

1991

The American family in John Steinbeck's novels

Karen M. Anderson
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Anderson, Karen M., "The American family in John Steinbeck's novels" (1991). *Master's Theses*. 91.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.f5t9-g7n3>
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/91

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

U·M·I

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Order Number 1344237

The American family in John Steinbeck's novels

Anderson, Karen Margretta, M.A.

San Jose State University, 1991

U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

THE AMERICAN FAMILY
IN JOHN STEINBECK'S NOVELS

A Research Paper
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
San Jose State University

In partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
Karen M. Anderson

May, 1991

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Elsie Leach

Dr. Elsie Leach

Susan Shillinglaw

Dr. Susan Shillinglaw

Scott Rice

Dr. Scott Rice

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

M. Lou Lewandowski

ABSTRACT
THE AMERICAN FAMILY
IN JOHN STEINBECK'S NOVELS
by Karen M. Anderson

This thesis, concentrating upon five novels, To a God Unknown, The Pastures of Heaven, The Grapes of Wrath, East of Eden, and The Winter of Our Discontent, and one non-fiction work, America and Americans, traces Steinbeck's portrayal of the American family. In his novels, Steinbeck consistently broke the stereotype of the typical American family as he wrote about weak, ineffective patriarchs and strong, knowledgeable wives, and about the subsequent destruction of the family.

As a microcosm of the entire American social structure, his fictional families represents factions within society, and the issues of the family represent those larger issues facing America. Steinbeck portrays the destruction of all his families to show his fear that the American society is collapsing. However, he provides a metamorphosis in the form of a new philosophy, or even of a new family, to show his hope that it is not too late for reform.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1	The Role of the Family in Steinbeck's Novels	1
Chapter 2	The Role of the Patriarch	20
Chapter 3	The Role of the Matriarch	57
Chapter 4	The Metamorphosis of the Family	90
	Works Cited	124

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my advisors for their participation in this project; without their help this thesis would never have come to fruition. Elsie Leach encouraged me, counseled me, and patiently listened to my problems. Susan Shillinglaw urged me to expand my insight further than I ever believed I could. Scott Rice showed me how my simple sentences could become rhetorical statements. Another professor who deserves thanks is Carolyn Walker, whose teaching greatly expanded my knowledge of John Steinbeck's works.

In addition, I thank my family who also contributed this project. My husband's deep and abiding faith in my abilities, and his great patience while I was absorbed in work furnished that extra support that I needed. And lastly, I thank my mother and father, who always served as role models to show me the value of education.

Chapter 1

The Role of the Family in Steinbeck's Novels

Everyone wants to have a family. Maybe I can create a universal family living next to a universal neighbor. This should not be impossible. John Steinbeck, Journal of a Novel

Although John Steinbeck wrote of his desire to create a universal family as he was writing East of Eden in 1951, he had already created many universal families--the Waynes, the Tiflins, and the Joads, just to mention a few. Jackson J. Benson in The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer, notes that "much of Steinbeck's fiction deals with the family--relations between husband and wife, parents and children" (11). The family is, indeed, the foundation for many of Steinbeck's novels. However, the families that he writes about do not fit the stereotype of the typical American family with a strong, effective patriarch who ably defends his family against all harm; a weak, docile wife who submissively follows her husband; an obedient, well trained son; and a pampered, protected daughter. Instead, he writes about weak, ineffective patriarchs and strong, knowledgeable wives, and about the subsequent destruction of the family in order to portray the problems which beset America and the metamorphosis that is necessary for the survival of the American way of life. The only stereotypes that he did follow were those of the well-trained son and the protected daughter. Consistently throughout his career he undercut the stereotype to write about families as he saw them, not as

people wished them to be. The readers of Steinbeck's novels can always rely upon the same scenario for the family. In his novels the family always struggles towards a particular goal or dream, usually one set by the father, and that quest exposes the entire family to situations which are so harmful that the family is eventually destroyed.

Steinbeck used the family in his novels not only in its function as the basic unit of society, but also as a microcosm for the entire American social structure. In the Journal of a Novel he kept while writing East of Eden he explained that "this is not a story about the Trasks but about the whole Valley which I am using as a microcosm of the whole nation" (65). However, not only in East of Eden, but in all of his novels, he used his families as a microcosm of the whole nation. As an acute observer of the human condition, Steinbeck wrote about the family to show the American experience as it really is, hoping to expose the problems that exist so that others might understand the misconceptions, the mistakes, and the distortions rampant in America.

In order to see how Steinbeck consistently portrays the American family in decline, this paper will concentrate upon five representative novels written throughout Steinbeck's long career. These novels, which include works from each stage of his career, were chosen because in each the family serves as an integral part of its theme. The earliest, To a God Unknown, was begun in 1928, but not published until 1933. The next, The Pastures of Heaven, was published in 1932, before To a God Unknown. The third novel, The Grapes of Wrath, was published in 1939. The fourth is East of Eden, written twelve years later and published in 1952. And

finally his last novel, The Winter of Our Discontent, was published in 1961.

Using the family as a microcosm for the entire American social structure, these novels show Steinbeck's continual concern for the American way of life. However, in 1966 near the end of his career, his deepening concern prompted him to write a non-fiction work, America and Americans, which clearly elucidates the specific concerns that he had explored less explicitly in his novels. It is here in this book that he directly writes his own opinions about the American way of life and the problems that modern America faces. Therefore, America and Americans can be used to gain a deeper understanding of Steinbeck's entire career, particularly his abiding concern for the people and their values. Richard F. Peterson notes, "America and Americans represents Steinbeck's examination of American life for evidence of the movement and adaptability which are necessary for survival even if that search may uncover the stagnation and entropy that means death for the organism" (6).

Although Steinbeck created many universal families, very little has been written about them. Any mention of the family is usually of a particular family in a particular novel, and the focus is upon an issue other than the family itself. For example, the Joad family usually receives a good deal of attention in any study of The Grapes of Wrath, but the focus is rarely upon the function of the family itself in the novel. However, a few relevant articles have been written, most notably, "The Enduring Power of the Joads" by Donald Pizer and "Growth of the Family in The

Grapes of Wrath" by Carroll Britch and Cliff Lewis. Pizer concludes that although Steinbeck would have wished that The Grapes of Wrath be remembered for its social message, "it is the Joads themselves who are the source of the enduring power of the novel" (98). Britch and Cliff argue that the Joad family has not broken up, but rather it has "restructured itself to meet the challenge of new life in changing times" (107). Although these two do focus directly upon the family, they nevertheless restrict themselves to one family in one novel.

Some recent studies focus upon the role of women in Steinbeck's novels. One of these is The Indestructible Woman in Faulkner, Hemingway, and Steinbeck by Mimi Reisel Gladstein, who finds similar characterizations of indestructible women in these three authors' novels. Another, "A Study of Female Characterization in Steinbeck's Fiction" by Sandra Beatty, concludes that although male characters dominate Steinbeck's fiction, the women "contribute in a positive way to the impact and worth of Steinbeck's novels" (5). A third by Marilyn L. Mitchell, "Steinbeck's Strong Women: Feminine Identity in the Short Stories," notes that Elisa Allen in "The Chrysanthemums" and Mary Teller in "The White Quail" are both able to "express themselves meaningfully within the narrow possibilities open to women in a man's world" (91). However, while these works are very relevant to any study of the family, they do not focus upon the entire family.

At the literal level Steinbeck wrote about the family as the foundation upon which all society rests. He realized that it is the family which produces the members of society and if that family is weak and produces

flawed offspring, society will suffer. However, Steinbeck saw the basic unit of society tottering and ineffectively operating with mores and expectations of a bygone era, unable to cope with twentieth-century needs. To illustrate outmoded mores, he portrayed families led by ineffective patriarchs who held their position of leadership from custom rather than ability. To illustrate outmoded expectations, he portrayed families relying upon outmoded practices; for example, in To a God Unknown Joseph Wayne offers sacrifices to insure the fertility of the land.

Another problem facing Steinbeck's families is that the patriarchs are weak and ineffective leaders. One indication of the patriarch's ineffectuality is that he is a farmer or a shopkeeper who deals with the produce of the land, occupational roles which relate more to an earlier generation than to the generation in which Steinbeck was writing. The patriarch's focus upon farming prevents him from understanding the complexities of modern society based upon industry rather than agriculture.

Another reason the patriarch is ineffective is that he has obsolescent expectations. Steinbeck shows these expectations by portraying the patriarch as an ardent follower of the American Dream. Louis Owens notes:

Throughout his career, Steinbeck was obsessed with America as a subject. The myths deeply ingrained in our national consciousness and the patterns of thought that have carried us from wilderness to world power appear again and again in Steinbeck's writing, not only in such obvious studies of the

nation as America and Americans or Travels with Charley, but also throughout the novels. (Trouble 50)

The American Dream that Steinbeck writes about evolved from man's earliest dreams of the existence of a utopia, and this dream seemed to be fulfilled by the discovery of America. David Madden in American Dreams, American Nightmares explores how this dream came about and notes its complexity:

Compared with other national dreams the American Dream is unique because the settlers, fleeing the nightmare of European history, made, in the name of all Western man, a new beginning in a new Garden of Eden; thus "Americans became the heirs of all civilizations." There has never been a purely American Dream, because in the beginning all Europe lay down in "the American Dream bed" and dreamed universal dreams. To old bitch Europe, the new continent was a fountain of youth. In Virgin Wilderness, where all things seemed possible, the New Adam could recreate his lost paradise by the sweat of his brow. In his Brave New World, the young American Adam did indeed transform the Great American Desert into the Garden of the World. (xviii)

The writings of the American Puritan writers, J. Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, James Fenimore Cooper and others have helped not only to promote the idea of the American Dream, but to assure its persistence in the American psyche.

Steinbeck believed that while the American Dream may once have been valid, it no longer applies because there are no guarantees that the West can offer any more opportunities than any other place; furthermore, he believed that each person must assume responsibility for individual success or failure. To illustrate the obsolescence of the dream, Steinbeck depicts his patriarchs questing after the American Dream and finding that the West is not the Eden they had expected. Charles R. Hearn in The American Dream in the Great Depression notes a similar trend among the major novelists writing during the Depression:

Among the major novelists and playwrights of the Depression years, disillusionment with the traditional American dream of personal success was thoroughgoing and profound. . . . Many writers of the Depression decade who attacked the myth of success did so not only because of its bourgeois shoddiness and its hollow, materialistic content, but also because of the dangers inherent in the idealism, the hopefulness, and the desire which have always been at the heart of the American dream. (196-97)

Each of Steinbeck's patriarchs is so obsessed with the American Dream that he focuses his life around a self-centered script which he himself creates. In this script he defines the character of his wife and children while he plays the part of the patriarch upon whose strength they depend. He then writes the plot focusing upon some future goal around which the action will pivot. Usually he even prescribes the setting. John H. Timmerman notes, "Humans will dream, he [Steinbeck] insists, and

almost invariably that dream will cast them into conflict with social standards" (Dramatic 97).

Another weakness of Steinbeck's patriarchs emerges in their inability to solve the problems facing the family. These problems result from both outside pressures and internal struggles. The patriarchs typically ignore the problems or apply solutions which are outmoded and ineffective. So, overall, Steinbeck portrays incompetent patriarchs.

Although Steinbeck's patriarchs are weak and ineffective, they retain the leadership of their families. Even though their wives recognize their husbands' faults, they do not assume the leadership because of their respect for their husbands. Even Rama Wayne, who rules over her husband, accepts the leadership of her brother-in-law, Joseph Wayne. Occasionally in times of stress the wife may temporarily lead the family, but she always returns leadership to the patriarch. However, since the patriarch is a weak and ineffective leader, his wife's role assumes greater importance as the family frequently must rely upon her strength.

Therefore her role in this study of the family is extremely important. Unfortunately, no word in the English language effectively describes this role. To call her "wife" neglects her role as a mother and as a homemaker, and "mother" or "homemaker" are equally limiting. Other terms-- chatelaine, materfamilias, or housewife--are no better. The one broad term which is all-encompassing and gives the role the importance it demands is "matriarch"; however, this term indicates that the family is a matriarchy, rather than a patriarchy, which is not the configuration of Steinbeck's families. Warren Motley in "From Patriarchy to Matriarchy:

Ma Joad's Role in The Grapes of Wrath" comments on this same problem, "Unfortunately, matriarchy is an awkward term; . . . to most people it erroneously connotes a topsy-turvy, Amazonian patriarchy in which 'women exercise a domination over the men similar or equivalent to that exercised by the men over the women in a patriarchal social order'" (398). Although none of the previously mentioned terms is entirely satisfactory, it is absolutely necessary to use a specific term in order to discuss successfully this role in the family. Therefore, in this paper "matriarch" will be used in most of its senses--wife, mother, homemaker, chatelaine, materfamilias--but it does not indicate that this woman is the ruler or leader of her family or that these families are matriarchies, unless otherwise indicated.

Steinbeck's matriarchs are the realists who live in the present, recognizing and handling day-to-day problems. While pragmatism asserts itself most obviously in their homemaking skills, it also expresses itself in their roles as nurturers of both their children and their husbands. Although most appear weak and dependent upon their husbands, they actually possess an inner strength that enables them to withstand stress better than their husbands. Furthermore, they command an inner wisdom, an intuitive sense that men lack which helps them not only to understand their biological processes, but also to understand their husbands and children. These skills also help them to recognize the folly of their husbands' dreams. Steinbeck believed that the only reason the family survives at all is that the matriarch is able to recognize present needs, using her strength to bolster the family in times of stress. Nellie Y. McKay

explains, "In times of crisis, Steinbeck suggests, the survival of the family and, by extension, the social order, depends on the wisdom and strength of the mother, whose interests are always those of her husband and children" (64).

Steinbeck consistently portrays the patriarch as a figure rendered ineffectual by his quest after the American Dream, while the matriarch compensates by using her inner strength and knowledge to handle the day-to-day problems. In To a God Unknown, as Joseph Wayne is out rutting in the fields, Elizabeth is busy learning the secrets of homemaking; in The Pastures of Heaven John Whiteside reads to an uncomprehending son, while Willa recognizes that Bill does not share his father's values; in The Grapes of Wrath while Pa Joad is dreaming about the farm in Oklahoma, Ma faces up to the needs of a starving family; in East of Eden while Samuel Hamilton is planning new inventions, Liza is keeping "the Hamiltons out of the poorhouse" (432); and in The Winter of Our Discontent while Ethan Hawley is out in his cave communing with his ancestors, Mary deals with community antagonism. These examples indicate that Steinbeck rejected the patriarchs' values and affirmed those of the matriarchs.

Steinbeck did preserve the stereotype of a well-trained son and a protected daughter. Most of his patriarchs strictly train their sons, teaching them their values, standards, and expectations. On the other hand, they pamper their daughters, protecting them from any knowledge of the world. These practices seem incongruous with Steinbeck's portrayal of adult men and women. How does a strictly trained son become a dreamer, or a pampered, protected daughter become a strong, wise matriarch?

Although Steinbeck was able to put aside the stereotype when writing about adult roles, he was unable to put aside his own upbringing and societal expectations concerning the role of children.

In showing the destruction of every family, Steinbeck strongly debunked the notion that "they all live happily ever after." This destruction reveals the price of the metamorphosis that he believed America was currently enduring. In a literal metamorphosis, the caterpillar must be destroyed before the butterfly can be released; in the same way, Steinbeck destroys the old family so that the new can take its place. The families are destroyed because of outmoded expectations and invalid solutions; actually, a chain of events conspires to destroy the families: a weak patriarchy, strong self interest, outside intervention, and obsolete solutions to their many problems. Rather than any single factor, it is an accumulation of factors which is responsible their destruction.

However, Steinbeck saw a hope for the future. While his emphasis upon non-teleological thinking in his earliest novels prevented him from making a specific prediction for the future, he nevertheless offered clues which suggest the philosophy which should replace the discarded one. However, his later novels do provide evidence of a new family which will rise out of the destruction of the old, but even in these he does not specifically identify the new family, leaving the reader to make his own hypothesis. Warren French comments on this concept in The Grapes of Wrath: "The solution of this problem he leaves squarely to the conscience of the reader, as he should, since a novel is art--an ordering of reality--and not a sociological prescription" (John Steinbeck 101).

A recognition that Steinbeck destroys all his families and then provides a metamorphosis helps to clarify the somewhat difficult endings in his novels. He closes each with a dramatic scene which is not so much a conclusion as it is a seminal event which suggests his hope for the future. Benson explains how these conclusions were typical of Steinbeck's way of thinking: "He was unable to see situations as having resolutions--to him, life and the difficulties of life were ongoing (. . . for example, the ending of The Grapes of Wrath)" (True Adventures 181). So while Steinbeck never resolves the situations, he does provide an event which suggests a dramatic change.

Although the literal interpretation of the family is important, Steinbeck's primary message comes at a higher level. As a microcosm of the entire American social structure, the family represents factions within society, and the issues of the family represent those larger issues facing America. Hence, the destruction of the family represents Steinbeck's fear that the American way of life itself will be destroyed. And finally, in the philosophy or the new family which rises out of the destruction, he expresses his hope for the future.

The last line of the following quotation from America and Americans contains the real key to understanding Steinbeck's portrayal of the American people:

If I inspect my people and study them and criticize them, I must love them if I have any self-love, since I can never be separate from them and can be no more objective about them than I am about myself. . . . Perhaps my questioning is

compounded of some fear, more hope, and great confidence.

(142)

Steinbeck's "fear" is that American society is crumbling and may fall; his "hope" is that it is not too late for Americans to see their errors and that they can reconstitute their system; and his "great confidence" comes from his observation that Americans have learned from their past mistakes and have made appropriate changes, so they should be able to continue to improve in the future. In his Nobel acceptance speech he explains his duty as a writer:

The ancient commission of the writer has not changed. He is charged with exposing our many grievous faults and failures, with dredging up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams, for the purpose of improvement. (8)

Using the family as a microcosm to illustrate these concepts, he shows his "fear" by exposing the problems of the family which lead to its ultimate destruction. His belief that "we struggle with our lives in the present and our practices in the long and well-learned past. . . . We have not had time to learn inside ourselves the things that have happened to us" shows that he feared that the American society is collapsing because the traditional agrarian ways of life and values which served our ancestors so well are no longer relevant in an industrialized society (America 141). In America and Americans he suggests a few of these problems:

Part of our existence has leaped ahead, and a part has lagged behind, because the problems have not been faced as problems,

and the mores have not kept up with methods and techniques.
(105)

Perhaps the urge toward happiness has taken the place of the
urge toward food and warmth and shelter. (136)

Those codes of conduct we call morals were evolved for this
thinly inhabited continent when a man's life was important
because he was rare and he was needed. Women were
protected to the point of worship because only they could bear
children to continue the race. . . . Every pursuit, no matter
what its stated end, had as its foundation purpose, survival,
growth, and renewal. (141)

To expose these outmoded concepts he portrays his families applying
outmoded solutions to twentieth-century problems.

Steinbeck explains why he believed America was on the verge of
collapse:

And it is historically true that a nation whose people take out
more than they put in will collapse and disappear.

Why are we on this verge of moral and hence nervous
collapse? One can only have an opinion based on observations
plus a reading of history. I believe it is because we have
reached the end of a road and have no new path to take, no
duty to carry out, and no purpose to fulfill. . . .

I have named the destroyers of nations: comfort, plenty, and
security. . . . A dying people tolerates the present, rejects the
future, and finds its satisfactions in past greatness and half-

remembered glory. (America 140,143)

Although he wrote these words in 1966, he had long believed that the world was on the verge of collapse. In 1952 in East of Eden he wrote, "There is great tension in the world, tension toward a breaking point" (171). And in a letter to Carlton A. Sheffield, written in 1931, he had voiced similar sentiments: "The world seems to be crumbling. It's about time. The old values were worn pretty thin" (Benson, True Adventures 217). Benson, writing about Steinbeck's attitudes in the late thirties, notes, "For several years, as we have seen in his letters to Albee and others, Steinbeck had expressed the belief that the country was undergoing a kind of revolution" (True Adventures 386).

Steinbeck's "hope" lies in his characters changing their philosophies, leaving behind the outmoded "codes of conduct" and replacing them with rules adjusted to a twentieth-century lifestyle. Although he did show the destruction of all his families, he did not reject all social amenities and cry for anarchy. Rather, he believed we need to reexamine our beliefs and practices, throwing out those which are obsolete and replacing them with beliefs and practices which will serve our current society. He wanted to reform all institutions, not destroy them. French notes, "He did not argue against the existing system, but argued rather that, since its evils were extensive, it must be overhauled. . . . The important point is, that to be understood, Steinbeck must be read as a reformer, not a revolutionary" (John Steinbeck 97-98). However, Steinbeck did not specifically identify those needed reforms because he believed, "[t]he roads of the past have

come to an end and we have not yet discovered a path to the future" (America 142).

Although Steinbeck consistently saw a need for a change of philosophy, the changes that he advocated were not consistent. In his early novels, he particularly stressed non-teleological thinking and pragmatism. While he never repudiated these philosophies, he gave them less emphasis in The Grapes of Wrath and his later books. Group consciousness and his phalanx theory, which explains the expanded capacities of the individual when he becomes part of a phalanx, are the primary thrust of The Grapes of Wrath; however, he rejected this philosophy and advocated self-determinism and individual responsibility in East of Eden and The Winter of Our Discontent.

Steinbeck's "great confidence" is in his readers' ability to understand how the failures of the past can point the way to a better future. Timmerman notes, "The fictional world, Steinbeck claims, can have a greater reality for the reader than anything he might experience in his own world" (Aesthetics 8). In a letter to Pascal Covici, Steinbeck explains the responsibility for the readers of The Grapes of Wrath:

I know that books lead to a strong deep climax. This one doesn't except by implication and the reader must bring the implication to it. . . . Throughout I've tried to make the reader participate in the actuality, what he takes from it will be scaled entirely on his own depth or hollowness. There are five layers in this book, a reader will find as many as he can and he won't find more than he has in himself. (Letters 178-79)

Therefore Steinbeck closes his novels with a scene which provides the clues to his hope for the future, but his readers must interpret it for themselves.

Steinbeck's consistent portrayal of the American family is especially remarkable since he is noted for his diversity of themes, styles, and philosophies. Steinbeck believed that "if a writer likes to write he will find satisfaction in endless experimentations with his medium. ("Critics, Critics Burning Bright" 20). So, a very general statement about Steinbeck's overall career would be that he was constantly exploring new materials and new ways to present them. Timmerman suggests that "his work is as varied as the life he observed" (Aesthetics 270). Nevertheless, even though Steinbeck experimented with his materials, his basic portrayal of the American family remained consistent throughout his entire career. It remained consistent because the family in all his novels carries his message to the American people that the American way of life is in danger and changes are needed.

One pattern of development which is relevant to this study, however, is that as his career progressed his characters become more realistic and lifelike. The significance for this study is that it will concentrate upon the actions of the family members even though they may be symbolically rather than realistically portrayed. A brief description of this pattern of development in Steinbeck's characters should provide a background for the novels of this in-depth study. About To a God Unknown French writes, "The novel is incomprehensible in realistic terms unless one supposes that the principal characters suffer from hallucinations" (John Steinbeck 47). Owens explains Steinbeck's own attitude toward these characters:

The failure of this first California novel--its wooden characterization and naïvely heavy-handed symbolism--is defined in Steinbeck's own description of its characters. In discussing these characters in a letter to his publisher, Robert O. Ballou, Steinbeck said, "They make no more attempt at being sincerely human than the people in the Iliad. . . . The detailed accounts of the lives of clerks don't interest me much, unless, of course the clerk breaks into heroism."

(Revision 28)

Although many of the characters in The Pastures of Heaven remain symbol characters, they are far more human than those in the previous novel. And in The Grapes of Wrath Steinbeck acutely depicts the many foibles of a real family, as Donald Pizer has noted: "[I]t is the Joads themselves who are the source of the enduring power of the novel" (98). In East of Eden Steinbeck concentrates even more directly upon his characters. Peter Lisca argues that "for the first time . . . Steinbeck is concerned with his characters primarily as individuals who exist and have importance apart from the materials of his novel, for it is through them rather than through structure and language that he tries to establish his theme" (Wide World 273). And finally, in The Winter of Our Discontent Steinbeck examines the inner consciousness of his characters. Owens suggests, "Ethan, far more than any previous Steinbeck character, transcends the role of what Steinbeck earlier termed 'symbol-people' and becomes fully human with all of the personal agony that entails" (Revision 199). His symbol people of the early novels carried his message, but did not react realistically with

other family members, whereas his later family members do realistically interact with each other. As Steinbeck's characters become more fully developed, there emerges a greater depth of relationships among family members. Nevertheless, although his later novels develop the basic pattern of the family in greater detail, the makeup of the family and its message remain consistent with those in his earlier novels.

Since Steinbeck's families are patriarchies, this study will begin with the patriarch, defining his role in the family, examining his dreams, and his relationship to his wife and children. The following chapter will define the role of the matriarch, examining her hidden strength, her inner knowledge, her relationship to her husband and children, and her most important role--to provide the stability and strength upon which the family depends. And finally the last chapter will focus upon the destruction and metamorphosis of the family: why the family is destroyed, the causes of destruction, the new philosophy or family which develops from the old, and the significance of this metamorphosis.

Chapter 2

The Role of the Patriarch in the Family

Steinbeck's patriarchs differ from his other male characters. While many critics have noted a dichotomy in his women, who "seem compelled to choose between homemaking and whoredom" (Lisca, Wide World 207), none has noted a similar dichotomy among his men. And yet, there is such a dichotomy between Steinbeck's patriarchs and his single men. The patriarchs are diligent, serious, faithful men who either occupy positions of respect in the community or work towards gaining that respect. While this trait is obvious in most, it is implicit in the others; for instance, Pa Joad is a respected member of the community in Oklahoma, and Adam Trask serves the community as a member of the draft board. Steinbeck's single men, on the other hand, have dropped out of main-stream society. This is true whether they are hard working men, like Charles Trask or Pat Humbert, who work to hide their loneliness, or whether they are paisanos or hangers-on who hustle to keep alive.

Probably the most important clue to the difference between Steinbeck's single men and his married men is that while the married men have placed a great deal of emphasis upon the choice of a home, the single men live in shacks, or on the street, or in one cramped room. In some of his novels, especially Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row, Steinbeck seems to romanticize the single life, yet his strong sympathy toward the institution of marriage emerges in these novels about families. This conviction is further supported by his portrayal in our five novels by the young men--

Joseph Wayne, Richard and John Whiteside, and Adam Trask--who yearn to get married and have children. Steinbeck seems to view marriage as a major change in a man's lifestyle: before marriage he is responsible only to himself, but after marriage he takes on not only the responsibility of a wife, but the community as well.

Steinbeck's patriarchs are the leaders of their families. Steinbeck always shows respect for the patriarchy, and though he destroys the family, he does not destroy the patriarchy. Although he does portray Rama Wayne as a true matriarch (using the word in its usual sense) who subjugates her husband, she does show respect for the patriarchy of her brother-in-law, Joseph. Even in those few instances when the matriarch assumes leadership, there is always the implicit understanding that she will lead the family only temporarily through a particular hardship and then return the patriarch to leadership. In The Pastures of Heaven, when Katherine Wicks takes over the leadership, Steinbeck clearly states that her power is only temporary: "[A]s he [Ed Wicks] looked, her genius passed into him. . . . She was frightened now the power was leaving her. Suddenly Shark sat up on the bed. He had forgotten Katherine, but his eyes shone with the energy she had given him" (43). Steinbeck is less explicit in The Grapes of Wrath. Although Ma has undoubtedly taken over, Pa still exhibits his capacity for leadership as he plans and constructs the dirt bank to keep out the water; furthermore, his sarcastic comment to her as they flee into the rain, "'You ain't said where-at we're a-hurryin' to'" (577), is certainly not submissive. While the issue is not as clearly defined for the Joads as it is for the Wicks, Steinbeck certainly indicates that Pa "ain't beat" (453). These examples

show that although Steinbeck believed women may be better equipped for leadership than are the men, he never suggests that patriarchy should be traded for matriarchy.

Another important fact about the patriarchs is that they are all farmers or shopkeepers who deal with the produce of the land. Although some of them derive income from other means, such as Adam Trask, who inherited wealth from his father, and Samuel Hamilton, who supplements the meager returns from his farm with blacksmithing and well drilling, the primary occupation of these men is one which relates more to an earlier generation than to the generation in which Steinbeck was writing. These traditional occupations are one indication of families struggling with "lives in the present" with practices from "the long and well-learned past," as Steinbeck noted in America and Americans (141). These occupations also tie the patriarchs into a relationship with the land.

Furthermore the patriarchs are all dreamers, a characteristic that Steinbeck observed in the American people:

Americans seem to live and breathe and function by paradox; but in nothing are we so paradoxical as in our passionate belief in our own myths. . . . One of the characteristics most puzzling to a foreign observer is the strong and imperishable dream the American carries. On inspection, it is found that the dream has little to do with reality in American life.

(America 30)

Frederic I. Carpenter in "John Steinbeck: American Dreamer" sees the American dream as the primary focus of Steinbeck's writing:

Steinbeck has been astonishingly consistent. A single purpose has directed his experimentation, a single idea has guided his literary thought. Always his fiction has described the interplay of dream and reality; his thought has followed the development of the American dream. (68)

While the American Dream is made up of a complex set of myths, as previously noted, one very important part of the myth is that man has an inherent bond to the land. In one of the intercalary chapter in The Grapes of Wrath Steinbeck identifies this need:

If a man owns a little property, that property is him, it's part of him, and it's like him. If he owns property only so he can walk on it and handle it and be sad when it isn't doing well, and feel fine when the rain falls on it, that property is him, and some way he's bigger because he owns it. (48)

The heart of this quotation lies in its description of the symbiotic relationship between the man and his land: man cannot survive if his tie to the land is broken. Roy S. Simmonds has recognized this recurring theme in Steinbeck's works:

The vast majority of Steinbeck's male characters . . . hunger for and identify themselves with the land and the productive soil. . . . The irresistible need felt by man to own his little plot of land, put down roots into the earth and identify himself with--and, as it were, merge into--his natural surroundings manifests itself directly or indirectly. (6-7)

While this does not seem to fit the conventional notion of a myth or a

dream, in actuality it is a type of myth because of the enormous bond that develops between the patriarch and his land. He comes to believe that he is a part of that land and cannot survive if separated from it.

Closely allied to this dream is the westering myth with California as the goal of the quest for a new Garden of Eden. All of Steinbeck's fiction relates to the westering myth which Owens describes as "the archetypal American quest which began beyond the Atlantic and ended only at the edge of the Pacific" (Revision 5). Even though The Winter of Our Discontent is set in New York, it too relates to the westering myth as Ethan's Puritan ancestors came west across the Atlantic so that they might realize the American Dream. Owens explains:

Poised on the edge of the continent, at the end of what had for centuries seemed an endless unraveling of new world, Steinbeck undertakes a careful, painstaking examination of the land that constitutes this supposed Eden, of the land's effects on those who inhabit it, and of the myth that Americans have pursued across a continent. Involved in this examination is the most scrupulous study offered in American literature of the values imparted by the quest for an illusory Promised Land.

(Revision 5)

In order to illustrate the persistence of the myth, Steinbeck portrays each of his patriarchs as firmly believing that in the West he will achieve the American Dream.

As dreamers, Steinbeck's patriarchs are so consumed by their dreams that they view their family almost solely in terms of their dreams. All of

them, to some extent, see their wives instrumentally as someone who will help fulfill their dreams; consequently, they do not clearly understand them as real persons. Since the patriarchs understand their own creations better than their real wives, they are often mystified by the real women. Richard Whitesides's comment about his wife is an example:

Alicia was smiling a peculiar enigmatic smile that puzzled him. No matter how well he became acquainted with her, this smile, a little quizzical, a trifle sad, and filled with secret wisdom shut him out of her thoughts. She retired behind the smile. It said, "How silly you are. I know things which would make your knowledge seem ridiculous if I chose to tell you."

(Pastures 198)

Although most of the patriarchs do not fully understand their wives, they realize that the women have an inner strength that they themselves lack. Sandra Falkenberg notes, "Their husbands are quick to recognize this strength in their wives, especially in their own times of uncertainty and weakness" (52).

The patriarchs also interpret their children in terms of their dreams; hence, they do not understand them either. Furthermore, they lose contact with their children because they leave the day-to-day care of the children to their wives. However, most patriarchs do feel responsible for the moral training of their sons and are fiercely protective of their daughters. As previously noted, the patriarchs seem to believe that sons should be prepared to take their place in the world, while daughters should be

protected from any knowledge of that world. In his depiction of child rearing practices Steinbeck was not as objective as in his other portrayals.

To summarize the general characteristics of Steinbeck's patriarchs: they have an occupation close to the land, they are dreamers, they do not fully understand their wives and children, and while they are the leaders of their families, their leadership is weak. Overall, Steinbeck's portrayal of the patriarch is very unfavorable as he seemed to be very critical of their value system. A chronological examination of the patriarchs in these five Steinbeck novels will show these characteristics and how Steinbeck uses the patriarch to relay his message to the American people.

To A God Unknown¹

In the first novel of this study, To a God Unknown, Steinbeck relates the experiences of four brothers as they each search for their own "god unknown": Joseph found his god in the land; Thomas found it in the animals; for Burton, it was the Church; and for Benjamin, hedonism. However, Joseph and Thomas most clearly elucidate Steinbeck's message concerning the role of the patriarch.

Joseph Wayne is obsessed with his relationship to his land; in fact, he is so closely tied to the land that he believes "[f]or a moment the land had been his wife" (8). Furthermore, these "moments" recur again and again as "Joseph walked in sometimes with grass-blades in the laces of his shoes and green grass stains on the knees of his jeans and sweat still shining on

¹ John Steinbeck, To a God Unknown (New York: Penguin, 1985). All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.

his forehead" (96-97). His obsession with the land comes from the blessing he received from his father, John:

"Come to me, Joseph. Put your hand here--no, here. My father did it this way. A custom so old cannot be wrong. Now, leave your hand there!" He bowed his white head, "May the blessing of God and my blessing rest on this child. May he live in the light of the Face. May he love his life." (3)

The most one can say about this blessing is that its roots go back to antiquity, but other than that, it makes no specific promises. However, Joseph interprets it to give him the same powers the Old Testament Joseph received from his father's blessing:

By the power of the Mighty One of Jacob,
 by the Name of the Stone of Israel,
 the God of your father who assists you,
 El Shaddai who blesses you:
 blessings of heaven above,
 blessings of the deep lying below,
 blessings of the breasts and womb,
 blessings of the grain and flowers,
 blessings of the eternal mountains,
 bounty of the everlasting hills--
 may they descend on Joseph's head,
 on the crown of the one dedicated from among his brothers!

Genesis 49:24-26

Obviously this blessing delivers upon its recipient power over all of nature,

and this is the blessing that Joseph believes he has received because of the parallels between himself and the Biblical Joseph. Therefore, he believes he is personally responsible for the fertility of the farm as "[a]ll things about him, the soil, the cattle and the people were fertile, and Joseph was the source, the root of their fertility; his was the motivating lust. He willed that all things about him must grow, grow quickly, conceive and multiply" (22).

Joseph never wavers in his belief even though no one else accepts it. His wife ridicules him: "Don't play your game too hard, Joseph. Don't let the game take you in" (116); his friend Juanito tells him, "You are not well, señor" (164); Father Angelo warns, "Your body is ill, and your soul is ill" (172); and his brother, Burton cautions, "I am begging you to give up this thing. . . . All of us will be in ruin. . . . I'm trying to protect all of us" (111-12). Burton's warning indicates that Joseph is no longer able to combine the responsibilities of both the family and the land because he is so obsessed that he cannot think about his family except in relationship to appeasing the land. Not only is Steinbeck showing someone so obsessed with power that he refuses to listen to any suggestion that he is misinterpreting the situation, but he is also showing us someone who has passed over the dividing line from sanity to insanity. Evidence for this reading comes from a letter from Steinbeck to Ted Miller: "I hope the thing [To a God Unknown] doesn't read like a case history in an insane asylum. . . . After my careful work in filling the book with hidden symptoms of paranoia and showing that the disease had such a hold as to be

incurable [W]ith the ailment gone as far as it had, he [Joseph] must turn suicide or homicidal maniac" (Benson, True Adventures 171).

While Joseph is obsessed with the land, his brother, Thomas, is almost as obsessed with animals. Steinbeck describes Thomas as having "a strong kinship with all kinds of animals . . . but humans he neither understood nor trusted very much" (19). When the drought threatens the family, Joseph chooses to stay with the land and Thomas chooses to stay with the animals. In Thomas we see a bond, not between himself and the land, but a bond between himself and animals, which are just another aspect of nature. In portraying Thomas's obsession with animals, Steinbeck shows how easily one can lose contact with humanity, whether by preoccupation with animals, or with the land, or with anything else.

Furthermore, because all the other husbands in Steinbeck novels are leaders in their families, it is important to note that Thomas is not the leader of his family. However, the reason for this is that Rama, in her role as Earth Mother, exerts "a goddesslike authority over all within her domain," as Mimi Reisel Gladstein notes ("Indestructible" 97). So although Steinbeck portrays Thomas as being subservient to his wife, it is not through any personal lack, but through his role as husband to the Earth Mother.

While Thomas is ruled by his wife, Joseph, on the other hand, sees himself firmly in control of his family. However, he is so obsessed by the land that he views his wife and son only in relationship to the land. In fact, his only apparent reason for getting married is to contribute personally to the fertility he saw around him, as he admits: "Everything on the land is

reproducing. I am the only sterile thing. I need a wife" (23). Joseph Wayne's love for his wife is united with his love of the land, and he understands her only in terms of this relationship, which is dramatized in the scene where he comes in from the rain, and "he felt such a love for the land and for Elizabeth that he strode across the room and rested his wet hand on her hair in a kind of benediction" (80). After her death, he tells the rock from which she slipped, "Now you are two, and you are here. Now I will know where I must come" (129). Joseph has incorporated his wife Elizabeth just as firmly into his dream as he has incorporated everything else in his life, and she does not exist apart from her function in the fulfillment of his dream.

He views his son in the same terms. When Elizabeth breaks the news of her pregnancy to him, he responds: "Yes--the child is precious, but not so precious as the bearing of it. That is as real as a mountain. That is a tie to the earth" (92). And when the drought comes, he offers his child as a sacrifice for the land, saying, "I am trying to help the land, and so there's no danger that I shall take the child again" (154). In these instances he is using his own son to fulfill his dream of providing for the fertility of the land. Joseph is a failure as a husband and a father because he never recognizes the real woman or the real son, instead seeing them only as a means towards his union with the land. The same is true in his role as patriarch of the Wayne brothers: his obsession with the land blots out all other responsibilities.

In no other novel does Steinbeck make such a strong statement about the tie between man and his land, but it is a critical rather than an

approving statement as Joseph Wayne loses his wife, child, and brothers, and sacrifices his own life because of his obsession with the land. In To a God Unknown Steinbeck uses Joseph's fanatical belief in the westering myth and his death as a warning that the American Dream is no longer valid. Furthermore, he uses the entire Wayne family to show Americans' preoccupation with the American Dream to the detriment of themselves and others.

The Pastures of Heaven²

There are many families in The Pastures of Heaven; however, since some of these families are non-traditional units which lack either patriarch, matriarch, or both, this chapter and the next will ignore them in favor of the traditional units which are headed by both a patriarch and a matriarch, concentrating especially upon the Whiteside family, which is the most important family in the Valley.

As young men, Richard Whiteside and his son, John, ordered their lives around the dream of "founding a dynasty" (191). The Whiteside family had "lived in one house for a hundred and thirty years" (194) in New England, and when the house burned down, Richard moved to California vowing, "I'll build the germ of a tradition into my house" (191). Towards this end, he built a great white house, married a distant relative, and even tried to "influence the appearance of the firstling" (193). Richard believed that he could replace the old family home and start a new

² John Steinbeck, The Pastures of Heaven. (New York: Penguin, 1986). All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.

dynasty by moving to the West because "[i]n ancient times when, through continued misfortunes, the people of a city came to believe themselves under a curse or even under disfavor of some god, they put all of their movable possessions in ships and sailed away to found a new city" (195). Nevertheless, Richard sired only one child, John, who, in turn, sired only one child, Bill. As the Whitesides attempt to reproduce the lifestyle of a past generation, they show how "a dying people . . . finds its satisfactions in past greatness and half-remembered glory" (America 143).

Although these two generations of Whiteside men hope to found a dynasty, believing that starting over in the West would insure their success, they fail to achieve their goal. Harbour Winn notes, "They [Richard and John] merely repeat the cycle of Richard's grandfather and father that they had hoped to escape in a new land" (99). Steinbeck uses the Whiteside patriarchs to dramatize America's obsession with lineage. Although Americans leave their home town and desert their parents, they still spend hours searching the records to find their "roots." In this way as in so many others, Steinbeck portrays the paradox of American life.

Both Richard and John Whiteside view their wives as necessary components of their plans to build a dynasty. Richard chose Alicia so "there would be no accidents of blood" (192) because she was his relative. He pampers her during pregnancy because "his great fear was that something would go wrong with the bearing of the child" (193). Likewise, John chose to marry a classmate's sister solely because he felt he must create a dynasty. Furthermore, Richard and John Whiteside expect their sons to provide the dynasty they, themselves, are denied. So the

Whitesides, too, view their wives and sons as instruments toward the realization of their dreams.

When John and Richard fail to found a dynasty, they both rechannel their energies into leadership of their community. Their neighbors in the community serve as a surrogate for the dynasty each man desired and as an outlet for their frustrated familial patriarchal desires. Their paternalistic attitude toward the community help their neighbors "feel more secure" (199) and because of their influence "these ceased to exist in the valley any of the ferocious politics and violent religious opinions which usually poison rural districts" (205-06). So although they are failures in their own eyes, they are successful in the eyes of their neighbors. Steinbeck uses the Whitesides to show how it is possible to rechannel frustrations into constructive directions.

Another patriarch in The Pastures of Heaven who influences the lives of his neighbors is Bert Munroe, only his is a destructive rather than a constructive influence. In fact, Bert may be considered the antagonist as he is responsible for the destruction of many of the families in his community. Before coming to the Valley, he "had engaged in many enterprises and every one had failed," leaving his spirit "badly broken" (16-17). Although French describes him as "content with the status quo and . . . a vicious mediocrity" (John Steinbeck 46), a better explanation is that he is a man driven by a dream to be "a part of the valley, a solid man, a neighbor" (18). Bert may be mediocre, but it is not because he is complacent; rather it is because he diligently copies the lifestyle of his neighbors. As a result, he is not content with the status quo, but instead quests after popularity. It

is this insecurity and strong desire for acceptance that leads him to the actions which will destroy his neighbors' dreams.

Most men dream great dreams and hope to achieve great prizes, but Bert Munroe only wants to be like all his neighbors and to have a house that looks like every other house. He seems to lack totally any desire for originality, merely wishing to be a replica of others. Symbols of success in his quest are as mediocre as his dream: being able to borrow tools and have tools borrowed from him and being elected a member of the school board. Bert represents the conformists who believe that the road to success is through copying the accoutrements, behaviors, and attitudes of the successful members of society. Harbour Winn suggests, "In the Munroe section of the story Steinbeck merely describes important aspects of the family to emphasize their role in the book: to introduce middle-class values into the valley" (94).

Unlike Joseph Wayne in the previous novel, who is destroyed by his dream, Bert Munroe is rejuvenated, using the dream as a motivation for action. When he comes to believe in the American Dream, he is motivated to leave behind that part of himself which was a failure and take on a new role: to be "a part of the valley, a solid man, a neighbor" (18).

Timmerman notes, "The land lifts a personal curse from Bert Monroe. . . . The land becomes a beneficent provider for him. A harmony between spirit and land is achieved" (Dramatic 62).

However, as Bert Munroe strives toward the accomplishment of his own dream, he destroys those of his friends and neighbors. Bert and the other members of his family are the catalysts in the destruction of their

neighbors' dreams as Steinbeck puts them in a position to compromise the integrity of the other families in the valley. This intervention is usually inadvertent or even is a result of good intentions, such as Bert's help in clearing the brush around John Whiteside's mansion; however, the family's intervention is less innocent as they destroy the dreams of the Lopez sisters, the Maltby family, and the Banks family. Steinbeck uses Bert Munroe to show how Americans destroy others as they seek after their own dreams, a reiteration of the theme of To a God Unknown.

Another important patriarch in The Pastures of Heaven is Ed Wicks, who is so obsessed with possessions and wealth that "the wealth itself became real to him" and he manages his investments as though they really exist (21). He is so immersed in the dream that "a stern and yet sorrowful look crossed his face when he foreclosed a mortgage on a good farm. 'I hate to do this,' he whispered. 'You folks got to realize it's just business'" (29). Ed's entire life is a sham. He has convinced not only his neighbors, but also himself that he is a shrewd investor. Once only a game, his investments have become a reality. Like Joseph Wayne, he has become paranoid, but unlike Joseph, others believe in his fabrication. Even when he is forced to admit, "That ledger was nothing but a lie. . . . I made it all up" (42), he still believes in his abilities as an investor as he says, "I'll get my chance then. I'll show people what I am" (43). Ed Wicks, although he is not weak and ineffectual, is paranoid and living in a dream world.

Timmerman explains:

Shark Wick's fantasy world of an empire of wealth becomes an alternate reality for him, so much so that his present world

of pragmatic reality seems more the deceptive dream. Reality will not have it so, of course, and the devastation of Shark's fantasy demonstrates his tragic inability to live in reality.

(Dramatic 96)

Ed Wicks rules his family with complete authority: "He governed her [Katherine] with the same gentle inflexibility he used on horses" (24), and as for his daughter, "[n]o man ever guarded his prize bitch when she was in heat more closely" (27). Obviously, he thinks of his family in terms of animals rather than humans, aware that he must take care of them and guard them from harm; yet he is blind to the fact that being more than animals, they need his love and understanding as well as his protection. Timmerman notes, "Simply put, Katherine is for him a piece of livestock" (Dramatic 97). Perceiving himself to be a shrewd investor, he regards his wife and daughter like his other investments. His feeling for his daughter is especially materialistic: "He did not love her as a father loves a child. Rather he hoarded her, and gloated over the possession of a fine, unique thing" (28). As the owner of this "fine unique, thing" he becomes obsessed with preserving her value, fearful of "her loss or disfigurement" and eventually becomes "terrified at the thought of her loss of chastity" (27). In his attitude toward his family, Ed Wicks is more like a proprietor who is responsible for his possessions and increasing their value, than like a husband and father.

Steinbeck uses Ed Wicks to show American's obsession with material goods which Steinbeck believed poisons our society: "But we are also poisoned with things. Having many things seems to create a desire for

more things, more clothes, houses, automobiles. . . . We are trapped and entangled in things" (America 139-40). Ed Wick represents the strong materialistic aspect of the American Dream.

In The Pastures of Heaven as a whole, Steinbeck is less pessimistic than he was in To a God Unknown. Although the patriarchs all fail to achieve their dreams, many rechannel their energies: Bert Munroe overcomes his failures, Ed Wicks goes on after his exposure to actually become an investor, and Richard and John Whiteside rechannel their energies into leadership of the valley. So although these men fail to achieve their dreams, their aspirations produce alternatives that are perhaps more desirable than their original goals.

However, it is important to remember that the patriarchs did not find the peace and tranquility in the Pastures of Heaven that they sought; instead they found problems and strife. So in this novel, as in the last, Steinbeck debunks the westering myth.

The Grapes of Wrath³

Pa Joad's role in The Grapes of Wrath, considered to be Steinbeck's premiere achievement, is so overshadowed by Ma, Tom and Casy that the importance of his role is usually unappreciated. But it is Pa, not the others in the novel, who truly represents the displaced farmers who flee to California and it is through him that Steinbeck shows their failure to function after their displacement. To make that point, Steinbeck shows

³ John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath (New York: Penguin, 1986). All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.

how Pa is unable to start a new life once he leaves the land that he has worked his entire life. While he goes through the motions of picking peaches, his mind is "'figgerin' to mend that hole in the south fence" (541). Finally he admits, "'Spen' all my time a-thinkin' how it use' ta be. Spen' all my time thinkin' of home, an' I ain't never gonna see it no more'" (541). Although physically he is in California, emotionally he has never left his own land. He becomes impotent because he derived his strength and power from the land.

While Pa Joad only grieves for the land, Grampa Joad dies when he is separated from it. Casy explains, "'Grampa didn' die tonight. He died the minute you took 'im off the place. . . . He was that place, an' he knowed it. . . . He's jus' stayin' with the lan'. He couldn' leave it'" (187). To a greater or lesser extent we see this tie to Oklahoma in all the adults of the Joad family. Evidence for this comes from a conversation between Ma and Tom. When Ma comments about California, "'It's purty I wisht they could of saw it,'" Tom replies: "'They was too old. . . . They wouldn't of saw nothin' that's here. . . . Who's really seein' it is Ruthie an' Winfiel'" (295). He means that only the very young who have not already established ties elsewhere can "really see" California; the other members of the family cannot because they are interpreting it through their experience of Oklahoma.

Pa also represents the farmers Steinbeck describes in intercalary Chapter 5. He is one of those who realize "what cotton does to the land; robs it, sucks all the blood out of it"; and yet "maybe next year will be a good year. God knows how much cotton next year. And with all the wars

--God knows what price cotton will bring" (41-42). Pa Joad is one of many who share the responsibility for depleting the resources of the land.

Owens describes the cycle of depletion:

It is the westering pattern of American history laid bare: drive the Indians and serpent from the Promised Land only to discover that the Garden must lie yet farther to the west. Reject the poor land, use up the good and move on, destroying the Garden in the delusive belief that the Garden has not yet been found. The Joads are firmly fixed in this pattern of displacement, and they have no choice but to follow the pattern until, along with the thousands of other migrants, they reach the barrier of the Pacific. (Revision 133)

Pa depleted the land, borrowed money to continue the cycle; then the bank foreclosed, forcing him off his land. Pa suffers along with the other displaced farmers who fled to California, but none are totally innocent victims of the system.

Pa Joad, like Steinbeck's other patriarchs, is perplexed by his wife. He has always respected Ma, and accepted her strength and wisdom in managing the house and children, but he does not understand that this strength and wisdom can extend beyond her role as homemaker. Long after Ma had taken over the leadership of the family, he is still taken aback: "Funny! Woman takin' over the fambly. Woman sayin' we'll do this here, an' we'll go there. An' I don' even care" (541).

Still, Pa Joad is one of Steinbeck's better fathers; he serves as a role model for his sons and as a protector of his daughters. Pa treats his grown

sons--Noah, Tom, and Al--as adults, praising them and criticizing them as peers. His concern for his daughter, Rose of Sharon, is especially apparent as he angrily denounces Connie for deserting her, saying, "'If he ain't no good, we don' want him'" (350). But although he is supportive of Ruthie and Winfield, he leaves their upbringing to Ma. In this novel the children are not so much a vehicle for the attainment of the patriarch's dream as they are participants sharing his vision of California. Pa Joad treats his family well, but in the end he becomes a broken man and unable to provide for them. Although he is a success as a father, his failure as a patriarch nevertheless puts his children in jeopardy.

Pa Joad represents the failure of the westering myth. He is totally defeated when he does not find a new Garden of Eden in the West. The rest of the family struggle on, but Pa only comments, "'Seems like our life's over an' done'" (541). He represents not so much the innocence of the Garden, as he does the high expectations that the West has always offered. He sought those promises which J. Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur wrote about:

[T]housands of acres present themselves, which he [the immigrant] may purchase cheap. Whatever be his talents or inclinations, if they are moderate, he may satisfy them. I do not mean that every one who comes will grow rich in a little time; no, but he may procure an easy, decent maintenance, by his industry. Instead of starving he will be fed, instead of being idle he will have employment; and these are riches enough for such men as come over here. (14)

For Steinbeck, however, the American Dream has become tarnished and the guaranteed opportunity has been revoked; therefore Pa's expectation of sharing in the abundance of California is never realized. Hearn notes: "Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath dramatizes the bankruptcy of the old American hope of finding opportunity and fulfillment by going west. . . . The dream is a delusion which can postpone the necessity of facing reality, but cannot itself become a reality" (86). Pa's dreams of starting over in California only postpones the reality of facing his family's homeless condition. He trades a bad situation in a familiar setting, for one an even worse one in an alien environment.

East of Eden⁴

Steinbeck contrasts the "light and gay" Samuel Hamilton to the "dark and dour" Adam Trask in East of Eden, as he revealed in the Journal he kept while writing the novel: "This Trask chapter is as dark and dour as a damp tunnel. It has to be. And the next Hamilton chapter is very light and gay. I'll have my contrasts all right. It will be all contrasts and balances" (42).

Although it is tempting to believe that Samuel Hamilton in East of Eden is modeled accurately upon the real Samuel Hamilton, in fact, this is not the case. Steinbeck could not have known his grandfather well enough to write about him out of his own experience because the old man died in

⁴ John Steinbeck, East of Eden (New York: Penguin, 1986). All subsequent quotations are from taken this edition.

1904 when Steinbeck was only two years old. (In East of Eden Steinbeck states he died in 1912.) Benson suggests:

Like the other Hamiltons who are featured in the novel, Samuel is a semifictional character made up of various component parts from various models: there is more in him of Steinbeck and of certain Rickett's characteristics that Steinbeck admired, than of the real grandfather as others remembered him. Nevertheless, the writer believed that these were his people. (True Adventures 679)

Steinbeck, himself, admits: "I must depend on hearsay, on old photographs, on stories told, and on memories which are hazy and mixed with fable in trying to tell you about the Hamiltons" (10). It is important to remember that Steinbeck dedicated East of Eden to his young sons because "they are little boys now and they will never know what they came from through me, unless I tell them" (Journal 4); therefore, he portrayed Samuel Hamilton as the kind of great-grandfather he wished his sons to know. So, although Steinbeck believed he was accurately portraying his grandfather, the man he portrayed is actually as fictitious as any of his other characters.

The adjectives, "light and gay," might falsely give the impression that Samuel Hamilton is frivolous, but another entry in Steinbeck's Journal clarifies his intent: "I hope I am going to show you Samuel in a kind of golden light, the way such a man should be remembered" (109). Hence, Steinbeck portrays Samuel as a paragon of virtues: "Samuel had good looks and charm and gaiety. . . . He came to the Salinas Valley full-blown and

hearty, full of inventions and energy" (11). Furthermore, he is learned, witty, and a good story teller:

Men from all over the district . . . loved to hear Samuel talk of the world and its thinking, of the poetry and philosophy that were going on outside the Salinas Valley. He had a rich deep voice, good both in song and in speech, and while he had no brogue there was a rise and a lilt and a cadence to his talk that made it sound sweet in the ears of the taciturn farmers. (13)

To contrast with the "light and gay" Samuel, Steinbeck portrays Adam Trask as "dark and dour" by having him "closed in a viscosity that slowed his movements and held his thoughts down" (331). Adam Trask's life is governed by periods of deep depression followed by manic episodes, which suggests a manic-depressive psychosis. Even as a child he is described as looking "out of his covered brain--out the long tunnels of his eyes" (26). He alternates periods of depression and frenzied activity: he goes from his adolescent low to the high caused by meeting Cathy when his "spirit rose flying" (172); then back into a nearly catatonic state when she deserts him, and then release comes through a face-to-face encounter with Cathy which jars him out of his self-inflicted imprisonment. In his earlier manic period he pours his ambition into founding a family, and in this manic period he wildly invests in his lettuce enterprise; however, when this venture fails he does not retreat into depression. Given Adam's history, any threat should drive him into depression; however, this is not the case because Steinbeck needed a functioning Adam to reject Cal's gift and to react to Aron's enlistment. This final blow not only drives him back into

depression, but sends, first of all, a series of small strokes, and eventually, the large stroke which leaves him paralyzed. Steinbeck characterizes Adam Trask as a man who is totally unable to control his own emotions, one who reacts violently to outside stimuli. By portraying Adam Trask buried in a deep depression most of the time, Steinbeck effectively emphasizes the gregarious nature of Samuel Hamilton.

Steinbeck also contrasts the effect of their dreams upon the two patriarchs. Although both are dreamers, Samuel, unlike Adam, recognizes that he is a dreamer and the pitfalls that he must avoid because of that tendency as he admits, "My imagination will get me a passport to hell one day. Let me dig this nonsense out" (235). Furthermore, he is a dreamer who puts his dreams to practical use, a person who "was forever inventing a new way of doing an old thing and doing it better and quicker" (11). This is a rare combination, as most men of dreams never make the dream a reality. Moreover, he has no delusion concerning the American Dream. Timmerman notes, "Samuel . . . cannot tolerate illusion and insists upon seeing things as they are" (Aesthetics 238). Although he realizes the goodness of his valley: "This will be a valley of great richness one day. . . . And happy people will live here" (190), he also realizes its evil side: "There's a blackness on this valley. . . . I don't know what it is, but I see it and feel it in the people here" (190). He has the same ambivalence towards his own land: "I can see myself sitting on my dust heap making a world in my mind as surely as God created this one" (190). Through his understanding of both the good and evil aspects of the land, he is not trapped by the westering myth. John Ditsky notes:

Perhaps it is better to describe Samuel Hamilton--the type from which the author himself springs--as one of those who never lost their Eden, never having been there in the first place, but who accomplished their own salvation by lesser means--by coping as if agents of Nature herself with the slender means afforded them, neither complaining nor reaching towards more grandiose attainments. ("Outside" 17)

So Samuel recognizes his land as having only the potential that he, himself, can find in it and never believes it to be an Eden.

Adam, on the other hand, is undone by his dream. When Cathy, his Eve, deserts him, leaving him with the evidence of original sin in the form of twin sons, and destroying his dream of creating a new Garden in the West, he retreats into a viscosity which protects him from the reality of his situation. However, unlike the first Adam who ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, this Adam refuses to accept the concept of evil.

Samuel, unlike not only Adam Trask, but most of Steinbeck's other patriarchs as well, recognizes both the good side and the bad side of every issue, thereby avoiding a blind quest for unobtainable dreams. Owens elaborates upon this concept: "Samuel represents the man who has accepted the fact of the Fall and thus the responsibility for life as it really is, both good and evil" (Revision 144). Nevertheless, Samuel Hamilton dies when he is separated from his land. However, as "the balanced man," he recognizes his bond to the land and predicts his own death:

"I love that dust heap. . . . I love it the way a bitch loves her runty pup. I love every flint, the plow-breaking outcroppings, the thin and barren topsoil, the waterless heart of her. Somewhere in my dust heap there's a richness. . . . That's what I had to accept, and I have accepted. When you say I deserve a rest, you are saying that my life is over." (390)

The land had become a necessary part of Samuel Hamilton, and like Grampa Joad, when he was cut off from that part of himself, he could not survive any more than a man can survive without a heart or a brain.

Steinbeck carries out the contrast between the two patriarchs not only in their personalities, but in their relationship with their wives. Samuel Hamilton is the only patriarch in all of Steinbeck's novels who understands his wife. This is especially apparent as he correctly describes her as a realist: "No dreams, no ghosts, no foolishness. . . . Liza has no truck with foolishness" (258). Although there were "few times in his life he would disobey her wish" (335), he and his friends do "get out the 'little something' . . . behind the shed" (183). Samuel understands Liza and lives his life avoiding confrontations with her. And yet he admits he has never been totally faithful to her: "All of these years I've cheated Liza. I've given her an untruth, a counterfeit, and I've saved the best for those dark sweet hours" (389). Perhaps Steinbeck gave Samuel a dream lover because he felt his grandfather deserved someone better than the strait-laced Liza.

In contrast to Samuel who completely understands his wife, Adam does not understand his at all. In fact, the woman he loves exists only in his mind:

Perhaps Adam did not see Cathy at all, so lighted was she by his eyes. Burned in his mind was an image of beauty and tenderness, a sweet and holy girl, precious beyond thinking, clean and loving, and that image was Cathy to her husband, and nothing Cathy did or said could warp Adam's Cathy.

(173)

He interprets all the real Cathy does and says in terms of his expectations for his "created Cathy." So he does not listen when the real woman tells him she does not want to move to California, or when she tells him, "I am not going to stay here. As soon as I can I will go away" (230).

Furthermore, when she makes good her promise to leave, he retreats into himself, refusing to accept her desertion. In his Journal Steinbeck wrote, "Adam has a picture of his life and he will continue to maintain his picture against every influence until his world comes down" (76).

Needless to say, Samuel's relationship to his children is very different from Adam's relationship to his. In fact, Samuel's relationship to his children is different from that of all the other patriarchs, as he alone understands his children, nurtures them, and shares the responsibility for their upbringing. Samuel's role as a patriarch can be viewed as being analogous to Steinbeck's Earth Mothers, Rama Wayne and Ma Joad, especially the former. While Rama is the "Earth Mother" who nurtures all the earth's children he is the "Earth Father." Some comparisons point to

this conclusion. While she is a "good and efficient midwife" (To a God 19), "his hands were so good and gentle that neighbors from twenty miles away would call on him to help with a birth" (13). And though "children adored Rama when they had been good, for she knew how to stroke the tender places in the soul" (To a God 20), "Samuel had no equal for soothing hysteria and bringing quiet to a frightened child. It was the sweetness of his tongue and the tenderness of his soul" (14). Not only does Steinbeck ascribe similar traits to the Earth Mother and Samuel Hamilton, he describes these traits using almost the same words. It is uncanny that he would write these phrases about Samuel Hamilton which so closely echo those he wrote twenty years earlier about the Earth Mother!

Although Samuel is "Earth Father" with great nurturing talents, as a material provider for his children he is a failure because "he had caught the patent fever, and year after year the money made by threshing and by smithing was drained off in patents. The Hamilton children went barefoot, and their overalls were patched and food was sometimes scarce, to pay for the crisp blueprints with cogs and planes and elevations" (54-55).

While Samuel nurtures his children, Adam ignores his: Cal and Aron "knew him as a presence--as ears that heard but did not listen, eyes that looked and did not notice. He was a cloud of a father. The boys had never learned to tell him of their interests and discoveries, or of their needs" (462). This list of unmet needs shows which qualities Steinbeck felt most important in a father: listening, seeing, understanding.

In East of Eden Steinbeck explores the relationship between fathers and sons in great detail, exploring how fathers affect their sons, and how

those sons affect their own children. Adam Trask assesses his relationship with his father as he says, "I did not love him. Maybe he loved me. He tested me and hurt me and punished me and finally he sent me out like a sacrifice, maybe to make up for something" (93). Later, he realizes how this affected him, "I'm the same as my father was. He didn't allow me to be a person, and I haven't seen my sons as people" (591). In this way Steinbeck is pointing out the devastating effects that child neglect can have on the future generation.

East of Eden is undoubtedly Steinbeck's most autobiographical novel. Benson notes that "in composing his long novel he would become deeply engaged in evolving a philosophy that would allay his hurt and anger in respect to Gwyn and formulate a rationale for the salvation of his boys" (True Adventures 665-66). Benson also tells us that Steinbeck, like Adam Trask, never understood his wife:

He [Steinbeck] was building a dream of life around Gwyn that had little to do with what Gwyn was or what she wanted. . . . Thus a collision course was set from the beginning between what he wanted and needed her to be and what she was and, out of circumstance, became. . . . He had determined that she was the romantic love of his life and embodied all the answers to all the vague longings and dissatisfactions that had haunted him for so long. She was, now that he was nearly forty, all that he had missed. (True Adventures 494, 496)

Furthermore, in Looking for Steinbeck's Ghost, he notes, "Others I interviewed suggested, in hushed tones and with the provision that I not

quote them, that Gwyn had been the model for the monster Cathy in East of Eden, a suggestion that shocked me when I first heard it--how much he must have hated her!" (95). He also explains that Cal and Aron Trask "bear a remarkable resemblance to Steinbeck's own boys" (True Adventures 688). Timmerman also sees East of Eden as being autobiographical: "East of Eden is unique among the works based on Steinbeck's life experience because it is, in part, the story closest to him--his own" (Aesthetics 211). So, as Steinbeck portrays the Trasks he writes about his own relationship with his ex-wife and with his sons. In East of Eden Steinbeck portrays Adam Trask as the kind of father he fears he himself is and Samuel Hamilton as the kind of father he wishes he could be!

Although Steinbeck endows Samuel Hamilton with some of the same characteristics as his other patriarchs--he is a dreamer, he has a close bond to his land, and he is ineffective as a family leader--he gives him many characteristics the other patriarchs lack: an insight into the true nature of events, an understanding of his wife, a close, nurturing, and loving relationship with his children. Samuel is unlike the other patriarchs because Steinbeck's purpose in creating him was different from his purpose for creating the other patriarchs. They illustrate the weaknesses of the patriarchy, while Samuel introduces Steinbeck's sons, Thom and John, to their grandfather "in a kind of golden light, the way such a man should be remembered" (Journal 109).

In East of Eden Steinbeck portrays Adam Trask to show how a person who can only accept the "good" in the world and who denies all "evil" can nevertheless inflict pain on himself and those around him.

Furthermore, in this novel of contrasts, Adam represents the "dark and dour" as a contrast to the "light and gay" Samuel Hamilton. Moreover, Adam demonstrates how American Dream can grip a person's life so strongly that he will retreat into depression rather than admit that his Dream is unattainable.

However, it is through Samuel more than any other character that Steinbeck realizes his stated purposes for the novel. First of all, he wanted to tell his boys about their family, "how they lived, and some attempt to give them a quality of their background" (Journal 7). Although there are vignettes of many other Hamilton family members, Samuel looms most significantly among the Hamiltons, showing his grandsons much of the "quality of their background." Timmerman suggests, "Samuel ranks as one of Steinbeck's most eminent heroes. . . . Although his narrative presence in *East of Eden* is relatively brief, that presence hovers like a benedictory spirit over all the action. He shows a way a person might go, and be the better for having gone that way" (Aesthetics 242-43). And secondly, it is Samuel, the "balanced man" who personifies the inseparable doubles which Steinbeck writes about in his Journal:

I will tell them one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest story of all--the story of good and evil, of strength and weakness, of love and hate, of beauty and ugliness. I shall try to demonstrate to them how these doubles are inseparable--how neither can exist without the other and how out of their groupings creativeness is born. (4)

So although many critics have maligned East of Eden, Steinbeck in many

ways fulfilled his own objectives for writing his "big novel" as he called it in his Journal (20).

The Winter of Our Discontent⁵

Ethan Allen Hawley gives up his strict puritan code of ethics to pursue a vision of wealth in Steinbeck's last novel, The Winter of Our Discontent. Although the Eden where Ethan lives is not the Garden in the West of Steinbeck's previous novels, he nevertheless is clearly portrayed as an Adam who betrays his own convictions as a result of being tempted by his wife. However, unlike Adam, he recognizes what he is doing and the price he will have to pay: "And if I should put the rules aside for a time, I knew I would wear scars but would they be worse than the scars of failure I was wearing? To be alive at all is to have scars" (105). Elizabeth Long in The American Dream and the Popular Novel notes that Ethan's "decision to 'succeed' is a decision to give up the ideal of brotherhood, and is thus an incontrovertible acknowledgment of the costs of success" (96-97).

Nevertheless, he gives up his strict moral rules, destroys his employer, kills his friend, and finally realizing not only the devastation he has caused, but also the example he has set for his children, he plans suicide. Belatedly, he realizes that the real problem facing the family is not a lack of wealth, but a lack of moral principles and that there is no escaping the moral morass into which his family has dropped.

⁵ John Steinbeck, The Winter of Our Discontent (New York: Penguin, 1983). All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.

Steinbeck portrays many scenes of interaction among the family members, and yet they are empty of any true communication. Ethan's banter, although filled with affection, hides his real feelings from his wife: "When I am troubled, I play a game of silly so that my dear will not catch trouble from me. She hasn't found me out yet, or if she has, I'll never know it. So many things I don't know about my Mary, and among them, how much she knows about me" (51). Ethan does not share his deepest concerns with Mary because he feels that she is too "tender" and will be crushed by their weight. Beneath his silly chatter, Ethan not only hides his own feelings, but also avoids an involvement with Mary's feelings. Since Old Cap'n drilled into him the importance of being stoic, he feels he must never display his real emotions. For these reasons he has a totally mistaken view of his wife which is revealed by Margie Hunt-Young: "Mary? You don't even know her" (300).

Steinbeck portrays Ethan as having a much better relationship with his daughter than with his son. About her he says, "I do love her, and that's odd because she is everything I detest in anyone else--and I adore her" (85). However, he sets much higher standards for his son: "Allen! There are unchanging rules of conduct, of courtesy, of honesty, yes, even of energy. It's time I taught you to give them lip service at least" (191). Ethan unconsciously trains his own son the way Old Cap'n and Aunt Deborah trained him, demanding that his son learn manners of a bygone day. However, as a female, his daughter is exempt from these demands. Once again Steinbeck's portrayal of parent-children relationships has slipped into the same stereotype where little boys are to be trained, while

little girls are to be spoiled and pampered. Benson notes how this novel reflects Steinbeck's own relationship to his sons and step-daughter, "But for us, the important thing is that it was out of the conflict of his love for his children with the intense frustration that they caused him that much of his later writing was generated" (True Adventures 829).

In The Winter of Our Discontent Steinbeck looks directly at the American Dream in its most basic sense: America is the land of opportunity. Here Steinbeck is exposing both sides of that original Dream, revealing that opportunity exists side by side with the ruthlessness of those who exploit it. This view is obvious in Ethan's frequent mention of his ancestors, Old Cap'n and Great Aunt Deborah, who represent the Puritans who, on the one hand, were strictly moral, God-fearing people, and on the other, stole a nation from the natives. Long notes, "Reflecting back on his New England family's past fortune, and his father's loss of the family wealth, the hero, Ethan Allen Hawley, characterizes success in every era and in all its forms as robbery, murder, even a kind of combat, operating under 'the laws of controlled savagery' (96). Through his contradictions, Ethan embodies both the strict moral tradition and the ruthlessness of his ancestors. Hassell A. Simpson interprets The Winter in Our Discontent in those terms:

The novelist meant not simply to condemn American greed circa 1960 but to acknowledge that his countrymen had dual and even contradictory natures: on the one hand, benevolent, generous, charitable impulses--and, on the other, aggressive, cruel, acquisitive instincts. Far from being the pessimistic

work of a soured and defeated writer, or the upbeat work of an incurable optimist, Winter seen in this light is a mature and balanced, if somewhat cryptic, assessment of the American dream and what happened to it. (317)

So, according to Hassell, Steinbeck in this last novel shows the perversity of Americans, idealistic on the one hand and ruthless on the other. Therefore, Steinbeck's final vision of the American Dream is one that he had advocated since The Pastures of Heaven: America is a land of paradox and the American Dream represents this paradox more strongly than any other facet of American life. The Dream was, on one hand, the original impetus for exploration and settlement, and on the other, a vision of an Eden which never existed.

These are Steinbeck's patriarchs, the weak leaders who are so focused upon their own dreams that they understand neither their wives and children, nor the reality of their current situation, thereby leading their families toward destruction. From the fanatical Joseph Wayne, through the broken Pa Joad, to the disillusioned Ethan Hawley, Steinbeck has consistently portrayed his patriarchs following after the American Dream and failing in that quest. Although the patriarchs in East of Eden and The Winter of Our Discontent are focused upon more personal issues than the more universal issues of the earlier novels, they are still unable to understand the larger implications and achieve their goals. Only the "golden light" of Samuel Hamilton relieves the otherwise uncomplimentary portrayal of these patriarchs. These patriarchs reveal Steinbeck's message

to the American people that their nation is struggling with twentieth-century problems using traditional solutions and values which are no longer relevant to an industrialized society which must open its vision to a new concept of America.

Chapter 3 The Role of the Matriarch

Steinbeck was fascinated with the differences between men and women, and throughout his career he attempted to define those differences. Nevertheless, his efforts were handicapped by his idealized perception of women. Gladstein criticizes his sentimental portrayal of women:

In his characterizations of the indestructible woman, be she mother or whore, Steinbeck the sentimentalist edges out Steinbeck the scientist. . . . The reverence and the awe he feels in the face of natural phenomena repeatedly intrude, often causing his naturalism to go soft at the center. This is particularly so in the case of his women, whose indestructibility is sentimentally portrayed.

("Female Characters" 25)

Steinbeck's most successful female characters are Elizabeth Wayne, Ma Joad and Mary Hawley. In presenting these three women he is able to rise above sentimentality, allowing his readers to see their weaknesses and flaws as well as their virtues. John Ditsky, in John Steinbeck: Life, Work, and Criticism, also comments on Steinbeck's portrayal of women: "Even his evident madonnas-and-whores dichotomy as far as portrayals of women are concerned can be traced to the fact that, in fiction as in life, John Steinbeck desired constantly to idealize women--an alien species he perhaps but dimly understood" (28).

Steinbeck's madonnas-and-whores dichotomy is especially relevant to East of Eden because one of the patriarchs, Adam Trask, marries a whore. Although he was unaware of Catherine's profession when he married her, when she deserts him and her infant sons, her rejection of marriage and motherhood becomes apparent. This rejection excludes her from being one of Steinbeck's matriarchs⁶ because the term would indicate that she is a wife, mother, homemaker, chatelaine, and materfamilias, which Catherine Trask is not.⁷

Steinbeck's matriarchs are all full-time homemakers. Gladstein notes:

Steinbeck was unable to face the reality of self-sustaining, independent women in nontraditional roles in his fiction. Though his professors, agents, and sometimes the models for his labor organizers were women, traditional female occupations such as mothering, teaching school, and prostitution are the only employments he allowed his fictional women. (Indestructible 103)

As homemakers, Steinbeck's matriarchs do not focus their lives upon distant goals as their husbands do; instead, they live in the present, handling the day-to-day necessities such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for their families. These practical tasks keep them in close touch with all that is going on around them, thereby giving them a more realistic viewpoint of

⁶ In this paper "matriarch" is used in most of its senses--wife, mother, homemaker, chatelaine, materfamilias--but it does not indicate that this woman is the ruler or leader of her family or that these families are matriarchies, unless otherwise indicated.

⁷ Although Catherine Trask is not a matriarch, she nonetheless affects her husband and children and will be mentioned in regard to them.

the activities of their families. Falkenberg notes, "They are intricately bound up in reality, in simply day-to-day existence" (56).

In order to truly understand Steinbeck's matriarchs it is necessary to realize the importance that Steinbeck placed upon homemaking. For him, homemaking was exactly that: making a home. Over and over again he writes about women transforming dwellings into homes. However, this is a role that only women are permitted to perform because whenever men undertake this task, they fail. The houses which Pat Humbert and Adam Trask attempt to transform into homes are eventually abandoned and no one ever lives in them. Another example can be found in Of Mice and Men as George and Lennie never achieve their dream of buying "a little house and a couple of acres an' a cow an' some pigs and . . . live off the fatta the lan'" (14).

For Steinbeck the home was a special place with a meaning far beyond its physical appearance. It was a sanctuary away from the outside world and a place to nurture the soul. However, this sanctuary only exists for men with families. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Steinbeck's bachelors always seem to huddle in one room, feeling uncomfortable about living in the entire home; e.g., Charles Trask, Pat Humbert. So it seems that Steinbeck believed that it was the presence of a woman which turned a house into a sanctuary.

Steinbeck viewed the homemaking activities of women as skills rather than chores and believed that women instinctually need such activity and thoroughly enjoy it. Falkenberg in "A Study of Female Characterization in Steinbeck's Fiction" writes:

In Steinbeck's fiction the role of wife is oftentimes synonymous with that of housewife. . . . Rather than viewing this role as menial or degrading, Steinbeck sees the housewife as performing a particular task or function, perhaps the one to which she is best suited, with a pride and efficiency bordering on perfection. (51)

This perfection is especially noticeable in those matriarchs who become too obsessed with their homemaking. Once Mrs. Munroe decides upon the placement of her furniture "that piece was fixed forever, only to be moved for cleaning" (13). Emma Randall in "The Harness" keeps her house "unscarred, uncarved, unchalked" with footscrapers and thick cocoa-fiber mats which "kept dirt out of the house," and her house is a reflection of the sterile condition of her life (111).

Given the strong emphasis Steinbeck places upon the skills of women in homemaking, one would also expect an emphasis upon the skills that women possess as mothers. True, he gives us Rama and Ma Joad, whose names are synonymous with the role, but he also gives us any number of mothers who are much less skillful; in fact, Catherine Trask and Mrs. Morgan are total failures. Nevertheless, Steinbeck believed that the role of a mother is critical for her children. Although he particularly examined the role of fathers in East of Eden, he also looked at the problems of motherless boys, not only Cal and Aron Trask, but Adam Trask, as well, who secretly longs for all he has missed:

He did not know what it was about, but all the long lack of holding, of rocking, of caressing, the hunger for breast and

nipple, and the softness of a lap, and the voice-tone of love and compassion, and the sweet feeling of anxiety--all of these were in his passion, and he did not know it because he did not know that such things existed, so how could he miss them. (27-28)

In this list of needs that Adam has been denied, Steinbeck identifies the things he believed a mother should give to her child. When these needs are unfulfilled and these unloved children grow into adults, they are unable either to give love or to accept love. Steinbeck wants his readers to know that when mothers fail, their children suffer and eventually pass along that suffering to their children.

Another characteristic of Steinbeck's matriarchs is that they are strong women. As a mother, the matriarch is responsible for her children; therefore, she needs extra strength to protect them from harm, and this strength comes from her biological ability to procreate and nurture. "Steinbeck suggests," McKay writes, "why women are better equipped to lead in time of great social stress: They are closer to nature and to the natural rhythm of the earth" (64). However, this strength is available for the mother to use at any time, giving her an advantage over her husband in times of severe stress. Gladstein notes in The Indestructible Woman in Faulkner, Hemingway, and Steinbeck:

[T]here is something in the essential nature of woman, something which strengthens her, some psychic cushioning which, like the subcutaneous layer of fat that distinguishes the female anatomy from that of the male, provides a natural insulation which better equips woman for survival. (101)

Although much has been written about the strength of Ma Joad, the "indestructible woman," as Gladstein calls her, the strength of her sisters in Steinbeck's works has been largely overlooked by all but Gladstein. In fact, when she was writing her book, the standard response from students and colleagues was "Well, there is Ma Joad, but who else?" (76). However, there are many other female characters who also possess the strength to face and overcome the most severe stress and it is they, not their husbands, whom their families rely upon. In East of Eden Lee voices Steinbeck's own opinion of women, "I believe a strong woman may be stronger than a man, particularly if she happens to have love in her heart. I guess a loving woman is almost indestructible" (469). In all cases the matriarchs fight stress with their strong willpower, refusing to accept defeat.

In addition to their strength, Steinbeck attributes to most of his matriarchs an inner knowledge, a second sense that men are denied, which gives them not only an understanding of their biological processes, but also an insight into their current situation and what action is most appropriate. It also helps them to understand their husbands; for example, Elizabeth Wayne "saw into her husband's mind; all in a second she saw the shapes of his thoughts, and he knew that she saw them" (102). Falkenberg notes:

The most significant quality with which Steinbeck's women are endowed is knowledge--both of their own husbands and of men generally. Despite their apparent lack of experience, it is often the women in Steinbeck's novels who come closest to an understanding of the intricacies of human nature and the profundities of life in general. They are acutely aware of

their own particular realm of influence. The women seem to arrive at this awareness by first knowing their husbands completely and then, from this knowledge, by determining how they can best fulfill their roles as wives. (52)

The matriarch's focus upon the present and her inner knowledge allow her to understand her husband's quest after the American Dream. She, more clearly than he, defines exactly what he is searching for, so she is able to see how futile his quest really is. Each of these matriarchs at some time describes her husband's dreams and how they affect the family. Ditsky notes, "In terms of contemporary American culture, it is Woman picking up the pieces of the American dream and holding the man-caused shards together, the seams invisible" ("Ending" 123).

It is their hidden strength and inner knowledge, not their physical strength, which gives the matriarchs their indestructible quality. In fact, Ma Joad is the exception rather than the standard of Steinbeck's typical female physiology, as most of his women more closely resemble Liza Hamilton, whom Steinbeck describes as a "skinny little biddy" (56).

Despite its initial appearance, the power structure of Steinbeck's families is extremely complex. By custom the patriarch is the leader of the family. The matriarch accepts his leadership, but recognizing his weakness, does all in her power to support him and to provide for her family when necessary. An analogy would be that the matriarch is the prime minister who manages the country while the patriarch is the king, the titular head. This power structure exists consistently in all of

Steinbeck's families except for Rama and Thomas Wayne. Rama, the Earth Mother, by the very nature of that role must be the leader of a matriarchy.

This power structure points to Steinbeck's own point of view.

Although he observed the family, and by extension, the American society, beset with problems and faults, his own belief in the current order, both in the patriarchy and in a democratic society, was so strong that he did not condemn it. As French has observed, "He did not argue against the existing system, but argued rather that, since its evils were extensive, it must be overhauled. . . . The important point is, that to be understood, Steinbeck must be read as a reformer, not a revolutionary" (John Steinbeck 97-98). Thus, Steinbeck affirms the patriarchy and democracy, while noting its faults, an affirmation most evident in the power structure of the family.

Steinbeck's matriarchs play a very important role not only in their families, but in the novels in which they appear. Timmerman notes, "Female characters play a significant role in Steinbeck's fiction, and their roles, as well as the author's comments on them merit close attention" (Aesthetics 110). Falkenberg also considers the role of women to be significant in Steinbeck's novels:

The iron strength, realism, practicality, conviction, efficiency and resignation of these women make them outstanding and significant characters in their own right. Many of Steinbeck's women, because of their strength and nobility, contribute in a positive way to the impact and worth of Steinbeck's novels as a whole. A knowledge of the women and their relationships to the men in Steinbeck's fiction helps to elucidate the characters

of the men themselves. In fact, the primary function of woman, in relation to man, is to provide the perfect counterpart to him. (55-56)

The matriarch possesses the strength and knowledge which Steinbeck saw as the necessary ingredients for the survival of not only the family, but the American way of life. It is she, rather than the patriarch, who can provide the stability, the adaptability, and the wisdom needed to withstand the pressures of the twentieth century. A chronological examination of the matriarchs in these five Steinbeck novels will show how each uses her homemaking skills, her strength, and her inner knowledge for the benefit of her family; furthermore, it will show her "worth" in the novel as a whole.

To a God Unknown

Steinbeck portrays two matriarchs--Rama Wayne and her sister-in-law, Elizabeth, in To a God Unknown and both will serve as models for his future matriarchs. Rama, Steinbeck's Earth Mother, is such a strong character that Elizabeth's role as a precursor of Steinbeck's later matriarchs can be easily overlooked; however, it is Elizabeth, not Rama, whose characteristics are most frequently found in Steinbeck's other matriarchs. An examination of first Rama and then Elizabeth will put their roles in perspective.

Rama "was nearly always contemptuous of everything men thought or did. . . . [She] had ways of making her field: cooking, sewing, the bearing of children, housecleaning, seem the most important things in the world;

much more important than the things men did" (19-20). So in Rama, Steinbeck portrays the very basic creative spirit which hails back to the earliest fertility goddesses of primitive man at a time when procreation was more important than anything the men accomplished. Gladstein notes, "To a God Unknown the most obvious earth mother figure is Rama, Joseph's sister-in-law. She is the repository of all the virtues Steinbeck associated with indestructible women" (Indestructible 97). In this role she serves as guru to the neophyte, Elizabeth, teaching her the secrets of marriage and homemaking in times "filled with mystery and with ritual" (76). In her first meeting with Elizabeth, just after Benjamin's death, she begins her teaching. She tells Elizabeth: "Tonight, because our brother has died, a door is open in me, and partly open in you. Thoughts that hide deep in the brain, in the dark, underneath the bone can come out tonight. I will tell you what I've thought and held secret" (65). It is ironic that the special knowledge, which is usually associated with childbearing and birth, is opened up to Rama by the death of Benjamin. That this "door is open" because of death may be a portent of Elizabeth's own untimely death.

The two men in Rama's life are her husband, Thomas, and her brother-in-law, Joseph. Steinbeck's only comment about Rama's relationship with her husband is that "[s]he understood Thomas, treated him as though he were an animal, kept him clean and fed and warm, and didn't often frighten him" (20). However, her relationship with her brother-in-law is antithetical: she is the Earth Mother who really has power over all fertility, while he only deludes himself into thinking that he has such power. Nevertheless, after Elizabeth's death she uses her inner strength to

relieve Joseph's sorrow. After mating with Joseph she tells him: "It was a need to you. . . . It was a hunger in me, but a need to you. The long deep river of sorrow is diverted and sucked into me, and the sorrow which is only a warm wan pleasure is drawn out in a moment" (135). Gladstein suggests, "Acting in her incarnation as the Great Mother, Rama comes to Joseph as healer and surrogate mate" (Indestructible 97).

Steinbeck describes Rama as being the perfect mother:

She was . . . an utter terror to evildoing children . . . for she could find a soft spot in the soul and punish there. . . . The children adored Rama when they had been good, for she knew how to stroke the tender places in the soul. . . . [T]he laws of Rama never changed, bad was bad and bad was punished, and good was eternally, delightfully good. (19-20)

The foundation of her skill as a mother lies in her belief that the good, as well as the bad, needs recognition. Falkenberg notes, "The children in To a God Unknown recognize instinctively the mother in Rama. To the children, Rama is lawmaker and judge, and because she carries out these roles with consistency and fairness, she wins their respect and their love" (54). Unfortunately, Steinbeck neglects to show her in action other than for mentioning that she brought her "good children" with her and left the "bad ones" at home "doing nothing, for Rama knew how idleness is a punishment to a child" (76). Since Steinbeck at this time was a bachelor, it would have been difficult for him to write about the experiences of mothers and daughters.

Rama's role in To a God Unknown is to represent the all-encompassing role of Earth Mother, so that her God-given powers of procreation and nurturing serve as an antithesis to the powers which Joseph believes he possesses. This force represents not only procreation, but continuation as well. She is a precursor of the idea that Ma Joad articulates in The Grapes of Wrath: "Ever'thing we do--seems to me is aimed right at goin' on. . . . Jus' try to live the day, jus' the day" (542).

While Rama represents the strong, symbolic Earth Mother, Elizabeth represents the practical, pragmatic, down-to-earth wife and mother. Elizabeth, more than any of Steinbeck's other wives, has a clear self-knowledge which allows her to recognize that in her life she plays a series of roles, each of which will make an irrevocable change in her lifestyle: from child to adult, from adult to wife, from wife to homemaker, and from homemaker to mother. However, the one which best illustrates this transformation is from adult to wife as she feels she will "'be leaving myself behind. I'll think of myself standing here looking through at the new one who will be on the other side'" (53). Steinbeck shows the finality of these changes: once a person takes upon a new role, he or she can never resume the previous role.

Elizabeth sees her first duty as a wife is to transform Joseph's bachelor's quarters into a home:

Elizabeth took on the new life and changed to meet it. For two weeks she went about her new house frowning, peering into everything, and making a list of furniture and utensils to be ordered from Monterey. . . . When it was all done, the

worried look went out of Elizabeth's eyes, and the frown left her brows. (75-76)

Although she brought with her some homemaking skills, others she learned from her sister-in-law, Rama, in "good times, filled with mystery and with ritual" (76). This training provides her with the knowledge that she needs to complete her transformation into a homemaker. Elizabeth is the first of Steinbeck's many homemakers who takes her role very seriously.

Although Elizabeth's strength comes from her self-understanding, her inner knowledge is released through her pregnancy, as her husband comments: "Women in this condition have a strong warmth of God in them. They must know things no one else knows" (101-02). This inner knowledge allows her to understand even her husband's deepest thoughts: "And for the first time she saw into her husband's mind; all in a second she saw the shapes of his thoughts, and he know that she saw them" (102). What she recognized in her husband was that his obsession with the land "isn't a game" (102). Later she warns him, "Don't play your game too hard, Joseph. Don't let the game take you in" (116). So this inner knowledge not only allows her to understand her husband's obsessions, but also reveals how they can be destructive to the family. She further uses her strength and inner knowledge to nurture and relieve her husband's stress: "She tried to find tasks to keep him busy" and "[s]ometimes she tried to argue him out of his fear" (120, 122). Since she recognizes Joseph's obsessions, she tries to direct him into alternative activities which are less destructive to himself and the family.

As a mother she is a realist. She confesses immediately after the birth of her son, "I still hate it for making so much pain" (107). And later when Joseph insists that for "nearly two hundred years now the boys have had those eyes," she realistically replies, "They aren't far from the color of my eyes, . . . [a]nd besides, babies' eyes change color as they get older" (109). She has no illusions about her baby, merely accepting him as he is.

Although she is married to a strong-willed husband, and is taught by her indomitable sister-in-law, Rama, she never allows others to take away her independence. In her second meeting with Joseph she establishes her relationship with him, "She would put him in his place as she would a smart-alec boy in school" (40). Throughout their marriage she treats him in the same manner, realizing his obsession, and accepting her role as one who tries to redirect his actions, rather than accepting his domination.

Looking beyond the literal meaning of Elizabeth's role, she represents those who recognize that changes are taking place around them, see the significance of those changes, and realize that the past needs to be left behind. They are the realists who clearly see things as they are rather than as they wish them to be. They are also willing to learn new skills, just as Elizabeth accepted Rama's teaching. And finally, they are fiercely independent, not allowing anyone, no matter how powerful they may be, to take away their basic rights.

So although Rama is the strong Earth Mother, and it is obvious that Ma Joad follows in Rama's footsteps, a close look reveals that Steinbeck's other matriarchs follow more in the footsteps of Elizabeth in their self-understanding, independence, pragmatism, quiet strength of character, and

devotion to homemaking. In fact, even Ma Joad shares those characteristics. So as a model for Steinbeck's future matriarchs, Elizabeth takes her place as a very important matriarch in his fiction.

The Pastures of Heaven

Steinbeck does not develop the character of his matriarchs as fully in The Pastures of Heaven as he does in some of his other novels; nevertheless, it is clear that they share many of the traits of his other matriarchs. Since the Whitesides are "the valley's arbiter of manners," Alicia and especially Willa Whiteside are the most influential matriarchs (199). Steinbeck describes them as being consummate housekeepers: Alicia Whiteside "ordered the house in the old, comfortable manner, the unchangeable, the cyclic manner" (193), and Willa Whiteside "liked to sit . . . talking of the innumerable important things that bear on housekeeping" (205). Falkenberg notes, "Steinbeck seems to imply in The Pastures of Heaven that the impulse to order and to make a house a home is part of the female heredity and is as timeless and unalterable as the cycle of life itself" (52).

Alicia and Willa use their strength and inner knowledge to help their husbands. Alicia and Richard Whiteside have a "ritual" every evening of discussing the farm and the people of the valley, transferring Alicia's strength and knowledge to her husband to help him run the farm and interact with other people. Steinbeck notes the aid that Willa Whiteside gives to her husband: "Perhaps it was partly her influence that caused John to become gregarious" (205). Furthermore, these matriarchs accept their

husbands' dreams of founding a dynasty and use their inner knowledge to help them understand the implications of that quest. Alicia Whitehead tells her husband to teach their son, John, all he knows so that the "family is safe" (202). Willa Whitehead recognizes that her son is very different from her husband and tells John, "He isn't built like you nor like your father. . . . He has escaped you, John, and I don't think you can ever catch him" (209). As Alicia and Willa Whiteside are able to recognize their husbands' weaknesses and use their own strength and knowledge to assist them, they are affirming the patriarchy rather than claiming power for themselves.

Another important matriarch in The Pastures of Heaven is Katherine Wicks, who is the first matriarch to take over the leadership from her husband, even though only temporarily. Although Katherine "had known she could do this . . . and she knew that all her life was directed at this one moment," she was able to rejuvenate Ed's strength only through his participation (42). First of all, it is his confession, "I haven't any money," that turns "her genius" into the power that "flooded her" (42). Even after his confession releases her genius, he cannot draw upon her strength until he recognizes the beauty that this strength bestows upon her. But as "her genius passes into him," she is left powerless, in her former subservient position (43). Shark has "forgotten Katherine," as he cries, "I'll show people what I am" (43). Timmerman notes:

Shark's source of strength emanates, in this case, not from some perverted fantasy but from the human source of Katherine, precisely the resource he had neglected in his prior

fantasy world. . . . If he is driven out of Eden, however, he now finds the steadfast support of Katherine by his side.

(Dramatic 102)

The primary significance of the Wicks episode is that in a time of her husband's weakness Katherine uses her strength not to usurp his power, but to help him regain his strength. On the literal level, this signifies that Steinbeck believed that marriage is a partnership in which both man and woman have a definite part to play.

Two other matriarchs in The Pastures of Heaven need to be mentioned, Mrs. Morgan and Mrs. Humbert. While these two matriarchs are flat characters, one particular characteristic in both of them is fully developed: their failure as mothers. Mrs. Morgan "had wanted so much to be loved, and she hadn't known how to draw love. Her importunities had bothered the children and driven them away" (134). Timmerman comments, "Molly's own mother was a pinched nerve of lovelessness, an empty vessel claiming love as a kind of debt" (Dramatic 86). Mrs. Humbert believed "[y]outh should think of nothing but the duty it owed to age, of the courtesy and veneration due to age. On the other hand, age owed no courtesy whatever to youth" (165). Mrs. Morgan drove her children away, and Mrs. Humbert left her son filled with guilt for his own inadequacy. Timmerman explains, "Never allowed to dream when he [Pat Humbert] grew up, his dream possesses him when his parents die" (Dramatic 115). Steinbeck uses these matriarchs to illustrate how mothers can fail their children, leaving them hurt and resentful all of their lives. Although these two women are almost always overlooked in Steinbeck's

fiction, they are important because they temper his portrayal of mothers as being near-perfect beings. Through his portrayal of mothers who are failures, Steinbeck puts aside his idealism, and portrays not only the perfect, but the imperfect as well.

In The Pastures of Heaven some of the matriarchs use their skills to aid those weaker than themselves, while others believe they are owed something and make demands upon others. The former group are the quiet ones who not only perform their own jobs, but give assistance to others who are struggling. And the latter are the ones who take advantage of the system by demanding more than their share. So in The Pastures of Heaven, more than in any of his other novels, Steinbeck shows his readers a diversity of responses to the role of matriarch.

The Grapes of Wrath

Ma Joad in The Grapes of Wrath is Steinbeck's best-known matriarch. No other character in his fiction is developed with such complexity. Gladstein remarks on the fullness of Steinbeck's creation:

Ma Joad stands out in Steinbeck's works as a complete and positive characterization of a woman. Few of his other women are so fully drawn. None of his other women functions on so many interpretive levels, all affirmative. Not only is Ma realistically characterized as a believable woman, but she is also the embodiment of the myth of the pioneer woman, the symbol for positive motherhood, and the earth goddess incarnate. (Indestructible 77)

When Steinbeck first introduces Ma, he defines her strength in a fitting metaphor: "She seemed to know, to accept, to welcome her position, the citadel of the family, the strong place that could not be taken" (95). "Citadel"--a fortress that commands a city, both for control and defense--perfectly describes her position. Over and over we see Ma controlling her children's and her husband's individual desires that might otherwise be destructive to the entire family, but when necessary she also defends her brood against outside forces which might destroy them. Benson suggests whom Steinbeck might have used as a model for Ma: "Steinbeck's mother is also reflected in his fiction. . . . many of her best qualities--her cheerful strength, her sociability, her capable management--are given to Ma Joad in The Grapes of Wrath" (True Adventures 15).

Steinbeck also endows Ma with a deep inner knowledge which is especially evident as she analyzes the difference between a woman and a man:

"Woman can change better'n a man. . . . Woman got all her life in her arms. Man got it all in his head. . . .

"Man, he lives in jerk--baby born an' a man dies, an' that's a jerk--gets a farm an' loses his farm, an' that's a jerk. Woman, it's all one flow, like a stream, little eddies, little waterfalls, but the river, it goes right on. Woman looks at it like that. We ain't gonna die out. People is goin' on--chargin' a little, maybe, but goin' right on. . . .

"Ever'thing we do--seems to me is aimed right at goin' on."

(541-42)

This can be interpreted, at the most basic level, to mean that a woman spends her entire life occupied with household chores which never change, thereby giving continuity to her life. On a higher level, we can relate it to Steinbeck's belief that pregnancy brings a woman into communion with the secrets of creation. As a result, the hope for humanity lies in a woman's biological capacity for procreation and nurturing and in her ability to see the overall picture of mankind, a picture that men are denied. This quotation reflects Steinbeck's long search towards a definitive explanation of the difference between the roles that the female and the male play in the family. Although he was unable to define that difference until now, his portrayal of patriarchs and matriarchs in his earlier novels is consistent with this formal statement.

Steinbeck shows us not only Ma's indomitable strength and knowledge, but also her weaknesses. Although Ma seems to be indestructible, this is only a facade because she realizes "that if she swayed the family shook, and if she ever really deeply wavered or despaired the family would fall" (96). However, occasionally she allows her family a peep behind the facade: before leaving for California she admits, "I'm scared of stuff so nice" (117); when Al asks her if she is scared, she admits, "A little. . . I'm jus' a settin' here waitin'" (158); and when Noah deserts she admits, "Family's fallin' apart. . . . I jus' can't think. They's too much" (278). So Steinbeck presents us with a real woman, not the stereotypical indomitable Earth Mother who never fails, but a strong woman who overcomes her fears so she can keep her family intact.

Although Ma has used her strength to aid Pa's leadership in keeping the family together from the very beginning, it is not until the Weedpatch camp that her true position of leadership in the family is evident:

"We got to do somepin'," she said. . . . "You're scairt to talk it out. Ever' night you jus' eat, an' then you get wanderin' away. Can't bear to talk it out. Well, you got to. . . . Now don't none of you get up till we figger somepin out. . . . You set here an' get busy!" (450)

She does not tell Pa what the family should do; she only tells him that he needs to face up to the problem and make some decision. Later she admits, "Pa, he didn't say nothin', but he's mad now. He'll show me now. He's awright" (453). This shows that Ma never thinks of herself as taking over the leadership of the family; she only wants Pa to do his job.

Ma uses her strength and inner knowledge not to usurp the leadership of the family from Pa, but to protect her family when Pa loses his power. Ma always remains confident that he will regain his vigor and can take back the leadership of the family. This is evident as she says, "Don' you mind. Maybe--well, maybe nex' year we can get a place" (541). Ma recognizes her role as being the "citadel" of the family: she is the family center of strength while Pa is its leader. Ma recognizes the difference between their respective roles and does her utmost to sustain Pa's leadership. McKay notes, "If the wisdom that Steinbeck attributes to women directs Ma to step outside her traditional role in times of crisis, . . . her actions immediately after also make it clear that she is just as willing to retreat to wifhood and motherhood" (64).

When Steinbeck introduces Ma Joad he calls her a "healer" and an "arbiter," and these two words probably describe her maternal philosophies better than any other. As a healer, she heals the emotional wounds as well as the physical wounds of her children. This trait is especially noticeable as she counsels Rose of Sharon, but she is also concerned that they "didn' do nothin' in that jail to rot" Tommy and make him "crazy mad" (98). As an arbiter, she settles disagreements not only between Ruthie and Winfield, but also among her grown children. She is also the disciplinarian, sending the younger children to bed and scolding her grown children. Although she sees Al's "tom-cattin" and Rose of Sharon's gullibility of her husband's wild plans, she keeps her peace and lets them make their own decisions. Ma is Steinbeck's creation of a supreme mother. If indeed she is patterned after Steinbeck's own mother, as Benson suggests, Ma Joad is certainly a fine tribute to Olive Steinbeck.

Two other very important matriarchs in The Grapes of Wrath are Granma Joad and Rose of Sharon. Although Granma Joad is more of a caricature than a real person, she also portrays the same strengths as her daughter-in-law when, after Grampa's death, she "moved with dignity and held her head high. She walked for the family and held her head straight for the family. . . . Granma sat proudly, coldly . . . until no one looked at her, and then she lay down and covered her face with her arm" (177-78). She plays her role as the proud widow as long as the family requires it.

Although Rose of Sharon at first appears weak and sniveling, she eventually takes her place among Steinbeck's other strong women as she is the ultimate nurturer in the closing scene in The Grapes of Wrath.

Gladstein notes, "By giving her breast to the old man, Rose of Sharon takes her place with Ma as earth goddess. Her youth and fertility combine with her selfless act to signify continuity and hope" (Indestructible 84). Ma serves as a role model and sage to prepare Rose for her adult role, knowing that the future lies not with herself, but with her daughter as the new matriarch of the family. Owens in The Grapes of Wrath: Trouble in the Promised Land explains, "If we look rather closely at Rose of Sharon's relationship with Ma throughout the novel, however, it becomes evident that the daughter is the mother's disciple and has learned much from Ma. . . . Rose of Sharon is moving steadily closer to Ma's selfless commitment to the larger whole" (69).

Although the entire Joad family undergoes a transformation in this novel, Rose of Sharon's conversion from youth to maturity is the most remarkable transformation of all. It is through her that Steinbeck shows the indomitable strength that lies dormant in the young woman until the need arises. In the barn Sharon instinctively recognizes the needs of the stranger and knows how she can administer to them. Pizer explains how childbirth prepares her for this role:

Her childbearing is honored because it is a contribution to family continuity, and it constitutes, because of her intense self-preoccupation, the inward-turning nature of the family. But with the birth of her stillborn child . . . she is freed from these "I" roles. Encouraged by Ma, she can now--in a climactic gesture of conversion--move outward to the "we" of

the starving man. She is saying, in effect, that all those who hunger are her children. (94)

So although Ma is the indestructible woman, she does not stand alone, as Granma and Rose of Sharon take their places beside her. Gladstein notes, "Throughout the novel Steinbeck emphasizes the special indestructibility of women. When the men are disheartened and defeated, the women bear up and take charge" (Indestructible 84). In his previous novels Steinbeck struggled to portray that indefinable something which differentiated the female, and finally, in *Ma Joad* he has realized this goal.

East of Eden

Steinbeck portrays his grandmother, Liza Hamilton, in East of Eden. Although he knew little about his grandfather, who died when he was two, he probably knew his grandmother better because he was sixteen before she died in 1918; furthermore, she lived for a time with the Steinbeck family. Nevertheless, even though she is the primary matriarch in East of Eden, her role is not as fully developed as the other characters in the novel. Steinbeck describes her as having "a nail-hard strength in her, a lack of any compromise, a rightness in the face of all opposing wrongness, which made you hold her in a kind of awe but not in warmth" (57). While she is indeed a strong matriarch, she is not an Earth Mother because she lacks the ability to nurture others.

About her housekeeping skills, Steinbeck writes, "her house--it was always her house--was brushed and pummeled and washed" (14). This description is very reminiscent of Emma Randall's house, which was

"unscarred, uncarved, unchalked" ("Harness" 111). The difference is that Emma's house is totally sterile because she never allows anything to happen in it, whereas Liza's house, which is filled with nine children, sees a great deal of activity, but is kept immaculate through Liza's diligent exertion. The significance of this is that while Emma's house lacks vitality, Liza's overflows with it, but it is controlled by her strength of will.

Steinbeck does not give Liza the special inner vision possessed by his other matriarchs. Instead, he describes her as having "no truck with foolishness" (258) and accepting "the world as she accepted the Bible, with all its paradoxes and its reverses" (383). This suggests that she accepts the Bible in its literal meaning without searching for any deeper meaning, and in the same way she accepts all other things strictly at face value, unlike Steinbeck's other matriarchs, who are able to see deeper intrinsic meanings. Her perception of the evil Cathy Trask as "a sensible girl who didn't talk very much or try to teach her grandmother to suck eggs" (261) proves her lack of insight.

However, she does exert power in her family. Her son Will comments, "I think my mother held us together and kept the Hamiltons out of the poorhouse" (432). She uses this power to curb Samuel's more exuberant nature, as she believed "Samuel was wide open to the devil" (15) because he enjoyed laughing and having fun and also "had a good lusty love for a drink" (57). Like Steinbeck's other wives, she uses her strength to bolster her family when her husband's weakness has put it in jeopardy. Although it seems that she rules the family, Samuel actually uses her strong will to get his own way. An example is her refusal to let Samuel take Joe

to work on the Trask ranch. So when Joe decides he want to go, Samuel tells him, "And when you talk to your mother about it, I'll thank you to let it slip that I'm against it. You might even throw in that I refused you" (240). Understanding her contentious nature, he sets her up to respond the way he wants.

As a mother, "Liza enjoyed universal respect because she was a good woman and raised good children. She could hold up her head anywhere. Her husband and her children and her grandchildren respected her" (57). Furthermore, she "fed them, baked bread, made their clothes, and clothed them with good manners and iron morals too" (56). These descriptions suggest she provides for the material things her children need, and for their training, but mention nothing about the love and nurturing that most of Steinbeck's mothers provide so generously.

Liza and Samuel Hamilton are unlike Steinbeck's other couples in a number of ways. First of all, Samuel is given the special knowledge to understand the mysteries, while Liza is not. And furthermore, while she provides for the children's training, he provides nurturing and love. In the portrayal of his grandparents, Steinbeck seems to have given all the qualities that he admired--gregariousness, a sense of humor, creativity, dreaming, and insight--to Samuel, and all the necessary, but less admired traits--strength, reliability, hard-work, practicality, uprightness--to Liza.

However, Liza's role in East of Eden is far more important than just as the portrayal of Steinbeck's grandmother. Since East of Eden, is a novel of contrasts, Liza represents those characteristics of practicality and reliability which contrast with her husband's dreaming and with Catherine

Trask's irresponsibility. Furthermore, Liza certainly takes her place among Steinbeck's indestructible women even though she lacks some of their more gentle characteristics.

The Winter of Our Discontent

Steinbeck's last novel, The Winter of Our Discontent, is written in the first person from Ethan Hawley's point of view, so the matriarch, Mary Hawley, is described only from her husband's perspective. And in his eyes, she is "tender and sweet and kind of helpless" (300). This point of view gives the reader mixed signals, as sometimes Ethan's descriptions of Mary seem incongruous with the person Steinbeck depicts. A comparison of Mary to Steinbeck's other matriarchs should provide a better guide to her actual character than Ethan's biased description provides.

Although Steinbeck makes less of an issue of her homemaking skills than he does when depicting his other matriarchs, he subtly lets the reader know her concern for her home. Most of the interaction between Mary and her family takes place in the kitchen as she is cooking, preparing for a party, or cleaning up afterwards. Another indication of her dedication to homemaking is her statement, "Well, I've been going like spit to get the house ready" (75).

It is more difficult to assess whether or not she is as strong as Steinbeck's other matriarchs because Ethan keeps reminding the readers of the many ways in which she seems fragile and helpless. Several times he mentions her quiet, untroubled sleep; furthermore, he talks to her in a silly language one would use when talking to a child. However, her actions and

conversations indicate that Ethan does not understand her true character. A "sweet and tender" wife does not tell her husband he is a failure as she does: "I do blame you for sitting wallowing in it. You could climb out of it if you didn't have your old-fashioned fancy-pants ideas. Everybody's laughing at you" (40). Peter Lisca is wrong in his opinion that she is "vapid, insipid" (Nature and Myth 184). Actually, she is a strong, domineering woman since it is she who convinces her husband to put aside his "old-fashioned fancy-pants ideas" and think of his fortune (40). Although Ethan never consciously thinks of her as being strong, his reflection that "never before had the iron of her wishes showed through" (47), reveals his subconscious knowledge that Mary is indeed a very strong woman.

Even though she is a strong woman, she seems to be extremely gullible. She genuinely seems to believe that Margie Young-Hunt can predict the future with her tarot cards: "You think Margie made it all up. She didn't, because I cut the cards three times--but even supposing she did, why would she do it except to be kind and friendly and offer a little help" (37). Furthermore, she seems blind to Margie's ulterior motives.

Nevertheless, she possesses the same inner knowledge as Steinbeck's other matriarchs. She is able to totally understand her husband as she "listens to tones and intonations and from them gathers her facts about health and how my mood is and am I tired or gay" (61). Furthermore, she uses her special knowledge to interpret the family's standing in the community. While Ethan believes, "No one sneers at Hawley" (39), Mary recognizes the truth that, "[i]n this town or any other town a Hawley

grocery clerk is still a grocery clerk'" (40). However, unlike Steinbeck's other matriarchs who use their inner knowledge to strengthen their families, she uses hers in a way which eventually causes her family's doom.

As a mother she is in total control of her children's behavior. This is especially evident in that marvelous scene where she enlists the children to wash the dishes:

Mary's eyes sought out the children and her spirit moved on them with a fixed bayonet. They knew what was coming but they were helpless.

Mary said, "The children always do it. They love to. And they do it so well. I'm so proud of them." . . .

They knew they were being taken. (87)

This scene confirms her ability to motivate her children to do exactly as she wishes rather than as they wish.

In the Hawley family, Mary totally dominates her husband, but Ethan does not realize it. Throughout, despite Ethan's playful chatter, the power struggle is unrelenting as these two people are constantly locked in combat. Although this struggle occasionally becomes overtly combative, most often it is covert as each misleads the other as to the true nature of their thoughts. The following is one example:

"Ethan, that's cynical. You aren't like that. . . . [T]hat wasn't a joke the way you said it. I know your jokes. You meant that."

A fear struck me. I was showing through. I couldn't let myself show through. "Oh say, Miss Mousie will you marry me?"

And Mary said, "Oho! Oho!" (240)

In this exchange Ethan is trying to deceive Mary into believing that he is not involved in the conspiracy, while she is trying to discover what is in his mind. She succeeds in her efforts, but he fails in his.

While it seems that Ethan manipulates Mary into going along with his plans without revealing to her what they are, in actuality Mary has set him up and allows him to do whatever is necessary to achieve her goal. This is especially evident as she allows him to distract her attention with promises of a vacation, so he can get her approval to withdraw more of her money, without any questions asked. In his silly way he asks, "'Don't you want to know what the investment is? The figures, the flotage, the graphs, the probable return, the fiscal dinkum, and all that?'" (219). While her reply, "'Well, I wouldn't want to understand it,'" satisfies him, it is too glib and reveals her understanding that Ethan is trying to deceive her (219). Mary is very much aware of what she is doing and what Ethan is doing, but Ethan is deceived into believing that Mary is unaware of his activities. However, at the end of the novel, he realizes the truth as he "ran away fast . . . from Mary," finally recognizing that she has tempted him to act in ways that are contrary to his own strict system of morals (309).

Although Mary's role in this novel may seem rather insignificant, if she is viewed as Eve, her role becomes quite important because she is the one responsible for the sins of her husband and her children. Although the

setting of this Eden is not the West where Steinbeck's others Edens are set, it nevertheless is filled with metaphors from the Garden. Margie Hunt-Young is the snake who can predict the future with her tarot cards, planting a vision of wealth in the gullible Eve who tempts her God-fearing, upright Adam to abandon his "old-fashioned fancy-pants ideas" and recognize the family's real status in the community. This reading is further supported by Ethan's comment, "'You have taught me something. . . . Three things will never be believed--the true, the probable, and the logical'" (40). Steinbeck uses Mary Hawley to represent the age-old temptress who is responsible for all mankind's sins.

Mary Hawley shares many of the characteristics of Steinbeck's other matriarchs--homemaking skills, strength, inner knowledge, control of her children--yet she differs from them in one important aspect. She rather than her husband initiates the quest after the American Dream of wealth. Furthermore, she uses her skills not to nurture and protect her husband from stress, but to encourage him to put himself into a very vulnerable position in order to improve the family's status in the community. Mary Hawley is the only matriarch to use her unique talents for her own advantage; all the others altruistically care for their husbands and children.

While Steinbeck's previous matriarchs had their faults--Elizabeth Wayne felt superior to her husband, Liza Hamilton lacked nurturing skills--they are, for the most part, idealistically portrayed. This more realistic portrayal of Mary Hawley indicates that Steinbeck has lost his previous idealistic view of women. This change of attitude probably had its roots in his hatred of his second wife, Gwyn. In East of Eden he vented this anger

in his portrayal of Catherine Trask. Benson notes that "in composing his long novel he would become deeply engaged in evolving a philosophy that would allay his hurt and anger in respect to Gwyn (True Adventures 665). In doing so, he finally recognized the fallibility of women, and this recognition comes through in his portrayal of Mary Hawley.

However, Steinbeck became less idealistic not only as a result of his own personal experiences, but also as a result of his increasingly pessimistic view of American society. He wrote to Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary of the United Nations, about the "symptoms of a general immorality which pervades every level of our national life and perhaps the life of the whole world. . . . [T]he tools of success are chicanery, treachery, self-interest, laziness and cynicism" (Letters 653). So his less than idealistic portrayal of Mary Hawley is a result of both his more realistic viewpoint of women, and his more pessimistic viewpoint of the world in general.

These are Steinbeck's matriarchs, the women who spend their lives turning dwellings into homes, minding their children, using their strength to bear the burdens of the family, and their inner knowledge to prepare for the future. These are the realists who must function in day-to-day situations, correctly analyzing the significance of events. These are the matriarchs who must be prepared to take over the leadership of the family when their husbands fail. These are the realists who clearly see things as they are, rather than as they wish them to be. These are the ones who represent Ma's faith in the future: "People is goin' on--chargin' a little,

maybe, but goin' right on'" (Grapes 542). And indeed, Steinbeck's families will be "changin' more than a little," as they goes through a complete metamorphosis, which the next chapter of this paper will reveal. The destruction is inevitable even though the matriarchs have valiantly fought to protect their families. But because the problems are insurmountable, they have failed and the families, as they currently exist, will be destroyed.

Chapter 4

The Destruction and Metamorphosis of the Family

Steinbeck destroyed his families because he wanted to warn his nation that the destruction of the American way of life is inevitable unless Americans modernize their expectations, attitudes, standards, and methods of dealing with problems. Evidence of this comes from America and Americans when he asks, "Why are we on this verge of moral and hence nervous collapse? (140). He believed that as long as Americans behave as though they are still in the nineteenth-century, they cannot succeed. In his novels and his prose Steinbeck shows his readers that both the family itself and American society as a whole are struggling to survive.

To show the most basic cause of imminent destruction he portrays his families living close to the land in a farming economy. While this does not seem to apply to The Winter of Our Discontent, in actuality Ethan Hawley is closely associated with the produce of the land, and seeks desperately to escape into a new way of life. So, in all five of these novels the livelihood of the family comes from an outmoded occupation.

Another basic cause of destruction is the weak leadership of patriarchs obsessed with the American Dream. Because they are focused upon achieving their goals in the future, they are blind to the current situation of their families and neglect to provide for their needs. Furthermore, the means they use to achieve their dreams exposes their families to situations which are destructive. The patriarchs all believe in the westering myth; however, rather than being the Garden they expect, the

West actually proves to be a destructive place. Steinbeck portrayed the West in this way because he did not see it as being the Garden that its migrants sought; instead he believed that it was like any other place which offers no guarantees of success. He believed that it is up to each individual to make his own Eden. "Steinbeck asks us," Owens explains, "to work toward an understanding that transcends illusions and sees things as they really are. The central message here is that there are no Edens, for that [sic] is the most American and most dangerous illusion of all" (Revision 89).

Another cause of destruction is the family members themselves as they place self-interest before the needs of the family. When this happens communication breaks down and family members become alienated from one another. As each member of the family exerts pressure upon the others for his own selfish desires, the unity of the family disintegrates, leaving a structure that is ripe for destruction. Although self-interest is most noticeable in Steinbeck's later families--the Trasks and the Hawleys--all of his families suffer from this malady to some degree.

That final ingredient which breaks the already crumbling structure is outside intervention. It can be totally accidental, such as Mae Munroe's comment that Pat Humbert's house looks just like the house in Vermont she had seen on a postcard. Or it can be a totally random happening, such as the drought which Steinbeck used in both To a God Unknown and The Grapes of Wrath. Other outside influences are more deliberate in nature, such as Margie Young-Hunt's intervention into the relationship of the Hawley family. One of the most serious cases of deliberate outside

intervention is the persecution of the Joad family by the frightened citizens of California.

Ironically, "good intentions" just as frequently bring about destruction as do these more malicious interventions. When this happens, the individual with the "good intentions" is totally unaware of the goals which motivate the individual to whom he offers his "gift." In some way this "gift" attacks the individual's self esteem, integrity or lifestyle, causing destruction to this part of him. Samuel's children kill him with their "good intentions," and the Munroe's "good intentions" destroy some of the families in The Pastures of Heaven: Bert visits the Van Deventer house to "see if they need anything" (69); Mrs. Munroe brings a few clothes to Robbie Maltby because "the poor child's hardly clothed" (103); and as a neighborly gesture, Bert and Jimmie help John Whiteside burn off his brush. Lisca comments on "good intentions" in The Pastures of Heaven: "[E]ach story can be seen to illustrate the same general theme: human happiness and fulfillment are tenuous; it is a condition so frail that it can be shattered even by good intentions" (Biography 53). Actually for these families it isn't the "human happiness and fulfillment" that are fragile; it is their unrealistic dreams which are so fragile.

As the families attempt to shore up the crumbling structure, they find that the solutions which worked in the past no longer apply. Methods which worked in an agrarian society no longer work in an industrial society. So, using Steinbeck's observations in America and Americans, these families who struggle with "lives in the present" operating with

"practices in the . . . past" find that their inappropriate, outmoded solutions do not solve their current problems.

And so a chain of events works to cause the destruction of the family: an outmoded lifestyle, a weak patriarchy, unreal expectations, strong self interest, outside intervention, and obsolete solutions to their problems. It is the whole chain, not just one problem, which is responsible for the destruction of these families. Steinbeck was wise enough to realize that a simplistic cause will not do; rather, he must show life the way it really is with its many interconnected problems.

To translate these literal concepts into the microcosm, Steinbeck predicts the destruction of the American way of life for the exact same reasons: an outmoded economic structure, weak government leadership, unreal expectations by both the people and its leaders, strong self-interest on the part of both the people and the leaders, outside intervention in the form of insensitivity and social persecution, and--especially--obsolete solutions to twentieth-century problems. In America and Americans he lists even more reasons:

I have named the destroyers of nations: comfort, plenty, and security--out of which grow a bored and slothful cynicism, in which rebellion against the world as it is and myself as I am are submerged in restless self-satisfaction. A dying people tolerates the present, rejects the future, and finds its satisfactions in past greatness and half-remembered glory. A dying people arms itself with defensive weapons and with mercenaries against change. (143)

As dark as the picture of the family becomes, one bright light remains. Although Steinbeck criticizes "his people," and has "some fear," he also has "more hope, and great confidence." He confirmed his confidence in the future as he wrote:

We have not lost our way at all. The roads of the past have come to an end and we have not yet discovered a path to the future. I think we will find one, but its direction may be unthinkable to us now. When it does appear, however, and we move on, the path must have direction, it must have purpose and the journey must be filled with a joy of anticipation. . . .

We are in the perplexing period of change. We seem to be running in all directions at once--but we are running. And I believe that our history, our experience in America, has endowed us for the change that is coming. We have never sat still for long; we have never been content with a place, a building--or with ourselves. (America 142-43)

Since Steinbeck believed that a "change is coming," he allowed for a change in the family structure by presenting an option to the present order and some clues as to his hopes for the future. It is very important to realize that what Steinbeck offers for the future is not specifically identified; rather, it is something which the reader can hypothesize through an analysis of what is destroyed. Steinbeck, does not attempt to discover "a path to the future" in these novels, because "its direction may be unthinkable to us now." In his early novels especially in To a God Unknown, he placed a strong emphasis upon non-teleological thinking

which denies divine Providence and an overall design for life; therefore, although he destroys his families, he does not make a specific prediction for the future. Nevertheless, he offers clues to the philosophy which should replace the discarded one. Benson explains:

Steinbeck presented almost from the beginning of his published work a world that was mechanistic and independent of the desires of man and the presence of God. There may be enough immediate physical cause to provide some logic, but by and large, there is the pervasive sense that things just happen. People who act by their dreams, are defeated; people who try to change things are usually unsuccessful. The best that man can hope for is to be able to adapt to what is and to survive.

(True Adventures 242-43)

While Steinbeck never totally abandons non-teleological thinking, his stress upon other philosophies in his later novels permits him to be more specific about his hope for the future. Therefore, in these he names a specific person or family which will be the hope for the future.

To translate his hope for the future in terms of the microcosm, the hope that Steinbeck offers is a break with the past, a discarding of outmoded standards, morals, and solutions which can be accomplished by adopting a new philosophy. In his Nobel acceptance speech he explains:

The present universal fear has been the result of a forward surge in our knowledge and manipulation of certain dangerous factors in the physical world. It is true that other phases of understanding have not yet caught up with this great step, but

there is no reason to presume that they cannot or will not draw abreast. Indeed, it is a part of the writer's responsibility to make sure that they do. (9)

In order to understand Steinbeck's confidence in the future, it is necessary to define each family, investigate what causes its destruction, note its metamorphosis, and finally, discover Steinbeck's hope for the future.

To a God Unknown

The once great Wayne clan which traced its heritage back to antiquity is the family destroyed in To a God Unknown. The strength of this clan came from its traditions, which were passed along from father to son in the form of a blessing. Further strength came from its cohesiveness. As long as the family remained on the original farm in Vermont under the leadership of John Wayne, the brothers lived together in harmony, each dedicated to the needs of the entire family.

However, the death of the patriarch and the move from the old family homestead to a new, unknown land signals a change in the family's character. First of all, the family members all become fervent believers in the westering myth, expecting the new country to be more bountiful than the farm in Vermont. Furthermore, the brothers no longer live in harmony, substituting self-interest for the previous dedication to the needs of the family. The most dangerous change comes over Joseph, who believed he "spoke with the sanction of the grass, the soil, the beasts wild and domesticated; he was the father of the farm" (22). His obsession with the land causes him to be a weak and ineffective leader of his family.

All of these problems are exacerbated by the drought. To end the drought Joseph attempts to appease "a god unknown" through sacrifices. This ancient ritualistic solution alienates his brother, Burton, and leads to his own suicide. Ultimately the family is destroyed not by the drought, but by their reactions to the drought. Furthermore, each brother becomes so consumed with his own dreams that he puts these before the needs of the family, and the result is that Benjamin and Joseph die, leaving Burton and Thomas to go their own ways, absorbed in their own interests.

Although the reader might be tempted to speculate that the hope for the future lies with Joseph's son, John, who is being raised by Rama, no textual evidence for this hypothesis exists. However, it is clear that Steinbeck rejects teleological thinking and reliance upon "gods" to fulfill man's needs; therefore, non-teleological thinking which denies the existence of divine intervention is his hope for the future. Owens, using Steinbeck's own words explains:

Teleological thinking . . . results from acting upon partial evidence, which is all we can see of the "overall pattern." It is a mistaken belief in cause-and-effect relationships, the kind of relationship that underlies all supplications to all gods, known or unknown. This is the kind of thinking which Joseph must grow out of in the course of To a God Unknown.

(Revision 19)

Steinbeck sends the message that the old systems the family knew on the farm in the East are now obsolete and will not function in the new world of California. The old traditions which guided the family for

centuries must be discarded, so that individuals can be free to make their own decisions based upon pragmatism rather than custom. French notes: "What the book actually describes is the breakdown of an archetypal family. . . (the name appropriately symbolizes the decline of the family's fortunes)" (John Steinbeck 47).

Furthermore, Steinbeck exposes the false hope of the American Dream, particularly that a new Garden exists in the West. The ideals of the American Dream no longer apply; no Eden lies waiting in the West. Instead each individual must make his own Eden through his own labors. To summarize, in To a God Unknown, Steinbeck destroys the great Wayne clan because they are too bound up with traditional and ritualistic solutions and follow teleological thinking, while his hope for the future lies in non-teleological thinking.

The Pastures of Heaven

Steinbeck depicts a large number of families in The Pastures of Heaven. This chapter will consider all of the families, including the non-traditional units (two sisters, one-parent households, a bachelor, a bachelorette) that were excluded in the previous chapters because they lacked traditional matriarchs and patriarchs. Each of these families follows its own version of the American Dream, which in some way clouds its vision of reality. In five of these families, reality is within their grasp, but is unacceptable to them; however, when forced to accept the reality of their situation, only four benefit from the experience. The Lopez sisters and the Wicks family accept the truth and move away from the valley to profit

from their talents. Pat Humbert remains, making the conscious decision "to hide for a while," indicating that in time he may recover and move into his remodeled home (187). The Banks family also remains, but changes its lifestyle. Only one, Molly Morgan, flees from the valley, unwilling to accept the truth. The destruction in this case is to a lifestyle, and while these families survive, a valuable part of them has been irretrievably destroyed. Winn notes, "When circumstances in each story evolve to a point at which illusion could be shattered, the protagonists find themselves unable to take that step and, instead, either maintain the same illusion or fabricate a new one" (94).

Other families in The Pastures of Heaven also focus their lives totally upon their dreams. Unlike those who merely suffer from a skewed sense of reality, these do not benefit when reality is thrust upon them because without their dreams, nothing is left: Tularecito is institutionalized, Helen Van Deventer murders her daughter, the Maltbys leave behind their freedom because Robbie "has lived like a little animal too long" (107), and the Whiteheads learn "how a soul feels when it sees its body buried in the ground and lost" (219). These families have lost more than the first group, as they have lost that part of them which makes life worth living. So for them, life no longer has any meaning. It is unlikely they will be able to find anything to take the place of that which has been destroyed, so ultimately they will be completely destroyed.

The destruction in this novel comes, not from the "baby curses" engendered by the Monroe family, but from the vulnerability of the families. Since their lives rest precariously upon an unreal base, they are

easily destroyed. Lisca further elucidates upon this: "In each case a Munroe's intrusion causes a climactic change in the characters' lives by serving, however innocently, as the instrument that shatters some dream or illusion which had provided these lives with order and purpose" (Nature and Myth 52).

Steinbeck's hope for the future in The Pastures of Heaven can be found in the last chapter of the novel, which recounts the tale of vacationers traveling in a sightseeing bus, seeking to escape from the reality of their everyday lives. Although Steinbeck draws heavily upon the ironical misinterpretation of outsiders who believe that the valley must be an ideal place without any troubles, he seriously portrays them as people who are seeking to escape from their own real problems and concerns. As they look down into the Pastures of Heaven, "an old and healthy man with eager eyes" (222), speaking of his hopes, sums up the problems of all the passengers:

I've never had time to think. I've been too busy with troubles ever to think anything out. If I could go down there and live down there for a little--why, I'd think over all the things that ever happened to me, and maybe I could make something out of them, something all in one piece that had a meaning, instead of all these trailing ends, these raw and dragging tails.

Nothing would bother me down there and I could think. (225)

Although he is obviously misinterpreting the tranquility of the valley, he is not misinterpreting his own need to withdraw from everyday cares and look for meaning in his own life.

Steinbeck puts into the words of this old man his hope for the future: people should take time out from their impatient quest after their own dreams to contemplate the past and the present, to find some real relevance and order in the things that have happened to them. If the families in The Pastures of Heaven had followed this advice they might not have been destroyed.

Although at the time he wrote The Pastures of Heaven, Steinbeck still put such a strong emphasis upon non-teleological thinking that he could not definitely indicate new families rising from the destruction of the old families, four years later he did write a sequel to the story of Junius and Robbie Maltby. In this sequel, which is entitled Nothing So Monstrous, he posits that Junius and Robbie have returned to the Pastures of Heaven and live in a secret cave. "And to this cave young farmers who were little boys when Junius was here before, may come secretly" (30). They sit and listen to Junius while he discourses upon the many mysteries of the world. "The young farming men may listen and be glad he came back" (31). Steinbeck concludes the story: "I don't know that this is true. I only hope to God it is" (31). This sequel indicates Steinbeck's belief that man needs to stretch his imagination as he searches for meaning in things that happen. This does not indicate that he will ever find meaning; rather it indicates that reality is not enough.

Although Steinbeck seems to undercut all dreams in The Pastures of Heaven, the last chapter of the novel and the sequel to the Maltby story both seem to indicate that he, in fact, believed otherwise. In his Journal he wrote while composing East of Eden he muses, "I guess one of the things

that sets us apart from other animals is our dreams and our plans" (75).

And in America and Americans he wrote:

For Americans too the wide and general dream has a name. It is called "the American Way of Life." No one can define it or point to any one person or group who lives it, but it is very real nevertheless. . . . These dreams describe our vague yearnings toward what we wish were and hope we may be: wise, just, compassionate, and noble. The fact that we have this dream at all is perhaps an indication of its possibility.

(34)

In these two quotations, Steinbeck indicates the necessity for man to stand back from the present reality and think about what has happened and is happening. Steinbeck himself spent many hours with Ed Ricketts doing exactly that.

In this novel Steinbeck has moved beyond merely condemning outmoded, ritualistic solutions and affirming non-teleological thinking as he suggests that one must not just let events happen without thinking about them and evaluating them. By taking the time to think about the past, one should be able to discover the correct and the incorrect solutions that were applied to past problems and relate them to the present. Therefore, the families in The Pastures of Heaven might have escaped from their troubles if they had just taken the time to step back and think about what was happening and relating it to their experience, rather than just blindly reacting to stimuli.

To relate this hope for the future into the microcosm of society, Steinbeck is advocating that our nation consider the past to find solutions to present problems. Everything that happens today in some way relates to something that happened in the past, and by understanding the mistakes previously made, America should be able to develop better policies for the present. Furthermore, Steinbeck continues to condemn the westering myth as each of these families come to this valley in California hoping to find an idyllic home, but instead they find a valley beset with "baby curses." This novel represents a mid-position between heavily allegorical To a God Unknown and the stark realism of the next novel, The Grapes of Wrath.

The Grapes of Wrath

The destruction of a proud, self-sufficient family with strong ties to the land is the subject of Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. Grampa had cleared the land and planted the farm, and his sons and their families had spent their lives working it. Ma, the philosopher, sums up the family's relationship to the land: "They was the time when we was on the lan'. They was a boundary to us then. Ol' folks died off, an' little fellas come, an' we was always one thing--we was the fambly--kinda whole and clear. An' now we ain't clear no more'" (503). Their "jerk" from the land engendered the Joad's dream of owning one of the "'little white houses in among the orange trees'" (118). But since the westering myth is obsolete, California is not the Eden they envision. Indeed, it is the reality of California--the cruel vigilantes, unemployment, homelessness, poverty, and floods--which physically destroys the Joads; however, it is their separation

from the land and the difficulty of adjusting to a new lifestyle which emotionally destroys them. Only six of the original twelve members of the family are left to flee into the rain. Hearn notes, "As they proceed, one of the main sources of dramatic tension is the ironic contrast between their dreams of a California paradise and the brutal reality they actually find. It is a contrast that conveys starkly Steinbeck's vision of the bankruptcy of the American Dream in Depression America" (87).

While it is easy to blame the destruction of the Joad family upon the cruelty of the large California landowners, this answer is too simplistic. The cause can actually be traced back to the farmers' own rapacious use of their land. They knew "what cotton does to the land; robs it, sucks all the blood out of it" (41). And yet they continued to grow cotton. Therefore, the drought only worsens an already existing condition. Motley notes, "In defending their independence, they [farmers] have clung to their fathers' ways without adjusting to the changing economics of farming" (403). So one of the most basic reasons for the Joad's destruction lies in their exploitation of their own land.

Another reason is their fierce independence. As they rely strictly upon their own abilities, not asking others for help, they deny themselves necessary support. Furthermore, in their independence they neglect to give support to others. So in The Grapes of Wrath Steinbeck destroys the isolated, self-sufficient family. Hearn notes: "The implication is that the dream of individual success in a land of plenty, comforting though it may seem to people like the Joads, is actually a relic of the past which will have

to be recognized as such before there can be any effective communal action to redress social wrongs" (88).

As the small party flees into the rain, "'gettin' to higher groun'" (575), their immersion in the rain signifies the end of their old life and their baptism into a new life, one in which their identity as an individual family is destroyed so that they may take their place as a part of "the people." In "The Ending of The Grapes of Wrath: A Further Commentary," John Ditsky suggests, "As water implies baptism, the flood implies a new start--a re-Creation" (117). The Joads have moved from what Steinbeck called an "I" to a "we" consciousness. In The Grapes of Wrath Steinbeck's hope for the future lies in group consciousness, with individuals joining together for communal growth. Pizer in "The Enduring Power of the Joads" argues:

By the close of the novel the Joads have been stripped clean. . . . [T]his is a group in which each figure has conformed to the biblical promise that to lose all is often to gain one's salvation; that is, each has struggled through to a form of "we" consciousness. . . . [E]ach has made the journey from 'I' to "we." (94)

In the destruction of the Joad family, Steinbeck brings together all the themes that he explored in the destruction of his previous families. The most obvious strand is the destruction of the American Dream: the Eden they envision does not exist. It is ironic that the Joads were forced from Oklahoma because of a drought, only to face destruction in California because of a flood. Owens explains the philosophical implications to be

found in this novel, "The Joads' exodus is from the fatal delusion of the American myth. . . . It is a journey toward a mystical and non-teleological commitment leading to a pragmatic ability to survive in the American Eden that never was" (Revision 140). So, as Owens notes, two other philosophies, non-teleological thinking and pragmatism, which Steinbeck saw as the hope for the future in his previous novels, also apply in The Grapes of Wrath. While the specific thrust of non-teleological thinking for the previous novels was to put an end to searching for causes and concentrate upon what is happening, in this novel the thrust is more upon looking at the West as it is, rather than viewing it as a new Eden. This realism leads to updated pragmatic solutions rather than a reliance on outdated traditional ones. Carpenter comments, "In the course of the book Steinbeck develops and translates the thought of the earlier pragmatists" ("Philosophical" 13).

Another philosophical ideal which Steinbeck advocates in the metamorphosis of the Joads' consciousness from "I" to "we," is his phalanx theory. While the Joad family remains fiercely independent, they are not able to overcome the hardships of California, but as a part of a phalanx known as "the people," they have the resources to do so. Benson explains how Steinbeck used the Joads as a microcosm for America:

He saw the Okie migration as a smaller phalanx within the larger, and he also notes in his interview that in writing The Grapes of Wrath, "I have set down what a large section of our people are doing and wanting, and symbolically what all people of all time are doing and wanting. This migration is

the outward sign of the want." It was a movement, both literally and figuratively, that for the purpose of this novel could be used as a metaphor for the social revolution as a whole. (True Adventures 387)

Steinbeck's hope for the future lies in man's ability to forget self-interest and reach out to become a part of all mankind working together as one large phalanx to solve common problems. Hearn notes:

But the American dream that lowly people like the Joads can acquire their share of the plentiful land through desire and individual effort is a monumental fraud, Steinbeck suggests. Only through a strong communal unity and class solidarity can the disposed hope to grasp their share. There is hope in the fact that bitter disillusionment helps to develop this sense of unity. (88)

To summarize, in The Grapes of Wrath the philosophies which Steinbeck advocates as the hope for the future are non-teleological thinking, pragmatism, and his phalanx theory. These are the same philosophies which he advocated in the previous two novels, but in The Grapes of Wrath they are emphasized more strongly, and are more clearly elucidated.

East of Eden, the Trasks

The Trask family in East of Eden, represents the good and evil sides of human nature. The role each family member plays is based upon Steinbeck's overall theme of good and evil as depicted in the Biblical story

of Cain and Abel. As an extension of this metaphor, Steinbeck names all the "good" Abel characters with "A" names: Adam, Aron, Abra; and all the "evil" Cain characters with "C" names: Cyrus, Charles, Cathy, Caleb. To carry this allegory one step further, the innocent "good" people neither see nor understand the misery that they cause with their narrow vision of the world, while the worldly "evil" people are very aware of their actions. In particular, Cathy and Adam are narrowly characterized to exemplify only those precise aspects of their nature. Owens explains:

[I]n Adam Steinbeck is postulating an absolute, deterministic "goodness" that stands in direct contrast to Cathy's (and Charles's) absolute "badness." Thus, Adam and Cathy represent the two halves of the illusory American myth with its certainty of both evil and innocence, and neither is capable of functioning with any success in the real, good-and-evil world of a fallen Eden. (Revision 149)

And it is this narrowly defined family whose destruction Steinbeck depicts.

The westering myth with its Garden metaphors is blatantly obvious in East of Eden. Furthermore, we see Adam's dream of perfection invested in a woman. Also there is Cal's dream to buy his father's love. So in this novel Steinbeck gives added dimensions of the American Dream beyond the westering myth as he includes the perversion of wealth and the idealization of Woman. In American and Americans Steinbeck comments upon the origins of this latter obsolete way of thinking, "Women were protected to the point of worship because only they could bear children to continue the race" (141). So Adam's idealization of Cathy had its roots in a time when

women were idealized because they were necessary to bear the children of the next generation, but Adam carries it to the extreme.

Steinbeck portrays the Trask family hurtling towards its doom because each member of the family is so narrowly focused he cannot understand the others. Although World War I and its potential for profit complicates their problems, the primary destructive force is entirely internal: they end up destroying each other. Cyrus denied Adam the love he deserved and he, in turn, denied his sons, Cal and Aron, as did their mother, Cathy. This denial irretrievably molded each of their lives as Steinbeck noted:

The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell he fears. I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection, and with the crime guilt--and there is the story of mankind. (East 355)

The anger, revenge, and guilt caused by rejection eventually cause the destruction of the Trask family.

The solutions that the Trasks apply to their problems are entirely ineffective: Adam retreats into himself, refusing to recognize his problems; Cathy uses her power to destroy others; Cal tries to buy his father's love; and Aron seeks to find a mother's love in his girl friend, Abra. And since these solutions only compound their problems, the family is destroyed: Aron dies, Cathy commits suicide, Adam sinks into a coma, and Cal is consumed by guilt.

The "hope" for the future lies in "Timshel," which Adam whispers to Cal, giving him forgiveness of his guilt and allowing him to "be free" (777). The union of the forgiven Cal who accepts "Timshel" and the wise Abra will provide the family of the future, as Lee notes to Adam, "Your son will live. He will marry and his children will be the only remnant left" (777). Steinbeck actually planned to write this sequel, as he noted in a letter to Bo Beskow: "But understand please that this is only half the book. There will be another one equally long. This one runs from 1863 to 1918. The next will take the time from 1918 to the present" (Letters 431). And in his Journal he wrote, "I want the grandson of Cathy to be 20 years old in 1952" (60).

The union of the forgiven Cal and the wise Abra will result in a family which rejects preordination and lives by the concept of choice. In his Journal Steinbeck wrote about his goals for East of Eden:

I will tell them [his sons] one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest story of all--the story of good and evil, of strength and weakness, of love and hate, of beauty and ugliness. I shall try to demonstrate to them how these doubles are inseparable--how neither can exist without the other and how out of their groupings creativeness is born. (4)

This indicates that Steinbeck believed that it is necessary to know both good and evil so a person not only can recognize what choices are available, but can also understand the behavior of others. And through a recognition of the choices, a person is free from preordination.

Some critics have maligned East of Eden for offering "Thou mayest" as the major premise, and yet not allowing either Cathy or Adam any choice in their narrowly focused lives. Lisca's criticism is typical: "Although the main drift in East of Eden is toward asserting belief in man's free will, both author and 'spokesman' characters sometimes deny that belief at important points" (Nature and Myth 169). However, there is another way of interpreting this message. Steinbeck's real message is that all individuals have the power to control their own fate, but they are unable to do so until they realize that they have the power to make their own decisions. Adam was unable to accept the evil in Cathy until Samuel Hamilton gave him the power to make the decision to go and see for himself. Cal believed that he was just like his mother until seeing her, he realized, "I'm my own. I don't have to be you. . . . If I'm mean, it's my own mean" (605). So in East of Eden, the family metamorphoses from a world of preordination where one has no choice, into a world in which each person is free to choose either good or evil. However, unless one recognizes that he has the ability to control his own fate, he is unable to do so.

This emphasis upon individual choice in East of Eden is a radical change from Steinbeck's previous stress upon the importance of community in The Grapes of Wrath. Ditsky, in "Toward a Narrational Self," attempts to account for Steinbeck's change of direction:

[W]e have . . . a Steinbeck ready to accommodate a new vision of the self. The objective events of this period are the dissolving of his second marriage (to Gwyn Conger) and the

love affair with and subsequent marriage to Elaine Scott, the death of Ed Ricketts, and the decline of Steinbeck's interest in, and respect for, the notion of the group man. . . .

John Steinbeck has finally resolved the issue of the group-man by returning to something like the Christian idea of moral responsibility-- and is ready to incorporate the changes in his attitudes, and in himself as a person, into the novel. (3-5)

In addition to the reasons listed by Ditsky, Steinbeck lists a few in East of Eden:

There are monstrous changes taking place in the world, forces shaping a future whose face we do not know. . . . And now the forces marshaled around the concept of the group have declared a war of extermination on that preciousness, the mind of man. By disparagement, by starvation, by repressions, forced direction, and the stunning hammerblows of conditioning, the free, roving mind is being pursued, roped, blunted, drugged. It is a sad suicidal course our species seems to have taken. (170-71)

By Steinbeck's own admission, he changed his beliefs in response to the war which left a world hostile to self-determinism, although undoubtedly the great changes in his own life, as noted by Ditsky, also contributed to the change.

So in East of Eden Steinbeck uses the Trasks to show his rejection of his previously affirmed vision of the phalanx and instead advocates self-determinism. This can be translated to mean that the American people are

not preordained for success; rather they must make their own choices and accept others' rights to do the same. Although Crèvecoeur in "What Is an American?" promised, "Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour" (10), Steinbeck believed that there are no guarantees; rather, each person is responsible for his own success or failure.

Although Steinbeck revises his opinions about self-determinism, his attitude toward the American Dream remains consistent as Adam fails in his attempt to recreate a garden of Eden. Once again Steinbeck rejects the westering myth, substituting instead the realization that the West is no better than any other place, and that each person must be responsible for his or her own success or failure.

East of Eden, the Hamiltons

The message that Steinbeck's own family brings to readers is no different from the one brought by his more fictitious families. The Hamiltons too are destroyed because they are tied to the land and to outmoded solutions for present problems. So even though Steinbeck wrote about his family to show his sons "the quality of their background," they suffer the same fate as the families he created to carry his message to the American people.

The strength of the Hamilton family actually comes from its poverty. Since the land is "harsh and dry" (12), the Hamiltons are forced to struggle for survival. Samuel drills wells, mends farm equipment, and does odd

jobs for his neighbors, while Liza's life "was taken up with bearing and raising" her large brood (56).

The destruction of Samuel and Liza comes from their own children, who are not content to leave them on the farm because it's "too hard a life" (376). However, when the children decide to invite Liza and Samuel to "come for a visit" (376), they know it will kill Samuel, as the conversation between Will and George reveals:

He [Will] said, "If we ask him to close up shop it will be like asking him to close his life, and he won't do it."

"You're right, Will," George agreed. "He would think it was like quitting. He'd feel it was a cowardice. No, he will never sell out, and if he did I don't think he would live a week." (376)

Although the children know that taking Samuel off the farm will kill him, they go ahead with their plan. They conceive the plan on Thanksgiving Day, and Samuel dies less than four months later on March 15, 1912. (The real Samuel Hamilton died in 1902.) Samuel's death signals the destruction of the family: Dessie and Tom die, and the others are scattered. So Steinbeck destroys the Hamilton family because they, too, are tied to the land and to outmoded solutions for present problems.

The metamorphosis of this family is very different from Steinbeck's other families as it comes in the form of the spirit of Samuel Hamilton. Steinbeck explained this metamorphosis in his Journal entry which he wrote to Pat Covici: "Were you conscious of what happened to Adam in the last chapter? I have repeated that good things do not die. Did you feel that

Samuel had got into Adam and would live in him? Did you feel the rebirth in him?" (124) Although this entry clearly speaks of rebirth, in a previous entry Steinbeck explained in even greater detail his expectations for the spirit of Samuel Hamilton:

There needs today to be the end of the kind of music which is Samuel Hamilton. It has to have first a kind of recapitulation with full orchestra, and then I would like a little melody with one flute which starts as a memory and then extends into something quite new and wonderful as though the life which is finishing is going on into some wonderful future. . . . 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. . . . It is the duty of the writer to lift up, to extend, to encourage. If the written word has contributed anything at all to our developing species and our half developed culture, it is this: 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. (115-16)

This long quotation indicates that Steinbeck believed that the memory of Samuel Hamilton would not only serve as a guide for the characters in East of Eden, but for his readers as well. Timmerman suggests:

That pillar of fire never entirely dies out in the novel; its flame burns in the people whose lives Samuel has touched. But it is also a larger flame that Steinbeck envisioned rising above the desolation of the modern world, the hope of man's

spiritual aspiration and rejuvenation through the leadership of the one individual who is fully human and at work among humankind. (Aesthetics 246)

So, the metamorphosis of the Hamilton family is a spiritual, rather than a physical metamorphosis, which touches the lives of all who read about Samuel Hamilton. Martha Heasley Cox in "Steinbeck's Family Portraits: The Hamiltons" notes:

In addition to their roles as Valley homesteaders and Hamilton historians, family members also express, elucidate, and channel Steinbeck's optimistic, thematic message, his avowal of the potential of the human spirit. That man can through choice prevail was first proclaimed by Samuel Hamilton and transmitted from him through Adam Trask to Cal. (26)

Although they are gone, the Hamiltons are not forgotten because their grandson, John Steinbeck, immortalized them in East of Eden. In his Journal, Steinbeck noted some of his reasons for writing about his family:

I am talking to the boys actually, I am relating every reader to the story as though he were reading about his own background. If I can do that, it will be very helpful. Everyone wants to have a family. Maybe I can create a universal family living next to a universal neighbor. This should not be impossible. . . . I want them [his boys] to know how it was, I want to tell them directly, and perhaps by speaking directly to them I shall speak directly to other people.

(8,4)

Steinbeck wanted not only his boys, but also his readers to know that by understanding the past and where the American people have gone wrong, they can change direction and find a way to survive in the present so that they will be able to prepare for the future.

The Winter of Our Discontent

In The Winter of Our Discontent, Steinbeck's last novel, he writes about a contemporary American family beset with contemporary problems; in fact, it is his only novel with a setting in the latter half of the twentieth-century. Long notes that the novel is set "within the bosom of a warm and loving suburban family. . . . [It is] self-consciously concerned with the problems of modern America" (94). The dream of wealth in this novel is true to the materialistic vision of the American Dream which had its roots in de Crèvecoeur's promise: "thou shalt prosper, provided thou be just, grateful and industrious" (16), and in Turner's observation that Americans have a "masterful grasp of material things" (24).

The destruction of the Hawley family results from their quest to overcome their so-called poverty. As they pursue their quest for wealth, they struggle with a conflict of values, or with what was once called "the generation gap." At first it is a conflict between Ethan's values and the values of the rest of the family, but soon it becomes a conflict between traditional values and current values, with Ethan caught in the middle. The outside influence of Mr. Baker and Margie Young-Hunt, who both encourage them to change the status of their family, adds to the problem. As the family members ruthlessly claw their way towards their prize, they

destroy everyone in their path: Ellen betrays her brother, Allen cheats in his essay for the "I Love America Contest," Mary destroys her husband's strict code of morals, and Ethan destroys two men in the community--his employer, Marullo, and his friend, Danny.

Steinbeck does a very interesting thing in this novel. While in his previous novels he has shown families applying outmoded solutions to modern problems, in this final novel he presents modern solutions to modern problems--plagiarism, secret "deals," and conspiracy--but these are not satisfactory solutions either because they disregard ethics. In one of his letters, Steinbeck lists three problems of moral turpitude prevalent in America at the time:

Back from Camelot, and, reading the papers not at all sure it was wise. Two first impressions. First a creeping, all-pervading, nerve-gas of immorality which starts in the nursery and does not stop before it reaches the highest offices, both corporate and governmental. Two, a nervous restlessness, a hunger, a thirst, a yearning for something unknown--perhaps morality. Then there's the violence, cruelty and hypocrisy symptomatic of a people which has too much, and last the surly, ill-temper which only shows up in humans when they are frightened. (Letters 651-52)

So here in The Winter of Our Discontent, Steinbeck clearly suggests that the American people are applying immoral solutions to their problems. The concept that "everybody does it" destroys the family because what "everybody does" is motivated by greed and selfishness, and is

accomplished through deception and dishonesty. Elizabeth Long comments on the role of the family as it relates to success in The Winter of Our Discontent and Jerome Weidman's The Enemy Camp:

In both books, then, limited success is necessary for the sake of one's family and the fulfillment that comes from providing for them, but the moral foundations of success in general are treated very critically. . . . The old certainty that morality and success walk hand in hand is shattered. In its place enter moral relativism and doubt. Both books question the rational foundation of the social world. (97-98)

There is a close parallel between Ethan Hawley in this, Steinbeck's last novel, The Winter of Our Discontent, and Henry Morgan, in his first novel, Cup of Gold: they are the only patriarchs who achieve their outrageous dreams and both find their prizes to be bitter. Henry Morgan in Cup of Gold says: "I find I am tired of all this bloodshed and struggle for things that will not lie still, for articles that will not retain their value in my hands. It is horrible" (162). Ethan Hawley would certainly agree with that statement. Although he becomes the owner of the grocery store and the site of the future airport, he realizes "there comes a time for decent, honorable retirement, not dramatic, not punishment of self or family--just good-by, a warm bath and an opened vein, a warm sea and a razor blade" (311).

At the literal level Steinbeck destroys a family which has become overwhelmed with greed. Writing in America and Americans, Steinbeck warns about this very thing: "Wanting is probably a valuable human trait.

It is the means of getting that can be dangerous" (140). However, he realized that Americans are very apt to seek wealth by any means: "We scramble and scabble up the stony path toward the pot of gold we have taken to mean security. We trample friends, relatives, and strangers who get in the way of our achieving it; and once we get it we shower it on psychoanalysts to try to find out why we are unhappy" (America 29).

The hope for the future lies with Ethan's daughter, Ellen, "the light bearer" and the new owner of the talisman. Through her insistence upon honesty, even if it means exposure of her brother, she has earned the right to bear the light. While the other members of her family are destroyed by their chicanery and dishonesty, she alone remains pure. Owens notes: "Ellen is Steinbeck's feminine Galahad, the promise of the future . . . the light bearer and Ethan's hope" (Revision 206). But for her, the way will be very difficult because "[i]t isn't true that there's a community of light, a bonfire of the world. Everyone carries his own, his lonely own" (311). Ellen will not be bothered by Old Cap'n or great Aunt Deborah whispering in her ear; instead, she will be totally on her own. She will serve as an example of individual honesty and purity for the future generation, in which each person will be individually challenged to make his or her own moral choices.

In his last novel, Steinbeck takes the concept of self-determinism he wrote about in East of Eden, and adds to it individual responsibility, with the result that the individual is totally isolated. The comfort of group support he argued for in The Grapes of Wrath no longer exists; now the individual is cut off from everyone else. Although this relieves the

individual from having to support others, it also removes that person's own support system. Even though Steinbeck is still insisting upon the necessity of change as he was in his previous novels, the change must now be accomplished by the individual all alone without any help from others.

So once again Steinbeck changes his philosophical outlook, although the change is not as radical as that reflected in East of Eden. Benson explains the foundations for this change:

Through his artistic struggle in the fifties, wherein he consciously planned and attempted to make several radical changes in his writing, the largest and most crucial change may have come unconsciously as a result of a gradual change in his own personality. His "symbol character," as he also calls the persona, changes from other, Ricketts, to himself, an idealized Steinbeck. It was an act of reconciliation, of integration, that may be unparalleled in literature. Steinbeck had learned, at last, to like himself well enough to speak as himself and to project a possible version of Steinbeck based on what he actually was, as well as what he would wish to be or become. In both Winter and Charley he is saying in effect, it seems to me: "This is what I am, both as I see myself and as I see the possibilities in myself." (True Adventures 830)

Judith Mulcahy also comments on Steinbeck's new focus upon the individual:

At first he is the proponent of mutual responsibility, but as the years go by and the days in Ed Ricketts's lab become a

memory--and as his experiences with real-life children change his theories--his native concern with individual responsibility becomes more prominent. (247)

Steinbeck's new emphasis upon individual responsibility reflects his increasing pessimism regarding American social institutions. His sentiments concerning the "monstrous changes taking place in the world" which he wrote about in East of Eden, have strengthened to the point that he believes not only in self-determinism, but in individualism (170-71). Timmerman notes, "The motivations and artistic urgings that spawned Winter derive from . . . a response to what Steinbeck perceived as a peculiar moral darkening of the age. He wanted to reveal that and react to it" (Aesthetics 251). Steinbeck shared some of his ideas that went into The Winter of Our Discontent with his friend, Adlai Stevenson:

Someone has to reinspect our system and that soon. We can't expect to raise our children to be good and honorable men when the city, the state, the government, the corporations all offer the highest rewards for chicanery and dishonesty. On all levels it is rigged, Adlai. Maybe nothing can be done about it, but I am stupid enough and naively hopeful enough to want to try. How about you? (Letters 653)

So, in The Winter of Our Discontent Steinbeck, being "stupid enough and naively hopeful enough," exposes the "chicanery and dishonesty" that he saw rampant in America.

In this, his final novel, Steinbeck left a final direct message to the American people in the form of an epigraph: "Readers seeking to identify

the fictional people and places here described would do better to inspect their own communities and search their own hearts, for this book is about a large part of America today." And this indeed, is the message of all his novels about families: America is going through a necessary metamorphosis and it is up to each person to determine the outcome.

In American and Americans Steinbeck wrote about that metamorphosis:

How will the Americans act and react to a new set of circumstances for which new rules must be made? We know from our past some of things we will do. We will make mistakes; we always have. We are in the perplexing period of change. We seem to be running in all directions at once--but we are running. I believe that our history, our experience in America, has endowed us for the change that is coming.

(America 143)

Indeed, in these five novels--To a God Unknown, The Pastures of Heaven, The Grapes of Wrath, East of Eden, and The Winter of Our Discontent--Steinbeck has chronicled "our history, our experience in America," using the family to portray his concepts, so that we might "know from our past" in order to prepare for the future.

Works Cited

- Astro, Richard. "Intimations of a Wasteland." John Steinbeck. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1987. 19-34.
- . John Steinbeck and Edward F. Ricketts: The Shaping of a Novelist. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1973.
- Beatty, Sandra. "A Study of Female Characterization in Steinbeck's Fiction." Steinbeck's Women: Essays in Criticism. Ed. Tetsumaro Hayashi. Steinbeck Monograph Series 9. Muncie: Ball State U, 1979. 1-6.
- Benson, Jackson J. Looking for Steinbeck's Ghost. Norman: Oklahoma UP, 1988.
- . "Novelist as Scientist." John Steinbeck. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1987. 103-23.
- . The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer. New York: Viking, 1984.
- Bloom, Harold, ed. Introduction. John Steinbeck. New York: Chelsea House, 1987. 1-5.
- Bluestone, George. "The Grapes of Wrath." Steinbeck: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Robert Murray Davis. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972. 102-21.
- Bracher, Frederick. "Steinbeck and the Biological View of Man." Steinbeck and His Critics. Ed. E. W. Tedlock, Jr. and C. V. Wicker. Albuquerque: New Mexico UP, 1957. 183-96.

- Britch, Carroll and Cliff Lewis. "Growth of the Family in The Grapes of Wrath." Critical Essays on Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. Ed. John Ditsky. Boston: Hall, 1989. 97-108.
- Burgum, Edwin Berry. "The Sensibility of John Steinbeck." Steinbeck and His Critics, A Record of Twenty-Five Years. Eds. E. W. Tedlock, Jr. and C. V. Wicker. Albuquerque: New Mexico UP, 1957. 104-118.
- Carpenter, Frederic I. "John Steinbeck: American Dreamer." Steinbeck and His Critics, A Record of Twenty-Five Years. Eds. E. W. Tedlock, Jr. and C. V. Wicker. Albuquerque: New Mexico UP, 1957. 68-79.
- . "The Philosophical Joads." John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1988. 7-15.
- Conder, John J. "Steinbeck and Nature's Self: The Grapes of Wrath." John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea, 1988. 99-114.
- Cox, Martha Heasley. "Steinbeck's Family Portraits: The Hamiltons." Steinbeck Quarterly. 14.1-2 (1981): 23-32.
- Crèvecoeur, J. Hector St. Jean de. "What Is an American?" Rereading America. Eds. Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, Bonnie Lisle. New York: St. Martin's, 1989. 7-16.
- DeMott, Robert. "Creative Reading/Creating Writing: The Presence of Dr. Gunn's New Family Physician in Steinbeck's East of Eden." Rediscovering Steinbeck: Revisionist Views of His Art, Politics and

- Intellect. Ed. Cliff Lewis and Carroll Britch. Lewiston: Edwin Mellon P, 1989. 35-57.
- Ditsky, John. "The 'East' in East of Eden." Essays on East of Eden. Muncie: Ball State U, 1977. 41-50.
- . "The Ending of The Grapes of Wrath: A Further Commentary." Critical Essays on Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. Ed. John Ditsky. Boston: Hall, 1989.
- , John Steinbeck: Life, Work, and Criticism. Fredericton, N.B.: York, 1985.
- , "John Steinbeck--Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow." Steinbeck Quarterly XIV:1-2 (1981): 5-16.
- . "Outside of Paradise: Men and the Land in East of Eden." Essays on East of Eden. Muncie: Ball State U, 1977. 15-40.
- . "Toward a Narrational Self." Essays on East of Eden. Muncie: Ball State U, 1977. 1-14.
- Everest, Beth and Judy Wedeles. "The Neglected Rib: Women in East of Eden." Steinbeck Quarterly. 11.1-2 (1988): 13-23.
- Falkenberg, Sandra. "A Study of Female Characterization in Steinbeck's Fiction." Steinbeck Quarterly. 8.2 (1975): 50-56.
- Fensch, Thomas. Steinbeck and Covici, The Story of a Friendship. Middlebury: Eriksson, 1979.
- Fontenrose, Joseph. "Sea of Cortez." Steinbeck: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Robert Murray Davis. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972. 122-34.

- French, Warren. "The Grapes of Wrath." A Study Guide to Steinbeck: A Handbook to his Major Works. Ed. Tetsumaro Hayashi. Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1974. 29-46.
- , John Steinbeck. New York: Twayne, 1961.
- , "John Steinbeck and Modernism (A Speculation on His Contribution to the Development of the Twentieth-Century American Sensibility)." Critical Essays on Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. Ed. Ed. John Ditsky. Boston: Hall, 1989. 152-162.
- , "A Usable Concept of Naturalism." John Steinbeck. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1987. 64-78.
- Gladstein, Mimi Reisel. "Female Characters in Steinbeck: Minor Characters of Major Importance?" Steinbeck's Women: Essays in Criticism. Ed. Tetsumaro Hayashi. Steinbeck Monograph Series 9. Muncie: Ball State U, 1979. 17-25.
- . The Indestructible Woman in Faulkner, Hemingway, and Steinbeck. Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1986.
- Hayashi, Tetsumaro, ed. A Study Guide to Steinbeck: A Handbook to His Major Works. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1974.
- . A Study Guide to Steinbeck, Part II. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1979.
- Hearn, Charles R. The American Dream in the Great Depression. Westport: Greenwood, 1977.
- Hughes, R. S. "A Steinbeck Short Story Cycle: The Pastures of Heaven." John Steinbeck, A Study of the Short Fiction. Boston: Twayne, 1989. 90-117.

- Kennedy, John S. "John Steinbeck: Life Affirmed and Dissolved." Steinbeck and His Critics, A Record of Twenty-Five Years. Eds. E. W. Tedlock, Jr. and C. V. Wicker. Albuquerque: New Mexico UP, 1957. 119-34.
- Krutch, Joseph Wood. "John Steinbeck's Dramatic Tale of Three Generations." Steinbeck and His Critics, A Record of Twenty-Five Years. Eds. E. W. Tedlock, Jr. and C. V. Wicker. Albuquerque: New Mexico UP, 1957. 302-05.
- Levant, Howard. "The Fully Matured Art: The Grapes of Wrath." John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1988. 17-44.
- Lewis, R. W. B. "John Steinbeck: The Fitful Daemon." Steinbeck: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Robert Murray Davis. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972. 163-75.
- Lisca, Peter. "Escape and Commitment: Two Poles of the Steinbeck Hero." Steinbeck: The Man and His Work. Eds. Richard Astro and Tetsumaro Hayashi. Corvallis: Oregon State UP, 1971. 75-88.
- . "The Grapes of Wrath." Steinbeck: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Robert Murray Davis. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972. 75-101.
- . "John Steinbeck: A Literary Biography." Steinbeck and His Critics, A Record of Twenty-Five Years. Eds. E. W. Tedlock, Jr. and C. V. Wicker. Albuquerque: New Mexico UP, 1957. 3-22.
- . John Steinbeck: Nature and Myth. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1978.

- . The Wide World of John Steinbeck. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1958.
- Long, Elizabeth. The American Dream and the Popular Novel. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985.
- Madden, David, ed. Introduction: True Believers, Atheists, and Agnostics. American Dreams, American Nightmares. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1970. xv-xliii.
- Marks, Lester Jay. Thematic Design in the Novels of John Steinbeck. The Hague: Mouton, 1969.
- Mc Daniel, Barbara. "Alienation in East of Eden: The 'Chart of the Soul.'" Steinbeck Quarterly XIV:1-2 (1981): 32-39.
- Mc Kay, Nellie Y. "Happy (?) -Wife-and-Motherdom: The Portrayal of Ma Joad in John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath." New Essays on The Grapes of Wrath. Ed. David Watt. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. 47-69.
- Mitchell, Marilyn L. "Steinbeck's Strong Women" Feminine Identity in the Short Stories." John Steinbeck. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1987. 91-102.
- Moore, Harry Thornton. The Novels of John Steinbeck, A First Critical Study. Port Washington: Kennikat, 1939.
- Motley, Warren. "From Patriarchy to Matriarchy: Ma Joad's Role in The Grapes of Wrath." American Literature 54 (1982): 397-412.
- Mulcahy, Judith. "The Journalist as Serious Writer: Steinbeck in the 1950's." Rediscovering Steinbeck: Revisionist Views of His Art.

- Politics and Intellect. Ed. Cliff Lewis and Carroll Britch. Lewiston: Edwin Mellon P, 1989. 240-56.
- The New Jerusalem Bible. Garden City: Doubleday, 1985.
- Owens, Louis. The Grapes of Wrath: Trouble in the Promised Land. Boston: Twayne, 1989.
- . John Steinbeck's Re-Vision of America. Athens: Georgia UP, 1985.
- Parrington, Jr., Vernon Louis. American Dreams: A Study of American Utopias. 2nd ed. New York: Russell & Russell, 1964.
- Pearson, Pauline, ed. Guide to Steinbeck Country. Salinas: John Steinbeck Library, 1984.
- Peterson, Richard F. "The Mythology of American Life: America and Americans (1966)." A Study Guide to Steinbeck: A Handbook to his Major Works. Ed. Tetsumaro Hayashi. Netuchen: Scarecrow, 1974.
- Pizer, Donald. "The Enduring Power of the Joads." John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1988. 83-98.
- Sheffield, Carlton. Steinbeck: The Good Companion. Portola Valley, Ca : American Lives Endowment, 1983.
- Simmonds, Roy S. Steinbeck's Literary Achievement. Millwood: Kraus, 1980.
- Simpson, Hassell A. "Steinbeck's Anglo-Saxon 'Wonder-Words' and the American Paradox." American Literature. 62.2 (1990): 310-317.
- Steinbeck, John. America and Americans. New York: Viking, 1966.
- . Conversations with John Steinbeck. Ed. Thomas Fensch. Jackson: Mississippi UP, 1988.

- . "Critics, Critics Burning Bright." The Saturday Review of Literature. 33 (1950): 20-21.
 - . East of Eden. 1952. New York: Penguin, 1986.
 - . The Grapes of Wrath. 1939. New York: Penguin, 1986.
 - . "The Harness." The Long Valley. 1938. New York: Penguin, 1986. 107-27.
 - . John Steinbeck: Working Days, The Journals of The Grapes of Wrath, 1938 - 1941. Ed. Robert De Mott. New York: Viking, 1989.
 - . Journal of a Novel, The East of Eden Letters. New York: Viking, 1969.
 - . The Log From the Sea of Cortez. 1951. New York: Penguin, 1986.
 - . Nothing So Monstrous. 1936. New York, Pynson Printers, 1980.
 - . Of Mice and Men. 1945. New York: Penguin, 1986.
 - . The Pastures of Heaven. 1932. New York: Penguin, 1986.
 - . Speech Accepting the Nobel Prize for Literature. New York: Viking, 1952.
 - . Steinbeck, A Life In Letters. Eds. Elaine Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten. 1975. New York: Penguin, 1981.
 - . To a God Unknown. 1933. New York: Penguin, 1985.
 - . Travels with Charley: In Search of America. 1962. New York: Penguin, 1988.
 - . The Winter of Our Discontent. 1961. New York: Penguin, 1983.
- Timmerman, John S. John Steinbeck's Fiction: the Aesthetics of the Road Taken. Norman: Oklahoma UP, 1986.

- . The Dramatic Landscape of Steinbeck's Short Stories. Norman: Oklahoma UP, 1990. 48-116.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." Rereading America. Eds. Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, Bonnie Lisie. New York: St. Martin's, 1989. 20-24.
- Valjean, Nelson. John Steinbeck, The Errant Knight. San Francisco: Chronicle, 1975.
- Watt, F. W. John Steinbeck. New York: Grove, 1962.
- Winn, Harbour. "The Unity of Steinbeck's Pastures Community." Steinbeck Quarterly. 22.3-4 (1989): 91-103.