Kiwi He

ENGL 3201

Joel Brown

6.28.2020

**The Theme of Relationship in the Novels**

In the three novels: *The Good Earth*, *Things Fall Apart* and *Of Mice and Men*, the different relationships between these three pairs of character-Lennie and George, Wang Lung and Ching,Nowye and Okonkwo- are a very memorable point for me. In these three novels of different times and places, different character identities lead to different character relationships. This essay mainly argues that in the relationships between the protagonists of these novels, the companionship and trust that come from shared goals and experiences is more tighter than the ties of blood, as blood relationship is not always in harmony and love.

Lennie & George from *Of Mice and Men*

The novel *Of Mice and Men* was written by John Steinbeck and published in 1937. It mainly talks about the story of two workers and close friends- Lennie and George. The two most influential factors- common experience and common pursuits contribute to the companionship between Lennie and George that is shown in the novel *Of Mice and Men*.

Character

Lennie and George have shown a lot of differences from appearance to mind, but they both need each other just the same. Which made their relationship.

In the course of the whole story, Lennie and George have always been in the state of wandering. But the state of Lennie remains the same from the beginning to the end of the novel. He has incredibly powerful and childlike mind, which comes from his mentally deficiency. Under the broad body hides a merely kind soul. He also likes to stroke soft things and he always acts like a kid. He is always been so simple, from desire to thought. Because of his uncontrollable strength, he always seems helpless and powerless in the face of difficulties.

George is the one that is always taking care of Lennie and takes him away when Lennie is in trouble. George takes care of Lennie after Lennie’s aunt passes away. George has a shrewd mind under a small body. George is much smarter and more mature compared to Lennie. He is the man who first thinks of their dream of owning a small farm of their own. This desire sustains both of them through all the tough days and nights.

Lennie and George are always together. George has a short temper and keeps complaining that he would live much better without Lennie, as he has to take Lennie away every time Lennie gets in trouble. But he is lonely deep in his mind, and he needs friendship and warmth. Lennie has always been his only friend as Lennie is naturally simple and unwary of George.

“ 'Lennie!' he said sharply. 'Lennie, for God’ sakes don’t drink so much.'

Lennie continued to snort into the pool. The small man leaned over and shook him by the shoulder. ' Lennie. You gonna be sick like you was last night.' ”（Steinbeck 3）

This paragraph is the first time that George spoke in the novel. Grumpy as he is, he does nothave much patience. But he never deviatefrom the original intention of protecting his friend- Lennie. He takes care of Lennie by his instinct and never questions it. Although in the eyes of all, Lennie is a manwith only strength and an imperfect mind, he is the most cherished person for George.

Lennie has always been a simple person. He sees George as his brother and patron. He has a bad memory and can not remember things well. When Curley 's wife tries to get Lennie to talk to her, Lennie refuses because George told him not to talk to the woman because they may get into trouble because of this. He is absolutely obedient and faithful to George, and he trusts George deeply.

There is memorable part in the novel that describes their relationship, speak by George and Lennie themselves.

“ 'Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don’t belong no place. They come to a ranch an’ work up a stake and then they go into town and blow their stake, and the first thing you know they’re poundin’ their tail on some other ranch. They ain’t got nothing to look ahead to.'

' But not us! An’ why? Because . . . . because I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you, and that’s why.' ” (Steinbeck13&14)

The novel is set in a society and time where the working people are at the bottom. Like Lennie and George, people who wander around doing temporary jobs have no sense of belonging, no stable emotional connection and are extremely lonely, but George and Lennie have each other. Although George is smart and had a lot of experience of life and work, he also needs Lennie 's company and friendship,and although Lennie is powerful in strength, he always needs George's care in life.

They trust and depend on each other, live together all the time.

Dream

“ ‘O.K. Someday—we’re gonna get the jack together and we’re gonna have a little house and a couple of acres an’ a cow and some pigs and—’

‘An’ live off the fatta the lan’,’Lennie shouted. ‘An’ have rabbits. Go on, George! Tell about what we’re gonna have in the garden and about the rabbits in the cages and about the rain in the winter and the stove, and how thick the cream is on the milk like you can hardly cut it. Tell about that, George. ’

‘ Why’n’t you do it yourself? You know all of it. ’

‘ No . . . . you tell it. It ain’t the same if I tell it. Go on . . . . George. How I get to tend the rabbits. ’

‘Well,’said George, ‘we’ll have a big vegetable patch and a rabbit hutch and chickens. And when it rains in the winter, we’ll just say the hell with goin’

to work, and we’ll build up a fire in the stove and set around it an’ listen to the rain comin’ down on the roof—Nuts!’ ” (Steinbeck 14&15)

Having a little farm of their own, it is the biggest and only dream that been share between Lennie and George throughout the novel. They share this dream for a long long time and Lennie keep asking George to repeat it again and again. A place where they don't have to be told what to do every day. A place that will stop them from wandering. A place that belongs only to Lennie and George.

Lennie and George have been constantly wandering, doing temporary jobs in different places, non-stop labor. Days like these seem boring and tired. They don't have a place to belong to, a place to rest when they are tired, and they lack and long for this sense of belonging.

As for this sense of belonging that they both looking forward to, talking and thinking about this dream already becomes a very important part of their daily life. They keep working hard to save money, so that one day they can be able to buy a small farm that represents home and belonging. If they own a little farm that they dream of, even if Lennie makes another mistake or gets into troubles, they don't have to run away, and no one will tell them what to do. They can keep animals, Lennie can keep many of his favorite rabbits. They can set their own schedule for what they want to do at when, because they don't have to worry about making a living or where to go next.

Just because Lennie and George share the same experience with each other for a long time, their common pursuit is what they both miss and yearn for in their common experience. They shared this same dream, while continuing to live together and saving money for it through their own efforts.

This dream come from their life experiences and is what keeps them going.

Wang Lung & Ching from *The Good Earth*

The novel *The Good Earth* written by Pearl S. Buck, published in 1931, mainly talks about the story of Wang Lung, his family and the people around him. It is set in a Chinese village in the early 20th century.

Ching is Wang Lung 's faithful servant and friend. Wang Lung and Ching met during the famine years when they were both poor and could hardly live. Like Lennie and George, they are not related by blood, but have been friends for many years cause of their common experience, trust and one’s loyalty to another

Ching and Wang Lung met long before Wang Lung became rich. Ching is more timid than Wang Lung, he is also very quiet and silent.

“ 'One lingered, that one called Ching, a small, silent yellow man with a face like an ape's in the best of times, and now hollowed and anxious.

He would have spoken some good word of shame, for he was an honest man and only his crying child had forced him to evil. But in his bosom was a handful of beans he had snatched when the store was found and he was fearful lest he must return them if he spoke at all, and so he only looked at Wang Lung with haggard, speechless eyes and he went out.' ”(Buck 44)

During that period of poverty and famine, Wang Lung 's uncle spread a rumor that only Ching feels guilty after stealing Wang Lung 's beans and return them to Wang Lung. Wang Lung 's wife O-Lan ate the beans so she could survive.  After Wang Lung became rich he still remembered Ching, so he takes him to his home as a servant.

When Ching died, Wang Lung is very sad. Of all the deaths in the novel, Ching's death was probably the most devastating for him. Although Ching was not his family member and they do not have blood connections, Wang Lung still let his children mourn Ching like him did for three days. Even through their relationship is not equal after Wang Lung became rich, especially under the social background with clearly gap between host and servant, it further explained that Ching was more than a servant for Wang Lung. Because of Ching's loyalty, he is Wang Lung's most trusted person, and the only person Wang Lung can trust, except for O-Lan.

His trust in Ching comes from years of company and getting along with each other, as well as the hard experience them shared. Meanwhile, Ching has been very loyal to Wang Lung for many years, and it has never been against him. This is very much the same as Lennie and George. Both are years of trust and companionship, and the loyalty from Lennie and Ching to George and Wang Lung. Both of them are friends without blood relationships. But a big difference of Wang &Ching 's relationship compare to Lennie and George is that that they do not work together because of the same ideals.

Nowye and Okonkwo from *Things Fall Apart*

            In the novel *Things Fall Apart* written by Chinua Achebe, first published in 1958, mainly talks about life in the southeastern part of Nigeria and the arrival of Europeans during the late 19th century and the life of Okonkwo.

“ His name was Nwoye, Okonkwo's first son. It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. The words of the hymn were like the drops of frozen rain melting on the dry palate of the panting earth” (Achebe 109).

Nwoye is Okonkwo’s eldest son. That makes it very clear that their biggest differences compare to Lennie & George, Wang Lung & Ching is that they had blood relationships and they suppose to be very close. They don't get along because of the disagreement between them.

First, there is Okonkwo 's dissatisfaction with Nwoye, Okonkwo wants his son to show strong manhood, like a true warrior. Because he was always feared and loathed his own father's cowardice, he does not want his own son to be like that.

So Okonkwo keeps pushing Nwoye while using physical and verbal violence to try to get Nwoye to obey him. Such behavior hurts Nwoye a lot, so he decided to stay away from Okonkwo. They have different perspectives, but they are not willing to put down their ideas and sit down to communicate. So the generation gap between father and son is getting deeper and deeper. Although they live together, they don't feel good about each other.

Because of the lack of communication and common goals, there is an increasing amount of misunderstanding between these two people. Nwoye is not satisfied with his father's behavior, so he decides to rebel against his father. He left his family and joined Christian missionaries. Okonkwo, however, has always been a strong igbo adherent and a conservative man. He absolutely could not accept his son's behavior and refused tocommunicate with him.

There are big differences between the two religions Nwoye & Okonkwo follows. It is hard for the locals to understand the purpose of Christianity, Christian missionaries also had difficulty understanding Igbo. So when the Christian missionaries arrived, Okonkwo didn't want to have anything to do with them. So when his son Nwoye converted to Christianity, Okonkwo could not accept this and broke with Nwoye.

Okonkwo is too proud, too vain, too wedded to traditional beliefs and nostalgic for past failures. He is too afraid of failure. All of these features of Okonkwo had shown in his relationship with Nwoye. The arrival of Christian missionaries freed Nwoye from Okonkwo's autocratic and repressive atmosphere of family and company. Compare with the two characters in the previous two novels, Okonkwo and Nwoye are closely related in blood, but the final result is that they break up and it is not an overnight event that leads to this ending. Grievances between them have accumulated over time, include unresolved conflicts, none shared goals, ideas, or beliefs. Never liked or appreciated each other.

When you come into this world, you have the blood ties that you were given, but as you grow, you learn to build and develop friendships and trust with others, whether it's your family or your friends. These relationships are within your control. The more sincere and understanding your relationship with others, the closer you will be. It doesn't matter if you like the people you're related to, because in the end, the people you deserve are the people who care about you, and that is all. To sum up, the companionship and trust that comes from shared goals and experiences is tighter than the ties of blood in the relationships between the three pairs pf protagonists in the novels- *Of Mice and Men*, *Things Fall Apart* and *The Good Earth*.