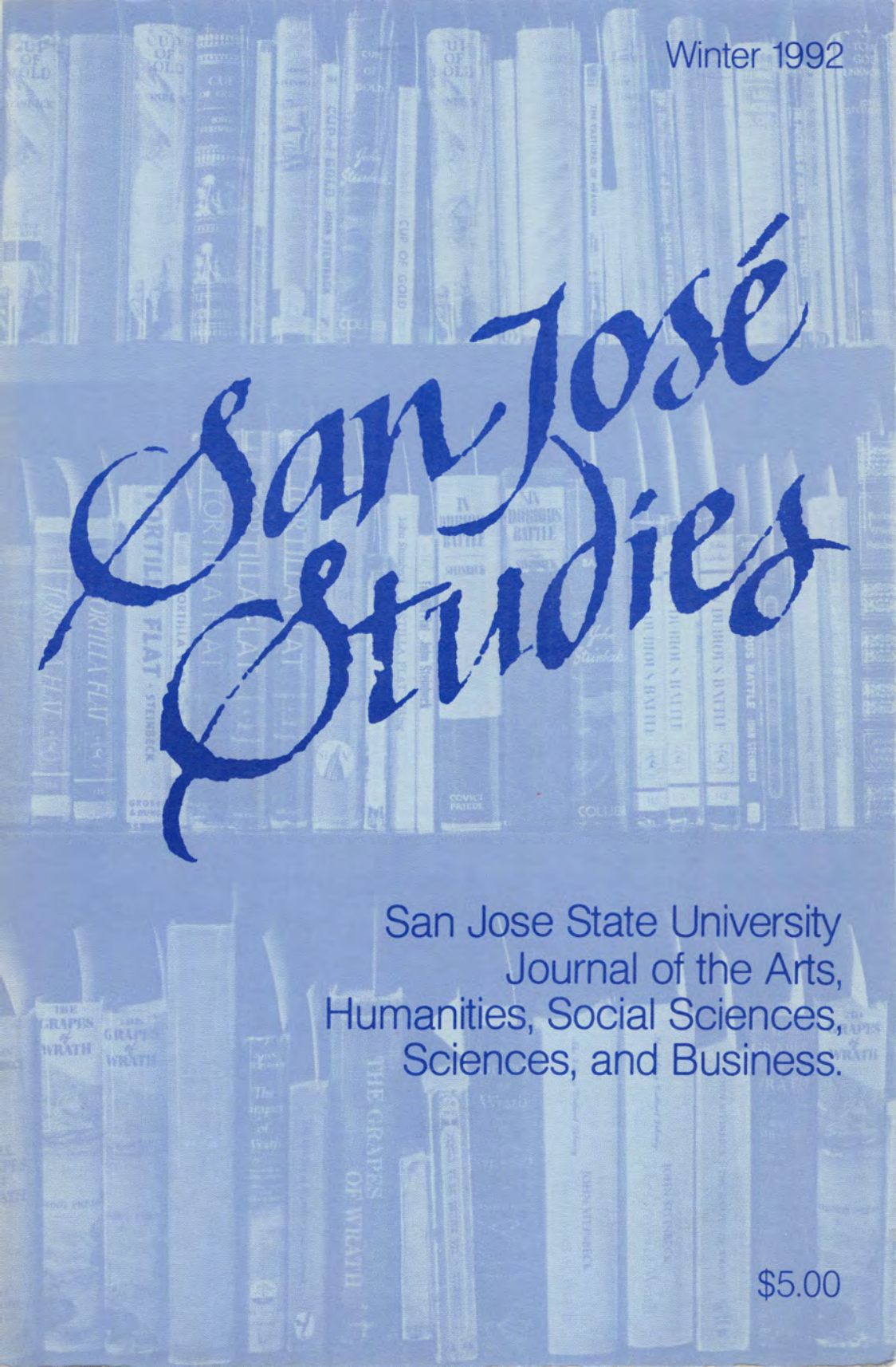
Winter 1992

San José Studies, Winter 1992

San José State University Foundation

Winter 1992



San José Studies

San Jose State University
Journal of the Arts,
Humanities, Social Sciences,
Sciences, and Business.

$5.00

Acknowledgments

The publication of *San José Studies* is possible only through the support of its guarantor, benefactor, and patron subscribers. The trustees and staff of *SJS* wish to acknowledge these supporters and to see their ranks grow.

GUARANTORS

College of Applied Arts and Sciences, SJSU
College of Engineering, SJSU
College of Humanities and the Arts, SJSU
College of Social Sciences, SJSU
English Department, SJSU
Humanities Department, SJSU
Society of Archimedes, College of Science, SJSU
Spartan Shops, Inc., SJSU

BENEFACTORS

Accounting and Finance Area, College of Business, SJSU
Associate Dean's Office, College of Business, SJSU
Marshall Burak
Hobert W. and Patricia Burns
Lucius R. Eastman
Economics Department, SJSU
Gail and Stanley Fullerton
Ted C. and Caryl Hinckley
History Department, SJSU
Management Area, College of Business, SJSU
Marketing Area, College of Business, SJSU
Master of Business Administration Program, College of Business, SJSU
Arlene N. Okerlund
Phillip Persky
Psychology Department, SJSU
Murco and Margaret Ringnalda
SJSU Emeritus Faculty Association
Sourisseau Academy
O. C. Williams

PATRONS

Ralph C. Bohn
California Faculty Association, SJSU Chapter
Robert D. Clark
College of Education, SJSU
Communication Studies Department, SJSU
Whitaker T. Deininger
John A. Galm
Journalism and Mass Communications, SJSU
Elsie Leach
Dorothy L. Stevens
Richard G. Tansey
Rose and Raymond Tseng
University Club, SJSU

SAN JOSE STUDIES

Volume XVIII, Number 1 Winter, 1992

PRINTER Quality Offset Printing, Inc.
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

 ISSN: 0097-8051

SAN JOSE STUDIES

Volume XVIII, Number 1

SPECIAL SECTION ON JOHN STEINBECK

Susan Shillinglaw, Guest Editor
Introduction 4

Carroll Britch
In Dubious Battle: the Drive to Power 6

John Ditsky
The Late John Steinbeck: Dissonance in the Post-*Grapes* Era 20

Jean M. Emery
Manhood Beset: Misogyny in *Of Mice and Men* 33

Mimi R. Gladstein
Deletions from the *Battle;* Gaps in the *Grapes* 43

Tetsumaro Hayashi
The "Chinese Servant" in *East of Eden* 52

Abby H. P. Werlock
Poor Whites; Joads and Snopeses 61

Cover: A shelf of books at the Steinbeck Research Center. All photographs in this issue are courtesy of the center at San Jose State University.

FICTION

F. R. Lewis
How the World Grew Up 74

Carole Vopat
A Good-Looking Woman..... 91

POETRY

Norah Christianson, "Red Rider" and two other poems..... 103

Leonard J. Cirino, "Self-Portrait" and two other poems 106

Thomas Kretz, "The Only Way" and one other poem..... 108

Neil Myers, "Beanstalk with Variations" and two other poems 110

Nils Peterson, "My Lecture on Romanticism" 117

Rita Signorelli-Pappas, "Fasting Woman" and three other poems... 121

SPECIAL SECTION ON JOHN STEINBECK

Introduction

If a writer likes to write, he will find satisfaction in endless experiment with his medium. He will improvise techniques, arrangements of scenes, rhythms of words, and rhythms of thought. . . . And sometimes the experiment, which at first seems outrageous to the critic and the reader who have not been through the process of its development, may become interesting and valid when it is inspected a second and third time.

John Steinbeck, "Critics, Critics Burning Bright"

STEINBECK had good reasons for dismissing the likes of critics, "special pleaders who use my work as a distorted echo chamber for their own ideas." The words reflect his bitterness toward the reviewers and critics who attacked his work with virtually unparalleled zeal throughout his career. But he could also, with some charity, acknowledge the importance of the critic's role: to help us see, perhaps only with the passage of time, the vitality of a work. The best criticism, of course, brings us back to the text with a fresh vision, with a new angle to consider. And the essays in this volume—examining Steinbeck's treatments of gender and ethnicity, his interest in music and psychology, his connections to other writers—all chart fertile ground for revisionist thought.

Recently I heard a teacher declare to docile students that one characteristic of Steinbeck's writing is his dislike of women, all of whom are as manipulative as Curley's wife in *Of Mice and Men.* Jean Emery rescues the reputations of both the wife and her creator. It is the men in the work, not the author of the work, who would "eliminate women and femininity" from their male fraternity. George and Lennie's bond is a "kind of marriage," she argues, with Lennie the doomed feminine principle. Reading *Of Mice and Men* as a critique of the patriarchy suggests new methodology for reexamining gender issues in Steinbeck, particularly the suppression of the feminine by myopic characters within his fiction. Suppression also intrigues Mimi Gladstein, but her gaze is on matters extrinsic, not intrinsic to the text. With a rich background of biographical and historical data on women's political involvement in the 1930s, she asks why these vigorous women do not find their way into *The Grapes of Wrath* and *In Dubious Battle.* This is a question that of late has been of particular concern to those who regularly teach Steinbeck's texts of the late 1930s and find themselves explaining why he consistently fails to

register the ethnic diversity of the strikers. To respond that Steinbeck was not writing social history satisfies only some; Gladstein's essay provides impetus for a continuing debate.

Carroll Britch is one participant, to be sure. His provocative essay on *In Dubious Battle* concerns the book's "ongoing psychic realities, rather than temporal economic conditions." Jim's basic sense of inferiority is masked by his drive for power, a drive that sends him to the pinnacle of party organization and control. Mac, growers, and migrants are no more virtuous, as each rhetorically disguises a raw psychological urge to control. Britch's essay is as thoroughly grounded in Steinbeck's reading as is John Ditsky's on Steinbeck's urgent fascination with music, a topic that, as Ditsky notes, needs further investigation. "From the beginning," Steinbeck wrote a friend in 1939, "I have worked in a musical technique . . . I have tried to use the forms and the mathematics of music rather than those of prose . . . It accounts for the so-called 'different' technique of each one of my books." Ditsky, a lover of Steinbeck and of music, has sketched out some provocative ground that the writer himself challenges critics to further explore.

Essays by Tetsumaro Hayashi and Abby Werlock complete this special section. Hayashi's is an exhaustive study of Lee's seminal role in *East of Eden*, an analysis that establishes the significance of a character who is a virtuoso, playing the multiple parts of Chinese servant/scholar/surrogate father/and mentor. In his letters and journals, Steinbeck often says that during composition he loses his own ego and becomes his characters, and Hayashi suggests that the author, in some ways, is Lee and uses Lee as his spokesman and persona. Werlock compares Faulkner's infamous Snopeses with Steinbeck's tenacious Joads, concluding that both authors "articulate resoundingly a 'No' to exploitation and totalitarianism and a 'Yea' to the rights and dignity of the ordinary individual." Comparisons between Steinbeck and other writers, particularly other writers of the 1930s, will continue to generate stimulating discussion.

As I reread each essay, I recalled the conferences at which they were given: four at the 1989 forum on *The Grapes of Wrath* at SJSU; Ditsky's at the 1990 Salinas Steinbeck Festival; Emory's at the May, 1991, American Literature Association in Washington D.C. At the time, all were recognized as important contributions to scholarship; in print they will gain the wider influence that they deserve.

Susan Shillinglaw
Guest Editor

In Dubious Battle: the Drive to Power

Carroll Britch

Man hates something in himself . . . but himself he cannot win over unless he kills every individual. And this self-hate which goes so closely in hand with self-love is what I wrote about.

Letter to George S. Albee, January 15, 1935—the day Steinbeck finished the novel.[1]

ON face, the men of *In Dubious Battle*[2] clash because a few hope to profit by denying the many a living wage. Given the general context of the conflict, the depression of the early 30s, it might seem that the struggle for food, shelter, and gas for the car would entail complication enough to sustain the narrative. Hardly so. For the migrants in John Steinbeck's fictional Torgas Valley are not, even when on strike, in the totally desperate straits of, say, those at Visalia whom he later in the decade found to be actually "starving."[3] Times are hard at Torgas, true. Yet, apples have to be picked or they rot. Rations are scarce, and some go hungry but nobody starves. A baby is born and it survives; a few characters end up something like martyrs but none utterly perishes from the despair of poverty. In short, contrary to most early reviewers, Steinbeck shows little interest here in exploiting the timeworn issues of naturalism, whether economic or social or biologic—and his plot is the richer for it.

As abstracted above in the letter that serves as an epilogue to the novel, the issue that does concern Steinbeck is psychological. To lead the reader into considering that issue, he has packed the novel with passage after passage of reflective dialogue on the nature of group and individual behavior. He does not intrude by blurting out the point, but he has made enough signs to show that his characters act as they do because of the urge or drive to power, a force perhaps more compelling than the need to

eat but rarely as easy to satisfy.

Since the urge exists as both a constituent part and necessary function of the love-hate complex, it carries the potential to heal as well as to hurt. Unhappily, throughout the action of *In Dubious Battle,* power works woe. It does so, perhaps, because no matter what else each side claims to be driven by, the overriding urge is to win. The language Steinbeck employs in his *America and Americans* to explain something of the inner workings of the power drive reveals the density of the problem, not to mention the difficulty of expressing it in essay form: ". . . our closest and most precious possession we gave into the hands of God or gods, not kindly or wise, but vain and jealous and greedy—in the image not of ourselves but of the ugly things, precarious and usurped, that power makes of us."[4] Throughout the action of *In Dubious Battle,* neither profit-taker nor Party-man nor picker appears able to live free of the ugly and dangerous thing that power makes of each of them alike, and so puts to question just what it is that each side truly fights for.

Accordingly, my reading is that the novel is about ongoing psychic realities, rather than temporal economic conditions. This view was inspired in good measure by the compelling way that Jackson J. Benson and Anne Loftis argue in their well-known "background" essay that *In Dubious Battle* is far from a realistic portrait of actual strikes or strike leaders, and then conclude that under the surface story runs a "parable of man's self-hatred."[5] With few exceptions Steinbeck would hardly have disagreed with any of that, for in the 1935 Albee epilogue, already cited, he proclaims that his novel consists of a "Surface story, group-psychological structure, and philosophical conclusion. . . ." Demonstrating his intentions within the novel itself, he has Doc Burton, the resident medicine man, prefix the material of the epilogue while lecturing Jim Nolan on why man himself is often his own worst enemy: "Psychologists say a man's self-love is balanced neatly with self-hate. Mankind must be the same." (p. 180)

The question now is whose psychology/philosophy did Steinbeck look to in order to lend authority to his construct of plot and character. Happily, very early in the story he names Friedrich Nietzsche—whom many regard as the father of modern psychology and a champion of the philosophy of being, both—as one of the great minds Jim Nolan read to educate himself. (p. 6) Robert DeMott lists Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*[6] as a book that Steinbeck had his hands on. In that book is a famous discourse entitled "Of Self-Overcoming," where, in words by now all too familiar, Zarathustra speaks:

> I know the hatred and envy of your hearts. You are not great enough not to know hatred and envy. So be great enough not to be ashamed of them! . . . Man is something that should be

> overcome. (*Z*, pp. 73–75)
> . . . But you yourself will always be the worst enemy you can encounter: you yourself lie in wait for yourself in caves . . . you love yourself and despise yourself as only lovers can despise. (*Z*, p. 90)

That Steinbeck has Doc Burton deliver the paraphrase creates a double irony: though Doc hates no one, loneliness is his "enemy" (p. 186); though Nietzsche is Jim's mentor, Jim has no idea what Nietzsche and spokesman Zarathustra are all about.

To give an idea of what Jim is all about, I believe that Steinbeck got help from the teachings of Alfred Adler who, following in the footsteps of Nietzsche, established the will-to-power as a primary psychological drive. Adler's great work *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*[7] came out in 1929, and in February of that year Adler delivered a series of lectures at Berkeley. Whether or not Steinbeck heard him, he surely read about Adler in C. G. Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, [8] wherein Jung devotes more than 30 pages to a critique of Adlerian psychology, and where, in consort with Adler, he terms the will-to-power a "natural instinct or drive." (*MMSS*, p. 119)

Dynamics of Self-Hate

As Adler explains it, self-hate arises from the feelings of inferiority that mortals in one way or another all share and that, for want of self-esteem or love, all attempt—often at the expense of somebody else—to strive above, to turn into a positive thing. In that light, what Steinbeck means by the negative "something" that man hates in himself may well be the loss of pride or sense of powerlessness which inheres when man "gets hurt or goes down" like a dog. (p. 235) Mac, Party strike organizer, delivers the line—and that's telling. To the civilized heart, the spectacle of the downed dog ought to trigger compassion. But to the men of battle, wounds are weakness. Defeat is ugly. And when men there regard either themselves or others as weak, they hate what they see as the spoiler of love and, caught so, hurl themselves down to where wounds never heal.

Steinbeck's littering the pages of the novel with broken bones and wounded limbs is good metaphor and science both. For as students of Adler will recall, "organ inferiority" in any part affects the whole organism, and that includes the psyche which, like the body, seeks to compensate for the weakness. (*PTIP*, pp. 307 ff) To feel inferior is not pleasant; it generates negative energies which condense in envy and resentment of those who seem to hold superior positions. In their respective struggles, neither Party-man nor migrant worker holds a superior position in the Torgas Valley, and each resents it. In tandem, inferiority

Lines from Steinbeck's ledger book, showing the start of a dramatization of *In Dubious Battle,* never completed (c. 1936).

and resentment function as the source of the power drive, and Steinbeck uses them as the controlling ideas of his argument.

As if writing with Mac and Jim in mind, Nietzsche concludes in his autobiography, *Ecce Homo,*[9] that "Resentment born of weakness is not more deleterious to anybody than it is to the weak man himself." He goes on there, as well as in *Zarathustra,* to describe resentment as a complex, whereof the main function is a kind of lifelong revenge; and he points to the early Christians as perfect examples of those like a Mac or a Jim who take revenge in degrading the world they cannot win in or rule over by withdrawing into one where they can feel powerful. Mac and Jim withdraw into the underground of the Party. Adler terms that condition of adaptation "a life within life" or "self-boundness," (*PTIP,* p. 15) where the only reality that matters happens in the closed cave of the mind. If the stuff of that image is just too sluggish to move with force, Zarathustra helps by characterizing the reality of Jim and his like as the "cunning, loveless Ego that seeks its advantage in the advantage of the many." (*Z,* p. 86) Zarathustra speaks in riddles. No matter, for Jung's concept of the unconscious, which he sometimes calls "the collective human being," (*MMSS,* p. 186)—and which Doc Burton discusses with Mac as "group man" or even groups of men, and which Mac in turn ridicules as "the collective Colossus" (p. 105)—suggests exactly how it is that the individual ego might use the many to extract its advantage. In ways that do homage to Nietzsche and Adler alike, Steinbeck depicts Jim, especially, as

a virtual case study of the "loveless Ego" that tries to turn the group to self-advantage.

Since he lives as a reflection of those about him, to know Jim Nolan as a psychological entity is to realize the plot. Keep in mind that young Jim brings the old story of himself with him to the Party, and that Mac, his father figure—one also stone blind to the repugnancy of his own resentments—serves only to intensify the negative energy that Jim himself radiates. Knowing a spark eager for burning when he sees one, Mac, conduit of the Party, delivers Jim the wanted fuel—feeds it to him in the form of five highly volatile injunctions: STOP HATING PEOPLE (p. 7); STOP LOVING THINGS (p. 127); WASTE NO TIME LIKING PEOPLE (p. 82); WANT NOTHING FOR YOURSELF (p. 250); and the supreme injunction, USE ANYTHING FOR THE CAUSE. (p. 34) The notion to love thy neighbor as thyself is missing from the list. And at first glance that seems strange because, as Steinbeck set it down, hate cannot play in the human equation without its opposite, love. On closer look, however, the absence makes perfect sense. For love of any kind implies the emotional risk of self in defense of love. But Mac and Jim are too self-bound, their egoism too cunning to ever chance loss of control or face or esteem like Dakin who, "poisoned by the flow from [his] own anger glands," (p. 131) goes down "slavering around the mouth like a mad dog—just nuts," (p. 134) after vigilantes torch his beloved, new green pickup truck. Some of the injunctions are perhaps wasted on Jim, for he never had anything nor anyone to love or to like.

The injunctions that mark the cunning of the straight face worn by Mac and Jim are: STOP HATING and WANT NOTHING. Lies. Adler would term their professed humanitarianism their "life-lie" (*PTIP*, p. 236); Jim and Mac hide from themselves in it. And what they hide is their capacity for cruel indifference to the suffering of others. To illustrate, after torturing one of the "kiddies with cannons" sent from town to "shoot through the tents," Mac reasons out loud, "If I could only of let his hands go, so he could take a pop at me once in a while, or cover up a little" (p. 199)—never stopping to think that he in fact could have untied the kid, beaten him silly still and, though mired in violence, spared the dignity of all. But Mac hates the underdog as himself, and he in general disparages humankind for the humiliation suffered when "ten . . . brave bastards" beat him unconscious, then broke his arm and torched his mother's house. (p. 17) In shielding old hurts from feeling, the life-lie thrives on unreason.

Mac finishes the kid-beating with a "cold smile" on his face, and Jim watches without lifting a finger either to help or to hinder. Shoulder wound or no, Jim might have kicked. Be that as it may. Cold in being, Jim radiates a negative sympathy potentially more dangerous in attitude and disjunctive in prospect than anything engineered by Mac and his fists. Jim

shies away from hands-on violence. As if to compensate, he makes an open but safe play for power. In a controlled tantrum typical of a boy out to overthrow his father, he quietly takes the floor and announces: "I'm stronger than you, Mac. I'm stronger than anything in the world, because I'm going in a straight line." (p. 199) Jim's show of superiority is typical of the kind Adler cites as arising from its opposite, inferiority.

Route to Power

Adler maps out Jim's route to power as a favorite of those who chase after "unattainable ideals," with a belief in their own "godlikeness" and a "life-plan" to effect the goal:

> In order to gain his control over an object or over a person, he is capable of proceeding along a straight line, bravely, proudly, overbearing, obstinate, cruel; or he may on the other hand, forced by experience, resort to by-paths and circuitous routes, to gain his victory by obedience, submission, mildness and modesty. (*PTIP*, pp. 2–7)

Jim is neither brave nor modest. But then the path he uses to reach the fictive ideal of himself is rather more crooked than straight.

To alert the reader to the path Jim is likely to take, Steinbeck opens the novel with him poised like an actor in the wings, where, in the darkness, he concentrates on himself as a new identity, ready on cue to take the stage, eager for applause. Lines: "And life itself told me this secret: 'Behold,' it said, 'I am that which *must overcome itself again and again*. . . . I have to be struggle and becoming and goal and conflict of goals; ah, he who divines my will surely divines, too, along what *crooked* paths it has to go.' " (Z, p. 138) Wrong script? No. It's just that, like many actors who forget who they really are or where they come from, Jim misreads his part. Inferior to the demands of the role he would play, he dies in it.

Entering through what Hertha Orgler[10] calls the Adlerian "gates to mental life" to view Jim's attitude toward 1) his position in relation to others in the family, 2) his dreams, and 3) his first memories will help in determining his psychological truth. The observer will learn most from the attitude that Jim holds in common toward those three aspects of his life, be they real or imagined in content, different or alike in form. Through the "gates," Steinbeck details the early years of Jim in such a way that they read as a confession of a secret self. Words run counter to intent. For example, though Jim states flat out to Party interviewer Harry Nilson that "everything in the past is gone" and that he is "finished with it," he talks about little else. Not to be embarrassed, he covers the contradiction with an attitude of indifference, acting himself and his past out for Harry

in the gestures of a man "half asleep." (p. 5)

Through his acts, past and present, Jim stands out as the kind most people would call a born loser. That does not mean that he has some genetic defect. Nor does it necessarily imply that his way of passage in the world was determined by childhood circumstance or upbringing. It means simply that he rarely wins. Such is his character. His style of coping with himself and others was no doubt influenced by his father's bad example. An angry man who used his fists, Dad was always beaten, and decidedly so with "a charge of buckshot in the chest from a riot gun." (p. 4) In the memory fear likely lingers. So rather than challenging his attacker in the orchard scuffle—the one where no guns go off—Jim "climb[s] up into an apple tree, far up." (p. 109) Steinbeck makes it known elsewhere that Jim likes heights, and that he climbed long before Dad died.

To be on top and out of danger is Jim's goal and his conflict as well. Such is his life history. Just before going to jail, where he found inspiration to join the Party, he had "climbed up on the pedestal" of a statue to "watch" the crowd taking part in a street demonstration. No, he did not participate. And, no, he did not escape unharmed, for "a cop slugged [him] from behind" and dragged him away. Given that experience, it makes sense that he joins the Party and brings with him the attitude of his mother who pined away a few months earlier not caring "if she went to hell." (p. 5) Jim avoided going to her funeral simply because he didn't want to," (p. 5) justifying it later by saying, "I guess I got something burned out of me that night" she died. (p. 242) He does not bother himself much about anything that might show him vulnerable.

Jim certainly does not fret over the memory of his only sister, May, who disappeared, "dropped out" when she was 14, never to be "heard of" again. With May gone, Mom "got a kind of dead look" to her eyes. (p. 10) The disappearance must have hit hard, for Mrs. Nolan was the kind of woman who "was so cool she'd make you shiver." (p. 233) If such can be imagined, then in regard to family feeling, Jim would freeze you numb. A year younger than May, Jim doubtless envied her position as the first-born. Typical. And it is also normal enough that her "giggly" ways and "yellow hair" put him at 13 in awe of her sexuality. (p. 9) The problem is that, at marbles or in a scrap, sister May "could lick nearly everybody in the lot." (p. 8) The years have passed. Nonetheless, May has left him, the male child, without glory. Worse, Mom has left him without a feeling of security. And now here with Mac and the Party, Jim hopes to raise himself up from the ashes as a different entity. Impossible of course. Neither himself nor his memories will let him be.

Memories intrude. On the train ride down to Torgas, the countryside reminds Jim of the time he and about "five hundred" other kids were treated to a picnic in the woods, and he tells Mac, "I remember I climbed

up in the top of a tree and sat there most of the afternoon." (p. 26) He was just a little boy. But even then his urge to godlikeness, never mind his anti-social attitude, had settled in. A short while after the picnic memory, Jim has a dream. It happens as a warning. But Jim evades its meaning by blocking the whole event from conscious reflection. Adler would find the evasion common, and he explains it more than once as a means of the dreamer to avoid self-criticism in order *"not to endanger the ego's unity of personality."* (*PTIP*, p. 223) In a maneuver to emphasize both the meaning of the dream and its forgetting, Steinbeck has the narrator report that Jim "was in the black, roaring cave again, and the sound made dreams of water pouring over him. Vaguely he could see debris and broken bits of wood on the water. And the water bore him down and down into the dark place below dreaming." (pp. 29–30) Bad trip. Who can blame him for not wanting to remember?

Dreamt or narrated, in the realm of fiction the shipwreck is Jim's own. If Adler is correct, then somewhere in the totality of the character called Jim the "ruling will" works overtime to keep from consciousness what the image of the dream suggests. Jim would shudder to remember. For the will that rules him is what Zarathustra likens to an amoral passenger who rides in a self-made craft "upon the river of becoming," where "it is of small account if the breaking wave foams and angrily opposes its keel." (*Z*, pp. 136–137)

Selfhood in Fellowship

In leaving the mainstream for the murky waters where Party-men seem to thrive, Jim hoped to discover "some meaning" (p. 16) to life other than failure. Yet he will not be helped—certainly not by Doc Burton, to whom he declares, "Argument doesn't have any effect on me." (p. 185) It seems that direct experience has no positive effect either. Isolated by his style of approach to the human family in general, yet wanting particular acceptance, Jim seeks a bizarre kind of fellowship in the heady notion "I'm more than myself." (p. 185) He is wound up enough at this stage to back his declaration with "the authority of a rifle." (p. 201) If challenged, he would likely run amok in proving himself "more." Jim Nolan is no Tom Joad. Readers of *The Grapes of Wrath* will recall that in Chapter 26 Ma Joad sums up the life of Tom with the line "They's some folks that's just their self an' nothin' more . . . [but] ever'thing you do is more'n you." What Tom does is to protect himself so that he might do more for others than just talk. But Jim is self-bound "an' nothin' more." To prove his right to command he insists that his life "doesn't matter." (p. 185) Negative attitude. Unthinking horror. Result? People in general do not matter.

Lost to his past, Jim lives out his old need for mother-like power and childlike protection; unfortunately, he does not reflect on the dangers of

living so. He will not listen—not even when warned through the memory of that time in church where he saw "a Mary . . . wise and cool and sure . . . with a ring of little stars in the air, over her head, going around and around, like little birds." He swears to Mac that he "saw them, all right," and that the sight made him "feel happy." And now comes the line that bespeaks his fatal flaw: "It's kind of what the books I've read call wish fulfillment, I guess." (p. 219) He read, he remembered; but he will not realize—not even when the meaning of his storied Self is summed up by Zarathustra in the words "Are you a new strength and a new right? A first motion? . . . Can you also compel stars to revolve about you? . . . Alas, there is so much lusting for eminence." (Z, p. 88)

Eventually it comes to pass that Jim gets his chance to fly, to take the stage and shine like a star, when Mac asks him to "talk," convince the strikers to stand and fight. Upon accepting the challenge, Jim's face is "transfigured,"[11] lit up by a "furious light of energy." (p. 249) In an earlier scene he had achieved a certain success in directing London, the natural leader, to inspire the strikers to storm the barricade the growers had erected to keep them at Anderson's place and out of the orchards. Moving as a mob, the strikers won. Typical of his life-style, Jim only looked on, ordering "himself aloud, 'Don't get caught.' " (p. 229) For the moment he felt safe and on top. Cunning. And now he hopes to take the glory. The men Mac would have him stir up are unarmed. The opposition has submachine-guns. All know. To ask them to fight is to invite them to die. To address any group in that circumstance is high risk, and London has already begged off from doing the job. Jim is eager. Finally, his moment of truth has come. But it never happens. Buckshot blows his face away—poetic justice for a loveless ego.

Of course Jim would like to have mounted the platform and played god. No go. He is suckered away from camp by the same trick that got Anderson's barn burned. Slow learner. Arrogant? Probably both. One thing is certain: he was not quick enough to duck the truly anonymous fellow who played god in shooting him. To punctuate what any reader might infer as his disdain for the likes of Jim, Steinbeck has Joy and Jim's father shot in the chest—seat of the nobler virtues. Joy, Jim's father, Mac, London, and several of the strikers have all stood up to the enemy with their bare fists, and so achieve a kind of manly dignity, however brutal. Jim, on the other hand, only talked; when put to the test in the scab bashing scene, he stood safely "apart" and "looked without emotion" at the ten scab pickers, "moaning men on the ground, their faces kicked shapeless," and then, before he was shot at and wounded, he ran "blinded with tears" in very fear of being so. (p. 131) Clearly, Steinbeck has marked Jim's path to would-be power as the way of anonymity where, like the nameless in a mob, he could act out his hatreds empty of compassion and free from blame. In death, Jim wears his face as the very emblem of the

way he lived. Ugly.

Jim is not the only one to have chosen the crooked path. By definition, all the Party-men have chosen to work in the shadows. Using "kiddies with cannons," as well as more experienced vigilantes, the Association of Growers acts likewise. The thing called *organization* offers Party-man and Association-man "a standard," (p. 104) says Doc Burton—or a self-created "world before which [they] can kneel," (Z, p. 136) says Zarathustra—whereby to channel resentments, justify the life-plan, and sustain its lie. Bolter, president of the growers camp, buries his life-lie, i.e., his need to be held unaccountable in matters of violence or social inequity, in such phrases as "we've got to help each other . . . that way we'll both be happy," and so on into the twisted logic of something like the "misled" stiffs are "going to make us fight," then down to the icy threat of "we have weapons," in words already acted out as promise with the murder of Joy. (pp. 178–181) His rationalization stems of course from the probable drop in profits caused by labor's increased wages if the Association gives in, or from fear of a dead loss if the strikers win over the scabs and the apples rot. Hence, when Mac says, "This Valley's *organized*," (p. 11) he knows what Bolter is all about. And along with Bolter, he understands how to turn the long-range plans of his organization to immediate personal advantage: under the Party "standard," Mac can afford with cold indifference to abandon the field to the hatred of grower and striker, and still hold his job. Sly. If he can keep out of the path of a bullet, he will not lose.

Now, for better or worse, the only important difference between the loosely knit group of migrants and the group-men of either the Party or the Association is lack of formal organization. The gypsy-like pickers would love to hold a position of power, surely. But with no actual jobs to protect, and next to nothing in property, their strivings are limited to the immediate practical needs of the individual family unit. As Doc Burton observes, the migrant pickers move to fill their bellies without concern for "social injustice . . . or Democracy, or Communism" or any standard but the sustenance of self and family. (p. 104) Moreover, they do not like being ordered around, certainly not when they feel that they are being asked to fight "some other guy's war." (p. 96)

It is true, however, that when collected together as a mob, the strikers become a "terrible mechanism," wielding colossal power and wreaking vengeance on anything that gets in the way. (p. 219) But the "mechanism" is shortlived, unpredictable, and a waster of energy on such mindless thrills as the stoning to death of "little dogs," (p. 195) or in nearly lynching its leaders over some "canned peaches." (p. 223) And then, with passions spent, the perpetrators literally turn "sick" over what they have done. (p. 131) The lesson is clear: hatred hurts; power in the raw turns on the user. As Steinbeck portrays him, the family-man—though capable of

violence—simply does not have the stomach for bloody battle. Further, when undone by the general misery, he seeks refuge with his wife and kids, and not with his fellow migrants nor with the Party collective. Detached and self-involved within the "darkness" of the family tent (p. 216), the migrant is about as anti-groupminded as man can be. Accordingly, even when functioning at their warlike best, it is doubtful whether the strikers, as a group, can do either themselves or the Party any practical good. Then again, it was never Mac's purpose to bring actual victory to the "little strikers" of Torgas.

Mac's Harvest

As an agent in the field, it is Mac's job to stir up unrest among the migrant workers for the express purpose of increasing Party membership, (p. 234) and he has served in that capacity for so long that he even "dreams commotion." (p. 231) Peace would cost him his job. With the Party, he gives mouth to the slogan, "Someday we'll win" (p. 111); nonetheless, if the tactics he has used on the Torgas mission are an indication, then his belief in any grand success is about as likely as his trust in the idea that the strikers can indeed wrest victory from the growers with their bare hands. Though disguised by rhetoric, the battle that Mac truly fights is far more deeply grounded in psychological need than in ideological belief. He wants revenge, pure and simple—and let the victims be damned, innocent and all.

Through a bizarre conspiratorial scheme that he concludes with Mac, Sam, a veteran striker, provides the most telling example of the pathological extremes that organization-men embrace in order, on the one hand, to satisfy some personal grudge and, on the other, to maintain a standing within the group. Sam just plain hates anything and anyone who would put him down. He also likes "to play with matches," and he seeks Mac's blessing to torch a grower's house in payment for the destruction of Anderson's barn. Now, that could result in bad press. But Mac sees a way around. He tells Sam to "burn the bastard into the ground," and then adds the clincher, "We don't know you" if he gets caught. (p. 192) Sam escapes. He gets his way, Mac his. Old hatreds drove Sam and his kind onto the crooked path, and new ones have worked to keep them there. In trade for license to act the criminal in appeasing those hatreds, group-man allows himself to be used in any way that those in organizational command see fit. Accordingly, vengeance is the keystone of Steinbeck's "group-psychological structure"; for, as imbedded, it functions as a perverse kind of moral compact whereby ruler and ruled can with guiltless ease declare the Self a winner. Reinforced by word, fist, fire, or lead, such is the meaning of belonging.

Belonging to no unit other than an undernourished family, the migrant

fights for more substantial ends than do either the growers or the Party-men. And in that battle the migrant is no fool. With no way to win against bombs and rifles, he reasons to "strike no more," (p. 148) and take his chances someplace other than Torgas. Bolter claims that he will "protect" house and child with his "life," (p. 182) but since none of his own is seriously threatened, his boast is as empty of virtue as the war he supports against labor is devoid of practicality. Men must eat for the harvest to work. As a practical measure, the growers could, without doing themselves economic harm, put a few more dollars in labor's pocket and get the crop in trouble-free. All would benefit—all except Mac and his gang, of course. To repeat, Mac is out to harvest Party membership. Violence is necessary to his cause: in place of each worker killed by the opposition, "ten new ones come over" to Mac's side. (p. 234) The Growers Association plays the numbers game with dollars, the Party with names. In short, the contest between the two organizations is predicated on nothing more complicated or substantial than the thirst to hold power itself as the prize.

That Steinbeck did his homework on the general topic of "drive psychology" is apparent from a line he wrote to his friend Carl Wilhelmson: "There are streams in man more profound and dark and strong than the libido of Freud, Jung's libido is closer but still inadequate."[12] Having dismissed the big daddy of modern psychology, and downplayed the second, Steinbeck appears to have embraced the third, Adler, whose grandaddy is Nietzsche. And from the two of them it seems certain that he has borrowed the metaphor of the "straight and crooked" to pattern power as the driving force behind the events of *In Dubious Battle.*

In addition to the deftness with which he has exposed the interior life of characters as played out beyond the "Adlerian Gates," the beauty of Steinbeck's strike narrative is that it unfolds as a series of tactical maneuvers common to the practice of psychological warfare. Mac's use of Joy's funeral and the growers's use of the local newspaper are prime examples. As power-ploys, such tactics not only resonate with the strivings of the Ego behind them but amplify as well Doc Burton's keynote remark to Jim that "The other side is made up of men, men like you." (p. 184) Further, because Steinbeck uses the series to show that the "straight" maneuver tends to reverse to its opposite and vice versa—e.g. Lisa's birthing leads to Mac's working behind the scenes; Joy's murder results in the solidarity of the strikers; Jim's submission gains him the opportunity of open authority, and so on—he is able to define by demonstration how and why the battles within character, within groups, and between capital and labor are dubious, whether in terms of morality or practical outcome. In a crowning illustration of that vision of man's struggle, Steinbeck open-ends the plot with the re-staging of an earlier scene—only this time he has Mac use Jim's bloody corpse rather than

Joy's to "solidify" the unrest. Finally, since Jim does exist in the novel as a reflection of the men about him, with or without direct reference to Zarathustra, Steinbeck has made the general drift of his "philosophical conclusion" clear: in the fragment is the whole; the future is the past happening now, on and on till the last man wins.

Notes

[1] Excerpt from Clifford Lawrence Lewis, "John Steinbeck: Architect of the Unconscious," Ph.D. Diss, University of Texas at Austin, 1972, p. 135.

[2] John Steinbeck, *In Dubious Battle,* New York: Bantam Books, 1966. Hereafter, page references will appear in parentheses.

[3] *Working Days: The Journals of* The Grapes of Wrath, Ed., Robert DeMott, New York: Viking Penguin, 1989, p. 6.

[4] John Steinbeck, *America and Americans,* New York: Bantam Books/Viking Press, 1968, p. 178.

[5] Jackson J. Benson and Anne Loftis, "John Steinbeck and Farm Labor Unionization: The Background of *In Dubious Battle,*" *American Literature,* 52 (1980), pp. 194–223.

[6] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* trans., R. J. Hollingdale, Baltimore: Penguin, 1966. Hereafter cited as Z, with page numbers in parentheses. Robert DeMott lists *Zarathustra* as item #605 in his *Steinbeck's Reading,* New York: Garland, 1984.

[7] Alfred Adler, *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology,* Rev. ed., trans., P. Radin, New York: Harcourt, 1929. Hereafter cited as *PTIP,* with page numbers in parentheses. Adler based his psychology on the principle that for both "healthy and diseased" the goal of the psyche is superiority, a striving for power. His aim was to help people gain a "sense of reality" by substitution of "latent hatred" with "a feeling for the common weal and the conscious destruction of the will-to-power." (*PTIP,* pp. 5–15). Steinbeck may have heard Adler speak in person in Berkeley or San Francisco in early February of 1929 (*San Francisco Chronicle* February 3, 1929, C4; February 10, 1929, F7); at the time John Steinbeck was in and out of the city courting Carol Henning, who became his wife.

[8] C. G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul,* trans., W. W. Dell and Cary F. Baynes, San Diego: Harvest Book/Harcourt, first published in 1933. Cited hereafter as *MMSS* with page numbers in parentheses. Robert DeMott lists *MMSS* as item #448 in his *Steinbeck's Reading,* cited previously. Note that Jung's "collective human being" is a concept similar to "the collective Colossus" which Mac complains that Doc Burton spends too much time thinking about. (p. 105) Also of interest is that Doc Burton phrases his scientific attitude in much the same way as Jung refers to his own, e.g. Jung: "The modern man wishes to find out for himself how things are," to know that if "what seemed good has kept alive the forces of evil" (*MMSS,* pp. 238–239); Doc: "I want to see the whole picture. . . . If I used the term 'good' on a thing I'd lose my license to inspect it, because there might be bad in it." (p. 103) Both Jung and Doc are clearly taken with the idea that men of science might have something to contribute to the field of moral philosophy—at

the risk of being called "mystics" of course.

[9] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* Vol. 17 of *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche,* 18 vols., trans., A. M. Ludovici, Ed., Oscar Levy, New York: Russell & Russell, 1964, Part 6, 21, first published 1909–1911. Also see Josef Rattner's *Alfred Adler,* trans., Harry Zohn, New York: Ungar, 1983, pp. 80–81, where Nietzsche's concept of resentment is explained as meaning the same as Adler's "life within a life" syndrome, with the exception that Adler writes of resentment in terms of the individual but Nietzsche writes of it in terms of the group. See "Of The Afterworldsmen" (Z, pp. 58–61) for a poetic exposition of the syndrome.

[10] Hertha Orgler, *Alfred Adler: The Man and His Work,* New York: Mentor Books/New American Library, 1972, pp. 32–61. According to Orgler, Adler's "three entrance gates to mental life" are only three of the many methods Adler used to discover the "style of life" or "unity" of an individual human being. Adler uses the "gates" throughout his *Individual Psychology* as the main methods, however. Hertha Orgler was Adler's friend and coworker.

[11] Howard Levant, in *The Novels of John Steinbeck: A Critical Study,* Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1974, p. 87, declares that "Jim's 'transfigured' face is godlike because it is not human." But even if his statement is read as a figure of speech, the sense does not ring true: Steinbeck has taken great pains to mark Jim Nolan, the boy and the young man, with a psychological disposition that is as human as human can be. Hope transfigures him.

[12] *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters,* Eds., Elaine Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten, New York: Penguin, 1976, p. 87. Letter from Steinbeck to Carl Wilhelmson, August 9, 1933.

The Late John Steinbeck: Dissonance in the Post-*Grapes* Era

John Ditsky

The story ends only in fiction and I have made sure that it never ends in my fiction.
—**John Steinbeck**[1]

THIS essay brings together some pet critical interests about the work of John Steinbeck. Ten years ago I discussed Steinbeck's conception that music arises from nature by a process rightly called organic.[2] More recently, I have been interested in how Steinbeck's language arises out of situation in a similarly organic way—one which, however, is often more recognizably dramatic than novelistic.[3] And throughout this period, I have been especially concerned with the later Steinbeck works, the ones that followed *The Grapes of Wrath* and that are generally viewed by critics as showing a falling-off in Steinbeck's artistry.[4] While not defending the later works in the present paper, I propose a new approach to the later writing in what I will term the musicality of language. Bearing in mind the name of a discarded early novella of Steinbeck's, "Dissonant Symphony," I suggest taking a look at some representative examples of Steinbeck's references to music in his letters and journals; and then, surveying the later works, I make a start towards an understanding of "dissonance" in Steinbeck's writing after *The Grapes of Wrath* .

I suggest new ways of reading the later works by means of an analogy with the terminology of music—that is to say, by metaphorically extending things musical to cover things literary. Such applications, while often attempted, are seldom wholly satisfying, for the practitioners of these

sister arts are seldom as adept in both as they are fascinated with the other; an Anthony Burgess, then, is a rare example of duple expertise. This discussion of musicality in literature will be confined to the Pateresque, and modernist, attempt to recreate experience in the auditor's heart with minimal interference from the brain. Steinbeck's "dissonance," in my view, is a departure from or development within this line of thought, involving as it does the deliberate contrasting by means of various "wrong notes" of the "melodies" characteristic of Steinbeck's deceptively fluid style. By reminding the reader of the presence of artifice, then, Steinbeck's "dissonance" toughens the demands being made by an otherwise superficially easy realism.

I

Steinbeck's writings are rife with references to the arts, especially music. The observation applies to both his fiction and non-fiction, the latter extending to his letters and journals. I make use here of two volumes of non-fiction. The first is the limited edition *Letters to Elizabeth* (the "Elizabeth" being Steinbeck's trusted longtime agent Elizabeth Otis). The other is Robert DeMott's edition of the *Grapes* journals, *Working Days. Letters to Elizabeth* begins, conveniently enough, in the era of *Grapes* and extends throughout the period of what I call "the late John Steinbeck." *Working Days* deals with the writing of that novel and with its aftermath, so that it represents a sampling of Steinbeck's thinking. Mining both volumes for musical references will provide grist for the survey of the later writings.

One of the first *Letters to Elizabeth,* written in February, 1939, while *Grapes* was still in press, connects the novel and music:

> Edgar Varese the modern composer wanted to do—"a work of great scope"—based on one of my books. I wrote him that I thought *Grapes* might be a theme for a symphony. It's amusing anyway. And he really is a fine composer. Flattering too for he is the first person who has recognized that I use the mathematics of musical composition in writing.[5]

Steinbeck goes on to discuss other matters for a couple of paragraphs, but the notion of a musical *Grapes* must have continued to tease his mind, because before the letter is done he is musing, "I think a ballet of *Mice* would be even better." (p. 12) The latter remark is likely tongue-in-cheek, perhaps even an allusion to *The Nutcracker* ballet.

What is important about his comments to his agent are, first, Steinbeck's evident admiration for the dissonant music of a maverick French-American modernist composer whom not all that many people in 1939—

at least outside the sphere of professional musicians—would have known about, and, second, the revelation that Steinbeck had been using "the mathematics of musical composition" in his writing. Whether or not Steinbeck conceived that Varèse's putative work—never brought off, of course—would correspond, movement-by-movement, to the mysterious layers or levels of meaning of the novel itself, may never be known. Nor may the seriousness and depth of Steinbeck's knowledge of and commitment to musical form.

One thing, however, is certain: a *Grapes* opera by the dissonant composer Varèse would not have been a Weillian parable for the masses; it would have been thorny and difficult and of uncertain box-office appeal. Steinbeck's friend Carlton A. Sheffield tells us in the introduction to *Letters,* however, that the writer's first published novel, *Cup of Gold,* was patterned after the form of Dvořák's *Symphony No. 9 in e, Op. 95 ("From the New World")* (p. xvi)—whatever that may actually mean, since I do not recall that that clue has been pursued. Sheffield's specific word is "design," but it is not clear what he means when he goes on to speak of Steinbeck's "endeavoring to adjust tone, movement, and expression to those of the music"—a list of elements that are not necessarily formal in character. (Sheffield also speaks intriguingly of what he quotes Steinbeck as calling the "four separate levels" of *Cannery Row,* as well as the interweaving of "sounds or smells of other scenes" in every scene of *In Dubious Battle.*) The Dvořák is in the conventional four movements, whereas Steinbeck's romance—unfortunately, for purposes of constructing glib parallelisms—has five chapters. Was John Steinbeck again talking about levels of meaning, this time four in number? Was he referring to the symphony's descriptive subtitle, "From The New World"? Or was he alluding to "Going Home," the name by which its most famous theme is known? For present purposes it may be of use to observe that between *Cup of Gold,* a volume whose last word is "Tone," and *The Grapes of Wrath,* John Steinbeck's conceptions of literature in musical terms had reached the point that he was thinking of his fictions in terms of the dissonant Varèse, instead of the Romantic Dvořák.

As a writer of fiction who had as a friend no less an eminence among the musical avant garde than John Cage, Steinbeck also dabbled in more popular forms of musical art. He allowed *Of Mice and Men* to run as a musical and expressed detailed interest in the project, and he intended to collaborate with popular songwriter Frank Loesser on the unfinished *The Wizard of Maine.* Commentators on *Sweet Thursday* often dismiss the piece on the grounds that it was intended for adaptation as a musical, but such dismissals often say more about the cultural ignorance of such critics than about the merits of *Sweet Thursday,* because the American musical has long been accepted, along with jazz and modern dance, as one of the three genuinely native artistic innovations. When at work on *The Short*

Reign of Pippin IV, Steinbeck wrote Otis that the book "would very well make a play or a musical and a movie." (p. 63) The distinctions seemed to make little difference to him. The draft version of *Pippin* was entitled "Bourbon on the Rocks," a name that might have proved attractive to Broadway audiences; but even when he changed the name to the present one, he was able to report to Otis that Cy Feuer and Ernest H. Martin had shown "great interest" in the property. (p. 73) Feuer and Martin produced a long string of Broadway successes, including *Where's Charley?, Guys and Dolls, Can-Can, Silk Stockings,* and *How to Success in Business Without Really Trying,* and perhaps met Steinbeck when his friend Loesser was writing the songs for the enormously successful *Guys and Dolls.* The two producers seemed seldom to err about a potential property. A musical, *Pippin* (1972), was later written about the historical model for Steinbeck's character. And Leonard Bernstein created a masterpiece out of Voltaire's *Candide,* which Steinbeck says in the same letter was the "spiritual father" of his own work. (p. 73) In short, Steinbeck's interest in the fabular bridges his interests in music and the musical, theatre and language.

Steinbeck reports going to the home of Richard Rodgers in the hope of hearing some good music. (pp. 47–48) Rodgers had produced Steinbeck's *Burning Bright* with Oscar Hammerstein, and in spite of that play's relative failure, the men had stayed in touch. Rodgers wrote the score for *Pipe Dream,* the musical comedy based on Steinbeck's *Sweet Thursday.* Although the music is not considered to be Rodgers's best, it is even likelier that Steinbeck's contribution was undercut by Hammerstein's bowdlerizations, as for example the turning of Doc's Suzy into a mere "homeless wanderer," as the original cast recording notes have it.[6] The points to be made here are that a greater respect for Steinbeck's values might have produced a more successful effort and that *Pipe Dream*'s shortcomings are no reason to disparage the genre to which it belongs. The era of Steinbeck's association with Rodgers was one in which the composer was trying to extend the musical form itself in terms of both seriousness of formal development and willingness to tackle prickly social issues of the day.

Little is known of the discussions Steinbeck had with the composer John Cage.[7] Did Cage speak to Steinbeck about monophony and minimal compositional means? Aleatory or "chance" composing practices? The recognition of the role of silences in musical creation? On that last point, Steinbeck's letter of September 24, 1955, is intriguing. There he writes of having spent time listening to and studying carefully the speech of others.

> No two people have the same speech pattern. They say that a life is written in the face but now it seems to me, after listening, that it is even more written in the speech. The background is

> all there and the fears, the nature of the man is in his speech. But since people are usually a little afraid of speech, as a revealer, nearly everyone uses it to attempt to conceal what he really feels—I mean in casual speech. It requires close attention to separate the two. And the more intelligent the man, the more subtle his concealments. Since most people do not listen carefully, they also do not read carefully. Therefore I cannot use speech as it is really spoken but must edit and point up to a semblance of life. . . . (p. 52)

Steinbeck then goes on to cite "three facets" of most speech: habitual constructions, intentional communication and/or concealments, and the freight of unconscious content. He writes, "The cleverest of all speakers are those who use silence as a technique." (p. 53) As a result of his researches, Steinbeck says, he is attempting to write a piece that will capture each individual's distinct "rhythm and tone," by which "the readers will know them not only by what they say but how they say it. And since the pauses in speech are sometimes the most revealing I must use pause symbols extensively, hoping that they do not make the work seem self-conscious." (p. 54) He intends, in this experiment that may not have gone anywhere, to use a system of dots and dashes of specific length to indicate silences, creating in effect unspoken speech.

These observations are worth bearing in mind in connection with his later work. They confirm my point that Steinbeck writes fiction as a dramatist would and that judgment of his work is in vain if it is done in terms of a petty fidelity to observed reality. His understanding of subtext is theatrical, yet it is expressed in musical imagery that is sometimes distinctly Cagean. His attention to the meanings of silence anticipates Harold Pinter; his understanding of concealments brings David Mamet to mind. He even proposes a system of notation by which the dramatic and the "musical" might be fused, and their meanings heightened.

II

DeMott's *Working Days*[8] also has an introduction that makes use of the imagery of music even when music itself is not the literal subject. The effect is as fascinating and provocative as Sheffield's references to music and layers of meaning and interwoven theme. In listing the various sources of influences which resonate throughout the pages of *Grapes*, DeMott specifically mentions two musical ones: "the inspired mood of classical music, the poignant refrains of American folk music. . . ." But his list of nonmusical items also contains such terms as "voices," "fluid . . . style," "elastic form," "tempo," "counterpoint," "rhythms," "timbre," "echoes, and reverberations." (pp. xliv–xlv) DeMott's introduction

demonstrates that it is natural for a scholar writing on Steinbeck to reach for musical terminology to express himself, for all these terms bring about a bridging of the musical and literary arts. In giving us a clue we shall return to later, DeMott separates the work after *Grapes* from its predecessors by stating that after 1940, Steinbeck's topic changed to "the dimensions of individual choice and imaginative consciousness. A prophetic post-modernist, Steinbeck's real subject in *Cannery Row, East of Eden, Sweet Thursday, The Winter of Our Discontent,* and *Journal of a Novel* was the creative process itself." (p. xlvi) Presumably a different sort of musical language will be needed to understand that later work; yet though DeMott's references to music in the period of *Grapes* and earlier are primarily to pre-modern forms of composition, he seems remarkably prophetic when he refers to the shape of *Grapes* as a "rambunctious symphonic form." (p. 11) There remains the question of how astute Steinbeck himself was about the relationship of music and literature. DeMott quotes a Steinbeck letter that says that his technique in *Grapes,* "the forms and the mathematics," have been musical, "symphonic." (p. 13) The novel's form, observed DeMott, is "contrapuntal," with a "consonant combination of major chords." This consonance is achieved, however, on the basis of some strange inspirations; DeMott notes that Steinbeck was able to write to the pulsing of a washing machine, and throughout the journal we find him slogging on despite the clashing and nonmusical sounds of his neighbor's radio, someone's hammering, a barking dog, the sound of a cement mixer, and the noise of pounding on pipe. Specifically, DeMott notes, the writer was getting into the mood for his day's performance by listening to such pieces as Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*—an unsurprising choice, should an unruffled consciousness be the goal—but also Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms,* a masterpiece of a more austere and less sugary sort. (p. 13)

With the Stravinsky mention as a clue, I would venture to say that *Grapes* may mark Steinbeck's venture into the territory of "dissonance." An early journal entry refers to the coming of the tractors in Chapter 5 as requiring a "symphonic overtone," and continues: "Now must make music again." (p. 22) With the washing machine going a couple of days later, Steinbeck was unable to hear the music coming from the speakers he had fitted against the wall of the big room next to the smaller one in which he did his writing: "But I wish I could have the music," he lamented. "I really need the music." (p. 22) What kind of music? "Have to make the sound of the tractors and the dust of the tractors," he says—a music itself to be the effect of what he can hear from the next room. The next day, he has been able to work on the "overtone of the tractors" in a chapter whose "tone is very important—this is the eviction sound and the tonal reason for the movement." (p. 23) What kind of music was Steinbeck playing to bring out so successfully the "tone" of mechanical viola-

Carol Henning and John Steinbeck, c. 1935. Possibly a passport photo.

Gwyn and John Steinbeck. On a streetcar in Mexico City, 1945.

Elaine and John Steinbeck, Warsaw, Poland, 1963. The three photographs show the author's three wives.

tion of the land and dispossession of its occupants? It seems unlikely that the inspiration, the mood-setting, would have been accomplished by conservative romantic harmonies. Indeed, the washing machine might have been more apt after all, though in another entry he says that the sound has driven him out to the porch deck to work. (p. 37) My point is that while Steinbeck might have alternated the general and specific chapters in order to create an effect that is "contrapuntal,"[9] a term that might refer equally well to the baroque or neoclassical eras in music, he seems to have meant some chapters to create, within themselves, moments of dissonance.

It is possible that this dissonance was inspired by music of a different sort. Steinbeck intended to write Chapter 9 to the music from *Swan Lake,* for instance, because "there too is the loss of a loved thing of the past." (p. 31) There was ample music of his own century that might have established such a mood, perhaps even more satisfactorily, but whether he

knew of it or owned it is not known. What is certain is that he needed *his* music, whatever the sort; for the next day the neighbor's radio kept him from accomplishing much; and when Carol's busy wifeliness got in the way he could be selfishly ironic: "Tried to get some music but couldn't. Routine of the house more important. Will have to get on without." (p. 43)

Yet Carol contributed even the novel's superb title (p. 65), which Steinbeck later said appealed to him because "it is a march and this book is a kind of march—because it is in our own revolutionary tradition." (note, p. 161) Rhythm was an aspect of music that also affected the form of the novel: Chapter 23, a short "general" chapter, would be "on music possibly, to be followed by the long chapter of the dance." (p. 72) The dance would lead the book in new geographical directions—"south, then north." (p. 75) The novel approached its inevitable ending with what its author considered a "concentrated tempo" (p. 88), so that by this time he was able to work in the mere absence of noise—a "delicious" silence. (p. 82) The action of the concluding chapters of *The Grapes of Wrath* may seem slow-paced, but the chapters themselves are the product of an intelligence being driven inexorably along by the rhythms of its own interior drum.

Usefully for present purposes, DeMott appends journal entries for the period extending to roughly a year after the novel's completion. Well aware of the potential effect of success on his subsequent career, he began to search for new directions. The music-literature alliance was bridged again, for instance, by his plans to write two "theses" on "Phalanx and the Death of the Species" for John Cage to score for percussion. (p. 106) This project, never brought into being but hardly designed to court popular favor, Steinbeck described as "The song of the microscope." (p. 107) He was already thinking of writing a "pipe play" about the denizens of the abandoned boilers in Monterey, but the "humming" of a cold in his head delayed work. (p. 107) Such interior discord helped scuttle a project he came to see as "lousy" in execution (p. 120), but not before he decided to pace this effort differently from *Grapes,* making it "almost like a ballet." (p. 116) This material eventually got reshaped into the two Cannery Row fictions, so that it is interesting to see how significant it was in helping Steinbeck shift creative gears as early as 1939–40. With his marriage deteriorating and with him grappling with the need to do something wholly unlike *Grapes,* Steinbeck typically expressed himself musically, remembering Monday mornings at his parents's home, with the pulsing of the washing machine counterpointing his sister Mary's "playing the dull scales on the piano"; whereas nowadays, Carol "can and does make the tempo of the house'" (pp. 112–13)—showing Steinbeck to be a bit illogical in his remembrances of things past, since Carol's "tempo" was also partially a matter of washing machine and piano. He would leave her for a singer.

III

As his career and his artistry accomplished the transition from their first third to the second two thirds, I can now turn to the later works themselves, and discuss them in terms of music and dissonance. Dissonance is a matter of not sounding "right" and of failure to achieve a sense of resolution, or of regaining the tonic point of rest. Dissonance leaves one unsettled, up in the air. Of course, one age's notion of dissonance is not another's; what clashes to the consciousness of this era may seem acceptable to another. But in any event, Steinbeck's use of dissonance may parallel that of certain composers immediately thought of when the term is mentioned, Russian composers such as Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich. Music of theirs that once triggered near-riots at premieres now strikes us as pleasurably expressive and highly appropriate. So too, in time perhaps, with the late John Steinbeck.

In 1940, as is well known, Steinbeck and his marine-biologist friend Edward F. Ricketts made a specimen-collecting voyage into the Gulf of California. The resulting volume, *Sea of Cortez,* reaches this conclusion about a trip in which the scientific mind accommodates itself to the reality of existence:

> . . . This trip had dimension and tone. . . .
>
> . . . The shape of the trip was an integrated nucleus from which weak strings of thought stretched into every reachable reality, and a reality which reached into us through our perceptive nerve trunks. The laws of thought seemed really one with the laws of things. There was some quality of music here, perhaps not to be communicated, but sounding clear and huge in our minds. . . .
>
> The *Western Flyer* hunched into the great waves toward Cedros Island, the wind blew off the tops of the whitecaps, and the big guy wire, from bow to mast, took up its vibration like the low pipe on the tremendous organ. It sang its deep note into the wind.[10]

This harmony with nature—in spite of the ship's bearing in its hold a great number of dead animals—is a music rarely achieved in human affairs other than in scientific inquiry.

The harmonies of nature—or with nature—are absent in *The Moon Is Down,* where the war is background for the clash between two very different kinds of "group man"; the inappropriateness of rational discourse in such an arena is conveyed by Steinbeck's use of a stagy language attuned to the unnaturalness of the situation. In the two final novels of the Monterey Bay trilogy, *Cannery Row* and *Sweet Thursday,* the ostensibly

"natural" is personified by the often coldbloodedly objective Ed Ricketts figure of Doc, who is characterized increasingly by his isolation. The early critical assumption that Ricketts figures appear in Steinbeck's fiction to serve as authorial spokespersons is undercut by the fact that the narrational voices achieve some distance from these figures, who generally disappear before the novels attain their final stages. In these two works, the charge of sentimentality is also undercut by the presence of the ironic displacement provided by a distinctly literary narrational voice. *The Wayward Bus* is similarly self-consciously literary, constantly reminding—and distracting—the reader with strong hints that allegory is afoot. Steinbeck thus lures the reader into reading meaning into life—reading life as literature—when that meaning may in fact be absent. Patterns do appear in life and literature, but human beings put them there; and the dissonance in *The Wayward Bus* can be said to reside in the trap of being seduced by the temptation of allegory: to dispose of text and move over to the comforting world of "stands for." Also employing the allegorical trap is *The Pearl,* but here the central metaphor is clearly musical, and just as clearly a series of dissonances is explicitly referred to in the text—until an acceptance of defeat restores a musical "harmony."

Although I am otherwise confining this survey to the fiction and drama of the later years, the screenplay for *Viva Zapata!*—as Clifford Lewis recently informed us—was meant to contain a "minstrel" as narrator, a device that can be argued to have been meant to achieve Brechtian distancing from the materials of the story.[11] And the alienating and theatrical language of *The Moon is Down* is exceeded by that of *Burning Bright,* which has interestingly Brechtian parallels. Indeed, I would go so far as to claim that Brecht's introductory speech for a radio broadcast of his early play *Man Equals Man* contains a hint as to an approach especially helpful with respect to *Burning Bright* and one that could easily be used as the basis for a new approach to the Steinbeck corpus:

> . . . What matters most is that a *new human type* should now be evolving, at this very moment, and that the entire interest of the world should be concentrated on his development.[12]

This *"new human type"* is most ironically suggested by Brecht's play, but only in Steinbeck is the effacement of ego seen as an evolutionary step upward.

I have discussed elsewhere the problem of the ego in the final Steinbeck fictions and of his resolution of the difficulty.[13] In *The Short Reign of Pippin IV,* self-effacement is the means chosen to deal with this difficulty. Pippin takes power, yes, but he wisely knows when to step down. The dissonance here is largely a matter of the irony, the difference between the wisdom of foolishness and the foolishness of wisdom.

But now to turn to novels in which dissonance is part of the works's actual structures and is present as solutions to the problem of the ego alluded to above: Critical complaints about both *East of Eden* and *The Winter of Our Discontent* can largely be reduced to their perceptions of dissonance—all unaware—when they had been expecting a rather different sort of music. The maverick American composer Charles Ives once famously challenged his audiences to listen like men, i.e., to accept the burden of dealing with a work of art making strenuous demands. One could convert this John Wayne-type of taunt into a literary one commanding the reader to "listen up."

East of Eden is torn into two different kinds of narrative concerning two radically different kinds of family premised on two opposing notions of "reality." The result is a narrative that fragments as the narrator disagrees with himself, most notably over the question of whether or not Cathy is a "monster." Is this or is it not a book "spoken" by Steinbeck; and is he one voice or two; and can we trust him? *The Winter of Our Discontent* is also, surely, a novel in which self-effacement and split voices become routine; its central character is simultaneously someone who conceives of himself both as a Christ-figure and also as someone viewed by a dispassionate outsider capable of reading his thoughts. The unfinished *Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights* collapses over the issue of the author's attachment to the character of Lancelot. Can the writer ever again emerge from his own fictions? Or is he forever immersed in them, like the victim of his own strange cryonics?

Steinbeck's writing career eventually draws to an end on a note of dissonance: *individuals* flare out or head downwards; the *species* sees that it may indeed evolve upwards and that lights need not go finally out at all. For those whose sense of closure demands resolutions to the tonic, the endings of the later works will seldom satisfy, even when the ending chords are in a minor key. There will always remain a reason to point to this or that later work as the point of falling-off, of declension into the unpleasantry of dissonance. For those of us willing to embrace most or all of the later works for what they are, on the other hand, it is only a slight exaggeration to observe that "I never heard/So musical a discord, such sweet thunder."

This essay was developed from a paper created for and delivered at Steinbeck Festival X, Salinas, California, August, 1989.

Notes

[1] Letter to Dorothea Lange, *The Steinbeck Newsletter*, 2,2 (Summer 1989), p. 6.

[2] "Music From a Dark Cave: Organic Form in Steinbeck's Fiction," *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 1,1 (Jan. 1971), pp. 59–67.

[3] "Steinbeck as Dramatist: A Preliminary Account," in *John Steinbeck: From Salinas to the World*, ed. Shigeharu Yano, Tetsumaro Hayashi, Richard F. Peterson, and Yasuo Hashiguchi (Tokyo: Gaku Shobu Press, 1986), pp. 13–23; "Steinbeck's 'European' Play-Novella: *The Moon Is Down*," *Steinbeck Quarterly*, 20, 1–2 (Winter–Spring 1987), pp. 9–18; " 'I Know It When I Hear It On Stage': Theatre and Language in Steinbeck's *Burning Bright*" (in press).

[4] British critic Roy S. Simmonds argues that Steinbeck's prose declined because of an "uncertainty of style, with its increasing propensity toward imprecision of language"; see Roy S. Simmonds, *Steinbeck's Literary Achievement* (Muncie, IN: *Steinbeck Monograph Series*, 1976), p. 27. The question of whether the use of a vague or empty term instead of a more vibrant or lucid one is part of the technique I will discuss is perhaps worthy of separate study.

[5] John Steinbeck, *Letters to Elizabeth*, ed. Florian J. Shasky and Susan F. Riggs (San Francisco: The Book Club of California, 1978), p. 11. Further references to this volume are annotated parenthetically within the text.

[6] Rudolph Elie, liner notes to *Pipe Dream* (Original Cast Recording), RCA LOC 1023 (1955).

[7] The novelist Jean Ariss, wife of the artist Bruce Ariss and oldtime friend of John Steinbeck, has assured me that John Cage had been explaining his musical theories to an interested Steinbeck at least by 1935.

[8] John Steinbeck, *Working Days: The Journals of "The Grapes of Wrath,"* ed. Robert DeMott (New York: Viking Press, 1989). All references to this volume in this section are annotated parenthetically within the text.

[9] "Contrapuntal" is the musical term most frequently abused by literary artists, since they hardly ever use it in the strict sense of simultaneously experienced but separate lines of musical expression.

[10] John Steinbeck and Edward F. Ricketts, *Sea of Cortez* (New York: Viking Press, 1941; rpt. Mamaroneck, NY: Paul P. Appel, 1971), pp. 270-71.

[11] Clifford Lewis, "Outfoxed: Writing *Viva Zapata!*" (1975), in *Steinbeck's Posthumous Work: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Tetsumaro Hayashi and Thomas J. Moore (Muncie, IN: *Steinbeck Monograph Series*, 1989), p. 25.

[12] Bertolt Brecht, "Introductory Speech (For the Radio)," in "Texts by Brecht," in Bertolt Brecht, *"Man Equals Man"* and *"The Elephant Calf"* (London: Methuen, 1979), p. 99.

[13] "Toward a Narrational Self," in *Essays on* "East of Eden" (Muncie, IN: *Steinbeck Monograph Series*, 1977), pp. 1–14.

Manhood Beset: Misogyny in *Of Mice and Men*

Jean Emery

OF Mice and Men is not, as most critics would have us believe, a poignant, sentimental drama of an impossible friendship and an unattainable dream. Rather, the story actually demonstrates the achievement of a dream—that of a homogeneous male fraternity not just to repress, but to eliminate women and femininity. *Of Mice and Men* depicts the rescue of men from women, "a melodrama of beset manhood," to use the words of Nina Baym. (p. 70)

Textual evidence suggests that John Steinbeck, as chronicler of America's social inequities, intended *Of Mice and Men* as a critique of our society's most fundamental injustice. George and Lennie represent the duality of masculinity and femininity, their partnership a kind of marriage. Ultimately, George's need and desire to confirm his membership in the powerful and dominant male community drives him to kill his partner as a sacrificial rite of initiation. Bolstered by smaller, less dramatic, but nonetheless significant sacrifices, the text illustrates the insidious presence of this practice in our culture at large. That for more than 50 years literary critics have read the text purely as an exposé of a failed *economic* dream corroborates ba blindness to this issue and complicity in preserving the patriarchy.

George and Lennie as a couple display the stereotypical attributes of husband and wife. Lennie's refrain, "I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you," solemnizes a kind of marriage vow between them. (p. 20) "We got a future," George says in reply. The glue that binds George and Lennie is the dream of a house and a couple of acres where they can "live off the fatta the lan'." (p. 20) George, the masculine creator of this dream, gives it voice and grounds it in the realm of possibility. But it

is "feminine" Lennie who nurtures it and keeps it alive with his boundless obsession for hearing George tell it "like you done before." (p. 19)

As in many traditional marriages, this is not a partnership of equals but one of lord and vassal, owner and owned. George as the patriarch makes the decisions, controls the finances, decides where they'll work and live, dictates the conditions of the relationship ("no rabbits" is the threat employed), even regulates when Lennie can and cannot speak. Yet George wants power without the burden of responsibility. "God, you're a lot of trouble," he says more than once to Lennie. "I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail." (p. 14)

George's droning retelling of the dream is done primarily for Lennie's benefit. George's own dream is really something quite different: "If I was alone I could live so easy. I could go get a job an' work, an' no trouble. No mess at all, and when the end of the month come I could take my fifty bucks and go into town and get whatever I want." (p. 17) The latent message, of course, is that life would be better without the complications of a relationship of a dependent "other."

Relationships in this story center on the issue of power: who will have it and who will not. Obsessed with his ability to control Lennie's behavior (just as Curley is driven to regulate his wife's), George admonishes Lennie for carrying dead mice in his pocket, for directly responding to a question from the Boss, for bringing a pup into the bunkhouse. Such power frightens and, at the same time, thrills George. "Made me seem God damn smart alongside him," George tells Slim. "Why he'd do any damn thing I tol' him. If I tol' him to walk over a cliff, over he'd go." (p. 42) George then recounts the time Lennie nearly drowned demonstrating exactly such obedience.

Peter Lisca suggests that George needs Lennie as a rationalization for his own failure. (p. 141) But George's failure is not just his inability to establish his own autonomy. It is also his struggle to assure himself of his own masculinity and reject the disturbing influence of such feminine traits as gentleness, compassion, submissiveness, and weakness. Lennie's size and strength, a constant reminder of George's own physical puniness, presents a constant threat to George's vulnerable masculinity, clearly displayed in Lennie's effortless emasculation of Curley when Lennie crushes the bully's hand.

Demonstrations of masculinity suffuse the text. The ranch George and Lennie come to work—a stronghold of physical effort, rationality, and orderliness—reeks with maleness. The bunkhouse, utilitarian and void of decoration except for "those Western magazines ranch men love to read and scoff at and secretly believe," (p. 23) exemplifies the heroic male struggle to control nature, other men, and, inevitably, women.

Women as Intruders

Woman and, correspondingly, feminine traits are intruders and threats to this world, "entrappers" and "domesticators" in Baym's words, woman as temptress thwarting man in his journey of self-discovery and definition. (p. 73)

In the novel some of the central female figures are the whores, who use their sexual powers to seduce men, robbing them of their financial stake. Women are poison, George tells us, "jailbait on a trigger." (p. 53) George and Lennie's dream, one all the men subscribe to in some measure, is, not surprisingly, devoid of women. The female taint precipitates the pathetic destruction of Lennie and, invariably, the ruination of every man's dream.

Curley's wife, the evil, disloyal seductress, personifies the "fallen" woman. She flaunts her sexuality (her only effective weapon in this arena), dressing like a bordello whore—heavy makeup, painted fingernails, red ostrich feathers on her slippers. She triggers the story's tragic events and George foresees this. "Been any trouble since she got here?" he asks. (p. 52)

Curley's wife (the only woman appearing in the story aside from the spectral Aunt Clara), is, in fact, so antagonistic to this environment that she remains nameless. She's called "tease," "tramp," "tart," "rat-trap," "jailbait," "bitch," "Curley's wife"—identity always contingent upon her relationship to men. By refusing to speak her name, these men attempt to rob her of her power over them, just as a superstitious and primitive native might refuse to invoke the name of a feared spirit.

George's reaction to her is particularly intriguing, since his vehemence seems vastly out of proportion to her possible influence on his life. "I seen 'em poison before, but I never seen no piece of jail bait worse than her." (p. 36) George clearly doesn't trust or even like women; to him they are liars and manipulators like the girl in Weed who cries rape when Lennie clutches at her dress. Curley's wife threatens the same action when Crooks and Candy try to throw her out of Crooks's room.

The essential conflict of the story—the strength of the bond between George and Lennie—hinges upon this desire for a world without the contaminating female. Lennie, despite his size, possesses characteristics traditionally identified as feminine; and his continued habitation of the male sphere eventually becomes intolerable for everyone, including George.

Stereotypically feminine, docile and submissive, dependent and lacking in self-assertiveness, Lennie obeys George like a good woman. "Baffled, unknowingly powerful, utterly will-less, he can not move without a leader," observes Harry Thornton Moore. (p. 50) Lennie is a pleaser, seeking approval, desiring love. We first see him mimicking

Wallace Ford as George, **Broderick Crawford** as Lennie, and **Clare Luce** as Curly's Wife at opening night of George Kaufman's Broadway production of *Of Mice and Men,* November 23, 1937. **Peter Stackpole,** photographer.

George's behavior, a conscious ploy to endear himself to his protector. Lennie loves soft, sensual objects: mice, puppies, silky curls. He possesses maternal cravings, revealed in his affection for small animals. And playing into long-held prejudices against women's intelligence, Steinbeck makes Lennie a half-wit.

Lennie's superhuman strength does not contradict this interpretation of him as a feminine figure, but rather confirms it. Throughout history, taboos surrounding virginity, menstruation, and sexual intercourse have expressed men's dread of female sexuality. Images such as *vagina dentata* exemplify men's inordinate fear of submitting to a force that is unseen, uncontrollable, and menacing to their essential nature—"a generalized dread of women," in Freud's assessment: "The man is afraid of being weakened by the woman, infected with her femininity and of then showing himself incapable." (pp. 198–99)

George displays mistrust, disgust, and barely disguised rage on the topic of women. He seems particularly to resent the shackles of his promise to Aunt Clara to care for Lennie (a vow, notably, given to a woman).

Of Mice and Men's solution to this strangling bind is the rescue of men by men from the grip of women. Freud, of course, vigorously promoted the significance of a boy's separation from his mother in achieving his sense of masculinity. Here the struggle manifests itself in the creation of what anthropologists call "men's house institutions." These cultural centers of male ritual and values ensure male solidarity and the overall segregation of the sexes within the tribal group. Any breach of house norms meets with severe censure and even social ostracism.

Sexual segregation is *de rigueur* on the ranch. "You ain't wanted here," Candy hisses at Curley's wife when she invades Crooks's room. (p. 76) Curley's wife and Lennie are excluded from the male rituals of card games, trips to town, and horseshoe tournaments. But then, so too are Crooks and Candy, despite their possession of the correct biological anatomy.

Crooks is ostracized because of race, a nonconformity to the norms of the tribal group. Candy's case is more complicated. His strength and usefulness are on the wane. He has been crippled, hence he is less of a man. More importantly, however, he fails to uphold the standards of desired male behavior. Just as his muscle has withered, Candy's emotional state has grown soft and sentimental. Male power demands a code of behavior that asserts control over property and possessions, whether they be wife or dog. Sentiment and attachment—dare one mention love— is of no consequence. Candy's dog is too old and feeble for work and has a "bad stink" to boot. But Candy can not bring himself to perform his manly duty of ridding himself of this no-longer-useful appendage. Carlson, rational, cold-hearted, eminently practical, the antithesis of femininity, takes on

the job himself, in the process sealing Candy's expulsion from the male community.

Lesson for George

The lesson is not lost on George. When the crisis comes and Lennie is no longer "manageable," George, like a rancher suddenly confronted with a pet dog that has taken to killing sheep, follows Carlson's example, right down to shooting Lennie in the very spot Carlson marked on the dog's head. George's killing of Lennie is, in effect, his sacrificial rite of initiation into the male enclave.

By his action, George chooses virility over compassion, masculinity over femininity. Stoic, calm, and nearly emotionless, George's behavior, unlike Candy's, is manly. His lie about the actual events of Lennie's death, which on the surface suggests deep-felt emotion, actually serves to enhance his own male stature: diminutive George wrestling the giant, bone-crushing brute, Lennie, for a loaded Luger—and winning, getting off a clean shot to the back of the neck like a skilled marksman—a narrative straight out of a Western pulp magazine. Slim's proposal to go into town for a drink validates George's membership in the clubhouse. "Ya hadda, George. I swear you hadda." (p. 101)

By murdering Lennie, George rids himself of the very thing that sets himself apart from other men. Without Lennie, he is no longer a curiosity, a man of questionable masculinity because he travels with another. The demise of Lennie is also the demise of the dream. George thus establishes his solidarity with the other men for whom the dream will remain just talk.

Lennie's death need not necessarily mean the end of the dream, however. After all, Candy is still eager to pursue it. But partnership with Candy requires a different kind of relationship than the one George had with Lennie; and unwilling to reestablish a new hierarchy of dominator and dominated, one where George is not so obviously superior, he quickly abandons the dream.

What really stands in the way of the dream, however, is George's inability to accept the implied responsibility of the dream: shared contact with another—equal—humanbeing. As Louis Owens writes, "It is Lennie's need for contact with other living beings, a craving the men of this world deny, that brings about his destruction." (p. 104) George, of course, is the instrument of this destruction and the ultimate judge of its validity. The inherent message of the text is that a partnership based on mutual caring and respect is doomed and the model of marrying masculine with feminine is by nature destructive and tragic. Ironically, while the masculine world despises female dependence and submissiveness, membership in the male community in fact rejects the possibility of

true independence and autonomy.

The melodrama of beset manhood neatly rescues the men on this Salinas Valley ranch from the entrappers and domesticators. By story's end, all vestiges of femininity have been eliminated—Lennie, Curley's wife, Candy's dog, Lennie's mice and rabbits, even the deer that bound silently across the path through the willows to the pool; a path, it should be noted, "beaten hard by boys" and men.

Despite the prevailing belief that this story portrays the pathos of the quest for the American dream, the foregoing evidence suggests that *Of Mice and Men* is a Steinbeckian condemnation of the American male's inability to accommodate diversity and nonconformity, a terse commentary on misplaced values.

Carlson and Slim epitomize this conflict between domination and compassion. Warren French notes that Carlson is insensitive and brutal; Slim, kindly and perceptive. (p. 78) There is no sentiment in Carlson, an eminently practical, albeit destructive man. Curley's wife and Lennie, like Candy's dog, are to Carlson useless, intrusive, and annoying. A man of action, Carlson does not let emotional weakness keep him from doing what a man's got to do. His having the last word in the story—"Now what the hell ya suppose is eating them two guys?" (p. 101)—attests to the weight given the text's masculine message.

Slim's Characterization

The characterization of Slim, however, suggests some slight hope for reconciliation between male and female components and saves the text from a completely cynical misogyny. Slim is androgynous, what Carolyn Heilbrun defines as "a condition under which the characteristics of the sexes, and the human impulses expressed by men and women, are not rigidly assigned." (p. x) Kindly, perceptive, compassionate, tender, intuitive, Slim is described in feminine terms. Even his hands are lean, delicate and as graceful as a temple dancer. "His ear heard more than was said to him, and his slow speech had overtones of thought, but of understanding beyond thought." (p. 37) Yet his feminine traits are coupled with images of virility. "His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love." (p. 37) He is "the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leader." (p. 37) Physically strong, powerful and in control, the others take their cue from Slim, who combines the finest attributes of male and female.

When he finds George and Lennie beside the pool, Slim perceptively recognizes George's internal struggle. He soothes George as a woman might; and yet, unlike a woman, he instructs George as to what he must do next, what "story" he must tell. The two leave together, as George and

Lennie first arrived, a couple. *This* partnership may be different. Slim, the only character to integrate the masculine and feminine attributes of his own nature, may well influence the man who has so forcefully denied this integration.

Steinbeck's sympathy clearly lies with the feminine. Lennie tugs at a reader's heart in the same way that a child or defenseless animal might. So, too, his portrayal of Curley's wife in death softens earlier, viperous images of her: "And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face. She was very pretty and simple, and her face was sweet and young." (p. 88)

But most revealing of Steinbeck's attitude toward the material is a simple image he creates in the opening pages, one that becomes a metaphor for the text. Shortly before we meet George and Lennie, "a big carp rose to the surface of the pool, gulped air and then sank mysteriously into the dark water again, leaving widening rings on the water." (p. 17) If Steinbeck had intended our sympathy to lie with the status quo, the fish that rises to the surface would have been something other than a carp—a rainbow trout or a cut-throat perhaps, game fish known as strong, wiley fighters. Instead Steinbeck gives us the carp, a sucker fish, an invader that eventually takes over a pond or stream, muddying the waters and irrevocably altering the environment it penetrates. Smaller, weaker, and less aggressive species are quickly subsumed. Diversity can not be accommodated once the carp arrives. Over time, all except the carp disappear. The pond is no longer a very interesting or "wild" place. It is ruined.

"Violence without tragedy; that is the weakness of this book," writes Moore. (p. 50) "Sentimental," say others, dismissing the work as minor. The dictionary tells us sentimental means "influenced more by emotion that reason; acting from feeling rather than from practical and utilitarian motives." In short, feminine.

Steinbeck's carp, the men of the Salinas Valley, eliminate diversity and complexity out of a fear for their own survival. They huddle like a school of fish in their bunkhouse, confidence in their own self-definition residing in the absence of contrasting existences. They reign homogeneous, unvarying, sterile—big fish in ever-dwindling ponds.

Works Cited

Baym, Nina, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors," in *The New Feminist Criticism,* ed. Elaine Showalter, New York: Pantheon Books, 1985, pp. 65–79.

Freud, Sigmund, "The Taboo of Virginity," in the *Standard Edition,* ed. James Strachey, London: Hogarth Press, 1961, pp. 191–208.

French, Warren, *John Steinbeck,* New York: Twayne, 1961.

Heilbrun, Carolyn G. *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny,* New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1964.
Lisca, Peter, *The Wide World of John Steinbeck,* New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1958.
Moore, Harry Thornton, *The Novels of John Steinbeck,* Chicago: Normandie House, 1939.
Owens, Louis, *John Steinbeck's Re-vision of America,* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985.
Steinbeck, John, *Of Mice and Men and Cannery Row,* New York: Penguin Books, 1937.

Deletions from the *Battle;* Gaps in the *Grapes*

Mimi R. Gladstein

DURING the early part of his career, John Steinbeck was known, most especially by those who did not know him well, as a writer of the proletariat. This reputation began to take shape with the publication of *In Dubious Battle,* took root with the appearance of *Of Mice and Men,* and reached full growth in the political reaction to *The Grapes of Wrath.* There can be little doubt that Steinbeck's best works, both comic and tragic, exude a great sympathy for the plight of the disadvantaged and downtrodden of society. And *The Grapes of Wrath* is often compared to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a book that galvanized a country's response to the plight of an oppressed group.

Still, the success of *In Dubious Battle* and *The Grapes of Wrath,* which especially in the latter case has outworn its temporal significance to become a classic, has hidden pitfalls. And one of these pitfalls derives from the very power of both books's images. Works of fiction are often treated as means of experiencing the distant and the past. In contemporary art, there is often no distinguishable line between fiction and fact. Examples abound. In popular fiction, James Michener is perceived as an author who does massive research in order to acquaint his readers with the past history and present society of his latest location novel. (Hawaii and Texas come to mind immediately.) Part of the attraction of reading these works is the sense that one is learning something about these areas while enjoying the plot line. The movies reproduce the murder of three civil right workers in *Mississippi Burning* (1988). Television uses both actors and actual interviews to recreate a miscarriage of justice in *The Thin Blue Line* (1988). So too, in many universities *In Dubious Battle* and *The Grapes of Wrath* are assigned in history classes as auxiliary reading so that students can "get a

feel of the times." Therein lies the danger. For though Steinbeck's creative paint provides vivid portraits of the white male experience, its store of female pink and red tones is both muted and limited, while yellow, brown, and black are totally absent from the palette.

These dubious deletions are most evident and least defensible in *In Dubious Battle.* In this novel about the attempts to form a union and run a successful strike, woman's voice, so strong in the call for better conditions for workers and the downtrodden, is totally denied her. And yet woman's involvement in labor issues in the time period encompassed by this novel began at the highest government levels and was evident in many arenas. Steinbeck knew a number of these women personally and those that he did not know personally, he probably knew about, as their activities were part of the discussion at both the Winters/Steffens home and the Ricketts's lab.[1] Through the intervention of Sis Reamer, Steinbeck gained access to sources of information that contributed to the creation of his novel. Reamer was one of a group of young radicals who lived in the Carmel area and were active in support of the efforts of the Cannery and Agricultural Workers's Industrial Union. These young idealists, strongly influenced by Lincoln Steffens and Ella Winter, included members of the John Reed Club and the Young Communist League. Sis Reamer was a forceful person, rough, hardy and forthright.[2] She was a passionate advocate of the agricultural workers's cause. In the winter of 1934, she took John Steinbeck to Seaside to meet Cicil McKiddy who was hiding there. (Benson, p. 297) Steinbeck paid McKiddy, originally from Oklahoma, for his story of the cotton strike of 1933, a story that became a major source for *In Dubious Battle.*

Sis Reamer was not the only woman Steinbeck knew who worked actively in support of the unions, although her activities in their behalf directly affected the creation of *In Dubious Battle.* Ella Winter's support and advocacy of farm-labor issues was well known. Many of the Communist and left-leaning activists in the area congregated at the home of this brilliant and energetic woman. Before she married Steffens, much her senior, she had been secretary to Felix Frankfurter, taught at the London School of Economics, worked for H. G. Wells, studied at the Psychology Laboratory at Cambridge, and translated Wolfgang Kohler's founding work in Gestalt psychology, *The Mentality of Apes.* In Carmel, she hosted a list of guests who encompassed the famous such as Gertrude Stein and the to-be-famous such as John Steinbeck. Her advocacy for labor causes was unrelenting and public. Among her friends was another woman famous for her support of the proletariat, Anna Louise Strong. Strong visited the young Steinbecks in the early 30s. After Steinbeck had published *The Grapes of Wrath,* Strong spent a day with him, sharing her concerns about the new underclass being created in America.[3]

Depiction of Women

The depiction of labor-activist sympathizers in *In Dubious Battle* bears no hint of women like Reamer, Winter, and Strong. When help for the movement is solicited in the novel from women, it comes not because of commitment to the cause, but because Dick Halsing, the bedroom radical, whom Mac calls the DuBarry of the movement, seduces possible sympathizers. The implication is that the women will only help if Dick will go to bed with them. Mac teases Dick about his "sacrifice" for the party when Dick complains about "one old dame" who wants to give her all to the cause.[4] Shuddering that "her all was sixteen axe-handles acrost" (p. 174) Dick lets the lady have her way with him in return for two cows, one bull calf, and ten sacks of lima beans. (p. 210) Dick sends a note to Mac indicating that his situation was somewhat ameliorated by the fact that the woman was actually only "twelve axe-handles" wide. In real life, however, Ella Winter sent money to the strike organizers for gas; she then enlisted the aid of a wealthy friend who wrote a check for pipes for the sanitary facilities. The women sympathizers in the novel send cakes with pink frosting and cupcakes. (p. 15)

The men who support the strikers, such as Al and his father, are portrayed as tragic victims. They are given their voices. Al, who is beaten up and has his lunch wagon burned, decides to move from secret support to active party membership. When told by Mac that he will get beaten up again, he replies, "Well, I won't care then, because I'll be fightin' 'em." (p. 180) By contrast, there is no voice for the women who support the party, although Mac characterizes them as "ladies" who get up and "squawk." (p. 156) Mr. Anderson, who loses his entire crop and his barn for allowing the strikers to camp on his land, expresses his outrage, as all of Mac's promises of protection are broken, "You bastards never owned nothing. You never planted trees an' seen 'em grow an' felt 'em with your hands. You never owned a thing, never went out an' touched your own apple trees with your hands. What do you know?" (p. 301) The woman whose ranch provides the food for the strikers is given no words.

Steinbeck's muting of woman's voice and role from the realm of outsiders supporting the strike might be tolerable if it stood alone, but it is only one of the more obvious deletions from his painting of the labor battles. A more grievous one is the elimination of any women from roles in the strike organization or in the picketing. Anne Loftis and Jackson Benson have suggested that "the primary models for the two major characters in the novel, Mac and Jim" were a man, Pat Chambers, and a woman, Caroline Decker, the actual principals in the San Joaquin Cotton Strike of 1933. (p. 219) Their suggestion has merit. Like Chambers and Decker, Mac and Jim were sent by the Communist Party to organize the workers. Their respective ages at the time, 31 and 21, are paralleled by

Mac's and Jim's. Cicil McKiddy, who supplied Steinbeck with much of the information he used to create his fictional strike, had worked with Decker, distributing leaflets she had written. At the emergency camp at Corcoran, which like the camp in the novel was donated by a sympathizer, Caroline Decker, like Jim, began to take over more and more of the leadership of the strike. This was due, in part, to the fact that Chambers had been arrested. Later, both Chambers and Decker would be tried and convicted under the California criminal syndicalism law. Steinbeck knew of Decker's situation. When he was accused of not portraying Communist organizers realistically because, unlike an event of the novel, no organizer would carry a list of sympathizers in his pocket, Steinbeck countered that Caroline Decker was in jail because she was found to be carrying just such a list.[5]

Decker's voice was loud and effective in her championship of the cause of the workers. She is described as a fiery speaker. Loftis and Benson explain that "Witnesses of her oratory during and after the strike testify that she compelled and overwhelmed her audiences with her eloquence." (pp. 219–20) When a sheriff tried to stop the strikers with a road block, Decker asserted, "No man will stop us." And no man did. (p. 214) Margery Lloyd recalls hearing Decker when Winter brought her to Carmel to raise funds for the strikers. Lloyd says that everyone in the group was much impressed by this young, lively, and attractive woman. (Lloyd interview) Lloyd does not remember if Steinbeck was in the group that heard Decker, but if he was not, he most probably heard about her from his friends, many of whom were there. Loftis and Benson characterize Decker as "impatient for action" and "tough-minded and more militant than Chambers." (p. 219) This description fits the Jim of the novel. Decker was not the only young female labor organizer in California in those days. The year after the cotton strike in the San Joaquin Valley, a strike of vegetable pickers was organized in the Imperial Valley. The field-worker organizers in this case were also a man and a woman, Stanley Hancock, 25, and Dorothy Ray, 19.[6] Like Caroline Decker, Dorothy Ray was an active and vocal strike organizer of the time. Still, though Steinbeck uses some of the particulars of Decker's character and actions and though there were other women involved in organizing the strikes, he gives women no such role in his dubious battle.

In the novel, strike activity is carried out by the men. Dakin's truck leads off. "The column of men followed it. . . ." What do the women do? "Howl" goodbyes. (p. 144) This straggling parade marches to town where a trainload of scabs is unloaded and Joy is killed by vigilantes when he tries to talk them over to the strikers's side. One possible model for this killing happened in Pixley in 1933 during the San Joaquin Valley Cotton Strike. Dolores Hernandez, one of the strikers, was shot, as was Delfino Davila, a representative of the Mexican consul, when he tried to stop the

shooting. In another possible model, a striker named Pedro Subia was killed in Arvin. In those two cases, Steinbeck's brush whitened the skin of the victims, as well as ignored women's participation in and martyrdom to the cause.

Lillian Dunne, who was present in Pixley on that day, had come from Oklahoma. Though she did not know what a Communist was at that time, she subsequently became an organizer. Like other women in the strike, she was arrested for rioting, though there was no riot. (Steinbeck Festival tape, 1986) Considerable strike activity was carried on by women, who acted as guerilla pickets, running into the fields to encourage pickers to quit work and join the strikers. At Corcoran, strikers used caravans of cars and trucks to drive out to the fields and discourage scabs. In actuality, these vehicles were filled with men and women. In the novel, the women wait in camp, "howling."

Ethnic Makeup

Steinbeck was clearly aware of the ethnic makeup of California's agricultural workers, as evidenced by his *San Francisco News* articles which later were published as *Their Blood is Strong*. His research into the cotton strike provided him with the information that the majority of the workers involved in that strike were either Mexican or of Mexican descent. The Corcoran camp was even dubbed "Little Mexico City." According to Cletus E. Daniel, 75 per cent of the workers in the cotton strike were Mexican; the rest were mainly black and white southerners, with a sprinkling of Filipinos. One of the most positive aspects of the strike was the coming together of these previously divided ethnic groups when violence broke out. (p. 186) Two Items in the CAWIU code directly address the questions of race and sex. Item 4 calls for equal pay for equal work. Item 12 calls for no discrimination on the job or in relief because of race, color, or creed (*Bitter Harvest*, p. 178) In his depiction of the abused workers Steinbeck chose not to include the most abused of all, the women and non-Anglos.

The cotton strike, peopled mostly by Mexican workers, was the most successful of the 30s agricultural strikes. In that world, the Secretary of Labor was Frances Perkins, the first woman cabinet member. Eleanor Roosevelt, the President's wife, spoke out against the horrible conditions the workers suffered. Helen Gahagan, who would become a congresswoman, chaired the John Steinbeck Committee to Aid Agricultural Organization. Dorothea Lange took the photographs that communicated the misery of the migrants better than tens of thousands of words. Women were active participants in the battle in real life; in Steinbeck's novel, the major female voice is that of a young nursing mother. She flirts with Jim, is subject to an adolescent kind of embarrassment because he

Jane Darwell as Ma Joad and **Russell Simpson** as Pa Joad in Darryl F. Zanuck's film version of "The Grapes of Wrath" (1940).

aided in the delivery of her baby, and is never seen without baby in tow. When Steinbeck does give her her voice it is to express the most elemental concerns, "I like to have a cow—I like to have butter an' cheese like you can make." (p. 229)

Steinbeck's research into the migrant worker situation eventually led to the writing of *The Grapes of Wrath,* which cannot be faulted in the same way as *In Dubious Battle* because there is no evidence that Steinbeck altered the sex or the color of his models. It might be said instead that the fidelity of his portraits is noteworthy. Dorothea Lange's photographs of the period seem to come to life on his pages. Nor is woman deleted from the picture. She is given her voice in the novel and that voice is the one that endures. It is hard to quibble with a novel in which the female protagonist is as admirable as Ma Joad. Yet, in its own manner, *The Grapes of Wrath* presents a world which is, in important ways, as limiting of women's roles as is *In Dubious Battle.*

Women in *The Grapes of Wrath* are presented in only the most traditional of roles, mainly as nurturers, fulfilling their maternal function. Nowhere does Steinbeck take the opportunity to show any of the women who worked to alleviate the suffering of the migrants. Tony Schmidt, who met John Steinbeck on three different occasions, was one such woman. She worked for the Farm Security Administration Health and Medical

Association as a field nurse in a migrant camp. She dispensed birth control in her camps and felt strongly about people she worked with, considering them a beautiful people. (Schmidt interview) Rose of Sharon speaks of a nurse at the government camp, but the nurse never appears on the scene; unlike the male manager, her voice is never heard. Neither does Steinbeck include any women in the activist rolls of strike organizers. When Tom encounters the group encouraging a strike of the peach pickers, they are led by Jim Casy and they are all men. The message to be inferred from the plot is that men such as Casy are the martyrs to the cause of organizing the workers, and men such as Tom Joad will rise up to avenge them and carry on their work.

And what is woman's role amidst these grapes of wrath? Steinbeck gives us the tripartite woman—maid, mother, and crone. When she is a girl, she is a spiteful tattletale, pestering, aggravating, incapable of understanding the family's pain or danger. It is Ruthie's inability to keep a secret that causes Tom's separation from the family. Having been flooded out of their boxcar shelter, the family is trying to get to higher ground. Among the last actions of the totally insensitive Ruthie is the taunting of her brother when she finds a flower that she won't share with him. Among her last words are the softly spoken "You little son-of-a-bitch."

Young womanhood brings little to celebrate to the female types presented. Deserted and undernourished, Rose of Sharon suffers through an agonizing pregnancy and labor, only to bear a dead baby. Nevertheless, she has a woman's role to perform. Her body can still be the source of nourishment to sustain the life of a dying old man. Presiding over all is the matriarch. When times are good, it is the men who preside over the family council. It is only when the times are bad and the men have abdicated power that the woman can take over. Even so, Ma tells Pa that only when he starts putting food on the table can he use his stick "an' women folks'd sniffle their nose an' creep-mouse around.' "[7]

Nobody's lot is enviable in *The Grapes of Wrath.* Misery abounds. However, there are men in the novel who act, who take steps to ameliorate the misery. Jim Rawley, the camp manager, has provided a haven for the migrants. His actions suggest a way to deal with the problem. Jim Casy turns himself in to save Tom and then spends his time encouraging the men to strike, trying to make them understand the realities of their situation. Tom sets himself on a similar course to be part of a larger movement, to be a "little piece of a great big soul." As he explains to Ma, "Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. . . . An when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in houses they build—why, I'll be there. (p. 572) If Steinbeck is suggesting ways to deal with the problem, it is the men who point the way.

And what is woman's role? If she is past the age of childbearing, she can watch her men. Then, if they break, if they abdicate responsibility, she can

react, pick up the pieces, try to hold things together until they are ready to take authority again. Or, if she is still fecund, she can accept her time-worn lot, perform her traditional function, offer up her body for others to feed off. And through it all, smile mysteriously.

There are those who saw Steinbeck's novel as prophetic, one that pointed the way to a new era in human relations. But as with *In Dubious Battle,* seen from the perspective of women and minorities, there is little new wine in these grapes. It is no new deal, it is the same raw deal, an archetypal picture, painted from a patriarchal palette.

Notes

[1] Benson documents the Steinbeck's association with "the young radicals who had attached themselves" to Ella Winter and Lincoln Steffens. They gathered not only in Carmel at the Winter/Steffens home, but also took to dropping by the Steinbeck cottage for talk and food. Ella would drop by, too, and often had more famous leftist figures such as Anna Louise Strong and Mike Gold with her. Jackson J. Benson. *The True Adventures of Steinbeck, Writer* (New York: The Viking Press, 1984), p. 294.

[2] My description of Sis Reamer derives from telephone interviews with Virginia Scardigli on 2/3/89 and with Margery Lloyd on 2/13/89. Both were part of what Scardigli calls "the inner circle" of Steinbeck and Ricketts friends in the early 1930s.

[3] Tracy B. Strong and Helene Keyssar. *Right in Her Soul* (New York: Random House, 1983), p. 185.

[4] John Steinbeck. *In Dubious Battle* (New York: The Viking Press, 1938) p. 173. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be within the text.

[5] On page 316 of his biography, Benson quotes a letter to Mavis McIntosh in which, though Steinbeck misspells Decker's name, calling her Carolyn, he tells of her sentencing under the California Criminal Syndicalism law.

[6] Cletus E. Daniel, *Bitter Harvest* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 224.

[7] John Steinbeck. *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: The Viking Press, 1939), p. 481. All further references will be within the text.

Works Cited

Benson, Jackson J. and Anne Loftis, "John Steinbeck and Farm Labor Unionization: The Background of *In Dubious Battle,*" *American Literature* 52, May 1980, pp. 194–223.

Daniel, Cletus E., *Bitter Harvest,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Dunne, Lillian, Steinbeck Festival VI Tape, August 4, 1985.

Kaplan, Justin, *Lincoln Steffens,* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974.

Lloyd, Margery, telephone interview, February 13, 1989.

Ruiz, Vicki L. *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives,* Albuquerque: University of New

Mexico Press, 1987.
Scardigh, Virginia, telephone interview, February 3, 1989.
Schmidt, Tony, taped interview, John Steinbeck Library, Salinas, September 9, 1981.
Steinbeck, John, *The Grapes of Wrath,* New York: Viking Press, 1939.
_____, *In Dubious Battle,* New York: Viking Press, 1938.
Strong, Tracy B. and Helene Keyssar, *Right in Her Soul,* New York: Random House, 1983.

The "Chinese Servant" in *East of Eden*

Tetsumaro Hayashi

IN *East of Eden* (1952), John Steinbeck employs Lee, Adam Trask's Chinese servant, to play a number of roles of thematic importance. Like Dr. Winter in *The Moon Is Down* (1942), Lee proves to be an indispensable, active, supporting character in a Cain-Abel drama. Few critics, however, have ever taken Lee seriously—quite understandably—because he always plays his role under a disguise, while remaining socially "ignored" or "invisible" or "non-existent" to most of the unsuspecting, undiscerning Caucasian characters. (pp. 163–64) As Steinbeck reveals his fictional design in his diary, he wants to tell his readers "the greatest story of all—the story of good and evil, of strength and weakness, of love and hate, of beauty and ugliness."[1] But why does the author use a lowly Oriental servant to advocate the lofty Jewish theme of *timshel*, man's moral choice to triumph over evil, in this compelling story?

To answer this question, I should first like to identify the surprisingly extensive and penetrating roles Lee plays in the novel and, then, to assess his unique qualities. To begin with, Steinbeck portrays Lee as a stereotypical servant to Adam Trask and his twin sons, Caleb (Cal) and Aaron (Aron). A mysterious, obscure Oriental, Lee is a stranger in America, his native country, who has, as he confides to Sam Hamilton, "no chance of mixing."[2] Rejected on every level of society, he, like the alien-artist, is more sensitive to the agony of rejection than anyone else in this novel; thus he embodies the theme of rejection. Let us first listen to what Steinbeck himself has to say about Lee.

> I have known so many of them. Remarkable people the California Chinese. . . . Now you are going to like Lee. He is a philosopher. And also he is a kind and thoughtful man. And beyond all this he is going to go in the book because I need

him. The book needs his eye and his criticism which is more detached than mine. (*Journal of a Novel,* p. 73)

It can be argued that at times Lee represents Steinbeck's "mind's eye" (his prophetic vision), his authorial voice (his moral theme), and his "criticism" (his extraordinary insight). Belonging to no society, to no organization or group, Lee represents more objectivity, freedom, transcedence, and independence than any other character. Although a humble servant, Lee also serves throughout as a wise, compassionate counselor to his master and his master's sons and some of his close friends.

Lee's numerous dramatic roles in this novel are far more subtle and overreaching than they may first appear. As Richard C. Bedford points out, Steinbeck first identifies Lee as "a caricature of a Chinese."[3]

> His long black glossy braided queue, tied at the bottom with a narrow piece of black silk, hung over his shoulder and moved rhythmically against his chest. When he did violent work, he curled his queue on top of his head. He wore narrow cotton trousers, black heelless slippers, and a frogged Chinese smock. Whenever he could, he hid his hands in his sleeves as though he were afraid for them, as most Chinese did in that day. (p. 16)

Nonetheless, Steinbeck gradually reveals Lee's paradoxical identity as dramatically different from that of a stereotypical Chinese. Being a racial minority, Lee is paradoxically free from suspicion, involvement, and jealousy. As a Chinese servant who has experienced every social rejection in the past, Lee, in isolation, can still transcend obsessions and conflicts that imprison and blind mankind. As a "nobody" in a Caucasian society, he is empowered by the very poverty of his station. When talking to Sam Hamilton, Lee has this to say about his role as a servant who is simultaneously playing other important roles for far more than mere "convenience," "self-protection," or "acceptance":

> But a good servant, and I am an excellent one, can completely control his master, tell him what to think, how to act, whom to marry, when to divorce, reduce him to terror as a discipline, or distribute happiness to him, and finally be mentioned in his will. . . . (p. 165)

Lee, fully aware of the significance of the various roles he is playing, is indeed a superb actor who knows the nature of his roles, how to play them, and why he plays them with relish, boundless energy, and an aesthetic distance. Without overacting, Lee always maintains a delicate

balance between his occupation as a humble servant and his second role as a dynamic leader. An American citizen born in California under tragic circumstances, Lee has attended the University of California for several years; he has been condemned by his fellow Chinese on mainland China, his parents's country, as a man speaking like "a foreign devil." Lee, too well educated and Westernized, is not accepted as a member of the Chinese community in America either, though he still feels, as he puts it, "less foreign here [California] than I was in China." (p. 164) As Bedford has noted,[4] while playing his social role, Lee is an enigmatic Oriental servant, speaking pidgin English to most of his master's Caucasian visitors to be "understood by those who can see and understand only what they expect and demand. His entire costume supplements the expected stereotypical Chinese behavior." (p. 163)

Despite his extraordinary, positive influence on the Trask family, Lee remains a congenial, considerate, faithful servant—always playing a supporting role gracefully, while functioning simultaneously as a guide for his master and his children. In the process, the stranger/outsider becomes a genuine member of the family—an insider in the archetypal Biblical family in California—especially when Lee forsakes, willingly and totally, his long-cherished dream of opening a Chinese bookstore in San Francisco after retirement. When he briefly leaves the Trasks for this supposedly final business venture, he suddenly realizes, as in an epiphany, that he misses the only family he has ever had—too painfully for permanent separation. And when he returns to Adam and his boys, they become Lee's real and natural family. Then Lee becomes a complete man, individually and socially—a family man who truly "mixes." In such an intricate, dynamic relationship—one based on love, trust, and understanding—Adam Trask can leave almost every judgment and decision, every aspect of management, to Lee, totally depending on his wisdom and resourcefulness. The sharp distinction between the master and the servant disappears, to the benefit of both.

As Steinbeck intends in *East of Eden,* the East and the West symbolically merge into a wholesome oneness in spite of all that tends towards separation. At the beginning of Chapter 35, for instance, Steinbeck's narrator confirms Lee's extraordinary role as "the citadel" and "arbiter" of the Trask family:

> Lee helped Adam and the two boys move to Salinas, which is to say he did it all, packed the things to be taken, saw them on the train, loaded the back seat of the Ford, and, arriving in Salinas, unpacked and saw the family settled in Dessie's little house. (p. 416)

This seemingly casual description of Lee's dual role actually confirms that

James Dean and Lois Smith in a scene from the Hollywood film of "East of Eden." Dean played the part of Aron.

he is a servant who, in fact, directs every affair and project for the family, serving as *de facto* commander-in-chief in their exodus from the Salinas Valley in search of freedom and a new life in the city of Salinas.

While playing the role of a manager, Lee simultaneously serves also as a surrogate parent, nursing, protecting, and loving both Adam and his "motherless" children. He does so superbly without becoming arrogant, or obnoxious, or even domineering. In such a delicate dual role of servant-master, Lee proves to be an accomplished actor-artist, one who knows how to play his complex roles—social, spiritual, and dramatic—without stealing the show from Adam or the novel's other Caucasian characters. In a parental role, Lee saves Abra Bacon, first Aron's girl friend and later Cal's, from agony over her father's theft and hypocrisy, by serving as her spiritual father and mentor and by helping her overcome the horror of Aron's unrealistic, obsessive purity and repulsive sanctimoniousness; through Lee, she finds a promising future with Caleb. It is thus with compassion and love that Lee, the father-confessor, protects the young people's right to seek and discover their new Eden in a fallen world. Lee is indeed Steinbeck's superb preacher, explicating the author's allegorical lesson—his gospel—to the reader; always he

practices Horace's motto: "The man who mingles the useful with the sweet carries the day by charming his reader and at the same time instructing him."[5] Through the Oriental character, Steinbeck reveals himself here as an artist-moralist more insistently than in any other novel.

One of the best educated men in the novel, Lee serves as Steinbeck's exponent of the Old Testament theology but more specifically of the theme of *timshel* in Genesis IV: 1–16. Through Lee, the author passionately advocates the concept of "thou mayest"—man's moral capacity to choose to triumph over evil—as the pivotal theme of the novel. As Steinbeck's theologian, Lee dramatizes the central thesis of the "never-ending contest in ourselves of good and evil" (p. 415) in an eloquent, elevated dramatic speech and provides the subsequent spotlight for Adam, Samuel, Caleb, and Aron and what they stand for.

Adam's friend and neighbor, Samuel Hamilton, is the first to recognize the extraordinary value and identity of Lee not only as Adam's faithful household servant, but also as a friend and protector—a true insider, indispensable to the social, familial, and spiritual survival and growth of Adam and his twin sons. Sam confesses to Lee:

> It was your two-word translation, Lee—"Thou mayest." It took me by the throat and shook me. And when the dizziness was over, a path was open, new and bright. And my life which is ending seems to be going on to an ending wonderful. And my music has a new last melody like a bird song in the night. (p. 308)

Steinbeck's diary reveals his fictional intention for Samuel Hamilton: "And Samuel I am going to try to make into one of those pillars of fire by whom little and frightened men are guided through the darkness." (*Journal of a Novel*, p. 115) Before anyone else, Sam Hamilton recognizes Lee as a man of exceptional intellect, education, and wisdom; during their dialogue, Steinbeck's charismatic Irishman discovers the Chinese servant to be an articulate exponent of the Old Testament theology: Samuel sees that Lee is a seasoned philosopher capable of inspiring Sam and, later, Adam to experience their ultimate epiphanies.

Lee clearly recognizes the universal truth of the Old Testament theme, *timshel*, declaring in a fiery speech:

> "They know that these sixteen verses are a history of mankind *in any age or culture or race*. . . . But this—this is a ladder to climb to the stars." Lee's eyes shone. "You can never lose that. It cuts the feet from under weakness and cowardliness and laziness." [Italics mine] (p. 304)

In turn, Lee's and Steinbeck's concept of man, inspired by the Old Testament, precipitates Sam Hamilton's ultimate epiphany, which transcends racial and class distinctions. The Chinese servant declares in a dramatic scene:

> And I feel that a man is a very important thing—maybe more important than a star. This is not theology. I have no bent toward gods. But I have a new love for that glittering instrument, the human soul. It is a lovely and unique thing in the universe. It is always attacked and never destroyed—because"Thou mayest." (p. 304)

Following Lee's exhilarating sermon on man's free will and moral choice, Samuel Hamilton accepts his "categorical imperative" and tells Adam the truth about Cathy (Kate), thus helping Adam experience a spiritual rebirth. Samuel (Lee's disciple) enables Adam to be reborn as Cal's and Aron's father and as an active citizen of Salinas. Without Lee, Samuel would not have gained enough insight, determination, or audacity to awaken Adam from spiritual paralysis and self-indulgent inertia.

Lee's roles become increasingly complex as the novel proceeds. When Cal tells Lee, "I hate her [Kate] because I know why she went away. I know—because I've got her in me," Lee jumps up and rebukes the boy:

> "You stop that!" he said sharply. "You hear me? Don't let me catch you doing that. Of course you may have that in you. Everybody has. But you've got the other too. Here—look up! Look at me! . . . You've got the other too. Listen to me! You wouldn't even be wondering if you didn't have it. Don't you dare take the lazy way. It's too easy to excuse yourself *because of your ancestry.* Don't let me catch you doing it! Now—look close at me so you will remember. Whatever you do, it will be you who do it—not your mother!" [Italics mine] (p. 449)

And at the end of the novel, Lee, playing his role as Cal's spiritual father, persuades Adam to forgive and bless Cal who needs and deserves a second chance:

> He said sharply [to Adam], "Your son is marked with guilt out of himself—almost more than he can bear. Don't crush him with rejection. Don't crush him, Adam." (p. 602)

Lee continues to plead as a preacher with an unusual gift of persuasion: "Help him, Adam—help him, give him his chance. Let him be free. That's

all a man has over the beasts. Free him! Bless him!" (p. 602) Responding to Lee's ethical command, Adam finally blesses Caleb, whispering, *"timshel!"* (p. 602)

Steinbeck regards Cal as a favorite character, as he confesses, "Cal is my baby. He is the Everyman, the battle between good and evil, the most human of all, the sorry man."[6] Lee teaches Cal to learn to transcend evil (the mother in him) and his bondage (the Cain in him) by exercising moral choice. Thus, Lee not only saves Caleb from the paralyzing guilt and despair deriving from his father's rejection and anger, but also gives the young man a second chance to transcend the past and create a future with Abra. In this lofty mission, Lee, like Samuel Hamilton, proves to be Steinbeck's miracle worker, enforcing the author's pivotal theme into action with determination and skill.

Lee's passionate sermon is the way that Steinbeck wants to preach his gospel in *East of Eden*—to enforce a basic premise of Jewish theology—that man is free but responsible as the master of his own destiny: that while the past is his heritage, the future is his creation and that he has the gift of choice. The Bible is alive around and in us, so that God continues to speak to Lee and to Samuel just as He spoke to the prophets. Through Lee, Steinbeck's prophet, Caleb is taught to believe that he, the rejected Cain, can still emancipate himself from the bondage caused by rejection, subsequent agony, fury, violence, and alienation, and that he can triumph over evil by his moral choice.

Being an Oriental, Lee might be expected to be either a Buddhist or a Taoist, perhaps even totally ignorant of the Bible and of Jewish theology. Paradoxically a "Presbyterian," he reveals himself as a learned exponent of Jewish theology, a seasoned "popular" philosopher, and a successful "communicant," in Whitman's sense, with his disciples—Samuel Hamilton and Adam and Caleb Trask. Indeed he embodies this theology. Steinbeck seems to have thought Lee's non-Jewish identity would give his interpretation of the Jewish text more credibility, more universality, and a greater moral authority. Perhaps because no one takes seriously an alienated Oriental, Lee is better able to break through barriers and to accomplish the demanding task of interpreting the Old Testament as if he were a rabbi. According to Janet Aviad,

> the study [of the *Talmud Torah*] was a form of *imitatio Dei*. . . . Men of the Torah, engaged in study as a way of drawing near to God, represented the central religious experience of Judaism, and constituted an intellectual elite upon whose authority and charisma traditional Jewish society rested.[7]

Such is the lofty mission that Steinbeck gives Lee.

Richard F. Peterson defines Lee's function succinctly. He is a "bridge

between the human and the divine."[8] As a stranger, brotherless like Christ, Lee has avoided such an involvement as the Cain-Abel rivalry himself and can rescue his agonized friends from the bondage. In the process, he turns human conflicts into harmony and peace and teaches the brotherhood of mankind.

As a Chinese, he can also interpret the theological theme of Genesis IV for his friends, Sam, Adam, and Caleb, with refreshing perspectives, clarity, and without sectarian prejudice or obsession. By using Lee as his omniscient eye, voice, and ear, Steinbeck effectively presents his recurrent motifs—the Cain-Abel confrontation, the theme of good and evil, and man's transcendence and emancipation. In Lee, the author creates the novel's dramatic and moral center, to which every character is linked and around which every action revolves. Through Lee, Steinbeck clarifies two of his literary mottoes: "it is the duty of the writer to lift up, to extend, and to encourage"; and "great writing has been a staff to lean on, a mother to consult, a wisdom to pick up stumbling folly, a strength in weakness, and a courage to support sick cowardice." (*Journal of a Novel,* pp. 115–16)

Lee, whose heart is afire from the Old Testament's pivotal message, *timshel,* "moves from one role to the other with theatrical effectiveness," as John Ditsky puts it perceptively, "becoming each time the clear epitome of *Western* views of what he ought to be: servile, obscure, and foreign, or congenial, learned, and recognizably progressive."[9] Lee also admits that he is "no more Oriental than you [Samuel] are" (p. 207), while paradoxically perceiving, when he cuts his queue, that he seems to "get more Chinese as I get older." (p. 294) Lee represents Steinbeck's universal, prophetic, moral vision—the vision of both the East and the West and the author's synthesis of Cain and Abel. Thus Lee ultimately "mixes" without losing his individual identity.

Acknowledgement

I am exceedingly grateful to Ball State University for awarding me the 1987–88 Academic Year Research Grant that sponsored my research on "John Steinbeck's Use of the Old Testament in His Major Fiction." This article derived from this research.

Notes

[1] John Steinbeck, *Journal of a Novel: The* "East of Eden" *Letters* (New York: Viking Press, 1969), p. 4.

[2] Steinbeck, *East of Eden* (New York: Viking Press, 1952), pp. 163–64.

[3] Richard C. Bedford, "Steinbeck's Use of the Oriental," *Steinbeck Quarterly,* 13 (Winter–Spring 1980), pp. 5–9.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[5] *"Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulce/lectorem delectando, pariterque monendo," Horace, De Arte Poetica,* 343–44; in the *The Complete Works of Horace,* ed. Casper J. Kraemer, Jr. (New York: Modern Library, 1936), p. 408.

[6] Cf. Barbara McDaniel, "Alienation in *East of Eden:* The 'Chart of the Soul,' " *Steinbeck Quarterly,* 14 (Winter–Spring, 1981), p. 38. See also *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters,* eds. Elaine Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten (New York: Viking Press, 1975), p. 429.

[7] Janet Aviad, "Education," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought,* eds. Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes Flohr (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), p. 156.

[8] Richard F. Peterson, "Steinbeck's *East of Eden* (1952)," in *A Study Guide to Steinbeck (Part II),* ed. Tetsumaro Hayashi (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1979), p. 78.

Poor Whites: Joads and Snopeses

Abby H. P. Werlock

JOHN Steinbeck and William Faulkner first met in 1955, for cocktails, at the Steinbecks's New York city apartment—with predictable results. (Benson, *True Adventures*, p. 770) Faulkner was drunk, moody, and taciturn. To a woman guest who kept trying to elicit responses about his fiction, Faulkner finally retorted, "Madam, I write 'em, I don't read 'em," and abruptly left the party. (Quoted in Blotner p. 524) Mrs. Steinbeck later remarked to a friend that Faulkner was "a very strange man." (Blotner, p. 1523) For Steinbeck the unpleasant evening clearly continued to rankle, for, when Faulkner later apologized for his behavior, saying he must have been terrible, Steinbeck, replied, "Yes, you were." (Benson, *True Adventures*, p. 770)

This lack of amicability between the two men might have been expected, considering the disparaging and faintly hostile statements each writer had been making about the other for a number of years. On occasion Steinbeck had privately referred to Faulkner as part of the "neurosis belt of the South." (Benson, *True Adventures*, p. 773) On occasion Faulkner had privately criticized Steinbeck for his view that man and society could improve; such an approach, said Faulkner, "softened Steinbeck's view and made him a sentimental liberal." (Blotner, p. 1470) Steinbeck complained to a friend that Faulkner was "a good writer . . . turning into a god damned phony" and that he "stole" Steinbeck's words from a recent *Saturday Review* article. (*Letters*, p. 529) Knowing Faulkner's humorously infamous statement about the artist's inherent right to steal from anyone, even his own grandmother, one might be less apt to doubt Steinbeck's accusation. In any case, Steinbeck's bitterness focused particularly on Faulkner's receiving the Nobel Prize which, he said, if it ruined everyone the way it had Faulkner, then "thank God I have not been so honored." (*Letters*, p. 529)

Somewhat ironically, perhaps, in 1962 just months after Faulkner's

Steinbeck turning pages of back issues of a Salinas newspaper, 1948.

death, Steinbeck received word of his own Nobel award. Thus he joined the ranks of those who in Alfred Nobel's words wrote "work of an idealistic tendency." (Gladstein, "Ma Joad and Pilar," p. 1) At that point Steinbeck told interviewers that he admired nearly "everything" that Faulkner ever wrote. (Benson, *True Adventures,* p. 915) We should also recall that, just before receiving his Nobel Prize in 1949, Faulkner at least twice had ranked Steinbeck among the top five writers of the day. (Blotner 1213, 1232)

Indeed it was fitting for the Nobel Prize selection committee to honor the two men. In a number of their works, both authors not only feature but clearly admire the dignity and integrity of humankind, as seen particularly in their poor white characters. As their Nobel Prize acceptance speeches attest, both writers concern themselves with human tenacity and endurance, celebrating the assertion of traditional values in the face of seemingly impregnable evil. Moreover, both stress the importance of the relationship of a man to his land and detail the tragic results accruing when he is denied or deprived of that land. Steinbeck places a number of his writings, including *In Dubious Battle,* in the era of the Great Depression. Faulkner writes not only of those years but of the hungry ones leading up to them: the South in the mid- to late-20s, when he began

work on *The Hamlet,* was already in economic difficulty. (Dimino, p. 156) Poverty and loss of property afflict the characters in Faulkner's Civil War novels, *The Unvanquished* and *Absalom, Absalom!;* in these works, set in the 1860s, Faulkner's first Snopes appears to take advantage of the Civil War-induced privations of women, ex-slaves, and children.

Whereas Faulkner's Snopes family features in his trilogy—*The Hamlet, The Town, The Mansion*—and appears in several other novels and short stories, Steinbeck's Joad family appears in only one novel, *The Grapes of Wrath.* Still, the two impecunious but ubiquitous clans share similarities in their inception. Both, for example, have a genealogical history. Paul McCarthy notes that Ma Joad has instilled in her children a sense of their heredity, including both Civil War and Revolutionary War ancestors (McCarthy, p. 64), and the results are evident in a clear sense of family identity: "We're Joads," the family typically announces when introducing themselves, "and we're proud to meet you." This sense of family history and dignity makes painful the departure from Oklahoma for California. In an ironically similar way, Faulkner's various character-narrators chronicle the Snopes antecedents from their initial 19th century invasion of Frenchman's Bend, Mississippi, in the person of Ab Snopes, father of Flem and progenitor of them all, to their 20th century invasion of the social, economic, and political worlds of Jefferson, Mississippi.

Tribal Journey

In fact, the journeying of the tribe is a motif in both novels. Joads came west and established themselves on the Oklahoma land; later their descendants journey further west when they are dispossessed of that land. That second migration is initially led by the hereditary patriarch of the family, Pa Joad, whose own father dies before they reach the Oklahoma state border. Critics often note both the journey concept and the Biblical language, especially the similarity to Genesis 12, in which Father Abraham leads his tribe out of Ur to Canaan. Similarly, Faulkner's early experimentation with the Snopes tribe—begun in 1926 as "Father Abraham" and later abandoned—describes Abraham, the earliest Snopes ancestor to appear in Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. (Blotner, p. 526–529) In the rest of Faulkner's saga, however, the original Abraham is recast as Flem, the vicious, chillingly amoral Snopes who traces his ancestry only to his father, Ab—not Abraham—Snopes, who gains a reputation as a mercenary and a barn burner. James Watson suggests that Faulkner changed his mind about the tribe genealogy because the Biblical parallels were too sympathetic to depict the truly animalistic nature of the Snopeses. (Watson, p. 224) Far more effective than tracing genealogy is the technique Faulkner employs consistently in the published trilogy. Therein Snopes's relationships are frequently

presented in vague and confused terms. "They none of them seemed to bear any specific kinship to one another; they were just Snopeses, like colonies of rats or termites are just rats and termites." (*The Town,* p. 40)

Both *The Grapes of Wrath* and the trilogy begin with an established patriarchal society that comes into question and realigns, as poverty, oppression, and injustice increase. The Joads and the Snopeses are first presented as tenant farmers, share croppers barely eking out a living: Tom Joad describes his father's "forty acres. He's a cropper, but we been there for a long time." (*Grapes of Wrath,* p. 12) And Mink Snopes describes himself and "all my tenant and cropper kind that have immolated youth and hope on thirty or forty or fifty acres of dirt that wouldn't nobody but our kind work." (*The Mansion,* p. 90) Adumbrating trouble for both families, the dust chokes the Joads's land at the beginning of *The Grapes of Wrath,* the "small unpainted house . . . mashed at one corner" (p. 54); and weeds choke the Snopeses's land at the beginning of *The Hamlet,* the "sagging broken-backed cabin set in its inevitable treeless and grassless plot." (p. 18)

The poverty and deprivation suggested here engender enormous survival difficulties and ensuing techniques for coping with hardship. Notably, while both Steinbeck and Faulkner were familiar with Darwin, each responded to Darwin's theories in different ways, which in fact marks a point where the books appear to part company. According to Warren Motley, Steinbeck hoped to reject Darwin's pessimistic theory of the survival of the fittest and, searching for an alternative, delved into such writers as Jan Smuts, Jan Elif Boodin, and especially anthropologist Robert Briffault, who advocated a return to an earlier matriarchal society. (Motley, p. 398) Steinbeck's first wife Carol has affirmed that the portrait of Ma Joad is "pure Briffault." (Motley, p. 398) On the other hand, Faulkner, according to Gail Mortimer, appears to have tacitly accepted and utilized Darwin's theories in his depiction of the adaptive and survival abilities of the Snopes clan. (Mortimer, p. 189) Faulkner describes the Snopeses as a species covering the land, "the chain unbroken, every Snopes in Frenchman's Bend moving up one step, leaving that last slot at the bottom open for the next Snopes. . . ." (*The Town* pp. 8–9)

Although Joads and Snopeses are both regarded as inhuman or subhuman, Steinbeck appears to abhor the label, whereas Faulkner seems to approve of it. Throughout *The Grapes of Wrath,* the narrator's sympathy is implicit in his tone, as is his criticism of the speaker who observes, "Them goddamn Okies got no sense and no feeling. They ain't human. A human being wouldn't live like they do. A human being couldn't stand it to be so dirty and miserable. They ain't a hell of a lot better than gorillas." (*Grapes of Wrath,* p. 301) This bigoted, insensitive view of the Okies is explicitly refuted throughout Steinbeck's novel. In *The Hamlet,* however, the nar-

rator seems to approve the view of Snopeses not merely as inhuman, but as varmints, animals, reptiles. For example, Mink Snopes is "a different kind of Snopes like a cotton-mouth is a different kind of snake." (*Hamlet*, p. 91) And an oft-stated goal of Faulkner's admirable characters—Gavin Stevens, V. K. Ratliff, Linda Snopes Kohl—is the defeat of Snopesism.

If Steinbeck does not actually sentimentalize his Joads and their ilk in government work camps, he certainly demonstrates through them, as Benson notes, an "idealized view of common man." (Benson, "To Tom," p. 190) When they leave Oklahoma, the family are 12, as in the tribe of Israel—Ma and Pa, Grandma and Grandpa, Tom, Al, Noah, Ruthie, Winfield, Uncle John, Rose of Sharon, and Connie Rivers, joined by the preacher Jim Casy. Each is presented sympathetically, sometimes with humor, always with respect. Only Noah, the retarded brother, and Connie Rivers, Rose of Sharon's non-Joad husband, willfully desert the family. Compared to Faulkner's Snopeses, the Joads are absolute paragons. Faulkner, of course, portrays numerous poor white families who are similarly admirable, but, as Philip Cohen notes, they are Tulls, Armstids, Bookwrights, Littlejohns—rarely if ever Snopeses. (Cohen, p. 350) The goodness or nobility of Faulkner's poor whites is actually heightened because they compare so favorably with the Snopeses.

The non-aristocratic status of the Joads and the Snopeses is suggested by the very names of the two families. The Joads, according to Benson, actually did exist, at least in name, as an Arkansas clan. ("To Tom," pp. 166–167) The name seems humble and solid if not actually dull. Ma declares that no Joad ever refused food or shelter to anyone in need. "They's been mean Joads, but never that mean." (p. 139) The name Snopes, though, connotes not merely commonness but meanness: as numerous critics point out, the name suggests all sorts of revolting creatures, including sneaks, snoops, and snakes—probably, as Frederick Burelback suggests, because of its "sn" phoneme. (Burelback, pp. 125–126) Indeed, Snopeses are synonymous with the exploiters against whom the Joads vainly struggle. Snopeses metaphorically become the fruit growers and bankers who, lacking any humanity whatsoever, oppress the poor and force them off their land. Flem Snopes, of course, even before he succeeds to the bank presidency, is the star representative of this inhumanity, personifying, as Andrea Dimino observes, J. P. Morgan, Rockefeller, Hill, and other men who ruined the small farmers. (Dimino, p. 170) One of Flem's earliest coups is to cheat Henry Armstid of his mortgage, against which Armstid must then borrow from Flem and pay outrageous interest rates.

Ma mourns the break-up of the Joad family, but the Snopeses rarely exhibit that sort of loyalty. What makes the Snopeses worse is that they exploit not only the other poor whites, but also each other. Each is more pernicious than the next. Montgomery Ward Snopes peddles soft-core

pornography; Launcelot or Lump sells tickets to watch his own kinsman, the idiot Ike, make love to a cow; I. O. Snopes is a "blacksmith-cum-schoolmaster-cum-bigamist" (Town, p. 36); Uncle Wesley Snopes, the revivalist song leader, is tarred and feathered for seducing a 14-year-old schoolgirl; and the list goes on: Virgil Snopes is known for his legendary sexual prowess—he can sexually satisfy more than two women in succession, and his cousin Clarence Eggleston Snopes, the entrepreneurial state senator, sells tickets to Virgil's performances. Ironically, however, one of the common Snopes traits, once they reach a certain rung of the Yoknapatawpha social ladder, is a hypocritical semblance of middle-class respectability: I. O. Snopes actually stops Lump from selling tickets to the Ike-and-cow spectacle because, he says, "A man can't have his good name drug in the alleys. The Snopes name has done held its head up too long in this country to have no such reproaches against it like stock-diddling." (*Hamlet*, p. 201)

Snopes Mutants

Within the Snopes themselves, however, exist contrasts and contradictions—mutants, perhaps, according to the Darwinian view. Such Snopeses are described as aberrations or illegitimate children: they cannot possibly be Snopeses if they do not behave badly. Eckrum, or Eck, Snopes literally breaks his neck saving the life of a Negro who works with him at the lumber mill; his son Wallstreet Panic, recognized as a non-Snopes by his second-grade teacher, marries a splendid young woman who, like other women in the novel who defy the Snopes principle, shouts aloud, "Them damn Snopes! God damn them! God damn them!" When the bemused Gavin Stevens asks why she does not simply change the name to something else, the decent Ratliff shrewdly explains, "She don't want to change it. She jest wants to live it down. . . . She's got to purify Snopes itself." (*Town*, p. 148, p. 149) Indeed, Snopesism is specifically equated to a type of person, not a name. And Faulkner makes clear that only men can be Snopeses. Because women are protected by their innate goodness, male Snopeses by and large continue to beget male Snopeses, "repeating that male principle and then vanishing." (*Town*, p. 136) Faulkner's Flem personifies Steinbeck's impersonal "Bank," which is "a monster," a creature who does not breathe air or eat side meat, but constantly craves "profits," without which it dies. (*Grapes*, p. 43)

Although Faulkner conceived of the Snopes saga in 1926, nearly four decades elapsed before he completed the trilogy. (Blotner, pp. 526–534) *The Grapes of Wrath* was published in 1939, a year before the first edition of *The Hamlet*. *The Hamlet* concludes with the defeat of even the shrewdest poor whites and an open declaration of the war against Snopesism with

which the rest of the trilogy is concerned. Likewise *The Grapes of Wrath* concludes as Tom and Ma Joad articulate their conviction that people must act together to fight the banks, the fruit growers, the uncaring rich. Indeed, despite obvious differences between Joads and Snopeses, some curious parallels exist between *The Grapes of Wrath* and the final novel of Faulkner's trilogy, *The Mansion.*

Both novels contain imprisoned protagonists. As *The Grapes of Wrath* opens, Tom Joad, who has been jailed for killing Herb Turnbull in self-defense, has just been released from McAlaster Prison. Tom is journeying home, hitching rides, uninformed of the recent disasters at home and unaware that he is only at the beginning of his odyssey. Similarly Mink, imprisoned for murder in *The Hamlet,* is released from Parchman Prison. Although a Snopes, Mink is presented with increasing almost Joad-like sympathy: his victim Jack (Zack) Houston was a well-to-do landowner who demeaned the impoverished Mink with quasi-legal rulings and punishments, while every day Mink looked at Houston's warm house, his fat cattle, his mules and horses, until pride, hunger, and desperation drove him to murder. Everyone, including the sheriff, believed that Flem, as titular head of the clan, would hire a lawyer to free Mink. But Flem, a true Snopes, absented himself during the trial at which Mink was convicted and sent to the federal penitentiary for 20 years. Adding insult to injury, Flem sent another kinsman, Montgomery Ward Snopes, to jail and bribed him to persuade Mink to attempt an impossible prison break, thus ensuring Mink 20 more years at Parchman. Flem believed that during this time Mink would die.

But Flem is wrong; Mink does not die. Like Tom Joad, he is released from prison and hitches rides into a world so changed he does not recognize it. Both Tom and Mink indicate that their prison experiences had no reforming effect; both, significantly, leave prison ready to murder again. Tom says he would "squash Herb down with a shovel again" (*Grapes,* p. 74), and Mink has nourished for 38 years his plan to kill Flem, his oppressor and the symbol of all the evil in the world.

On the way home from prison, both Tom and Mink link up with men of the church. Tom meets the former preacher Jim Casy, who resigned his ministerial duties when he realized he might have hurt a few people because of his insatiable desires for the women of his congregation. "I'd just get 'em frothin' with the Holy Sperit, an' then I'd take 'em out in the grass." (*Grapes,* p. 30) He asks, "when a fella ought to be just about mule-ass proof against sin, an' all full up of Jesus, why is it that's the time a fella gets fingerin' his pants buttons?" (p. 30) Mink's view of the hypocrisy of preachers is notably similar: churches are "places which a man with a hole in his gut and a rut in his britches that he couldn't satisfy at home, used, by calling himself a preacher of God, to get conveniently together the biggest possible number of women. . . ." (*Mansion,* pp. 5–6) And Mink

doubtless knows that one of his relatives, Uncle Wesley, could simultaneously lead a "hymn with one hand and fumbl[e] the skirt of an eleven-year-old infant with the other." (*Town*, p. 41) The Jim Casy that Tom Joad remembers, however, has changed, and in his new role he formulates a profoundly humanistic philosophy which deeply affects Tom. Journeying with the Joads to California, Casy now believes in the "Holy Sperit" embodied in all men and women, all the people. Depicted now as a Christ figure, he sacrifices himself twice for the Joads and for the workers. The second time he is murdered by the Snopesish law-enforcers, but not before he tells them, in effect, that they know not what they do. (p. 527)

Similar to Tom's, Mink's journey from prison takes him home by way of the religious camp of the Reverend Goodyhay, a preacher remarkably like Casy. An active supporter of the poor, the Reverend Goodyhay is an ex-Marine who survived Pearl Harbor, emerging with a Christian humanist vision. He prays with Mink, "Save us, Christ, the poor sons of bitches." (*Mansion*, p. 271) His "congregation" consists of men, women, blacks, whites, "tenant farmers come up from the mortgaged bank- or syndicate-owned cotton plantation." (p. 282) Like the Reverend Casy who understands that "we was holy when we was one thing, an' mankin' was holy when it was one thing" because there is "one big soul ever'body's a part of" (p. 110, p. 33), the Reverend Goodyhay watches approvingly as "the white people on the bench mak[e] way for the Negro woman to sit down beside the young white woman and put her arms around her," (p. 282), then takes up a collection for Mink. With the money Mink buys the pistol which he later uses to kill his cousin Flem Snopes.

Retaliation Central

The question of angry, frustrated retaliation is central to both Steinbeck's and Faulkner's works. In *The Grapes of Wrath* a nameless tenant asks, "Who can we shoot? I don't aim to starve to death before I kill the man that's starving me." (p. 52) Tom kills Casy's murderer and becomes a fugitive—but at least he has taken action and, in his own mind, avenges the wrongs that the working poor are so helpless to defy. Mink, too, suffers from pent-up rage at unjust treatment and, like Tom, acts decisively against the oppressor. Neither is able to eradicate the evil, but each strikes a symbolic blow against it. The difference is that although both kill twice, each murdering oppressors, Mink's second murder is within his own family.

In addition to their similar experiences with prison, men of the church, and impulses toward retribution, Tom and Mink are both aided by women relatives. These women, all of whom offer help to Tom and Mink when they most need it, even share physical similarities: Ma Joad is

"heavy, but not fat, thick with childbearing and work" (p. 99), Mink's wife Yettle is "big yet not fat" (p. 259), and Mrs. Holcomb, the woman who helps Mink when he leaves prison, is "thick but not fat." (p. 264)

Certainly both novels explicitly express awareness of female power and its effects on men. Tom recalls his mother beating "hell out of a tin peddler" who argued with her. (p. 64) Each man has been influenced by his mother—Tom, powerfully by Ma Joad, who encourages him to be a man and to become an activist: "She seemed to know that if she swayed the family shook, and if she ever really deeply wavered or despaired, the family would fall, the family will to function would be gone." (p. 100) Always his supporter, even after he kills Casy's murderer, she feeds him and gives him the money for his escape. In direct opposition to this feminine principle are Steinbeck's Snopes-like and inhuman men who drive the tractors: sitting on iron seats and operating iron pedals, they are incapable of seeing, smelling or feeling "the warmth and power of the earth." (*Grapes*, p. 48) Mink's awareness of the feminine principle is clear as he thinks, "the very moment you were born out of your mother's body, the power and drag of the earth was already at work on you; if there had not been other womenfolks in the family or neighbors or even a hired one to support you, hold you up . . . you would not live an hour. And you knew it, too." (*Mansion*, p. 402) On his journey from prison, Mink, whose own mother died when he was small, recalls a scene with his stepmother—the only time he ever thinks of her. He recalls a golden fall day when without telling the father—who regularly beat them both—they kill a squirrel, then cook and eat it. Mink suddenly understands that "What a man [aches] to go back to" is not a place, but the "inviolable" and "splendid" memories of relishing together with his stepmother the food that the father-husband would have forbidden them. (p. 105, p. 106)

Mink's mother, stepmother, and wife are long dead; it is Linda Snopes Kohl (not really a Snopes at all) who arranges for his early release. Mink cannot know that she has counted on his wanting to kill her "father," Flem Snopes. Just as Ma Joad defends her views on correct behavior by threatening violence with the jackhandle, Linda, an ambulance driver on the battlefields of Spain, where her husband died, and a ship riveter during World War II, has learned that one must "say No" to the evil represented by Hitler, Mussolini—and Flem Snopes. Formulating what amounts to military strategy, she masterminds the elimination of the worst Snopes of all, even, like Ma, arranging to give money to Mink so that he can escape after shooting Flem. (Werlock, p. 38). Thus, although Ma Joad and Linda are markedly different, each aids an embattled kinsman in his fight against oppression. As numerous critics persuasively argue, Ma is the strongest character in *The Grapes of Wrath*. But Linda, living a quarter-century later in *The Mansion*, is even better equipped to fight than Ma: younger and a well-educated combat veteran, Linda com-

bines the tendencies of the men in *The Grapes of Wrath,* even, like some of the workers, joining the Communist Party while, like Jim Casy, she develops her humanistic philosophy to defeat those who victimize the weak—black, white, male, or female.

Both Steinbeck and Faulkner portray maternal figures to emphasize not only the mother-son relationship but also the mother-daughter bond. As Gladstein observes, both authors use the myth of Demeter and Persephone to suggest the "continuity" and "endless renewal of the female principle." (Gladstein, *Indestructible Woman,* p. 81) Ma, mother of Rose of Sharon, appears as a "goddess" (p. 100), a mythical figure of maternal strength, and Eula Varner Snopes, mother of Linda, passes into local legend in numerous "goddess" images. However, whereas Ma, according to Gladstein, passes to Rose of Sharon the mantle of the nurturing female (Gladstein, "Ma Joad and Pilar," p. 104), Eula's relation to her daughter is somewhat more complex. Eula commits suicide in order to free her daughter from her stepfather Flem's influence, an act of self-sacrifice which ensures Linda's education and self-sufficiency, in turn leading to her compassionate activism in behalf of the downtrodden. By providing the means to eradicate Flem, Linda avenges in general all victimized humans and, in particular, her mother who suffered the bondage of marriage to Flem Snopes. In both novels, then, the daughters—Rose of Sharon Joad Rivers and Linda Snopes Kohl—effect powerfully symbolic acts: Rose of Sharon loses husband and baby but saves a life; Linda loses husband and mother and avenges both. Although their actions seem diametrically opposed, in fact each woman through symbolic gestures supports the rights of the poor, the victimized, the dispossessed. Their methods differ, but their effects are life-affirming. In both novels, with the decisive actions of women, the patriarchal structure diminishes.

Finally, both novels convey strong sympathy for victimized people everywhere. Jim Casy comments that "There ain't no sin and their ain't no virtue" (p. 32), and Pa Joad says, "We done the bes' we could." (p. 328) A quarter-century later Gavin Stevens says, "There aren't any morals. . . . People just do the best they can." And Ratliff replies, "The pore sons of bitches." (*Mansion* p. 428) Ma is the one who tells Tom, "We're the people. We go on." (p. 383) Tom Joad and Mink Snopes, both described near the ends of their respective novels as preacher-like (*Grapes,* p. 572; *Mansion,* p. 204, p. 266) and both beneficiaries of aid and money from their women kinfolk, seem to transcend their puny and fallible frames. Tom tells Ma, "I'll be everwhere—wherever you look," for perhaps Casy was correct in his belief that each of us is only "a piece" of one big soul. (p. 572) Mink's last view of himself, as he gazes upward at exactly the "right stars," is inextricable from "all of them: the beautiful, the splendid, the proud and the brave, right on up to the very top itself among

the shining phantoms and dreams which are the milestones of the long human recording." (pp. 435–435)

Although injustice claims its victims along the way, the fight against it continues at the ends of both novels. The communal effort advocated in both *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Mansion* is mirrored in the collaborative work of Steinbeck and Faulkner as volunteers in President Eisenhower's People-to-People Program in the 1950s. (Benson, *True Adventures,* pp. 709–801) Therein, old hostilities dismissed or ignored, the two writers discovered common ground in their mutual distaste for literary talk and in their disdain for oppression in any form. Steinbeck and Faulkner signed their names to a proposal to aid the Hungarian refugees, to disseminate American books in Eastern Europe, and to free America's "greatest poet," Ezra Pound. (Benson, *True Adventures,* pp. 800–801) Although Steinbeck's Joads and Faulkner's Snopeses have come to signify different literary archetypes and divergent views of humanity, both authors successfully employ their chosen "families" to make a similar point: Steinbeck and Faulkner articulate a resounding "No" to exploitation and totalitarianism and an emphatic "Yea" to the rights and dignity of the ordinary individual.

Works Cited

Benson, Jackson, *The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer,* New York: Viking Press, 1984.

_____. "To Tom, Who Lived It: John Steinbeck and the Man from Weedpatch," *Journal of Modern Literature* 5, 1976, pp. 151–194.

Blotner, Joseph, *Faulkner: A Biography,* Vols. I & II, New York: Random House, 1974.

Briffault, Robert, *The Mothers: The Matriarchal Theory of Origins,* New York: MacMillan, 1931.

Burelbach, Frederick M., "The Name of the Snake: A Family of Snopes," *Literary Onomastics Studies* 8, 1981, pp. 125–146.

Cohen, Philip, "Balzac and Faulkner: The Influence of *La Comedie Humaine* on *Flags in the Dust* and the Snopes Trilogy." *Mississippi Quarterly* 37, 3, 1984, pp. 325–351.

Dimino, Andrea, "Why Did the Snopeses Name their Son 'Wallstreet Panic'? Depression Humor in Faulkner's *The Hamlet*," *Studies in American Humor* 3, Summer-Fall, 1984, pp. 155–172.

Gladstein, Mimi, *The Indestructible Woman in Faulkner, Hemingway and Steinbeck,* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986.

_____. "Ma Joad and Pilar: Significantly Similar," *Steinbeck Quarterly,* 14, 1981, pp. 93–104.

Faulkner, William, *The Hamlet,* New York: Random House, 1931, Vintage Edition, 1956.

_____. *The Mansion,* New York: Random House, 1955, Vintage Edition, 1965.

_____. *The Town,* New York: Random House, 1957, Vintage Edition, 1961.
McCarthy, Paul, "The Joads and Other Rural Families in Depression Fiction," *South Dakota Review* 19, #3, 1981, pp. 51–68.
Mortimer, Gail. "Evolutionary Theory in Faulkner's Snopes Trilogy," *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 40, 4, 1986, pp. 187–202.
Motley, Warren, "From Patriarchy to Matriarchy: Ma Joad's Role in *The Grapes of Wrath,*" *American Literature* 54: 2, 3, October 1982, pp. 397–402.
Steinbeck: A Life in Letters, Eds. Elaine A. Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten, New York: Viking Press, 1975.
Steinbeck, John, *The Grapes of Wrath,* New York: The Viking Press, 1939.
Watson, James Gray, *The Snopes Dilemma: Faulkner's Trilogy,* Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1968.
Werlock, Abby H. P., "Victims Unvanquished: Temple Drake and the Women in William Faulkner's Novels," pp. 3–49, in *Women and Violence in Literature: An Essay Collection,* Katherine A. Ackley, ed. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990.

FICTION

How the World Grew Up

F. R. Lewis

Prince Charming

PRINCE Charming wants to take us—Kate Cowan, Deena Lawrence, Jody Carson, and me, Sarah Ann Fox—dancing. He says dancing, anyway, then he's off to scout a match. For his cigarette.

Prince Charming is not the man from Nashville, although among the poets, playwrights, critics, and fiction writers at summer writing camp, the man from Nashville seemed at first blush the most likely candidate. For Kate, that is. Kate did describe herself as in the market.

"And I'm a pushover for gray-haired men," Kate said.

Nashville's hair: almost white. Fine, too. Skimming his forehead, brushing an eyebrow. Occasionally lifted back into place with the palm of a slender, long-fingered hand.

"But Tennessee's so far away," I said.

"Mmm. . . . The perfect summer camp—ah—diversion," Kate said, doing that dirty little laugh she does.

Deena, Jody, and I do not describe ourselves as in the market. I, for example, am married. Deena, for example, had a husband and now has a live-in. Jody, the youngest, even she has a regular, although he and she have sometimes been separated by words.

In summer writing camp we are, as it were, in different bunks. Jody's doing her second July with George, the playwright. Deena and Kate are in the intermediate half of the fiction draw, Nashville and I in the advanced half. So, during one of those cheap wine and limp chip gatherings that five nights each week follow readings by staffers or visiting literary lights, I got to introduce Kate and Nashville. They smiled, first looking each other in the eye, then glancing kneeward.

"We'll have to talk," Nashville said apropos of nothing in particular.

"I'd like that," Kate said.

And then, POOF! Nashville, potential Prince Charming, was gone. Well, not gone gone. Just gone across the room, wriggling through the crowd to the munchies table.

"What is this?" Kate said after a day or two of Nashville's courting ritual.

Now if Nashville was any example, then even someone with experience limited (for a decade or three) to the imagination would have to say that courting rituals aren't what they used to be. Done up every night in a Necco-Waferish pastel-colored knit shirt, almost wrinkleless chinos, not-new but polished to gleaming Weejuns, baggy-cuffed sport socks—and that white hair—Nashville, the Prince *manqué*, eyed Kate from a distance. His gaze holding her gaze, eventually Nashville worked himself closer to where Kate stood. He halted no more than one small writer away from her, lips slightly apart, as if he were on the verge of speaking. Then, turning his attention to the floor, he passed in front of her. And from the new outpost: a reprise.

"I give up," Kate said.

"Maybe he just prefers the 20-year-olds," I said.

"There you go," she said. Kate had recently edged past mid-30s; I have children older than some of the 20-year-olds.

Enter the next candidate, he who would be designated Prince, a man of the gray hair that Kate said could push her over. Steel gray and upstanding, this hair, on a man previously unseen in dining hall and classrooms.

"I'm a friend of George's. The playwright," said the Prince. "I live in town."

It had occurred to Kate and me that George-the-playwright was someone who in addition to being produced off-off-Broadway seemed to attract more potential princes than anyone else in camp. George's friend, Prince Charming of Saratoga Springs, however, exhibited instincts native to the sheep dog Kate left kennel-bound to free herself up for camp, herding Kate—and me along with her—from the flock of apparently-single, or at least momentarily detached, women.

"I used to live in The Big Apple," he said, thrusting a not-inconsiderable chin at Kate, as though positioning himself to take a sniff. "Can I refill your drinks?" For Kate, he opened a bottle of beer, for me he had to pump the water-cooler. During the first week of camp, I drank the wine and wrote not a word; by the middle of week two, I was on water only.

Anyway, almost the minute he handed me the glass, Jody appeared and moved me to the corner where her mom and dad—they'd come for the reading—waited. We left Kate to Prince and Prince to Kate.

The courting scene, recounted by Kate, went like this:

"Let's go fuck," Prince Charming said to Kate, as Jody and I faded to gone. With royal authority, he grasped Kate's elbow and nudged her

toward the exit.

"I don't do that these days," Kate said.

"I understand," Prince said.

Without changing expression, he proceeded to spin out his life-tale. Sole custody of a princeling since the mother, Prince's ex-, attempted child snatching. A New York City actor. Was. Did soaps. Was one year on *Guiding Light* for a month. Does ads for tv. Moved upstate to raise son and become head-hunter. Is going computer. Takes 28 per cent. Car's getting painted Tuesday. How's Wednesday night?

Tonight is Wednesday night. It looks okay.

"I'm not sure I believe a word of his story," Kate said on Wednesday afternoon, as she had on Tuesday afternoon and last thing Monday night.

"Even Prince Charming can have an Excedrin headache," I said. I'm not sure I know what I meant, but I did get a laugh. "Besides," I said, "he is good looking enough for the role."

"But that chin," Kate said. "Who could take it seriously?"

We pondered this.

"You know what?" Kate said after a bit. "You know who he looks like to me?" She didn't wait for an answer. "He looks exactly like Dudley Do-right."

"Wasn't Dudley Do-right's chin dimpled?" I said.

"Details," Kate said.

"Who is Dudley Do-right?" Jody said.

Jody was camp wunderkind last summer, which was how she got to be the gopher in the university department for which I worked until last spring when the money ran out. My four weeks at the department's writing camp is what you could call severance. Jody's as well, except Jody got only two weeks—and some office duty that pays her keep. The youngest of us, Jody is nonetheless old enough to drink in New York and well past consenting age. Well, past it in any case.

To unwatchful Jody, Deena explains Rocky and Bullwinkle, Boris and Natasha and Do-right, the intrepid Canadian Mountie. None of us can remember the name of Do-right's lady, but we're sure it wasn't "Cinderella," or, for that matter, "Kate."

Deena

Explaining is Deena's livelihood. She teaches in a small high school in a small city in the western part of the state. English, she teaches. "I hate it," she says, "but it's too late to change."

I, too, teach. After a fashion. Fiction-writing workshops. Not high-

falutin' like summer writing camp—I mean it's not like I have a book. That's how I know Kate. Kate was a student in my first workshop.

"Bring something to the first session. To share," I told everyone in advance of that workshop.

"I don't have anything," Kate said.

"Well, a paragraph is okay," I said, "even a sentence. Just so everyone can hear your voice."

"You're going to make us read aloud?" Kate said. "I'm not sure I can do this. Maybe I shouldn't."

I promised not to *make* her do anything and she promised to—maybe—give the workshop a try. She stuck it out—the first workshop, then a second, then a third, and a fourth—no matter that during the first one she seemed always on the verge of saying, "I can't do this," and skittering away. Who could have imagined her summering in writing camp with others of the ever-hopeful?

When Dudley Do-right was a pillar of righteousness on Saturday mornings in the 60s, she, Kate, couldn't have been more than almost-adolescent. I was in my journalism phase—back before I let fiction have its way with me. I wrote a feature on a man, an automobile dealer, whose middle name was Dudley—and, come to think of it, whose chin was appropriately cleft. He invited me to his office, where he stationed himself beneath a portrait of automobile dealer as Canadian Mountie.

The costume Deena wears is kind of 60s, too. I mean it could have been worn by a flower child, except to Deena it's not a costume at all; it's a memory of growing up in West Virginia, in a valley near Charleston, before her mother married a second time and moved north to Albany. Like I knew Jody and Kate from before summer writing camp, I could have known Deena, too. I could have known Deena from high school, which she went to in the private school next door to the public school I graduated from with—of all people—Jody's mother. Jody's mother and I, face to face after all those years, discovered that we still wear virtually identical jackets, blouses, slacks. The same hair-style, too, we have, with hairs turned just so, designed to mask the gray.

As for Deena, only a year younger than I, only a school year behind, she turned out to be. That year might as well have been a decade, she seemed such a 60s person. First, her clothing, as I said: tight, washed-out, vaguely distressed jeans (washed-out and distressed from use, not from the factory); flowy-gauzy blouses and dresses; a scrubbed-clean face even at night, long hair loose down her back. Her attitude, though, is what I think it mostly is: Open to life. Then again, there were those first twelve years in West Virginia, and there is her living now in a cabin on a mountain in a pine forest in the Catskills, where for a long time—until, she says, just recently—she chopped wood, burned candles, pumped water.

On Wednesday night, when Prince says downtown and dancing, Deena says, "I love to dance."

"Fast dances," she says, "where I can really move my body. Next summer my body will be 50. Next summer, I may not be able to do this. For my body, this may be its last hurrah."

"Talk it over; I need to find a match," Prince says, heading toward the smoker who stands nearest.

"I'm out," Jody says. "Computer watch-dogging tonight. And these guys from Albany are downtown." Jody, I can tell from rooming next door to her, entertains a steady stream of guests, in addition to her one-and-only. "We're supposed to meet here—catch some cathode rays." Stage right, Jody exits.

"Lots of good places downtown to dance," Prince says, back from his match safari. He is careful not to blow smoke in our faces. "Have you been?"

Deena, who's occupying an entire off-campus house lent by a friend, says last week she danced at a club downtown.

Prince rattles off a list of clubs where she hasn't danced. Better clubs, he says. Hotter bands.

"Oh, no, I can't go there," Deena says of place after place. "To get to those places I would have to turn left. More than once, for some of them. I would have to cross traffic. I never turn left," she says. "I never cross traffic."

"Well," Prince says, "we all have our limits."

I walk with Prince, Kate, and Deena toward the visitor's parking lot, which takes us past the computing center where Jody is at work. "I don't guess it's right for an old married woman like me, this downtown and dancing stuff," I say in what apparently is my turn.

"I should be up in my room, nodding off," I say.

"Don't be silly," Kate says. "Of course you should come."

"Oh," Prince says. "You're married?"

"How will I get back?" I say.

"We'll drive you," Kate says. "What else?"

"There are always taxis," Prince says.

As though she has been waiting for us to come by, Jody pops out of the computer center's door. "Not a computer-user in sight," she says. "Let's book."

"Everyone won't fit in my car," Prince says. He names a parking lot and a club where we should meet.

Deena makes worry noises, repeating what she said about left turns and traffic.

"I know a way with only one left turn," Jody says. "And if we see two cars coming from the other direction . . . Hey!"

Kate

Prince's car—some sporty job, American—smells of paint. Kate and Prince in the front buckets natter on about acceleration velocities or some such.

"So I painted instead of trading," Prince says.

"I would have driven you yesterday, to pick up your car," Kate says, "but you'd left by the time I got your message and called back."

"I got one of my hunted heads," Prince says.

"I love to drive," Kate says.

"Gotta go to the bank," Prince says.

Prince fingers the money machine's buttons, then gets involved with what Kate is saying about the first car she owned, a used Midget, I think she says. Across its liquid crystal, the money machine displays, "Press now or transaction terminates."

"True romance is calling," I say.

Jody and Deena guard three bar stools for us. "Bloody Mary," we each order as Prince asks. Kate and I head off to the Women's, as we would have done if we were in high school (except in my day it would have been called the Ladies).

"I can't look at him and get serious," Kate says. "Just too professionally good-looking . . . you know?"

"And this is the person—this virtual stranger—that you were going to drive 50 miles to pick up his car?"

Kate shrugs. "I was born with a steering wheel in my hand."

"My youngest came out sucking a forefinger—but a steering wheel. . . ."

"Ouch!" we say almost in unison. Kate gazes into the mirror, lifts the collar of her blouse, pokes at her mouth with a pale pink lipstick that sets off her tan.

"Ah well," she says. "I don't suppose beggars can be choosers."

Jody

Bloody Marys in which shreds of horse-radish float ("Just the way I like them," Prince says) sit in huge sweating glasses on the bar in front of our stools.

"Pretty good," Jody says to me. She's perched on the edge of a stool, ready for flight. "Springing for three more five dollar drinks than he has to."

"Mmmm," I say. "There is that." Straw in mouth, Kate nods.

"I have to tell Ms. Kate anyway," Jody says. She leans across me. "This

guy is one dud spud," she says. "You deserve a greater potato."

"Listen, kiddo," Kate says, without blinking a lid, "the question as I see it is: Do I want to get laid or don't I?"

"Heyhey! We have a lot more to talk about than I thought," Jody says. "But for now I have to get going." I flick the ash from a nonexistent cigar and wriggle my eyebrows. "Hello, I must be going," I sing. No one reacts.

"Thanks," Jody says to Prince, and draining her glass, except for the ice, she hops off the bar stool and slings the strap of a tattered canvas *Boston Globe* delivery bag over her head. The strap crosses her chest and the bag part hangs on her hip. During a lull in the flow of traffic into and out of her room—an oasis for her current love and several other young men who are enrolled in workshops but haven't the dollars for room and board—and while she sorted into portions a stash of plums, peaches, bananas, pepper and carrot strips, broccoli flowers, squares of vanilla cake with chocolate frosting, bags of Earl Gray tea, and oddly-shaped tuna salad sandwiches, all removed from the cafeteria, Jody told me she had stolen the bag from the girl she roomed with when she lived in Boston.

"You know what? She borrowed a dress from me and never gave it back."

"Why didn't you just liberate the dress?" I said.

"Always wanted the bag," Jody said. "Always hated the dress."

Jody pauses at the bar's entrance and over the noise screams something. We shrug our shoulders, point to our ears, and mouth, "What?" She comes back. "Maybe the guys are on the street," she says.

"And I have to stop at the bike shop, too," she says. "Well, the back of it. Wednesday's trash night." Then she's out the door.

"Trash night?" Kate says.

"Bargain hunting, Jody style," I say. "Wearable discards. And stuff she makes into—ah—sculptures, I guess you'd call them."

For my birthday back in the spring—right before our jobs disappeared—Jody gave me a little book published at the beginning of the decade her mom and I appeared at the close of, a book titled "How The World Grew Up." On each leaf, she pasted portrait and extra-curric photographs of me snipped from her mother's high school year book—and even a photocopied reduction of the class poem I wrote—along with original snapshots of her—Jody's—early childhood.

At the moment, however, she's desperate for bike tires. She'd plucked this ancient ten-speed out of the garbage a couple of weeks before camp, and after lunch this afternoon, she ruined what was left of the tires doing wheelies in front of the dorm, terrorizing the Elder Hostelers with whom the summer writers share the campus. Someone stole her real bike, a pricey mountain type bought by her folks when they still expected her to graduate.

In George-the-playwright's workshop this summer, Jody presented theft of the mountain bike as an incident in the family life of a clump of white birches. No one got it.

Charming Prince Dudley

Where we go next, Prince and Kate and Deena and I, is a bar and jazz and rock spot that shatters ear drums even as far out as the sidewalk where the queue of toe-tappers waits to pay the bucks and get the backs of hands stamped, invisible marks that on Wednesday nights, the stamper says, show up fuchsia under the ultra-violet.

"It's a slow dance," Prince says taking Kate to the floor, while Deena and I in the summer-use only atrium locate a table—one of those white metal mesh jobs that makes you think of ice cream parlors or lawn parties—separated at least partly by bricks, I am thankful, from bar and band. When the set ends after Kate and Prince take not more than two turns around the dance floor, Prince springs for more drinks: one highball (his), two beers.

"Great," I say, and hand the beer he brings for me to Deena.

"You married, too?" Prince says to Deena.

"My husband was an alcoholic," Deena says, lifting the beer bottle to her mouth, not bothering with the glass. "Then he committed suicide."

Prince questions me about my kids and Kate about being a mid-level managing state bureaucrat. Shoulders forward, head tilted, eyes wide open and focused on each face in turn, lips ever so slightly pursed, he listens as though he expects to hear all the world's best secrets—or at least, all of ours.

"Next time around," he says, "how about someone else buys the drinks?"

Kate buys. Prince is the only taker.

Kate

"Funny how he dances all the fast dances with Deena and all the slow dances with me, isn't it?" Kate says.

"No," I say. "It's not funny. You said slow dancing was what you wanted."

"Right. I did. It is."

"And Deena, as I recall, is out to hurrah her body. No?"

"Yes."

Deena and Prince return to the table. Deena sits down, nurses the beer.

"Anyone got a cigarette?" Prince says, patting his chest. One hand lifts hair high, then drops to polo-shirt pocket. "No?" He sets off in search of a smoke.

Enter Jody, blue eyes dark with excitement. "Couldn't find the guys," she says, coming to rest on the edge of Prince's vacated chair, sampling his high-ball.

"Great pickings," she says. "Look, I've got two almost-new wheels, they're only a little bent, and these tires aren't even worn, they're probably just an odd size, but I'm sure I can stretch a couple to fit, and this bike rack is just great, I can't imagine why anyone would throw it out, oh boy, I really wanted one of these, my dad can help find the right nuts and screws to put it on, he's good at that." Jody breathes as though she has been running, as well as running on.

Jody's up as soon as Prince returns from cigarette-safari, trophy between his lips. "Well—gotta head out. Keep looking for the guys," she says. "Thanks for the drink." she says, lifting Prince's glass to salute him, taking one last swallow.

Deena

"Look at that," Kate says. Like Prince's, her chair faces the street, where there is no longer a queue.

Through the atrium's glass we see Jody walk away, slump-shouldered, a little, from the weight of her *Globe* bag, not-quite-long-enough blonde hair caught in a no-more-than inch-long pony tail, too-long bangs close to resting on pale eye lashes. On her arms, Jody carries the four tires and two wheels as if they are bracelets.

Before tonight's reading, Jody decorated herself in her garbage bin best: overlarge men's black pleated pants (in style just like Prince's white ducks, only cut off at the knees), hunk of red drapery cord through the belt loops and tied, red tee-shirt urging environmental sanity, red and white and black checker-board patterned wind-breaker, white canvas sneakers (the kind Deena and I—and Jody's mom—wore back in high school) with the over-the-instep part of each sneaker colored with red marker to stimulate the saddle shoes Deena and I—and Jody's mom—once wore.

"A preppy with spare parts," I say to Deena.

"She should come home from off-Broadway loaded," Kate says. For fall, Jody will be at Playwright's Horizons, interning as a dramaturge—internship not being the science course she'd have to take if graduation figured in her plans.

"She plans to write a play based on this diary she found the weekend she went down for her interview," I say. "An actress who died of cancer. Jody found the diary in a trash can on 43rd Street."

"My son, the youngest, lives in New York, but all he finds are traffic tickets," Deena says. "I mean they find him. He's a messenger. He must get a ticket every time he delivers something. And then the City sends the

tickets to me. I worry all the time. I don't want more trouble. But I know I'll open the door one day and there he'll be: a New York City policeman insisting I tell him where to find my son."

"Don't give 'em a thing," Prince says. "Not a thing."

My eyes are closing. Deena says even she's pretty much danced out for the night—mindfully if not bodily—and offers to return me to my dorm. Prince smiles, not at Kate, not at anything, as far as I can see. Kate sits straight in her chair, hands folded together on the table in front of her, no readable expression on her face.

In the car, Deena drives the circuitous route that Jody taught her.

"This is really great for me," she says. "I've been on sabbatical. I've been going to meetings and I've been studying Joseph Campbell. Last summer, at the beginning of my sabbatical, I came here. Now this summer again, before I go back to teaching. A perfect circle. Last summer, I spent the whole month with the same writer. He said go home and finish your novel. My novel, it's about my two sons and me, our life, after my husband, their father, what all that meant, going on. The writer gave me the name of his agent. He said tell her I told you to get in touch."

"I feel like I'm really getting somewhere," Deena says. "Almost."

The Ball

"So?" I say to Kate.

"So," Kate says to me. "He lives in a carriage house—what would you expect?—he's got a great computer set-up, he's tastefully and elegantly furnished. Lots of asparagus fern. A hamster. The kid's. No water in the hamster cage, no food. Hamster starts screeching when we walk in. Dudley points his chin at the cage and screeches right back."

"Spellbinding. . . . So?"

"You mean was he any good, that sort of 'so'?"

I nod.

"No," Kate says. "Much too wrapped up in himself. No imagination. I suppose he might have followed zone-to-zone instruction, but I really wasn't up for Erogeny 101."

"Cute."

"We left right after you guys."

"I could see through the window. He looked ready to lick his chops."

"Bringing the grand total of persons licked to one," Kate says.

"I thought maybe he's lonely," Kate says. "There were lots of pictures of him and his kid, none of women or other men."

I don't ask any more questions.

"Anyway," Kate says, "his clothes get hung, mine are strewn. Brass bed, mushy mattress. Long night. His body is so lean and so firm it's like being

in bed with a tree. My dog would've loved him."

"Next morning—his hair even wakes up in place—he rubs himself down with some kind of oil and says he'll make me breakfast. Asks what do I want. Only there's nothing in the Fridge. I'll have to go to the store, he says. Oh no, I say. Don't bother. And you know what?—he doesn't bother. 'A cup of coffee will be fine,' I say, only either he doesn't have any or he doesn't hear me really or he doesn't hear me on purpose—I mean his face is always present but who knows where the brain is. Whichever—there's no coffee. Meanwhile, he takes this green banana—which he says is not really ripe enough for *me* to eat—and his newspaper (and he doesn't offer me a piece of that either) goes into his back yard, sits down on this chaise, nips at his banana, and reads the news to me. Okay, I say. *I'll* go to the store. Oh no, he says, I wouldn't want you to do that. I'll take care of it. By the time he'd finished all the news fit to read, I was ready to kill even for a cup of instant."

"Okay, I'll bite," I say. "Why didn't you just speak up? Insist?"

"Well, why should I have had to?" Kate says. "He should've known enough . . ."

"Aha! Mind-reading 101."

"Well, he did say he's into Edgar Cayce. He had all these books around. And crystals."

"You're right. I admit it. Food was the least he could have done," I say. "Should have done," I say. Kate nods crisply.

"Finally, when I'm about to get out of his car at the dorm—too late for breakfast, too early for lunch—he says he and his kid are going to be camping for a week. He'll be coming into town to do some work, but otherwise won't be around, he says. Like he's apologizing for the disappointment. Is he kidding? No complaints from me."

"Besides," Kate says, "The Tall One and The Short One [like Nashville and Prince Dudley, all Kate's men friends are designated] they keep pressuring me that they want to come up and I don't know what to do about them."

"I thought you'd dropped Advanced Promiscuity," I say.

"In the 70s—you know, college—while everyone else was bed-hopping? There I was: Kate the devout monogamist. Now I can't make up my mind what I want. Well, if Dudley's going camping in the woods with his son next week, that's that for him."

"What we need," I say, "is a day off. A day on the beach."

Sarah Ann

At the end of the reading that begins our final week of summer writing camp, just when we are not expecting him, Prince Dudley appears—in pleated shorts, a Polo shirt, no socks, canvas sneakers like Jody's, only

L. L. Bean, not commercial dumpster.

"Your basic deep-woods camping costume," Jody says.

"I thought you weren't around," Kate says.

"I am and I'm not," Prince says. "Just wanted to stop by and tell you I'd see you tomorrow afternoon."

"What about your kid?" Kate says.

"He's great," Prince says, like he doesn't know what she means. "Besides, George is reading tomorrow afternoon and the boy wouldn't want me to miss that. So—I'll be able to see you tomorrow."

"Sorry," Kate says, like she doesn't know what he means. "We're going to the beach."

"You're kidding," Prince says. "Everyone goes to George's reading."

"Not me," Jody says. In George-the-playwright's class, none of Jody's scenes have been appreciated.

"I write when we don't have workshop," Deena says. "I won't be there either."

"It's almost fall," Kate says. "I can feel it. I need more sun. Tomorrow's the only day we can go to the beach."

"Miss George's reading for the beach? You can't mean it," Prince says.

"Sarah Ann is taking me to the lake she went to when she was a teenager," Kate says. "She says we can drive it in 20 minutes."

"But George is hilarious," Prince says. "You won't go to the beach. You'll be *here.* At his reading."

"Only in case of rain," Kate calls to his back.

No rain. No George's reading. Instead, the second day of our last week of camp, we take off.

I direct Kate 20 miles north of the campus, along a two-lane road curvaceous enough to please someone born steering wheel in hand, to Lake Luzerne. With this Lake, I have a history. Here various of my mother's people maintained camps all the time I was growing up and I had been there occasionally. Once, when I was 15, for a whole summer.

The sand still looks clean and pale, and the spring fed water is crystal clear (warm spots in this lake won't mean what they mean in the campus swimming pool). From across the narrow lake, where the boys' overnight camp used to be, comes music that sounds live. Summer music camp, the lifeguard says. Motor boats—a lot of them—speed back and forth in the lane between the public beach's roped off share of lake and the music camp's roped off share. The lifeguard, she says that the beach shack that had offered food and row boat and canoe rental and suit-changing knotty-pine cubbies where you knew someone's eye was always at the knot had made way for a wire-fenced vinyl-clad private house.

"No Fudgsicles," I say. "No hot dogs."

"Bummer," Kate says.

"I didn't bring cards—we can't even play War."

"Play War?"

"What you do is divide the deck in half—or among however many players there are. With me it was usually this one girl cousin that I played with. And then each player turns one card face up, with the higher card winning, and if both turn over, let's say tens, you have a War where you put three cards face down and then the last card face up. In a War, you always hope for Aces and Kings."

"What," Kate says, "no Princes?" I ignore her.

"Sometimes we would use two or three—and once even four—decks to spice things up. With all those cards we could make one game fill a whole afternoon—and still never once not pay attention to who was paying attention to us."

"Cards were not in my lineage," Kate says.

My one summer at the lake, everyone spent early to mid-evenings and non-beach days hanging out and playing pinball at a place called Hilltop, which is where Kate and I get lunch. After all the hamster-food we've consumed at writing camp, we order subs with turkey and ham and salami and cheese. Hilltop today looks like a quick market, no pin ball machines, no teenagers.

The third night of our last week at camp, the guy Kate calls The Tall One comes up the Northway, causing all of Prince *manqué* Nashville's 20-year-olds to go dizzy, Kate says, when he rides with them in the elevator. The Tall One carries Kate off in his Charger. At the reading, in the company of another townie, Prince attends.

"Where's your sidekick," Prince says, smile big, eyes bright.

"Out to dinner," I say.

"Oh sure," Prince says, dimming brights, well-modulated actor's voice sliding into petulance. "Too rainy for the beach today; she can't use that excuse. Now she's out to dinner."

"And you Dudley, old chap, are out to lunch," I resist the urge to say. Instead, wondering how did I end up in the middle, I set lowered chin on lifted shoulder, raise eyebrow—only one—turn palms to ceiling, and say, "Hey—everyone has to eat."

King and Court

On the last night of summer writing camp, the head cheese, the big buckeroo, the region's star, the man in whose name we, the summer writers gather, this man, the great man, speaks. The small auditorium is so hot and the great man so next-thing-to-incoherent that we who bask in

his reflected glory behave like Sleeping Beauties—most without benefit of pricks.

Jody does not nap with Deena, Kate, and me. Her mom and dad have taken custody. After lunch Jody packed up her books and clothing and bicycle parts and moved out of her room, leaving behind only her camera and her drop-in room mates.

"Camping trip," Jody said. "Family outing. All eight of us. Making a memory, my mom says. Something for me to take to the big bad city."

Deena spots Prince. She waves. He doesn't.

The great man's speaking is not a speech; it is giving—more or less—answers. The great man's best friend asks questions on TRANSLATING FICTION (presumably the great man's) INTO FILM SCRIPT. Successful film scripting is a nut that—even after several attempts—for the great man, some people say, still awaits cracking. What do I know? As a camper, I have gotten through only one story, only one draft.

The great man's best friend—himself professing literature at the university—between asking the great man questions that begin, "We were talking about this tonight at supper. . . ." and picking out audience members to ask their questions and saying okay just one more question, tells us again and again, "My, my this room is certainly . . . uhmm . . . hot."

Forced to sit in the back rows—except for the woman who captured and occupied one of the front row seats reserved for the great man's entourage—the people from the Elder Hostel take their leaves, shouting to each other, "Maybe if I could hear him, I'd understand what he said."

"Ah, for the beach," Kate says.

By the time we migrate to summer writing camp's ultimate after-event reception, the Elders are profoundly involved with the usual chips, cheap wine, diet cola, beer. Tonight, everyone parties. Even the great man. The great man lingers at the reception, staying beyond his usual ten minutes to soak up adulation and wine.

"Why 'translation'?" I say to the great man's best friend, my one-time boss. "Isn't the film script a new work of art?"

The great man's best friend clears his throat once or twice and makes assorted growly noises before he answers. "We have to call it translation," he says, harumphing one more time. "We have to do that."

"There are things in the works at the university," he says, as though he were telling this tale to a stranger. "We can't discuss them right now . . . Big things . . . Hush-hush."

"But how can a writer write wonderfully when only the mechanics are different, the form?" Deena says, carrying the discussion to the great man.

"I never thought of that," the great man says, gazing at his best friend, the corners of his mouth sloping floorward.

"I have to leave first thing in the morning," Deena says. "I'll have to pack tonight."

"What's the problem now?" Prince says.

"No problem: My man friend's son's moving in with us," Deena says, "I have to make room for him—clean out my office."

"Clean out your office?" I say. From a distance, I can be militant.

"It'll be all right," Deena says. "I'm handling it."

Jody pops up with Mom and Dad, parks Mom and Dad next to me.

"But New York City!" her mom says about Jody's next semester in The City. In our other camp encounters, we've run the "aren't these incredible coincidences" (our—mom and I—graduating high school together and our—Jody and I—working together) conversations to ground.

"If she doesn't do this now, when will she," I say. This line is a favorite. I have spoken this line about my daughter.

"Let's get out of here," Prince says to me. He has Kate in tow.

"I fear for her," Jody's mom says, as though she were not speaking of someone who had already run away, once to Boston and once to New Orleans, and who even in Albany lived pretty much on her own.

"Please look after her," Jody's mom says. She leaves me speechless.

"George is having a farewell party," Prince says. "He's expecting us." I think Prince is going to add, "even though you didn't go to his reading last week," but he doesn't.

We track down Jody. We hug her good-bye.

"I need some pot," Kate says when we finally make it out the door.

"Sounds good," Prince says. "You have some?"

"I miss smoking pot," Deena says. "I really do. But I must must must leave. Right now."

"I smoked pot once—in high school," I say. "It was fat like a cigar except the ends. The effect it had on me was exactly none."

"Pot now is not like pot then," Kate says.

"Right," Deena says. "The joints back in the 50s were huge and weak. Now they're skinny and powerful. You are in for a surprise."

"We'll see," I say.

Deena gone, Prince and I, we wait outside, in the square between dormitories, while Kate goes up to her room in the Tower. In the Tower is where most of us campers bunk.

"I've gotta pee," Prince says. He walks to one of the trees; although the square is not well-lit, I turn my back.

"I'm writing a play for my son's fifth grade," Prince says over the sound of urine hitting tree trunk. "Last year we did *Our Town*. This year I figured an original: cowboys and Indians. And a baby Bigfoot."

Three or four of the Elders, having left the party, walk the path through the trees toward one of the dorms.

"Rain?" a woman says. "Does it sound to you like rain?"

I hear the zip of a zipper. Prince giggles.

After a puff or two (or maybe three) I, too, giggle.

"Where have my feet gone?" I say, and giggle.

Footless and giggling I walk with Prince and Kate across campus to where George and company are farewell partying—on the lawn behind Alumni House. Fieldstone stairs lead to the grass. I take the stairs through the bottom half of my graded-lens bifocals. A neat trick with no feet, I think.

"You really married?" Prince says.

"Married," I say. Giggling pains my chest.

"Long?" Prince says.

"Forever," I say. Giggling attacks my stomach.

"Terrific guy, her husband," Kate says. "Always taking her out for breakfast."

I almost drop to the ground at that one; Prince says, "Oh yeah?"

Perched on a picnic table at George's party is the great man. The great man holds forth to Nashville's cache of 20-year-olds. Nashville cups chin in one hand and uses the forefinger of the other hand to poke at the hole in his sock, in the back, where floppy cuff meets Weejun. George dispenses liquids. George's smile does not leave George's face.

"Enjoy," George says. "Enjoy."

"Before I enjoy," I say. "I have something to give you."

George tilts his head. Round face, blue eyes, strawberry blond-hair, curl drooping on forehead, he looks, I think, like a Campbell's Soup doll, the boy one.

Giggling almost doubles me over.

"What? . . . What?" says George.

"Jody," I say.

"Her mom," I say. "Jody's mom—the very Jody's-mom I graduated high school with . . ."

"Did you know I graduated high school with Jody's mom?" I say.

"No!" says George, the syllable eruption-like.

"Yes," I say. We sort of bobble our heads at one another, to express, it seems to me, the inexpressible.

"And what she did, this Jody's mom, she put this mom curse on me. Take care of my Jody, this Jody's mom said."

"NO!"

"How can I do it?"

"I don't know."

"I have my own kids not being taken care of," I say.

"You do?" says George.

"I do," say I. "But you, you do not."

"I do not."

"I don't live in New York City," I say.

"I'm sorry," says George.

"No, no—you live in New York," I say.

"Yes, I do," says George.

"And," say I, "Here is the clincher: you are supposed to be her friend."

"Am her friend," says George. "D'you like everything she writes?"

"Irrelevant," say I, more or less. "Won't be easy on her own. New York City. Jody. Alone."

"Not one bit easy," says George.

"Tough, in fact," he says, his body going all ripply.

"Needs someone to call when things get lousy," I say. "Needs someone . . ."

"I can do it," says George, raising his arm at the elbow and wiggling his hand. "Me. I can be someone."

"Great," say I. "Relieved it's settled." George and I we shake hands. My feet do not return.

"Enjoy," says George.

Kate lights another joint. Kate and Prince, they have been enjoying. Prince hugs her, kisses her cheek. She kisses his.

"Not tonight," Kate says. "Another time, perhaps."

We leave George and the great man and Nashville and the 20-year-olds and walk me back to the Tower. Kate, too. I hear Prince's heavy leather sandals clomping on the black-top. I hear him breathe.

"A puff for the road?" Kate says, offering me the joint.

"What if my ankles go?" I say. "My shins? My knees?"

"I can't," I say.

Then I do.

A Good-Looking Woman

Carole Vopat

COOKIE'S mother stood stiffly before the full-length mirror, appraising her reflection, while the alterations lady, mouth full of pins, crawled on the rug beside Momma's impatiently tapping toe. The saleslady hovered nearby, adding up the total in her salesbook, excitement sharpening her worn features.

"Missus, please, the hem, I can't. . . ." The alterations lady sat back on her heels and poked nervously through her hairnet at thin gray hair. Her mother sighed. In new shoes, high-heeled and backless, she towered over the old woman who circled slowly on her knees, marking the hem with puffs of chalk. The dress was Chinese style and dazzling, of heavy brocade in swirling patterns of orange and blue shot through with gold and silver threads. A row of what the saleslady called "frogs" marched diagonally across her mother's high bosom. The matching coat, of orange linen lined with brocade, had long sleeves and a stiff mandarin collar that pressed into her mother's throat. Both coat and dress had a slit high above the knee on either side, through which Momma's calf, round and hard from waitressing, thrust like a fist.

Closing her book with a snap, the saleslady wandered towards the folding metal chair to the side of the mirror where Cookie sat, watching and waiting. Together they gazed raptly at her mother.

"Your mother is a beautiful woman," the saleslady declared. "A little short in the waist."

Yes, Cookie thought, with her dark head reared up and her spine so straight, Momma looked like a queen, a Chinese Empress from a story book. Or Joan Crawford, Joan Crawford playing a lady executive in one of those career movies, striding around in suits with big shoulders. Her mother, too, looked tough and glamorous, as if there were nothing she could not stare down. Looking at her as she tipped her chin higher in the bright glare of the mirrors, no one could guess how upset she really was.

Cookie alone could detect the glint of panic that brightened her eye, read the fury and determination in the taut line of her spine, her closed face.

They had stopped sitting *shiva* only two weeks ago. The thick memorial candle on top of the television had burned away. Her mother had given Daddy's clothes to Granpa and Uncle Abie, and gone back to work. Momma was working two jobs now to pay off Daddy's hospital bills; by day, at the kosher deli downtown, and at night for the caterer on the highway. Daddy had been sick for three years before his heart finally gave out; there was no money and lots of bills. "We don't take welfare," her mother said fiercely. "We ain't beggars! Not as long as I got hands and feet!" Cookie wished she could earn money too, but at twelve all she could do was go back to school, her black mourning button fluttering conspicuously over her heart. People glanced at it curiously, but no one said anything, not even the Jewish kids. It was only good for a week; then she had to put it away in her special drawer, with Daddy's yellowed *yarmulke* and her old dog Butchy's toys. Now there was no sign anywhere that her father had died.

This morning her mother had wakened her early, her voice brisk: "Okay, kid, let's get crackin'; we got places to go and people to see." Her curls, newly set, bristled around her ears; color burned high on her cheeks. Hurrying into her clothes, Cookie wondered that Momma could spend all day in bed cursing and weeping, yet wake up next morning as if nothing had happened. Hadn't she been as upset as she acted? Or was it that today she had pulled herself together, and was being grownup and brave? Eating her pie and milk, Cookie monitored her mother as she bustled from kitchen to bathroom. She seemed angry and excited; the corners of her mouth were tight, her movements clumsy. In the bathroom, she threw down her makeup, slammed the toilet seat, broke a glass.

After breakfast her mother set out, Cookie in tow, for the best and oldest women's clothing store in the city, The Strand, where, after hours of choosing and rejecting, she bought this expensive, elaborate outfit. Cookie, like her mother a size 18 (in *full* skirts), knew that this dress she would never be allowed to borrow or even try on. Momma had explained it to her on the walk over. The dress was not for pleasure but for business: Her mother was readying herself to go out hunting. They had to find a man right away.

"A good-looking woman," the saleslady spoke again. Cookie nodded, her eyes on her mother's three reflections. What would the saleslady think if she had seen the way Momma had carried on yesterday? But only Cookie had ever seen her like that.

She tried to imagine the saleslady or any of her teachers at school behaving that way; it was funny to think of it. Momma just let herself go, and yelled, and flung herself against walls, said any awful thing she felt

like. Cookie had read books; she had seen movies; she knew other grownups didn't act like that. They didn't tear their cheeks and their clothes, hurl ashtrays and knives, make terrible accusations. They had manners. They kept things to themselves; they made the best of it. They tried to spare their children; in a fire or shipwreck, they saved them first. They discussed how to break bad news gently, so the children wouldn't be scarred. Grownups were noble, like Mrs. Miniver; Cookie had watched that four times on "Million Dollar Movie." No matter what, Mrs. Miniver didn't get upset; she hardly even cried. She was pert and brave and cheerful and beautiful. That was how Cookie wanted to be when she grew up. She'd never hit anybody, either.

The alterations lady sighed and folded her tape measure; the saleswoman bore the new dress off to be wrapped. Her mother lit a cigarette, drawing the smoke gratefully into her lungs, then stuffed her checkbook into her purse and, easing the new high heels back into their box, slipped into her worn mules.

"Okay, kid, we spent all our money," she said. "Time to hit the road. Let's get crackin'. I gotta go to work."

"That dress looks great on you," Cookie assured her. "You look like a million bucks."

"Yeah, a million bucks—that's what it cost me." Her mother laughed shortly; smoke spurted through her nostrils. "You know, it's a damned shame, you spend so much money and you can't even enjoy it."

"You might have a good time," Cookie offered. "It might be fun at the dance."

"Nah. I ain't buyin' it for no good time. You think I enjoy what I gotta do next?" She glowered fiercely at her cigarette, as if accused.

No, Cookie knew, of course she didn't like it. Cookie imagined Momma donning her new hunting clothes, like a warrior his armor; making her grim foray to the Manhattan dance; dragging a dazed husband back to their lair, where she herself waited for her future. Love welled behind her eyes. They felt hot and bright. This must be what courage was, then, she thought; not being without fear, but never-minding it; swallowing your panic, and carrying on. That's what made ordinary Mrs. Miniver so great. It was a shame her mother couldn't see how brave she really was. If she could, maybe then she wouldn't be so terrified.

All the way over to the Strand her mother had explained how poor they were, what big trouble they were in—they could get kicked out on the street at any moment. Cookie wasn't so scared. She knew her mother would always take care of her, go out to work to support her, come back to her each night. No matter how angry, her mother would never just get on a bus and run. She might get upset but she wouldn't have a nervous breakdown, or go crazy like Joyce's mother and have to be put away. She would never get sick. She would never kill herself—Jews didn't kill them-

selves anyway, she thought scornfully, just like they were never alcoholics or juvenile delinquents. Despite what Momma said, Cookie knew they wouldn't have to go without meat or shoes. How could they really be poor when there was always money for cigarettes and the movies?

Cookie glanced over at her mother, trudging down the crowded aisle beside her. Her face was pinched; she was frowning. She hated having to work as a waitress, running her feet off, taking orders from everybody. Cookie made up her mind right then that while she was waiting to make her fortune as a great writer, she would get an education, so she could always support herself, and never have to depend on somebody else to live. She'd be important, and wear suits. She would never do as her mother did, as the older sisters of her classmates were doing, and get married right away. Just last week during recess 14-year-old Christine Novak had strolled across the Junior High School playground, pushing her baby carriage. She had been the class tramp; now she was married, and didn't have to go to school. All the girls crowded around, clucking over the baby, a wizened doll in a fussy white crocheted bunting, but Cookie thought that Christine looked scared. Her mouth was tight and her eyes jumped around. No, Cookie would educate herself; she'd have a career. Then, when her husband died, she would never have to be terrified. Her mother was upset all the time now; everyday, she made scenes. Cookie was dreading the long walk back to their flat; the hours just before her mother had to leave for work were the worst. She glanced at her mother, butting through the crowds at the door, elbowing out to the street. Cookie hung back, embarrassed by the glares her mother did not see. Maybe once her mother found a man, everything would be better.

"When are you going to go to the dance?" she asked.

"There's one in Brooklyn Saturday night."

Cookies face froze. "Already?"

"Listen," her mother flared, "don't *you* give me any crap. It's bad enough I gotta hear it from Buby and Gertie and those jerks at work. 'It's too soon; it's too soon', " she mimicked. "Well, I'm tired a workin'. I been workin' all my goddam life! What should I wait for? I wanna stop already, sit home, be like other women for a change. Or ain't I got a right?"

"I didn't mean anything; I was just asking."

"Sure, you're supposed to wait a year," her mother explained; "but I can't afford it. It's easy for them to talk, they ain't gotta *schlep* to work. They ain't gotta come home in the dark prayin' nothin' more's gonna happen. They'd like it if I tied a black *schmotta* around my head and sat like a bump onna log for a year. They ain't got a kid without a father to feed and dress. I should wait a year, and what happens to you in the meantime? You don't stop eatin', you don't stop growin', you don't stop needin' shoes on your feet! Maybe I should end up like Gloria Weisberg's mother, better?

Maybe you'd all like that!"

Bluma Weisberg's husband had deserted her a long time ago, when Cookie's friend Gloria was only three. He left them for Another Woman, a younger one, the ladies on the stoop whispered, a *Shickse* who wouldn't convert. Bluma Weisberg was the only divorcee in the neighborhood, the only divorced person Cookie knew. All the ladies were very nice to her, but she never joined them on the stoop. She didn't remarry; never even dated. When Cookie came to get Gloria for school, Bluma was leaving for work, a cigarette clamped between her lips. She mumbled hello grudgingly, squinting against the smoke, her voice a thin wire drawn through clenched jaws. Once, Gloria's cocker spaniel FiFi got stuck end to end with another dog right in front of their building. The next day Gloria whispered that when she told her mother, Bluma had beaten the dog with a broom handle. Cookie was afraid of Bluma.

Her mother pushed ahead of her into their apartment and huffed up the stairs. Then she discovered that Cookie hadn't ironed her uniform and apron. Cookie stammered that she had forgotten, she had had a big test to study for, but the secret truth was that she just hadn't felt like it. She guessed this was just one more proof that she was rotten, but she didn't care. Her mother was mad at her again. She was always mad at her these days. And Cookie had just been feeling sorry for her! She had thought she was brave! Cookie burned with anger and resentment, as if she had been tricked.

"I'll do it now," she muttered. "Gimme it."

"Don't do me no favors," her mother snapped. "I don't like your attitude. I'll do it myself. I'll have to rush my *kishkes* out, but what do you care?"

"I *said* I'd do it."

Her mother drew herself up. "You kin go straight to hell!" Her eyes snapped; two spots of red blazed high on her cheeks; she looked feverish and excited. Her low, scornful voice sent an unwanted thrill up Cookie's spine. Even though Cookie was mad she had to admit, her mother could be so pretty!

Her mother flounced from room to room, slamming doors and drawers.

"You don't realize how good you got it here," she called. "You're spoiled, that's why—spoiled rotten. Somebody else, Daddy died, they'd make you leave school and get a job. That's what *I* had to do. Sixteen years old, it was the Depression, so goodbye! go to work! support everybody! I brought home my paycheck and gave it all to Buby. And if I didn't hand it over fast enough, if I wanted to keep a dollar out, she beat me black and blue." For a time there was no sound but the furious thump-thump of the iron. Then her mother's voice rose. "It's killin' me! It's eatin' me up alive! You never ask, 'Momma, you're tired, you're workin' hard, is there some-

thin' I can do for you?' Oh, no! Everything I do, you take for granted, like it's coming to you just for bein' born!"

"You hate me," Cookie accused coldly.

"You make a person hate you!" As if Cookie's words were an invitation, her mother rushed into the living room. "Look at you! Who could love you! Who could stand you! You oughta get down on your hands and knees and thank God for a mother like me. Whaddaya think goes on out there?" She flung her arm towards the front windows. "You think it's a picnic? You think it's a playpen? That's how much *you* know, Miss Smart-Ass. It ain't like in the books you're readin'! Nobody gives you nothin'! You can cry for a penny, they let you starve! Whaddaya think, this is America, it can't happen, you can't get thrown out on the street?" Now her finger turned to stab her own breast. "I been too good to you, that's my problem! You don't know what life really is. And listen, I'll tell you what a jerk *I* am, I still love you. No matter what you do, no matter how you treat me, I'll always love you. Nobody is ever gonna love you like I do. I'm your mother." Her voice softened; she closed her eyes wearily. "You're my world, you're my eyes, you're my soul, my *n'shuma,*" she sang. "Like gold, I love you; like diamonds! And whadda *you* do?" Her eyes flew open. "You take that love and oof! boof! you wipe your feet on it. You make me your doormat! Your nigger! I'm goin' out to work now, I'm so *oysgemutschet,* I can't even see straight, you should have what to eat, you should have a skirt to put on! I love you more than my life! I love you more than my right arm!" She flung her right arm out so violently, the loose flesh above her elbow wobbled. "Here, take it! Take my arm, why doncha? You got everything else. Na! Take!"

"Come on, Ma."

Her mother ripped open her robe; she bared her long-line brassiere, and thrust her bosom towards Cookie. "Go ahead, eat my heart out! It's what yer doin' anyway! Go ahead!"

"Ma-a-a-a," Cookie groaned.

"I can't take any more! Nothin' lasts forever! Even a train breaks down! Even a train got to stop! And look, this little bastard, she don't even blink an eyelash."

Cookie rolled her eyes up at the ceiling and sighed. Her mother's glance narrowed.

"Be careful, Cookie, be careful! Think what you're doin'. You'll kill the goose that lays the golden eggs! Then you'll be all alone, like I'm all alone. Then it'll hurt you, like it's hurtin' me." Her voice grew soft, almost loving. "If I get sick, if I can't work, who's gonna take care of you? Who's gonna feed you? Who's gonna *give* to you? Don't you think I don't worry about that night and day? You ain't got nobody but me, kid; we're all alone in this *facockte* world! Anything happens to me, you're finished." She made a chopping motion across her neck. "Kaput! You think I'm kiddin'? You

think I'm just tryin' to scare you? Think, Cookie, think, you're so smart, what's gonna happen to you if I ain't here? You think they're gonna be linin' up to take you?"

"Leave me alone," Cookie muttered.

"Leave me alone! Leave me alone!" her mother mimicked, her voice thickening. Cookie knew she was going to cry. "I'll leave you alone! I'll leave you plenty alone! One day you'll eat those words!"

She slammed into the bedroom. Cookie could hear her crying but she remained hunched on the couch, glaring at the floor. Maybe this meant she was bad, but sometimes she thought she hated her mother. And then her mother was back, in her uniform and apron, whirling into the room, standing over the couch, fixing burning eyes on Cookie.

"I want you to know just what you're doin'," she spat. "I'm goin'; I'm goin' to work—but my heart is poundin', my hands are shakin', I can't even see straight. Look!" She held out her hand. As they stared at it, it wobbled obligingly. "Look what you're doin' to me! Look how you're sendin' me! You make me so upset I could drop dead, I could *cholish.* I'm gonna get in an accident tonight, and it's gonna be your fault!" She paused, but Cookie kept silent. "You know how hard I work; you know how tired I am. I come home late at night, two, three inna mornin'. All the drunks on the road, anythin' could happen. I could go off the highway. I could get in a crash. Think, Cookie, think what you're doin'! You won't get another chance!"

Fear spiralled up Cookie's chest; she clamped her lips tight against it. People shouldn't talk about such terrible things; it was like asking for them to happen.

"Remember, Cookie, remember! Remember this night! Remember how you're sendin' me! Murderer!" she wept, "Angel of Death! My very own *Malech Hamoves!* I'm not gonna be comin' back tonight; you ain't gonna see me! I'm gonna be dead, I'm gonna be layin' by the side of the road! Cookie, remember! You're sendin' me to my grave!" She tore open the door, and clattered headlong down the stairs. The outer door slammed so hard the windows in the living room rattled. Then it was still.

Cookie slumped on the couch, staring blackly at the floor. Then she scrambled up, raced into the hall. "Goodbye!" she shrieked, flinging the door shut. "I hope you *do* get killed! I hope you *die!*" The door slammed with a shattering crash; she threw her back against it. "Drop dead! *Drop dead!*" Blood rocketed through her head; her ears rang. Thank God her mother was finally gone! She was crazy! Her mother just let herself get more and more worked up; her fury rose like the sirens at noon and nothing could stop it. She didn't care how she hurt her; she didn't care if she ruined her life! Look how her chest was churning, how everything inside thumped and rushed! It wasn't fair! It wasn't even healthy! Could a

kid have a heart attack? Because all this turmoil was bound to weaken her heart. She saw it grown gray and shrunken like a bird's nest in winter, saw her agitated blood foam up to break through veins rubbed thin as onion skin. One day she might just drop dead, when she was 20 or 25, fall down plop in the street, and no one would know why, but it would be because of her mother. And what could really happen, she thought with a thrill of fear, she could jump up right in the middle of school, knock over her chair, and start screaming, like Howie Shapiro had done—bleating, really, terrible high-pitched squeals, while everyone sat stunned. She might suddenly burst out into tears! She, who never cried any more, no matter what her mother flung at her!

Cookie stomped into the living room and flung herself on the couch, then, leaping to her feet, jumped up and down, up and down, as hard as she could, landing with a jar that rattled her teeth and shot pains up her calves. There was no protest from beneath; the Hagedorns weren't home. She stalked to her mother's closet, glared at the clothes tumbling off hangers, heaped on the floor. Only the new dress hung straight, shrouded in its plastic garment bag. She unzipped the bag and fingered the luscious brocade, then twisted it savagely around her fingers, looking with satisfaction at the deep creases she made. She spat, but only a thin spray dribbled over the sleeve of her mother's worn mouton coat. Eyes screwed tight, she kicked the wall with her oxfords, grunting uh! uh! uh! until her toes hurt. "I HATE YOU!" she shrieked. "DROP DEAD! YOU'RE CRAZY!" Blood pounded in her ears. She began to feel afraid.

She made herself listen to the breath whistling through her nose until, gradually, it slowed. At the end of the corridor, through the open bathroom door, a light shone; porcelain fixtures gleamed like a painting. An orange towel draped over the tub stunned her with its rich beauty. She wandered towards her room and leaned in the doorway. Her old dolls smiled up at her from the floor where they waited in a dusty row. Her looseleaf binder, her paper bag-covered history book spread over her pillow. From where she stood she could see a man in the post office across the street lean out of a second story window to draw in the flag. It was suppertime. She could make herself something to eat. Eagerly, she hurried into the kitchen.

At nine, in a flurry of car doors slamming and people calling out, the stores on Broadway closed. Then, except for an occasional reveler leaving one of the bars, the night was still. She put aside her book with a sigh. She couldn't concentrate.

She had never imagined her *mother* dying. Yet it was true: late at night, when people were tired, there could be accidents, a car could leave the road, drunken drivers, her mother was always nervous and upset. . . . She sat up very straight on her bed. She would think this through now, so she would be prepared. It was all right to think about it, she told herself.

Thinking couldn't make anything happen—could it?

If she couldn't live with Buby and Granpa, she didn't know where to go. Even if people did allow it, it would be awful. Buby and Granpa couldn't speak English! Buby wet the bed and Granpa was so silent; their house was cold and gloomy and smelled of mothballs, urine, and soup. Buby fixed ugly boiled food, grey meat and watery chicken with pimply skin. They lived in a bad neighborhood, surrounded by the Puerto Ricans who had swarmed in when the other Jews left years ago for the suburbs. The synagogue across the street was boarded up; the Kosher butcher's was a *bodega;* and Beth Israel Hospital, a block away, where she used to visit the laboratory rabbits trembling in their cages out back, had been turned into a nursing home. Now a small, swarthy Puerto Rican man rented Momma's old bedroom. He looked at Cookie with intent, glistening eyes, as if he had just discovered something important he had to tell her. Sometimes he licked his lips and very deliberately pointed the tip of his tongue at her. She didn't know exactly what that meant, but she knew she didn't like it. The girls in that part of town were real tough; they hung out in gangs and smoked and beat each other up in the street over boys. They looked like they went all the way: They plucked out their eyebrows and redrew them with dark pencils, quivering half-moons that gleamed nakedly above their cool, knowing eyes. In stories, there was a kind teacher, or old friend of the family, some long lost relative with twinkling eyes, but she and her mother didn't have anyone. And Cookie knew from *True Confessions* what happened to girls who didn't belong to anybody.

And she couldn't really take care of herself all alone. She didn't even know how to run the washing machine; her mother had never taught her. No wonder her parents called her useless. When her father was seven, his parents had given him away to a tailor in another village to be an apprentice. When he was her age, he and his older brother Max sailed off to America alone. She guessed her mother was right; she *was* spoiled. Even though she was twelve, she still had to have someone around to take care of her.

Cookie pressed her hot cheek against the window and stared at her reflection. She could always run away! But that was most frightening of all. Outside the window, the world stretched, dark and limitless. Her mother said it was a jungle. She never had run away, even when she was little and you were supposed to. There was nowhere to go. She didn't want to join a carnival, or ride on trains. Girls couldn't do those things, anyway. She wanted to stay right here, in her snug little room, with her dolls and her books and her map of the world. She had that test in History; she planned to try out for the student newspaper; next week the Latin Club was going on buses to the U.N. She didn't want anything different! She wanted everything the same!

The neon had never winked so garishly. There were spiky haloes

around the street lamps; they flashed at her as though beaming a secret message. She strained to read the dark pavement as if it too could be signalling her. Her ears felt sharpened into points.

"Oh, God, please let my mother come home; please, please, dear God. . . ." But no star fell, no dog barked. If a car passes by the time I count to ten, everything will be all right, she told herself. And then it changed to 20. If a man walks out of Peppy's Bar, if a prowl car comes, if I hear a horn. But the night was still. She knew something terrible was going to happen. On the street no one walked. She began to sing "You'll Never Walk Alone," then switched to "Whistle a Happy Tune." Something terrible was happening to her. She thought of the part in "The Helen Morgan Story" where a girl tells Ann Blyth that the three worst things in the world were "to lie in bed and sleep not; to try to please and please not; to wait for one who comes not." Then the girl killed herself because her boyfriend left her. That was the last movie she and Daddy had seen together; he had really liked it. That part had stuck in her mind because, she now realized, it had been true grown-up Wisdom. Waiting was awful. She couldn't see any lights in the houses on the side streets. Everyone in the world must be asleep. The black pavement seemed to tilt in a sudden sharp movement, like the trick floor in a funnyhouse. She pressed her head against the windowpane, tapping her forehead gently on the glass. Only this stood between her and the threatening streets. Outside, wild animals lurked in the bushes, straining to rip you apart. The world was a bottomless hole. Without her mother, she would fall and be swallowed up. Darkness would close like water over her head, and all her thoughts, her stories and plans, the "she" that she was, would be lost. A far-off part of her wondered if this was how grown-up women felt without a man. Was this how Momma felt inside? Momma! Her insides gave a sudden lurch; she flattened both palms on either side of her and held on tightly to the edges of the mattress. She was on a carnival ride that was too high and too fast, trapped, too terrified to cry or scream, as the ride hurled along its orbit towards its sickening conclusion, when she would disappear. "Momma," she whimpered; "Daddy. . . ."

A door slammed. She stiffened, listening. Her mother was trudging up the stairs. "Oh, thank God!" she breathed. Her body slackened, she gulped in air, then scrambled out of bed, remembering in time to check herself; her mother would still be angry. She stopped inside the doorway of her mother's bedroom, hanging back against the wall. Momma slumped on the bed, peeling off her uniform, her face creased with irritation and weariness. She glanced up; they stared at each other in surprise.

"What're you doin' still up?" she snapped.

Cookie hesitated, then admitted through stiff lips, "I thought you weren't coming home."

"Oh, yeah? Well, here I am. The ole workhorse'll always come back to the barn." She sighed heavily. "Time to go to bed so I can get up and go to work again." She pulled off her white nylon apron and shook it out ferociously. "What're you lookin' at me like that for?"

"I thought you were gonna die," Cookie gulped. "You said you were gonna have an accident and die."

Her mother looked startled. She held her apron protectively in front of her chest. At first she seemed pleased; then her eyes narrowed into her "what-are-you-trying-to-pull" expression. But before she could speak, Cookie began to cry. "You said you weren't comin' back. You said you were gonna die." She stumbled into her room and rolled into bed, pulling the pillow over her head.

After awhile her mother called out angrily from her bed, "All right, stop already, I'm home. Nothin' happened to me this time. Next time you might not be so lucky." Much later she called again, gruffly, "*Nu*, Cookie, stop." And, later still, in a grudging tone, "Cookie, stop it. I'm here. Nothin' happened. Stop cryin' already. Why are you doin' this to me?" Her mother fell silent. "Cookie," she called at last, her voice softening, "I'll go to the dance Saturday, I'll get a man, things'll be different. Just wait, okay? Everything'll be better." Cookie tried to stop crying; imagined herself in high heels and a suit: Her hair was up, she carried a briefcase, she was a *mensch*, a big shot; all her diplomas hung on the wall of her penthouse. "Okay, Cookie?" her mother begged. Suddenly Cookie emitted a loud sob that startled both of them.

POETRY

Norah Christianson

Red Rider, Red Rider
(John "Red" Pollard, 1909–1981)

I

You hardly were around,
Quick star, dark storm racing lightning circuits of the track,

But when you came home, you came in gusts,
In gales of loud and louder,

Until the banging of your heart,
Your midnight valedictories from the roof

Took up the moon's room in my night;
And days, you shouted down the sun.

II

When you'd leave, you'd leave enormous silence
In your wake.

The volume of your absence struck
The world deaf-still.

Even now that you are nine years gone,
I have to listen with extraordinary care

To hear the starting gate's bell gash air,
The thudding of those hooves less thundering than you.

The Crabs

Late six o'clock sun gives half-moon shadows to
Hundreds and hundreds of stalled horseshoe crabs, bronze humps,
All pointed in a single direction up the beach
Like battalions of miniature armored tanks
Who've failed in their assault against the land,
Surrendered to the enormity of earth's spread,
And then that black October tide, slick turncoat,
Running out on them.

The crabs' spirits have vanished
From their unlucky horseshoe holds.
Nothing's in those little gunners' dun hulls now.
Their husks crackle everywhere you step,
Hollow and dolorous as a dead cause.
The spirits have left. They've gone off behind the dunes
Developing new strategies, taking new disguises,
Talking again of invasion.

Caveat

I deny connection to the House of Atreus,
Repudiate any descendency from that pack of fools,
Will not be party to, tool
Of those intent on doing themselves and kin in,
Will not brook their puking in the halls,
Their banging on the walls;
Nor will I look into their hollow, sinkhole eyes
That would drag me down and in,
Eyes of these fathers, brothers, uncles,
With their whiskey, their gin,
Drugs, sour days, courtships of their deaths,
Their rotten ways.

These, these relative males, marginal men,
Who deny their bodies and sell their souls in job lots,
Do not impress me with their torment.
Damnation is a chosen career.

Women of this family must be stone,
Resist the whore, Pity,
Turn our backs on the failing voice, the pleading eye,
Refuse these subtle sadists' using hand,
Stand guard before our sons, arms widespread,
Protect them from their heritance,
Roar warnings to the old instructing fathers,
Flames curling from our lips like wrathful tongues.

Leonard J. Cirino

Self-Portrait

My shadow is a wounded bird,
a wolf of rock of salt, the sea.
A thing without purpose, destination,
it wants to fly, not speaking, in pure air.
It spends distances in silence,
doesn't understand the others' ways:
those of objects and buying objects,
those who own the earth, the trees;
drops its penumbra where the algae
float endlessly up and down, questions
no one, nothing, has no quarters
except for those it gives to thieves.
It steals days from days, for the blue-
veined breast of the woman it loves:
who she really is. Exactly like you
and the others, its only difference:
it is here and I am it.

The Other
for Pat

We say things alike and think
of our differences. Our words evolve
from the feet, heave from chest
and mouth, lead the tongue.
It has a separate utility,
one that stutters saying,
"I want to know you, taste
a foreign lip," then gets bit.
It's strange the things we fear
not knowing the other. Failing
again, I put these words down,
end up chewing through paper.

The Collage

The woman's dress is made from cigarette
foil charred in the fire, her hair
from cat dander gathered up with dust.
Her shoes are larger than Rodin's feet,
her blouse is silk and cheesecloth.
One of her eyes steers impossibly left,
her mouth is a nasturtium garnish,
her rouge is made from rose petals.

The chair she sits on is pasted-up
madrone bark. The dog who sits
to her right is tanned leather,
her teeth are corn. She takes supper:
the bowl in front of her an odd-sized
thimble. Her knife and fork are twisted
hairpins, she eats with a baby spoon.
The whole thing lies in a sepia wash.

Thomas Kretz

The Only Way

Timid foreigner seeking a salient way
to twist and twirl pasta without accent
Chianti confident on the tongue
a squeeze of lemon rind for the skin

Romans mostly nosey depending on garlic
and inhabited cheese for tidbits to relay

Talking to the snow through boots
a delicious movement to thaw
long nights with ski lifts at rest

Inhale steam from a giant hot tub
of cappuccino with your smile
eating sunbeams from the surface
of my existence for one week
in Cortina d'Ampezzo

The clam stretched his flesh to cover a yawn
as I kicked the dirty sand of Ostia
but it was not boring for the seagull
who muscled her beak between bone lips

This is perhaps the only way I can say
I have come a long way into language

The First Borgia Pope

Spoke only Catalan with a lisp
but Calixtus III made his will
known in banquet halls by the fall
of the wicked mace and big handfuls
of jewels and glittering indulgences;
unemployed knights got the message
that crusades were their salvation
giving horse and sword a free rein;
nephews metamorphosed into cardinals
and mistresses became pious abbesses;
stout noble to enjoy the Renaissance
by letting all his threadbare protégés
frame and bust him at their pleasure
as long as that turned out to be his.

Neil Myers

Beanstalk with Variations

1 Jack at 60

Just crazy, to think it again,
riding the old sprouts, those that took root
in the yard once, & still
lift fresh as clowns with tall faces, sighing,
pull yourself up, quick as you wish,

& even the undergrowth,
stuffed with cans, shards, turds, brambles
clattering magically at every wind,
can help,
since whatever he climbs now is useful & dense,

& if he squints hard he can begin,
hunching & leaping
until he lets stuff spill he's carried for years—
goose, harp, eggs in a basket,
his mother's check.

The choice is his.
He can be generous, & gigantic,
& end the tale any way, with a crash, renewal, more craving,
trying it out in all sizes, to see if it works
when diminished & raging.

2 Rising

To be aloft, & then look back,
fingers raised, imagining the crowns
of flower heads, braille of petals
snapping silently,

fruits growing in thick lanes,
dogs raising tunes from river & the moon's
huge face for which he came,
its no-need, no-name,

clouds of fireflies,
clusters, dippers, armfuls,
separate as stars,
swollen to immense points in disparate space,

rain, sweet green, the pig of a pulse
draining him upward in thin air,
kicking fresh leaves,
fierce-gilled edges, terse dependencies.

He swallows. Leans his head.
Something will tell him where to step,
a snail bobbing
before continuing, unpredictably.

3 Resting

This can't be the first time he's paused,
pretending nothing's lost, or not
worth the trouble, or that he can let it

fall a mile, as far as the horizon, deepening
each minute, enough crows, roofs,
fields to hold late light. A flood of dark,

a way to grasp what still might yield
& carry it with him, thru plots
too dense to read, an eye for every

storm, the hundred thousandth error in
a life arrived at this balance
of waste & gain. Each alike. All the same.

4 Arriving

Shrieks dropping past his hat
like woodlice, dandruff,
incessant names, *Hello I'm Big*

Fee Fi I'm Jack, scenes stitched
in helpless panic, loss
of memory & scale, a strobe that

flames his figure clambering
toward its target,
spilling soup, tapes, numbed

repetitions, an old hen casting
shadows, blind clucks,
cloud-scapes rolled up & under,

the vine in dawn-bright curlers,
tails, arcs, tongues,
long seconds plotting, pleading,

fleeing, vast footsteps, then a
truth so bland
he squirms in shock: that little's

up here but the air his lungs
keep bracketing,
a world perpetually puffing itself

back & him inside it, its urgencies
identical as coins
or squirrels in flagrant leaps, off

stems & trunks, *fear not,*
into the void, *at length, at last.*

Lanes

If we can succeed in not being
bounded, in cutting down the boundaries, that's
all.

—Sekiun Koretsune

All one needs:
world, mood, things.
That's it.
Light lifts slowly, leaves fill, wind swells.
Shapes & borders are unquestionable.
Last night I leaned clear across one,
waking suddenly, choking on wild floods of phlegm, thinking
heart! until I sat up.
Sinus.
Today I'm ok.
What I've decided to love is still in place.
As for terror, what's the value of that?
Why? What difference? What on earth?

•

I'm the one in back, in the photo of the frozen lake,
hand high, waving.
Listen.
There's nothing in my palm but weathered surfaces,
like the chill rising where trees begin.
I'm cold.
I know how to get by
as I know letters missing in the alphabet,
the piece out of *car,* or *don't talk now,*
or *red:* stick around,
green: everything flees incessantly,
showing me where to look, who to wave toward, what to say.

•

How ponderous, this breathing, heat & a fan flapping lightly
overhead;
like wind on a mountain covered with hairs.
For a second, I don't know if mountains exist,
& if I am a mountain,
not seeing how to beat time, climb itself, count its own death.

•

If I hold a breath, I hear thunder, like the storm that rolled by
at Hokyoji, a week ago,
our bodies pounding, staring at each other,
smiling, threatened by the sky's dark core, the peaks of wind &
firs,
birds fleeing, a rabbit huddling.
No problem. Wet, I went back inside, sat down,
did zazen slowly,
hour beyond hour, dark to dark.
As for that death, well,
I walk down lanes of sputtering,
the old ones,
rimmed by ancient suffering.
It's all familiar,
a thousand injuries, swollen by space, cracking, ticking away.

September, Late

When I wake, I hear them. Voices, Sentences.
The moon. The katydids. *Help help o help.*
Like horror flicks. I used to close my eyes
& wait for signals, daylight, *it's ok.*
Saturday matinees. Zombies sometimes, a
mirror for each skull (*no image if you're dead—*
I see my nose, feets do your stuff). & once
a furry claw, emerging from a panel just
above a sleeping woman's head, who woke up
slowly, inch by frozen inch, & finally
shrieked (*o help eeyow*). I mean, if I kept
lids tight, whatever showed would vanish, in
a burst of hammered pulse & dull expectancy,
& I'd be back among the things I knew,
hands in pockets, sockets wide, a smooth
walk to the house I left, & safe,
where face of loss was merely loss of face.

Nils Peterson

My Lecture on Romanticism

And a spirit in my feet
Has borne me—Who knows how?
To thy chamber window, sweet!

—P. B. Shelley

It is spring—a hundred years ago
and I am a freshman at a small Kentucky college.
Air is heavy and sweet and heavy and sweet
is the flesh that hangs about the bones whispering.
The witching hour has come and gone,—the dark
world lingers bewitched, and Doug, my roommate,
has set off to rescue his girl. Also it is fall
a hundred years from then and I am putting
together a lecture on romanticism for the lumbering
course I teach on the history of everything.

Doug was my second roommate that freshman year,
the first had gone off to the Deke house
with the other football players to butt heads,
drink beer, and date the girls with the biggest
boobs, and Doug was a liar, but maybe there was something
about the blank open naive gullible
faces of Purdom and Klell Napps and me
which drove him to it, which made him tell us,
though he wore glasses and was only a little
less scared and skinny than we that he had been
a forest ranger and a paratrooper, or that
the plain brown wrapper he received
each month in the mail was really hot
stuff conceived in the sewers of Paris for men
ready for mature thrills. *Will they,*
can I make them, for God's sake, believe
this?, I imagine him saying to himself,
looking up over coffee at us who

not believing, yes, believed. Looking
for action in the brown envelope he for once
did not lock in his desk, I discovered
the Charles Atlas course whose dynamic
tensions he later admitted performing in the shower
those mornings he cut class which gave him,
as a matter of fact, much time to practice.
He had a guitar and taught me how to play
the three or four chords of which I'm still
confident, though, as it turned out, the reason
his guitar was out all the time was that
its case, stuck in the back of our closet, hid
his gun collection—two rifles, three
pistols, and what looked like about the right
amount of ammunition to take along
when being dropped behind the lines at Pan-
munjon which we had begun to realize might
happen to us. Anyway, as I assemble
my notes on Blake, Wordsworth, and Keats, I think
of him because in the middle of winter he found
and fell in love with the only girl
named Mimi in all of central Kentucky.
Her father was a refugee too, but from Vienna,
not New Jersey or New York
like Doug, my first roommate, and me, and made
his living in some exotic unKentucky
way—breeder of orchids, or analyst, or tracer
of lost persons. She was a lovely girl,
a little stocky, but the owner of a jeep, a genuine
real surplus army jeep which her father
had bought for 200 bucks a couple of years
before and in which she would haul our
unseatbelted asses out
to the lake in the springtime by which time
she had already said goodbye to Doug,
and Doug, although he slept in our room
and ate occasionally at the cafeteria,
had said goodbye to the school to hang out
with the railroad men who sat all night

long swapping yarns around the greasy
tables of the Coffee Cup Cafe where
a dinner of 2 porkchops, french
fries, salad, and unlimited coffee
cost 85 cents. I think
of him now because in that Kentucky
spring—air lovely with lilac, with magnolia,
languorous with the mating of bird, beast, flower,
and upperclassman—he got drunk on the moonshine
that appeared miraculously in old turnip jars
at the dorm, fraternity parties, or the pool halls
that attached limpet-like to the backs of small
restaurants,—and set out to rescue
Mimi from "the base durance and contagious prison"
of the Kentucky College for Women, and, arriving
intact across town, rattled that many-
columned splendor with the bassness of his fine deep
voice calling "Mimi, Mimi, Come down
to me and we will fly away on the wings
of song," and I think of him because then
he started to sing some fine rich romantic
song maybe "Some Enchanted Evening"
while the lights came on again all over the dorm—
And now, a hundred years later, I am
in love with his gesture, with the world and its reason well
lost for love, with the "lyric imagination
asserting itself over brute fact."
I read in my text from Blake "Sooner murder
an infant in its cradle than nurse an unacted
desire," and I remember what Ezio Pinza
advised us all my high school long,
"Then fly to her side and make her your own,
Or all through your life you may dream all alone,"
and so sang my friend Doug to a dorm
full of girls amused, then envious, then cynical,
at last annoyed as he sang on and on
again and again, annoyed as was my roommate
when it became clearer and clearer that Mimi was not
about to come down and fly with him

anywhere. And now whatever this
means to me gets confusing for Doug
broke off in the middle of his 7th or 8th
chorus, stopped for a moment, heard at last
the growing chorus of Southern catcalls,
turned angry, and hollered "Come on down
out of there, Mimi, or I'm going
to come on up and drag you down."
And in the silence—"Gawdamn it, Mimi—
come down," and he pulled from his pocket 2
of the pistols he had gathered from our room
and began waving them in the air. By this
time, the air was filled with catcalls, Deans
of Women, sirens, and police, and Doug, though drunk,
was not so drunk that he did not sling
his pistols under a bush before anyone
quite got to him, and though he spent that night
in the pokey it was for being drunk and disorderly
not for an armed assault on the girl's dorm.

It was not his first night in the hoosegow,
but it was his last as he left by mutual
consent, the school. The night before he went,
we fought. It was the last fight
of my fight-filled youth. He would
not-not fight, so he followed me
as I retreated from room to room. At last
we had at each other in the first floor
lounge, knocking over lamps, rolling over sofas,
tripping over chairs until all of a sudden,
it was enough and we stopped. No one hurt.
No one even bruised much. I never
saw him again, but sometimes when lecturing
on romanticism I wake up in the middle
of the night to the sound of my own voice
having at last found itself—and I
have been standing in front of the girl's dorm and I have
at last been singing my heart out.

Rita Signorelli-Pappas

Fasting Woman

Every morning when my eyes open
I feel my throat slide shut again.
I dream of live Byzantine statues
descending from marble pedestals
like angels swinging their censers—
they keep singing because
they want me to be their queen.

Each time the strangeness
tries to swallow me, you come
and raise a cup of honey to my mouth,
but how can I comply, how can I leave
this cruel, hypnotic paradise,
this wizard's dream in which the cool
abstract lines of my body
speak only of salvation?

I am one of the bad ones—
doomed, giddy, lovesick—
that your amazement still circles
like a blinded dove,
when I walk this borderland
more ghost than woman,
head sequined with willow straw.

Umbrellas in the Rain

After Maurice Prendergast

Only the red ones
can remember love,
the soft dark husk
of burning thunder
cooled to rainbows.
The gray ones
shudder and bump
like odd mollusks.
Homely exiles, they
blind the boulevard
with sudden flocks
of flightless birds.
You see white ones
floating in their
queer tight moons
wishing they were
clean, sheer curtains
swooning into
symphonies of wind.
They are all awkward,
all taut as queens
in satin ruffs. Not
one is comfortable,
especially black ones
bubbled and hushed
in their muffled
domes of loneliness.
The umbrellas huddle,
arched like bridges
marching to the sun,
which turns them
to implements
of cloth and bone—
like passion they are
the first to go.

Sylvia, My Shark

Sylvia, my shark,
with your big eyes
you found a way
to keep following me
down this river.
You are the dark
sandpaper angel
whose lithe falsetto
lifts through my lines
like a cool moonlit fin.
Even now I can feel you
moving behind, passing
in long, slow circles
closer and closer
through the weedy
vibrations of these
whispering words.

Then right away
this poem starts
to change:
the pulse, the pulse
of your gusto
rushes each syllable
awake.
The whole rhythm
starts moving
fast so fast that its
jagged beats
arch and harden
like the smooth spine
of a quick, quiet fish
whose garden of teeth
keeps growing,
whose eyes puff
and double in size—

Sylvia, my shark,
the poem is a loneliness
with no bones in its body.
It swims to survive.

Aspasia

Nude in her balcony
she moves slowly,
knows she is the best
picture in the world.
Her moody pets scatter,
the dull peacock
dragging its glassy
wilderness of eyes.
Her thoughts float
weightless as gulls
in blue air.
She cannot think of him,
not now, not ever,
without the taste
of seafoam
in her mouth.
The stunned dove stares.
A bald greyhound
noses her thighs
and licks her crimson slippers.
A boiled voice calls,
"Aspasia! Name your price!"
Mayflies spiral
in lunatic despair.
Her frizzed hair
sprays like spume
from her satin cap.
The dream dives off
and swims for
midnight. Benumbed,
she drifts inside,
opens the door
to blunt hands
cupping her hips.

The shade knocks
against the window
like a blind man's cane.
Her nipples ravished
into absinthe.
And Pericles gone.

Contributors

Carroll Britch is a professor of drama and English at Springfield College, Massachusetts, where he is also Director of Theatre. He co-edited *Rediscovering Steinbeck: Revisionist Views of His Art, Politics, and Intellect,* published in 1989 by the Edwin Mellen Press of New York.

Leonard J. Cirino, editor and publisher of Pygmy Forest Press, has had poems in a number of journals and anthologies. Kicking Mules Records of Alder Point, California, has listed a 60-minute cassette that features poetry that he wrote during 1987 through July, 1989.

Norah Christianson has been a calligrapher, welder, nanny, high school teacher, and administrative secretary—the post she now holds in Bridgeport, Connecticut. In 1988, the University of Bridgeport presented her with the Academy of Poets John B. Clare Award.

John Ditsky is a poet and a teacher of American literature, modern drama, and creative writing at the University of Windsor, Ontario. His literary criticism has been widely published. He chairs the editorial board of *Steinbeck Quarterly* and is vice president of the International John Steinbeck Society.

Jean M. Emery, freelance journalist and independent scholar, has been a producer, writer, and director for radio and TV for a dozen years. She is now studying for an M.F.A. in creative writing at the University of Montana. Three years ago, her husband and she finished an 18-month bicycle journey around the world.

Mimi R. Gladstein, professor of English at the University of Texas at El Paso, has published on Faulkner, Hemingway, and Steinbeck, as well as on sports and the Mexican novelist Jose Emilio Pacheco. Her Ph.D. is from the University of Mexico.

Tetsumaro Hayashi is Director of the Steinbeck Research Institute of Ball State University, Indiana, where he is a professor of English. Winner of outstanding service awards from the John Steinbeck Foundation of Salinas, California, and the Steinbeck Society of Japan, he has written and edited ten books on Steinbeck and is editor of the *Steinbeck Quarterly.*

Thomas Kretz is writing a history of the Jesuit brothers. The last of his seven books of poetry, *Sifting Every Spadeful,* was published in 1988. He

has been a nurse and a business manager, and he taught school in South America. He commented: "So far I have had more luck publishing than my brother Gerald Manley Hopkins."

F. R. Lewis was a fellow at The Millay Colony for the Arts last spring, where she began work on a novel. Her work has won two awards from the PEN Syndicated Fiction Project. She has recently had stories accepted by *Ascent, Alaska Quarterly Review, Negative Capability,* and *Salmon.*

Neil Myers, Professor of English at Purdue University, has been a student of Zen Buddhism for many years. Sun Moon Press is the publisher of his latest collection of poems, *The Blade of Manjusri.* His poetry has appeared in *Tendril, The Reaper, Kansas Quarterly,* and *Cincinnati Poetry Review,* among others.

Nils Peterson teaches humanities and creative writing at San Jose State University, where he has been a professor since the 60s. A writer of fiction and poetry, he has also published literary criticism, including "Dreams and the 'Poor, Bare, Fork'd Animal,' " which appeared in the Winter, 1989, issue of this journal.

Susan Shillinglaw, associate professor of English at San Jose State University, has been director of the Steinbeck Research Center here for five years. An associate editor of this journal, she holds a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Rita Signorelli-Pappas's poems have appeared in *College English, California Quarterly,* and *The Women's Review of Books.* She has also published fiction and reviews. An instructor of English at Valparaiso University, she holds a B.A. from Douglass College and an M.A. from Rutgers University.

Carole Vopat teaches creative writing, African American women writers, and modern American novel, among other subjects, at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside in Kenosha, where she is an associate professor of English and Women's Studies. She is currently writing a novel whose progress has been supported by three grants from the Wisconsin Arts Board.

Abby H. P. Werlock is an assistant professor of American literature at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota. Among the authors on whom she has written are James Fenimore Cooper, William Faulkner, Tillie Olsen, and Edith Wharton. She holds a doctorate in American Studies from the University of Sussex, United Kingdom.

The interdisciplinary journal of San José State University

San José Studies

announces a special issue

drama, poetry, fiction, essays, art

to be published in 1993

By and About Chicanas y Chicanos: Santa Clara to Monterey Counties

As a refereed journal, *San José Studies* has been sponsored by SJSU since 1975. Inquiries about and orders for the special issue should be addressed to:

The Editor, *San José Studies*
c/o Department of English
San José State University
San José, California 95192

Telephone: (408) 924-4476

San José Studies is published three times a year—winter, spring, and fall. Other recent special issues have been devoted to John Steinbeck's THE GRAPES OF WRATH, to cultural diversity, and to women poets.

Guest editors for this issue will be Professors Roberto P. Haro and Patricia C. Nichols, SJSU.

SJSU SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

San José Studies
One Washington Square
San Jose, California 95192

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
Paid
San Jose, CA
Permit No. 816