can lead to a disconnection from the natural world, as economic considerations take precedence over ecological balance. For Jody, this environment presents a tension between the practical realities of ranch life and his growing awareness of nature's intrinsic value. His experiences with animals, particularly the pony Gabilan, highlight this conflict. The death of Gabilan, a result of both natural forces and human decisions, serves as a heartrending moment that underscores the harshness of a capitalist-driven environment and its impact on ecological consciousness.

In *Tortilla Flat*, the influence of high capitalism is more indirect but still significant. The paisanos live on the margins of the capitalist economy, and their lives are shaped by a lack of material wealth. This marginalization fosters a different kind of relationship with their environment, one that is more communal and sustainable. Their survival depends on a practical, respectful use of natural resources, driven by necessity rather than profit. The high form of capitalism in Monterey creates a backdrop of economic disparity that shapes the paisanos' interactions with their environment. Their lack of integration into the capitalist economy allows them to maintain a more ecologically conscious lifestyle. They fish, forage, and farm on a small scale, practices that reflect an understanding of natural cycles and a sustainable approach to resource use. Such way of life contrasts sharply with the exploitative tendencies of high capitalism, highlighting a form of ecological awareness born out of necessity and communal values.

The high form of capitalism at the Tiflin ranch shapes an environmental perspective that prioritizes economic gain over ecological balance. Jody's experiences reveal the consequences of this mindset, as he learns about the fragility of life and the impacts of human actions on the natural world. His budding ecological consciousness is constantly challenged by the economic realities of ranch life, reflecting the broader tensions between capitalism and environmental sustainability. In *Tortilla Flat*, the characters' marginalization by the capitalist economy leads to a different environmental perspective. The paisanos' sustainable practices and communal ethos represent an ecological consciousness that contrasts with the dominant capitalist mindset. Their lifestyle demonstrates a more harmonious relationship with nature, driven by necessity but also characterized by a deep respect for the environment.

In this way *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*, California serves as more than just a backdrop; it serves as a significant element that shapes the characters' lives and perspectives. The influence of high capitalism within these settings significantly affects how the characters

interact with their environment and develop their ecological consciousness. In *The Red Pony*, the capitalist driven approach to ranching creates tensions between economic imperatives and a deeper understanding of nature. In *Tortilla Flat*, the marginalization by the capitalist economy fosters a more sustainable and respectful relationship with the environment. Steinbeck's portrayal of these contrasting experiences offers a nuanced critique of high capitalism and its impact on ecological awareness. By examining how economic systems influence characters' interactions with their surroundings, Steinbeck highlights the complexities of maintaining a balanced and respectful relationship with nature within different economic contexts.

Drawing upon his own experiences and observations, Steinbeck crafted narratives that reflect the rugged beauty, harsh realities and ecological diversity of the region. In *The Red Pony* Steinbeck invites readers to explore the bond between a young boy Jody Tiflin and the natural world around him, particularly through his interactions with horses on his family's ranch. Similarly *Tortilla Flat* invites readers into the rustic world of paisanos, depicting a community deeply connected to the land and its bounty. Both the fictions represent the natural landscapes of the Salinas Valley and Monterey, California into the structure of his narratives. In *The Red Pony*, the valley's seasons and agricultural rhythms mirror the emotional journeys of its characters, highlighting the intimate relationship between humans and animal. Similarly, in *Tortilla Flat*, he portrays the paisanos' harmonious coexistence with the coastal ecosystem, emphasizing themes of human dependence on and impact upon nature. In the context of *The Red Pony* John Steinbeck represents a nuanced exploration of history through intimate portrayals of individual lives within specific regional and socio-economic landscapes. It is drawn from Steinbeck's upbringing in the agricultural community of Salinas, California, offering a glimpse into the challenges and dreams of farm workers during a time of economic uncertainty. Through the story of a young boy's coming-of-age and his

interactions with the natural world, Steinbeck captures the resilience and hardships faced by rural families, reflecting broader themes of perseverance and loss amidst the backdrop of early twentieth century America. Similarly, *Tortilla Flat* embodies Steinbeck's historical commentary by depicting a group of friends living in poverty in Monterey, California. Set against the backdrop of the Great Depression, the novel explores themes of friendship, loyalty, and the struggle for meaning in a changing society. Steinbeck's portrayal of these characters and their interactions within a close knit community reflects the social dynamics and economic challenges of the era, highlighting the resilience and humor that often emerge in the face of adversity.

Through both *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*, Steinbeck crafts narratives that not only illuminate the personal struggles and triumphs of his characters but also offer a broader reflection on the historical contexts in which they live. His ability to intertwine individual stories with larger societal themes enriches his portrayal of American history, showcasing the enduring relevance of his work in understanding the complexities of human experience within specific historical and cultural landscapes.

In *The Red Pony* Jody's father's ranch is depicted not merely as a setting but as a dynamic ecosystem where the health of the land and creatures profoundly impacts the character's lives. Jody's experience with his pony, Gabilan focuses the fragile relationship between human and animals underscoring the limitations of human control over nature. The cyclical nature of life and death depicted through Gabilan's illness and the birth of a new colt emphasizes the resilience and continuity of the natural world. Steinbeck explores the theme of environmental stewardship, as Jody learns that caring for the land and creatures requires respect and hard work. The novella invites reflection on the delicate balance within ecosystems and the importance of sustainable and respectful interactions with the environment.

Tortilla Flat illuminates the deep connection between the characters and their natural surroundings through an eco-critical lens. Steinbeck paints a picture of the paisanos' lives intricately intertwined with the land and sea, where nature serves as both provider and sanctuary. The characters' sustainable lifestyle, marked by reliance on the land's resources and minimalistic consumption, underscores themes of harmony and balance with the environment. However, their occasional disruptions of this balance through actions like theft hint at the complexities of human impact on nature. Despite their marginalization in society, the paisanos find solace and inspiration in the natural beauty of Monterey, reflecting nature's resilience in the face of human encroachment. Through this novel, Steinbeck invites readers to consider the ecological implications of human behavior and to foster a respectful and sustainable relationship with the environment.

Despite the growing interest in eco-criticism, much of the scholarly analysis of John Steinbeck's works has focused on their social, political, and economic dimensions, often overlooking the critical environmental aspects embedded in his narratives. In *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*, Steinbeck intricately weaves ecological themes into the fabric of his narratives, yet these aspects have not been adequately explored. This thesis seeks to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive eco-critical analysis of these novels, addressing how Steinbeck's portrayal of the natural environment and human interaction with it speaks to broader ecological issues. Understanding these elements is crucial for appreciating Steinbeck's contribution to environmental literature and for recognizing the enduring relevance of his work in contemporary ecological discourse.

Organization of the Study

This research work comprises of four sections under different thematic headings. The first section begins with the introduction of the topic, critical summary as per the issue raised, theoretical parameters, objectives of the study, literature review, texts in context organization

of the study. The second section and the third section deal with the textual analysis of the two primary texts respectively through the lens of an eco-critical perspective. The last chapter covers major findings and the conclusion of the research work with the recommendation for further research.

Chapter II

Interconnectedness of Humans, Animals, and Land in *The Red Pony*

John Steinbeck portrays the world together with humans, animals, and nature in *The Red Pony* to highlight their coexistence. This novella offers a profound exploration of the human-animal relationship. Through experiences of the major character, a ten-year-old boy, named Jody Tiflin, and his attachment especially with red pony named Gabilan and various animals on his father's ranch, Steinbeck explores themes of life, death, responsibility, and the unavoidable loss that comes with growing up the young boy into manhood. In this chapter, the researcher analyzes the human-animal relationship and attachment to the land in *The Red Pony*, drawing on textual references to underscore how these interactions shape Jody's development and reflect broader themes within the novella.

Firstly, in *The Red Pony*, the relationship between humans and animals is central to the narrative. Steinbeck uses this relationship to explore complex themes and to illustrate the emotional and psychological growth of his main character, Jody. Steinbeck writes, “The pony’s eyes glittered, and he edged around kicking position. But Jody touched his high arched neck as he had always seen Bill Buck do, and he crooned, “So-o-o, boy” in a deep voice. The Pony gradually relaxed his tenseness” (14). This excerpt states the relationship of humans and animals when the boy comes close to the pony and its eyes show happiness and feel a kind of relaxation. Peter Singer in his book *Animal Liberation* writes, “Those who have studied the behavior of other animals and those who have animals as companions soon learn to understand their responses as well as we understand those of an infant, and sometimes better” (46). It is understood that Jody has knowledge about the behavior of the animals and to make the pony anxiety-free when he touches the body of the pony.

The animal red pony in the novella is not merely background information but is the central theme of the story, which represents different aspects of life and teaches Jody valuable lessons. From the very beginning, the gifted red pony plays a significant role in Jody's life. Living on a ranch, he is surrounded by animals. In the primary text, there are lines which reflect:

After the frenzied greetings the dogs lowered their noses to the ground in a businesslike way and went ahead, looking back now and then to make sure that boy was coming. They walked up through the chicken yard and saw the quail eating with the chickens. Smasher chased the chickens a little to keep in practice in case there should ever be sheep to herd. (4)

These lines depict the closeness of Jody with animals that form deep connections, seeing them as both companions and sources of learning. In this regard, Paul Taylor is worth mentioning in his book *Respect for Nature*. As he writes, “human and animals share the earth and should live equal and harmoniously” (75). He tries to create equal status of human beings with that of other animals. Above cited paragraph says that there is co-existence among animals human and birds as well maintaining a community as a whole.

In *The Red Pony* the major character, Jody Tiflin has a special relationship with the land where he lives. Jody lives in a farm in a valley near the city of Salinas, with his parents and two dogs. The ranch is located in a valley that is surrounded by mountain ranges. Jody's family leads a simple rural life and his days are filled with household chores such as he gathers wood, feeds chickens and takes care of his favorite animal red pony. Jody's existence is connected to the land and the natural surroundings where he lives. In the primary text, Steinbeck points out, “Jody continued on through the large vegetable patch where the green corn was higher than his head. The corn pumpkins were green and small yet. He went on to the sagebrush line where the cold spring ran out of its pipe and fell into a round wooden tub.

He leaned over and drank close to the green mossy wood where the water tasted best (4-5).

To support the above idea, Aldo Leopold focuses, “The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals; or collectively: the land” (204). Jody’s community is comprised of different animals, natural resources from the land where he lives such as water plants trees etc.

In *The Red Pony*, Gabilan, is the most prominent animal which serves as a symbol of hope and growth for Jody. Gabilan's arrival marks a significant moment in Jody's life, representing his transition from childhood to adolescence and his burgeoning sense of responsibility. When Jody's father, Carl Tiflin, gives him the red pony, Jody is filled with excitement and pride. The pony represents not just a gift, but a promise of independence and maturity. Steinbeck describes Jody's initial reaction is that "Jody's throat collapsed in on itself and cut his breath short” (10). This reaction highlights the emotional impact of receiving Gabilan and sets the stage for their bond. Jody's early interactions with Gabilan are filled with a sense of wonder and dedication. He spends hours grooming and feeding the pony, demonstrating his commitment for taking care of him. Steinbeck writes, "Jody never waited for the triangle to get him out of bed after the coming of the pony. It became his habit to creep out of bed even before his mother was awake, to slip into his cloths and to go quietly down to the barn to see Gabilan” (15-16). These detailed descriptions of Jody's care emphasize his growing attachment and the sense of responsibility he feels towards Gabilan. Before the entry of pony it was difficult for him to wake up, but after the coming of the pony he started to wake up before his mother. To connect with this idea Immanuel Kant is worth mentioning. In an article Rational Beings Alone Have Moral Worth he writes, “Animal nature has analogies to human nature, and by doing our duties to animals in respect of manifestations which correspond to manifestations of human nature, we indirectly do our

duty towards humanity”(86). He means to say that Jody is doing his duty not only towards animal indirectly he is fulfilling his duty towards the humanity as whole.

As Jody takes on the responsibility of caring for Gabilan, he faces various challenges that test his commitment and maturity. One of the first significant challenges occurs when Gabilan falls ill. Despite Jody's best efforts to care for him, the pony's condition worsens, and Jody experiences the helplessness and frustration that comes with being unable to control the outcome. The description of Gabilan's illness is poignant and heart-wrenching, "The pony still lay on his side and the wound in his throat bellowsed in and out. When Jody saw dry and dead the hair looked, he knew at last that there was no hope for the pony” (41). This moment is a turning point for Jody, forcing him to confront the harsh realities of life and death. Gabilan's death is a pivotal moment in the novella and in Jody's life. It represents the loss of innocence and the inevitable pain that comes with growing up.

Steinbeck portrays Jody's grief with raw emotion, capturing the depth of his sorrow in writing as “the top of the ridge Jody was winded. He paused, puffin noisily. The blood pounded in his ears. Then he saw what he was looking for. Below, in one of the little clearings in the brush lay the red pony. In the distance, Jody could see the legs moving slowly and convulsively . . . buzzards waiting for the moment of death” (42-43). The lines from the primary text illustrate the inner turmoil Jody experiences as he struggles with his emotions. Gabilan's death also indicates as a harsh lesson in the limitations of human control over nature. Despite all of Jody's efforts, he is unable to save the pony, highlighting the unpredictability and inevitability of death. This lesson is a crucial part of Jody's development, teaching him resilience and acceptance. Reviewer Howard Levant states “the imagery indicates that nature is an indifferent process to which men assign meaning” (88). This analysis is important as it highlights the naturalistic trend that defines Steinbeck's fiction states nature as indifferent to the pain of human. Additionally, one could argue that Steinbeck

uses this scene to emphasize that nature is so unforgiving that the strong survive at the expense of the weak. Here, pony is depicted as weaker and natural environment as stronger. It becomes difficult for the pony to survive against nature.

While Gabilan is the central animal in the novella, other animals also play significant role in Jody's life and contribute to the overarching themes of the story. These animals, including the buzzards, the black colt, and Nellie the mare, each bring their own lessons and experiences. The buzzards that appear after Gabilan's death are symbolic of the inevitability of death and the natural cycle of life. Their presence is a stark reminder of the harsh realities of the world Jody is growing up in. Steinbeck describes the buzzards in a way that underscores their ominous nature as "[h]e looked up and saw a high circle of black buzzards, and slowly revolving circle dropped lower and lower " (42). This imagery reinforces the sense of finality and the unchanging nature of death. Jody's reaction to the buzzards is one of anger and defiance. In a moment of intense emotion, he attacks one of the buzzards as Steinbeck highlights "[h]e struck again and again, until the buzzard lay dead, until its head was red pulp. He was still beating the dead bird" (44). This act symbolizes his struggle to come out of the pain with Gabilan's death. This scene highlights Jody's desire to assert control in a situation where he feels powerless. Following Gabilan's death, Jody's hope and sense of purpose are renewed with the promise of a new colt. This black colt represents a new beginning and a chance for Jody to apply the lessons he learned from his experience with Gabilan. The process of preparing for the colt's birth is filled with anticipation and a renewed sense of responsibility. Holmes Rolston III in his article *Naturalizing Values: Organism and Species* argues that, "Maybe we can extend feelings into the higher animals, because evolution does teach their kinship with us" (136). Steinbeck captures Jody's excitement and determination maintaining kinship with animals as his age is also evolved from childhood to boyhood. Jody's eyes sparkled with new interest when his father said to him, "tomorrow

morning you take Nellie up to the ridge ranch and get her bred. You'll have to take care of her, too, till she throws the colt" (72). There was a new thing to think at present about Jody after the death of his Red Pony. These lines reflect Jody's resilience and his ability to find hope even after experiencing loss. Nellie, the mare who is to give birth to the black colt, becomes another important figure in Jody's journey. Caring for Nellie and awaiting the birth of the colt requires patience and diligence, further testing Jody's sense of responsibility. The birth of the colt is a tense and challenging process, marked by complications that require the intervention of Billy Buck, the ranch hand. Steinbeck describes the moment with vivid details regarding the relationship. He depicts, "Billy's face and arms and chest were dripping red. His body shivered and his teeth chattered. His voice was gone; he spoke in a throaty whisper. "There is your colt. I promised. And there it is"" (94). This scene underscores the unpredictability of nature and the need for experience and skill in dealing with such situations. The eventual birth of the colt is both a moment of triumph and a reminder of the complexities of life. Jody's joy is tempered by the knowledge of the difficulties that had to be overcome, highlighting the bittersweet nature of growth and learning.

Throughout novella *The Red Pony*, the human-animal relationships serve as catalysts for Jody's personal growth. Each interaction with the animals teaches him valuable lessons about life, responsibility, and the acceptance of both joy and sorrow. Billy Buck, the ranch hand, plays a crucial role in shaping Jody's understanding of animals and the natural world. Billy's experience and wisdom provide Jody with guidance and support for helping him navigate the challenges he faces. Billy's relationship with the animals is marked by respect and deep knowledge. His advice and actions often reflect a profound understanding of the natural world. For example, when Gabilan falls ill, Billy does everything he can do to help, but he also understands the limits of human intervention. Steinbeck writes, "Billy Buck stood up from the box and surrendered the cotton swab" (41). This moment emphasizes the

acceptance of nature's unpredictability and the humility required in dealing with it. Billy's mentorship helps Jody develop a more nuanced perspective on the human-animal relationship, blending compassion with realism. Carl Tiflin, Jody's father, represents a more pragmatic and less sentimental approach to animals. His interactions with Jody and the animals reflect a belief in discipline and responsibility. Carl's expectations for Jody are clear, and he sees the animals primarily in terms of their utility. While Carl's approach may seem harsh at times, it is also an important part of Jody's education. Carl's insistence on responsibility and hard work helps Jody develop a strong sense of duty. For instance, Carl's reaction to Gabilan's death is pragmatic when Jody killed a buzzard he said, "the buzzard didn't kill the pony. Don't you know that?" (44). This reaction contrasts with Jody's emotional response and underscores the different ways people cope with loss. Through Carl, Jody learns the importance of resilience and the necessity of moving forward despite setbacks.

The culmination of Jody's experiences with the animals leads to significant personal transformation. He evolves from a naive and carefree boy into a more mature and thoughtful individual. The lessons he learns from Gabilan, Nellie, and the other animals shape his character and prepare him for the complexities of adulthood. Steinbeck captures this transformation subtly but effectively. By the end of the novella, Jody's interactions with the animals reflect a deeper understanding and a more balanced perspective. To connect with this Holly L. Wilson is worth mentioning he writes, "Animals, in contrast to matter, have an inner principle that gives rise to spontaneous movement. Here is a clear and significant difference between things and animals. Such a distinction gives rise to the presumption that animals should be treated differently from things" (88). Jody develops kind humane feelings after he has tender feelings towards animals. He treats his pony as his friend like a human being. His journey is marked by growth, resilience, and an acceptance of the cycles of life and death.

The human-animal relationships in *The Red Pony* are not only central to Jody's personal development but also reflect broader themes within the novella. These relationships highlight the interconnectedness of life, the inevitability of change, and the importance of resilience. One of the most prominent themes in *The Red Pony* is the cycle of life and death. The animals in the novella serve as representations of this cycle, with each experience reinforcing the natural progression from birth to death. Gabilan's birth and death, the anticipation of the black colt, and the interactions with other animals all underscore the inevitability of these cycles. To link up with this idea Mcshane Katie writes, "Humans are social animals; we typically exhibit great concern for the well-being of other members of our communities" (8). Steinbeck uses these events to highlight the transient nature of life and the need to accept both its joys and sorrows.

Steinbeck also explores the interconnectedness of life through the human-animal relationships. The novella emphasizes how humans and animals are part of a larger ecosystem, each influencing and being influenced by the other. For example, the health and well-being of the animals on the ranch are closely tied to the actions and decisions of the humans. Tom Regan is worth to cite in this regard. He mentions the "[i]ndirect duty views, then, including the best among them, fail to command our rational assent. Whatever ethical theory we should accept rationally, therefore, it must at least recognize that we have some duties directly to animals, just as we have some duties directly to each other"(109). Jody's care for Gabilan, the challenges faced during the colt's birth, and the daily interactions with the animals all reflect this interconnectedness. The human-animal relationships in *The Red Pony* also underscore the themes of resilience and adaptation. Jody's ability to learn from his experiences and continue to grow despite setbacks reflects the resilience required to navigate life's challenges. Steinbeck portrays this resilience through Jody's character development and his evolving relationship with the animals. Peter Singer further states about this in his book

Animal Liberation, he opines that ". . . this way we can argue for equality for animals without getting embroiled in philosophical controversies about the ultimate nature of rights" (37). The lessons Jody learns about equality of animals responsibility towards animals, patience, and acceptance are crucial for his growth and adaptation.

Secondly, in *The Red Pony*, the concept of land ethic is woven into the narrative through the characters' interactions with their environment. The novella emphasizes a deep respect for nature and the responsibilities of stewardship. The major character Jody learns insightful lessons about the cycle of life and death, responsibility, and interconnectedness through his experiences with his pony, Gabilan, and other animals on the ranch. These experiences, coupled with wisdom from his elders, reflect a growing awareness and respect for the land, illustrating the core principles of a land ethic.

Aldo Leopold's environmental ethics is best explained in his book "The Land Ethic," a part of his well-known ecological book, *A Sand County Almanac*. In *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold perceives the land like any "living organism"(173) and he opines that land shouldn't be viewed merely as property or an object. Instead, the land, plants, and animals form a biotic community where all elements are equally interdependent. In "The Land Ethic," Leopold describes the biotic community as a "biotic pyramid." At the bottom, there is the soil, followed by a plant layer, an insect layer, and then birds and rodents, continuing up to larger carnivores at the top layer. According to him the meaning of the land is not confined to soil only; soil is a flow of energy that moves all the way through soils, plants, and animals. The flow of energy rounds through various layers of the earth, and in every part of the pyramid to thrive, balance and interdependence should be maintained within the whole system.

Using the land pyramid model, it is analyzed Jody, the major character's position in his surroundings as stated in *The Red Pony*. First story from the novella, "The Gift," starts

with a description of Jody's connection to his ranch which is operated by his father. As Jody begins to do his household responsibilities, he notices something that happens in the garden like the growth of the corn and pumpkins in the vegetable patch. While he walking around his farm, he sees the "sagebrush line," the "green mossy wood," and the "red geraniums" and "cypress tree" (5) near the house. These observations mirror Leopold's land pyramid. Jody's surroundings include chickens, dogs, the vegetable patch, the sagebrush line, and the tub where he drinks water. All these elements are connected to the Leopold's land pyramid and layers of it, the layers of plants, soil, birds, and animals. Through this primary text Steinbeck shows that Jody's position in the physical world relies on every creature living or non living in environment where he lives.

At the beginning of "The Gift," Jody is found feeling comfortable in the familiar surroundings of the ranch. But as his day goes on, he is found feeling possessive; this line from the text says so, "Jody couldn't bear to look at the pony's eyes anymore. He gazed down at his hands for a moment, and asked very shyly, "Mine" (11)?" This indicates his gradual conversion into a further ecologically conscious person. His father gives Jody the duty of taking care of the red pony that he got as a gift, the duty assigned to him is part of the training to become a conscious and matured man. The responsibility is his initial step towards understanding land stewardship as Pony needs care just like the land does. Later, Jody sees the young grass growing and the old stubble disappearing, realizing that the grass, like the Pony and everything else, is part of a cycle of death and renewal. As Leopold emphasizes the "death and decay return to the soil," where the "energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals exists" (253). Jody looks down near the cypress tree, where he finds his lovable pony's battle with death, suddenly Jody discovers that nature is that force which provides comfort, sooth the sorrow, Steinbeck states:

Jody didn't even realize that someone else had fed the chickens and filled the wood-box. He walked up past the house to the dark bush line and took a drink of water from the tub. The spring water was so cold that it stung his mouth and drove a shiver through him. The sky above the hills was still light. He saw a hawk flying so high that it caught the sun on its breast and shone like a spark. (33)

Jody is unwilling to leave the sick pony in the barn, he feels disturbed and restless he is unable to focus on other chores except thinking about the pony. In contrast, when he observes nature it makes him calm, this experience changes Jody's perception for the natural world. While looking at the pony's suffering the scene makes Jody more empathetic to living things and unwrap his eyes to the ecological cycle. Later Jody finds a buzzard feeding on the carcass of red pony, suddenly Jody, becomes furious, kills the buzzard. His father tries to explain that the buzzard didn't kill the pony, and Jody wearily acknowledges this. Jody's grief drives him to kill the buzzard, but he starts to understand that this loss is part of the ecological process. This realization is reflected in his changing perception of his familiar surroundings and the new life he sees growing around him. Jody begins to understand his loss within the context of nature's ongoing cycle of rebirth, which is a key theme in Steinbeck's fiction. Timmerman argues, Jody's gradual experience were indispensable for him to ultimately gain wisdom, autonomy, and an awareness of balance within the ecosystem. According to Timmerman, "[f]rom the 'little boy Jody,' checked constantly by his father's discipline, dignity, and occasional cruelty, he has matured not necessarily to adult wisdom but to a sense of fullness of life that holds living and dying, reality and the dream, in balance" (138). The consciousness of "balance" is well understood as an awareness of the Leopoldian land pyramid the correlation of all entities. Life has demanded failure and unhappiness from Jody, but he has forged a resilient spirit and heartfelt actions.

At the end of "The Gift," Jody starts to understand how fragile life is, beginning his journey of learning about the environment. To truly feel connected with all living things, he must experience this fragility. However, Jody still has more painful lessons to go through to develop his environmental awareness. When the pony gets sick and dies, Jody faces the harsh reality of nature's balance, "Jody couldn't have gone away if he had wanted to. It was awful to see the red hide cut, but infinitely more terrible to know it was being cut and not to see it" (38). Losing the pony makes Jody more aware of the changing world around him and starts his angry rebellion against other animals like buzzard.

In "The Great Mountains," the next story in the novella, Jody starts to rebel by attacking the living creatures he loves doing some silly types of things such as, "He throws rocks at the swallows' nests under the eaves and "tricks his dog, Doubletree Mutt, into putting his nose in a mousetrap". But when his mother scolds him in his changed behavior he feels bad, "Jody feels bad and throws a rock at Mutt". "He then decides to kill a bird with a slingshot" (45-46). After hunting and killing the bird, Jody realizes how cruel and pointless his actions were. He notices the bird looks much smaller dead than alive and feels guilty, cutting off the bird's head. Human nature towards animals is worth linking with the idea of John Burroughs in "Human Traits in the Animals":

That there is a deal of human nature in the lower animals is a very obvious fact; or we may turn the proposition around and say with equal truth, that there is a deal of animal nature in us humans. We are all made up of stuff, the functions of our bodies are particularly the same, and the working of instincts and our emotional and involuntary natures are in many ways identical: Bundle of instincts, impulses, predilections, race and family affinities and antagonisms. (37)

Animals and humans share a lot of similarities. It is said that there's a lot of human nature in animals, or that there's a lot of animal nature in human beings. Humans and animals both are

made of the same basic materials, their bodies function in similar ways, and their instincts and emotions are often the same. Our instincts, impulses, preferences, connections, and conflicts are driven which come from our race and family backgrounds.

In the same way, in "The Gift," Jody smashes a green muskmelon with his foot and immediately feels regret, thinking whatever he did was a bad thing to do. Like any child growing up, he rebels against the rules to find his independence, only to reflect on the community he knows the farm. After his reckless actions, he knows older people in his family Billy and his father, Carl, would say about him. They echo Leopold's idea, "[a] thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (262). To understand his position in the natural world means accepting that life is temporary. Losing his pony, Gabilan, made Jody feel helpless; taking life gives him the opposite feeling. The land pyramid of Leopold states, "functioning depends on the co-operation and competition of its diverse parts" (253) and through his harsh activities in "The Great Mountains," the natural cycle is disrupted by Jody. However, these experiences finally helped him to regain a sense of balance and harmony in the nature.

The next story, "the Gabilan Mountains" symbolizes mysteries of becoming a man. Jody is on the verge of manhood, physically, mentally, and emotionally, as scholars have noted. Joseph Fontenrose in *John Steinbeck: An Introduction and Interpretation*, views the story as depicting the "passage from naïve childhood to the threshold of adulthood through knowledge of birth, old age, and death, gained through experience with horses" (122). Similarly, Arnold Goldsmith's essay, Thematic Rhythm in *The Red Pony*, compares "Jody's experiences in *The Red Pony* to the initiatory experiences leading to manhood found in the Nick Adams stories from Ernest Hemingway's *In Our Time*" (392). While these interpretations highlight Jody's classical initiation, they overlook his growing environmental awareness. When Jody looks at the mountains to the west, he feels a sense of fright "[h]e

thought often of the miles of ridge after ridge until at last there was the sea. When the peaks were pink in the morning they invited him among them: and when the sun had gone over the edge in the evening and the mountains were a purple-like despair, then Jody was afraid of them” (177). The "miles of ridge after ridge" represent the journey of life leading to death, while also drawing Jody in with their charm, “Jody knew something was there, something very wonderful because it wasn’t known, something secret and mysterious. He could feel within himself that this was so” (48-49). Early in the morning, the sun's presence feels inviting for Jody, but during the night, the "purple-like despair" makes him apprehensive. Crossing the mountains symbolizes Jody’s crossing in the course of time, mirroring a journey across the land which shape his understanding of the natural world. Jody eventually revisits to the natural world, much like the pony named "Gabilan."

Steinbeck, in this novella describes mountains, animals, tress, and the house as intertwined objects like Leopold, in the surrounding landscape:

He looked back for an instant at the Great Ones and shivered a little at the contrast. The foothill cup of the home ranch below him was sunny and safe. The house gleamed with white light and the barn was brown and warm. The red cows on the farther hill ate their way slowly toward the north. Even the dark cypress tree by the bunkhouse was usual and safe. The chickens scratched about in the dust of the farmyard with quick waltzing steps. (50)

Like Gitano, the Great Ones are mystifying, aged, wrinkled, and they deeply connected to their native land. Gitano's “eyes were large and deep and dark,” while “his face was as dark as dried beef” but mostly, “Gitano was mysterious like the mountains” (61). Gitano exemplifies the unbreakable bond between humanity and the land. His desire to return to his birthplace highlights the connection between humans and the layers of the land. By dying and being buried in the great mountain, his birth place Gitano becomes the bottom layer of the

Leopold's land pyramid then through Gitano; Jody begins to understand the human reliance on the land, as seen in native traditions. Gitano's frequent plea to Jody's father Carl Tiflin, "But I was born here" (61), shows Gitano's instinctual connection to the land, similar to the "energy circuit" Leopold describes (255). Witnessing Gitano's deep bond attached with his birthplace profoundly affects Jody, who "thought of the rapier and of Gitano. And he thought of the great mountains. A longing caressed him, and it was so sharp that he wanted to cry to get it out of his breast . . . he was full of nameless sorrow" (67-68). The "nameless sorrow" represents Jody's realization that human beings can never run away from their biotic community, even after death.

Steinbeck explores deeper understanding of human beings in both of the chapters "The Promise" and "The Leader of the People," that the omnivores are at the top of the land pyramid. Throughout his novels, Steinbeck consistently places people within their biotic communities. Louis Owens argues that Steinbeck "spent a lifetime attempting to bring about an alteration in the way Americans conceive of our relationship with the place we inhabit, attempting to help us 'grow up' and learn to live responsible and holistically"(2). Billy Buck becomes the voice of emphasizing man's interconnectedness with nature in the third story of the novella "The Promise," Similar to Jody's inspection of Gitano's bond with the land, he follows Billy Buck finds out about the human connection to the environment. Leopold notes that "[m]an is one of thousands of accretions to the height and complexity of the pyramid," we must also realize that the "invention of tools has enabled him to make changes of unprecedented violence, rapidity, and scope" (253-4). Billy acts as the ranch's ethical conscience, monitoring the "tools" that can cause harm within the biotic community. He teaches Jody to respect and appreciate the land and its residents. As Leopold suggests, "It is inconceivable . . . that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value" (261). Billy's conviction in this ethos

provides Jody not only with a mentor but also with a father figure and an ecological guide. Jody inquires Billy, "You'll tell me what to do about everything, won't you?" (86-7). Billy's respond is cleanly, "Why I'm half horse myself, you see" (87). Billy represents the deep ecology philosophy by promoting harmony with nature, utilizing the land solely for essential needs, and recognizing the intrinsic value of nature. Carl Tiflin emphasizes that "there's not a man in this country that knows more about colts than Billy" (91). No doubt, Billy is the only person on the Carl Tiflin's ranch who truly understands the balance of the farm community, leading Jody to see him as flawless. However, when Gabilan dies, Jody begins to see Billy more objectively, recognizing the humility in human limitations. Billy has realized that he is "capable of failure, and "[t]his knowledge made Billy much less sure of himself than he had been" (90). When Billy delivers the colt from Nellie's fresh carcass, he accentuates the fact that he delivered the colt as he "promised": "There's your colt. I promised. And there it is. I had to do it—had to" (94). Humans are merely members, not rulers, of the natural community. They must accept and embrace the inherent imperfections of life, including the inevitability of death.

"The Promise" also represents Jody's vow to himself to take accountability and turn into a dynamic member of the community. Just as he learned to care for a pony in "The Gift," he now steps up to the responsibility of raising the colt. As there is a limitation to what Billy can teach Jody, he must learn through his experience. Billy says that raising the colt by Jody himself is "the only good way" (82) to learn. He afterward asserts the idea of learning through self-discovery, quoting Carl: "'he wants you to start right at the start. That's the only way to learn. Nobody can tell you anything'" (86). This concept of learning through incidents reflects the thought that healing the world begins with our association to it. The chance Jody receives in "The Promise" drives him to entrust to caring for the colt, symbolizing his commitment to tending to the farm community as a whole.

By the last chapter of *The Red Pony*, “The Leader of the People,” Jody’s ecological awareness is almost absolute. Now he ought to learn to interpret and evaluate how other people treat the land. Leopold discusses the impact of humans on Land Ethics:

The combined evidence of history and ecology seems to support one general deduction: the less violent the man-made changes, the greater the probability of successful readjustment in the pyramid. Violence, in turn, varies with human population density; a dense population requires a more violent conversion. In this respect, North America has a better chance for permanence than Europe, if she can contrive to limit her density. (257)

Jody’s Grandfather represents the “violent man-made changes” Leopold warns about, which involve slowly populating and respecting the needs of the biotic community.

Grandfather, though conflicted about the westward association he was part of, shows the dominant view that supports over-population, over-production, and over-industrialization. Jody’s enthusiasm to know about “Indians crossing the plains” (101) is thwarted when Grandfather reveals the fact about “westering.” Grandfather feels that “the crossing wasn’t worth doing” (105). Jody sees his Grandfather’s regret. The West offered new resources for profit. Leopold notes that “[m]any biota currently regarded as ‘lands of opportunity’ are in fact already subsisting on exploitative agriculture, i.e., they have already exceeded their sustained carrying capacity” (257). The approach Jody sees is still relevant today rather than solving problems, people shift to new areas. Westering, as Steinbeck suggests, was a way to avoid solving ecological and residents issues. This philosophy’s consequences are shown in Grandfather’s regret and demonstrate Steinbeck’s deep ecological values and environmental ethics. Jody starts to understand the importance of the human role in maintaining the ecosystem through Grandfather. After hearing Grandfather repeats those old stories as mentioned:

It wasn't Indians that were important, or adventures, or even getting out here. It was a whole bunch of people made into one big crawling beast. And I was the head. It was westering and westering. Every man wanted something for himself, but the big beast that was all of them wanted only westering. I was the leader, but if I hadn't been there, someone else would have been the head. The thing had to have a head. (119)

Human beings are able to demolish any biotic community through what Leopold describes a "violent conversion" due to population density. At the end of *The Red Pony*, the grandfather's regret highlights the environmental crisis that both Steinbeck and Leopold predicted. The heading of the last chapter advocates that Jody should think about his place in the ecological community: "Maybe I could lead the people someday," he cautiously proposes (120). Jody envisions a type of leadership distinct from what his grandfather mourns.

In conclusion, the researcher depicts the interconnected relationship among human beings, and animal beings who depend on land for their existence. At the same time, the existence and protection on land also depend on humans and animals. It is impossible to imagine a healthy and happy life for living beings without appropriate nature, especially on land where living beings reside. There is a cyclic relation between land, humans, and animals. In John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony*, the human, animal, and land's interrelated relation is beautifully illustrated through the major character, Jody.

Chapter III

Correlation between Human and Nature in *Tortilla Flat*

Since the dawn of civilization, humans have relied on the natural world for food, clothing, shelter, and other indispensable resources. Instinctively, humans depend on the sun, air, water, plants, animals, land, minerals, and other living and non-living entities in nature. The energy that powers our cells, the nutrients that compose our bodies, and the ecosystem services that purify our water and air all come from the natural world from which we have evolved. As a renowned novelist, Steinbeck has vividly depicted humans' dependency on nature in the novel *Tortilla Flat*. Through careful observation and profound reflection on the harm human beings cause to nature, Steinbeck retains a clear perspective and seeks an effective method to promote a harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world. The researcher analyzes this harmonious coexistence as rooted in three essential elements: embracing a holistic ecological perspective, leading a simple life, and demonstrating reverence for nature. These elements are not merely thematic and intricately woven into the narrative and characters' lives, illustrating Steinbeck's ecological vision.

Firstly, Steinbeck's depiction of the paisanos' way of life in "Tortilla Flat" illustrates a holistic ecological perspective. This perspective is grounded in the understanding that humans are an integral part of the natural world, and their well-being is interdependent with their environment. He advocates for a holistic perspective, emphasizing that humans and nature are symbiotic and inseparable components of the same biosphere. Humanity cannot exist independently of nature, and it is an integral part of the biosphere, encompassing humans, society, and the natural environment. In *Tortilla Flat*, through the adventures of the paisanos, Steinbeck elaborates on the surrounding landscape to underscore the unity of humans and nature. He writes:

Monterey sits on the slope of a hill, with a blue bay below it and with a forest of tall dark pine trees at its back. The lower parts of the town are inhabited by Americans, Italians, catchers and canners of fish. But on the hill where the forest and the town intermingle, where the streets are innocent of asphalt and the corners free of street lights, the old inhabitants of Monterey are embattled as the Ancient Britons are embattled in Wales. These are the paisanos. (3-4)

The narrative extends beyond the lives of a group of friends to include the natural environment and all elements that form the community's ecosystem. Monterey is so integral to the characters of Danny and his friends that the town itself is imbued with life and unique color, presenting the lives of marginalized people from a broader, more holistic perspective. Seemingly trivial details, such as trees, hills streets, etc., help readers understand life in Monterey, which then sheds light on the lives of Danny and his friends. To connect with this idea Paul Pojman and Louis Pojman argue in their book *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*, "Deep ecology is egalitarian in that everyone and everything is equally valuable as part of the whole.

This transpersonal ecology calls on us to go beyond class, gender, and species and find our deepest fulfillment in harmony with nature (216). Deep ecology is a philosophical and environmental movement that emphasizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and the interconnectedness of life. It posits that every entity, regardless of class, gender, or species, holds equal worth within the greater ecological whole. This egalitarian perspective challenges anthropocentric views, advocating for a fundamental shift in how we perceive our relationship with nature. By recognizing the intrinsic value of all forms of life, deep ecology calls for a transpersonal approach that transcends individual identities and societal constructs to foster a profound sense of harmony with the natural world. This perspective urges us to seek our deepest fulfillment not in dominion over nature, but in coexistence with it,

embracing a holistic view that promotes the well-being of the entire biosphere. Through this lens, personal and collective well-being are inextricably linked to the health and balance of the environment, encouraging a more sustainable and compassionate way of living.

The diverse blend of misfits, gamblers, and drunkards, in *Tortilla Flat* illustrates Steinbeck's vivid depiction of the harmonious relationship between humans and their natural environment. Each figure represents a population, and the stones, trees, and mountains form a world that is not separate from man or an inseparable unit of man and his environment. From this perspective, Steinbeck strongly supports a holistic understanding of the relationship between humans and nature that is symbiotic and cooperative within a larger ecosystem. Each entity is an inextricable part of the integrated biosphere.

In *Tortilla Flat*, the characters, along with the warm sun, spectacular shoreline, and colorful plant and animal life, closely match the paisanos themselves. Steinbeck's concept of environmental ecology emphasizes the intrinsic connection between humans and their environment. In an era where individuals often feel isolated and disconnected from one another, *Tortilla Flat* offers a unique episodic narrative that illustrates the formation and flourishing of a group characterized by closeness, camaraderie, mutual trust, shared responsibilities, and a commitment to each other. This group values what is good, supports relationships, and strives for peace and security. Steinbeck describes this sense of community with warmth, noting, "...when you speak of Danny's house you are understood to mean a unit of which parts are men, from which came sweetness and joy, philanthropy" (3). The notion of Danny's house as a unit underscores the importance of togetherness, illustrating the need for ecological thinking through the lens of ideal community ecology. Steinbeck introduces ecological thinking by portraying an ideal community in *Tortilla Flat*. Frederick Turner in a book *Ecocriticism Reader* shares a chapter named Cultivating the American Garden, there he argues that, "if nature is the opposite of society, then the natural man is essentially asocial, or

even antisocial” (46). In the context, that nature is viewed as the antithesis of society, the concept of the "natural man" suggests an individual who operates outside societal frameworks and norms. Often characterized as asocial or even antisocial, the natural man is seen as living in alignment with innate instincts and personal values rather than conforming to social conventions. This perspective portrays such individuals as prioritizing personal autonomy, harmony with the natural world, and self-sufficiency over communal obligations and collective identities. Their perceived asocial or antisocial tendencies stem from a rejection of societal expectations and a preference for a more individualistic existence.

The dichotomy prompts reflection on the nature of human identity and the tension between individual freedom and societal cohesion in shaping human behavior and relationships. A natural community typically consists of organisms with similar life habits. The paisanos in *Tortilla Flat* form such a community, bound by similar outlooks and survival needs, including resources, habitats, and life-supporting systems. This group depends on both the environment and other species for their survival, reflecting a fundamental ecological principle. In this way, *Tortilla Flat* highlights the interconnectedness of life and the essential role of community in ecological thinking.

Major character Danny and his friends often spend entire days simply gazing at the pine trees and enjoying the beauty of nature. Pilon, in particular, is frequently stopped in his tracks by the spiritual beauty of the place. Steinbeck writes, “Pilon was a lover of beauty and a mystic. He raised his face into the sky and his soul arose out of him the sun’s afterglow” (18). Pilon is profoundly moved by the tranquility and beauty of nature. It refines and enlightens his soul. Nature serves as a guiding force, capable of touching his heart and rescuing him from selfishness and desire. Paul Taylor in *Biocentric Egalitarianism* points out, “[W]hen we adopt the attitude of respect for nature as an ultimate moral attitude we commit to live by certain normative principles. These principles constitute the rules of conduct and

standards of character that are to govern our treatment of the natural world” (180). When we adopt respect for nature as an ultimate moral attitude, we commit to a comprehensive set of normative principles that dictate our conduct and values in relation to the natural world.

Central to this commitment is recognizing the intrinsic worth of all living beings and ecosystems, valuing them beyond their instrumental use to humanity. This moral stance guides us towards practices that prioritize sustainability and conservation, urging us to minimize ecological harm, preserves biodiversity, and protects natural habitats. It calls for responsible stewardship through actions such as reducing carbon emissions, promoting eco-friendly technologies, and advocating for environmental policies that prioritize the well-being of ecosystems and species. Moreover, respect for nature fosters a deeper connection and empathy towards the environment, inspiring awe and appreciation for its beauty and resilience. Embracing this attitude compels us to integrate ethical considerations into our daily lives and collective endeavors, ensuring a harmonious coexistence with nature that safeguards its vitality for future generations. For the residents, nature is a spiritual sanctuary where people can receive the generous gifts of rejuvenation, refinement, and enlightenment essential treasures for human survival and growth. Notably, the weather in Monterey often mirrors the characters' spirits. Steinbeck presents his holistic view, showing that humans and nature are closely connected and form a developing organism. Humans are part of nature, and from his experiences and reflections, Steinbeck understands that whether nature is useful to humans and, everything in nature has intrinsic value and a right to live. As a highly developed species, humans should interact responsibly with the natural environment

In *Tortilla Flat*, nature is portrayed as a significant source of human happiness and companionship. The woods filled with black cypress pine trees become a cherished retreat for Danny and his friends, where they relish the beauty and vitality of nature. His friends also find joy in woods. Steinbeck writes:

It was purple dusk, that sweet time when the day's sleeping over and the evening of pleasure and conversation has not begun. The pine trees were very black against the sky, and all the objects on the ground were obscured with dark but the sky was as mournfully bright as memory. The gulls flew lazily home to the sea rocks after a day's visit to the fish canneries of Monterey. (17)

In this peaceful setting, Danny and his friends appreciate the stunning scenery and the presence of wild animals. Whether in the woods near their home or in the valley surrounding their town, Danny and his other friends consistently find shelter, food, and, most importantly, a place to relax, enjoy companionship, and find happiness in their lives. Eco critic Lynn White Jr. also shares a book chapter in *The Ecocriticism Reader* entitled "Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" where he states that, "What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship" (12). Activities regarding ecology are fundamentally shaped by the beliefs about the relationship between humans and nature. Whether we see ourselves as separate from or interconnected with the natural world influences our priorities and approaches to conservation and sustainability. Views that prioritize human dominance over nature may lead to exploitation of resources, while ecocentric perspectives advocate for sustainable practices that prioritize ecosystem health and long-term sustainability. Indigenous perspectives, emphasizing stewardship and reciprocity, also offer valuable insights into harmonious coexistence with the environment. These diverse perspectives underscore the importance of understanding and respecting the complex dynamics of the man-nature relationship in addressing ecological challenges. Man nature relationship is clearly depicted in the novella *Tortilla Flat*. Pilon says, "I go," said Pilon, "to the woods to have out my sleep. I counsel you come too. It will be well if Danny does not see us for a little while". They nodded gravely and followed him into the pine forest" (38). When there is misunderstanding among them especially with Danny because Danny is the owner of

two houses, other friends find woods for sleeping and relaxing. Woods provide solace for them.

The ecological perspective is further illustrated by characters' appreciation of their natural surroundings. The main character, Danny is deeply moved by the tranquility and beauty of the natural environment around him. Steinbeck writes, "When the sun was clear of the pines, and the ground was warm, and the night's dew was drying on the geranium leaves, Danny came out on his porch to sit in the sunshine and to muse warmly of certain happenings" (39). Steinbeck describes how Danny gets refined and enlightened by nature, portraying nature as a spiritual force that can guide humans towards selflessness and enlightenment. This is a direct reflection of the holistic ecological perspective, where nature is not just a backdrop for human activity but an active participant in the human experience, capable of influencing and transforming lives. Cheryll Glotfelty in her book *The Ecocriticism Reader* writes, "All ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnection between nature and culture" (XIX). Ecocriticism explores the intricate relationship between nature and culture, recognizing that human societies are deeply interconnected with the physical environment, and both shape and are shaped by each other. At its core, ecocriticism challenges traditional divisions between nature as a passive backdrop and culture as a purely human construct. Instead, it examines how cultural beliefs, practices, and ideologies influence our attitudes towards the environment, as well as how environmental changes and degradation impact cultural systems. Ecocritics analyze literature, art, and discourse to uncover representations of nature, often revealing underlying cultural values and attitudes towards the natural world. By studying these connections, ecocriticism aims to foster a deeper understanding of our relationship with nature's moral, social, and political implications. It encourages reevaluating our role as stewards of the Earth, advocating for

sustainable practices and policies that promote ecological integrity while honoring the interconnectedness of nature and human culture.

In *Tortilla Flat*, four friends living together in a house share their resources, concerns, and commitment to one another. Their bond is strengthened when they decide to give refuge to the Pirate, a mentally handicapped poor man, and his five faithful dogs. Pilon, upon encountering the Pirate and his dogs, feels compelled to show him mercy and love. He believes that the best way to do this is by sharing his belongings, extending the same generosity and support that he shares with his friends. This act of kindness further illustrates the theme of harmonious coexistence and mutual support that runs throughout the novel. Steinbeck writes, “The house was beginning to be a little crowded with five men and five dogs; but from the first day Danny and his friends realized that their invitation to the Pirate had been inspired by that weary and anxious angel who guarded their destinies and protected them from evil” (52). These thought-provoking words of Steinbeck inspire the ecological pattern of community living and highlight the benefits of such a system. In return for their kindness, the Pirate brings in more food that he receives through charity, which they all share.

His contributions include fresh fish, half pies, untouched loaves of stale bread, and meat. Their basic needs for food, shelter, and clothing are met, and they feel content living a simple, rustic life, untouched by the materialism of the world. In the book *Steinbeck and Environment: Interdisciplinary Approach* editors in the introduction write, “In Steinbeck's work the most redemptive sense that humans have is a kind of consciousness of the ecological web, a sense of their interdependence on one another” (19). This harmonious and mutually supportive way of living underscores the value of community and the fulfillment that comes from a life connected to nature and free from excessive material desires. In Steinbeck's works, there is a recurring theme of humans finding redemption through an awareness of their interconnectedness within the ecological web. Characters often discover

meaning and purpose in their relationships with the land and with each other. This sense of interdependence fosters resilience and solidarity, especially in times of hardship or crisis. Steinbeck suggests that acknowledging and respecting this ecological interconnectedness can lead to personal growth and a deeper appreciation for the web of life that sustains us all. His narratives emphasize the transformative power of recognizing our place within the natural world, highlighting how this awareness can inspire compassion, empathy, and a commitment to environmental stewardship.

In addition to its crucial role in sustaining life, nature also provides spiritual nourishment to human beings. Beyond supplying food, clothing, and other essential materials for survival and development, nature offers joy, recreation, and enlightenment. One of the examples in *Tortilla Flat* that illustrates the profound spiritual influence of the natural environment is, “The night came down as they walked into the forest. Their feet found the pine needle bed . . . A high fog covered the sky, and behind it the moon shone so that forest was filled with gauze-like light” (60). This natural beauty even during the night refreshes and saves their soul. They enjoy the pine needles as their bed, fog, moon forest everything has provided them solace. Paul Taylor in *Biocentric Egalitarianism* argues, “The ecological relationships between any community of living things and their environment form an organic whole of functionally interdependent parts. Each ecosystem is a small universe itself” (185). The ecological relationships within any community of living organisms and their environment form a cohesive system of interdependent parts. Each species plays a specific role, creating a complex web of interactions that maintains the balance and health of the ecosystem. This interdependence ensures that every component, from plants and herbivores to carnivores and decomposers, contributes to the system's stability. Thus, each ecosystem functions as a small, self-contained universe, where every element is essential to the whole.

Instead of relying on mechanical gadgets, the paisanos depend much on nature in ordering their days around the ebb and flow of the natural environment. Since Danny and his other friends are comfortable and safe in the natural environment, they see no need for conventional material items and comforts. Steinbeck explains, "Clocks and watches are not used by the paisanos of Tortilla Flat. ... For practical purposes, there was the great golden watch of the sun. It was better than a watch, and safer" (116). The paisanos' life follows the time and the changes of seasons of nature. Their life is closely connected with nature. Arne Naess's idea is notable to cite here. In the book chapter "Ecosophy T: Deep Versus Shallow Ecology" he mentions that "Ecological information about the intimate dependency of humanity upon decent behavior toward the natural environment offered a much needed rational and economic justification for processes of identification" (227). The identity of human beings is connected with the biotic community. In the absence of one another existence of each entity is almost meaningless. Ecological information demonstrating humanity's dependence on responsible environmental behavior provides a rational and economic justification for prioritizing conservation efforts. By highlighting the tangible benefits of ecosystem health such as clean water and climate regulation the rationale extends beyond moral considerations to underscore the economic value of preserving natural resources. This understanding supports policies that promote sustainable development and emphasize the interconnectedness between ecological well-being and human prosperity.

Secondly, Steinbeck highlights the simple lifestyle as the path to a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. From the beginning, Steinbeck presents this small group of Paisanos as an interdependent and interrelated group of people. Steinbeck emphasizes the relationship of human beings with life in its entirety. Steinbeck says in the preface that, "the Paisanos are clean of commercialism, complicated systems of America business, and having nothing that can be stolen, exploited or mortgaged....ancestors have

lived in California for a hundred two years” (4). Paisanos remain unaffected by any system that dominates the world. They are simple though they don’t have anything; they are not worried about food shelter and anything else. They share whatever they have, they spend their time drinking and enjoying in the woods. They are the inhabitants of the past hundreds of year; they are attached to the land they are living. Taylor further mentions in Biocentric Egalitarianism, “When one views the realm of nature from the perspective of the biocentric outlook, one never forgets that in the long run, the integrity of the entire biosphere of our planet is essential to the realization of the good of its constituent communities of life, both human and nonhuman” (185). Viewing nature through a biocentric outlook recognizes that all living beings have intrinsic value and emphasizes the interconnectedness of all components within the biosphere, including humans. A biocentric outlook on nature emphasizes that the integrity of Earth's biosphere is essential for the well-being of both human and non-human communities. This perspective recognizes the interconnectedness of all life forms and advocates for environmental stewardship that prioritizes the long-term health and sustainability of ecosystems. By valuing the intrinsic worth of all species and emphasizing ecosystem integrity, biocentrism promotes ethical considerations that extend beyond human interests to preserve biodiversity and support ecological resilience. This perspective advocates Paisanos and Danny’s integrity of the entire biosphere as essential for the well-being of both human and nonhuman communities. It calls for sustainable living and conservation practices, stressing that disruptions in the ecosystem can have surging effects. By adopting this outlook, Danny and his friends acknowledge their ethical responsibility to protect and preserve the natural world, ensuring that ecological processes continue to support the diverse life forms on this planet.

Another example of a simple lifestyle is of Danny who, being an owner of the two houses weighed down Steinbeck writes in the primary text, “Pilon noticed that the worry of

property was settling on Danny's face. No more in life would that face be free of care" (12). Danny had always longed for his old and simple existence. Hence, he plans to rent one of his houses to Pilon but has never thought of collecting rent. Even when that house was burnt by the carelessness of Pilon, Danny for a moment only mourns over the transitory quality of earthly property and never allows his anger to overwhelm him. This incident in turn makes him transcend to another state, perhaps an elevated state of setting his mind on the much more valuable spiritual property which can never be confiscated or destroyed in anyway. This nature of Danny is the concept of living in a community helping each other. To connect with this idea Albert Schweitzer writes "the man who has become ethical a will informed by reverence for life and self-sacrifice for the sake of life exists in the world is itself significant for the world" (173). An individual who embraces ethical values rooted in reverence for life and self-sacrifice holds profound significance in the world. Their commitment to prioritizing the well-being of all living beings and ecosystems inspires positive change and fosters a deeper respect for the interconnectedness of life. By embodying these principles, they contribute to a more sustainable and compassionate global community, setting an example of integrity and ethical responsibility for others to follow. In doing so, they play a pivotal role in shaping a more harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world, promoting a future where ethical considerations guide decisions toward collective well-being and environmental conservation. Danny is a person who embraces ethics rooted in reverence for all life and is willing to sacrifice for its well-being and significance in the world. His actions towards his friends embody deep respect for the interconnectedness of life and inspire others to consider the broader impacts of their choices. By promoting sustainability and environmental stewardship, they contribute positively to societal values, influencing a collective mindset of care and responsibility towards the natural world.

These Paisanos neither crave for power nor riches nor envious for anything for they

know that these will disrupt their ecological equilibrium which bind them together as friends and family. They always pool their resources and advocate the concept of common property and sharing. To the Paisanos the house becomes a common property, a perfect habitat that not only provides shelter to the desolate persons from heat, wind, rain, and cold but also a providential place where they all live, eat, laugh, be merry, sleep, be sad and even cry together sometimes. Not only paisanos five dogs brought by Pirate also never fight each other for food the lines from the primary text says, “then he opened the parcels and fed he dogs....the dogs sat down about him, licking their lips nervously, and shifting their feet while they waited for food. They never fought over it, and that was a surprising thing”(45). There was ecological equilibrium among the dogs and dogs and humans as well. Taylor argues “The ecological relationships between any community of living things and their environment form an organic whole of functionally interdependent parts”(185). The ecological relationships within any community of living things and their environment create an organic whole composed of functionally interdependent parts. Pirate and his dogs are creating an organic whole community interacting symbiotic partnerships in order to ensure the sustainability and resilience of the ecosystem. This interconnectedness highlights the importance of preserving the integrity of each ecosystem to maintain the overall health of the biosphere. There are noteworthy thought-provoking words of Steinbeck which inspire the ecological pattern of community living and the benefits attained from such system. The pirate in return for kindness of his friends brings in more food that he received through charity. The lines from the text say:

Every morning long before his friends awake, the Pirate arose from his corner and, followed by his dogs, he made the rounds of the restaurants and the wharves. He was one of those for whom everyone feels kindness. His package grew larger. The paisanos received his bounty and made use of it; fresh fish, half pies untouched loaves

of stale bread, meat that required only a little soda to take the green out. They began really to live. (54-55)

Paisanos's needs of basic amenities such as food, shelter and clothing are met in his way and they feel content living a simple and rustic life untouched by materialism of the world. Food is supplied by pirate and pirate is given shelter by Danny this act of living is mutual coexisting. Aldo Leopold in *Land Ethic* argues that, "All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise; that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in that community, but his ethics prompt him also to co-operate" (238-39). Ethics developed by pirate and paisanos are based on the premise that an individual is a member of a community composed of interdependent parts.

This foundational idea recognizes that while individuals are driven by instincts to compete for resources and status within their community, they are also guided by ethical principles that encourage cooperation. This duality reflects the balance between self-interest and the collective goodness of both pirate and paisanos including Danny. Ethical behavior, therefore, arises from the understanding that one's well-being is linked to the well-being of others in the community. Their cooperation to each other fosters social cohesion, mutual support, and shared progress, which are essential for the survival and flourishing of both individuals and the community as a whole. The mechanized world does not have a place either in the lives of paisanos or in the Tortilla Flat. The author says the streets were devoid of electric lights. Though the Paisanos lived only in candle lights yet their love and concern for each other was sufficient to light their life and house. He emphasizes the theme of simplicity by illustrating how modern conveniences in Danny's life ultimately create problems. The vacuum cleaner Danny gives to Sweets Ramirez exemplifies this point. Vacuum is shiny and symbolizes pride and noble status, even though it is useless without electricity. When the vacuum is later traded to Torrelli, who runs a grocery store, a scandal

arises because it has no motor, which symbolizes the emptiness of modern conveniences like the vacuum cleaner. The lines from the text say, “Torelli says he bought a sweeping machine from Pilon and hooked it up to his light wire, it wouldn’t work. So he looked on the inside, and it had no motor” (83). This symbolizes the emptiness of modern conveniences.

If something should happen to upset the life of one in the community, the entire community springs to action to make up for the loss somehow. Thus, the whole of Tortilla Flat leads to action to host a party for Danny and keep him happy when Danny becomes ill. Even the so long enemy Torelli, is caught in the fury of the moment and tells his wife, “May be we will go to Danny’s house. I will take a few gallons for my friends” (145) that they should go to Danny's house taking a few gallons of wine for his friends. Friends doesn't mean the five alone -Danny, Pilon, Pablo, Joe and the Pirate, but even the whole of Tortilla Flat feels a sense of camaraderie. The whole of the Flat marched up the hill to Danny's house. ““They are going to give big party for Danny” “everyone is going” (142). Thus, Tortilla Flat becomes synonymous with the camaraderie expressed by the Paisano community. The community is sadly inured to life's difficulties for the sake of being together and the rapport they share with the place. Steinbeck through this novella asks us to consider what it means to be an individual within the vast body of humanity. He reveals that people are not separate from the land on which we tread, but instead share a common fate with it. As Steinbeck suggests, we have to understand the elements that make up both ourselves and our environment. While we are composed of these elements, we are far greater than the sum of our parts. To prevent arrogance, we must continually recognize our fellowship with nature. Nature is something to respect, but it is also something we must evolve from as we strive to become kinder and more compassionate human beings. Bill Devall and George Sessions in Deep Ecology argue that “ecological consciousness is the search for a more objective consciousness and state of being through an active deep questioning and meditative process

and way of life” (232). Ecological consciousness involves striving for a deeper and more objective understanding of the place within the natural world. This pursuit entails actively engaging in deep questioning, reflecting on interactions with the environment, and adopting a meditative approach to life. It encourages individuals to critically examine their beliefs, behaviors, and the impact they have on the ecosystem. Through this process, paisanos develop a heightened awareness of the interconnectedness between humans and nature, fostering a sense of responsibility and respect. There living is mindfully and in harmony with the environment, ecological consciousness which acknowledges and honors the intrinsic value of all living things.

Thirdly, Steinbeck emphasizes the importance of reverence for nature, the only life-supporting system upon which humans can depend. In *Tortilla Flat*, the residents exhibit their reverence for nature in various ways. Reverence for nature is subtly woven throughout the narrative, reflecting the deep connection between the characters and their natural surroundings. The story is set in the scenic hills above Monterey, California, where the paisanos, a group of unusual and appealing characters, live in harmony with the land. These lines from the text say, “Pablo and Pilon in their blue jeans and blue shirts walked in comradeship into the gulch behind the house, and after a little time they returned to sit in the sun on the front porch to listen to the fish horns on the streets” (21). In the morning when the sun was up clear of the pine trees, their lifestyle embraces simplicity and minimalism, showing a profound appreciation for the bountiful landscape that provides for their basic needs. The hills, forests, and ocean are not only serving as a backdrop but also as sustenance, highlighting the characters' contentment and joy derived from the natural world around them, free from the trappings of modern materialism. Danny's house, surrounded by nature, becomes a symbol of community and friendship, signifying the paisanos' bond with each other and with the land they inhabit. Through these elements, *Tortilla Flat* conveys a sense of

reverence for nature, emphasizing the intertwined fates of human lives and the natural world, and encouraging readers to appreciate and respect the beauty and importance of their own natural surroundings. Towards the end of life though Danny has the company of Pilon and Pablo, he is lonely and there is an ache in his heart. He has sunk in great sadness and lonesome. When Pablo finds him at the end of the dark pier, Pablo sees "a black cloud in the air over Danny's head... it was a big black bird, as big as a man. It hung in the air like a hawk over a rabbit hole" [15]. That's not only the omen of Danny's death, but rather the reverence that Danny's friends show toward nature. Ever after that day, Pablo has not stopped telling the residents of the fear nature may impose upon their community.

To sum up, in *Tortilla Flat* John Steinbeck skillfully illustrates the concept of harmonious coexistence through the lives of the paisanos. He shows that people are not separate from the land on which they tread, and in fact share a common fate. As Steinbeck suggests, it is a human duty to be familiar with the elements that compose human and environment. By embracing a holistic ecological perspective, leading a simple life, and demonstrating reverence for nature, the characters exemplify a way of living that is deeply connected to their environment. Steinbeck's portrayal of these themes provides readers with a profound understanding of the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world, offering a timeless message about the importance of living in harmony with nature. Through detailed textual references and a rich narrative, *Tortilla Flat* stands as evidences to the enduring relevance of ecological thinking and the intrinsic value of simplicity and reverence in achieving a balanced and fulfilling life. To prevent human beings from running away with their arrogance, they must constantly recognize their association with nature. And nature, while something to respect, is also something human beings must evolve from as they strive to be kinder and more compassionate human beings.

Chapter IV

Exploring Ecological Consciousness through Eco-Narratives

Humankind is fundamentally connected to nature and cannot survive physically or spiritually without its support and nourishment. In John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony*, the intricate interconnectedness of humans, animals, and land is masterfully depicted, illustrating the profound and often poignant relationships among these elements. Through the experiences of young Jody Tiflin on his family's ranch, Steinbeck explores the cyclical nature of life, growth, and death, emphasizing how each entity is inextricably linked. The animals on the ranch, from the small red pony to the old horse Easter, embody the themes of hope, loss, and the passage of time, teaching Jody valuable lessons about responsibility, empathy, and the harsh realities of existence. The land itself with its beauty and brutality serves as a backdrop for the unfolding drama, reflecting the characters' internal struggles and triumphs. Steinbeck's fictions contain rich descriptions of the natural world underscore its significance, suggesting that the land is both a nurturing force and an indifferent entity, shaping the lives of those who depend on it. In *The Red Pony* it suggests the land as nurturing force.

In the same way *Tortilla Flat* depicts theme of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature that permeates the lives of major character, Danny and his friends. Set in the hills above Monterey, California, the novel portrays a group of paisanos who live simple, without materialistic lives deeply intertwined with the natural world around them. The characters, particularly Danny and his friends, exhibit a profound connection to the land, finding solace and sustenance in their surroundings. Their daily lives are marked by a rhythm that aligns with nature's cycles, suggesting a symbiotic relationship where humans and the environment support and enrich one another. Steinbeck illustrates how this harmonious existence fosters a community, freedom, and contentment among the paisanos, who often prioritize friendship and the joys of nature over material wealth and societal expectations.

Through vivid descriptions of the landscape and the characters' interactions with it, Steinbeck emphasizes the beauty and generosity of the natural world. The paisanos' lifestyle, though marked by poverty, is portrayed as rich in experiences and connections that transcend material concerns. Their respect for and integration with nature underscores a philosophy of life that values simplicity, resilience, and harmony. In this way, *Tortilla Flat* presents a compelling vision of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. Steinbeck's portrayal of the paisanos' lives serve as a testament to the fulfillment and peace that can be found when individuals live in balance with the natural world. The novel invites readers to reconsider their relationship with nature and appreciate the profound, often overlooked, benefits of living with harmony in the environment.

The previous chapters, particularly chapter two and three shape the textual analysis of the primary texts applying ecocritical parameters. Two texts are explored, examined and analyzed with the insights developed by ecocritics to assess how ecocriticism, especially land ethic animal liberation deep ecology, connects the issue of ecological consciousness. The extracts from other literary creations have become supportive references for amplifying the value of ecocriticism. For this purpose, the primary texts first have been examined to explore the connection among human animal and land. This concern of connecting relation among human animal and land has sustained jovial relationship among these entities.

After carrying out this research work, the researcher gets plentiful ideas of ecological consciousness in John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*, it becomes evident that both works reflect a deep, albeit distinct, connection between human characters and their natural environments. Steinbeck's nuanced portrayal of these interactions highlights the complexity and significance of the natural world in shaping human experiences and societal dynamics.

In *The Red Pony*, the bond between Jody Tiflin and his surroundings is central to the narrative, illustrating the formative role of nature in his maturation. The landscape and its creatures, from the pony to the mountains, serve as catalysts for Jody's understanding of life, death, and responsibility. Steinbeck's detailed descriptions of the Salinas Valley underscore the interdependence between humans and the environment, suggesting a symbiotic relationship where the natural world profoundly impacts personal growth and philosophical outlooks. Conversely, *Tortilla Flat* presents a more communal and somewhat whimsical interaction with nature. The paisanos' lives are intertwined with the coastal and forested regions around Monterey. Their carefree, almost idyllic existence is portrayed against the backdrop of a bountiful and forgiving environment. Here, Steinbeck emphasizes the role of nature in fostering a sense of community and shared identity. The characters' appreciation for the land is evident in their informal stewardship, celebrating the environment as a source of sustenance and spiritual solace.

To sum up both texts, through their distinct narrative lenses, advocate for recognition of the natural world's intrinsic value and the necessity of ecological awareness. *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat* remind readers of the profound connections humans share with their environment, encouraging a mindful and respectful approach to the natural world. Steinbeck's exploration of these themes serves as an early literary call to ecological consciousness, urging an understanding and preservation of the delicate balance between human life and the broader ecological systems that sustain it.

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