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Abstract: The present study explores the novel *The Moon Is Down* (1942), written by John Steinbeck, to examine the most relevant classical elements the author uses in order to compare the reality of World War II with that of ancient Greece and Rome. In this way, the repetitive patterns of history and, specifically of war, will be brought to light. These include the conflict between the barbarians and the Greeks and the use of false propaganda during and after a war. In addition, the novel also allows the identification of several aspects of Plato's thought and philosophy in its lines and, consequently, the work reviews these, especially attending to the idea of immortality and the separation of body and soul. As a result, it will be easier to understand the dehumanization experienced by the German soldiers as well as by all the people who had to participate in war.

Keywords: Steinbeck, Socrates, Plato, war, dehumanization, democracy.

Ángela MARTÍN MATA

An Examination of Ancient Greek Elements and Power Relationships in John Steinbeck's *The Moon Is Down*

0. Introduction

"We know what we're made of.
When up against all odds we hold our line

For the cause that we so love
We must hold at all cost"
(Iced Earth "Hold at All Costs")

In *The Moon Is Down* (1942), Steinbeck reminds his audience of the never-ending game of war. He subtly makes his readers look back at history and realize that all has happened before. Hence, the fight between Germans and Norwegians portrayed in the novel can be considered a modern reflection of many other military conflicts. However, the present work focuses on a particular period, the world of ancient Greece, which likewise saw multiple conflicts like the one portrayed in Steinbeck's novel, most notably the rivalry between Persians and Greeks. Similarly, this study also brings up the clash between Romans and the different communities that were reduced into the term 'barbarians', in relation to the issues of war propaganda and of the dehumanization of both soldiers and enemy alike. The resemblance does not only rely on war itself but on the basis that both historical moments also present a process of conquest, in which an army led by a tyrant invades a community organized around democratic principles.

The object of study of the present work, Steinbeck's use of ancient Greece as the axis of the novel and the recreation of historical scenes from the classical period, can initially be supported by the novel's reproduction of events like Socrates' trial. To do this, Steinbeck first introduces the character of Mayor Orden. Through him, Steinbeck examines several Platonic concepts such as the world of Ideas, the separation of the body and soul and the acceptance of immortality, all in a modern setting. The Platonic dichotomy of body and soul will be presented as the outer forces that move and guide the Germans and the Norwegians, respectively. The notions of Platonic ideals and archetypes will also be discussed, since Steinbeck is constantly hinting that his characters either are too close to perfection or are an imperfect copy of the ideal archetype. Another classical element that is going to be addressed is the ancient belief of the acquisition of the gift of clairvoyance before dying, which both Socrates and Mayor Orden experience, thus allowing and reinforcing the identification of these two figures. The analysis will start by defining the two political orders with which the novel is concerned from the point of view of Herodotus: tyranny and democracy.

1. Tyranny and democracy

"We Do Our Duty, We Do What We Must
And In My Plan You Will Trust"
(Iced Earth "High Water Mark")

Herodotus lived in the Athens of Pericles (5th century B.C.), a politically convulsive city due to sudden uprisings of tyrant leaders. Herodotus' debate could be considered the best introduction to the political thought of ancient Greece before Plato's *Republic* because it depicts the political views of the leading forms of government. The debate is found in the third book of Herodotus' *Histories* and it is the exponent of the conflict between the East and the West, which culminated in the liberation of Greece from the Persian tyranny in 478 B.C.

Throughout the debate the author presents various sets of opposites: barbarians and Greeks, slavery and freedom, tyranny and liberty; all of which can also be found in *The Moon Is Down*. Just like the Persians and Greeks, a country launches an invasion of another, in this case represented by Germany and Norway, respectively. Each group exemplifies a different political order and system; in the case of the Germans this would be tyranny (which Herodotus would name monarchy) and in the case of the Norwegians it would be democracy. The latter form of government is defended by Otañes in Herodotus' work (250-251), presenting democracy as equality towards the law (*isonomy*), meaning that each citizen has to be concerned about his relation towards the city and its inhabitants and that all deliberations must be considered by the community (Herodotus 251). The political power rests on the people since, ideally, democracy personifies the will of all citizens. This form of government also includes the same opportunities for all citizens and requests the compliance with the written laws of the city; therefore, each individual's personal freedom must be used in favor of the political life. It seems very clear in Steinbeck's novel that the current mayor of the Norwegian town, Mayor Orden, exemplifies this democratic belief, since "he and his office are one" (Steinbeck 34). Oppositely, in Herodotus' text, tyranny (or monarchy) is defended by Dario, who claims: "What government can possibly be better than that of the best man in the whole state? The counsels of such a man are like himself [the best]" (Herodotus 251). He continues by stating that to correct the vices and corruption of democracy, a "man stands forth as a champion of commonality" correcting these wrongs and, in return, being admired by the people (Herodotus 252), who acknowledge he is the best for that position and appoint him king, making monarchy the best government (Herodotus 252).

In the novel, immediately after conquering the Norwegian village, one of the German soldiers, Colonel Lanser, has to communicate Mayor Orden that they *must* work the local mine for the Germans. Mayor Orden does not know if the people would like to work for them, for "they are orderly people under their government" (Steinbeck 16), which does not mean they would be under the Germans': "My people don't like to have others think for them. Maybe they are different from your people" (Steinbeck 16-17). Lanser notices that Orden is constantly thinking about his people and finally remarks: "Always the people! The people are disarmed. The people have no say" (Steinbeck 18). Although Lanser tries to infuse Orden with his political views on authority, much like Darius in the *Histories*, but the mayor does not change his mind. In fact he brings to light Herodotus' ideas on democracy: "You won't believe this, but it is true: authority is in the town [...] This means we cannot act as quickly as you can, but when a direction is set, we all act together" (Steinbeck 19). In Chapter 2, Lanser finally acknowledges "Mayor Orden is more than a mayor [...] He is his people. He knows what they are doing, thinking, without asking, because he will think what they think" (Steinbeck 34).

Although historically, the Norwegians were under the authority of a much appreciated king before the Norwegian Nazi Party (Nasjonal Samling) with Quisling at the lead received support from Hitler (Toynbee 369-371), in the novel they belong to a democratic country. Its citizens know they are "free people" but have agreed to choose one of them, Mayor Orden in this case, to guide them. In his own words, the people chose him "not to be confused" (Steinbeck 10). The Germans are under a tyrant government, meaning they also have a

leader; however, he is not there to guide them, but rather to make them do whatever he believes in. Hence, it comes as no surprise that Captain Bentick, a German officer in the novel, sometimes excuses himself saying "it's regulations", or considers his duty as "unpleasant" (Steinbeck 7-8). In a way, it could be said that both groups are "good obedient people" (Steinbeck 11), but the difference relies on ferocity. Norwegians are not "fierce people" because democracy allows them to be equal and peaceful; nobody looks down on his neighbor. On the contrary, tyranny implies having "the best man" as the leader (Herodotus 251) and requires this man to make an immediate answer with action and violence, as this individual in power supervises and orders his people to do what he alone cannot do. In the novel, most of the soldiers are aware of the fact that they are just "dependable units" (Steinbeck 20); Mayor Hunter even mocks Lanser's intervention about Captain Loft being a "born soldier" by saying "born ass" instead (Steinbeck 29). This is connected with Lanser's description of a soldier: "Lanser told himself he was a soldier, given orders to carry out. He was not expected to question or to think, but only to carry out orders." (Steinbeck 23). These characteristics outline the difference between two types of leaders: a tyrant and a representative of the town. On another layer, Steinbeck compares the not so advanced army of the Norwegians compared to the Germans: "'It's no fight to go against machine guns', Doctor Winter said" (Steinbeck 45). The Germans, like the Persians, were more properly armed than the Greeks/Norwegians. The Germans owned a powerful supply of weapons and new gadgets that other countries did not, along with the massive numbers of troops that the Nazi party had at its disposal. This is another reason that gave Germany such strength. The Norwegians are not considered "fierce people" because "they haven't had a war for a hundred years. They've forgotten about fighting" (Steinbeck 31). However, despite not being "fierce people" they can engage in a war too because people "don't like to be conquered" (Steinbeck 42).

2. Socrates in Norway

"It's not the fear of what's beyond
It's just that I might not respond
I have an interest almost craving
But would I like to get too far in?"
(Iron Maiden "Infinite Dreams")

2.1. The Laws

From the moment the Germans attacked the Norwegian village by surprise and killed six local people, they broke the Norwegian rules and provoked war. Throughout the novel, the war progressively gets worse as seen in the killing of three citizens more even after the conquest. One of them is Alex Morten, a local miner. Captain Bentick was looking after the town mine and he was going to be relieved by Captain Loft, when Alex claimed that he wanted to quit the job: "When ordered back to work [...] the prisoner attacked Captain Loft with the pick-ax he carried. Captain Bentick interposed his body" (Steinbeck 52). Immediately after that, Alex is announced that he is going to be prosecuted. Steinbeck, in a conscious way or not, depicts Alex' trial in a very similar way to Socrates' trial, recorded in the *Apology* by Plato.

Both Alex and Socrates are condemned innocent people who have different opinions with their respective prosecutors about what is good and bad, just and unjust. Alex admits having killed a man and says he is not sorry. In fact, he is supported by the Mayor saying that there is no law between them and the Germans because the latter broke their laws in the first place; "this is war" (Steinbeck 48), Mayor Orden explains. Likewise, Socrates did not feel sorry during his trial. It must be remembered that Socrates was "guilty of not worshipping the gods the State worshipped but introducing other new divinities, and further [...] of corrupting the young by teaching them accordingly" (Russell 103). At some point of his speech, he declares, "as I am convinced that I never wronged another, I will assuredly not wrong myself. I will not say of myself that I deserve any evil, or propose any penalty" (Plato "Apology" 25). Regarding Socrates' situation, he was in a trial where justice and injustice were open to debate and to punishment, whereas Alex is in a trial where these are not involved, as Mayor Orden so often remarks. In fact, he states, "the invaders will have a trial and hope to convince that there is justice involved" (Steinbeck 43). Unlike in the trial of Alex and, later on, of Mayor Orden as well, Socrates had the option to choose between different alternatives apart from being condemned to death: a confiscation of property, the payment of a fine or going into exile. This last option is discussed in Plato's *Crito* along with the Greek notion of fidelity towards the law. At this point, a similarity between Mayor Orden and Socrates can be established, a resemblance that is even more clearly seen in the last scenes of the novel, in which Plato's *Apology* is recited.

In order to highlight the relation between the two characters, the ideals of both men as well as their belief are going to be compared and explained. Mayor Orden and Socrates respect and glorify the laws of their respective cities under *their* government and both know that the law of the foreigners, the barbarians, have nothing to do with them. They only accept the laws they have been obeying since birth:

Did we [the laws] not bring you into existence? [...] Say whether you have any objection to urge against those of us who regulate marriage [...] Or against those of us who regulate the system of nurture and education of children in which you were trained? [...] Since you were brought into the world and nurtured and educated by us, can you deny that you are our child and slave, as your fathers were before you? (Plato "Crito" 39)

Socrates does not choose to go into exile because he thinks that he would find it more difficult to accept foreign laws than to obey the laws of his own city. Both for Socrates and for Mayor Orden, the laws are and must be the priority, for they embody the idea of Justice, largely praised by the Greeks and by any democratic regime. Through this idea, the analysis can advance towards the world of Ideas.

2.2. The world of Ideas

It has been concluded that for the Greeks, as well as for the Norwegians in Steinbeck's novel, laws were the priority regardless of cost, even death. However, it may appear strange or not convincing enough for a man to be willing to die just because a law requires it.

Perhaps, it might be the case that there is another advantage in dying for the law, one more enriching, and both reasons may be interconnected. If we assume that at the hour of death the soul is separated from the body, two identities are being considered: the body and the soul. Plato distinguished between material things, connected to the body, and essences or the very true nature of a thing, connected to the soul:

Then reflect, Cebes: is not the conclusion of the whole matter this? --that the soul is in the very likeness of the divine, and immortal, and intelligible, and uniform, and indissoluble, and unchangeable; and that the body is in the very likeness of the human, and mortal, and unintelligible, and multiform, and dissoluble, and changeable (Plato "Phaedo" 72)

According to Plato, the senses, and therefore the body, fool individuals into thinking that they are feeling and experiencing everything there is. The body is unaware of the fact that it is led by passions, immediate impulses, which cause disturbance in the soul. The body acts upon a lie, it generates feelings according to what is being experienced; thus, it is a slave of the senses and of the passions. In other words, it does not follow Truth for it believes in a lie. The soul acts upon truth instead, because it is an essence itself and it is closer to the world of Ideas. The soul and the Ideas or essences inhabiting the world of Ideas share the same characteristics mentioned above. Therefore, essences are innate to the soul and are perceivable by it, the same way the senses allow the body to perceive material things (Russell 148-149). Socrates, as a philosopher, chooses the path that follows or guides to Truth. In *Phaedo*, he concludes that one should not be afraid of death (Plato "Phaedo" 112). He firmly believes that his soul will be saved if he lives a life dedicated to philosophy and meditation in order to be closer to the soul realm and therefore closer to divinity (Plato "Phaedo" 103). Consequently, at the hour of death he will not have anything to fear, for his soul will be reunited with divinity; an aim to which he has dedicated more attention in life and to which he is akin: "And this separation and release of the soul from the body is termed death [...] and the true philosophers, and they only, are ever seeking to release the soul" (Russell 152).

Likewise, in the novel *Mayor Orden* finally loses his fear of death. It is in the last chapter of the book when Mayor Orden can be completely identified with Socrates. First, Orden has been thinking of ways to escape his sentence and has been pleading for his life, the same offer that Socrates received and hesitated about, a situation that makes Orden feel "ashamed" (Steinbeck 106). However, he clarifies, "a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether he is doing right or wrong" (Steinbeck 106). As previously discussed, Socrates preferred to obey the law acknowledging that it was the best option for a *just* man, supported by his idea of immortality. Summing up, what Socrates and Orden believe is that one should not be afraid to die, for death is not a punishment. It is easier to choose honor and justice when one is not afraid of death, knowing that you leave this world being just and that you will reunite with divinity.

As stated in the previous pages, although the similarities between both characters are evident at the novel's conclusion, Mayor Orden embodies Socrates since the beginning. The first hints can be found in the names he is given by the townspeople: Mayor Orden, Idea-Mayor and Excellency, which all connect with Plato's world of Ideas. But one of the most remarkable sentences that denote this resemblance is when Doctor Winter and the Mayor are recalling the recitation of the *Apology* in school: "I was Socrates, he said, 'and I denounced the School Board'" (Steinbeck 106). It is in the following scenes that Orden starts reciting Socrates' final speech during his trial. He even describes himself as "little man" and sometimes feels as though he is "bigger and better" (Steinbeck 106) than he is now. This idea relies on the fact that both Socrates and Orden are already in contact with a side of divinity. Because they are philosophers, they are closer to the soul realm and tend to seek soul-like experiences, i.e. meditating or seeking truth and justice. Orden and Socrates are judged as social corruptors: "Socrates is an evil-doer, and a curious person, who searches into things under the earth and in heaven, and he makes the worse appear the better cause; and he teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others" (Plato "Apology" 7). Corell, the town traitor, accuses Orden similarly: "This man is a leader of a rebellious people", but Lanser justifies him by claiming: "Nonsense [...] he's just a simple man" (Steinbeck 100). When Socrates was said to be the wisest man, he was confused at first; he did not believe to have "oute mega oute smikron" wisdom (Haynes 91), "neither a great amount nor little" wisdom,¹ a sign of simplicity by recognizing his ignorant side. Similarly, in Chapter 3, Orden states: "Doubt? I am the Mayor. I don't understand many things" (Steinbeck 43). The similarity between the Socratic paradox and Orden's statement is something that can be taken into account to reassure the resemblance of these two characters.

As the next step in the analysis, the present study will briefly comment the concepts of Platonic archetypes and the opposition between body and soul, embodied by the Germans and Norwegians in the novel. The famous simile of the cave must be reminded in order to understand this identification. According to the myth, "those who are destitute of philosophy may be compared to prisoners in a cave" (Russell 140). They regard as true the shadows that appear on the wall, but the philosopher is the one who succeeds in escaping and "it is his duty to [...] instruct them as to the truth, and show them the way up" (Russell 140). Mayor Orden embodies this idea: he is presented as a good honorable man, wise and apt for the position of governor. Although all copies are imperfect, Mayor Orden is very close to the archetype and so he is the best fitted to guide his people: "Goodness and Reality being timeless, the best State will be the one which most nearly copies the heavenly model, by having a minimum of change and a maximum of static perfection, and its rulers should be those who best understand the eternal Good" (Russell 123).² The reasoning behind Orden's suitability for his position could be argued on the basis that: "When an individual partakes of an idea, the individual and the idea are similar" (Russell 143), from which it can be inferred that Socrates and Orden are not dogmatic, they just rely entirely in ideals that define their

¹ Author's own translation from Haynes' *Una guía de la Antigüedad para la vida moderna*: "ni grande ni pequeña sabiduría" (91).

² The supposition of "Good" being the one reality must be acknowledged to understand Plato and therefore Socrates (Russell 141-143).

lives and make them simple men. Imposing onto other people what one believes to be just or true is less effective, for only when a person has the idea of Justice or of Good, will he or she know and embody these notions: "The Mayor is an idea conceived by free men" (Steinbeck 112).

Concerning the figure of Hitler, Russell affirms, "the pleasures of sense were of very little importance to Hitler" (150). He hints that, like a true philosopher, he liberated himself from the tyranny of the body, which contributed to greatness, yet he did not do this in virtue, but in sin (Russell 150). Hitler and his soldiers partake from the ideal of 'tyranny' but they are also imperfect copies in the sense that they are fooled by the body because they engage in war. War is just another outcome of the cravings of the body: "Whence come wars, and fightings and factions? Whence but from the body and the lusts of the body? Wars are occasioned by the love of money" (Russell 151). Because of this, the Nazi's have to be identified with the body, opposite to the Norwegians, who would represent the soul, accordingly. In the novel, the Germans also partake of an ideal: "If Captain Bentick was too old to be a captain, Captain Loft was too young. Captain Loft was much a captain as one can imagine. He lived and breathed his captaincy" (Steinbeck 21). In this case, Captain Loft and Captain Bentick are shown as imperfect copies of the idea of *captaincy* – too old or too young. Here, Steinbeck refers to Aristotle's Third Man Argument, which proposes that "there will have to be yet another [idea], embracing the particulars and the two ideas, and so on ad infinitum" (Russell 143). This article, however, focuses rather on the idea of "Truth" or "Good" as seen by the different sides. Socrates and Mayor Orden are dedicated to philosophy, the love for wisdom, which for them is the same as the good and the real, since that is the truth outside the cave, the only Truth. The Germans follow a different kind of truth, the one inside the cave, created by the dancing shadows. Therefore, it can be concluded that the moral issue at stake is not a question of good against bad people, but of people ruled by different notions of what Truth is. The Norwegians act upon their love for justice and obey the laws accordingly, whereas the Germans act upon their love for their leader or for the love for the obedience of orders, even though they might not love these orders in themselves.

As previously affirmed, the final resemblance between Orden and Socrates can be identified at the end of the novel. The structure is the same as that of the *Apology* because it regards the trial of two innocent men, but it also takes the structure of the *Phaedo* in the literal wording: "Crito, I owe a cock for Asclepius [...] Will you remember to pay the debt?" (Steinbeck 112). This leads up to Plato's theory of reminiscence. This theory argues that the soul must have existed before birth in the world of Ideas, where it had complete knowledge. However, when the soul is born in the sensible world, it "wanders and is confused" (Russell 154) and suddenly forgets everything that belongs to the soul realm. Human memory, therefore, is imperfect. Steinbeck playfully uses the concept of memory, meaning either that Orden is actually an old man who has nearly forgotten the quotes of the *Apology*, but also that, as a human, our memory is imperfect: "And Winter nodded slowly, 'Yes, you remembered. The debt shall be paid.'" (Steinbeck 112). This final sentence, formulated as a prediction, brings us to the subject that is going to be treated in next section.

3. Clairvoyance before death

"Now that I know that the right time has come
My prediction will surely be true
The impending disaster it looms
And the whole of the village is doomed"
(Iron Maiden "The Prophecy")

Since the beginning of the novel, "Half-dreaming people" are present (Steinbeck 14). Dreamy states are connected with the ancient idea that dreams are or can be prophetic. Prophecy and clairvoyance are also linked with death, since in the 5th century B.C., people truly believed that when a human reached his/her hour of death, he or she could develop a certain degree of clairvoyance (Haynes 268).³ This is reflected in Plato's *Apology*: "I am about to die, and that is the hour in which men are gifted with prophetic power" (Plato "Apology" 27). In Chapter 7 of *The Moon is Down*, "Mayor Orden heard the planes in his sleep and they made a dream for him and he moved and whispered in his sleep" (Steinbeck 89). In the next chapter, and still in this dreamy state, he is informed of having been arrested and condemned to death. It is compulsory to bear in mind that he is a part of the idea of Justice and Democracy and, therefore, he knows that everything the Nazis have done to his town and his people are but disturbances on their true essence. As it has been explained before, essences are immutable, and it is the job of Mayor Orden and the town to go back to their previous state in order to maintain the harmony and justice they embody. Consequently, at the end of the novel Mayor Orden uses Socrates' prophecy against the German soldiers: "I prophesy to you who are my murderers that immediately after my departure, punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you" (Steinbeck 108). He also remarks the importance of the implication of the townspeople, without whom he is just a simple man: "You know, Doctor, I am a little man and this is a little town, but there must be a spark in little men that can burst into flame" (Steinbeck 106). His helpers, among others, are Annie and Alex. Both demonstrate to have the innate idea of Justice and Democracy and eventually manage to be considered heroes in the novel. Alex kills a soldier while claiming his freedom and Annie pours boiling water onto the soldiers and then becomes "a heroine" and the "exponent of liberty" (Steinbeck 39).

Looking at the Nazi side, Lieutenant Tonder experiences a psychotic episode with its roots on a dream –or thought– about the Führer being crazy. Regarding Plato's ideas, earlier in this essay it has been explained that the Nazis were more focused on and concerned about the body than about the soul. Tonder is starting to become aware of the madness of the body that guides their Leader, which until this point Tonder himself also followed: "He longed for death on the battlefield, with weeping parents in the background, and the Leader [...] He imagined his death very often [...] And even had his dying words ready" (Steinbeck 22). Eventually, Tonder starts to lose faith in war and in the Leader and shows a more humanitarian side. He often remarks that he wants to go back home or to meet girls, which means that he is trying to get his individuality and humanity back. Tonder realizes the leader

³ Author's own translation from Haynes, *Una guía de la Antigüedad para la vida moderna*: "En aquella época [siglo V a.C.] la gente sí creía que cuando a un ser humano le llegaban sus últimos momentos, éste podía desarrollar cierta clarividencia" (268).

is "crazy" (Steinbeck 68), more akin to the body-side in the suggested dichotomy, and distant from what he wanted in the first place. Following Plato's lines, Tonder may have awakened from sleep inside the cave and he is realizing that his leader is regarding shadows as the ultimate truth. He may be becoming aware that the Norwegians will eventually win. Interestingly, and to connect this with the nature of prophecy and its relation to dreams and death, Tonder dies shortly afterwards.

4. False propaganda of the war

To secure peace is to prepare for war
(Metallica "Don't Tread on Me")

In *Agricola*, Tacitus quotes a speech he ascribes to Galgacus, leader of the Caledonians, who claims that for the Romans: "To plunder, butcher, steal, these things they misname empire: they make a desolation and they call it peace." (221) As a Roman, Tacitus tries to raise awareness of the dangers of war, considering it the easiest choice but also the most harmful. He resumed that war is the reason why empires do not last forever. He also considered the fact that through imposition, civilization is unbearable because it created an artificial peace. The impact of war is not only physically visible through dead bodies and destruction, but the psychological factor is similarly significant. Families and soldiers may experience pain at unimaginable levels, face challenges and endure hardships. All these experiences may generate traumas, shell shocks and depressions, among other illnesses.

In Chapter 5 of *The Moon Is Down*, the consciousness of the soldiers, more specifically of Lieutenant Prackle and Tonder is explored: "Their talk was of friends and relatives who loved them and their longings were for warmth and love, because a man can be a soldier for only so many hours a day and for only so many months in a year, and then he wants to be a man again, wants girls and drinks and music and laughter and ease" (Steinbeck 58). However, another side of them had been shown in Chapter 2: "They believed in the great new system invented by a genius so great that they never bothered to evaluate its results" (Steinbeck 21). This demonstrates that both Lieutenant Prackle and Tonder are subjected to the new regime in Germany and have never evaluated its implications and results, which allows us to ponder that they are not individuals anymore. The more the soldiers lose their humanity by giving themselves to war and to their orders, the more the townspeople distrust them, see them as enemies and reject them. It is often remarked in the novel how silent the townsfolk grow: "These people! These cold people! They never look at you! [...] They never speak" (Steinbeck 63). Tonder criticizes the fact that the townspeople are horrible because they obey orders, when he is in fact doing the same and slowly growing colder and colder:

It came about that the conquerors grew afraid of the conquered and their nerves wore thin and they shot at shadows in the night. The cold, sullen silence was with them always. Then three soldiers went insane in a week and cried all night and all day until they were sent away home. And others might have gone insane if they had not heard that mercy deaths awaited the insane at home, and a mercy death is a terrible thing to think of. Fear crept into the men in their billets and it made them sad, and it crept into

the patrols and it made them cruel. [...] And the officers were a reflection of their men, more restrained because their training was more complete, more resourceful because they had more responsibility, but the same fears were a little deeper buried in them, the same longings were more tightly locked in their hearts. (Steinbeck 59)

There is historical evidence that some German soldiers realized the great amount of cruelty they were imposing on the Norwegian town and committed suicide as a result (Toynbee 374). In the novel, the statement "it would be a nice place to settle, I think" (Steinbeck 29) turns into: "I would like to get out of this god-forsaken hole!" (Steinbeck 63). Whenever Tonder or Prackle express a little bit of emotion or feeling, which allow them to remember their individuality, they are told:

You're not a man any more. You are a soldier. Your comfort is of no importance and, Lieutenant, your life isn't of much importance. [...]. Meanwhile you must take orders and carry them out. Most of the orders will be unpleasant, but that's not your business. [...] They should have built your soul with truth, not led it along with lies. [...] But you took the job, Lieutenant. Will you stay with it or quit it? We can't take care of your soul. (Steinbeck 99)

The concerns of war are not those of the soul, which is not in contact with bodily actions, including war. Thus, the soul must be rejected in order to participate in a war because war opposes everything the soul is engaged with. War would represent a fraction in consciousness that is so fooled by the senses that it acts without really considering the results:

In marching, in mobs, in football games, and in war, outlines become vague; real things become unreal and a fog creeps over the mind. Tension and excitement, weariness, movement – all merge in one great gray dream, so that when it is over, it is hard to remember how it was when you killed men or ordered them to be killed. (Steinbeck 23)

All in all, Steinbeck presents war as a dreamy state in which unawakened humans participate. In order to win a war, the soul of the people involved must be ignored, since other longings and bodily interests are the ones taking the lead.

5. Conclusion

Once again, Steinbeck captures the human character by means of the archetypes that build society and culture. In his work, history is brought under scrutiny, representing it as the exponent of life and highlighting the patterns that repeat themselves within its course. In this essay, some classical elements that Steinbeck used in *The Moon Is Down* have been examined in order to compare the modern world with the reality of ancient Greece. The opposition between democracy and monarchy/tyranny present and debated since Herodotus' times is explored by means of the two groups of people the novel represents: the German

soldiers and the inhabitants of the Norwegian town. Both groups constitute the axis of the novel and are clearly distinguished, not only because of their various political inclinations, but also because of the different behaviors and understandings of life.

The Platonic ideals take a leading role in the interpretation of the novel due to the different perspectives from which Truth, Good and Justice can be looked at. Steinbeck achieves successfully the Norwegian village's embodiment of democracy by comparing the town's mayor with Socrates, initially in a subtle way that progressively becomes evident. To establish this connection, the analysis has explained the main ideas of Platonic thought in which Socrates is involved: the compliance with the written laws of the city, the idea of immortality, the pre-existence of the soul and the dichotomy between body and soul. The identification of the characters with these ideas allows us to give a more meaningful interpretation of the end of the novel, when Mayor Orden recites Socrates' final speech in the *Apology*. In addition, the different groups of people and sides of the conflict have been identified with and classified into soul-like and body-like archetypes, the former being the Norwegians, while the latter is represented by the Germans. This classification is supported by Plato's myth of the cave, which explains the difference between the Truth inside the cave (the dancing shadows on the wall) and the Truth outside (the absolute Truth).

Military conquest is a recurrent event in history, as the one carried out by the Germans in World War II is not that different from that of the Romans as described by Tacitus, who had already addressed the different perspectives on war depending on the side one happens to be in. The quote from *Agricola* serves us to realize and to explain the typical use of false propaganda during and after a war and to understand what really means to conquer and to be conquered. Finally, the work has tried to sketch the character of the German soldiers and their eventual dehumanization as a result of war, since Steinbeck seems to give special emphasis to the chapters in which the soldiers are on the verge of losing their minds. Madness, dreamy states and prophetic visions are also examined in this essay, which attempts to help to better understand the identification of the characters of *The Moon Is Down* with the ancient world and with the ideas mentioned above.

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