
The Human and Animal Bond in *The Red Pony*

Chaker Mohamed Ben Ali

John Steinbeck perceives the natural world in *The Red Pony* as uncaring and unforgiving and predatory since it is full of predators which are in a constant conflict against one another. Such a conflict occurs either between animals and animals or between humans and animals or between humans and humans. At last it results in the survival of the fittest. Steinbeck demonstrates here his knowledge about little boys' behavior toward animals, and how they have to be taught not to be cruel to animals; Jody Tiflin is a good example. Also, Steinbeck shows us how human and animal lives are closely connected. In this case, old Gitano and old Easter are good examples. Besides, Steinbeck reveals how Jody Tiflin ascends from boyhood to manhood. Jody's acquisition of the red pony lifts him above his friends. One should remember that Steinbeck is enamored of the Arthurian cycle and so Steinbeck believes that the horse is of key importance to the knight. This idea can clearly be seen in "The Leader of the People" when the grandfather tells the Tiflin family and Billy Buck about his knighthood when he leads his people across the plains to fight the Indians.

Jody Tiflin and the Predatory World

It should be noted that Steinbeck perceives the natural world as predatory. This insight can clearly be seen in *The Red Pony*; that is, Jody Tiflin lives on a ranch wherein there is an endless struggle between the powerful and the powerless. Some instances are given here to support this philosophy. In the opening pages of "The Gift," Jody's dog named Smasher loses one ear when he kills a coyote (05). Then, Jody spots a "great black kettle under the cypress tree. That was where the pigs were scalded" (05). Next, Jody sees two big black buzzards

over the hillside move downward to the ground. He knows that there might be a dead animal like a cow or the remains of a rabbit in the nearby. The buzzards take carrion and fly away. In fact, “Jody hated them as all decent things hate them” (05). After that, Mrs. Tiflin asks Jody to fetch some eggs in the grass otherwise the dogs will eat them (06). When Jody goes to bed, he “heard the hoot-owls hunting mice down by the barn” (09). Finally, both Carl Tiflin and Billy Buck sell six old milk cows to the butcher and replace them with a red pony colt.

Steinbeck uses the red pony’s name “Gabilan,” the black and red colors and the triangle as well to stress the danger that awaits the red pony in such a predatory world. The word “Gabilan” is Spanish for a “hawk.” The red pony is named after “Gabilan Mountains.” Steinbeck in *East of Eden* asserts that they are called so because the Spaniards found the hawks “flew in those mountains” (10). The name “Gabilan” foreshadows the scene of the black buzzards at the end of “The Gift.” In the evening, Jody goes to the dark brush line and drinks water from the tub. Overhead he sees a “hawk flying so high that it caught the sun on its breast and shone like a spark. Two blackbirds were driving him down the sky, glittering as they attacked their enemy” (33). Also, Steinbeck says that when the ailing Gabilan is in the barn, “the owls flew through the hayloft, shrieking and looking for mice” (42). The buzzards are black and therefore they signify death. Furthermore, the red pony and his saddle are red, and his eyes “have big sparks of red fire in them like oakwood embers” (17). This is suggestive of the impending doom of the red pony himself. The ringing of the triangle signals the red pony’s demise. The triangle tolls for Gabilan when he is in the midst of his agony. One might say that Steinbeck takes the idea of the triangle from John Donne’s meditation:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece
of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed
away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a
promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or

of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me,
because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never
send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.

From this lens, we understand that the death of Gabilan diminishes Jody Tifly since they are closely connected.

At the culmination of "The Gift," the black buzzards encircle the dying Gabilan to feed on it. Critic Howard Levant points out "the imagery indicates that nature is an indifferent process to which men assign meaning" (88). This interpretation is so crucial since it shows us the naturalistic trend of Steinbeck that characterizes his fiction. Besides, one might also argue that Steinbeck himself uses this scene to assert that nature is so unforgiving that the strong lives at the expense of the weak. In fact, the black buzzards can be compared to the mako shark and the shovel nosed sharks that devoured the marlin in *The Old Man and The Sea*. Like Santiago, Jody endeavors to prevent the buzzards from eating Gabilan and he eventually kills one. Also, both the buzzards and the sharks are scavengers. That is why Santiago and Jody hate them. This comparison is important since it allows us to understand that nature is indeed full of predators.

In addition, Carl Tiflin wants to tell Jody that he should not put the blame on the buzzard because it "didn't kill the pony" (44). And Jody confirms to him that he knows that. This part is similar to that in *Cannery Row*. In chapter 24, Mary Talbot's cat named Kitty Casini "stabbed the mouse through the back and drew it wriggling to her tail flicked with tense delight" (141). So, her husband Tom Talbot "shouted and killed the mouse" and then he aimed at the cat; so he "picked up a rock and hit her in the stomach and knocked her off the fence" (141). His wife Mary Talbot reacted to his action by telling him that she "can't blame Kitty Casini" since she "knows how cats are" (141). We understand from this part that Carl

Tiflin's response to Kody is similar to that of Mary Talbot. They mean that the act is purely natural and so we should not revolt against it.

Indeed, Steinbeck emphasizes this philosophy of the predatory world in the last section Of Mice and Men:

A water snake glided smoothly up the pool, twisting its periscope head from side to side; and it swam the length of the pool and came to the legs of a motionless heron that stood in the shallows. A silent head and beak lanced and plucked it out by the head, and the beak swallowed the little snake while its tail waved frantically. (88)

Steinbeck mentions that "the heron stood in the shallows, motionless and waiting. Another little water snake swam up the pool, turning its periscope head from side to side" (88). As soon as the heron was about to prey on it, Lennie emerges silently as "a creeping bear." Thus, "the heron pounded the air with its wings, jacked itself clear of the water and flew off down river. The little snake slid in among the reeds at the pool's side" (88).

This scene represents that the weak has no room in the realm wherein the strong lives. The heron feeds itself on the snake and it disappears when the bear-like Lennie comes. Furthermore, it signals the impending doom of Lennie himself. Lennie is powerless and so he also has no room in the ranch since it is dominated by the powerful.

The philosophy of the predatory world recurs in "The Snake." Under the woman's request, Dr. Phillips takes out a male rattlesnake and puts it in the feeding cage. And then he goes to the rat cage and selects one randomly and moves to the feeding cage and puts the rat in. At last he invites her to see the scene (54).

Now the snake came out of its corner again. There was no striking curve in its neck, but it approached the rat

gingerly, ready to jump back in case it attacked. It nudged the body gently with its blunt nose, and drew way.

Satisfied that it was dead, the snake touched the body all over with its chin, from head to tail. It seemed to measure the body and kiss it. Finally it opened its mouth and unhinged its jaws at the corners. The snake fitted its jaws over the rat's head and then with a slow peristaltic pulsing, began to engulf the rat. The jaws gripped and the whole throat crawled up, and the jaws gripped again. The rat was swallowed, all except an inch of pink tail that stuck out of the snake's sardonic tongue. The throat heaved again and the tail disappeared. (56)

Steinbeck uses Doc who feeds the snake the rat to stress the idea that the laboratory is a microcosm of the predatory world ; that is, what happens here in this laboratory it might happen out in the wilds.

Steinbeck describes also the Great Tide Pool in Cannery Row as predatory. Steinbeck says that when there is no tide, the pool becomes full of predators. Some instances are mentioned below:

Crabs rush from frond to frond of the waving algae.

Starfish squat over mussels and limpets, attach their million little suckers and then slowly lift with incredible power until the prey is broken from the rock. And then the starfish stomach comes out and envelops its food. Orange and speckled and fluted nudibranchs slide gracefully over the rocks, their skirts waving like the dresses of Spanish

dancers. And black eels poke their heads out of crevices and wait for prey. The snapping shrimps with their trigger claws pop loudly.... Hermit crabs like frantic children scamper on the bottom sand. And now one, finding an empty snail shell he likes better than his own, creeps out, exposing his soft body to the enemy for a moment, and then pops into the new shell. Here a crab tears a leg from his brother. The anemones expand like soft and brilliant flowers, inviting any tired and perplexed animal to lie for a moment in their arms, and when some small crab or little tide-pool Johnnie accepts the green and purple invitation, the petals whip in, the stinging cells shoot tiny narcotic needles into the prey and it grows weak and perhaps sleepy while the searing caustic digestive acids melt its body down (25-26).

Going back to *The Red Pony* now, it is interesting to point out that the scene of the black buzzards as well as Jody's grief over Gabilan's death make him abuse animals. This idea is supported by critic Derek Gladwin's assertion "when he later sees the buzzard feeding off of the pony's dead carcass, Jody is filled with rage and a rebellion against nature. Grief for Gabilan motivated Jody's killing of the buzzard"(69). Furthermore, Jody's cruelty to animals can be attributed to what Howard Levant says, "his fascination with death. Having become aware of it, he must understand its human meaning" (89). The death of Gabilan signifies Jody's discovery of death per se. Accordingly, Jody aims to experience it through abusing animals. From a naturalist lens, the demise of Gabilan is inevitable and thus it is beyond our control since it is determined by nature.

As far as animal abuse is concerned, it is worth saying that Steinbeck uses Jody Tiflin to demonstrate his knowledge about little boys' behavior toward animals which is indeed contradictory; that is, their behavior is blended with love and sadomasochism. Sometimes he is enamored of raising and taking care of animals. And sometimes he shows sadomasochistic feelings toward animals. For argument's sake, in "The Gift," Steinbeck tells us that Jody Tiflin is a good hand with the red pony and he loves him a great deal to the point that his masochistic nature comes to the surface:

By thinking, imagining that Gabilan would be in the stall,
and worse, would never have been there. And he had other
delicious little self-induced pains. He thought how the rats
had gnawed ragged holes in the red saddle, and how the
mice had nibbled Gabilan's tail until it was stringy and
thin (16).

Besides, Jody Tiflin's behavior toward animals is usually very sadistic. For instance, in "The Gift," Jody throws a "hard black clod" at Doubletree Mutt that goes "yelping away to nurse a bruised paw" (36). After a while, Jody Tiflin "put his arm about the dog's neck and kissed him on his wide black nose" (41).

Jody's sadistic side can also be revealed in "The Great Mountains." He is in the barn, he throws rocks at the swallow's nest under the eaves until every one of the little mud houses broke open and dropped its lining of straw and dirty feathers (45). At the ranch, he tortures his dog named Doubletree Mutt by baiting a rat trap with stale cheese and setting it where Doubletree Mutt gets his nosed snapped. The dog "put his nose in the trap and got smacked, and shrieked with agony and limped away with blood on his nostrils (45). Then, Jody Tiflin takes his slingshot and picks up a stone and then he shoots successfully at a little bird which

falls dead on the ground. First, Jody beheads it. Then, he disembowels it. After that, he takes off its wings. Finally, he tosses all the pieces into the brush (47).

Also, in “The Promise,” on his way to the home ranch, Jody Tiflin starts his hunting game by putting a horny toad into his bucket. By the time he gets to the fork road, Jody Tiflin also hunts “two more horny-toads, four little grass lizards, a blue snake, sixteen yellow-winged grass-hoppers and a brown damp newt from under a rock. This assortment scabbled unhappily against the tin of the lunch bucket” (69). One could argue that this passage indicates that Jody is either sadistic or thoughtless toward his mother.

In fact, Jody recovers from his grief when his father Carl Tiflin promises to give him a colt since he was a good hand with the red pony. So, Jody’s attitude toward animals changes positively. For instance, Jody stops torturing the chickens by dumping the can of grain. Now, the chickens no longer jump over each other and struggle to get the grain (72). Furthermore, he promises himself and his mother not to fill his lunch bucket with “suffocated reptiles, and bugs” any more (72-73).

However, in the opening pages of “The Leader of the People” we see that Jody’s abusive behavior toward animals returns once again. This emphasizes the schizophrenic or contradictory nature of Jody. He gets out of the house and he sees Billy Buck raking the old haystack. Jody Tiflin moves toward him, and on his way he starts his hunting game once again. Jody picks up a stone and wants to aim it at a cat that hides under the porch before the shooting is done. So, Jody throws the stone at the white pigeons that huddle together in the cypress tree, and they fly away (96-97).

Following the same thread of thought, Jody Tiflin gets to Billy Buck and expresses his penchant for hunting the mice that “for eight months they had lived and multiplied in the haystack. They had been immune from cats, from traps, from poison and from Jody. They had grown smug in their security, overbearing and fat. Now the time of disaster had come;

they would not survive another way” (97-98). Jody Tiflin tells his grandfather that mice hunting is no more than a game for him. And he invites him to watch the scene when he is going to drive out the mice to the dogs” (106). Jody explains to his grandfather that “the dogs eat them” (106). The quotes given here also argue the philosophy that the predatory world is disastrous and chaotic.

Such Jody Tiflin’s childish behavior can be found in many countries. In Algeria, for instance, little boys behave the same as Jody Tiflin. They use such tools as traps, slingshots, stones, clods, pails or whatever they find on the ground to hurt or hunt animals. They stomp on ants, and pull puppy dog and cat tails, and throw stones at lizards and birds, etc.

It is worth saying that the quail is the only animal which is not tortured or abused by Jody Tiflin. One could argue that his father Carl Tiflin perceived the quail as the token of bounty. If Jody abuses him, bounty will die away and therefore a curse will descend upon the ranch. Steinbeck write in “The Gift” that “Jody, still eating, went out and did his chores. He saw the quail came down to eat with the chickens when he threw out the grain. For some reason his father was proud to have them. He never allowed any shooting near the house for fear the quail might go away” (07).

In fact, this specific bird is related to the account of the children of Israel who were rescued by the prophet Moses (peace be upon him) from the pharaonic persecution. Once in Sinai, they starved for 40 years. The Israelites started to fill themselves up. *The Holy Quran* refers to this incident in some chapters. For instance, God Almighty says in the 57th verse of chapter the Heifer “And We shaded you with clouds, and We sent down to you manna and quails: “Eat of the good things We have provided for you. They did not wrong Us, but they used to wrong their own souls” (04).

Steinbeck uses Mrs. Tiflin to convey his philosophy that little boys have to be taught not to be cruel to animals. This philosophy is shown in “The Great Mountains.” Mrs. Tiflin

hears Doubletree Mutt yelping and she asks Jody to “stop torturing that dog and find something to do” (46). In the same narrative, Jody Tiflin cuts the little thrush into shreds. Truly, he does not bother at all about his grotesque act. However, he feels ashamed when he knows what older people like his mother and his father and Billy Buck will say if they see him kill the bird inhumanely. In “The Promise,” Mrs. Tiflin expresses her rage when she finds the lunch pail full of scrabbling small animals. So, Jody “trotted away toward the barn, conscientiously not hearing the angry voice that called him from the house” (70).

This philosophy of teaching little boys not to be cruel to animals lies at the heart of Islam. Despite the fact that there is no concrete evidence that John Steinbeck knows about hadith, there are some prophetic sayings which urge us to treat animals humanely, or we will surely experience a painful punishment in the Hereafter. Imam An-Nasa'i points out in his book entitled Sunan An-Nasai, especially in chapter forty two pertaining to “One Who Kills A Small Bird For No Reason” some hadith about this particular issue. For instance, 'Abdullah bin Amr reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: “There is no person who kills a small bird or anything larger, for no just reason, but Allah will ask him about it. “ It was said: “O Messenger of Allah, what does 'just reason' mean?” He said: “That you slaughter it and eat it, and do not cut off its head and throw it aside” (250). Imam An-Nasa'i mentions another hadith which is similar to the previous one in which 'Amr bin Sharid said: “I heard Sharid say: 'I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) say: Whoever kills a small bird for no reason, it will beseech Allah on the Day of Resurrection saying: O Lord, so and so killed me for no reason, and he did not kill me for any beneficial purpose. ’” (251). Besides, in his book entitled Sahih Muslim, Imam Muslim states some hadith which follow the same line of thought. For example, chapter ten entitled “It is Permissible to Make Use of Things Necessary for Hunting but the Use of Small Pebbles is Disapproved”:

Ibn Buraida reported that Abdullah b. al-Mughaffal saw a person from amongst his companions throwing small pebbles, whereupon he said: Don't throw pebbles. for Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) did not like it, or he forbade flinging of pebbles since neither the game is taken thereby, nor an enemy defeated. but it may break a tooth or put out an eye. He, afterwards, again saw him flinging pebbles, and said to him: I inform you that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) did not approve or he forbade flinging of pebbles, but if I see you again flinging pebbles. I will not speak with you. (1212)

Imam Muslim states another hadith in chapter thirty-six entitled “The Prohibition of Killing the Ant” under which Abu Huraira reported that the prophet Muhammed (may peace be upon him) said: “An ant had bitten a Prophet (one amongst the earlier Prophets) and he ordered that the colony of the ants should be burnt. And Allah revealed to him:" Because of an ant's bite you have burnt a community from amongst the communities which sings My glory” (1375). And in chapter 37 entitled “It is Forbidden to Kill the Cat,” scholar Muslim includes a hadith in which Nafi’ reported from Abdullah that the prophet Muhammed (may peace be upon him) said: “A woman was punished because she had kept a cat tied until it died, and (as a punishment of this offence) she was thrown into the Hell. She had not provided it with food, or drink, and had not freed her so that she could eat the insects of the earth” (1375). However, it meritorious to treat animals kindly and respectfully. Scholar Muslim states in chapter 38 entitled “ The Merit of Supplying Water and Food to Animals” some hadiths

which revolve around this crucial point. For instance, Abu Huraira reported that the prophet Muhammed (may peace be upon him) Allah's Messenger said:

A person suffered from intense thirst while on a journey, when he found a well. He climbed down into it and drank (water) and then came out and saw a dog lolling its tongue on account of thirst and eating the moistened earth. The person said: This dog has suffered from thirst as I had suffered from it. He climbed down into the well, filled his shoe with water, then caught it in his mouth until he climbed up and made the dog drink it. So Allah appreciated this act of his and pardoned him. Then (the Companions around him) said: Allah's Messenger, is there for us a reward even for (serving) such animals? He said: Yes, there is a reward for service to every living animal. (1376-7)

The same companion reported another hadith which is similar to one given above. The prophet Muhammed (may peace be upon him) said in the first hadith: "There was a dog moving around a well whom thirst would have killed. Suddenly a prostitute from the prostitutes of Bani Isra'il happened to see it and she drew water in her shoe and made it drink, and she was pardoned because of this"(1377).

John Steinbeck advocates animal euthanasia in *The Red Pony* to support his philosophy about the predatory world. Carl Tiflin echoes Carlson in *Of Mice and Men* since both of them share a similar name and show their desire to execute the merciful killing of animals. Besides, Steinbeck uses Carl Tiflin to emphasize his philosophy about the analogy of the human and animal worlds; that is, what might happen to man, it might happen to

animals and vice versa. In this context, and in “The Great Mountains,” Carl Tiflin captures the last words of Gitano when he tells Jody that the horse Easter is “ too old to work. Just eats and pretty soon dies” (57). So, Carl Tiflin seizes the opportunity to draw the parallels between Gitano and Easter since both of them are old and useless and thus their lives end the same. Carl Tiflin tells Billy Buck that he wants to put old Easter out of his misery “ It’s a shame not to shoot Easter. It’d save him a lot of pain and rheumatism.” (57). He further says, “ Old things ought to be put out of their misery. One shot, a big noise, one big pain in the head maybe, and that’s all. That’s better than stiffness and sore teeth” (57). There is also an analogy between Gitano and the red pony. When the latter feels that his death is inevitable, he leaves the barn to live in “one of the little clearings in the brush” where Jody Tiflin finds him lying dead (43). Likewise, when the former feels that his end is coming, he resolves to leave the great mountains and to die on the ranch where he and his father were born. He is not allowed to do so by the Tiflin family, however.

It is also worth mentioning that Gitano’s condition is similar to that of Candy and Candy’s dog’s condition is akin to that of old Easter. In fact, Carl Tiflin admits to Billy Buck how old Easter was a good horse “ High neck, deep chest, fine barrel. He could jump a few-bar gate in stride. I won a flat race on him when I was fifteen years old. I could of got two hundred dollars for him any time. You wouldn’t think how pretty he was. But he ought to be shot now ” (58). This quote reflects Candy’s confession that his dog was a good shepherd and he had him since he was a pup. However, unlike Carl Tiflin, Candy is still loyal to him. We understand from Carl’s idea of shooting his old Easter that this natural world is so harsh that the strong tends to dispose of the weak. Also, it reveals his utilitarian philosophy in the sense that when you are productive you are good and when you get old and useless you are damned.

Animal euthanasia recurs in “The Promise.” When the colt’s birth comes, the mare Nellie stands “rigid and stiff” and her whole body writhes in spasmodic movements that pass and start over again. This shows Nellie crying with acute pain. Besides, the colt’s position is so wrong that Billy Buck cannot take it out. Therefore, Billy Buck resolves to crunch Nellie’s head with a horseshoe hammer to put Nellie out of her misery and to save the colt since he promised Jody to give it to him when the time comes. In fact, Steinbeck aims to teach us some of his philosophies about animal behavior behind this scene. First, Steinbeck emphasizes animal euthanasia by putting Nellie out of her deadly pain. Second, from a Darwinist’s viewpoint, Billy Buck appears to be a true believer in natural selection since he selects the newborn colt and eliminates the weak, ailing Nellie. In this context, Billy Buck can be seen as a determiner of life and death. This interpretation leads us to say that Billy Buck is analogous to Slim in *Of Mice and Men*. Third, the title of this story “The Promise” in which this scene is mentioned is significant. Billy Buck succeeds in keeping his promise to give Jody the colt. Steinbeck aims to teach us that man should not break his promise. This idea also lies at the heart of Islam. There are many Quranic verses and prophetic sayings that support this crucial philosophy.

In fact, the philosophy of the predatory world can also be seen among humans themselves in which “the fittest of the fittest shall survive.” There are some instances in *The Red Pony* which support this idea. In “The Leader of the People,” Jody compares the mouse hunt to hunting Indians. His grandfather confirms that “no, not much—but then later, when the troops were hunting Indians and shooting children and burning teepees, it wasn’t much different from your mouse hunt” (106). The grandfather further says “we carried life out here and set it down the way those ants carry eggs. And I was the leader” (119). So, the title per se as well as these two passages reveal that the Americans triumphed over the Indians at the end of the struggle and they became the leaders of the people. Besides, the idea of how

“westering” was done is compared to animals. This implies that the lives of humans and animals are indeed closely connected.

To conclude, John Steinbeck demonstrates how Jody Tiflin behaves and responds to the predatory word. Now let’s delve into how Steinbeck shows Jody Tiflin’s shift from boyhood to manhood.

Jody Tiflin’s Ascension from Boyhood to Manhood.

The first story of *The Red Pony* is entitled “The Gift” which indicates that animals in general and the red pony in particular are a gift granted by God to us to serve our lives. This viewpoint is strengthened by the eighth Quranic verse of chapter “The Bee” in which Allah says “And the horses, and the mules, and the donkeys—for you to ride, and for luxury. And He creates what you do not know” (133). The title also reveals that Carl Tiflin offers Jody Tiflin a red pony as a gift. Carl Tiflin tells him “ he needs a good currying” “ and if I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I’ll sell him off in a minute ” (10-11). This explains that Jody Tiflin is taught to look after animals and to treat them mercifully. It can also be interpreted as whatever the gift is, it should not be spoiled but protected.

In response to Jody Tiflin’s questions about the red pony, Billy Buck says he “bought him at a sheriff’s auction. A show went broke in Salinas and had debts. The sheriff was selling off their stuff” (11). And then he offers him a “show saddle” of “red morocco leather” (12). It foreshadows that Billy Buck will show Jody Tiflin horse training. This also implies that through the show red pony and his show saddle Steinbeck aims to reveal Jody Tiflin’s rise to manhood. This interpretation can be supported by the fact that Jody Tiflin wants to exhibit the red pony to his classmates. In other words, Jody Tiflin appears so luxurious with the red pony that he wants to show it off to his peers. In doing so, Jody Tiflin evolves from a little boy into manhood. Therefore, he is lifted above his classmates who begin to regard him with

respect, awe and admiration. This suggests that horsemanship is indeed worthy in the ranch life.

They stood self consciously before the pony, and then they looked at Jody with eyes in which there was a new admiration and a new respect. Before today Jody had been a boy, dressed in overalls and a blue shirt—quieter than most, even suspected of being a little cowardly. And now he was different. Out of a thousand centuries they drew the ancient admiration of the footman for the horseman. They knew instinctively that a man on a horse is spiritually as well as physically bigger than a man on foot. They knew that Jody had been miraculously lifted out of equality with them, and had been placed over them. (13)

In addition, Jody Tiflin's transformation into manhood can also clearly be seen through the eyes of her mother. "Jody didn't hear his mother enter the barn. She was angry when she came, but when she looked in at the pony and at Jody working over him, she felt a curious pride rise up in her" (15).

Carl Tiflin aims to teach Jody Tiflin horse riding. Since Billy Buck is "a fine hand with horses" he dedicates himself to making Jody Tiflin a good horseman. He explains that "they were terribly afraid for their feet, so that one must make a practice of lifting the legs and patting the hoofs and ankles to remove their terror" (17). Also, he tells him "how horses love conversation. He must talk to the pony all the time, and tell him the reasons for everything. Billy wasn't sure a horse could understand everything that was said to him, but it was impossible to say how much was understood" (17). This information is useful for such a little boy as Jody, for it makes him aware of the physical and psychological sides of horses' lives which in turn warm him up for the pony training.

Billy Buck teaches Jody Tiflin the pony training in the early fall. The first stage is the halter breaking in which Jody Tiflin "held a carrot and coaxed and pulled on the rope" (19).

The pony “followed him unled wherever they went” (19). The second stage is the long halter in which Jody Tiflin makes the pony “stop and start and trot and gallop” (20). In addition, Billy Buck shows Jody Tiflin how to “work at the hair tail” (20). The third stage is saddling and cinching the pony. And the last stage is bridling the pony.

From the pony training, we understand that there is an analogy between Jody Tiflin and the red pony. Both of them are untrained and little. This is a suggestive of the connectedness of human and animal lives. Besides, the red pony is a reflection of Jody Tiflin’s life. Jody Tiflin is untrained and the pony training is perfectly done, however. This paradox mirrors Jody Tiflin’s training himself to become a horseman so that he can confront the cruelties of the ranch life.

Furthermore, Billy Buck instructs Jody Tiflin how to ride the pony:

Now when you get up there, just grab tight with your knees and keep your hands away from the saddle, and if you get throwed, don’t let that stop you. No matter how good a man is, there is always some horse can pitch him. You just climb up again before he gets to feeling smart about it. Pretty soon, he won’t throw you no more, and pretty soon he can’t throw you no more. (23).

This quote shows that Billy Buck wants to teach Jody Tiflin how he copes with the ups and downs of the ranch life. Jody Tiflin mustn’t surrender to the difficulties that afflict him from all sides. He should keep in mind that life is akin to horsemanship. If the horseman is afraid of getting thrown on the ground, he never mounts on his horse. And if he gets thrown, he ought to consider it as a good lesson in his life. Such an experience will enable him to move forward.

Furthermore, through horsemanship, Billy Buck endeavors to make Jody’s life well-balanced and independent in the sense that he can master any situation that he faces without

relying on the others. Hence, being self-restrained and self-reliant, Jody will bring honor not only to his family and Billy Buck, but also to the whole ranch:

He practiced on the sawhorse how he would hold the reins in his left hand and a hat in his right hand. If he kept his hands thus busy, he couldn't grab the horn if he felt himself going off. He didn't like to think of what would happen if he did grab the horn. Perhaps his father and Billy Buck would never speak to him again, they would be so ashamed. The news would get about and his mother would be ashamed too. And in the school-yard—it was too awful to contemplate (23).

Jody Tiflin is not allowed to ride the pony until on Thanksgiving. He hopes it won't rain before that day; however, it does. He keeps the pony in the box stall during the week of rain, except for sometimes when he takes him out “for exercise and to drink at the water-trough in the upper corral” (25). One morning the sun shines on the ranch, and Jody Tiflin asks Billy Buck to watch over the pony since he is going to leave him in the corral when he goes to school. Billy Buck assures him that it probably won't rain today and if it does, a little rain doesn't hurt the pony (25-26). Nevertheless, Jody Tiflin insists on him to keep the pony. In fact, Billy Buck's assurance doesn't come true because the rain resumes to fall. When school is out, Jody Tiflin rushes for the pony through the slanting rain and the gusty wind, and eventually he finds him “standing miserably in the corral” (26). Jody Tiflin hurriedly opens the barn door and puts the dripping, shivering pony in and starts to rub him all over with a gunny sack and brings him a hot mash (26). We understand from this whole part that nature is unforgiving and indifferent to animal and human lives; that is, nature doesn't care about the pony's miserable situation, and it doesn't bother about Jody's reaction toward such a situation. The rain is an extraneous variable which represents that nature is far beyond our control and it can be a hindrance to our wishes.

Truly, Billy Buck's teaching of Jody Tiflin, under Carl Tiflin's request, to make of him a good horseman has its analogue in Islam. Allah says in the 60th verse of chapter "The Spoils":

And prepare against them all the power you can muster, and all the cavalry you can mobilize, to terrify thereby God's enemies and your enemies, and others besides them whom you do not know, but God knows them. Whatever you spend in God's way will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged. (60)

And besides, Umar bin Al-Khattab who is considered as the second khalifa of Muslims said, "Teach your children swimming, archery and horse riding." This proves how horsemanship is of key importance to a knight since Muslims used to use horses in wars. "The Leader of the People" shows how the horse is all important to a knight. The grandfather tells the Tiflin family and Billy Buck how he leads the people across the plains to fight the Indians and how the Indians drive off their horses. He also tells them the story of the iron plates:

When the Indians attacked, we always put the wagons in a circle and fought from between the wheels. I thought that if every wagon carried a long plate with rifle holes, the men could stand the plates on the outside of the wheels when the wagons were in the circle and they would be protected. It would save lives and that would make up for the extra weight of the iron. But of course the party wouldn't do it. No party had done it before and they couldn't see why they should go to the expense. They lived to regret it, too. (111)

In fact, Jody Tiflin shows his deep interest in his grandfather's stories about crossing the continent and fighting the Indians.

Jody lay in his bed and thought of the impossible world of Indians and buffaloes, a world that had ceased to be forever. He wished he could have been living in the heroic time, but he knew he was not of heroic timber. No one living now, save possibly Billy

Buck, was worthy to do the things that had been done. A race of giants had lived then, fearless men, men of a staunchness unknown in this day. Jody thought of the wide plains and of the wagons across like centipedes. He thought of Grandfather on a huge white horse, marshaling the people. Across his mind marched the great phantoms, and they marched off the earth and they were gone. (113)

To conclude, John Steinbeck views nature in *The Red Pony* as harsh, indifferent and predatory. The ranch whereupon Jody Tiflin lives is a bowl of an endless struggle between the weak and the strong. Steinbeck uses the name "Gabilan" as well as color symbolism and the ringing of the triangle to strengthen his viewpoint. Steinbeck demonstrates his knowledge about little boys' behavior toward animals. For some reasons like the scene of the black buzzards and his grief over Gabilan's demise, Jody Tiflin starts to abuse animals. In addition, Jody's attitude toward animals is schizophrenic; that is, it is based on both love and sadomasochism. Steinbeck also shows how little boys have to be taught not to be cruel to animals. Such a philosophy lies at the core of Islam. Despite the fact that there is no concrete evidence that John Steinbeck knows about hadith, there are some prophetic sayings which urge us to treat animals humanely, otherwise we will certainly experience a painful punishment in the Hereafter. It is worth saying that Steinbeck writes that Jody Tiflin's life shifts from boyhood to manhood. This evolution paves the way for him to adapt to the cruelties of the ranch life. In this respect, the backdrop against which Steinbeck points out that the horse is of key importance to a knight is that he is enamored of the Arthurian legend. This standpoint is obviously seen in "The Leader of the People." The grandfather tells the Tiflins and Billy Buck about his knighthood experience when he leads his people to cross the plains to fight the Indians. Jody shows his burning longing for following his grandfather's lead by being a good knight who will marshal his people some day.

Works cited

- Ahmed ibn Ali, An-Nasa'i. Sunan An-Nasa'i. Vol.5. Trans. Nasiruddin al-Khattab. Riyadh : Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 2007.
- Al-Hajjaj, Muslim. Sahih Muslim. 1st ed. Trans. Abd-al-Hamid Siddiqui. Mika'il al-Almany, 2009. Print.
- Donne, John. Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions Together with Death's Duel. 1st ed. The United States: The University of Michigan, 1959.
- Gladwin, Derek. "The Steinbeckian Land Ethic : Environmentalism and The Red Pony," Steinbeck Review, vol. 4.1, Penn State University Press Spring 2007, 65-78. Print.
- Levant, Howard. "John Steinbeck's "the Red Pony": A Study in Narrative Technique". The Journal of Narrative Technique, vol. 1.2, 1971, 77-85. Print.
- The Qur'an. Trans.Talal Itani. Dallas: ClearQuran, 2009-2012. Print.
- Steinbeck, John. Cannery Row. New York: The Viking Press, 1951. Print.
- . Of Mice and Men.Great Britain: Penguin Classic, 2000. Print.
- . The Red Pony. Great Britain : The Penguin Group, 2001-2011. Print.
- . "The Snake," The Long Valley. Avon Book Company 1945-1947. Print