CHAPTER-VII

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The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell he fears. I think every one in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of revenge for rejection, and with the crime, guilt and there is the story of mankind (EOE 268).

Steinbeck never recovered from the shock, in the account of his second divorce, when his wife falsely impugned the legitimacy of their second son. He poured his anguish into the troubled story of fathers and sons in East of Eden which is, a great deal an accurate, factual account of Steinbeck’s own maternal family, the Hamiltons. Only Samuel and Will, Steinbeck’s maternal grandfather and uncle, involve with the Trasks. He reveals the agony of the exiles by the story of the Hamiltons and Trasks. Samuel Hamilton comes from the north of Ireland. He is the son of a small farmer, neither rich nor poor. The Hamiltons are well educated and well read. They descend from the ancient kings of Ireland, as every Irishman is:

It was a good firm-grounded family, permanent, and success-fully planted in the Salinas valley, not poorer than many and not richer than many either. It was a well-balanced family with its conservatives and radicals, its dreams and its realities. Samuel was well pleased with the fruit of his loins. (EOE 43)
Samuel is never a political man. He is good looking, scrupulously honest, charming and full of gaiety. He has come to the Salinas valley full-blown and hearty, full of inventions and energy. His eyes are very blue and when he is tired one of them wanders outward a little. He is a big man but delicate in a way. In the dusty business of ranching he is always immaculate. His hands are clever. He is a good blacksmith, carpenter and woodcarver. He can impoverish anything with bits of wood and mettle. He invents a new way of doing an old thing, better and quicker. He never has any talent of making money. Others take his tricks and sell them and grow rich but Samuel’s barley make wages all his life. He is sweet in tongue and tender in his soul.

There is cleanliness in his body and thinking. Samuel Hamilton is a life bringer, an antithesis to Cathy. He is human and is subjected to fear. When he enters Cathy’s den to deliver her babies, he is subjected to emotions when he tells bluntly, that he doesn’t know, but he is subjected to pain when he suffers the sting of her evil, and is subjected to hard anger when he threatens Adam at the naming of the twins. In his very humanity, full and overflowing, he represents a presence that gives guidance and direction. He is pictured as the gray-beard patriarch full of humor, leader of the people, imaged as the prophet, shining with starlight. Samuel is the patriarch of the Hamilton family and the embodiment of the American spirit, as Steinbeck conceives it. He is a man of all trades from carpentry to blacksmithing, towel digging to midwifery. He is also a man of all ideas. He reads in spare time, being sure to keep his reading from his anti-intellectual and puritanical wife. Comfortable with emotion, Samuel tends towards the humor, laughing at himself and playing the comic for others amusement, but he can also exercise deeper feeling. When he meets Cathy Trask, he expresses great despair over her inhumanity. He recognizes the problem with Cathy intuitively even before she shows him her true colors when he is helping her give birth to her twins:
Nearly everyone in the world has appetites and impulses, trigger emotions, island of selfishness, lusts just beneath the surface. And most people either hold such things in check or indulge them secretly. Cathy knew not only these impulses in others but how to use them for her own gain. It is quite possible that she did not believe in any other tendencies in humans, for while she was preternaturally alert in some directions she was completely blind in others. (EOE 74)

Samuel Hamilton is also a highly social person. He recognizes his place in his place in the social world, building friendships with his humor and help. He is also a family man tied by blood and duty to his family and recognizes his wife Liza’s superior ability to maintain family cohesion with her strict moral code. He submits to his strict rule and exercises his mercurial spirit on the sly, as if he is a child and she is his mother. When he sees that Adam Trask is sinking into despair to the detriment of his sons, Samuel becomes the glue of his community. Everyone knows him and regards him with great admiration and familiarity. Samuel also regards others with the democratic assumption that all people are equal. This element of his character is best brought out in his relationship with Lee. During their first meeting, Lee feels become himself around Samuel, finding in him a fellow intellectual and an unwavering friend. Lee considers Samuel as the wiser and finest men he has ever known.

Liza Hamilton, the wife of Cyrus Trask and mother of Charles Trask, lives quietly, content to serve others. A tiny Irish, tight hard little woman, she has a presbyterian mind and a code of morals. She is a different kind of Irish. Her head is small and round which holds small convictions. She has a button nose and hard a little set back chin, a gripping jaw set on its course even though the angels of God argue against it. She is a good, plain cook and her house is
brushed, pummeled and washed always. Idleness is a sin and card playing, is a kind of idleness to her. She is suspicious of fun, whether it is dancing, singing, laughter. She wears her hair always pulled tight back and binned behind in a hard knot. She wears cloths that match herself exactly. She suffers bravely and uncomplainingly through life, convinced that it is the way of her God wanted every one to live.

Samuel and Liza take eleven quarter section land for every member of the family including their nine children. He labors like a giant with his heart and spirit, manufacturing, moulding, shaping happiness. The green last on the hills far into June a year when people of the Salinas valley forget the day years. Farmers bring more land than they can afford and figure their profits on the covers of their check book. When the Trasks will is made, after inspecting the bank books they find he has only ninety three thousand dollars and ten thousand dollars in good securities. People with this amount of money are rich, would never have to worry.

It is the story of Cain and Abel through Adam and Charles. Cain murders Abel because he feels unloved and rejected by God. He feels he is evil by nature. East of Eden like Moby Dick (1851), is one of his favorite novels, a searching, questioning, speculative fiction which points up the difficulty of position, a coherent ideology about the mass American experience. Interrogating the deepest emotional psychological implications of malevolence in the universe, as well as exploitation, anger, agony misogamy and silence, the novel enacts drastic statements on the abuse of power and the nature. It is the overarching mythology of corrupt national and personal identity (expansionism and capitalism, tyranny and dynastic destiny). Melville and Steinbeck arrive at a humanistic and emotional consensus. East of Eden becomes the site of a certain amount of ineluctable struggle.
The long Salinas Valley is part of the exploitation where people learn through the ages to live close together, to keep clean and feed under intolerable conditions. Some people are less affected and torn by the verities of life and death, than others. They are practical people, strong and brave, who can take care of themselves in a wilderness, but are naive and helpless against men, like businessmen, lawyers four or five portly men-greatmen rich or official bankers etc. It takes a smart man to know where the difference lay between the sects, but anyone can see what they have in common (EOE 215). The little houses are unpainted, unrepaired, very small which try to efface them in outside the neglected and the wild overgrown front yard and try to hide them from the street. The shades are always drawn with little lines of yellow light around their edges. (EOE 217)

A grimace of displeasure drew down. In human affairs of danger and delicacy successful conclusion is sharply limited by hurry men trip by being in a rush. If one is properly to perform a difficult and subtle act, he should first inspect the end to be achieve and then, once he expected the end as desirable. He would not move to false action by anxiety, hurry or fear. (EOE 238)

The people are ignorant. The human cattle are imported for one thing- to work. Only males are brought and no females because the country does not want them breeding. A man, woman and a baby have a way of digging in, of pulling the earth where they scratch out a home. It takes all hell to root them out. But a crowd of men, nervous, lusting, restless, half sick with loneliness for women want to go anywhere. The longer the men work and eat, the more restless they become. For the bosses they are not people but animals which can be dangerous, if
not controlled. Fifteen men are shot for being a little mutinous. Salinas Valley is therefore little
different:

A NEW COUNTRY seems to follow a pattern. First come the openers, strong and brave and rather childlike. They can take care of themselves in a wilderness, but they are naive and helpless against men, and perhaps that is why they went out in the first place. When the rough edges are worn off the new land, business and lawyers come in to help with the development—to solve problems of ownership, usually by removing the temptations to themselves. And finally comes culture, which is entertainment, relaxation, transport out of the pain of living. And culture can be any level, and is.

(EOE 215)

There are many of the wandering men, exiles, lonely men who run from responsibilities and some feel driven out of society by injustice. They work a little and steal only food and occasionally need garments. They are all kinds of men literate and ignorant, clean and dirty, but all have restlessness in common. They are exiles who live close to man. Emotions with other men are for a week or a day and then they drift apart. Few people don’t want money. They want love and admiration, living in a confused grey dreams.

There some smart men, like Satan, lacking some perception of human dignity, knowing every aspect of human weakness and wickedness, uses his special knowledge to warp and buy men, bribe, threaten and seduce, to find himself in the position of great power. Ugly forces are loose in the world to utilize their fears on poor and frightened people. Evil constantly respawn, while good virtue is immortal. Vices have always a new fresh young face while virtue is venerable as nothing else in the world is. Steinbeck himself writes:
A CHILD MAY ASK, “What is the world’s story about?” And a grown man or woman may wonder, “What way will the world go? How does it end and, while we’re at it, what’s the story about?” I believe that there is one story in the world, and only one, that has frightened and inspired us, so that we live in a Pearl White serial of continuing thought and wonder. Humans are caught- in their lives, in their thoughts, in their hungers and ambitions, in their avarice and cruelty, and in their kindness and generosity too-in a net of good and evil. I think this is the only story we have and that it occurs on all levels of feelings and intelligence. Virtue and vice were warp and woof of our first consciousness, and they will be the fabric of our last, and this despite any changes we may impose on field and river and mountain, on economy and manners. There is no other story. A man, after he has brushed off the dust and chips of his life, will have left only the hard, clean questions: Was it good or was it evil? Have done well- or ill? (EOE 411)

When there is war, there is hungry people. The nation slid imperceptibly towards war, frightened. They feel the shaking emotions of war. Business pick-up and prices begin to rise. British purchasing agents rave about the country, buying food and clothes, metals and chemicals. Pain makes a person sets his jaws, his eyes grow falsely bright with anxiety, the muscles over the temples, along the cheeks. Even the weak muscles near to the nose, stand out. There is a look of sickness and of resistance to suffering. One can only understand people if one feels them in themselves. Human species is the only creative species, has one creative
emotions, the individual mind and spirit of a man. The preciousness lies in the lonely mind of a man.

Steinbeck worked hard to achieve a perspective position with *East of Eden* which combines, “all forms, all methods, all approaches” in a unique order. Real structures are imposed by realities, with deep sense of Manichaeism, the abiding awareness of philosophical and aesthetic dualism. It is a story of good and evil, strength and weakness, of love and hate. It is meant to embody Steinbeck’s deepest beliefs and emotions in the sanctity of individual dignity, the glittering instrument of the exiles. His advocacy towards the power of language to effect communication, changes began in utter loneliness and ended in spiritual humility where language, establish a relationship of meaning, of feeling, of observing.

Partly historical partly fictional epic tale *East of Eden* is based on the, real life Hamiltons who lived run parallel, in a sixty years period from 1862-1918, mostly in California. Steinbeck sets up Adam Trask’s wife, Cathy Ames Trask, the mother of their two children, Caleb and Aaron whom she abandons after she shoots Adam and leaves him dead. Kate as she is known is a seducer, a murderer, the vicious madam of a Salinas brothel and a moral monster symbolic of evil. Adam Trask is ranged between Samuel and Kate, is naïve, guileless in the ways of hetero sexual love and fatally determined to create a dynastic farm on his land. He becomes instruments through which emphasis is on free will. If Kate is the axle, Adam is the hub. He learns that when people are very poor, they still have the impulse to give. He develops a love for poor people. He has to move to east of Texas where he meets several people and knows the Negros who are poor enough to be kind and does not trust any white man, as they have fear of strangers. He learns how men consider other men as beasts and the easiest way to get along with such men is to be a
beast. Lee says to Adam, It is a symbol story of the human soul, the best known story in the world because it is everybody’s story (EOE 79).

Besides the influence of cold war politics, personal upheavals occurred in 1948- Steinbeck grieved for his closest friend and collaborator, Edward F. Rickett, who died in a may train wreck and devastated by a bitter divorce from his second wife Gwyn, ,mother of his two children. *East of Eden* is dedicated to Covici in “gratitude and love”. Lee, the Chinese servant is wise, gentle and nurturing with both adults and children is a symbol of good. He plays a variety of complex role. He is generous, forgiving, compassionate emotional and understanding. In *East of Eden*, Steinbeck showed the story of his country and of himself, so deeply intertwined, as they are one and the same. The fictional Adam Trask, visits the real life John Steinbeck at his parents home on 132 Central Avenue in Salinas. Steinbeck loops back and forth from the Adam Trask’s purchase of Sanchez farm from its owner.

The book was called “Salinas Valley” than “my valley” than “Cain sign” and finally *East of Eden* after realizing the psychological significance of the first sixteen verses of genesis. It belongs not to the past or to his own time but to the future of children. Steinbeck privileged his small town and made the world unfamiliar to an increasingly sophisticated and urban audience and to locate qualities of wonder and evil, sacredness and profanity:

“What freedom men and women could have were they not constantly tricked and trapped and enslaved and tortured by their sexuality” (EOE 25).

“When I said Cathy was a monster it seemed that it was so. Now I have bent close with a glass over a small print of her and reread the footness and I wonder if it is true” (EOE 184)
Kate is Steinbeck’s most diabolic example. She is a demented, isolate, a female tyrant who sometimes is out of Ahabs in her cold-heartedness, in selfish pursuit of power and calculating disregard for the sanctity of human life. Kate grooves to run on iron rails, whatever she had done, she had been driven to do (EOE 552). “I’m smarter than humans. Nobody can hurt me”, she says (EOE 323). She is seen to have been consumed by divergent aspects of a similar kind of monomania. She is cat-like in the cave lean to of her brothel feeding on her own enmity, anger and silence (EOE 474). In the world of Steinbeck’s novel where the church and the whorehouse arrived in the far-west prostitution purposely provide some redeeming social value where bondage, sadomasochism and blackmail make it a dirty commercial venture, fit only for revenge and extortion. Kate too is totally consumed by hatred, ostensibly for Adam but also for the human race in general. In equally perverse way, she hopes to disabuse of hypocrisy. She asserts that only hatred, evil and folly exists in the world (EOE 321). She penetrates through her wall of self and finds a principal of vacancy on the neither side of consciousness. She remains lovely and isolated in death as she has been in life. “She was cold and desolate, alone and desolate” (EOE 552). She shrinks in tremor nothingness. “the gray room darkened and the love of light flowed and rippled like water---------- as she grew smaller and smaller and then disappeared and she had never been” (EOE 554).

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 then that he tries to establish an opinion he thinks emotionally about life and the human being who live it, specially the exiles who have to face the agony because they are unwanted. The novel is a long parable, which centers about Adam Trask, a fallible, gullible, intelligent man who thinks he has found his earthly paradise in the Salinas Valley. He is seduced by his Eve, comes out of the moral wilderness, to
achieve belief in himself and in the world he learns to live in. It is full of incidents of the exiles who deviate from the mainline, as Tom Jones. It is a novel planned on the grandest possible scale, is the best, most ambitious book, Steinbeck wrote, that has in it everything he has been able to learn about his art, craft or profession in all these years. Its limited aesthetic conviction, its mature certainty is pursued and further extreme in succeeding three novels. It is the capstone, the mature summation of Steinbeck’s great abilities. The Trask-Hamilton story clash because the self conscious Hamitons are believable, sympathetic, emotional and familiar while the Trasks are incredible, nasty and piggish. Samuel Hamilton, is nevertheless more credible and effective than any one, light and dark, life and death, good and evil. Humans are caught- in their lives, in their thoughts, in their hungers and ambitions, in their avarice and cruelty, in their kindness and generosity too- in a net of good and evil (EOE 227-228).

The dramatic center of *East of Eden* is of social horror that rests disalarmingly on the proposition that, there are monsters born in the world to human parents. It is more amorphous, less intent and effect. Good is opposed to evil—Charles, Cathy and Cal have bad traits. Adam and Aaron have good traits. Evil is the source of good. The evil Cathy, sets off the glory in Adam. The wealth which Cyrus Trask acquires dishonestly is inherited by Adam Trask an honest man who uses the money to educate his sons. Good is identified with admirable individual qualities, with conventional moral goodness. Evil is identified with ignoble individual qualities (meanness, cruelty, violent temper, avarice, hatefulness, selfishness) with criminal acts murder, arson, theft, embezzlement) particularly sex act as not only with prostitution and perversion but sexual satisfaction. “In uncertainty I am certain that underneath there topmost layers of frailty men wants to be good and wants to be loved” (EOE 414). There is no good, healthy or lusty sex in *East of Eden*. It is sordid, joyless, depraved and mercenary. The good
married couples, produces children, but they have no love life. Steinbeck decries human sexuality. *East of Eden* reveals Steinbeck’s multiple implications of Melville’s the very best sense is intended for the child in all, than grown up. It fails to be completely convincing, nevertheless a magnificent undertaking who scope of vision, risk taking technique and assault on the impossible are not only huge compelling gestures but are there own reasons for being.

Cain is a farmer and Adam and Eve’s firstborn son. His offerings of agricultural produced to the lord fail to find favor, whereas the livestock offered by Cain’s brother Abel, is well received. Angry, jealous and rejected, Cain kills Abel when they are working in the field. For crime of homicide the lord banishes Cain from his company and from the company of his parent and sets upon him a particular curse, as the essence, he is to become homeless- a wanderer and an agricultural worker never who would never possess or enjoy the fruits of his labor. Lord markes him in certain way as to preserve him from the wrath of others. Cain leaves home and goes to the land of Nod. The story *East of Eden*. “It seems to me that you or I must choose between two courses of thought or action, we should remember our dying and try so to live that our death brings no pleasures in the world” (EOE 415).

The novel *East of Eden* is developed around the battle of tyranny versus agony. At the beginning, tyranny reigns because the father figure, Cyrus Trask, does nothing to foster agony and tempers tyranny. In fact, he contributes to the degeneration of his son Charles into jealousy and hatred by treating him with contempt while openly favoring Adam. When Cyrus dies, goodness begins to flourish. Charles settles down as a successful farmer, becomes a warmer person, and cares about his brother, Adam.

Cathy Ames as a teenager murders her parents and becomes a prostitute. Her pimp, Edwards, falls in love with her, but then nearly beats her when he finds out that she had
murdered her parents. She crawls to the Trask farm, where Charles and Adam take her in, although Charles is reluctant to do so. Adam falls in love with Cathy and marries her. She betrays him by drugging his drink and sleeping with Charles.

In the year 1900, Adam moves to California with his new wife, who is pregnant. He buys a farm and is full of plans to develop it into another Eden, He asks Samuel Hamilton to drill a well for him, and Samuel becomes acquainted with Adam’s Chinese servant, Lee. He also has an intuition about Cathy’s evil nature. The novel is set in the Salinas Valley of northern California and a farm in Connecticut. The time spans the years before and after the turn of the nineteenth century, ending after the start of the World War I.

California’s Salinas Valley, was settled first by Native American, who were followed by the Spanish, and finally by the Americans. The narrator’s grandparents, Samuel Hamilton and Liza Hamilton (named for Steinbeck’s own grandparents), emigrate from Ireland in 1870 and are forced for financial reasons to settle on the Valley’s most barren land, where they work hard to raise their nine children. Samuel with good nature and with good work ethics and Liza’s good heart and emotion tender them to their neighbors, especially the Trasks. John Steinbeck, who casts himself as the young narrator, carefully creates the near mythical setting in which the character of East of Eden reside. His setting, however, does far more than merely serve as the backdrop for the action. Indeed, the setting creates tension and opposition. Steinbeck sets up the biblical metaphor of tyranny versus agony (or light versus dark)-the novel’s central settings- by utilizing Salinas Valley, California, where he lived as youngster, as the novel’s primary setting:

THE NATION SLID IMPERCEPTIBLY toward war, frightened and at the same time attracted. People had not felt the shaking emotion of war in nearly sixty years. The Spanish affair was mare nearly an expedition than
a war. Mr. Wilson was re-elected President in November on his platform promise to keep us out of war, and at the same time he was instructed to take firm hand, which inevitably meant war. Business picked up and prices began to rise. British purchasing agents roved about the country, buying food and cloth and metals and chemicals. A charge of excitement ran through the country. People didn’t really believe in war even while they planned it. Valley lived about as it ways had. (EOE 471)

Agony, or darkness, is represented by the Santa Lucia’s Mountains, which lie to the West, while good, or light, is represented by the Gabilan Mountains, to the East. It is here, between these two mountain ranges that the Hamilton and Trask families settle. Although the eleven-member Hamilton family is certainly fertile, they are forced to live on the most barren land in the Valley, while discrepancy is physical manifestation of the fact that the exiles, Samuel and Liza Hamilton, are forced to eke out a living on next to nothing, while the rich but weak Trasks, who inherited their wealth thorough dishonest means, seem to be sliding into degeneracy. Although he is at heart positive and sunny, Samuel Hamilton sinks into a deep depression as he returns home from dinner at the Trask ranch. As his faithful horse pulls his cart home on a star-studded evening, Samuel begins feeling unwell, and recalls a time during his youth in Ireland when he went with his father to town, where they saw a handsome young man being excoriated by a crowd. Samuel shudders as he recalls the man’s inhuman eyes.

Adam Trask, as a child, lives with Cyrus, his Civil war veteran father, his timid stepmother, Alice, and his cruel half-brother, Charles. His deeply devout mother commits suicide upon learning that Cyrus had infected her with syphilis. Cyrus also lies about his
military record and moves to Washington D.C to take a high – ranking government position. The boys have an extremely difficult childhood, but while Adam remains passive, Charles is aggressive, and beats his brother severely after Adam defeats him in a sample game. One day, Adam discovers his stepmother standing by herself and smiling. His father attempts to convince Adam to join the army, but thinks that his other son’s nature is too inherently dark for such a career. In a jealous rage, Charles attacks Adam and leaves him unconscious on the road. Samuel Hamiltons neighbors, Samuel and Liza Hamilton never acquire wealth, but they are rich in other ways. They have nine loving children, a wonderful home life. Liza works from sun- up to sun-down, and has a kind heart. After the savage beating from Charles, Adam joins the army, while his brother remains on the family farm. Charles suffers a farm accident which leaves him with a dark brown scar on his face. Charles longs for Adam’s return. Adam finds Cyrus living luxuriously in Washington D.C. His father attempts to convince Adam to enroll at West Point Academy. Adam finds that he cannot return home after his second stint in the Army expires, around the country as a vagabond until he is arrested and placed on chain gang. He writes to Charles to inform him that he has escaped, and asks him to send money so that he can return home. He learns that Cyrus has died and has left the brothers a fortune of $100,000. Adam, an exile suggests to move to California, arrives at Salinas, packs the things to be taken, loads in the train and settles:

Adam took pleasure in the new life. When autumn touched the trees he had got as far as Omaha, and without question or reason or thought he hurried west and south, fled through the mountains and arrived with relief in Southern California. He wandered by the sea from the border north as far as San Luis Obispo, and he learned to pilfer the tide pools for abalones
and eels and mussels and perch, to dig the sandbars for clams, and to trap a rabbit in the dunes with a noose of fishline. And he lay in the sun-warmed sand, counting the waves. (EOE 55)

Cathy Ames takes center stage. She has the face of an angel, but the temperament of a devil. Her parents, solid middle-class folk, adore their only child and cannot come to terms with her evil nature. The girl has an uncanny, almost preternatural ability to sexually attract men. When she is only twelve she seduces a group of teenage boys. One of Cathy’s teacher commits suicide after a mysterious liaison with her. Cathy has an intense hatred for her parents. She chooses to burn down their house, and they die in the flames.

Both the Hamiltons and the Trasks are led by heavily bearded men (Samuel and Cyrus, respectively) but the men are very different types of patriarchs. Samuel is the loving, healthy, good father, while Cyrus is the hateful, diseased, bad father. The kindly Samuel provides Adam with a positive paternal role model, but the sins of Adam’s biological father nevertheless wreak havoc upon him and his brother, Charles. Adam and Charles are representations of the biblical Cain and Abel, as evidence both by their initials and their family circumstances. In the Bible, Abel sacrifices of a lamb to please God more then Cain’s gift of grain and Cain murders his brother in a jealous rage. God cures Cain and sends him out into land of Nod, which lies to the east of Eden, the location referred to in the title of Steinbeck’s novel. Like Cain, Charles become deeply jealous when their father, Cyrus, ignores Charles’ expensive gift in favor of the free mongrel puppy given to him his favored son, Adam. In range, Charles attacks Adam and leaves him unconscious.

The biblical tale of Cain and Abel is the centre of the novel. The scar resulting from Charles’ farm accident is emblematic of an element in the Cain and Abel story. As part of
God’s punishment for Abel’s murder, God places a similar scar on Cain as a warning for others to avoid him, and curses him to wander the earth for the rest of his days. Cathy Ames, whose aims are evil, is a representative of the Biblical antihero, Satan. Manipulative and uncaring she seduces people into obeying her wishes. To Cathy, evil simply comes naturally.

Cathy Ames reemerges as Catherine Amesbury after setting fire to her parents’ house and leaving them for dead. She approaches Mr. Edwards who runs a prostitute and is the epitome of the middle-class family man becomes obsessed with Cathy and takes her as his mistress, buying her a luxurious house, learns about the suspicious nature of her and comes to see her true nature. One evening, he takes her out into the country, beats her almost to the point of death, and leaves her near the Trask farm. Charles and Adam find Cathy unconscious on their beck steps. Despite Charles’ protests, Adam nurses her back to health:

> It was white almost pitch-black inside, for not only were the shades down but blankets were tacked over the window. Cathy was lying in the big four-poster bed, and Adam sat beside her, his face buried in the coverlet. He raised his head and looked blindly out. (EOE 188-189)

Cathy finds that he has fallen deeply in love with her, and asks her to marry him. Charles can clearly see through Cathy’s wiles, and she fears him for it. On their wedding night, Cathy drugs Adam with the opiate medication she has been taking for pain, and seduces Charles. A short time later, exiles Adam and Charles move to California.

Adam buys out Charles’ share of the family farm and moves with the reluctant Cathy to the Salinas Valley, in California. Adam views her as a sweet and holy girl, precious beyond thinking, clean and loving. Cathy attempts to abort the baby herself and lies to the
doctor. She is terrified of passing along epilepsy to any offspring. Adam is happy, and feels that life is worth living. Full of hope, he goes about setting up a ranch so that he can gain from the rich opportunities all around him. Adam is intent on building a garden in his new-found Eden: I mean to make a garden of my land. Samuel is a diviner with an almost preternatural ability to locate water. They explore the Salinas Valley for the most fertile piece of land available. At Samuel’s prompting, Adam buys the old Sanchez place, located near King City. Steinbeck takes back up the threads of Adam and Cathy Trask’s story, Adam continues to find happiness on his new California ranch, and eagerly looks forward to the birth of his first child. His Chinese-American servant, Lee, becomes indispensable to him. Like Samuel Hamilton, Lee can see through Cathy. Are people, born with an innate predisposition towards good or evil, or do they have the ability to choose between the two extremes.

The house of prostitution in the Salinas Valley attracts a variety of clientele by specializing in different sexual fantasies. Faye’s brothel where Cathy (now “Kate”) winds up, provides homely comfort in addition to sexual release, but does not condone any extreme sexual practices:

Faye was the motherly type, big-breasted, big hipped, and warm. She was bosom to cry on, a soother and stroker. The iron sex of Niger and the tavern bacchanalianism of Jenny had their devotees, and they were not lost to Faye. Her house became the refuge of young men piling in puberty, mourning over lost virtue, and aching to lose some more. Faye was reassurer of misbegotten husbands. Her house took up the slack for frigid wives. It was the cinnamon-scented kitchen of one’s grandmother. If any sexual thing happened to you at Faye’s you felt it was an accident but
forgivable. Her house led to the youths of Salinas into the thorny path of sex in the pinkest, smoothest way. Faye was nice woman, not very bright, highly moral, and easily shocked. People trusted her and she trusted everyone. No one could want to hurt Faye once he knew her. She was no competition to others. She was third phase. (EOE 218)

Faye is well-liked by the authorities because she keeps an eye out for the criminal element amongst her clients and donates money to the local charities. Kate endears herself to Faye, and quickly becomes indispensable to the older women. She organizes the house, ingratiates herself to other girls, improves the menu and working conditions, and saves Faye a great deal of money. The sheriff, whom Kate likes for his direct and truthful manner, pays a visit to Kate after hearing of Adam’s shooting, but cannot do and to stay away from her sons- and his own son, for that matter. In additions, he orders her to dye her hair black so that she will not be recognized. Faye is interesting character, although she is a brothel owner. There is nothing inherently tyrannical about her. In fact, she gives more money to the local charities than most business owners. She also views her girls in an almost motherly fashion, and treats her customers well.

Eventually, Kate becomes so indispensable to Faye that she begins to think of her as her own daughter. At a private party, she informs Kate that she wants her to stop working as a prostitute and to take care of things for her. She informs Kate that she wishes to be called mother, and she is the sole beneficiary in her will, ordering Kate to drink champagne to celebrate. Kate, who losses control when she drinks, become hostile, calls Faye a lot of extra money by engaging in lucrative sadomasochistic sexual adventures with clients who ask for such service. Faye is horrified by the revelation. However, after Kate sobers up, she drugs Faye with an opiate and
convinces her. The distraught Faye, who wants more than anything to be cared for and loved, believes Kate. At this point, Kate takes control of the brothel and begins to poison Faye. She feigns illness herself so that Doctor Wilde will provide her with the meditation she needs to kill Faye thus making it appear as though her death is the result of natural causes:

That was October 17. Faye was never really well again. She would make a little gain and then go to pieces. She had bad time on December 3, and took even longer for her to gain her strength. February 12 the bleeding became violent and the strain seemed to have weakened Faye’s heart. Dr. Wild listened a long time through his stethoscope. Faye’s skin had shrunk, clinging to jaw and skull, and her eyes were huge and vacant. She tried to speak, and Kate said, “Shush! Save your strength. Save your strength.” She went to the kitchen for a glass of warm milk and put it on the bedside table. She took two little bottles from her pocket and sucked a little from each one into the eye-dropper. “Open up, Mother. This is a new kind of medicine. Now be brave dear. This will taste bad.” She squeezed the fluid far back on Faye’s tongue and held up her head so she could drink a little milk to take away the taste. “Now you rest and I’ll back in a little while.” (EOE, 248-249)

When Faye dies, Kate buries the bottles of poisonous meditation in the backyard. She appears to be a disturb daughter, abject with grief. She loses weight and takes to her bed, and her devotion goes unquestioned. The entire time in the brothel, Kate never thinks of Adam Trask or her twin boys.
Adam sinks deeper and deeper into lethargy and despair. After more than a year has gone by, Lee complains to his friend Samuel Hamilton that Adam has not yet even named his twin sons. Lee becomes the boy’s mother and father—they have even begun to say Chinese words. He says they are all descended from the restless, the nervous, the criminals, the arguers and brawlers, but are brave, independent and generous. They would have stayed in their home plots in the other world and starved over the squeezed out soil. They are over brave, over fearful, kind and cruel, over friendly, over sentimental and realistic, mundane and materialistic, frightened of strangers. Lee’s parents save a part of daily rice and hide it under the sleeping mats. Father stops smoking to save the matches issued. His mother collects every tattered scrap of cloth, unravel edges to make thread and sew rag bag together with a splinter to make swaddling clothes for him.

Samuel Hamilton comes immediately, and finds Adam deep in depression, unable to help himself. It seems to Samuel that Adam pleasures himself with sadness. After few failed attempts at talking to Adam, Samuel hits his friend to jolt him out his despair. Lee joins Samuel and Adam for a drink while the babies sleep in the warm dust. The men begin an intellectual discussion about the story of Cain and Abel, and analyze the continuing human cycle of rejection, anger, revenge, and guilt. Samuel suggests the names Cain and Abel for the boy, they decide to call the children Caleb (after the man who made it to the Promised Land (EOE 461) and Aaron, over time, the names morph into Cal and Aaron.

Steinbeck continues to juxtapose tyranny with agony in an effort to illustrate one of the novel’s primary food, the tyranny and the agony. The upright, honest Samuel, who symbolizes God the Father, becomes severely ill after the satanic Cathy bites him on the hand when he attempts to help her during labor. Here, agony is for tyranny and the poisonous Cathy’s
tyranny is so powerful that it incapacitates indeed and Samuel Hamilton is totally agonized, whose goodness is personified. Samuel must turn to his benevolent wife, Liza, to give him strength and restore him. There is an inevitable contrast between Liza and Cathy as a mother. Liza is a self sacrificing, adoring mother while Cathy refuses to look upon her children’s faces or care for them, and even abandons them. Not for a single instant does she consider her children’s well-being. Liza, the loving mother of nine, arrives to save the day. She is the only one capable of curing Samuel of the damage done to him by the tyrannical Cathy. Along with Lee, she helps to care for the newborn twins. Liza’s relentless cleaning of Cathy’s newly renovated home signifies that the Trask house is dirty and diseased.

Steinbeck wanted to accomplish and to reach as many people as possible and have his stories impact them in the manner of biblical parables. In *East of Eden*, he offers a simplistic personification of agony versus tyranny, Samuel and Liza Hamilton versus Cathy Trask. Similarly, Quinn and the sheriff, almost guardian angels, protect the Trask babies from contamination by their tyrannical mother. In addition, the sheriff is a good father in contrast to the weak, incapacitated and agonized Adam, when he warns Kate to stay away from the twins and from his own son.

Samuel is the epitome of the good father figure, while Adam pays virtually no attention to his children. Samuel fathers nine children, all of whom turn out to be good people. He cares deeply for each, and respects their unique talents and fallings. Adam, on the other hand, fails to give his children names even more then a year after their birth. Adam on some level enjoys his treatment at the hands of the sadistic Cathy. Adam’s ongoing despondency is over his clearly tyrannical wife because he is better person than Cathy:
Adam said, “I guess you can’t understand it. I don’t much care. There are so many things I don’t understand how you could shoot me and desert your sons. I don’t understand how you or anymore could live like this.”

He waved his hand to indicate the house.

“Who asked you to understand?”

Adam stood up and too his hat from the table. “I guess that’s all,” he said. “Good-by.” He walked towards the door.

She called after him, “You’re changed, Mr. Mouse. Have you got a woman at last?”

Adam stopped and slowly turned and his eyes were thoughtful. “I hadn’t considered before,” he said, and he moved toward her until he towarded over her and she tilt back her head to look into his face. “I said I didn’t understand about you,” he said slowly. “Just now it came to me what you don’t understand.”

“What don’t I understand, Mr. Mouse?”

“You know about the ugliness in people. You showed me the pictures. You use all the sad, weak parts of a man, and God knows he has them.”

“Everybody”

Adam went on, astonished at his own thoughts, “Bit you—yes, that’s right—you don’t know about the rest. You don’t believe I brought you the letter because I don’t want your money. You don’t believe I loved you. And the
men who come to you here with their ugliness, the men in the pictures—you
don’t believe those men could have goodness and beauty in them. You see
only one side, and you think—more than that, you’re sure—that’s all there
is.” (EOE 381-382)

Adam grows up under the influence of a particularly cruel father, but seems unable to
treat his children any better different phases of their lives, and that they have the ability to
change. Since familial relationship play a particularly important role, it is especially pertinent to
note that Steinbeck’s idea of forgiveness holds that an individual has the power to alter family
dynamics. The rejection of Adam’s brother Charles by their father Cyrus echoes God’s rejection
of Cain in favor of Abel. Charles’ subsequent anger towards Adam nearly result in Adam’s death.
Adam becomes a better father, and the cycle established by Cain and Abel is repeated in the
Trask family once more, causing Adam to repeat his father’s mistake.

Samuel even suggests naming the children, after the biblical story of Cain and Abel but
Adam rejects this morbid idea. Samuel, Adam, and Lee discuss the story at great length, even
going so far as to read the Bible. They mull over each word, and wonder aloud why God chose
Abel’s gift of a lamb over Cains gift grain, but cannot find an answer. They also examine God’s
decision to cast out Cain and force him to wander the earth, discussing what, exactly, God
promise Cain. Did God give Cain any hope for the future, or was he forever condemned? If no
hope is offered, then are the descendants of mankind doomed to repeat the sins of their fathers
over again, with redemption forever lying out of reach? During the philosophical debate, Adam
argues that repeating the negative cycle of anger, revenge, and subsequent guilt is not
preordained. After all, he remarks, he never even considered killing his own brother, Charles.
However he becomes much quieter after recalling the time when his brother almost killed him in a jealous rage.

Adam Trask the well loved son of Cyrus Trask does not return his father’s love. He is sent to join the army against his will. He marries Cathy Ames and moves to the Salinas Valley to start a farm. He raises twin sons by himself after Cathy shoots him and deserts him. Born on a farm on the outskirt of a little town, not far from Connecticut, he is the only son and is born six months after his father is mustered into a Connecticut regiment in 1862. With Adam Trask enters the core incredible story of his tyrannical wife, Cathy Ames, most vicious women in literature, is the abstract fiction of the social threat, of a witch beyond women. He is honest and kind but these are the negative virtues in him. He is passive, inert, and non-resistant. He is a rich landowner; was one of Samuel’s neighbors. Adam grows up with his brother Charles on a farm in Connecticut. Their father, Cyrus Trask Love Adam best, even though Charles is jealous of Adam and even though he loves him dearly. When Cyrus sends Adam to join the army, Charles writes his brother a long letter telling him that he misses him and wants him back on the farm. When Adam is released from the army, he writes that he is coming home, and Charles is delighted. He works tirelessly to get the farm ready from Adam but when Adam begins his journey, he realizes that he does not want to live with his jealous brother. As a result, he stays in the army. Charles is agonized and angry. For five years the brothers have little contact, and when Adam is released again from the army, he does not go to the farm instead he wonders the country as hobo and is imprisoned on a chain gang for a year. When he escapes from his captivity, Adam decides to return to the farm but things does not go smoothly. Adam decides to leave after wandering the country for a long time. He again returns to the farm. Shortly after his return, the brothers, receive word that their father have died and has left them a fortune. Charles is certain that their
father has stolen the money from the army, but Adam thinks that their father is innocent. Adam is clearly an Abel figure from the Cain and Abel story. He is the one who gives his father a puppy a worthy gift. He is also the one who incurs his brother’s jealousy. Charles, like Cain, tries to strike out at the goodness of his brother. He sleeps with Adam’s wife on his wedding night. Adam’s only flaw is his inability to face the truth. Adam is so attached to the ideal that he ignores the real. Catherine tells him over that she does not want to go to California. She says over and over that she does not want to stay with him, but he does not want to hear her. He assumes she will settle into a life he creates for her. Unfortunately, his inability to face the truth blinds him to tyranny and sets him up for failure. He never fully accepts the reality of Cathy and even calls her a poor darling when he hears she has committed suicide. Adam is also blind about his sons. He sees Aaron as totally good and constantly challenges Caleb to try and live up to his brother. He does not see his favoritism as an imitation of what Cyrus had done to him and Charles is again blinded by the truth. Even when Aaron tells Adam that he is going to quit college, Adam ignores his words and pushes his idealized vision onto his son. In the end, Adam overcomes all of his weakness and flaws when he is willing to give Caleb the blessing that he has sought throughout his life. It is the ultimate act of generosity and goodness. Adam has little senses of the importance of material possessions. When he inherits the money from his father, he has no desire to hold it tightly. He would willingly spend it all on travelling. When he loses the money on the lettuce venture, he feels little disappointment. Even though his sons are crushed by the shame of the loss, Adam merely thinks of it as an interesting Proposition that had failed. Although the lettuce failure leaves him in a weak financial position, he does not act to make more money, for he is simply not concerned about wealth. When Cal gives him $15,000 Adam refuses to take it for he feels it is not earned in an honorable way.
Charles Trask, son of Cyrus Trask, dearly loves his father, who does not return the love. Although he loves his brother Adam, he also has an intense jealousy of him. Charles is violent and is triggered by jealousy. He is a man set-apart by his own psychological horror and he sets himself apart from humanity because of the pain of his conscience. He feels remorse. He is able to control his violent nature. Charles is a simplistic character, an ideology for the Cain figure and the representative of evil or destruction in the family; he ends with the same mean-spiritedness, for in his will he forces Adam to share his inheritance with Cathy, his ex-wife turned prostitute. At an early age, Charles realizes that his father does not love him. He tries to win the love of Cyrus by being totally devoted to his father, but Cyrus barely acknowledges it. Charles response to his father’s unequal loves is to develop a jealousy and hatred of Adam. He wants to kill Adam, just as Cain killed Abel.

The complexity of Charles comes in two aspects. Although he hates Adam, he also loves him and longs to be his friend. Had it no been for Cyrus’ favoritism, the brothers probably would have had a normal sibling relationship. When Cyrus dies, Charles changes. He sinks into the mundane reality of farming and hopes that his brother will return to live with him. Since Charles is a good farmer, the community respects him. When Adam returns and questions his unvarying schedule of work Charles tells him to work hard for a good farm. He comes across as the stable brother, while Adam seems immature. He wants to spend his inheritance on luxuries travels and encourages Charles’ evil side appears two more times in the novel, and both instances result from the jealousy he feels for his brother. Charles totally violates Adam’s trust when he allows him to be seduced by Cathy on Adam’s wedding night. He also shows his evil tendency in his will, giving half of his fortune to Cathy Trask.
Cathy Ames/ Catherine Trask/ Kate, Women without morals, is a monster. She Kills her parents and steals their money. Making it seem like an outside murder and a robbery. She shoots Adam to escape him after she has just had Twins. She becomes a prostitute in Salinas and eventually becomes a madam after murdering her predecessor. Cathy-Kate, a born monster, is an allegorical quality, a representation of pure evil, not quite human. Her lust for money is equated with her will to do evil. Clifton Fadiman a critic called her the wickedest woman in the world’s fiction. She runs away from something, whether she escapes, who knows. She is devoid of moral sensibility. She is a pivot around which other character discovered their own, story of good and evil, of strength and weakness, of love and hate, of beauty and ugliness. She is a kind of diabolic backdrop for all discoveries. Her evil is the evil of lovelessness. She perverts twists and bends life to her darkness. She is like some balance wheel misweighted, some gear out of ratio. She debases sexuality, which is always a sign of robust vigor and energetic life. Cathy’s moral monstrousness is enforced consistently in two important stylistic ways throughout the novel. She is presented in the serpent imagery of Satan who lured Adam and Eve into the transgression that drove them out of Eden. She is attractive, and the lure of the serpent in genesis is attractiveness more subtle than any other wild creature that the lord God has made.

Cathy’s retreats to the dark into the tyranny. At Adam’s ranch she already huddles in the deep shadows as if afraid of the light. Adam believes that all his labor is for her. Cathy Ames is compellingly complex, who goes beyond the biblical Satan archetype and the responding evil associated with light and dark imagery. “I’m going to make a garden so good, so beautiful, that it will be a proper place for her to live and a fitting place for her light to shine on”. (EOE 222-223) Steinbeck says, “she is a little piece of the monster in all of us”. “There was a time when a girl like Cathy would have been called possessed by devil”. (Volume-21-122)
She is a psychic monster produced by a twisted gene or a malformed egg. Cathy Ames, the heart of *East of Eden*, is a black, perverse heart, who represents dark force unleashed in the world, a dark principle in relation to which others order their lives. She is a fusion of Eve, the Eden serpent and Cain’s wife. Steinbeck has accumulated all the anti – feminist notions of the mid twentieth century for Cathy’s primary manner of displaying her evil is in her sexuality, precocious as a child, luring boys and young men into sexual encounters with her and then sacrificing them in order to remain safely within the good graces of her parents. As an adult, she goes immediately into prostitution, both before and after she is married to Adam. On her wedding night, she successfully seduces Charles, the brother of her bridegroom. In her practice as a prostitute, Kate is sexually active rather than a passive victim of men’s predation. She brings out all their secret wickedness with her circus shows and her sadomasochism. She also photographs men in the sexual act and then extorts money from them.

The eyes of Cathy have no message, no communication of any kind. There is nothing recognizable behind them, they are not human eyes. Samuel saw as child was executed in front of him because he was thought to be evil incarnate, a devil in human form. He cannot get the horrible image out of his mind. He remembers how the man lacks an essential human component, and realizes that Cathy Trask is without this crucial element. When he returns home he is glad to see his wife Liza and inform her that he has agreed to help Adam rebuild his ranch and to help Cathy when she is into early labor.

Cathy goes to Salinas, changes her name to Kate, and joins a house of prostitution, where she develops a close relationship with Faye, the madam of the house. The sheriff knows that Kate is Adam’s wife and mother of the twins. He tells her he would expose her if she ever tries to use her connection to Adam for profit or if she ever reveals her identity to her twin sons.
Kate gains Faye’s trust to such an extent that Faye makes out a will that leaves everything to Kate, whom she treats like an adopted daughter. At a party Faye gives honor to Kate, Faye insists that she drinks some champagne. Kate quickly becomes inebriated and loses control, telling Faye that she hates her. The next day, when Kate realizes what she has done, she makes Faye think that she has dreamed all that happened the night before. She then decides to kill Faye by giving her poison, which she administers in small doses. Cathy is made to be more horrible when she expresses her lack of maternal instinct. She openly states that she does not want to be a mother and tries to abort her unborn child. When she goes into labor she is so upset over the thought of giving birth that she bites and wounds Samuel Hamilton, who is assisting her with the birth. One of her most tyrannical acts comes when she shoots her husband and abandons her infants as they are crying for her in hunger.

Cathy’s ultimate evil is seen in her lack of respect for her life. In order to be independent of her parents, she burns them to death and takes their money. When Adam tries to force her to stay with him as his wife, she shoots him. When she learns that Faye has willed her all her possession, Kate slowly kills her with poison. Caleb brings Aaron to meet his mother, Kate laughs at his distress. When Ethel reveals that she knows about Faye’s murder and blackmails Kate, Kate plans her murder. When Kate learns that Joe is trying to double cross her, she turns him in to the sheriff, causing his death. In the end, she reveals that she has no respect for her own life, and commits suicide. Steinbeck writes about Cathy:

WHEN I SAID Cathy was a monster it seemed to me that it was so. Now I have bent close with a glass over the small print of her and reread the footnotes, and I wonder if it was true. The trouble is that since we cannot know what she wanted, we will never know whether or not she got it. If
rather than running toward something, she ran away from something, we can’t know whether she escaped. Who knows but that she tried to tell someone or everyone what she was like and could not, for lack of common language. Her life may have been her language, formal, developed, indecipherable. It is easy to say she was bad, but there is little meaning unless we know why. (EOE 182)

In her rejection on the past, Cathy shows some abnormalities of childhood. She always feel terribly lonely. As a result, she fantasizes that she can make herself small like Alice in Alice in Wonderland. It is her way of escaping from the pain of her world Kate also has one tendency towards goodness. She feels strongly attached to Aaron and his Goodness. As a result, she wants to keep him from learning about her. When he finds out the truth about Kate, she cannot bear it and kills herself.

Kate’s physical being becomes a rejection of her evil nature. Her painfully arthritic hands are a symbol of her deformed and tortured soul. It is ironic that she has often used her hands to inflict pain on her. Her sensitivity towards the light is symbolic of her fear of the truth. She hides from the world inside her house of prostitution and from the light by living in a dimly lit gray room, eyes closed against the truth. Her evil has no apparent origin, for she is bright and was well taken care of in childhood. She simply suffers from an absence of goodness in her moral makeup. She also cannot understand goodness in others scoring it as a weakness and taking advantage of it.

Lee, a Chinese-American servant of the Trask in California, devotes himself in making a home for Adam and raising the twins. He is the philosopher of the novel, a constant testimony
of Adam’s honesty and goodness. He repeatedly tells both Aaron and Caleb that their father is very special and can totally be trusted. Even though Lee counsels Adam to tell the boys about their mother, he does not lose respect for him when he refuses. Lee understands that Adam is trying to do, what he thinks is best for his sons. When Lee counsels Adam against giving Cathy half of Charles’ fortune, he knows that Adam is incapable of doing anything other than what the will says. If his brother intended his money to go to her, Adam will make certain that she gets her fair share. He shares their similarly negative feeling about Cathy. At the house, they find Adam fretting, and ask the nervous father-to-be to leave. Samuel finds Cathy in a darkened room and opens the blind to let in light, making her diabolically angry. She hates Samuel, and bites him when he attempts to comfort her during her labor. After giving birth to twin boys, Cathy refuses to see them or nurses them. Samuel is shocked by Cathy’s unnatural behavior and sends for Liza to help. Cathy informs Adam of her plans to leave within a week after giving birth. He dismisses her words as raving brought on by the trauma of childbirth, but later she proves him wrong, shooting him in the arm when he attempts to stop her. Horace Quinn, the local deputy, refuses to believe that the shooting is an accident especially when he learns that Cathy has left the ranch. He informs the Salinas sheriff, who has heard that Cathy is working in Faye’s brothel, about the events. They decide to keep their mother as prostitute. Samuel and Adam become close friends while Adam recovers. The older man tells Adam that he too has suffered, and assures him that by going through the motions of living he will heal in time and assures him that by going through the motions of living he will heal in time. Adam has no idea that his wife is residing in a house of prostitution.

Aaron Trask is one of the twins of Adam and Cathy Trask. Open and innocent by nature, a good son who is loved by everyone. With his light hair and nice features, he is also quite
handsome. He goes to war in order to escape from Salinas after he finds about his mother. He is selfish, inconsiderable, unloving. He is too good, a man needs some bad in him.

Caleb Trask, is the second twin of Adam and Cathy Trask. A contrast to his brother, he is dark haired and secretive. He distrusts all the people in his life and manipulates their emotions to get his own way. Before the end of the novel. He undergoes a transformation, chooses goodness, and becomes the repository of hope for the future.

Will Hamilton is the oldest Hamilton son. He moves to the city and becomes a Successful businessman. He helps Cal get started in business.

George Hamilton, another Hamilton son, moves to the city and becomes a businessman in the insurance field.

Tom Hamilton, another Hamilton son, stays on the farm and reads books devotedly. He commits suicide after blaming himself for the death of his sister, Dessie.

Joe Hamilton, another Hamilton son attends Stanford College.

Dessie Hamilton, the favorite Hamilton daughter, becomes a popular dressmaker in Salinas. After a failed romance she moves to the home place with Tom, but soon dies of a stomach ailment. Tom blames himself for her death.

Olive “Ollie” Hamilton narrator’s mother and wife to Ernest Steinbeck. Devoted to her religion, she remains willfully ignorant of the nature of her husband’s business.

Louis Lippo, a farmer in Salinas Valley who introduces Adam Trask to Samuel Hamilton.

Horace Quinn, the deputy sheriff who investigates the shooting at the Trask ranch. Years later, he brings Kate’s will to Adam and burns the photographs she had planned
to use to rain the reputation of the state’s leading male citizens.

Julius Euskadi, a neighboring rancher, attends the first meeting between the deputy sheriff and Adam Trask after the shooting.

Faye is a madam of a house of prostitution in Salinas. When Kate goes to work for her, Fate adopts her as a daughter. Kate kills her with poison.

Dr. Wilde is a doctor whose age and confusion Kate uses in her scheme to kill Faye.

Ethel is a prostitute who worked for Faye and then Kate, after Faye’s death. Years later, she tries to extort money from Kate out of her knowledge of Kate’s murder of Faye.

Mary is a narrator’s younger sister.

Abra Bacon is the girlfriend of Aaron throughout their school years together in Salinas. Year later, when she realizes Aaron cannot grow up; she falls in love with Cal.

Joe Valery is a man who works for Kate in her house of prostitution. An escaped convict, he tries to trick Kate about her fear of Ethel. She learns of his betrayal and turns him in to the sheriff.

Alf Michelson is a handyman in Salinas who knows all the gossip and tells Joe Valery the rumors about Kate killing Faye.

The antagonist of the entire novel is tyrannynial represented primarily by Cathy Trask, who is later known as Kate the madam of brothel. She serves as a force of tyranny both in her husband’s and son’s lives. She is the personification of tyranny as she burns her parents to death, deserts her infant sons, and kills her employer. In the second generation portion of the novel,
Kate becomes the hidden force of tyranny that threatens Aaron and Cal. When Cal confronts her, he is repulsed and rejects her. When Aaron comes face to face with her, he is destroyed. He joins the military and dies soon after.

The key climax is goodness defeats evil. It happens after Cal rejects his mother and decides he can choose to live a life of goodness. He refuses to tell Aaron about Kate, knowing he would be unable to handle the news. He also tries to honor Adam, whom he feels is a good man and father, by earning a fortune to present to him. There are many other smaller climaxes in the novel that lead to the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Despite many tragic occurrences in the novel, the plot is resolved as comedy, with goodness triumphing over evil. The novel’s resolution occurs with Cal’s recognition that he can choose to act for the good, overcoming his negative emotions of rage and jealousy. He receives his father’s blessing and wins the love of Abra. There is an irony in the outcome, for Aaron, not Cal, was always noted as the good son. When Cathy enters the picture, evil flourishes once again. After killing her parents and being a prostitute, she arrives at the Trask place, where Adam and Charles are living, after being severely beaten and left for dead. The good Adam nurses her back to health, falls in love with her, and marries her, Charles, driven to evil in Cathy’s presence, has sex with her, on the night she marries Adam. Although she has tried several times to blot out goodness, the evil Cathy has never been able to kill the force of good. Samuel, Adam, Lee, and the twins all live in spite of her evil.

After the birth of Caleb and Aaron, begins the focus on the second generation. Samuel forces Adam to face the truth about Cathy, who has become Kate and the owner of a brothel. The knowledge frees him for goodness once again, and he turns his attention to raising his sons. Ironically, Adam makes the same mistakes as his father, Cyrus, favoring one twin over the other. Cal parallels Charles and Aaron parallels Adam. However, their relation to good and evil is
mediated by the wisdom of Lee, who guides them and disciplines them as a surrogate mother. Although Cal is sometime mean, Lee convinces the boy that he is not evil. He additionally teaches him that he has the freedom to choose goodness over sin. In the end, Cal forgives himself when he receives his father’s blessing, which he has been seeking throughout his life. As a result, he stands at the end of the novel as the figure of hope and goodness. He wants to be like his brother Aaron:

Cal crept quietly down the dark hall and edged into the room where he and his brother slept. He saw the outline of his brother’s head against the pillow in the double bed, but he could not see whether Aaron slept. Very gently he eased himself in on his side and turned slowly and laced his fingers behind his head and stared at the myriads of tiny colored dots that make up darkness. The window shade bellied slowly in and then the night wind fell and the worn shade flapped quietly against the window. (EOE 376)

The novel is expensive and complex, spanning three generations. As a result, it is ignores the unifying factors of time, place, and character. It is, tightly held together by the theme of agony vs. tyranny. In the end, goodness triumphs over evil through the characters of Adam and Cal, making it a comedy. Conflicts is the basis for the story of Cain and Able, as it in the Old Testament. Cain represents evil, while Able represents good. The Lord intervenes to punish Cain and teach him that he can choose the path of goodness over evil.

The original Hebrew provides hope for humanity’s escape from the impossible war between agony and tyranny. When Cain is banished from home by God, God tells him he may
choose to live a righteous life, of hope. The Hebrew word for “may” is timshel. It indicates that a person may have evil tendencies, but she or he may choose to live a righteous life. The choice is the person’s own; it is not a commandment from God and it is not a fate determined in advance. The free will to choose goodness and redeem himself. The resolution of the novel is based upon the theme of redemption. Cal is able to redeem his fall from grace by receiving and accepting his father’s forgiveness. Adam blesses him and grants him the power of free will. The novel is highly Christian in its interpretation of the Old Testament story. Love conquers evil. As punishment, Adam and Eve are sent to less perfect world outside of the Garden of Eden. They are allowed to have children. After their expulsion from Eden, Eve gives birth to Cain and Abel. The brothers are born in east of Eden, land where Cain commits the first sin of Murder. When he becomes jealous of Abel, he kills his brother. His brothers get the chop from his own brother Cain. Torture dehumanizes both Cain and Abel.

Thus the story ends with the agony of the exiles who try to find their roots in an alien soil but get trapped in the vicious circle of tyranny of the people around them which is followed by murder exploitation and subjugation. They are unable to mitigate the agony and have to lead a life of sorrow and pain. They do not find relief in the rich mosaic of meadows, river and woods. They are treated with disdain and Eden becomes Satan’s hell.