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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AN INDIVIDUAL AND A SOCIETY: ADJUSTMENT DISORDERS OF JOHN STEINBECK'S CHARACTERS

This article is an attempt to expand the existing criticism concerning the socio-psychological concerns of John Steinbeck's novels. Usually *Cannery Row*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Pastures of Heaven*, and *Tortilla Flat* are analyzed separately with little attention paid to the adjustment of individuals, mainly because Steinbeck's critics have often neglected the relationships between the circumstances, society and individuals and, consequently, not once have they misread his narratives. John Steinbeck was well aware of social relations of individuals, and his deep concern for those incompatible with social standards gave rise to the richness of psychological and social behavior underlying portrayals in his œuvre. Although the aim of this paper is not to seek diagnosis of character-patients' adjustment problems, socio-psychological considerations of Bruce Friedland, the Sarasons, James Sawrey and Charles Telford will be summoned to aid the analysis.

Adjustment is understood to be an attempt to solve conflicts involving one's own needs and desires on the one hand, and the demands of the situation, society and environment on the other. If a conflict is solved to the benefit of both sides, adjustment is recognized as satisfactory, "adaptation involves the balance between what people do and want to do, on the one hand, and what the environment [the community] wants and expects, on the other" (SARASON AND SARASON 4). Furthermore, a successful adjustment in a par-

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ticular environment may appear to be a failure in another; this comes to the fact that "the same person may handle a frightening or difficult situation well at one time and maladaptively at others. Some people may behave adaptively in the same situation that others handle poorly." (SARASON AND SARASON 5) Consequently, some adaptive mechanisms used in one situation may prove to be inadequate in another.

Often a man cannot cope effectively with difficult situations in any other way but through distortion of their perception of reality. Such avoidance of reality is the first step in behavioral disturbance; it is often achieved through the deployment of defense mechanisms. The main purpose of these mechanisms, which not infrequently take the form of rationalization, projection and repression, is to circumvent stress, environment, anxiety or an unfortunate situation. Because these defense mechanisms "involve the partial or complete denial, distortion, or disguise of motives, acts [...] and are means of bolstering self-esteem through self-deception" (SAWREY AND TELFORD 336), they are especially popular with individuals suffering from personality disorders and neuroses who engage in compensatory adjustment patterns. Although more elaborate explorations of personality disorders and neuroses will be forthcoming, the subcategories should be introduced here, for the sake of clarity. The individuals with faulty personality development fail in socialization process include obsessive-compulsive, passive-aggressive, antisocial, narcissistic, paranoid, dependant, avoidant and histrionic. They distort and manipulate reality to fit their needs, yet they still maintain a fair grip on it. However, the same cannot be said about neurotics, both phobic and obsessive-compulsive, who no only distort their perception of reality but also avoid any involvement or contact with it. Neurotics exhibit too much anxiety, which vents through complicated rituals, seclusion, uncooperativeness and manipulations. While psychotics escape into the worlds of their own fantasies and hallucinations, people suffering from affective psychosis additionally experience extreme moods.

Although the range of maladaptive behavior is wide, there is one heading under which many cases of maladjustment can be placed and categorized as personality disorders. People exhibiting these disorders try to distort their perception of the world, added to that they also manipulate others to their apparent advantage. Consequently, they are selfish and lack empathy, therefore "relationships with these people are often confusing, sordid, or exploitative, and are almost always destructive" (PODUSKA 82). No wonder these individuals have problems with making and maintaining long-lasting relationships. To make matters worse, those with personality disorders are not shattered by anxiety, guilt, and dread, however, they cause these very feel-

ings in others who happen to be in contact with them. Out of a whole spectrum of personality disorders only the most significant will be presented and discussed in relation to the characters in John Steinbeck's fiction.

The two personality disorders, histrionic and narcissistic, seem to be the least damaging in inter-human relations. Individuals with these disorders rely on the deceptive self-image of uniqueness so needed for their low self esteem. "Histrionics and narcissists," as Friedland explicates, "need attention and approval to bolster a weak self-image. They feel special only when others say that they are, so they adopt an image that they think will make them appear unique" (42). In many cases they pretend to be what they are not, as a result they are lost between the real and imaginary self image. In so doing, the true motives of their actions are hidden not only from others but, more importantly, from themselves.

Histrionics and narcissists share many characteristics, such as: being exploitative, manipulative and lacking in empathy. On the other hand, extreme egotism and aloofness differentiates narcissists from histrionics. Sweet Ramirez, one of the characters in *Tortilla Flat*, seems to suffer from narcissist disorder as she craves admiration and attention, and therefore she sets up a trap on Danny — her next prey. Danny has got a newly-established status in the community due to the two houses he has inherited. Thus Ramirez fantasies about power, prosperity and success she could gain by contact with Danny. Finally, he is trapped and "the grand status of Danny is likened to the new status of Senõra Ramirez" (KINNEY 45). Sweet is stupefied with her grandeur and uniqueness evoked by the vacuum cleaner she has received from Danny. Ramirez feels she deserves respect and special treatment as it is widely known that "people who did not remember her name referred to her as 'that with the cleaning-machine'" (*Tortilla Flat* 114). She could not wish more. The motorless vacuum cleaner raises her status in the community. She has gained fame and "[grown] puffed up with pride and dragged her sweeping-machine into the conversation on every occasion" (BEACH 88).

As a narcissist, Sweet Ramirez exaggerates the situation to her advantage, yet in one aspect Sweet's behavior is not typical — criticism of her behavior does not cause her to feel "humiliation and rage" (FRIEDLAND 48). Senõra lives in a non-electrified district and when her neighbors point to that fact she easily "push[es] the cleaner about on the theory that of course it would clean better with electricity, but one could not have everything" (*Tortilla Flat* 115). Immediately, she turns the situation into her advantage and claims that: "My friend is a rich man. I think pretty soon there will be wires full of electricity coming right into the house, and then zip and zip and zip! And you have the house clean!" (*Tortilla Flat* 114).

Like narcissists, histrionics advertise their uniqueness, yet in a somewhat more outward way. Contrary to narcissists, they are often warm, sociable and outspoken in agitating their exceptionality and their weak self image is easily influenced by others. Curley and his wife in *Of Mice and Men* show many elements of the complex histrionic personality disorder. They exhibit attention-attracting behavior by learned gestures and attitudes towards people, in particular towards farmhands. The Curleys crave attention and admiration, hence their "actions and mannerisms in the presence of others suggest a kind of emotional theatricality, almost a stage performance" (FRIEDLAND 43). It can be easily noticed in those scenes where Curley ostentatiously wears gloves filled with vaseline, so as to show people that he is gentle and soft for his wife (possibly a subconscious fear of inability to please and control his wife). She, his unnamed wife, shows discontent and disgrace of having to live a "regular" life on a farm. Curley self-deceptively claims his control over his wife and "he's keepin' that hand soft for his wife" (*Of Mice and Men* 30). Obviously this statement is intended for the public and himself.

Also Curley and his wife, due to their inflated self images, have failed to find human companionship.[1] Curley's wife has almost lost her battle with her real self as she "is a victim of a shallow, selfish imagination. Her pathetic loneliness and dream of movie stardom reflect the monotony of ranch life and her own doom" (MCCARTHY 63). She clings to the self-deceptive idea of gregariousness and uniqueness embodied in entrancing men around her. Therefore Mark Spilka is mistaken saying that Curley's wife "is not even provocative, she is just a lonely woman whose attempts of friendliness are misunderstood" (65). Howard Levant is even more deceived by her actions saying that "Curley's wife attempts to seduce Lennie as a way to demonstrate her hatred of Curley" (136). It is probable that she desires to show her hatred towards her husband yet psychological evidence shows that her behavior towards men is rooted in her grandeur self image.

Curley's wife behaves as if "the Hollywood ideal of the seductive movie queen [was] her only standard of love" (Levant 142) and life, one wants to add. She expresses her unfulfilled dreams: "I tell you I could of went with shows. Not jus' one, neither. An' a guy tol' me he could put me in pitchers" (*Of Mice and Men* 86). Her yearnings of being special are visible in her behavior and only when she lies dead "the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face" (*Of Mice*

[1] For a closer analysis see: Peter LISCA, *Nature and Myth* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1978), 80.

and Men 101). Her whole histrionic life and personality was frustrated by the absence of gratification and satisfaction.

Apart from histrionics and narcissists, avoidants and dependants also use their personality disorders to manipulate other people. What sets them apart, however, is not so much concentration on approval but on relationships with others. A common feature which characterizes dependants and avoidants is a need to form intimate relationships with others, no matter the sacrifice. Lennie seems to be a typical dependant person, as he is disabled in human interrelations by his extreme submissiveness. Lennie's process of decision making is hampered and therefore "George would […] now do his share in guiding and controlling" (GEISMAR 259) Lennie, who desperately needs it. His helplessness is most likely a learnt defensive behavior against the feeling of unworthiness, hence all the time "Lennie [is] looking helplessly to George for instruction" (*Of Mice and Men* 28). As all dependants, Lennie "need[s] constant reassurance that [his] actions are appropriate and acceptable" (FRIEDLAND 64). Even when he is told what to do, Lennie is checking whether George, his paternal partner, is content with his actions.

Their relationship is peculiar as they both emotionally benefit from it. Lennie, "the inferior" element in a relationship, gains the affection, attention and care he needs; and in exchange he provides George, "the superior partner," "with the feeling of being useful, sympathetic, stronger, and competent — precisely those behaviors that dependants seek in their mates" (FRIEDLAND 67). George will puppet Lennie's actions, Lennie will readily perform anything he is asked to. No exploitation is involved, as they both profit from their symbiotic relationship. Yet other men, who are alienated from the world, may perceive Lennie and George's relationship as deviant. Goldhurst implies that: "the general response of most men toward seeing two individuals who buddy around together in a friendless world where isolation is the order of the day [is that] there must be exploitation involved, wither financial and sexual" (54). Exploitation is out of the question, because "George protects Lennie from the pitfalls of a clever and unscrupulous society, and Lennie puts his enormous strength at George's disposal" (HEINEY 233). Lennie would do anything to keep George from leaving. The lack of confidence and belief in rightness of his actions make Lennie afraid of being abandoned.

Candy is also troubled by the lack of self-esteem which diminishes his self-image. Avoidants, such as Candy, feel "bad about themselves for not being better equipped to handle social situations" (FRIEDLAND 64). That is why others often relieve avoidants of uncomfortable duties or decisions. Candy's inability to accept responsibility is visible in his reluctance to solve the problem of his old suffering dog. His co-worker, Carlson, shoots his dog

to end its misery. Candy "did nor look down at the dog at all. He lay back on his bunk and crossed his arms behind his head and stared at the ceiling" (*Of Mice and Men* 51) and "then he rolled slowly over and faced the wall and lay silent" (*Of Mice and Men* 54). It is not that Candy should readily accept the idea of shooting his dog, but the humane behavior demands some kind of a decisive action. Being an avoidant, Candy also "shows a lifelong pattern of social detachment" (FRIEDLAND 63), and his mistrust and suspiciousness force him to withdraw as he is unable to show feelings openly.

Paranoid personality disorder is also founded on general suspiciousness and mistrust in people. Similarly to avoidant individuals, it is hard for paranoids to form lasting and triumphant relationships. The unsettling fear of being exploited, harmed or used by others paralyses paranoids' rational thinking. "Shark" Wicks in *The Pastures of Heaven* is the case in point. Many paranoids adopt bigoted attitudes or are devoted to some religious cults and so is Shark. His disposition towards his daughter, Alice, is far from normal. One might say he does not love his wife hence he transmits his love onto his daughter. Yet his attitude is not purely parental: "he did not love her as a father loves a child. Rather he hoarded her, and gloated over the possession of a fine, unique thing" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 22). He treats her as an object he could be proud of. The proof of his attitude towards her cannot be missed in another passage where he thinks that: "clearly a very precious thing had been given to him, and, since precious things were universally coveted, Alice must be protected. [He] believed in God when he thought of it, of course, as that shadowy being who did everything he could not understand" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 20). What Fontenrose says about Shark's relation to his daughter, "his real religion was his cult of ledger and Alice" (*Unhappy Valley* 39) applies very neatly to the description of a paranoid personality disorder.

Furthermore, Wicks is restrictive in his hypervigilance. This can be seen in the fact that "no man ever guarded his prize bitch when she was in heat more closely than Shark watched his daughter" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 22). Wicks is always on guard, protecting and searching for verification of his ill-grounded suspicions. More to that, Sharks is pathologically jealous and his "irrational fears" (FONTENROSE, *Unhappy Valley* 18) cause great distrust in anyone. He is so unjustifiably suspicious that somebody may deflower his pure female descendant that the same time every month he "wolfishly" and stubbornly asks his wife "is she all right?" and "[the positive] answer satisf[ies] Shark for a month, but it [does] not decrease his watchfulness. The chastity [is] intact, therefore it [is] still to be guarded" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 22). His paranoid behavior is, by all means, maladaptive and defi-

nitely caused by the paranoid personality disorder. This dismisses Frideric Carpenter's claim that Wicks is a psychopath (72).

Pathological jealousy is a trait of paranoid personality disorder exhibited also by another character in *The Pastures of Heaven*. Mrs. Hueneker "married [Allan] because she was thirty-seven, and because Allen was the only man of her acquaintance who could not protect himself" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 94). Unmistakably, she not only conquers and controls her spouse, but also feels the right to possess him. Her sick lust for possession, no matter whether of a husband or a house, leads to "invasion of privacy, a stifling possessiveness" (PODUSKA 186), so typical of paranoid personalities. Moreover, if there is no reason to be jealous, a paranoid person is sure to invent it. Mrs. Hueneker does not behave like that from the beginning but

> latter it developed that she was a woman whose system required jealousy properly to function. Finding nothing in Allen's life of which she could be jealous, she manufactured things. To her neighbors she told the stories of his prowess with women, of his untrustworthiness, of his obscure delinquencies. (*The Pastures of Heaven* 94)

Her growing unfounded jealousy has to find vent, therefore she concocts indecent stories about her husband. In the course of time she even believes in them. However "her neighbors laughed behind her back when she spoke of Allen's sins, for everyone in the Pastures of Heaven knew how shy and terrified the ugly little man was" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 94).

As the inhabitants of the valley realize that Mrs. Hueneker cannot abandon her suspicions, her neighbors do not incite her jealousy. All but Bert understand this. He, an irresponsible joker, "decides to tell Hueneker's jealous wife that Allen has run off with Maria" (Hughes 107), otherwise known as a bad woman in their community. It is not particularly wise of Bert to fuel the fire of her unreasonable jealousy. Her paranoid personality cannot stop searching for confirmation of her ill-grounded suspicions. Her inflated feeling of self-importance combined with self-confidence, mistrust degenerate into a maladaptive personality.

Obsessive-compulsive people share with paranoid ones the obsessive personality. The nature of obsession is different, however. Obsessive-compulsive people are paralyzed by possible anxiety connected with choices they have to make. Strict rules, self-control and seriousness are said by many to be concomitants of being a good co-worker and partner. However, when these traits of character are dragged to the extreme a well adjusted personality mutates into an obsessive-compulsive one. People with this disorder "are characterized by a tendency toward rigid conformity, orderliness, and a strict

adherence to the dictates of their conscience. An individual with this type of personality is perfectionistic and often obsessed with cleanliness and hygiene" (PODUSKA 186). They demand a lot from themselves and require the same commitment from others. Unfortunately, when others fail to satisfy their orderliness, obsessive-compulsive personalities are easily frustrated. Intermingled with great deal of intolerance and a lack of flexibility, these personalities are not the easiest to cope with on a daily basis.

The captain's wife in *Cannery Row* is a good example of maladjusted individual with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Although her figure is only mentioned in chapter 15 by the captain, Mac and the boys know that captain's relation to his wife lacks warmth and is painfully proper. Moreover, they sense her "preoccupation with perfection, coupled with an unreasonable insistence that things be done [her] way" (FRIEDLAND 74). Her influence on her husband is so great that others sense it even if she is absent:

> Mack and the boys are glad the wife is not there, because she would not accept their laziness, lack of orderliness along with disorganized, easy life.
> The kind of women who put papers on shelves and had little towels like that instinctively distrusted and disliked Mack and the boys. Such women knew that they were the worst threats to a home, for they offered ease and thought and companionship as opposed to neatness, order and properness. (*Cannery Row* 90)

The wife would demand adhering to strict rules of behavior in her household if she let them in.

The captain's wife in *Cannery Row* has been neglected by critics. Actually, to my knowledge, only Levant tried to interpret this episodic character. From the socio-psychological view his analysis is not correct, though. It is true that this woman is unnaturally obsessed with neatness and orderliness. His description of her as being "plainly a horror of perfect adjustment to 'the world'" (LEVANT 17) could not be more wrong. None of her traits of character can be ascribed to the successful process of adjustment. The wife tyrannizes her husband by an abstract, perfectionistic ideal of a house and therefore is unable to show love and affection. She cannot solve the conflict between her desires (a sterilely clean house) and the demands of the situation she is in. Somehow she is not able to cope with it and she escapes into rituals. These compulsions rule her every day.

Passive-aggressive personalities are not perfectionistic at all, though. They oscillate towards the other extreme. Being outwardly nice, harmless, sincere and charming is their secret weapon against the demands of the soci-

ety, family and friends. Their uncooperativeness is mostly seen in procrastination of any action that does not suit them. Being ineffective, forgetful, irresponsible and inactive can become means of a trouble-free existence for passive-aggressives (FRIEDLAND 74-75). For example Junius Maltby, the character in *The Pastures of Heaven*, cannot openly and actively resist the society. If he does not want to accept the standards of society and civilization, knowing that the society cannot unabashedly invade his privacy, Mr. Maltby can lock himself in the shell of emotional insulation. Nobody in the neighborhood can tell him to take care of his land or his son. The society cannot interfere with the fact that "Junius [brings] up a normal boy [Robbie] with benevolent neglect" (FONTENROSE, *Unhappy Valley* 38) till the moment the boy is legally forced to attend the school. Even then Maltby is shirking responsibilities as he merely provides son with the minimum of food and clothing. Judging by the standards of the society, which he nota bene rejects, Junius leads the "seemingly ineffectual way of life" (MCCARTHY 38) thus expressing hostility towards his community in a covert manner.

Maltby's behavior is viewed by neighbors as extremely uncooperative and contrary to what they believe in. Junius does not offend moral standards yet he is not respected in the society as his obstructionism in obeying social norms is obvious. He is also unresponsive in general interpersonal relations and shows poor judgment and failure to learn from experience. These features are also typical of psychopath, another personality disorder. A psychopath, otherwise called a sociopath and/or antisocial personality, shares many features with passive-aggressive personality, such as charm, sincerity and harmlessness. He can also be irresponsible and lacking in commitment to society to a much greater degree than passive aggressive. Selfishness, intolerance and frustration along with inability to learn from experience essentially form the core of a sociopath's personality.

There is at least one social group in Steinbeck's novels that displays some sociopathic features. This adjustment disorder is well exemplified by "carefree, gay, irresponsible world of paisanos" (WATT 39) in *Tortilla Flat*. These characters fail to develop 'normal' ethical, moral and social rules and therefore they exhibit "irresponsible and impulsive behavior, a disregard for what most of their peers regard as appropriate behavior, acting-out of impulses, and a lack of concern for the consequences of their behavior" (GOODSTEIN AND LANYON 257). Paisanos, those "indolent barbarians who hope to enjoy benefits of civilization without contributing to it" (FRENCH 56-57), have no inhibitions and are grossly selfish and unable to feel guilt when they wrong.

Paisanos do not adhere to social norms and feel no guilt, shame and remorse and their kindness and innocence in apologizing for wrongful behavior is just a means of manipulating people[2]. Paisanos exploit others "thinking nothing of petty theft, prevarication, and trickery" (FONTENROSE, "Creation" 20). Although charming, paisanos are unscrupulous and callous in exploiting others. Not infrequently do they "doublethink" as they "are great moralizers, but their moralizing too often consists in finding noble reasons for satisfying desires at a friend's expense" (FONTENROSE, "Creation" 21). This way their sociopathic nature manifests itself in their rationalizations.

No matter whether paisanos are "irresponsible and happy and inconsequential" (FROHOCK 151), "lumpen proletarians" (STODDARD 88), "ignorant and miserable" (WATT 260) or just "pleasant rogues" (Fontenrose, "Creation" 20) they fall into the clinical profile of psychopaths. Paisanos' maladaptive behavior can be investigated through most of the elements of psychopathic personality named by Cleckley.[3] Paisanos show superficial charm which hides their untruthfulness and insincerity. Their inadequately motivated antisocial behavior (no inhibitions whatsoever) lacks remorse and shame. The maladapted ones are irresponsible in general interpersonal relations (they have no commitments). Worse still, they show poor judgment and failure to learn from experience.

All the personality disorders discussed so far are characterized by some degree of guilt, dread and the lack of anxiety — exactly the feelings they inspire in others. In this aspect these maladjusted behaviors are quite contrary to neurosis, which is the second maladaptive way of avoiding reality. Poduska makes it explicit that "neurosis is generally thought to be a maladaptive reaction to stress" (208). Neurosis, unlike anxiety and fear, is always a kind of maladjustment. Goodstein and Lanyon explicate that: "neurotic behaviors are exaggerations of behavior that are seen in everyday life" (250). Many so called well-adjusted feel anxiety, yet they do not feel apprehension in the absence of real danger as it is in the case of maladapted personalities.

Anxiety and fear permeate all neuroses and cause psychological disturbance. Phobic neurosis and obsessive-compulsive neurosis refer to different maladaptive behavior patterns, yet they both involve anxiety and attempts to

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[2] For an alternative analysis see FROHOCK *The Novel of Violence in America 1920 -1950* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1950), 147.

[3] Based on Hervey CLECKLEY, *The Mask of Sanity. An Attempt to Clarify Some Issues About the So-Called Psychopathic Personality* (St. Louis: The C.V. Mosby Company), 1950.

reduce it. Phobic neurosis, for example, appears as a result of misidentification or displacement of the source of anxiety, while obsessive-compulsive neurosis occurs when individuals are compelled to perform compulsive actions to ward off the obsessive thoughts. This way, phobic neurosis is described as "strong, persistent, unrealistic fears of specific objects or events" and obsessive-compulsive neurosis as "persistent irrational ideas that serve to keep the real causes of anxiety from coming to the individual's attention" (GOODSTEIN AND LANYON 271). Anxiety in phobic neurosis is specific to a stimulus or situation from the past. It is proclaimed by Poduska that phobic neurosis "represents a displacement of anxiety from its real source to some symbolic substitute" (193). Often the intensity of the phobic reaction is greater than that connected with the stressful experience. Phobic reactions are said to be irrational and based on shame or guilt. Hence a person can displace or repress the original experience and through the process of generalization arrive at new anxieties.

This process of generalization characterizes Molly Morgan's neurotic behavior. By idealizing her father, who abandoned her family, Molly, the teacher in *The Pasture of Heaven,* maintains her illusions of the good old days. She represses the original experience of an irresponsible and weak father and "delude[s] herself that her alcoholic father is a glamorous adventurer who will someday return to her" (HUGHES 109). She clings to her illusions undisturbed until Bert Munroe, a "benevolent" neighbor, describes a wayward behavior of his drunken hired man. Then Miss Morgan feels "a sick dread rising in her" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 115) and leaves the valley in order to maintain her illusions. As Hughes observes that "Molly, who cannot help thinking this man is her own missing father, resigns her teaching post rather than risk confronting the disturbing truth" (110). Miss Morgan wants to keep the ideal of her father firm in her mind therefore any glamorous and personable drunkard in her presence constitutes a threat to her illusions. Because of the phenomenon of generalization, Molly exhibits a phobic fear of any wayward drunkard.

Parents-phobic reactions also handicap Pat Humbert, another character in *The Pastures of Heaven*. His old, stiff and spiteful parents constantly kept him working at home. Worse still, "they really hated Pat for being young" and "held his opinions in contempt because he was young" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 135). After his parents' death, he should not fear anybody yet even "when she [mother] was dead her eyes still accused him" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 136). His parents-phobic reactions are irrational and are definitely

based on guilt he was made to feel in his adolescence. He displaces the real source of his neurotic reactions, his parents, to a symbolic substitute, their rooms, "thus he fears these two rooms and can only begin a new life once he demolishes them" (HUGHES 114). Propelled by traumatic experiences of his youth, Pat attempts to avoid the anxiety. Hence after their death he "lives in the kitchen of the Humbert farm house and never enters the stuffy parlor and sitting room, which seem to be haunted by his deceased parents. He closes off these rooms" (HUGHES 113). He shuts the house and moves into the barn because he is unable to face the memories. The rooms remind him of constant reprimands made by his parents, which gradually sapped his ego strength and made him highly vulnerable to stressful situations.

Pat's inability to cope effectively with inner conflicts can be reduced only by counterconditioning, which "involves the replacement of the old fear response with a new, more desirable response through the process of associating the old anxiety-evoking stimulus with something positive" (PODUSKA 193). The beautiful Mae Munroe causes such a "desirable response" in Pat. Her praises of his roses being similar to those seen in Vermont houses make him want to rebuilt his parents' house. This way the old, nightmarish house will be rebuilt as a symbol of affection to Mae and positive attitude to life. Yet, his final victory over his phobic neurosis is not complete. His secret desire to win Mae's heart and marry her is shattered by her marriage to someone else. An attempt to seek solutions in others misfires.

A wide range of characters' neurotic maladaptive behavior, which is another way of avoiding reality, originated from the fear of being overwhelmed by unsolvable problems. The feeling of self-defeat among neurotic characters interferes with affective problem solving. Contrary to the well adjusted heroes, the maladjusted ones feel strong anxiety in the absence of a visible danger. The abnormality of their anxiety lies in its being disproportionate to any external event. Very often neurotics, like Pat or Molly, shows exaggerated behavior of well adjusted heroes. This behavior affects their motor tension, hyperactivity, hypervigilance, and apprehensive feelings about the future. The characters who display neurotic symptoms avoid getting involved in reality. They are caught up in various internal conflicts such as the feeling of guilt, shame, dread and anxiety.

Obsessive-compulsive neurosis is another means of reducing anxiety. People with this neurosis show extensive loss of the feeling of psychic freedom, which is inhibited by obsessive thoughts and compulsive rituals. Obsessions can crystallize around almost any thought which in turn causes the

feeling of anxious dread and plenty of people are sometimes worried by them. Obsessive people cannot disburden ideas which may be various: sexual, aggressive or religious. John Battle in *The Pastures of Heaven*, for instance, cannot get rid of persistent images of devils from his mind. His preoccupation with devils definitely exhibits vivid characteristics of obsessive-compulsive neurosis. John is unable to concentrate on a workday routine, as he is "too busy casting out devils to work on the farm" (FONTENROSE, *Unhappy Valley* 38). His life is seriously affected by his obsession, "at night he crept through the thickest upon a congregation of the demons, then fearlessly rushed forward striking viciously with his weapon" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 6).

John also exhibits ritualistic attempts to reduce anxiety: "As a protection John Battle covered his clothes and his hat with tiny cross-stitches in white thread, and, thus armored made war on the dark legions" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 5). Mr. Battle believes that the ritual compulsory signs will avert the devil he is fighting. And so he dies, three times bitten by a snake, saying: "this is the damned serpent, out, devil" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 6). The thoughts haunting individuals can also be sexual and aggressive in nature. The individuals may be terrified that something terrible is going to happen to those they love. Such ideas haunt Shark Wicks, who is obsessed with his daughter's purity. He cherishes Alice as his most sacred treasure and consequently is "neurotically obsessed with her chastity" (FONTENROSE, *Steinbeck* 22). His obsessive thoughts of Alice not being pure dominate his thinking and seriously interfere with his moral and social development.

These persistent irrational ideas keep the real causes of anxiety from coming to his attention. Shark Wick's anxiety stems from his fear that he would venture into the terrain of unacceptable or improper thoughts (delusions of grandeur are not permitted in a society). He tries to cope with the fear of losing a certain position in a society by displacing anxiety from its source (him — being respected) to some symbolic substitute (her — being special). Bearing in mind his obsessive thoughts, no wonder he comes "to regard the possible defloration of his daughter as both loss and disfigurement" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 21).

An impressive description of a ritual-haunted compulsive person can be found in *The Pastures of Heaven.* Pat Humbert, who suffers phobic neurosis, has also developed obsessive-compulsive neurosis. In his life Pat is tyrannized by his parents. After their death Pat needs to explain and reassure himself that the voices he hears are not his parents': "you are dead. You're just something that's happening in my mind. Nobody can expect me to do thing

any more" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 140). Yet not only does he hear the voices of his nagging parents but he also feels compelled to restore the old order of the house out of decency. Pat tries to isolate and lock up "the two thin old ghosts, but he [does] not [take] away their power to trouble him" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 141). Still he cannot forget the terrible experiences connected with his parents' rooms. Some visions invade his mind; he hears voices of their complaining. Pat has to destroy the rooms in a manner of exorcism and so "he [feels] that he was presiding at the death of the enemy" (*The Pastures of Heaven* 147). He superficially wins the battle with the voices of his ghastly parents and hideous memories bothering him, yet by that he becomes the victim of his own weakness — unhealthy obsession about his parents.

Henri, the episodic character in *Cannery Row*, is also enslaved by his obsession and thus compelled to perform compulsory actions. He seems to be tyrannized by the compulsive rituals of endless boat-building. These rituals become protection against anxiety; and as long as they are done correctly, Henri feels safe. Henri's neurosis stems from his fear that he would have to either think about something that terrifies him or even worse perform that action. Therefore, these ritualistic attempts serve a purpose of reducing his anxiety: the fear of the sea. His compulsion of careful making and ornamenting the boat is the only way to reduce his burning anxiety, "every time he gets it nearly finished he changes it and starts over again" (*Cannery Row* 36). Lisca notices this dependence and concludes that "Henri can love boats and be happy because he does not drive himself to the logical conclusion of finishing his boat and thus having to go out upon the water, which he fears" (118). Henri has been living in and building his boat for ten years and that is the way he wants to keep it.

Yet Henri's attempts to limit the anxiety are not so clear to Lawrence Jones, who misunderstands Henri's behavior. He offers an analysis of Henri's isolationism based on self-love. Jones misreads Henri's behavior and writes that: "the painter desires only to please himself in the construction of his boat in Chapter 22, which means he cannot have lasting relationships with women" (Jones 37). However, all the evidence leads to the opposite conclusion. The misunderstood "desire to please himself" is not connected with Henri's self-love and hence inability to form lasting relationships with the fair sex, but with the evidence that "Henri never wanted to finish his boat" (*Cannery Row* 135). His procrastination is aimed at delaying, or preferably eliminating, the fear of finishing the boat and having to face his greatest anxiety — sailing and the sea.

In Cannery Row there is another character — Doc, who is otherwise quite a normal person, with one compulsion — a great fear of getting his head wet. No matter the weather, he constantly wears a rain hat as an attempt to reduce the anxiety. He shows extensive loss of the feeling of psychic freedom. Doc cannot disburden ideas as he is enslaved by his obsession. "He will wade in a tide pool up to the chest without feeling damp, but a drop of rain water on his head makes him panicky" (*Cannery Row* 28).

Aforementioned neurotic disorders originate from a paralyzing anxiety and ways of managing it, or rather ways of mismanaging it. John, Wicks and Pat suffer from high levels of anxiety which, by interfering with everyday life, handicap their actions. Moreover, the effects of reducing the anxiety have negative consequences for the individuals as they become alienated from their feelings. In all these cases neurotics embark on persistent maladjusted behavior.

Maladjusted individuals in these four novels display personality disorders as a way of avoiding reality. These personality disorders are triggered by faulty developmental changes in a character's life. Characters with personality disorders distort reality to meet their needs and gradually develop the habit of manipulating others. Their inability to interact effectively with others interferes with their interpersonal relationships, which are often difficult and destructive. Free from internal conflicts and shattering feelings, characters with faulty personalities create them in others.

Maladjusted individuals, no matter whether suffering from personality or neurotic disorders, display many defense mechanisms, which involve self-deception and disguise of any unacceptable reasons. All of them distort reality to give a picture of "reality" that would not self-degrade the person. Sawrey and Telford claim that these "distortions represent the effects of a person's dynamic motives, values, and self-concept, on the way he perceives and judges the world in which he lives" (336). Defensive patterns are adaptive devices; however, when not balanced with a proper perception of the world, they may handicap and cause maladjustment.

The present analysis of John Steinbeck's oeuvre is an illustration of possible approaches to Steinbeck's short fiction. This socio-psychological insight into the reasons behind characters' actions should reveal Steinbeck's great concern for the individual and his community, his sensitivity to the human question in the modern society. Hopefully, this article will encourage the reader to go back to the fiction of John Steinbeck with renewed curiosity and desire to rediscover the richness of his prose.

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ZABURZENIA W PROCESIE ADAPTACJI DO SPOŁECZEŃSTWA NA PRZYKŁADZIE BOHATERÓW WYBRANYCH POWIEŚCI JOHNA STEINBECKA

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Celem artykułu jest ukazanie typologii postaci z zaburzeniami osobowościowymi w powieściach Johna Steibecka *Myszy i ludzie*, *Pastwiska Niebieskie*, *Tortilla Flat* i *Cannery Row*. Elementem kluczowym w analizie literackiej bohaterów jest zastosowanie teorii psychologicznych oraz socjologicznych. W przypadku omawianych postaci nieudolność procesu adaptacji jest częściej wynikiem zaburzeń osobowościowych jednostek niż negatywnego wpływu społeczeństwa. Unikanie rzeczywistości jest pierwszym etapem nieprzystosowania – osoby z wadliwym rozwojem osobowym (socjopatia, narcyzm, natręctwa myślowe, osobowości pasywno-agresywne) zniekształcają rzeczywistość tak, aby pasowała ona do ich potrzeb. Bohaterowie z osobowościami neurotycznymi lub paranoidalnymi nie utrzymują dostatecznego kontaktu z rzeczywistością, a ich wypaczone postrzeganie świata jest spowodowane lękiem i niechęcią do zmiany. Gdy unikanie prawdy jest niewystarczające, postaci muszą zbudować swój iluzoryczny świat, w którym czują się bezpiecznie. Bohaterowie ze skłonnościami psychopatycznymi uciekają do świata fantazji, popychani ekstremalnymi nastrojami. Jednakże rzeczą jednoczącą wszystkich analizowanych bohaterów jest zastosowanie przez nich mechanizmów obronnych, takich jak racjonalizacja, projekcja czy represja, pozwalających na manipulacje otoczeniem w celu uzyskania konkretnych korzyści.

Streściła Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis

Słowa kluczowe: wadliwa adaptacja, społeczeństwo, zaburzenia osobowościowe, powieści Johna Steibecka.

Key words: maladjustment, society, personality disorders, John Steinbeck's fiction.