



Defying Gender Stereotypes: Juana Eclipsing Kino in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*

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Abstract

The representation of female characters in the fiction of John Steinbeck has become a topic of scholarly interest as early as his first novel *Cup of Gold*. His women characters are always drawn as stereotypically far too inferior to men, something that is illustrated through the subordinate, sometimes scandalous, roles assigned to them. This is the reason why Steinbeck has often been stigmatised by a number of critics as a misogynist. Nevertheless, the aim of the present article is to show that Steinbeck defies his usual stereotypical portrayal of women and female roles and takes a lenient, if not sympathetic, stance on women in his novella *The Pearl*, which can be interpreted as an exception in the Steinbeck canon. This is highlighted right here through examining the character traits of both Juana and Kino in order to show how Kino, the protagonist, does pale in comparison to Juana, whom the author endows with unique wisdom, common sense and resourcefulness juxtaposed to the foolishness, incompetence and acquiescence of Kino. Such qualities as these make of Juana a far stronger and more superior person than her husband in a patriarchal and colonial society in which women have no say.

Key words: Chastened; Evil; Patriarchy; Stereotype; Subjugation; Women representation

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INTRODUCTION

For any polished reader of the oeuvre of the American novelist and Nobel Laureate for Literature in 1962 John Steinbeck (1902-1968), the portrayal of Juana in his novella *The Pearl* (1947) is a real turnaround in his representation and concept of female characters. In analysing Steinbeck's female creations, women are often given secondary, confined roles to play. To cite one single example, Curley's wife in *Of Mice and Men*, the only female character in the novella whose very name is not even given, is reduced to nothing but a piece of property belonging to her husband after whom she is named. This has led some critics to stigmatise Steinbeck as a sexist and a misogynist offering female characters unsympathetic stereotypes. Hart notably argues that portraying women this way has something to do with Steinbeck's male-dominated and sexist attitude towards women (2004, p.42). Likewise, in her 1975 article entitled "Some fictional stereotypes of women in 20th century American fiction," M. R. Gladstein of the University of Texas at Austin reduces Steinbeck, along with Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner, to a sexist for his scandalous depiction of female characters. Gladstein goes further to contend that there has been apparent sexism in the award given to him: "The last three American writers to win the Nobel Prize [Hemingway, Faulkner, and Steinbeck] represent American male novelists who have been unable either to come to terms with the 'Otherness' of the female or to draw convincing portraits of women" (Jewell, 2000, p.107).

As early as Steinbeck's early fiction, more specifically his maiden novel *Cup of Gold* (1929), along with other works like *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and *Cannery Row* (1945), to name but a few, some critics have decried Steinbeck's negative stereotyping of female characters, since he condones whoredom and speaks of whores with respect, which is considered much appalling. Morsberger speaks of the proliferation of such characters in his fiction and notes that, "whoring seems positively wholesome"

(qtd. in George, 2005, p.147). This is the very reason why some critics of the Steinbeck canon are quite surprised by his transformation in *The Pearl*, which they regard as unorthodox enough, if not revolutionary, as Juana simply does not conform to Steinbeck's usual stereotypical depiction of women.

1. JUANA AS THE "OTHER HERO" OF THE PEARL

1.1 Her Rebellion Against Her Patriarchal, Colonial Society

The Pearl was first published in a women's magazine, *Women's Home Companion*, in 1945 under the title "The Pearl of the World" before it was published in a book form in 1947. This may justify its lenient, if not positive, stance on women well illustrated in the depiction of Juana. Although the central action of the novella revolves around Juana's husband, Kino, who is always regarded as the protagonist, and his "Pearl of the World" (Steinbeck, p.25), Juana is given a role that makes of her a more important and far better person than her husband, if not all those characters in the book. One may not exaggerate if one claims that all the characters depicted in *The Pearl* pale compared to Juana. This is the reason why she is considered the real heroine of the book. For Barker, Juana is "the other hero of *The Pearl*" (1995, p.113). Similarly, M. Meyer looks upon both Kino and Juana as the novella's "protagonists" (2004, p.135). This way, Juana has carved out a reputation for herself amongst Steinbeck's strong and most memorable characters.

When she makes her first appearance, Juana serves a stereotypically traditional role of a poverty-stricken Mexican-Indian woman, who is much submissive to her husband as her traditional culture and male-dominated society dictate: she tends to her small family that includes her husband Kino, an impoverished pearl diver, and infant son, Coyotito. Like the rest of native women in Mexico in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, she is given a certain (subordinate) role and is not permitted to go beyond it. She still goes about the same things her ancestors had used to do a long time ago. The narrator says that she always awakens at dawn before her husband. In the very opening page, Kino gets up and looks at her eyes, which are always seen open in the morning: "Kino could never remember seeing them closed when he awakened...She was looking at him as she was always looking at him when he awakened" (Steinbeck, p.5). Then, she rises and goes to the hanging box where her baby son Coyotito sleeps to check up on him. Afterwards, she starts a fire and makes their simple breakfast of corncakes. In her introduction to *The Pearl*, Wagner-Martin looks upon Juana, whose very name in Spanish means a "gift from God", as "the answer, the solace for her husband's disappointed idealism" (1994, p.xvi). As such she serves the role of a submissive woman

living in a colonial and patriarchal society where women are always commodified and have no say.

However, things do not go this way in time: Coyotito is stung by a scorpion and his life is at stake. When she catches sight of the scorpion on her son's arm, Juana resorts to both pagan gods and the Virgin Mary for help and starts to recite pagan and Christian charms to guard her son against that malignant enemy. On his part, Kino, acquiescently enough, finds himself helpless, if not impotent, in this dangerous situation. Impulsively, he attacks the scorpion and tries to catch it before it finally lands on Coyotito's arm and instantly stings him. As for Juana, she acts more wisely by sucking the poison out because she is well aware that her son might die if enough of the poison goes in. Then, she, resourcefully enough, uses a poultice of seaweed to treat him, which, in large part, helps soothe the pain of the crying baby. Juana's resourcefulness in dealing with this danger holds Kino spellbound, and he starts to wonder at her apparent stamina and quick-wittedness juxtaposed to his impotence and helplessness to act when action is urgently needed:

Kino had wondered often at the iron in his patient, fragile wife. She, who was obedient and respectful and cheerful and patient, she could arch her back in child pain with hardly a cry. She could stand fatigue and hunger almost better than Kino himself. In the canoe she was like a strong man. And now she did a most surprising thing. (Steinbeck, p.10)

Afterwards, Juana, surprisingly enough, goes beyond the role assigned to her by revolting against the long-established norms, if not barriers, set in her primitive society: she asks Kino to fetch the European doctor to tend their baby. It is through this unbelievably far-fetched request that she plays the rebel not only against the authority of her male-dominated society, which does not permit women to act this way, but also against the hegemony of the colonial society of the European whites that has subjugated the poor Mexican-Indians and robbed them of their treasures for centuries. The white doctor belongs to a race that has humiliated and exploited Kino and Juana's race for more than four-hundred years. There have been big barriers set between the two races, and the poor natives of Mexico have always been taught to mind them strictly. This is the reason why Juana's decision to bring the doctor to treat Coyotito is regarded as an apparent bout of madness by both her husband and the community of the pearl divers who have come to offer their sympathies. They are all well aware that the doctor will never come to their brush houses to treat any of the poverty-stricken natives or their children. Besides, Kino and Juana cannot afford his fees that certainly go beyond their financial capabilities:

The word was passed out among the neighbors where they stood close packed in the little yard behind the brush fence. And they repeated among themselves, "Juana wants the doctor." A wonderful thing, a memorable thing, to want the doctor. To get him would be a remarkable thing. The doctor never came to the cluster of brush houses. Why should he, when he had more than

he could do to take care of the rich people who lived in the stone and plaster houses of the town. (Steinbeck, p.10)

Nevertheless, Juana's strong will does not tire or falter and, as strong as "a lioness", she says: "Then we will go to him" (Steinbeck, p.11). Her determination is unbelievably strong that it once again holds her husband and all the townsfolk spellbound. Both Juana and Kino, followed by Kino's elder brother Juan Tomás, his wife Apolonia and a great number of their neighbours, head for the doctor, who lives in a plaster and stone house in the nearby town. The idea that in such a patriarchal society as the Mexican La Paz Juana and Kino walk side by side followed by the others has its implication: it manifests Juana's strong will that does bring her to the fore. The narrator illustrates that her decision to go to the white physician turns into "a neighborhood affair" that all people in La Paz, and even beyond, speak of:

The thing has become a neighborhood affair. They made a quick soft-footed procession into the center of the town, first Juana and Kino, and behind them Juan Tomás and Apolonia, her big stomach jiggling with the strenuous pace, then all the neighbors with the children trotting on the flanks. (Steinbeck, p.11)

1.2 "The Song of the Family"

Out of her concern about her family, Juana is closely associated with the "Song of the Family". In *The Pearl*, the native Mexicans are led by internal songs, which the author employs as motifs to denote the natives' happiness, sadness, fear and so forth. The narrator illustrates that Kino's ancestors, originally ancient Indians who inhabited Mexico before the arrival of the Spaniards, were good at making songs for everything in their life: "His people had once been great makers of songs so that everything they saw or thought or did or heard became a song" (Steinbeck, p.5-6). These songs were passed over to their descendants and, in time, became part and parcel of their heritage. There are songs for everything. Chief of such is the Song of the Family. As is clear from the very name given to it, it basically signifies the strong ties uniting the members of the family or clan. In the very opening pages, Kino gets up too early in the morning and the Song of the Family hums in his mind once he catches sight of his wife Juana: "The Song of the Family came now from behind Kino. And the rhythm of the family song was the grinding stone where Juana worked the corn for the morning cakes" (Steinbeck, p.6). To lull her son to sleep, Juana sings a nursery rhyme, which is also part of the Song of the Family, whose melody entails feeling of "safety" and "warmth" (Steinbeck, p.7).

When Kino decides to go to the capital to sell his pearl, a journey considered too dangerous by all those close to him, Juana is heard singing the Song of the Family to drive evil away from the family. On different occasions, the narrator stresses that Kino looks at Juana seeking "warmth and security", something that conjures up the Song of the Family in him: "Behind him he heard Juana patting the cakes before she put them down on the clay

cooking sheet. Kino felt all the warmth and security of his family behind him, and the Song of the Family came from behind him like the purring of a kitten" (Steinbeck, p.32).

The idea that the Song of the Family is inextricably linked with Juana is significant enough right here as it simply signifies her indispensability to the family. Furthermore, it reinforces her position as the real cornerstone of it. This drives J. H. Timmerman into calling her, along with Ma Joad of *The Grapes of Wrath*, as "the spiritual and physical nurturers of the family" (qtd. in Benson, 1990, p.157).

In examining the role of women in the traditional Mexican culture in their 1988 article, "An examination of traditional gender roles among men and women in Mexico and the United States", Schmitz and Diefenthaler write,

[V]ery traditional sex roles and stereotypes have been ingrained within the [Mexican] society... For example, male-to-male relationships have been characterized by "machismo" which entails extreme aggressiveness and stubbornness whereas in male-to-female relationships "machismo" has been characterized by sexual aggression and contempt. In contrast, Mexican women have been viewed as "self-sacrificing" as they have been thought to possess dependent, submissive and passive traits. (p.140).

What Schmitz and Diefenthaler say about Mexican society is applied literally to the setting of *The Pearl* in which women are considered inferior to their husbands as rooted in their anti-woman culture. Many a time, Juana is described as a stereotypically complaisant woman watching over her husband and son. She is harshly beaten and insulted by Kino once she tries to defend her family against the pearl, which she considers a harbinger of doom: "Her mouth was still swollen where Kino had struck her, and big flies buzzed around the cut on her chin" (Steinbeck, p.72). Nevertheless, she tolerates her husband's humiliation without the least grumble. As the narrator comments, "But she sat as still as a sentinel" (Steinbeck, p.72). Likewise, when Kino is given a paltry price for his pearl, he gets out of La Paz angrily, and "Juana followed, trotting after him" (Steinbeck, p.54); and on the way to the capital to sell their pearl, Kino is followed by Juana: "And Kino could hear the pad of Juana's feet behind him. He went quickly and quietly, and Juana trotted behind him to keep up" (Steinbeck, p.69). The idea that Kino goes first followed by Juana behind him shows Juana's strict adherence to, if not reverence for, the customs and traditions of her culture, in which man is considered "half god" whose words are commands that must be obeyed without even questioning them:

There was no anger in her for Kino. He had said: "I am a man," and that meant certain things to Juana. It meant that he was half insane and half god. It meant that Kino would drive his strength against a mountain and plunge his strength against the sea. Juana, in her woman's soul, knew that the mountain would stand while the man broke himself; that the sea would surge while the man drowned in it. And yet it was this thing that made him a man, half insane and half god, and Juana had need of a man; she could not live without a man. Although she might be puzzled by

these differences between man and woman, she knew them and accepted them and needed them. Of course she would follow him, there was no question of that. (Steinbeck, pp.60-61)

Juana's act of trotting behind Kino is interpreted by Barker as submissiveness: "Juana appears as a submissive figure trailing after her husband with a devotion nearly dog-like" (1995, p.115). However, Barker's argument is somewhat inaccurate, since Juana, as illustrated earlier, in so doing has been conforming to the long-held rules set in the society in which she lives. When a real action is urgently needed, the real nature of the strong-willed Juana comes to the fore as is the case when she, boldly enough, asks Kino to fetch the doctor to treat Coyotito.

However, the Song of the Family is replaced by, or seen in constant clash with, other malignant songs, more specifically the Song of Evil and the Song of the Enemy, which are always heard resounding within Kino in difficulties. When the scorpion's stinging tail is seen briskly swinging very close to Coyotito, the Song of the Family relinquishes and gives way to the Song of Evil:

Kino's breath whistled in his nostrils and he opened his mouth to stop it. And then the startled look was gone from him and the rigidity from his body. In his mind a new song had come, the Song of Evil, the music of the enemy, of any foe of the family, a savage, secret, dangerous melody, and underneath, the Song of the Family cried plaintively. (Steinbeck, p.8)

The Song of the Enemy and that of evil are once again seen glistening in Kino's angry eyes and roaring in his ears once Coyotito is stung and Kino, furiously enough, crushes the scorpion in his hands. The same harsh melody of these malignant songs is heard echoing loudly in Kino's mind when the parish priest and the doctor visit him for the first time in his brush house. Similarly, on his journey to the capital, Kino takes the pearl out of his pocket and, startlingly enough, he hears the music of the pearl mixed with the Song of Evil once he looks at the pearl, on whose shining surface he sees frightening things: he sees a huddled dark body of a slain man lay somewhere on the road with shining blood oozing from him; Juana is seen with her beaten face crawling homewards to safety in the dark; and little Coyotito has also been seen there dying from fever. It is then that he quickly thrusts the pearl back into his pocket.

1.3 "The Pearl of Juana"

As is clear from the very title given to the novella, *The Pearl* speaks of a pearl which Kino finds. Nevertheless, the pearl, one way or another, can also be called 'the Pearl of Juana', since she is the one who has implored God to endow them with it as she is aware that most of their misfortunes result from their abject poverty. Thus, she prays for a way out of their financial difficulties. As the narrator stresses, "But the pearls were accidents, and the finding of one was luck, a little pat on the back by God or the gods of both" (Steinbeck, p.20). Juana, therefore, prays for a gentle godly "pat on the back" which is offered

in a marvelous pearl—"the greatest pearl of the world" (Steinbeck, p.24). When Kino throws his baskets into the sea and pulls them up in the hope of getting any pearl, Juana is seen busy imploring divine assistance. It is then that an oyster bed opens and the 'Pearl of the World' is cast in Kino's basket:

In the canoe above him Kino knew that Juana was making the magic prayer, her face set rigid and her muscles hard to force the luck, to tear the luck out of the gods' hands, for she needed the luck for the swollen shoulder of Coyotito. And because the need was great and the desire was great, the little secret melody of the pearl that might be was stronger this morning. Whole phrases of it came clearly and softly into the Song of the Undersea. (Steinbeck, p.21)

Likewise, Juana is described as the voice of resourcefulness and wisdom in the book. Wagner-Martin is of the view that she is the voice of "wisdom, common sense, and authority to balance the man's [i.e., Kino's] more wistful and sometimes unrealistic hopes" (1994, p.xvii). It is no wonder she is the first to discern perfectly well that the pearl is a danger that ruins anyone or everything that comes within its orbit. Thus, she implores her husband to get rid of it as soon as possible if they want to retain part of their old peace:

Now the tension which had been growing in Juana boiled up to the surface and her lips were thin. "This thing is evil," she cried harshly. "This pearl is like a sin! It will destroy us," and her voice rose shrilly. "Throw it away, Kino. Let us break it between stones. Let us bury it and forget the place. Let us throw it back into the sea. It has brought evil. Kino, my husband, it will destroy us." And in the firelight her lips and her eyes were alive with her fear. (Steinbeck, p.41)

As expected, thick-witted Kino, stubbornly enough, vehemently rejects this suggestion, regarding it as a bout of madness. For him, the pearl is the only solution that will help them get out of all their problems. On her part, Juana has no other alternative but to rid her family of that evil herself. She heads for the sea to throw the pearl herself without consulting Kino. In so doing, Juana once again plays the rebel—but this time against the hegemony of the patriarchal society represented by her husband. She decides to disobey the authority of Kino by flinging the pearl back to where it came from. But Kino catches her the very moment she raises her hand in preparation for throwing the pearl back into the sea, and she is cruelly battered.

Afterwards, the news of Kino's pearl travels outside the pearl village in no time and causes much avarice amongst the townsfolk. Everyone in the nearby town covets Kino's good fortune: the doctor, the priest, the shopkeepers, the pearl dealers and the beggars alike seek their share in Kino's treasure. The doctor, who has never visited the brush houses in which Kino and his people live, visits Kino and offers to treat Coyotito from the scorpion sting. Driven by his lust for the pearl, he poisons the little boy by giving him a drug that makes him sicker so that he can come back again to locate the whereabouts of the

pearl, which he intends to steal from Kino. As Burkhead puts it, his crime of poisoning the boy is “the first act of violence resulting from the promise of the pearl” (2002, p.103). Likewise, the pearl drives the local priest, who is not far better than the doctor and the pearl buyers, into visiting Kino only to remind him of donating the title of his selling price to the church once his pearl is sold.

Once Kino gets out of the village in which he lives to sell his pearl, he experiences the social ills permeating the neighbouring town for the first time. The pearl plays a significant role in unfolding lots of the vices which are quite prevalent in both the poor village of the pearl divers and the neighbouring town. This way, the setting plays an important role in conveying the message of the parable:

Place, or setting, also helps support *The Pearl's* messages. Undisturbed, the diver village is a place of order for the divers. The further they get from their homes, the more they experience chaos and threats to that order. The town represents authority and civilization to the villagers, but in reality, it represents an evil, the cheating and abuse of authority that make it, ironically, uncivilized. As Kino and Juana move even further away from their home into the wild, uninhabited areas separating them from the Mexican capital, the evil takes off its mask and order breaks down altogether. (Burkhead, 2002, p.102)

A great part of Kino's suffering lies in his intentional negligence to listen to Juana, the voice of wisdom. Towards the very end of the book, he comes to realise that he has been mistaken when he has turned a deaf ear to his wife and thought of the pearl as the panacea for all his difficulties. However, this realisation, or revelation, is too late as he has lost everything and has come back once again to the village barehanded.

1.4 More Chastened at the Very End

Juana's journey ends with her spiritual growth that makes of her a more mature person than before. She is now chastened by suffering as she is brought to realise lots of bitter lessons she has never heard of before throughout her entire life. Of such is that money alone, if not tempered or watered down by both wisdom and contentment, is far from being enough to bring about happiness or peace of mind. This is reminiscent of the old biblical saying ‘*radix malorum est cupiditas*’, which is translated into English as “love of money is the root of all evils”. Although a great boon has been conferred on Kino and Juana, it has been turned out into a curse in no time and their life has become far too worse than before because of Kino's rashness and imprudence. Even when the pearl is flung back into the bottom of the sea, they cannot restore their previous life or old peace, which, it seems, has gone forever. Therefore, evil as it is, the pearl has proved to be significant, too. Its positive side is that it has unfolded lots of things to Juana and Kino. Suffering, therefore, has transformed Juana into a new, but much better, person:

Hurled from the spiritual stasis of innocence into the travail of experience, Juana survives the ultimate initiation experience, transforming into a new being, a powerful character whose role

is far more significant than readers have previously recognized. Two particularly important tableaux, when juxtaposed, reveal not only a qualitative change in the dynamics of Kino and Juana's relationship, but also the extent to which Juana's character has grown” (Barker, 1995, p.115).

M. Gladstein goes further to describe Juana as “a composite of all the best qualities of the archetypal feminine” (qtd. in Barker, 1995, p.114). This is well illustrated when Juana, courageously enough, determines to accompany Kino on his journey to the capital and, adamantly, refuses to abandon him. She is well aware that Kino's naïve and impulsive nature, coupled with his overreaching ambition, will trigger their downfall, but she still supports him. When she finds the pearl thrown away somewhere behind the rocks, she picks it up and decides to get back to the beach to throw it away. However, she decides not to do so once she finds the dark figure of someone slain somewhere on the way by Kino. It is then that she realises that it is too late to stop Kino, who has recently grown more dangerous and more violent. She, therefore, hides the corpse of the dead man behind the trees and brings the pearl back to Kino. As the narrator puts it, she has done all this as she has understood that they have lost their old peace for good and that they have to keep the pearl to save themselves and secure a better life away from the village in which they live.

Even when Kino himself implores her to take the baby along with the pearl and flee to Loreto or Santa Rosalia, her reply is a clear-cut no: she refuses to let her husband alone encountering the enemies. In so doing, she proves herself a good and faithful wife. In the very concluding pages of the novella, despite her detestation of the pearl that has cost her her sole son and turned her life upside down, Juana refuses to take the pearl from Kino when he hands it to her to fling it into the sea and insists that Kino throw it himself. This time, she decides willingly to succumb to the confines of her patriarchal society that sets barriers between men and women. She is sure that her act of handing the pearl over to her husband to fling it away assuages his pains and brings him some of his lost dignity amongst the community of the pearl divers. Likewise, this decision reinforces equality and promotes communion between the couple. As the narrator notes, “And Kino drew back his arm and flung the pearl with all his might. Kino and Juana watched it go, winking and glimmering under the setting sun. They saw the little splash in the distance, *and they stood side by side watching the place for a long time*” (Steinbeck, p.89, emphasis added).

However, despite the unparalleled role Juana plays in the novella, she is not given her due in the critical appreciations of *The Pearl* compared to Kino, who is always regarded as the protagonist of the work. Barker contends that Juana is always looked upon as inferior to Kino. To quote her own words, “Even while complimenting Juana, readers nevertheless persist in marginalizing her as a supporting character whose status

in the narrative is more symbolic than dynamic and whose experience still warrants less attention than Kino's" (1995, p.114).

2. KINO—THE VERY ANTITHESIS OF JUANA

2.1 The Engineer of His Own Downfall

Kino, on the other hand, is the very antithesis of Juana. As early as the very opening chapter, he is described as bad-tempered, foolish and violent contrary to Juana's wisdom, reason and common sense. George argues that he is a person of "blind anger" (1995, p.9), whose "fear and anger completely blind him to Juana's good intentions as he hits and kicks her mercilessly on the beach" (Steinbeck, p.33). Likewise, his foolishness blinds him to the true nature of the pearl despite the attempts of Juana and Juan Tomás to convince him of its evil nature. According to Juan Tomás, the other voice of wisdom in the novel along with Juana, Kino's decision to go to the capital to sell his pearl is dangerous and foolish enough, since it may trigger his ruin: "You have defied not the pearl buyers, but the whole structure, the whole way of life" (Steinbeck, p.55). He reminds his younger brother of the story of the early men who, in years gone by, went to the capital to sell their pearls and never came back. He is afraid Kino will meet the same fate. Then, he goes further to add that the journey to the capital may cost him his life and will certainly cut himself off from the whole society around him: "You have defied not the pearl buyers, but the whole structure, the whole way of life, and I am afraid for you" (Steinbeck, p.55). But Kino insists on running that errand whatever the cost he may pay. According to George, this choice is, one way or another, a "rebellion" (2004, p.97) against the community of the pearl dealers, which brings about Kino's downfall later on.

Kino's ruin is inevitable at the very end. When the novella starts, he is depicted as an impoverished pearl diver who has nothing of real value except his boat, "which was the only thing of value he owned in the world" (Steinbeck, p.18). Nevertheless, once the pearl turns up, everything in his life turns upside down, and he starts to commit a barrage of follies: he rebels against the whole society in which he lives; he beats doting Juana; he murders one of the thieves who breaks into his hut to steal the pearl; and he murders the three trackers who hunt him and his pearl down. This way, he reverts to the animal or savage inherent in him. His myopic insight turns him into a violent person, a murderer who kills many a time only to protect his pearl: "He was an animal now, for hiding, for attacking, and he lived only to preserve himself and his family" (Steinbeck, p.64). As Wagner-Martin notes, he turns into a villain "whose wealth has taken him—a monster of a male ego, not a caring and supportive

husband" (1994, p.xvii). Likewise, Meyer looks upon him as the real villain of the book, whose avarice and overreaching ambition have triggered his breakdown:

However, when reread from an Eastern perspective or philosophy, the villain of the story is not the doctor, the pearl buyers, or the three dark men—it is Kino himself. For in his choice to keep the pearl, he has decided to break away from his comfortable existence and lower caste position in society and to try to become something he is not. (2005, p.51)

Unlike far-sighted Juana, who is much contented with the sort of simple, serene life she leads, Kino sacrifices his family and everything around him when, he, myopically enough, is duped by the mesmerising beauty of the pearl and the potential benefits it may give. This way, he turns his back on, if not revolts against, the whole social and economic system of his society and ends up with nothing but mere loss. According to Meyer, "the potential or financial success destroys his satisfaction with his quiet, unassuming life" (2004, p.136).

The moment Kino turns into violence, the beautiful the Song of the Family gives way to the Song of the Enemy, a harsh song whose melody hums deeply within him. As early as the visit of the priest, the Song of the Enemy resounds within Kino. The music of this song goes even louder and more strident with the visit of the doctor, something that startles him. As the narrator says, "the music of evil was sounding in his head and he was fierce and afraid" (Steinbeck, p.39). The same harsh music is heard again on different occasions: it hums within Kino once the pearl dealers conspire in concert against him to buy his pearl at a paltry price; when he determines to leave for the capital to sell the pearl and is attacked by someone in the darkness; and when his prized canoe is sabotaged.

The idea that the beautiful melody of the Song of the Family is replaced by the malignant melody of both the Song of the Enemy and the Song of Evil once the pearl shows up has its implication. It simply signifies that in the presence of Kino's savagery, the harmony, comfort and wholeness of the whole family vanish and that such good qualities as these have no real place in the life of Kino as long as he possesses the pearl. As is the case in all parables, life is either good or bad, black or white. This is literally applicable to Kino, who is given a good fortune and just two alternatives: whether to be contented with the simple life of his ancestors and sell the pearl for any price offered to him, or to stick to the pearl and bear the repercussions it may entail. As expected, he prefers the pearl to his family and old peace. He, therefore, has to pay dearly for this choice. This way, the pearl becomes a composite of contradicting things: great promise and inevitable peril. Lieber states,

As such it is a complex talisman, containing Steinbeck's vision of man: it is a thing of great worth and beauty and promise, but it also appears cancerous and ugly; it evokes avarice and greed, but also generosity and kindness; it produces high and noble thought and ambitions, but also theft and murder. (1972, p.269-270)

2.2 Biblical Connotations in Kino's Story

Kino is gullibly manipulated by the pearl whose enchantment and mesmerising beauty blind his eyes to the evil nature which it potentially entails. He voluntarily lets himself be naively led by it wherever it takes him. Whereas Juana, Juan Tomás and the other native pearlers persist that the pearl is evil, Kino insists that it is his life and that he is ready to sacrifice his entire life to preserve it. To quote his very words to Juan Tomás, "This pearl has become my soul... If I give it up I shall lose my soul" (Steinbeck, p.68). He speaks of four things he will do once he sells it: he will secure a better life and good education for Coyotito; he plans to hold a church wedding for Juana; he is going to get new clothes; and he intends to get power by buying a rifle. According to Burkhead,

On the surface, his plans seem modest enough... [But] Kino's wants reveal a previously unrealized dissatisfaction with his life as a pearl diver. They uncover his shame, both in his appearance and in his marriage, and a need to cover that shame with an official marriage and new clothing. (2002, p.103)

Indeed, Kino cannot be blamed for thinking of securing a better life for his family, but his problem lies in his refusal to give the pearl up even when he is well aware of its potential danger that may jeopardise all his entire life. This way, he engineers his own downfall, triggers the ruin of his family members and shakes the order and security of the entire community in which he lives. This act is reminiscent of the biblical story of Adam and Eve who, tempted by Satan, had triggered their own expulsion from Paradise when they tasted the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil: "In his refusal [to give up the pearl], Kino re-enacts the biblical story of the fall of man; Kino eats from the tree of knowledge, and, as a result, experiences a fall from the innocence he has known as a poor pearl diver" (Burkhead, 2002, p.103). This way, Kino's pearl can be interpreted as a Satan-like object that casts him into another weird, unknown world—a world of jealousy, avarice, hatred, deceit and schadenfraude, which is entirely different from the one he and his foreparents have led before.

As believed in Christianity, the ancestral sin is inherited by Adam's descendants till the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which has saved humanity. This is literally applied to Kino who, tempted by the spill and splendour of the 'Pearl of the World', has been expelled from his Eden-like life. Like Adam, his entire life of peace, quiet and serenity has been thoroughly shattered. Furthermore, he has to pay dearly for his blind adherence to the result of his naïve choice: his son Coyotito has been shot dead by one of those trackers seeking the pearl; his canoe, the only prized property he has in life, has been sabotaged; his brush house has been burnt down; and his peace of mind has been lost forever. This way, the price Kino pays for the pearl does eclipse compared to the potential riches he has expected of it: "The cost of his "progressive" dreams—the destruction of his home and canoe, the beating of his wife, the deaths of four people trying to take the pearl and of

little Coyotito—seem to eclipse anything that might have been gained" (George, 2004, p.91).

Besides, Kino is not the only person who suffers because of the evil nature of the pearl, but the curse extends to include the whole community of the pearl divers, too. Before the pearl turns up, the narrator shows that Kino and the other pearl divers in his community have mostly led a simple and quiet life. They have always been in close communion with nature. Once the pearl appears, the situation is thoroughly reversed: their life is plagued by some social ills, the least of which is the unprecedented jealousy which has grown quite prevalent amongst them for the first time in their life. This is the reason why they, once they first hear of the pearl, wish that Kino and his family would not be corrupted by potential wealth:

All of the neighbors hoped that sudden wealth would not turn Kino's head, would not make a rich man of him, would not graft onto him the evil limbs of greed and hatred and coldness. For Kino was a well-liked man; it would be a shame if the pearl destroyed him. "That good wife Juana," they said, "and the beautiful baby Coyotito, and the others to come. What a pity it would be if the pearl should destroy them all. (Steinbeck, p.45)

CONCLUSION

By the very end of the novella, Kino and Juana, bent and heartbroken, come back to the diver village with the dead body of Coyotito. But, this time, both of them walk side by side, which has its implication right here. When the story opens, Juana is first described as a customarily subservient Mexican woman with an acquiescent nature: "With the first tableau Steinbeck draws of Juana and Kino's relationship, Juana appears as a submissive figure trailing after her husband with a devotion nearly dog-like. Indeed, the narrator's choice of verbs suggests a subordinate status that is less than human" (Barker, 1995, p.115). However, in the very concluding part she is seen equal to Kino, if not superior to him. As the narrator says, "The two came from the rutted country road into the city, and they were not walking in single file, Kino ahead and Juana behind, as usual, but side by side" (Steinbeck, p.87-88). According to Burkhead, with both Juana and Kino walking side by side, it is somewhat difficult now to decide which one of the two genders ought to be superior to the other, since "The distinction between male and female has become blurred" (2002, p.106). Nevertheless, if things are evaluated this way, Juana is the one who certainly grows stronger out of this bitter experience than Kino. As Barker puts it, "Juana (but not Kino) has aged as a result of her ordeal: she goes into the world as a young girl—youthful, vital, and strong—yet returns an old woman" (1995, p.116). The now chastened Kino, starts to question both himself and the long-held conventions of his patriarchal, colonial society, and finally comes to realise that due to Juana's unique wisdom, reason and resourcefulness, he has to walk side by side with her in

front of the village pearl divers in broad daylight without fearing shame: "It is not shame that makes Kino walk side by side with Juana, but instead the change in Kino that allows him to accept within himself the female qualities of carefulness and reason, thus creating in Kino a new kind of man" (Burkhead, 2002, p.106). It is this growth, if not maturity, that justifies Kino's willing relinquishment of his pearl.

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