CHAPTER VI

ART OF THE ARTIST
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Steinbeck once wrote:

My experience in writing has followed an almost invariable pattern. Since by the process of writing a book I have outgrown that book, and since I like to write, I have not written two books alike . . . if a writer likes to write, he will find satisfaction in endless experimentation with his medium-techniques, arrangements of scenes, rhythms of words, rhythms of thought.”

(Steinbeck “Critics, Burning Bright” 44)

Right from the first to the last novel, there is a consistent development in his prose style, in his structural designs, his symbolism and his narrative patterns. He never repeats himself. There is a continuous and consistent growth in his conscious craftsmanship which makes him a singular writer among the writers of his generation and assures a permanent place for him in the world of American literature. His narrative technique in the final analysis is nearest to the natural expression of life in all its manifestations.

John Steinbeck is a talented and meticulous writer who has perfected his craft through the years. His natural genius endowed with the extraordinary expertise in his craft has made John Steinbeck one of the foremost American writers of the twentieth century. His brilliance in handling of individual scenes, the creation of memorable characters and above all his repertoire of a superb and varied colloquial style is matched by none.
All of his experience and knowledge are shown through his novels. Steinbeck worked very hard to accomplish everything that he did during his lifetime. Nothing came very easily to him, and he had to earn everything he owned. This helped him in his writing, because he was able to write about real people and real experiences. John Steinbeck got his inspiration from life experiences, people he knew, and places he had gone. Steinbeck’s characters are all real people drawn from the common working class American society.

During his many years that he lived, John Steinbeck met many people. The variety of people he met aided in the unique diversity of his characters. Almost all of the main characters in his novels, as well as some of the other characters, were based on people he knew in real life. The relationships that he formed with these people are also shown in his novels through relationships with other characters. Examples of this are: his relationship with Edward Rickettes, his relationship with his first wife, and his relationship with his grandfather. All of these things are used as starting points and even ending points for characters in Steinbeck’s novels. The character of Doc Burton of In Dubious Battle is believed to be modeled on his friend Ed Ricketts and that of Curley’s Wife in the novel Of Mice and Men on his first wife Carol Henning.

Characterization:

In Tortilla Flat Steinbeck draws his characters from the ethnic Paisano community in Monterey. Danny and his circle of friends are the central characters of the novel. The characters are more types than individuals with common habits and similar pursuits in life.
Danny the hero of the novel has been conceived in terms of King Arthur. He inherits two run-down Tortilla Flat houses from his grandfather. A number of men like Pilon, Pablo, etc. like the knights of King Arthur, come to live with him. A whole parallel of King Arthur, his knights and their adventures is drawn in the novel. Danny and his friends live among the Paisanos and imitate the ways of Arthur. They can rob, steal, and deceive others and yet appear heroic. Danny himself is not a man of heroic dimensions. They make their house their Round Table and centre of their wild lives, and face thousands of climaxes that take place in Tortilla Flat every day. At the end, after Danny's death, the house which brought the fellowship together is burned to the ground. Throughout the novel, Steinbeck does not assume a serious tone of approving or disapproving of Danny and his friends. The tone is deliberately mock-heroic.

The characters created by the author are all drawn realistically, psychologically, as if they were selected to be specimens of the human species to be examined, analysed and recorded for the knowledge and understanding of the world.

A similar objectivity marks the characters of *In Dubious Battle*. Watt observes:

It is not surprising that *In Dubious Battle* was received as a social document and appraised in terms of its accuracy and its ideological orthodoxy or heresy. It is not surprising either, to discover that it confused both Left-and Right-Wing Critics, and was condemned as
a communist onslaught . . . as a cynical reactionary attack on
radical idealism. (Watt 52)

Mac and Jim appear as the leaders of the migrant labourers in the valley. They have come to organize the unorganized workers. Mac is a ruthless and fearless provocator. He is the teacher of Jim in all matters. He trains Jim to be a successful leader even by inventing lies and posing to be all knowing. Jim goes on gathering power over the labourers and soon out-grows his master, Mac. He becomes an egoistical genius. In the end, however he meets his death and everything is ruined. In the same novel Steinbeck introduces Doc, a paradoxical figure, at once a detached and a fully committed worker. Mac fails to understand why Doc would not take a theoretical stand on the rightness or wrongness of the cause. But Doc Burton argues, “I want to see the whole picture . . . I don’t want to put on the blinders of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, and limit my vision.” (IDB 640) To Burton it is the study of the ‘masses’, or ‘group-men’ which is important. He says, “I want to watch these group men for they seem to me to be a new individual, not at all like single men. A man in a group isn’t himself at all; he’s a cell in an organism that isn’t like him any more than the cells in your body are like you.” (IDB 641)

This novel is definitely the result of Steinbeck’s non-teleological thinking and objective writing. Doc Burton is the best example of a character representing the author’s own objective viewpoint. Mac and Jim also reveal the novelist’s detached observation. Doc Burton disappears, Jim meets his death, and Mac is left with ‘frozen face’, ‘wide and white’ eyes and ‘monotonous’ voice. They,
Sharma therefore, do not show Steinbeck’s conclusions about their failure or success.
The author keeps aloof from the whole scene by firmly ingrained sense of objectivity.

*Of Mice and Men* was written in a dramatic form, the form that provides Steinbeck the frame and perspective of a detached writer. In this novel he describes scenes and people as clear visual pictures. Here wandering discussion and essay are impossible. Steinbeck says that he intended this novel to be a study of the dreams and pleasures of everyone in the world. George and Lennie make an incongruous pair. George is alert, intelligent and callous in manner and Lennie hardly remembers the simplest things. But still George gains from Lennie as much as he gives. George looks after Lennie as if he were a child. He always warns him against dangers and sometimes gets irritated. He argues, “... I could take my fifty bucks and go into town and get whatever I want.” (OMM 804). This is his dream of freedom to which he returns when he gets frustrated with the responsibility of Lennie. Lennie has his own dream to have rabbits in the cages and cream on the milk. Curley’s wife who is called a ‘tart’ by men because she is always trying to talk to men, occasions the destruction of George’s and Lennie’s Adamic dream. The logical implication of the social structure is emphasized; in such a social system Georges and Lennies would always meet a tragic end. But Steinbeck does not condemn George, Lennie or even Curley’s wife for their dreams and actions. His sympathetic treatment of these characters shows the novelist’s objectivity. Peter Lisca observes:


... in *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck extends the experience of two migrant workers to the human conditions... On this level, perhaps the most important, Steinbeck is dramatizing the non-teleological philosophy which had such a great part in shaping *In Dubious Battle*. (Lisca 139)

All the characters in *The Grapes of Wrath* are drawn as fully credible human beings, individual yet also representative of their social class and circumstances. This is true even of such clearly unusual and strong personalities as Tom Joad, Jim Casy, Ma Joad, and her daughter Rose of Sharon.

Jim Casy and Tom Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath* illustrate the novelist's ambivalent view towards his characters. Jim Casy appears in the novel as a character who has passed through many phases of life, occupation, schools of theology and philosophy. To begin with, he is a priest who preaches the gospel of Christ. But at the same time he himself leads a free and promiscuous life. He preaches against sin on the one hand and passes through the temptations of sensuality on the other. Disgusted with his split within himself, between theory and practice, he goes to the mountains. In sheer loneliness and silence of the mountains, through a very close self-analysis, he comes to receive a new knowledge. This knowledge is antithetical to the concept of sin in Christianity: it is a secular revelation to him. This knowledge rounds him off as a man who returns to the world to be further initiated into the practice of unifying men in the prison where he has landed as a result of his complete sympathy with Tom. Jim Casy opposes the idea of sin and inspires strength into men who come in contact
with him to work collectivity for the amelioration of their lot. His initials J.C. similar to Jesus Christ are not accidental. Moreover, by his speech and action he assumes the role of a secular prophet. Steinbeck endows him with all the natural instincts and aspirations. He is a man of revolutionary nature, a man who is larger than his compatriots and contemporaries, and, who gains stature by virtue of his free thinking.

Tom, to begin with is a downright misguided criminal type figure of an irresponsible young man. He has no purpose and direction in life and hangs between crime and punishment, home and prison. But when he comes in contact with Casy he is transformed. Casy declares that there is no sin and no virtue. He claims that he has found love to be the panacea of all ills and a means to higher life. It is this knowledge that adds prophetic dimensions to Casy. After Casy is killed, Tom takes over Casy's torch into his iron hands. He gains in size and stature to become a fit disciple of Jim Casy to set out to spread the gospel of social justice. Whereas Casy symbolizes the conceptual values of the novel, Tom carries these values forward into the world of The Grapes of Wrath.

Tom moves the narrow shell of his ego and contracted consciousness to the state of selfishness and expanding consciousness. But on the whole both Casy and Tom are seen progressing from a state of a moral chaos to a state of moral and ethical harmony. Both are given to crimes and sins, to forbidden ways of life, but are transformed from within without any superimposition of moral code or religious injunctions. Their natural growth and development from unchartered freedom to collective freedom of all men and women represents...
Steinbeck’s total non-commitment to the conventional art of characterization and the traditional way of making the characters stand for certain set ideas and ideologies. Even otherwise, in his treatment they remain untouched by the personal judgment of the writer.

As an artist Steinbeck is essentially occupied with the timeless pattern of human life gaining and losing its outer or physical design with the change of time and place. At the heart of all his studies of men and women, societies and ideologies, he finds the same basic reality manifesting itself in an infinite variety of names and forms. This helps him significantly in his art of writing.

In East of Eden his intentional parallels between the modern and the Biblical life prove this fact. The Cain and Abel theme is seen by him expressing itself in the lives of modern men. Adam and Charles are not the exact figures of Abel and Cain, but in their psychological make-up and human actions and reactions to their environments, they are exactly and intrinsically Abel and Cain born in other times. Adam is not completely innocent and Charles is not wholly evil. Both develop good and bad tendencies which are dramatized from time to time in their course of life. When Adam is beaten by other boys, it is Charles who protects him. But envy and hatred develop and dominate Charles, and yet he is as much a child of his environment as Adam. Charles protects Adam a number of times from the wrath of their father Cyrus. But when Adam’s gift as against his own is accepted by his father, he finds jealousy rising in his mind and paralyzing his reason. Out of a sense of revenge, he tries to kill Adam. In the next generation, Aron and Caleb repeat almost the same pattern of life and
action. Thus Steinbeck tells the story of three generations repeating almost the same pattern of conflict between good and evil. And though he describes also the Hamiltons, their sons and daughters and their wives, he hardly makes a direct approach. Steinbeck’s ambivalent and suspended judgment lies in the way he interprets the word ‘timshell’ and opens the course for redemption to all and one including Cathy, the monster, because this knowledge has the power of moral choice.

**Women Characters:**

Steinbeck’s women characters constitute a difficult and controversial subject. They occupy an important place in the novels, yet instead of filling the place of major characters they perform functions of characters important only in their relationship to men.

Steinbeck does not glorify womanhood. In spite of his generous and humanistic outlook he never romanticizes women. In *Tortilla Flat* most women characters are portrayed as promiscuous wives. The author here lays emphasis on their relationship with men, personal or professional. Women are in fact portrayed as a cause of disharmony and deceit. Mrs. Morales’ relations with Danny creates a wedge between him and his friends, Joe Portagee also suffers because of his relationship with a woman. In *Dubious Battle* is a novel that hardly has any significant women characters apart from London’s daughter Lisa who has only a minor role to play in the narrative. In *Of Mice and Men* Curley’s wife is not even given a significant individual name or identity. She is best known by her husband’s name. People around her don’t have a very good
opinion of her and she is also called a 'tart' by them. She is lonely and her desperation for company makes her wander about in search of a patient ear, but everywhere she finds coldness. It is only Lennie who provides her with an honest response. In *East of Eden* Cathy is represented as a character who turns out to be a challenger of all canons of morality. Her marriage to Adam is purely selfish and temporary. She uses people and manipulates them for her own good. She even tries to abort her pregnancy and later abandons her twins. She is a wholly evil character. She leaves to become a whore and takes over the management of a whorehouse. Abra another woman character in the novel is depicted in a more humane light. She is not evil but has very human flaws in her character. It’s her support and love that helps Caleb in making a new start in life.

Ma Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath* and Liza Hamilton in *East of Eden* are among the finest portraits of women characters by Steinbeck. They transcend the commonly known traits of women. Liza is the ideal wife and mother. She embodies those qualities that the novelist admires the most in women. She occupies the coveted role of the mother of the family. Similarly Ma Joad is the mother not only to her children but also to the family. She demonstrates the angelic quality of unqualified love for the members of her family. She is the citadel of the entire family and a pillar of strength during the times of crisis. Even though they face a lot of hardships yet Ma has a firm faith that the human race will go on. It shows her optimism and her unshaken belief in a better future. She has knowledge of the eternity of human race intuitively. Even in the most difficult of moments her ingenuity and strength comes through as in the last
scene when Rose of Sharon gives birth to a dead child and Ma looks into her
eyes in a gesture of silent understanding, and Rose feeds the hungry old man to
save him. Ma has the power to awaken and inspire motherhood in Rose. She is
the most admirable of the women characters drawn by Steinbeck. Her all
embracing love enriches the world around her.

Steinbeck assigns women an important role in his novels. Their presence
makes the world of his novels go forward or backward. He finds women
confined to an inferior position both in their domesticity and sexuality. His
concept of women is relational rather than moral, natural rather than logical.

Throughout his novels and stories, Steinbeck generally portrayed
working-class characters that were controlled or manipulated by forces beyond
their understanding or control. He isn’t saying that a common man does not have
a chance to overcome situations but that people or rather their lives can be
influenced thereby shaping their life and result. The influence of an omnipotent
fate over his characters is often reflected in the themes of his literary works.
Many a times it is the modern life with its commercialization and greed that is
projected as the enemy or the external force influencing his characters and their
life. In The Grapes of Wrath for instance the enemy is the non-human villain in
the form of the ‘bank’ that changes the course of the Joad family and millions
like them.

The obstacles so generated by the enemy, a malevolent fate in the form of
modern aggressive commercialization and capitalism goaded his common
characters to fight back and endure. He pitted a struggling individual in front of
strong forces, which helped his characters to develop and play a significant role in the development of this theme with the help of his narrative technique and style.

**Narrative Technique:**

Perhaps the most important of the devices Steinbeck uses is dramatization. He presents a series of vignettes in which, through generalized characters, situations and dialogue, we see things happening.

*Tortilla Flat* is narrated in the third person past omniscient by an unnamed someone who is sympathetic to his young characters even at their most larcenous. He allows them to speak for themselves in their own voices in first person in extensive passages of dialogue, and is careful to identify them and capture their emotions.

The novel *Tortilla Flat* is the work of an extremely cautious artist. The mock Arthurian saga of the poor Paisanos marks the end of his literary apprenticeship. It is written in a mock epic style employing the whole paraphernalia of mock-epic devices. The story is narrated in the third person by the author and the episodic structure further including interchapters. There is use of a dignified expression for the exploits of Danny and his friends. Ironic parallels are drawn and contrasts made between them and the Arthurian legend; down-scaling the exploits of King Arthur and his Knights. Mock epic tone is maintained throughout the novel which is obvious by the chapter headings and in the narrative it is maintained by the author's occasional interruptions. In the use
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of language Steinbeck recreates the very accents of the characters in their speech.

More than in any other novel, Steinbeck uses the techniques of drama to focus on characters in conflict in *In Dubious Battle*. Little attention is given to description, and there is almost no authorial intrusion. Characters speak and act; the reader gets a sense of action and of significance from what is said and done. In fact, at one point, the text itself is set up in the form of a dialogue, with characters' names set beside their speeches as one might find them in a prompt book.

The novel is told from a third-person omniscient point of view. This brings us close enough to each of the characters to get a peek into their motivations and see their fears and hopes, while keeping us distant enough to see the panorama that Steinbeck paints of the sprawling camp, the wide valley and the larger world beyond which is mirrors.

Considerable use of conversation gives the readers varying points of view, presents the popular arguments of the time and makes extensive use of the catch phrases and propaganda of both sides. Conversation also allows Steinbeck to give us a sense of the flavour of the language used by the pickers. It gives us more of a sense of knowing them and covers the lack of deep characterization in the novel.

As a narrator, Steinbeck takes an objective and detached position. It is through the dramatic technique that the reader is brought into direct contact with the characters' mind. The characters reveal themselves only through speech and
physical gestures and movements. Peter Lisca remarks, "Steinbeck’s cold prose and his dramatic presentation are important techniques for driving a wedge of objectivity not only between the author and his artifact, but also between the artifact and its audience." (Lisca 118) Besides, Steinbeck introduces Doc Burton, who represents non-teleological thinking. Through Doc, he introduces his theory of group-man and the biological theory of man. A man in a group is just a cell in an organism; he is not himself but a part of the group. As a believer in the non-teleological theory he says, “Well, you see I don’t believe in the cause.” (IDB 640). Hinting at the group instinct he remarks, “May be group-man gets pleasure when individual men are wiped out in a war.” (IDB 642). Steinbeck also introduces his knowledge of marine biology and natural laws to make In Dubious Battle a modern work of art.

The novel Of Mice and Men is again narrated by a third person omniscient, but Steinbeck tends to make use of dialogues between George and Lennie, and thus help the reader develop his or her opinion about each of the character as the story develops. The novel mainly concentrates on the landscape of Salinas. In his style, Steinbeck also tends to use a lot of imagery, especially in the first and the last chapters of the novel. He uses his technique very dramatically in the form of affective parallelism, repeating the language and the setting of both chapters.

Steinbeck’s technique involves a lot of imagery, where animal imagery mostly dominates his style. In the opening chapter of the novel, a snake is seen as the symbol of peace, as it slowly swims with its head sticking up, but in the
last chapter the water snake is shown gliding smoothly up the pool, twisting its
head from side to side while a heron stood in the shallows. When the snake
reached the heron, the heron plucked it out and swallowed it. Here the snake
foreshadows the tragic end and death that is to follow. By using the imagery of
the snake dramatically draws an affective parallelism that symbolizes the
shattering of all illusions and presents the stark and harsh reality of life where
one thrives at the cost of the other.

Steinbeck's style is simple; it relies on dialogue, which means direct
speech, and lyrical poetic description. The style is not difficult, it is very
accessible. This is one of the reasons the novel has retained its popularity. Of
Mice and Men was written in the play form. Peter Lisca points out that in the
novel the protagonists are projected against a very thin background and must
suggest or create this larger pattern through their own particularity. To achieve
this, Steinbeck makes use of language, action, and symbol as recurring motifs.
All three of these motifs are presented in the opening scene, are contrapuntally
developed through the story, and come together again at the end. These three
motifs build up a strong pattern of inevitability. The book attests Steinbeck's
greater control and power of organization of his materials into a well-made
fictional and thematic structure. The story begins with the pursuit of George and
Lennie for the fulfillment of their dream and comes full circle when the dream is
shattered. Lennie is killed and George returns all alone.

The novel with its highly restricted focus is the first of Steinbeck's
experiments with the novel-play form, which combines qualities of each genre.
The story is essentially comprised of three acts of two chapters each. Each chapter or scene contains few descriptions of place, character, or action. Thus, the novel's strength lies in part in its limitations. Action is restricted usually to the bunkhouse. The span of time is limited to three days, sunset Thursday to sunset Sunday, which intensifies the sense of suspense and drama. The point of view of the novel is generally objective—not identifying with a single character and limited to exterior descriptions. The third-person narrative point of view creates a sense.

The Grapes of Wrath is also narrated in the third-person voice. What is particularly significant about this technique is that the point of view varies in tone and method, depending on the author's purpose.

One of Steinbeck's more daring strategies in The Grapes of Wrath was to insert what he called 'interchapters' between episodes in the Joad narrative. These sections interrupt the flow of the novel to make observations—often highly critical—concerning American society during the Great Depression. Steinbeck conceived the idea of using alternating chapters as a way of filling in the larger picture. About one hundred pages or one sixth of the book is devoted to this purpose.

The Grapes of Wrath is a very ambitious work. It deals with the journey of the migrant labourers from the dust-bowl to California, their sufferings and their tortuous existence there. It is a very significant record of Steinbeck's attitude and of human conditions which were to be used as materials for his great novels. The extremes of poverty, suffering, depression and injustice are vividly
depicted in *The Grapes of Wrath*. In a sense he was hoping that the projection of
the microcosm will define the outlines of the macrocosm. As a result of seeing
so much suffering, his tone has come down from satire to compassion. He puts
on the tone of a down-right realistic writer in narration of the story of human
suffering. He gives factual details including psychological and sociological
actions and reactions. The materials of the novel presented the difficult problem
of structure, so he had to include philosophical interchapters concerned with the
Great Depression. The interchapters perform the function of presenting the
social background to enlarge the pattern of action represented by the Joad
family. Then there are intercalary chapters of 19, 21 and 25 that provide
historical information regarding the development of land-ownership in
California and the emergence of the migrant labour. Throughout the sixteen
inter-chapters are found scattered, occasional paragraphs which present the
philosophy or message to which the modern situation gives rise.

The novel shows that there is a general correspondence between the
material of each intercalary chapter and the material of the current narrative
portion. The chapter that deals with the migrants' life on the highway lies
interspersed with the narrative of the Joads' journey. The novel ends with the
description of the rain and the flood in the last intercalary chapter. The novel is a
triumph of fictional art. The interchapters are closely integrated into a total
structure along with an intricate interweaving of specific details. Peter Lisca
observes: "Every chapter is locked into the book's narrative portion by specific
cross-reference, which amplifies the Joads' typical actions to the dimensions of a
communal experience.” (Lisca 158). According to Joseph Warren Beach, each speaker in the novel is like the chorus in a Greek tragedy. The novel shows Steinbeck’s command of prose style.

Symbols and symbolic images such as the turtle, the dog, the flood, the rain and the dust give thematic and structural organization to the novel. Images of colours; red, grey, green, pink, white, brown are used to symbolize the state of degeneration or growth both of the earth and of human characters. Peter Lisca demonstrates the similarity between the language of the Old Testament and Steinbeck’s prose style in this novel and comments that the parallel grammatical structure of parallel meanings, the simplicity of diction, the balance, the concrete details, the summary sentences, the reiterations—all are there. Except for the terms of machinery, the passage according to Lisca could well be one of the Psalms. The novel certainly marks Steinbeck’s achievement as an artist with command over style and language and the skill of organizing chaotic and disparate materials into an organic structure.

Another device that Steinbeck uses to integrate the two kinds of material is juxtaposition. Of course everything included in the interchapters is related to the events of the narrative. And each interchapter is so placed that its content is most pertinent to the action in the chapter that precedes or follows it. Highway 66 is the subject of the inter chapter that follows the Joads’ turning onto that highway; the rain and flood of chapter twenty-nine set the stage for the novel’s conclusion. But furthermore, and most effectively, the interchapters are
frequently used to develop or complete some specific action initiated in the
preceding narrative or vice-versa.

A variation of this device is achieved by repetition, in which some
specific detail in one kind of chapter reappears in the other, thus further knitting
the two together. The anonymous house in an interchapter becomes the Joad
house when in the following chapter the latter also is seen with one of its corners
knocked off the foundation; the anonymous man with a rifle who in the same
interchapter threatens the tractor driver becomes Grampa Joad, who in the next
chapter is reported to have shot out the headlight of a tractor.

All this is not to say that the sixteen interchapters are equally brilliant or
successful. In themselves, then the interchapters accomplish several things for
the novel. They provide an artistically acceptable place for the author's own
statements, and they make possible the inclusion of additional materials without
overusing the Joads or introducing many other specific characters. Closely
related to this latter function is these chapters' capacity for amplification. They
present dramatically with a sense of real experience what would otherwise be
left to inference – that the situations and actions of the Joad family are typical of
a large group of people that the Joads are caught up in a problem of national
dimensions. These are perhaps the chapters' most important uses. In addition
they provide information – the history of land ownership and migrant labour in
California. Also through their depiction of American people, scenes and
folkways there emerges the portrait of a substantial portion of a people – their
political and religious beliefs, their music, manners, stories, jokes; their essentially pioneer character, with its virtues and its limitations.

*East of Eden* is considered the fruition of Steinbeck's maturity as an untiring experimenter, innovator, and literary artist. In the novel, the narrative art consists mainly in telling a number of parallel stories, which coalesce into one. *East of Eden* is embedded in the story of the fall and the rise of man in the contextual framework of the Bible, the Christian and non-Christian philosophy and theology. The novel covers the Old Testament. It presents the triumph of Steinbeck's art of structural design and complicated, epic like fabric. The moral philosophy in the form of the story is brought out by narrating the story of three generations. The book begins with the personal family saga with strong Biblical overtones. Steinbeck's greatness lies in his handling and ordering his diverse material in a cohesive and meaningful structural frame. The scale of the novel is enlarged to epical dimensions. The language, therefore, is also distanced from common-day language in keeping with the epic demands of the novel. The passages of pure description are not many because the story is told more in terms of human nature distances from nature and natural way of life.

In the novel Steinbeck explores the theme of human consciousness as it is related to an individuals taking moral responsibility for his actions. He makes this exploration in the context of Biblical references and other important considerations taken from other various religions and spiritual philosophies.

The story itself is advanced through the development and inter-relationships of characters who are clearly meant to be symbolic in their
portrayal by the author. The story is about two families—the Hamiltons and the family of Adam Trask. The intertwined narratives of these two families is meant to show how an individual working on the raising of his moral and philosophical consciousness can take an important part in the making of a new world of sorts.

The battle between good and evil is foreshadowed in the third paragraph of the first chapter, in the description of the mountain ranges that lie on each side of the Salinas Valley. The Galiban Mountains to the east are associated with light, sun, and warmth. The narrator associates them with a mother’s love. To the west are the Santa Lucia Mountains, which are dark and brooding, unfriendly and dangerous. In his childhood, the narrator says, he dreaded the west and loved the east. Thus the dualistic framework of the novel is established symbolically on the first page. That symbolism is developed through many biblical allusions.

While it is true that much of Steinbeck’s fiction was nurtured by firsthand experience, that experience is transmuted by the artist into a thematic or spiritual experience common to humankind. Realistic in origin, by artistry Steinbeck’s storytelling approaches the realism of the human spirit in much the same way.

In Steinbeck’s view a novelist not only puts down a story but he is the story. He is each one of the characters in a greater or a less degree. And because he is usually a moral man in intention and honest in his approach, he sets things down as truly as he can. The novelist begins with the real event but arranges that event. A novelist is a re-arranger of nature so that it makes an understandable pattern and a novelist is also a teacher but a novelist is primarily a man and subject to all man’s faults and virtues, fears and braveries.
Steinbeck believed, moreover that prose should be rendered with accuracy, vitality and interest. His rhetorical technique presents a study rich and revealing in its potential to unlock the author's method and meaning. His *The Grapes of Wrath* is a novel so rich startling and new on the American literary scene of the thirties and forties as to attract the attention of nearly everyone.

In his stylistic technique Steinbeck strove for a clipped, accurate prose. He believed that fictional prose should not be a course in interior decoration of the novel. His prose is generally marked by a spare, yeoman like rhetoric that relies on active verbs and imagery rather than ornamentation in the pattern.

Steinbeck's beliefs about style were remarkably consistent throughout his career. Steinbeck himself said of the prose that he wanted to adopt in his writings as one which will not be startling but lean and spare. He reminded himself that his objective was to hold description to an absolute minimum and hold his story and its strands together. What comes through is a portrait of an artist who was conscientious and remarkably consistent in exercising his craft.

Steinbeck's essentially forthright style is frequently modulated by passages of startling individual beauty and lyricism. He wanted a chapter to have a design of tone as well as form. His views and beliefs regarding literary style are put forth through one of his characters Mack in *Sweet Thursday* when he says that he wants his book to break loose with a bunch of hooptedoodle. And so hooptedoodle retains a significant place in Steinbeck's writing, providing a break from realistic narrative so that the author may indulge in rhetorical whimsy. Hooptedoodle may contribute to a symbolic pattern that enriches the
narrative as for example in the intercalary chapters of *The Grapes of Wrath*. These intercalary chapters are the clearest example of hooptedoodle. With their aesthetic richness they provide a significant pattern corresponding to the narrative unfolding of the plot. *East of Eden* has similarly crafted interchapters that provide historical background or physical description.

Steinbeck's prose is not simply straightforward telling interspersed here and there with lyrical passages. The prose abounds with literary devices. While the personification and metonymy of the tractor in *The Grapes of Wrath* may attract notice by its deliberate isolation, patterns of imagery interweave through all of Steinbeck's works so subtly as to escape casual notice. Steinbeck's uses imagery to set of a character like Jim Casy in *The Grapes of Wrath*. He particularly uses earth, animal and vegetable imagery to identify his characters, either as complementary to or ironically contrasting with the nature of the character.

Another notable stylistic trait is the adapting of rhetorical pacing to character or event. Perhaps Steinbeck's rhetorical skill is frequently overlooked simply because it is expertly paced to the narrative event. This is not contrary to the use of hooptedoodle rather it defines and controls character, clearly fulfilling Steinbeck's belief that technique should grow out of theme and not dictate it.

Steinbeck avoids the appearance of excessive ornamentation while providing fluid syntactical development. The net effect is prose that is lean, hard and stripped to the bone while remaining remarkably graceful and complex. Although Steinbeck loved it deeply, writing was nonetheless a task for him, a
life's work and calling. Even in the simple mechanics of the work he made careful preparations and expended diligent effort. After experimenting with a typewriter in the early years, he wrote all his manuscripts in his tight, even longhand; sometimes in ink, but most often in pencil.

Steinbeck's life experiences inspired his writing, broadening his mind and incorporating the lifestyles of those around him into his work. He created unique characters, each having certain flaws which gave them inspiration to transcend and break through the barriers of the social economic system at the time supported and enhanced by his exceptional and incomparable narrative technique and style.
WORKS CITED


All parenthetical references of the text are to this edition.


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