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The California Dream:

A Dangerous Social and Environmental Myth Protested by John Muir and John Steinbeck

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Doctor of Philosophy

in

World Cultures

by

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The Dissertation of Raymond Earl Winter III is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

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Chair

University of California, Merced

2010

DEDICATION

Before and beyond all others, this endeavor is dedicated to my wife, Kelly, who has been more patient, supportive, and enduring than anyone could possibly expect of another human being. Kelly, your sacrifices throughout this journey have been immeasurable, though I've counted every one. I am honored to share this accomplishment with you, which could never have been achieved without your vision of its completion and what so often amounted to being a single parent of three. Now let's all go play outside.

To my children-- Emma, Paige, and Ethan—I hope your youth protected you from the hardships of this season. You continue to be my inspiration for pursuing scholarship I believe will make a difference in your world. I hope to do my part in making each of you world-changers who pursue justice where it is needed.

To Paula Watney, truly a third parent to our children, thank you for your sacrificial and gracious nurturing of our kids. We couldn't imagine entrusting so much of their lives with anyone else. I know you love it, but we no doubt tested your limits, yet never found your breaking point. This degree likewise belongs to you.

Thank you to my extended family for the support, encouragement, and a lineage full of the stories and experiences of a western migration which have shaped and inspired me.

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I hope my effort at encouraging greater social and environmental justice models a form of stewardship and service that inspires others and honors God.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The California Dream:

A Dangerous Social and Environmental Myth Protested by John Muir and John Steinbeck

by

Raymond Earl Winter III

Doctor of Philosophy, Emphasis in World Cultures

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This study examines the intentions, techniques, and effects of John Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911) and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) as they review the social and environmental injustices in the Great Central Valley which have been created by the perpetuation of the "California Dream." These writers challenge the Dream itself, making a case for a less individualistic and dominating perspective of land ownership and of fellow mankind, to be replaced with a more altruistic and interdependent model.

I establish the sources and early applications of this utopian mythology through the explorer, builder, and profiteer phases of California's statehood, and assert (1) the

belief that California is limitlessly bountiful and a guaranteed source of prosperity for every hard worker falsely represents opportunity and literally overwhelms the landscape; (2) certain parties of industry continue to perpetuate an Edenic California mythology for the sake of profit at the cost of land and livelihood; and (3) literary efforts to counter the myth continue to challenge a social and environmental ethic that inappropriately encourages social hierarchies and environmental degradation. These literary efforts, as modeled by Muir and Steinbeck, likewise shift the psychological location of California in the American imagination into a more honest, informed, and justice-oriented position.

The study concludes with a contemporary review of how the myth continues to this day to justify social and environmental crises in the Great Central Valley, and how writers and citizens alike must continue to reorient the perception of this place in light of radical social and environmental changes that have occurred since the founding days of the California Dream.

Chapter One:

The Social and Environmental Destruction Invoked by the California Dream

The "California Dream," or the articulation of America's mythology of promise as applied to the continent's western-most edge: *"California is the endlessly bountiful and expansive place to start over and find prosperity—hard work on its beautiful and consecrated land will always result in fulfillment."*

"*Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it."*

--Bertolt Brecht

"Although the creative and critical arts may seem remote from the arenas of scientific investigation and public policy, clearly they are exercising, however unconsciously, an influence upon the emerging culture of environmental concern, just as they have played a part in shaping as well as merely expressing every other aspect of human culture. […] How we image a thing, true or false, affects our conduct toward it, the conduct of nations as well as persons."

--Lawrence Buell

From a distance, California's Great Central Valley in all of its pastoral beauty and economic force portrays the ideal expression of Thomas Jefferson's agrarian philosophy. Yet if examined closely, taking into account the tensions of race, class, land ownership,

and the environmental degradation which are byproducts of this mythologized agricultural paradise, the Valley becomes an imperialist dystopia.

Still marketed to America as a land of gingham table-clothed picnics and all-American conservative family values lived out on thousands of modest family farms, the environmental and social constructs of the Valley are nothing of the sort. The state of California and industrial giants which stand to profit from such idealized representations frequently avoid addressing the issues of itinerant field labor, the polarization between whites and people of color, the dependency on toxic chemicals for the sake of durable and beautiful produce, and other significant environmental concerns such as air quality, water use, and land degradation. Instead, the economic juggernaut of the region, agriculture, has used media to sustain the mythologized image of the Central Valley as a wholesome and pristine heartland of abundance, purity, and the ultimate land of opportunity. The lineage of such dangerous untruths is clearly traced to idealized writings by past dreamers of the land, then perpetuated by voices seeking to profit from this perception of paradise. Such naive depictions hinder society's ability to perceive the needs of a place and its people in a steward-based, ethics-oriented, and informed manner. Social and environmental injustices are left largely unacknowledged and therefore continue to perpetuate themselves unchecked.

This is where the writers in and of the Central Valley have distinguished themselves over the last century-- as informative voices of protest against the natural and human abuses that come with commercialization and nation building, reigning in the unbridled California Dream and calling a nation to action. California writers of all genres have considered their craft not simply an aesthetic exercise, but an effective medium

through which to change the perceptions and actions of a nation. Their voices have reflected the victimization of a land and its people with a sincere tone and unsettling content grounded in reality. They have sought to plow a new, more true furrow in the western consciousness of America.

John Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911) and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) are two of the Valley's most influential counter-narratives to the culturally engrained "California Dream," interceding on behalf of the victimized landscape and its labor force against an anachronistic mythology. Despite being voices of influence decades ago, the egalitarian philosophies of Muir and Steinbeck still powerfully speak into the Valley's most contested situations that reflect the inherent injustices sourced in the mainstream idealization of California. Corporate agricultural giants subsuming small farms, urban sprawl, air and water pollution, and farm laborer rights are but a few of the highly charged regional issues with which Muir and Steinbeck continue to take issue. They dominate the landscape of protest so overwhelmingly in part because they were groundbreaking voices offering a radical shift in perspective, and also because they did so with such craftsmanship. Thus, their ideas continue to insist on a philosophical and practical engagement in the process of reimagining this region.

I assert that these protesting voices of the Valley, despite the propagandistic agents of commerce working against them, activated a perceptual change in the understanding of regional realities that catalyzed a spirit of advocacy. In defending its silenced workers of the Dust Bowl era, and the appropriated land of early statehood, Muir and Steinbeck demythologized an idealized region full of social and environmental injustices.

At the center of their argument is an insistence that the tenets of the established California Dream must be replaced as the standard social and environmental philosophy lived by in the modern era. The Dream may have applied to the state at the time of its admittance into the Union in 1850, but it became almost immediately obsolete as all the land was quickly claimed and an unforgiving capitalist model was applied to its many bounties. Perpetuating this "Manifest Destiny" ideal compounds the strain on the landscape from a never-ending flood of pilgrims seeking their share of the promise. It also victimizes these pilgrims economically, socially, and environmentally once they've abandoned all else to seek prosperity in the Promised Land, left to discover all too often that they came far too late. Their fate is relegated to doing the difficult and unrewarding labor necessary to sustain the wealth—and the mythology—of the fortunate few who have the deepest roots in the fertile soil. John Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra* and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* act as an entry point into this reevaluation of California in the national consciousness. I consider how the California Dream leads directly to social and environmental injustices, and assert that it is an important examination in the 21st century in light of intensified cultural and ecological contestation. Artists and citizens alike are inspired and informed by understanding how these two voices, the best at what they did, have effectively shifted mainstream culture toward justice.

The "California Dream," the summative product of a geographic and archetypal concentration of the "American Dream," is frequently represented by other loosely interchangeable terms such as the Promised Land, New Jerusalem, Eden, Arcadia, Land of Milk and Honey, and Manifest Destiny. My definition of the Dream in this study is a

compilation of fundamental American ideas developed in many literary and historical representations of individual prosperity. It is here articulated as such: *California is the endlessly bountiful and expansive place to start over and find prosperity—hard work on its beautiful and consecrated land will always result in fulfillment*.

It must be stated explicitly that the California Dream has environmental and social aspects to it which are innately connected. Thus, when the Dream is "broken," social *and* environmental injustices take place. When land is abused for gain by one group of people, another group of people (along with the collective, ultimately) is burdened or victimized. This occurs either through the act of altering the landscape or through the efforts of the labor class, thus invoking social hierarchies. Likewise, when a group of people apply a model of social hierarchy on a society, it obviously burdens or victimizes the "lower" class. This social stratification is always reflected in the shaping of the environment, full of symbols and structures of stratification that perpetuate social injustice through environmental realities. Such an oppressive synergy of cause and effect clearly manifests itself in the examinations of Muir and Steinbeck. While the idealized depictions of California are founded on beautiful people and places that actually exist, this romantic perspective is far too narrow and must be broadened for the sake of justice. There is enough room for both the glorious and the galling in the social construction of California. Indeed, it can be argued that retaining the glorified images are just as important in developing a culture of activism and stewardship since they show the public a beautiful place and lifestyle worthy of preservationist efforts.

There are certainly many less culturally significant stereotypical perceptions of California which are not explicitly referenced in this "California Dream." However, in

making and studying such a list it is not difficult to identify their source in the mother archetype. For example, consider the following:

- Californians are all liberals.
- Everyone eats organic foods and is health conscious.
- Everyone is an environmentalist or environmentally conscious.
- Earthquakes happen every day.
- You see movie stars all the time.
- Everyone is peace loving and fights for social justice.
- There's always great weather; the climate is all the same.
- Everybody is middle or upper class.
- Most people are blonde and beautiful.
- It's all the same homogenous L.A. culture—image-oriented and active.
- Everyone lives close to the beach.

While each of these myths offer insight into the location of California in the American mind and are worthy of interpretive consideration, the fundamental California Dream as articulated earlier is the broadest and most culturally pervasive. Centering it as the basis for analysis enables other texts, historical events, and entities of popular culture to also engage in this dialogue. Ultimately, the California Dream is the basis for nearly all others, representing the fundamental ideas of improved social standing and unlimited opportunity through the consecrated land. It has at once a social and environmental orientation which appropriately weaves the two most important entities of the American psychic identity inseparably together.

Central California Today: A Brief Social and Environmental State of Affairs

The effects of industrial agriculture have altered the landscape and environmental conditions significantly from what the Great Central Valley was like before the explosion of agricultural renovation took hold of the region around the turn of the century. Erosion, salination, toxic pollution, the eradication of indigenous plants and wildlife, and statewide damming that eliminates entire habitats are direct results of the agricultural industry's actions for maximal production (Schoenherr 16). In commenting on this radical alteration, Elna Bakker notes in her ecological construction of the state, *An Island Called California*, that indigenous grasses have "retreated from the fields of the Great Valley. With them went many of the animals and other plants which, in adjusting to each other by the laws of communal living, had succeeded in creating an extensive and flourishing community" (170). There are two Californias in terms of flora and fauna: that of the past, and that of today, the latter being a product of technology, commercial demand, and a culture of capitalism.

The diversity of plant and animal life in California before European arrival is seen only in scattered remnants today. The rare patches of blossoming annuals in vernal pools west of the Sierra Nevada and Peninsular Ranges and the tule elk which once roamed the grasslands by the thousands are now confined to pockets of protected reserves. Even the blossom trails of the Central Valley are considered tourist attractions limited to specific routes, rather than simply being what much of the Valley's floor looked like before being appropriated into orchards, vineyards, and pastures. This enormous ecological transformation makes it quite easy to broadly describe keystone species of the Valley's ecosystem since so many of them have been eliminated or severely reduced. Encounters

with kit foxes and coyotes, for example, are anomalies. Other large mammals of prey that have either moved out of the Valley or have been eliminated by human efforts are mountain lions, grizzly bears, and gray wolves (Schoenherr 550). In terms of major vegetation types, 99% of the prairies, 94% of the freshwater marshes, and 89% of the riparian woodlands that were present in the early 1800s are now gone, replaced by fields of produce, roads, and suburbs (516). Irrigation farming has also largely neutralized the influence of an aridity gradient which increases from north to south, dropping as low as 12.5 cm of average rainfall in the southern San Joaquin Valley[1]. This technically classifies indigenous growth as desert scrub, yet this is the most agriculturally lucrative region in the world.

Unfortunately, one of the traits the Great Central Valley is known for is its poor air quality. This is due to two main factors, the first of which is unavoidable. The Valley is encircled by two substantial mountain ranges—the Sierra Nevada to the east and the Coastal Range to the west. Besides a small passage at the San Francisco Bay which roughly divides the two north-south running valleys (Sacramento and San Joaquin), air flow coming in or going out is very limited. The second factor compounds this problem. Particulate matter and invisible gases (such as dust, airborne pesticides, and livestock CO_2) lifted into the air from agricultural activity combines with the auto emissions from an ever-growing populace to create dangerously poor air quality. According to the American Lung Association, four of the six most polluted U.S. cities by ozone are located in the Valley (#2—Bakersfield, #3—Visalia, #4—Fresno, #6—Sacramento), and

[1] For a more technical and detailed profile of the Great Central Valley's vegetation types, soil, and related climate patterns, see Barbour, Keeler-Wolfe, and Schoenherr's *Terrestrial Vegetation of California*, 3rd ed.

four of the seven most polluted U.S. cities by airborne year-round particle pollution are located in the Valley (#1—Bakersfield, #4—Visalia, #6—Hanford, #7—Fresno) ("Most Polluted"). Needless to say, this environmental challenge significantly affects the vascular health of its residents.

With each decade there seems to be a new round of residents from somewhere on the globe who have joined the planetary microcosm that is California. And despite its lack of a worldly and metropolitan reputation, the populace of the Central Valley is very ethnically diverse and is the location of several big cities. The urban areas of Sacramento, Fresno, and Bakersfield have more than 500,000 residents each("Urban"), bigger than such other major U.S. cities as New Orleans, Cleveland, Kansas City, Oakland, and Minneapolis ("Top").

California has 76,000 farms which collectively have earned over $30 billion from the sale of produce each year since 2004 ("Agricultural" 17). It is the most lucrative state in the Union in terms of agricultural profits, out-earning number two Texas and number three Iowa combined (18). The average California farm earned three times the profit made in other states, even though being smaller on average (346 acres to 446 acres) (19). The counties of the San Joaquin Valley, which makes up the southern half of the Great Valley, are the most profit-generating agricultural counties in the nation. Within the state, six of the top seven most profitable counties are in the San Joaquin Valley, each of which far eclipsing the billion dollar mark in annual revenue (19). California also leads the nation in the production of over 80 major crop and livestock commodities (20).

In discussing the ethnic makeup of the Valley, two of the most respected literary historians of the region, Gerald Haslam and James Houston, say that "it has a character,

which some dismiss from afar as ‘rednick,’ but which is much more diverse than that, comprised not only of transplanted Texans and southerners, but of transplanted Swedes, Blacks, Germans, Italians, Yugoslavs, Armenians, Portuguese, Mexicans, Japanese, Chinese, and Basques, and their children, and their children’s children (often mixtures)—people who share for better or for worse an interest in its two great natural resources, fertile land, and oil.” The ethnicities that make up this region truly are a microcosm of global diversity, perhaps due in part to the myth of new beginnings that appeals to everyone everywhere. According to data recorded by the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, people of color make up nearly 64% of Fresno County’s population and 47% of Sacramento County’s population (“Demographics”). The largest of these ethnicities is Latino (49% and 20%), followed by Asian and African American. In Fresno County, one in three citizens lives below the poverty line, and in Sacramento over one in five is in the same category. In terms of languages spoken in the home, 40% and 24% of people in these two counties, respectively, have a first language other than English. The breadth of ethnicities and language groups are represented within the large categories of Asian and Latino, in particular, where there are over 100 languages and dialects spoken as the primary language in the homes of Fresno County students (Mason).

The political culture of the Valley is known to be of a conservative bent, dominated in the voting booth by white, evangelical, and big-business-oriented citizens. Even in a state which is thought of around the world as a wellspring of liberalism, the “heartland” of California does not vote accordingly. Of the nineteen counties that make up the Great Central Valley, twelve voted by majority for the Republican candidate in the 2009 presidential election, with four of the seven democratic counties being so by 4% or

less. The three counties which were aligned with the Democratic party were located near the San Francisco Bay area, the most strident of all "blue" populaces in the country ("Election").

California's Great Central Valley is certainly one of the most contested landscapes in the world. The careful management of its land, its dwellers, and its image are big business to many market-driven individuals and corporations. At the same time, activists are striving to promote a reimagining of the land and its dwellers in a way that more accurately reflects the complex and often unjust realities there. This battle for control over the guiding perceptions of California's heartland offers contrasting outcomes for the victor—if the Dream, as expressed in the Central Valley, goes unchecked and perpetuates itself for another generation, the land and the people of this place will be burdened beyond recovery. But if the voices of protest effectively expose the myth for what it is and what it causes, an era of restorative justice can begin.

Defining of Terms and Structure

"For people who yearn to be here, this state seems to be a land of tan, sun bleached blondes with straight teeth, blondes who don't have to work but who do hurry on roller skates from hot tubs to haute cuisine to the strobe-lit splendor of nightclubs; or, in the last century, a place where gold nuggets could be scooped up by the shovelful and fruit burgeoned year-round. Unrealistic expectations have led to disillusionment" (Haslam *Many* 1). This snapshot of the idea of California held by so many who don't live there begs the question: "How did this perception become so standardized?" A more formalized version of the same question is asked by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann

in their foundational sociological text *The Social Construction of Reality:* "How is it possible that subjective meanings *become* objective facticities?" (18).

The nature of teaching and learning cultural norms-- ways of seeing the world-- is based on the institutionalization of ideas. Language is the most fundamental medium for articulating and passing on traditions (myths) to those not experiencing it first hand; it is also a means of 'incorporating' new understandings of ideas. Berger and Luckmann explain this process: "Language objectivates the shared experiences and makes them available to all within the linguistic community, thus becoming both the basis and the instrument of the collective stock of knowledge. Furthermore, language provides the means for objectifying new experiences, allowing their incorporation into the already existing stock of knowledge, and it is the most important means by which the objectivated and objectified sedimentations are transmitted in the tradition of the collectivity in question"(68).

In other words, the California Dream is fundamentally sourced in various expressions of language. It is also by this same dialectic experience between the world and culture that social constructions of counter-narratives can be constructed, shared, and integrated into the culture, reshaping the normed understanding of a given idea. Thus, both the perpetrators and protestors of the California Dream engage in this socially mediated dialogue. Kenneth and Mary Gergen's *Social Construction: A Reader* express this shared access to the means of perceptual change: "If people come together to create meanings, and these constructions are ultimately used to dominate others, then the chief means of resistance lies in counter culture creation" (36). Ian Hacking terms this kind of lingual resistance for the sake of justice as "unmasking," an excellent descriptor of what I

argue Muir and Steinbeck do to the California Dream through their respective texts. "The point of unmasking is to liberate the oppressed, to show how categories of knowledge are used in power relationships. . . . One hope of unmasking is to enable the [oppressed] to take some control over their own destiny, by coming to own the very categories that are applied to them" (Hacking 58). While social constructionist theory is the best means of rhetorical explanation for the propagation of specific cultural perceptions, it is not central to this study. I simply borrow some of its language here to express the means by which all ideas, accurate or ill-intended, get processed by a culture.

I use the term "protest literature" to describe the writings of Muir, Steinbeck, and others. Like the terms myth, dream, and justice, defining literature as specifically oriented toward protest is an ambiguous affair. I am compelled to briefly define and characterize protest literature here for the sake of validating the use of the expression on the works of John Muir and John Steinbeck. In his essay "Teaching Protest Literature," Paul Lauter describes it is a social dynamic with varying complexities and nuances, rather than a finite literary term to be clearly denoted (12). Protest scholar Zoe Trodd also refers to its common and therefore diversely implemented qualities in American literature. In reference to a founding heritage of dissent, she claims that "the protest artists who came after made America a protest nation and protest literature the most American of forms" (xxvi). And in a nation which seems to always have been in the midst of reevaluation and self-reflective change, literature has always served as a medium of exploration and debate. There is certainly no shortage of examples among these waves of literary protest in American history inspired by significant public uprisings in the pursuit of justice. The Revolution, abolitionism, and women's suffrage are no doubt the most noteworthy

movements powered by literary protest before the Progressive era of Muir and the New Deal era of Steinbeck. California not only inherited the American Dream but also the legacy of protest inherent in the American experience. Whenever false promises have been made in America, there have been voices exposing the lie. Even after the New Deal era, critical moments of polarized philosophies swelled to the surface, most notably the Civil Rights movement and cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, and I would argue the present environmentalist surge of the 21st century.

Defined simply here as a point of reference[2], protest literature in this examination is meant to be understood according to the terms given it by American literary scholar John Stauffer: it accesses "the uses of language to transform the self and change society. By language [he refers] not only to words, but to visual art, music, and film. Protest literature functions as a catalyst, guide, or mirror of social change. It not only critiques some aspect of society, but also suggests, either implicitly or explicitly, a solution to society's ills" (xii). "The difference between literature and protest literature," he continues, "is that while the former empowers and transforms individuals, the latter strives to give voice to a collective consciousness, uniting isolated or inchoate discontent" (xii). These definitions strongly imply resulting actions, or cultural changes that are measurable. Though the means of calling readers to action may vary, the intention of converting them from inanimate spectator to invested activist is consistent. This desired effect of protest literature, that of psychologically and physically relocating

[2] To spend any more time arguing the case for these texts being accurately categorized as "protest literature" would detract from the central argument. Therefore, the correlation between the intents and techniques of the texts in this study and those of protest literature stands as a strong enough case.

the reader's relation to the issue from uninvolved to accountable, is the fundamental influence pursued by the artist.

The general aesthetic qualities and rhetorical strategies assigned to "protest" also reflect the works of Muir and Steinbeck, though in markedly divergent ways. In terms of content and technique, protest literature is anything but one dimensional and frequently blends multiple techniques. It is often political by default, it gives voice to the marginalized/unheard, strives to identify with and be familiar to the masses, implements empathy and shock value, uses ambiguous symbolic action, contains religious language, uses a structure and syntax which mirrors injustice, reveals the interiority of characters, and possesses realist and naturalist styles of journalistic factuality and rich imagery[3]. Ironically, many of the techniques listed here are also used in propaganda literature upholding the California Dream. Fortunately, "Institutionalization is not […] an irreversible process, despite the fact that institutions, once formed, have a tendency to persist" (Berger 81). Myths are made and altered or destroyed by nearly the same means. The writer of protest literature must therefore craft a product grounded in the common experience of life while surpassing that of its opponent in quality and imaginative influence.

The use of terms such as social justice and environmental justice are primarily intended to be understood according to their implied general meanings. However, the academic or formal meaning of these terms as applied to the interrogation of the

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[3] This list was compiled from the following sources, which are also fully cited in the works cited: Stauffer, John. Foreword of *American Protest Literature*; Trodd, Zoe. *American Protest Literature*; Lauter, Paul. "Teaching Protest Literature," *Radical Teacher*; Fisher, Philip. *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel*; Norman, Brian. *The American Protest Essay and National Belonging: Addressing Division*; Warford, Elisa. *Americans in the Golden State*.

California Dream enrich the analysis[4]. As general concepts, social and environmental justice have a long history in American culture, but as the terms relate to their more contemporary meanings, they both generally identify their source in the cultural and environmental revolutions of the 1960s. Social and philosophical transformations of race, class, gender, environment, and political structures merged into a confluence of revision. This also explains why, from a post-modern perspective, social and environmental agendas are inseparably intertwined, explicitly stated in Adamson's formal definition of environmental justice: to "call attention to the ways disparate distribution of wealth and power often leads to correlative social upheaval and the unequal distribution of environmental degradation and /or toxicity" (5). Light and Rolston describe the early concerns of the environmental justice movement, noting, "The overriding concern was that fundamental changes were needed in how we understood the value of nature and how we organize human societies accordingly" (1). In their essay "Integrating Environmentalism and Human Rights," James Nickel and Eduardo Viola list the analogous characteristics of both: "Both are predominantly post-World War II movements; both are international in scope; both are movements that find support among 'conservatives' as well as 'progressives'; both are committed to democratic political institutions; both support the survival of indigenous peoples; and both emphasize consciousness raising, individual engagement, and political activism as means of promoting their goals" (472).

[4] A pragmatic definition of social justice as the basic liberties related to thought, morality, politics, and the physical self is articulated by the much cited philosopher John Rawls (*Justice as Fairness*, *The Law of Peoples*, *A Theory of Justice*), while the Green Party defines and applies these issues of social justice in more political and economic terms. Environmental justice denotes the disproportionate burdening of one particular group or location by the effects of industrialization, particularly considerate of race and low economic status as common influences.

A final correlation worth noting, which further legitimizes my use of such terms in describing the social and environmental fallout of a mythical paradise, is the consideration given to local circumstances of the land and its people. Jodi Adamson, editor of *The Environmental Justice Reader*, explains that "contributors extend the literature by analyzing the connections between different incidents of environmental degradation and economic exploitation while at the same time emphasizing the local, regional, and cultural complexities of the struggles taking place at those sites" (5-6). This description of the field of environmental justice sounds like an analysis of texts by Muir and Steinbeck, confirming an alignment between their literary intentions and contemporary understandings of social and environmental justice.

I most frequently describe the imaginative understanding of the California Dream as *myth* (modeled in Henry Nash Smith's seminal text *Virgin Land*) and *dream* (used in the canonical California histories of Kevin Starr). The colloquial definition of *myth*, which I also feel represents the intended meaning of the word as it is used here, is found in Dora Beale Polk's *The Island of California: A History of the Myth*. Unless expressly noted, the occasional use of the words *symbol*, *vision,* and *archetype* to communicate this idea should be considered interchangeable.

Dissertation Overview

Chapter two examines the origins of the myth and the founding texts of the state and its Great Central Valley which established the groundwork for today's social

construction of California. My purpose is to confirm the sources and the psycho-social depth of the myth in order to portray it as an historically pervasive perception which has played a continuous role in regional injustices, rather than simply being a benign association of beauty and hope. It also proves the very difficult task undertaken by Muir and Steinbeck as they proposed a new, less subjugating means of living. This task of exposing the myth's construction is validated by Ian Hacking's theories in *The Social Construction of What?* He explains that "unmasking undermines a thesis[the myth], by displaying its extra-theoretical function. The distinction is not all that sharp, for some analyses that chiefly aim at refuting or discrediting may gain added cogency by showing how what is to be refuted or discredited was constructed in the first place" (56).

I distinguish three eras of statehood as defined by the intentions of its people: the explorer, the builder, and the profiteer eras. In each, I highlight significant examples of how the California Dream was popularized and maintained. Lansford Hastings's *The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California* (1845) and Edwin Bryant's *What I Saw in California* (1846) are the representative texts expressing the imaginative trajectory of the exploring era. The building era is examined through the eyes of Horace Greeley in his widely read text *An Overland Journey: From New York to San Francisco in the Summer of 1859*, and Charles Nordhoff's likewise popular *California for Travellers and Settlers* [sic] (1873). The profiteers are more loosely represented by the various forms of propaganda produced by big business entities such as the railroads, tourist organizations, land developers, and industrial agriculture.

Chapter three analyzes the intentions, techniques, effects, and reception of John Muir's 1911 text, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, focusing on the environmentally

degrading aspects of the California Dream and the ways in which he calls for a new land ethic centered in beauty, science, and spirit. Chapter four focuses on the social injustices stemming from the California Dream through John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. As with Muir, I consider the text's intentions, techniques, effects, and reception as he seeks to reshape the California Dream from capitalist-driven to one of interdependence. These two chapters consider the social, historic, and literary context in which they were written, framed by the respective social, political, and literary movements of the day. Ultimately, they challenge the myth in the name of environmental and social justice, do so through specific stylistic techniques, and, I assert, changed the way in which America imagines California, enlightening the nation to enough of the uglier truths of the state to invoke varying degrees of social and political change then and now. Muir and Steinbeck are selected as the challengers of the California Dream because they are giants of imaginative change, and they accomplished this during two of America's most trying and self-reflective eras. There are other strong examples and voices, but none greater.

It is not surprising that Muir and Steinbeck maintain the same power among us today that they did in their time. Despite being rather homogenous-- not only as white men but also in terms of their economic locations—their inclusive and egalitarian philosophies were ahead of their time then and continue to challenge the status quo. The culture of the Great Central Valley has broadened over time, as has the literature which expresses its ever-divergent voices. Chapter five offers a final consideration on what Muir and Steinbeck have meant to the literal and imaginative shaping of the Central Valley, and how they continue to engage contemporary examples of injustice through the new voices that challenge them.

Chapter Two: The Inventors and Investors of the California Dream in the American Imagination

The "California Dream," or the articulation of America's mythology of promise as applied to the continent's western-most edge: *"California is the endlessly bountiful and expansive place to start over and find prosperity—hard work on its beautiful and consecrated land will always result in fulfillment."*

"From the beginning, California had been a direct creation of the national will as expressed in the doctrine and practice of Manifest Destiny."

--Kevin Starr

"The great struggle for freedom has sanctified many a spot, and many a mountain, stream, and rock, has its legend, worthy of the poet's pen or the painter's pencil."

– Roland Van Zandt

In order to fully understand the social and environmental ethic that great voices of protest such as John Muir and John Steinbeck waged war against, the story explaining the escalation of the California Dream must first be told. No other land of its size save the whole of the New World has ever been such an imaginative force or held as many universal associations as this western-most Eden. And the misleading message that this dream carries—one of bountiful harvests and certain prosperity for the motivated individual—manifests the inherent injustices that Muir and Steinbeck so vehemently

protest. With such a foundational symbolic location in the collective mind of a nation, the Dream persists as a psychological entity almost beyond the influence of criticism. However, understanding the origin and lineage of such a primary archetypal entity helps translate its pervasive influence over turn-of-the-century, Depression-era, and contemporary social and environmental thought.

The theories related to archetypal thought in the California imagination as explained in William Everson's *Archetype West: The Pacific Coast as Literary Region*, greatly illuminate the substantial imaginative forces that Muir and Steinbeck were up against. Everson identifies *place* as the archetypal life force of the Californian psyche, its impress on the artifacts of humanity "not only authentic but absolutely ineradicable" (xiv). Furthermore, the origins of the California Dream are located in its larger and ever deeply rooted corollary, the American Dream. Everson explains the reductive qualities of archetypes as they "individualize" from their mother source (79). He names this process "reduction;" I prefer to describe it as a "concentration," which better represents the intensity of the myth in expression and belief. The California idea became an undiluted national fantasy that ravaged the working class and the land, igniting the influential literary masterpieces from advocates Muir and Steinbeck as instruments of war in their specific battles.

This lineage stretches hundreds of years into the past. It is manifested most overtly by the expressions of Judeo-Christian theology and the ways in which an organic hierarchy was practiced by the Puritans, the literary fantasy established most significantly in the literature of the Spanish explorers, the influences of Romantic aesthetics, and the forces of capitalism as it transformed an agrarian culture into an industrial economy.

Thus, the American Dream became the myth of the West as the nation expanded, which eventually concentrated into the California Dream by 1849. If the Western myth can be expressed as “owning and working your own land brings prosperity,” and California is the most extreme expression of the West, then the Central Valley and its affected borders are the epicenter of this myth, the most manipulated model of human and ecological utilitarianism in the world.

This calculated appropriation as played out through the philosophies of the California Dream was the injustice Muir and Steinbeck sought to reveal and reshape through their literary craft. This chapter reveals the unbroken lineage of the California Dream and the invasive and broad immersion of the myth in the mainstream imagination, a misleading pattern that Muir and Steinbeck sought to disrupt. They both knew that to reform the public consciousness into a more altruistic and informed location, the archaic mythologies driving the perspective of the day must be tapped into and subtly revised. Likewise, this chapter seeks to inform the reader of the philosophical sources of the California Dream and the cultural infrastructure that has maintained it for over 160 years, disclosing the context of the myth for contemporary society as we attempt to build a new psychological and cultural paradigm in place of the old one. Just as old wineskins with new wine will rupture from the pressure of freshly fermented spirits, old mythologies strangle the development of new societies, ultimately leading to a rupture in the land and its people. This is precisely the conflict in which 21st century California now finds itself as it strives to reconcile the age-old myth of promise with the dangers of disillusionment exposed by Muir and Steinbeck.

This chapter follows the lineage of California's making, maintenance, and magnification of the myth from roughly1840 through today. The three eras of *exploring*, *building*, and *profiteering* offer a chronologically escalating framework for this analysis. These periods are loosely assigned and often overlap in terms of how they were influenced by the myth and why they propagated the myth to influence others. At times they share intentions, techniques, characteristics, and effects—to suggest any more "clean" or scaffolded version of history would misrepresent its organic nature. These unclean lines of influence are mostly due to the rapidly changing social and environmental landscape of California once it became inhabited by white "foreigners" from the east.

Representative rather than definitive works from each era assist in demonstrating the ever present yet variously intentioned application of the western myth through time, paying particular attention to the eras in which Muir and Steinbeck wrote their highlighted works. The first group of writers whose words began to shape the mysterious western lands into a rugged yet attainable paradise is the *explorers* of approximately 1840 through 1848, at which point California became an American territory and gold was discovered in abundance. Their intent was to inspire the potential for continued national growth and reveal the many grand wonders of the West to the frenetic eastern populace. Not always for mass consumption, some of these writings were personal journals which were only later published. This could either suggest a greater authenticity of content, since there was no primary motivation of profit, or that they could contain embellished imagery in the name of pride and imagination. Other writings were commissioned expeditions, the products of which were expected to be made public and written to be

grand. The issue of authorial intent directly addresses the composition and desired effects of the myth by these writers. Examinations of Lansford Hastings's *The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California* (1845) and Edwin Bryant's *What I Saw in California* (1846) are selected to represent the *explorer* era based on the breadth of readership and influence attained by these two texts. Succinct references to writings by Jedediah Strong Smith, Pedro Fages, John C. Fremont, Richard Henry Dana, and Bayard Taylor compliment this section.

The second group of writers whose works continued to shape the myth of California is the *builders* of a newly established state possessing abundant space and resources. This era lasted from 1848 through approximately 1893, the year of Frederick Jackson Turner's famous "End of the Frontier" thesis. The intentions of this group of writers vary—many had begun to see the monetary value in further embellishing the state's beauty and bounty, and the ease with which one could succeed therein. Others (I argue the majority) were doing more to write a state into being rather than inflating their own economic standing. There was a tone of genuine pride in their articulation of a new landscape, and the adventurous American spirit of exploration and the desire to chart the land for the sake of national advancement is heavily represented in the pages of this era. This is the period in California that is most embracing of the idea of a collective Manifest Destiny, its writers celebrating all of the abundance offered in the West and offering it to a growing and enthralled readership. Of the many notable voices of this period, Horace Greeley's widely read *An Overland Journey: From New York to San Francisco in the Summer of 1859* and Charles Nordhoff's likewise popular *California for Travellers and Settlers* [sic] (1873) seem the most representative. The influential and frequently

anthologized works of Samuel Bowles, Josiah Royce, Bret Harte, John Rollin Ridge, Joaquin Miller, William Henry Brewer, and Clarence King could just as easily perform this task, but they are relegated to the role of supplemental references here. This is also the age in which Muir did much of his initial travelling and writing throughout the state, including his journaling as he traversed the Sierras for the first time in 1869, later to become *My First Summer in the Sierras*. Thus, this context of "builders" speaks directly to the cultural influences and intentions of his writing as he promoted a finely balanced environmental haven to be cherished and protected.

By the turn of the century, "marketeering" industries such as railroads, tourism, land developers, and industrial agriculture ran ahead with the money-making myths of California, publishing propaganda that told the consumer and aspiring citizen what they wanted to hear—the Land of Milk and Honey was still out there. It is at this point in California's history and literature that a definitive rupture occurred between the artists of the West and its influential markets. First as settlers and then as builders, the myth-makers of California had now become shameless *profiteers*, and in response the artists of the dawning Progressive Era initiated a protest that continues, as do the works of the profiteers, to this day. A talented literary class which included mainstream dissenters Frank Norris and Mary Austin, Muir led the way with writing that possessed a distinct social and ecological consciousness and engaged the American imagination in its first attempts at a shifting perspective.

Though the serious California writers of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry often sold the public a particular dream of the far west, they rarely portrayed a paradise. While guilty of exaggerating a rough and tumble culture of the wild west for the sake of

entertainment during the early years of statehood, these voices also sought to shape a cultural identity distinct from those of the more established regions of the nation. As the California Dream began to be used for large profits by the few, however, these writers recognized their responsibility as the voice of the people, if only from a white, middle-to-upper-class male perspective. In a mere fifty years of statehood, the social and environmental injustices had grown so out of hand that artists were unable to stand by while these patterns were encouraged to continue through the marketing of a land that no longer existed in its originally imagined utopian state. This kind of righteous indignation best describes Steinbeck's perspective in responding to industrialized farming's shameless capitalizing of a flooded labor market during the Depression. This profiteering phase-- and the artists who challenge its idealized construction of California-- has never relented. The dominant figures of a leading global market continue to pander perfection, and the artists of the region still strive to tell it like it is. The historical profiteers held accountable here are big business entities such as the railroads, tourism, land developers, and industrial agriculture.

In referring to Garci Ordonez de Montalvo's mythical *Las Sergas de Esplandian* (*The Adventures of Esplandian*), published in 1510, Gerald Haslam notes that "illusion preceded reality and this state has rarely been viewed as conventional or common since. While 30 million human beings experience real life here every day, California remains at least as much state of mind as state of the union" (*Many* 1). If this tale of adventure was the source of its naming by Hernando Cortes twenty-five years later, then it is true that a specific kind of mythical aura preceded the reality of this land and its people. The coding of California in the imagination of the world is founded in fantasy. In the introduction to

his anthology, *The Literature of California: Writings from the Golden State*, editor Jack Hicks furthers these thoughts concerning the legacy of *Las Sergas de Esplandian*, explaining, "it tells us California is an island. It tells us it is filled with gold. It also tells us the dream came first. The place came later. His novel was a concoction that actually fed the hopes of the region's earliest explorers. This sequence, the dream preceding the reality, has influenced the life and the ways it has been written about ever since" (3). The benchmark event of the 1849 Gold Rush served to confirm California as a paradise and a national treasure, compounding the idealized composition of this far away region newly added as an American territory. But long before Sutter's Fort and every day since, the dream has preceded the realities of the place in the American mind. And more than influencing the ways in which it has been written about, this lineage of fantastic perceptions has shaped the very real ways that California's land and people have been treated. This manipulation is what Muir and Steinbeck take issue with as they strive to redirect a physically and psychologically westering society unswervingly bent on acquiring a personal paradise.

Explorers

"From [the gold rush] days until now, California has been perceived as a place apart: linked by air and rail and asphalt to the rest of North America, yet somehow a separate region, with its own mystique and climate and economic history, its own legend—ever tied to that first tumultuous era of settlement—and a crossroads culture that grows increasingly complex."

--Jack Hicks

California became the epicenter of the “western myth” once it became the final western frontier. As it became a state, offered gold, and stood geographically as the furthest and thus ultimate physical expression of the mythical Land of Milk and Honey long applied to each appended region before it, the specific qualities of the region transcribed the essence of the American Dream into the *California Dream*. The myth finally had a home, for better or for worse (I argue the latter—the full force of centuries of expectations overwhelmed the land and its least aggressive, or “archetypally challenged,” people). These two fundamental aspects of the myth, man’s relationship with the land and his fellow man, are the focus of the analysis here, which establishes the motivation and intent of California’s most important defenders of the region and its people—John Muir and John Steinbeck.

The complex development of an Edenic mythology is one which stretched out over nearly two millennia before geographically locating itself in California in 1848. From Europe’s first encounter with the western edge of the New World in 1533 until the landmark year of 1848 in which California became a U.S. territory and gold was discovered, the myths of this region grew out of excitement and opportunistic legend. From the earliest writings about this region, including Montalvo’s *The Exploits of Esplandian* (1510), God and gold were consistently the two inspirations driving its depictions and occupation. From the sixteenth through the first two decades of the nineteenth centuries, the story of California is dominated by the developments and exploits of the Roman Catholic Church and Spain. Following the Lewis and Clark expedition and a growing American population with a hunger for land, the early years of the nineteenth century experienced a small but influential influx in the settlement of the

far West by Americans. This was an incredibly turbulent time for the region. Mexico established its independence from Spain in 1821 and continued to struggle for stable leadership throughout the region. America saw these western territories as a natural extension of the expanding Manifest Destiny that had already brought them to the Rocky Mountains and the Northwest. The number of Americans in Mexico's Alta California continued to increase into the 1840s when the Bear Flag Revolt, Mexican American War, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ultimately ushered in a new state in 1850.

This span of three hundred years serves as a time of exploration and settlement in California. It ends at approximately the point where the mythology of the state begins to directly address the lives of American citizens in terms of land and prosperity. By the 1840s, American explorers began to be an influential presence in the region. This is also the time at which the numbers and intentions of these Americans shifted from the few profit-oriented fur traders to the thousands who desired to expand America with settled farms and share all of its wonders and potential with the East. This decade's movement was greatly aided by a number of influential texts written by Americans with first-hand accounts of this mysterious and untapped natural resource. The journeys of fur trapper Jedediah Strong Smith laid a foundation for Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840), John C. Fremont's government-funded surveying expeditions throughout the state from 1842-46, and Bayard Taylor's accounts of the California Gold Rush in *The New York Tribune*.

While these early texts don't necessarily represent the full expression of the California Dream, they constructed a land highly responsive to being "mythed" in the future. The two manuscripts that are most representative of the "explorer" era's shaping

of California are Lansford Hastings' *The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California* (1845) and Edwin Bryant's *What I Saw in California* (1847). These two texts were widely read and trusted as not only the most factual account of the place, but also as trusted guide books to a wave of migrating settlers seeking land and prosperity of their own.

The intentions of the settler, state builder, and profiteer blur greatly; there are no clean chronological lines which distinguish one mindset from the other, and in each category are examples of the others. In fact, it is difficult to imagine any one of these phases without the presence of the other two, either by necessity or by precedent. Yet the general pattern proposed here roughly reflects the sentiments of the American as he represented California to the nation in literature. Mary Spence notes that Lansford Hastings' intentions matched those of the nation at the time, suggesting that

> the reasons for the growing surge of movement to Oregon and California were diverse and complex, and would have to include economic drive coupled with land hunger, the basic lure of adventure, the complicated call of religion, and an innate desire to extend the American empire and way of life. Also important was the optimistic and exuberant literature produced by official and unofficial boosters of all kinds—explorers, missionaries, and avowed propagandists. It was in this last role, as a self-styled publicist of the West, that history cast Lansford W. Hastings. Through the publication of The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and

> California (1845), Hastings undoubtedly interested many in moving on to the Pacific shore. (v)

Hastings saw the opportunity to put himself in a place of social, political, and literary power by establishing himself as one of the early publishing voices in the West. Muir most certainly viewed his early location in California as likewise opportunistic, though not for the sake of self-advancement. Hastings' intentions of national expansion in the name of democracy and God were coupled with an opportunistic invitation for others to partake in the bounty of the West. In other words, he was a booster for the white settlement of California. According to Jack Hicks, *The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California* "was the Bible for transcontinental travelers. Hastings had led his first wagon party west in 1842 and returned with visions of a California republic, like Texas, free from Mexican control and led by himself as president. An early promoter and land developer, he also had plans to subdivide and sell land along the banks of the Sacramento River. A guidebook celebrating the region, he hoped, would lure west the Americans he needed to help his personal dream come true" (4).

While the book is laden with facts, it is equally laden with anecdotal experiences and personal perceptions. He is also starkly racist against Mexicans and Native Americans, idealizes the economic potential in California's land, and feels obligated to defend the veracity of its glory. Other than the economic perspective of Hastings, Muir's content and style ironically parallel Hastings' list of traits to some degree. In the introduction to the Da Capo Press edition of his *Guide* in 1969, Mary Spence reveals two fundamental intentions of the text: "the careful description of the geography, climate, forts, settlements, resources, and possibilities for economic development both of Oregon

and of California, but California was Hastings' obvious preference," and to communicate that "California was paradise par excellence[…], a veritable garden of Eden on earth—and it was available" (vi). In terms of its overall style, Spence goes on to say that the *Guide* "is a period piece which reflects the ideals, the concepts, and the prejudices of the nineteenth century" (vi). Not surprisingly, Hastings did not advertise the intentions of his work in such terms. In his own words, he stated his intentions to be purely altruistic, practical, and fact-based. In the preface to the text, Hastings says, "The design of these pages is not to treat *in extenso* of Oregon and California, but merely to give a succinct, and at the same time, practical description of those countries; embracing a brief description of their mountains, rivers, lakes, bays, harbours, islands, soil, climate, health, productions, improvements, population, government, market, trade and commerce; a description of the different routes; and all necessary information relative to the equipment, supplies, and the method of traveling" (3-4). He goes on to say that "all excrescences have been cautiously lopped off, leaving scarcely any thing more than a mere collection of interesting, important and practical facts" (4).

The response to his book was precisely what Hastings had hoped it would be. First and foremost it promoted the idea of a grander and God-blessed America, a nation that outmatched all others in providential blessing and natural resources. America's disciple-like response to these early travel guides perfectly represents its history as a land of pilgrims migrating west in search of a God-ordained destiny. The following quote, excerpted from chapter thirteen titled, "A Description of California," perfectly captures the environmental and social implications of the myth in the text: "In a word, I will remark that in my, opinion, there is no country, in the known world, possessing a soil so

fertile and productive, with such varied and inexhaustible resources, and a climate of such mildness, uniformity and salubrity; nor is there a country, in my opinion, now known, which is so eminently calculated, by nature herself, in all respects, to promote the unbounded happiness and prosperity, of civilized and enlightened man" (133). With this "silver platter" quotation as an introduction, I start my analysis of Hastings' *Guide* in regards to his treatment of environmental, or land-oriented, promises implied in the California Dream. It is the beginning of a utilitarian anthropocentric hierarchy that Muir challenges head-on a few decades later, arguing that, in fact, the beautiful resources of California are intricately and interdependently woven together in ecological balance in such a way that the unbridled appropriation of one results in the destruction of all.

"All those who went with me to California, as well as all other foreigners, who are residing there, are extremely delighted with the country; and determined to remain there, and make California the future home, not only of themselves, but also, of all their friends, and relatives, upon whom, they could possibly prevail, to exchange the sterile hills, bleak mountains, chilling winds, and piercing cold, of their native lands, for the deep, rich and productive soil, and uniform, mild and delightful climate, of this unparalleled region" (69). Hastings sets up a dichotomy throughout the text between California and every other landscape, placing the soil and climate of this western Eden so far above that of the next best option that the reader is left with no sense of scale. It should be noted that Hastings wrote this just before the Mexican-American War, while California was a region belonging to Mexico. Thus, he refers to Americans, or other "white" settlers there, as foreigners. He implies, however, that they are "determined to remain" in the region and graft it into an American territory, making the Mexicans and

Californios the foreigners. In describing the soil of the Central Valley, he even goes so far as to declare it superior to that of the "deep, rich, alluvial soil of the Nile, in Egypt" (81). This exotic and biblical allusion further draws the reader into a sense of the Californian landscape as something of a paradise, requiring less of the farmer while producing much more.

Hastings continues to establish the region as a perpetual paradise which seems to defy the known rules of fallen man in a fallen world. Seasons of rest, cycles of life and death, and a painful subsistence accomplished by the sweat of the brow are all challenged by this landscape which seems to have been exempt from God's first judgmental decree. The following quotes reveal such assertions, a far cry from his advertised intent of a "succinct" and "practical description." This is to say nothing of his epileptic syntax throughout. Here the seasons and limits of growth are other-worldly: "Many kinds of vegetables are planted, and gathered, at any and every season of the year, and of several kinds of grain, two crops are grown annually. Even in the months of December and January, vegetation is in full bloom, and all nature wears a most cheering, and enlivening aspect. It may be truly said of this country, that 'December is as pleasant as May'" (83). This excerpt suggests a freedom from decay, both physically and spiritually through the boundless verdure of the land: "The purity of the atmosphere, is most extraordinary, and almost incredible. So pure it is, in fact, that flesh of any kind may be hung for weeks together, in the open air, and that, too, in the summer season, without undergoing putrefaction. […] Disease of any kind is very seldom known, in any portion of the country. […] It is one of the most healthy portions of the world" (85). Finally, he celebrates God's grace in lifting the curse of toil from mankind as he suggests that simply

putting a fence around some soil will spontaneously result in a bountiful crop: "In many portions of the country, in the interior, the Indians subsist almost wholly upon them, and in other portions, if a farmer wishes to grow a crop of oats, he has nothing to do, but to designate a certain tract as his oat field, and either fence it, or employ a few Indians, to prevent the herds from grazing upon it; which being done, in May or June, he reaps a much larger crop, than we are able to do, in any of the States, with all the labor and expense of cultivation" (87). Hastings promotes a pattern of distance between the farmer and the land, implying that one need not come to know the soil providing sustenance, but rather simply take from it what it so naturally offers. This physical separation between man and land develops into a spiritual separation over time, becoming Muir's greatest obstacle as he seeks to express the innate moral and spiritual values to be drawn from the land. This perspective is best, or most horrifically, manifested in the means of production adopted by industrialized farming and challenged by Steinbeck.

Page after page relishes the quality and "inexhaustibleness" of California's natural resources (101), and a number of times throughout the text he is prompted to address the suspicions of others who question the veracity of his claims. By bringing up such an issue, and giving specific instances of organic abundance, Hastings adds credibility to his claims and makes the California Dream even greater:

> Several very respectable and credible gentlemen, informed me, that there had been an instance, within their own knowledge, of a farmer's having received one hundred and twenty bushels to the acre; and that, the next year, from a spontaneous growth, upon the same ground, he received sixty-one bushels, to the acre. To many it

> will appear impossible, that one acre of ground, should produce the quantity of wheat, and hence, to them, the above statement will appear incredible; but I have not the least doubt, of its entire correctness. […] *These things are* true. (89)

While he insists that his descriptions of the land "are, by no means, mere, gratuitous exaggerations" (69), the epic tone and incomparable circumstances overwhelm the pages. This may have been exactly what the reader as a potential settler wanted to hear and believe, and Hastings was more than willing to hyperbolize the actual verdure of the land for the sake of national expansion. Of course, the ultimate failure in these false expectations and man's violent response to the land in efforts to fulfill the dream is precisely the inherent danger of the myth that Muir and Steinbeck so adamantly decry.

The implications of social prosperity in the California Dream is such a fundamental message in the text that it seems unnecessary to state. As this concept is analyzed in Hastings' work, keep in mind the phrases *start over and find prosperity* and *hard work . . . results in fulfillment*. The lineage of American frontiersmen have always used the ideas *starting over* and *fulfillment for working hard* to promote expansion of the nation to the west, and now, having reached the final frontier halted by the Pacific Ocean, the settlers of the mid-nineteenth century suggest that not only is it the end of the continent, but it is the best of the continent. The elusive Eden of modern civilization of course requires greater sacrifice in terms of travel, and faith in the fact that it really is as good as advertised. The guarantee of a successful and thriving farm or business was enough for almost every reader looking to improve their state, especially when it was advertised as an almost effortless process.

Hastings develops the myth of certain prosperity in California by characterizing the American "foreigners" as the most industrious of all citizens. Of course, every reader tends to place himself in this category, believing that they too are worthy of such a challenging adventure. He also forwards the myth through the depiction of the region as an uninhabited paradise open to any taker, completely disregarding, among other realities, the indigenous population living throughout the region. All one has to do is survey the land and pick the section which best suits one's tastes. As if inviting the reader to establish his own personal kingdom, Hastings says, "Here as in Oregon, foreigners from all countries, of the most enterprising and energetic character, are annually arriving, selecting and improving the most favorable sites for towns, and selecting and securing extensive grants of land, in the most desirable portions of the country" (112). He continues to manipulate the pride of the American "foreigner" and the spirit of industrious independence that is so ingrained in the identity of its people: "The foreigners of this country are, generally, very intelligent; many of them have received the advantages of an education; and they all possess an unusual degree of industry and enterprise. Those who are emigrating to that remote and almost unknown region, like those who are emigrating to Oregon, are, in all respects, a different class of persons, from those who usually emigrate to our frontier. They generally, possess more than an ordinary degree of intelligence, and they possess an eminent degree of industry, enterprise, and bravery" (112-13).

The irony of the California Dream is that it is not accessible to everyone, only white Americans or those originating from Western Europe who look and act according to the norms of colonial America. This racist perspective was all but a given among

citizens at the time. Minorities implicitly knew Hastings was not inviting them to realize their dreams out west, just as whites exceptionally envisioned their new region as a culturally homogenous one. Though explicitly expressed in American writing to a decreasing degree over the years, Hastings is quite transparent in regards to who it is he envisions joining him, showing no signs of self-consciousness as he warmly invites whites only to immediately marginalize Mexicans and Native Americans. The irony of his language as he mixes benevolence with racism is more than a little disturbing to the twenty-first century reader, but the racial polarity firmly fixed at the time of its writing no doubt allowed for the white reader to consume it without batting an eye.

> A more kind and hospitable people are nowhere found; they seem to vie with each other, in their kindness and hospitality to strangers; and at the same time, they treat each other as brothers. […] Upon the arrival of a stranger among them, the question is not, is he an Englishman, an American or Frenchman, but is he a foreigner? which latter, if he is found to be, he receives all that kindness and hospitable attention, peculiar to the foreigners of California. These are truly a happy people; among whom, no distinction of clime is recognized, national preferences and prejudices do not exist, religious rancor is hushed; and all is order, harmony and peace. (113)

The very next paragraph describes Mexicans and Native Americans with terms such as ignorant, superstitious, beastly, destitute of intelligence, and as semi-barbarians best ridden and restrained (113-14). Nowhere in my research is a better example of an

idealized, non-prejudiced social structure that is in reality rife with racism and injustice. Over the years, the overt racism in the voices perpetuating the Dream has lessened, but the myth continues to be understood as a racially exclusive one. This undertone of bigotry in the California Dream is cleverly assaulted by Steinbeck as he illuminates the ironic racing of Okies by white Californians in *The Grapes of Wrath*, challenging this pervasive social injustice that resides in the myth.

The closing words in Lansford Hastings' *The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California* reflect his desire to expand America by settling the Far West. They also exemplify the presentation of the myth and the dangers inherent in it. He concludes in the name of "an all-wise, and over-ruling Providence," saying,

> I can not but believe, that the time is not distant, when those wild forests, trackless plains, untrodden valleys, and the unbounded ocean, will present one grand scene, of continuous improvements, universal enterprise, and unparalleled commerce: when those vast forests, shall have disappeared, before the hardy pioneer; those extensive plains, shall abound with innumerable herds, of domestic animals; those fertile valleys, shall groan under the immense weight of their abundant products: when those numerous rivers, shall team with countless steamboats, steam-ships, ships, barques and brigs; when the entire country, will be everywhere intersected, with turn-pike roads, rail-roads and canals; and when, all the vastly numerous, and rich resources, of that now, almost unknown region, will be fully and advantageously developed. […] And in fine, we

> are also led to contemplate the time, as fast approaching, when the supreme darkness of ignorance, superstition, and despotism, which now, so entirely pervade many portions of those remote regions, will have fled forever, before the march of civilization, and the blazing light, of civil and religious liberty; when genuine *republicanism*, and unsophisticated *democracy*, shall be reared up, and tower aloft, even upon the now wild shores, of the great Pacific. (151-52)

Hastings was not an anomaly of his era, but rather quite representative of the voices forming the early narratives which shaped California. These stories directed the ways in which California was perceived by the rest of the nation, and therefore decided the cultural and environmental legacy of the region through the living out of these mythologies by the settlers that responded to the call west. Edwin Bryant's *What I Saw in California* (1847) continued to build on the environmental and social myths of paradise founded by his contemporaries. Though he stays closer to what he and Hastings say they intended their works to do, which is to describe, aid, and inform on practical matters, Bryant inevitably promotes the California Dream through assertions and anecdotes. Like Hastings, he knew that their perpetuation only aided the cause of expansion. And while much of the content in their guide books was practical and beneficial to the traveler, the myths that stretched the grandeur of the state's opportunities was nothing that would harm them in any grave way. Ultimately, however, it was the subjugated land itself and the disempowered working class who were victimized by this idealized dream chased down toward the setting sun.

A native of Massachusetts, Edwin Bryant founded two Lexington, Kentucky, newspapers, gaining himself "an outstanding reputation in journalism" (Gaer 39). Bancroft called his text "a standard authority on the events of 1846 and 1847" (qtd. in Gaer 39), in which he sought to tell of the history, culture, geography, and regional habitats of California, as well as offer insights on routes and traveling. In his Preface (italics added), he explicitly states his reasons for writing the text at all, saying:

> In the succeeding pages, the author has endeavored to furnish a *faithful sketch* of the country through which he travelled – its capabilities, scenery, and population. He has carefully *avoided such embellishment* as would tend to impress the reader with a false or incorrect idea of what he saw and describes. He has *invented nothing* to make his narrative more dramatic and amusing than the truth may render it. His design has been to furnish a volume, entertaining and instructive to the general reader, and *reliable and useful* to the traveller and emigrant to the Pacific. If he has succeeded in this, it is as much as he can hope. The facts in reference to those military and naval operations in California which did not come under his personal observation, have been derived from *authentic sources*.

Bryant works very hard at the outset of this book to develop trust with the reader, communicating in multiple ways and places that his observations were to be trusted. He is very candid regarding the issue of a polarized west which is either heavenly or hellish in the second-hand retellings of those in the East (5). He implies that his first-hand

experiences are to be trusted and even acted upon. This earnest promise made to the reader reflects a sincere altruistic intention, thus making any comments on the Edenic nature of California that much more powerful in the minds of the reader. He says, “My design is to give a truthful and not an exaggerated and fanciful account of the occurrences of the journey, and of the scenery, capabilities, and general features of the countries through which we shall pass, with incidental sketches of the leading characteristics of their populations. […] Whatever I saw and noted at the time, with the impressions made upon my mind, will be faithfully and truthfully recorded” (7).

While subtly perpetuating the myths of California through his opinions and impressions, Bryant ironically notes the influential power of such stories; even absurd tall tales leave a residual impression on the minds of the recipient. The following passage reflects his understanding of perceptual influences through stories, while also commenting on the significant presence of prospectors and dreamers in the dominant American culture. The myth of bountiful plains and certain prosperity was already alive and well at his writing this guide; he simply fueled the flame. “In response to a tale of a Californian man living to 250 due to the climate, dying only by leaving the country, and being revived when buried in Californian soil due to its richness: Stories similar to the foregoing, although absurd, and so intended to be, no doubt leave their impressions upon the minds of many, predisposed to rove in search of adventures and Eldorados” (6).

The myth of a bountiful, expansive, and beautiful California is frequently supported through opinion and assertion. Though he details at great length the horrors of the Donner/Reed party in the High Sierras, this tale acts as much as a juxtaposition to the verdant and balmy valleys that await the traveler as they descend the snow-swept range.

In capturing the value and dimensions of the Great Central Valley, Bryant borrows from another explorer, ironically a second-hand dealing which he earlier condemned as an untrustworthy medium. "I subjoin a description of the valley and river San Joaquin, from the pen of a gentleman (Dr. Marsh) who has explored the river from its source to its mouth. 'This noble valley is the first undoubtedly in California, and one of the most magnificent in the world'" (271). The tempting allure of the valley is furthered as he describes it as perfect, yet fortunately uninhabited. In his perspective, the native tribes of the Valley did not count as legitimate holders of the land. No American or European held large tracts as yet, thus, it had yet to be cultivated to the extent of which it was certainly destined to be: "The whole of this region has been but imperfectly explored; enough, however, is known, to make it certain that it is one of the most desirable regions on the continent" (272). He goes on to celebrate the harvest of the land as a product of superior quality to other places. As perhaps the oldest example of marketing the idea that "happy cows come from California," he notes, "the Californian beef is generally fat, juicy, and tender, and surpasses in flavor any which I ever tasted elsewhere" (368).

The myth of environmental perfection innately implies the myth of social and economic prosperity, and vice versa in the midst of an agrarian-based culture. This is seen throughout Bryant's writings as he projects a measureless development of wealth through the appropriation of California's natural resources. In an unknowingly prophetic passage discussing the abundance of fish in the rivers of the Great Central Valley and the profits to be made from them, Bryant had no idea that the rivers and their mountain sources would yield hundreds of millions of dollars over the next two decades, albeit in gold rather than fish. Nonetheless, he urges his readers to consider the economic

possibilities as he says, "These salmon are the largest and the fattest I have ever seen. I have seen salmon taken from the Sacramento five feet in length. All of its tributaries are equally rich in the finny tribe. American enterprise will soon develop the wealth contained in these streams, which hitherto has been entirely neglected" (266). The implication here would be quite appalling to Muir. Bryant forwards the concept that every life-giving or bountiful natural resource is good only for its market value, and anything less than capitalist endeavors related to nature is a foolish response. Clearly, the consumerist mindset inherent in the myth is advanced, and Muir's task of philosophical revision was made ever-more difficult. Bryant also insightfully highlights America's pride in their expansionist philosophy as a holy right. In recounting the discovery of America's attempts at acquiring the California territory from Mexico, Bryant points out the grand assumption in the hearts of Americans—that the frontier to the west is perpetually acquired for their prosperity, and it is *the white man's burden* to civilize it.

Lansford Hastings and Edwin Bryant are but two voices from the exploration period of California history which implemented the myths that provoked a distancing from and destructive treatment of the land, as well as a return to feudalist classism based on property and labor (the very patterns that Muir and Steinbeck railed against). Their intentions were not always purely for the sake of democratic and Christian expansion, but this was their largest source of inspiration. At times looking for personal or political advantages, these early voices did so in the same spirit of democracy that they invited others into. *Come*, they said, *and let us take of the best fruits destined to us by God. There is enough for everyone, and no one will be for want*. This attitude and era ushered in the "builders" of California, who functioned out of the same expansionist principles yet did

so with a captive audience already present and ever growing in the West. They desired infrastructure and democracy to gird up the economic and philosophical pillars of the nation; they also polled for cultural validity in a region seen as unrefined and wild. This building era ranges roughly from 1848 through 1893, the year in which Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his "Frontier Thesis" suggesting the closing of the frontier and explaining the individualistic and self-serving tendencies of west coast profiteers. In that historic moment, the perspectives of the builders and profiteers sharply bisected, initiating a more distinct separation of social and ecological philosophies that has played out in art, culture, and politics ever since. Even today, the responses to this philosophical schism that stand as benchmark works of protest are those of Muir and Steinbeck, who found themselves builders of a common good when the "American way" increasingly became self-serving.

Builders:

"At the core of the dream was the hope for a special relationship to nature."

--Kevin Starr

The second half of the 19th century, while being the most complex period of social shaping in American history, is a very simple historical period to understand in terms of its patterns of migration. Between the archetypal force of land in the American imagination and the expanse of it to the west, the only possible outcome was a transcontinental tipping of the population. Owning land came with a guarantee of independence and a classless, democratic society, all of which was available in the West.

While this was expressed legislatively in the Homestead Act of 1862, there is no question that the cry of gold really stands as the symbolic starting point of the California Dream. "Ever since [the gold rush], California has beckoned to millions of hopeful new citizens, who come to the state looking for job opportunities, sunshine and surf, safe refuge, or stardom" (Barron 113). Only the glitz of gold could cause such a legacy.

Throughout these formative years of statehood, the intentions of the voices put into print which held California as their subject matter ebbed and flowed between propaganda and objectivity. Kevin Starr, the preeminent Californian historian, notes in *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915*, that it was not until Franklin Tuthill's 1866 work *History of California* that a fair and objective history free of propaganda and hyperbole was written (113). This suggests the tendency toward boosterism in the early building years, but also reveals an eventual refining of the state in art and cultural representation. This enhancement of cosmopolitan potential was greatly aided by the natural wonders of the West, tantalizing Romantic sensibilities at the height of its American expression. Upon the exploration of the Far West and the discovery of sights such as the Grand Canyon and Yosemite, builders of the West were armed with natural wonders such as these to represent the grand creativity of God and the grandeur of His American gift. Readers were no longer deluged with the overused narratives of wild west shoot-outs and dusty, provision-starved settlements, but enticed with gardens and forests alluding to the holy Eden. This intersection of sublime landscape with an aesthetic appeal for it couldn't have come at a better time for America as it steadily expanded west into a new world of natural wonders and hyper-imagined opportunity. As for Muir, who lived most of his life in this period, he was the master of developing sublime landscapes of the

West into the icons of a new environmental ethic which countered the dominating tenets of Manifest Destiny. He wanted to build a western ethic founded on preservation rather than conquest.

California scholar Jack Hicks speaks to the good intentions of California's other early writers in advertising it as a place worthy of renown and unique from all others: "[Ina Coolbrith] created the persona of Joaquin Miller when she advised the struggling poet Cincinnatus Hiner Miller to adopt frontier buckskins—along with mustachios, a floppy hat, boots, and spurs—a pen name, and a Byronic Western image. And she advised him further to take the whole act to England, where matters Californian were all the rage. Joaquin Miller was an instant success" (198). Coolbrith was California's first Poet Laureate, an appropriately ironic title of honor reflecting the grand sentiment of the era. As expressed by Starr concerning these early shapers of the state, "a fable was being put together, a means by which Californians sought to know—and sometimes to delude—themselves. This fable was both a history of the past and a taxonomy of present and future hopes" (*Americans* 120).

With romantic landscape came a romantic diction to market the California Dream. An example of such writing, drawn from Thomas Starr King, argues that California's natural wonders are the grandest expressions of creation ever. Appeals to the Romantic concept of the sublime cannot be missed here; he wrote the following in a series of articles for the *Boston Evening Transcript* in the winter of 1860 describing his travels to Yosemite Valley:

> We will not attempt any description of the "thing." "The thing" is "there" away up in the Sierras, and all we have to say is that he

> who has threaded the streets of Nineveh and Herculaneum, scaled the Alps, and counted the stars from the top of Egypt's pyramids, measured the Parthenon, and watched the setting sun from the dome of Saint Peter's, looked into the mouth of Vesuvius, and taken the key note of his morning song from the thunder of Niagara, and has not seen the Yo-semite, is like the Queen of Sheba before her visit to King Solomon—the half has not been told him. (qtd. in Demars 9)

As historically monumental as the Gold Rush of 1849 was to the nation's physical migration, a benchmark of psychological transformation in the form of historical theory came in 1893, marking the imaginative and literal end of the "builder" phase in California and the nation. "In what must be considered one of the most influential pieces of writing about the West produced during the nineteenth century, Frederick Jackson Turner's paper on 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History' (read before the American Historical Association in Chicago in 1893) attributed to the West the responsibility for virtually every American virtue or vice" (Kolodny 136). Henry Nash Smith summarizes the central point of Turner's paper succinctly: "Turner maintained that the West, not the proslavery South or the antislavery North, was the most important among American sections, and that the novel attitudes and institutions produced by the frontier, especially through its encouragement of democracy, had been more significant than the imported European heritage in shaping American society" (Smith 250).

This geographic determinant of the American experience exposed the suddenly flaccid archetype of America in light of its fully settled land and reverberated throughout

the popular, artistic, and theoretical circles of the decade. This ultimately led to the need for a reevaluation of the American identity, past and future. The literary voices of the Progressive Era, roughly 1890-1914, eagerly and effectively mediated this national reconsideration of an American ethos and how the country's actions must also change with it. The most dominant of these was Muir, urging a preservationist philosophy toward the land in light of its finite limits and ecologically complex nature.

Mid-19th century America was ripe for taking hold of a new icon of the myth that promised to exceed Europe's greatness and thereby continue the development of a distinct American identity. Selling the Western idea to an adventure-seeking nation would not be very difficult; the only thing needed was a physical icon to match its philosophical ideology of new beginnings and endless possibilities. The western frontier in all of its immense potential, capped by the discovery of megalithic Yosemite, finally presented America with a place and a reason to stand distinctly apart from, and above, Europe in terms of its natural beauties and resources. The spellbound nature of Muir's must significantly credit the beauty with which he had to work with in arguing his case.

> The opening of the Far West, with its astonishing array of natural wonders, provided Americans, at last, with claims to scenic superiority that were difficult to dispute. Everything "western" seemed to exist on a monumental scale. Boundless prairies teemed with numberless herds of buffalo, while giant rivers cut enormous chasms through towering ranges of snow-covered mountains. […All] were heralded as attractions without rival in the known tourist world. (Demars 21-22)

The settlers and builders of California faced a challenging paradox as they sought to portray the region to the rest of the world through fair and accurate depictions— they often encountered a uniquely pristine and distinctively beautiful landscape that called for elaborate description. This is largely where Muir and others diverged—Muir highlighted their grandeur as something sacred to be preserved, while others praised it as the physical provider of prosperity. It must have been very easy for them to slip from objective description to fantastic conjecture and dimensional hyperbole as they considered the voluminous bounty of the expansive land and the economic security that seemed guaranteed through its settlement. As they sought to offer first-hand objective insight into the settling and development of California, their words seemed to have an agenda of their own, establishing and then furthering the grandiose myths of this western territory. In writing this place into the minds of America, two significant things happened. These early descriptions became "permanent" identifiers, establishing associations with endless bounty and certain prosperity that carried over from decade to decade. The effect of these idealized symbols of the California Dream created the second result of a mythologized West—thousands of people went there in search of that Promised Land and sought to draw prosperity directly from it. The obvious problem with the perpetuation and pursuit of these myths is that there is a finite point of saturation at which the land is either negatively altered or fully occupied, and the availability of the American Dream for newcomers ceases. Ironically, this flood of migration was the central desire of the settlers and builders in the name of progress and prosperity, yet it led to degraded landscapes and a casted social system of land owners and laborers. *The Grapes of Wrath* best tells of the

social outcome of this pervasive pattern, while Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra* reflects the ecological dangers in metaphorical condemnation of his destructive sheep.

Put simply, these early Californians had good intentions but ill effects. The growth rate was so rapid that, in the short time it took private parties and corporations to stake a claim to every parcel of land and the resources upon it, the myth of land and prosperity for all had reached its peak. The balance of supply and demand for the California Dream was abruptly out of balance, and the resulting strain on the land and its new arrivals was all but inevitable. In 1850, the state's population was approximately 92,000. By 1860 it had increased by more than 300% to 380,000. For the next seven decades to follow, the population averaged nearly a 50% increase, swelling to 865,000 by 1880 and 1.21 million in 1890 (*U.S. Census*). This conflict between actual opportunity and the limitations of reality was articulated in the last decade of the nineteenth century, but not before the good-intentioned builders of the Golden State upheld the myth of prosperous opportunity and a bountiful landscape for all.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, America had established itself as a country and a people of great promise, yet still found itself in the shadows of its European forefathers. Europe had a rich history of art, culture, and landscape, making it very difficult for America to gain an equal respect in these areas. The eastern states continued to emulate Europe for many years, demonstrating cultural originality only in the forms of religion and governmental philosophy. The West, however, was continually appropriating the qualities of its dramatic landscape for the development of a unique and significant culture all its own. The fringes of civilization, along the western edge of American expansion, continued to be the place where the nation established a unique

identity. Borrowing the big ideas from Europe and from its own short past, the ever-expanding America of the frontier was where the dreams of progress and the culture of innovation were perpetually born. This national tension between maintaining a comparable cultural identity with European nations while at the same time developing a culture unique enough to match the distinctive land and philosophies of America played itself out in the publishing world as much as it did in Washington D.C. or any other culture-shaping medium. The Western voices projecting messages of personal and national prosperity (boasting of a truer democracy representative in the untamed and free lands of the West) challenged their eastern brothers and sisters to extend their American journey. This invitation was offered by both the settlers and the builders that followed them from 1848 through 1893.

The list of voices which fall under the category of builder is much larger and distinguished than that of the settlers before it, and much more personalized than the often times nameless corporate and state profiteers that follow. This can be accounted for by the increased number of professionals and publishers venturing west, which likewise correlated to an increased interest in the topic from those in the east. It was also one of the most significant topics of conversation and curiosity among the population of a growing nation, matched only by such weighty topics as slavery and reconstruction, the "Indian question," and an unstable market pulled between agrarian and industrial foundations.

Another circumstance of mid- to late-nineteenth century culture promoting western literature is the increase in fictional prose, adding invented retellings of the Wild West to the consciousness of the nation and further complicating the distinction of truth

from reality. While every reader was certainly able to decipher the difference between fictional prose and non-fiction writing in the form of travelogues or biographical narratives, the power of association held in the fictional words and images did not bring this difference to the minds of readers then, nor does it now. For example, readers knew that Bret Harte's tale of Poker Flat was purely inventive entertainment. Yet the stoic images of a rough riding gambler Mr. Oakhurst and his motley assortment of companions listening to a colloquial recitation of the Iliad as they froze in a Sierran snow storm would factor into their image of the west. Also clouding truth from fiction since the mid-nineteenth century was the rise of realism as a literary technique, in which the author sought to capture the events, characters, and locale of a story in as strict a verisimilitude to reality as possible. This move away from the romantic approach of writing added a sense of truth, or reality, to the fictitious regional tales of the West. Likewise, the non-fiction of the time focusing on California, though intended and declared by its authors as objective, consistently reveals a romantic tendency to portray a pastoral ideal and hyperbolize the dramatic landscape. Much like the nation which increasingly struggled to reconcile its cultural identity between the urban and the frontier, the literary world was likewise in flux, casting the myths of California as truth. For a truth teller and naturalist like Muir, the adoption of fantastical myths as truth did not help his preservationist cause.

Selected for its breadth of influence and its representative nature of writing from this era, Horace Greeley's *An Overland Journey: From New York to San Francisco in the Summer of 1859* is the central text for analysis of the *building* period. Greeley's biographer Glyndon Van Deusen assigns him "remarkably accurate powers of observation that made him a real authority on the resources, interests, and state of

development of the regions that he visited" (230). More important than this New Englander's observation skills, his highly respected reputation as a conscientious citizen and leader added a great deal of power to his words. At the age of thirty he founded the *New York Tribune*. In terms of popularity and respect, Jo Ann Manfra suggests that "his eye for what middle-class citizens wished to see in a newspaper, and his vigorously reflective editorial opinions had given the *Tribune* a national readership and had made him the best-known newspaperman in the country" (vi). Called "a powerful and prestigious opinion leader" (Manfra vi) through the medium of print and oratory, "Uncle Horace" was a true advocate of national expansion. His travel journal held a patriotic tone in terms of what America and Americans can be, are made of, and will do. He was even nominated for President of the United States in 1872, but lost to the war hero of the day, Ulysses S. Grant. Besides being a trusted reporter and politician, he had also established himself as the teller and knower of the wide world, writing *Glances at Europe* in 1851. His intent as an expansionist couldn't be more clear; he travelled as far west as Iowa lecturing on his favorite issues such as emancipation and a transcontinental railway, among others (Manfra vii).

Balancing out Greeley are selected excerpts from Charles Nordhoff's 1873 work, *California for Travellers and Settlers*. While also a first-hand account, this book was less targeted at the specific issue of promoting the construction of the transcontinental railroad and more focused on the task of establishing a European-American populace and a thriving tourist industry in California. Parts of his book appeared first in *Harper's*, *The Tribune*, and the *Evening Post*, evidence that it reached a large number of readers and therefore held significant sway.

There are many other writers of the era that could have been highlighted as examples of state builders whose words also constructed a mythological California. Mark Twain is the most significant of this group, particularly his regional western writings of the 1860s and 1870s. Jack Hicks, in discussing Twain's perspective of the burgeoning western culture and landscape, suggests that he "read a promise in his surrounding that was both exhilarating and terrifying: a place to start over again, to find a fortune, a sight on which innocence might encounter darkness—perhaps even transform it—the geographical end of the line for the westward odyssey" (196). This implication that Twain saw his writing as a working through of the cultural conflicts, or of the complexities of defining the nation, points to the shared understanding by Muir, and later Steinbeck, as literary activists. Second only to Twain in profits and fame via stories of the west, Bret Harte began publishing the *Overland Monthly* out of San Francisco in 1869; it took the East by storm, selling more copies in New York than all of the Western territories combined. Though both Twain and Harte moved back East while continuing their "mything" of the west, their work "also manifested a self-critical awareness of the character of the Golden State, an ambivalence toward the dreams that beckoned others. The early California passages of *Roughing It*, for example, question and counter the airbrushed idylls of topography, climate, and primitive innocence for which the good citizens of the East and the Midwest thirsted" (Hicks 197).

Other "building" era writers perpetuated social and environmental myths of California promoting its promise while also beginning to selectively challenge its unqualified guarantee. The historian Josiah Royce wrote a more accurate depiction of California's despicable social and political actions between 1846-56 than had yet been

written. He challenged the ethics behind the actions that formed the state, reflecting “a mature self-critical capacity” (Hicks 199) in a man who benefitted from America’s response to the Dream as much as anyone else. Helen Hunt Jackson’s novel *Ramona* (1884) revealed the plight of former mission Indians, though its effects were not what she had intended. It sparked a kind of cult romanticism with mission images and ideas (Hicks 200). Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s novel *The Squatter and the Don* (1883) lampooned the thieving arrogance of American squatters on Spanish land grants, yet ultimately shows the white settler and the railroad winning out over the Californios. Samuel Bowles’ travel book *Across the Continent* (1865) keyed in on the importance of a transcontinental railroad for the sake of expansion and development. John Rollin Ridge’s novel *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murrieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854) was the first novel written in California. It condemns racism and violence by whites against minorities, especially Mexicans. Joaquin Miller’s poetic celebrations of the Sierras in grand Byronic style were widely read, thus becoming quite influential in the public perception of California. Two others who greatly influenced the shaping of the California landscape in the minds of Americans are the botanist William Brewer who wrote the first-person account *Up and Down California, 1860-1864*, and geologist Clarence King with his *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada* (1872). This growing-up period in California history from 1848-1893 seems to be the point at which the voices of the region chose between measured optimism grounded in social and environmental realities, led by Muir, or overt propaganda that perpetuated myths of perfection for the sake of profit. The second of these, the profiteers, is considered following a look at one of

the state's most significant builders and myth makers, Horace Greeley, and the lesser voice of Charles Nordhoff.

" 'Go West, young man,' urged Horace Greeley, America's most celebrated journalist of the nineteenth century, 'go West and grow up with the country.' This legendary advice, which Greeley did not originate but did popularize to the point that it has been forever associated with his name, remains part of the nation's continuing conversation with itself on matters of history and culture" (Manfra v). As the founder of the *New York Tribune*, Greeley was a very powerful voice in a culture run according to the printed word of the Northeast. Understanding that America's most unique strengths and assets for future development were in the wild and bounteous West, Greeley invested a good deal of his efforts in selling newspapers that waxed of the newly discovered wonders of the Far West. He also personally devoted himself to prospecting routes for a trans-continental railroad (Manfra ix). He was able to accomplish two goals through the single medium of the publishing world—sell newspapers to a growing readership throughout the East, and promote Western expansion through his propagandist non-fiction that is now considered the birth of travel journalism. Greeley's 1860 book *An Overland Journey: From New York to San Francisco in the Summer of 1859* first appeared in the *Tribune* periodically throughout 1859, printed at intervals corresponding to his investigative adventure west by train and stagecoach. In taking this overland excursion, "his main goal was to inventory the character of the central route to San Francisco and to create public support for a Pacific railway that would invite rapid free-state colonization of the West" (ix).

Knowing Greeley's central intention certainly opens his writing up for question. I suspected it would be riddled with seductive hyperbole, one-sided propaganda, and continued mythologizing of California as a Garden of Eden. Yet, what was written as a first-hand account by one of the most respected and well known newspaper barons of the period was taken to heart by hundreds of thousands of his readers, based largely in the trend-setting East. The text makes it clear that his desire was rooted in development and infrastructure rather than personal gain, thus making the mysteries and potential of the Far West as alluring as possible to the wealthy venture capitalists and the restless citizens of the East.

As stated by Jo Ann Manfra in the introduction to the 1999 reprinting of *An Overland Journey*, his primary intention was to assess a central railroad route to the Pacific which would encourage Western colonization. Widely considered to be a national necessity after the boom of the early gold rush years, the transcontinental railroad's specific route became the center of debate more than whether or not it was wanted or needed. As a nationalist considering the broader needs and benefits of the nation, Greeley rallied for a centrally located line, while southerners insisted that a more southern route was more ideal. Greeley "labeled the southern plan 'moonshine,' a product of slave-state self-interest that maliciously sectionalized what should be a great nonpolitical enterprise" (Manfra ix). This prompted his trip across the country along a central course, supported by rhetoric as to why it was the best choice. His belief that the railroad offered the best means of accomplishing America's Manifest Destiny is further supported by his social philosophies written in his 1850 work *Hints Toward Reforms*, in which he suggests America's infrastructure should be built on an agrarian model. This aligns with his

advocacy in *An Overland Journey* for the settlement of millions of square miles of open land to provide for such an infrastructure. It also reinforces the American perception of the ever-available frontier to the west, an idea that Muir and Steinbeck advertise as not only wrong but dangerous.

In his closing paragraph of the book, he makes his intentions as a nation-builder more explicit than anywhere else, pleading with the nation to fully embrace the prosperity offered to America through transcontinental rail. His trusted voice is full of promise and optimism as he claims guarantees of personal and national advancement through appropriating the western landscape:

> Men and brethren! let us resolve to have a railroad to the Pacific—to have it soon. It will add more to the strength and wealth of our country than would the acquisition of a dozen Cubas. It will prove a bond of union not easily broken, and a new spring to our national industry, prosperity and wealth. It will call new manufacturers into existence, and increase the demand for the products of those already existing. It will open new vistas to national and to individual aspiration, and crush out filibusterism by giving a new and wholesome direction to the public mind. My long, fatiguing journey was undertaken in the hope that I might do something toward the early construction of the Pacific railroad; and I trust that it has not been made wholly in vain. (386)

He is keenly aware of the power of the "public mind" as a shaper of a nation's trajectory. His desire to build the west in the name of democracy and opportunity was in a large part

accomplished through the summoning of the American dream in the hearts of his readers, beckoning them to partake in and support the acquisition of a bountiful land which promised to provide a thriving future.

The environmental promises of the California Dream, highlighted by the phrases *endlessly bountiful and expansive place* and *beautiful and consecrated land,* dominate Greeley's rhetoric in *An Overland Journey*. Again, the aspects of the myth guaranteeing prosperity for western transplants through hard work is inseparably connected to the idealized bounty of the land, but Greeley's anecdotes and imagery focus particularly on the inexhaustible natural resources present in the Far West. This implies multiple and diverse industrial opportunities dependent on the land, hopefully inspiring individual dreamers and bank-rolled companies alike to make the West their targeted investment of the future.

Perhaps the most praised resource is that of timber. He constantly rejoices in its plentitude, but also assigns an almost divine destiny in the land already having the most essential commodity for expanding civilization. In describing the forests of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, he says, "How greatly blest California is in this abundance, I need not say" (280). However, he of course does choose to repeatedly emphasize its abundance: "Taking into account gold, timber, and grass, the Sierra Nevada is probably the richest and most productive mountain–chain on earth" (281). Not long after this description, he ties this bounty directly to monetary values and a thriving timber industry for whosoever may be the wisest to pursue the land immediately. He tempts the eastern farmer and investor as such: "The day is not distant—there are those living who will see it—when what is now California will have a population of three to six millions; then

eligible timber-lands in the Sierra will be worth more per acre than would now be paid for farms in the richest valleys near San Francisco" (348-49). This commoditization of nature is again the antithesis of Muir's philosophy beginning only a decade later, but the allure of profits rather than spiritual uplift from the forests of the Sierras had by that time already established itself in California.

Greeley cleverly addresses every benefit of such a rich natural commodity in order to draw in the points of interest and value of every potential settler and investor. He highlights the aesthetic beauty of California's forests as a resource perhaps even more precious than the timber itself; it is much more difficult to manufacture or find pristine beauty on a grand scale like the Sierra Nevada Mountains at this time. While these ideas encourage national pride, they by no means suggest preservationist thought. Indeed, the beauty found in the "tempest-tossed sea of evergreens" can just as well refer to the profits to be made from their fell. Making epic comparisons to the idealized Alps of Europe, he says,

> The Sierra Nevadas lack the glorious glaciers, the frequent rains, the rich verdure, the abundant cataracts of the Alps; but they far surpass them—they surpass any other mountains I ever saw—in the wealth and grace of their trees. Look down from almost any of their peaks, and your range of vision is filled, bounded, satisfied, by what might be termed a tempest-tossed sea of evergreens, filling every upland valley, covering every hillside, crowning every peak but the highest, with their unfading luxuriance. . . here, I am confident, [are] the most beautiful trees on earth. (301-02)

Greeley is much more judicious in his description of the climates throughout California than others had been. Yet whenever he identifies a region as less than ideal for the venture of farming, he qualifies it by explaining how it is still a bountiful provider, just in different ways. For example, the foothills are too dry for wheat and are not easily irrigated, yet they are as ideal for ranching as any known land in the country. He also defends the dry, hot summers of the Valley as "hav[ing] their advantages" (347), citing safety from crop damage due to rain, insects, rust, and weeds. Also, such weather leads to grand harvests of agriculture in multiple seasons. On this point, he explains the unique climatic patterns of the Valley which seem harsh to the easterner but prove to be twice as fruitful to the prudent farmer. Describing the thoughts of an observer from the foothills looking down across the plains in the heat of summer, he imagines him saying, "Is this the American Italy? It looks more like a Sahara or Gobi." Yet he goes on to explain that the winter and spring are the seasons of bounty in the lowlands, giving statistics that reveal the doubly productive harvests of California crops compared to those in the East (325-26).

The myth of environmental fecundity surfaces again as Greeley proclaims the ease with which a rich harvest is accomplished: "No other land on earth produces wheat, rye, and barley so largely and with so little labor as the great majority of these thirty million acres" (344-45). Previous to declaring how well the grains grow in the Valley, Greeley boasts of the fruit trees. In speaking of stone fruits such as peaches, apricots, and nectarines, he promises the unbelievable to be true, saying, "Nowhere else on earth is it produced so readily or so bountifully. Such [fruit . . .] would stagger the faith of nine-tenths of my readers" (328). He continues the glorification of California's agricultural

bounty with a rare example of hyperbole that certainly perpetuates Edenic associations with the land. Referring to the absence of pestilence, he says, “Under a hundred fruit-trees, you will not see one bulb which has prematurely fallen—a victim to this destructive brood” (329). Associations to the false expectations of the Joad family floods the mind when reading this early source of agricultural paradise in terms of abundance and ease with which it is managed.

Just as endless bounty is to be had by agricultural means, it likewise awaits the industrious citizen willing to continue the mining and “water management” begun ten years earlier. He advocates dams for the sake of irrigation, the result of which will be “one of the most productive regions on earth” (276). Equally profitable, Greeley believes the many tributaries flowing from the Sierras could more than provide for the mining needs of the next quarter century. History proved his assertions wrong concerning the life span of California’s golden age, yet here he argues, “I find no one seeming to cherish any apprehensions that California will cease to produce gold abundantly, at least within the next quarter of a century. […] If the amount of available water were doubled, with a considerable reduction of price, the gold product of California would thereupon be increased several millions per annum” (287). He speaks of doubling the water supply as if it simply needs to be wished for, and refers to the most ecologically destructive form of mining (hydraulic) as he dreams of the limitless economic potential resonant in the land. This perspective upholds the myth of nature’s cornucopia in California, and it also highlights the escalating ecological dilemma between conservation and appropriation faced by the builders.

In discussing the negative environmental effects of development, specifically stemming from the mining industry, Greeley ultimately defends it as "necessary" and views the region's land as a greedy temptress. Yet he still paints a less than attractive picture of California in the aftermath, noting: "Mining is a necessary art, but it does not tend to beautify the face of nature. […] California, in giving up her hoarded wealth, surrenders much of her beauty also. […] Not a stream of any size is allowed to escape the pollution—even the bountiful and naturally pure Sacramento is yellow with it, and flows turbid and uninviting to the Pacific. […] As most of the land has no owner, everybody cuts and slashes as if he cared for nobody but himself, and no time but to-day" (292-93).

Clearly, Greeley and other well-intentioned builders of the American West were conflicted between responsible land use and unsuppressed appropriation of resources for the immediate expansion of a dynasty. This conflict plays itself out further as he encounters the giant sequoias of Mariposa Grove. In this instance, he calls for the preservation of these largest of all land dwelling organisms, second on earth only to the great coral reefs of the sea. While still giving detailed measurements of these mythologically proportioned trees and fascinating the reader with California's noble natural wonders, his preservationist stance separates him from the profiteers that had begun to spring up all around him. They would want to cut them down for so many cents per board foot, or for the profiting spectacle of such an artifact from the exotic West, but he at least recognized the big trees as a symbol and source of pride for the nation, an irreplaceable resource. "If the village of Mariposas, the county, or the state of California, does not immediately provide for the safety of these trees, I shall deeply deplore the infatuation, and believe that these giants might have been more happily located" (313).

He knew that his social influence and words held great sway in public opinion, and likewise held the government accountable to the defense of the trees. This attitude highlights the separation between the builders and profiteers as the turn of the century approached. The fully developed and radicalized version of justice-conscious writers of the building age such as Horace Greeley, Helen Hunt Jackson, and John Rollin Ridge ultimately surface in the Progressive Era with the likes of John Muir and continue through present day. Standing on these broad literary shoulders, they consistently counter the harmful perpetrators of the California Dream who have likewise grown more sophisticated with time.

In coming to the end of his journey, Greeley sought to concisely convey his central intents for writing his travelogue. In answering the question, "What is the inducement for future immigration?," Greeley gives a number of reasons. He notes "a great need of virtuous, educated, energetic women," good farmers and dairymen, and hard workers not expecting to "'make their pile,' and return to the east" but permanently populate and civilize the land (358-59). On this last point he expounds, "If you come to California at all, come to stay; and nowhere else will you find a little money more desirable than here. Even one thousand dollars, well applied, may, with resolute industry and frugality, place you soon on the high road to independence" (360). His intent in depicting the California Dream was not to create entrepreneurial millionaires, but rather to encourage industrious citizens desirous of bountiful land all their own. He did not align with the "make it rich" propagandists that followed, or those that promised paradise to every traveler in order to profit from their naivety. He encouraged democratic ideals of a good solid living for hard work and wise investments, following the lines of a stable

agrarian market and according to the archetypal principles of Manifest Destiny. This principle may have held more truth when it was said, but while the realities of the land's availability changed, the ideal he offers continues to echo in the national imagination for generations to come. Thus, Steinbeck's tragic tale of disillusionment had to be told no less than seventy years later in an attempt to update the disappointing realities of a once promising land.

Greeley promoted economic and social success in a number of ways throughout the text. In a section titled "California—Its Resources," Greeley states that "California is one of the cheapest and best stock-growing countries in the world" (335). The implication is that success done cheaply is success acquired easily, depicting a fated destiny of prosperity to the adventurous souls willing to take the risk and journey west. This "easy pickings" theme continues as he portrays the blessed life of the fruit farmer who cannot even keep up with the wealth which God apparently desires to pour out upon him. "He has a squad of thirty or forty men picking and boxing peaches for the last month, yet his fruit by the cart-load ripens and rots ungathered" (336). He continues, "Their harvests continued to be augmented by at least twenty-five per cent. per annum" (337). Just as the individual prospers from the decision to try his fortunes in California, the state and thus nation likewise benefit from the imminent economic development of a major emigration west. Such a shift in human resources, argues Greeley, is not only a safe but also a prosperous choice for the citizen and the land: "I can see why the owners of large estates or of mining claims should strongly desire an ample and incessant immigration. This is plain enough; while it is not so obvious, though I deem it equally true, that an immigration of one hundred thousand effective workers per annum, would be readily

absorbed by California, and would add steadily and immensely to her prosperity and wealth" (340). He of course implies white immigrants.

The most significant shadow that looms over this perpetuated mythology of a Promised Land is the racist premise never explicitly articulated but always implied in this myth. The Land of Milk and Honey was meant only for the chosen people, and in America's case this meant white Americans descended from Western Europe. Even from the lips of supposedly staunch white abolitionists such as Horace Greeley, it was always abundantly clear that their vision of Manifest Destiny in the West was very white. It was never meant to apply to African Americans, Mexicans, Native Americans, or Chinese. The California Dream was one in which they were not allowed to share. The following quote reflects the paradox of Greeley's expansionist philosophy founded on equal access to prosperity and the right of every man to pursue his dreams. In speaking of the Chinese in California, he says, "He is an inveterate gambler, an opium-smoker, a habitual rum-drinker, and a devotee of every sensual vice. But he is weak in body, and not allowed to vote, so it is safe to trample on him; he does not write English, and so cannot tell the story of his wrongs. […] Even the wretched Indians of California repel with scorn the suggestion that there is any kinship between their race and the Chinese" (289). Ironically, this racist exclusion of minorities from the California Dream empowered the profiteers that came after them in a number of ways. It allowed them to develop racially filtered communities throughout the state, and advertise the West as a racially pure society to match the pristine landscape shaping it. This in turn invited a land-owning citizenry to a state which had never sustained a stable economy without the exploitation of a minority class. These racist expectations, crushed by interracial realities, invoked a culture built on

principles of injustice rather than democratic dreams. In battling this social ethic, Steinbeck faced a mythology which had hatred woven into it from its very foundations.

This kind of perspective from Greeley certainly erodes any trust he may have had in a modern reader, but sadly, the white majority of the day were not likely rattled by the overt racism against Chinese and Native Americans. In short, Greeley knew he held a captive audience and used the myth of the Golden State to promote his goals for the nation. The results of such earnest writing from a reputable source are made explicitly clear in the following 1859 magazine article discussing the public reading of his Sierra Nevada accounts. Despite his first-hand accounts being more outlandish and fantastic than actual fictional tales, the readers still faithfully accept every detail in light of the fact that it is "Uncle Horace" speaking:

> Tuesday evening, another "great story" from Mr. Greeley about the mammoth trees in California. Sinbad the sailor is outdone now; and yet we believe Mr. Greeley most implicitly. We should believe him if he said he saw a live sea-serpent.—He tells of trees which he doubts not were of substantial size when Solomon laid the foundation of the temple—which possibly indeed belonged to a geologic period before man's creation, contemporaries of the giant ferns fossilized in coal—tree one hundred feet in circumference at the height of six feet from the base, and three hundred feet high! These California discoveries make the world seem new. We need not go to the moon for wonders while we are so ignorant of the wonders on our own planet. (*Oneida*)

A second primary source taken from the building era, Charles Nordhoff's *California for Travellers and Settlers* (1873) helps to more fully represent these voices through its nuanced differences in intent and style. Nordhoff was more specific in his boosterism than Greeley; while Greeley polled for a railroad route to and through California, Nordhoff isolated his text in the Golden State. In many ways, Nordhoff's work is a product of Greeley's accomplishments with the railroad. Only four years earlier, the transcontinental railroad was completed, allowing for a steady stream of travelers and settlers to access the Far West. As for his intentions, the title says it all—both traveling there for pleasure or settling there for life are building enterprises. In fact, combining a travel and settler guide is a very ingenious and effective rhetorical approach for someone intending to develop a region. While he vividly advertises only the most dramatic and bountiful regions of the state for visitors, he is simultaneously convincing potential settlers to fall in love with a carefully crafted California Dream seemingly free from imperfections.

In general, Nordhoff's intentions were like those of Greeley's and other democratic-minded builders of the mid- to late-nineteenth century. He desired to expose a ripening yet unpicked California to the East, appealing to their sense of adventure in the American tradition of western migration, and baiting them with an opportunity to start anew. Nordhoff was not the wealthy philanthropist that Greeley was, however, and thus also intended to profit from book sales which appropriated the irresistible mythology of California to do so. In fact, he was later commissioned by railroads and land speculators to wax eloquent about the wonderful opportunities in California (Kurutz 17). Yet in *California for Travellers and Settlers*, he also speaks quite matter of factly of his

benevolent intentions and objective style in writing the book. He declares, “I have aimed to give a plain and detailed statement” of routes, sights, and tables to manage time and expenses. He also gives accounts of the agricultural potential of the state, “which, by reason of its fine healthful climate, its rich soil, and its remarkably varied products, deserves the attention of farmers looking for pleasant homes and cheap and fertile lands, combined with a climate the best, probably, in the United States” (11-12). The many charts and data tables give the text an overall impression of objective journalism, yet closer scrutiny reveals an idealized opportunity and landscape. He is speculative in terms of the agricultural promise for every industrious farmer-settler, and many of his “facts” are based on anecdotal encounters and personal observations. Well intentioned for the settlement of farm families in pursuit of the American Dream, Nordhoff also perpetuates the myth of California which ultimately set up optimistic settlers for harsher realities and an already overrun landscape for more destructive alteration.

The environmental premises of the myth are excessively promoted to the reader throughout the text. Seeking to alter the perceptions of any proud Easterners yet to be converted to the belief that life in California is superior to that in New York, Boston, Chicago, or St. Louis, Nordhoff insists on the far greater quality of life found out west: “We who live on the Atlantic side of the continent are sorry for [Californians], and do not doubt in our hearts that they would be only too glad to come over to us. Very few suspect that the Californians have the best of us, and that, so far from living in a kind of rude exile, they enjoy, in fact, the finest climate, the most fertile soil, the loveliest skies, the mildest winters, the most healthful region, in the whole United States” (118-19). He phrases this concept in such a way as to reflect a kind of insider knowledge, letting the

reader in on an opportunity yet to be known to the general public. This is not simply a land to visit, he implies, but a land to settle which would greatly and immediately enhance one's quality of life.

His efforts to expand the population by revealing the agricultural potential of the state are quite calculated. In speaking of the San Joaquin Valley after discussing the natural bounty of California, Nordhoff teases the reader with this powerful statistic: "The plains alone contain nearly seven million acres of land, of which less than seven hundred thousand were cultivated last year" (128). This partial disclosure of the situation is a full embrace of the myth of endless bounty. Unmediated ejaculations of boosterism such as "More land! More for you! Enough for everyone!" would almost fit into the text in such places without a stark shift in tone. In offering this particular statistic, he falsely implies that 6.3 million acres are fallow and waiting for any taker who wants it. He conveniently avoids the ugly realities of land grant disputes and tenant farming which more accurately represent the status of that land. Inviting them in "on the ground floor," it sounds, he says, "The people are but slowly discovering that the great source of the State's wealth is in its productive soil" (119). As if the residents of the west are not privy to his text, Nordhoff speaks to the potential settlers in the East in a confidential tone. He also plays on the cultured pride of the Easterner, suggesting that they, unlike the Californian, are intelligent enough to see the full potential in such an opportunity.

He further boasts of the general bounty of the state as he suggests that its every natural quality far surpasses the best offerings in the East. He also touches on the issue of a need for an intrastate railroad, reflecting his desire as a nation builder to unite land, people, and resources more effectively.

> But nature has given it everything else except a railroad; a soil of remarkable fertility; a climate, according to the opinion of Eastern men with whom I spoke, who have lived here for some years, far more pleasant in the hottest summer heats than New York or Illinois, and in winter charmingly mild; healthful breezes, and freedom from malarious diseases except in the vicinity of Bakersfield; lovely mountain scenery; the capacity for a great variety of products; and water enough, flowing from the mountains on each side, if it is properly saved, to irrigate every acre of soil which needs it. (226)

The promise of prosperity and fulfillment in the myth is also a fundamental message of the text. The builders of this era not only implemented this perception among the populace as a means of promoting expansion, but truly believed in the essence of it. In their long-term vision of a continental democracy, they were short-sighted in terms of social and environmental injustices which inherently stem from the deflated realities of false expectations. Coupling this with a continued idealization of California in spite of significant falterings of the myth, the hard realities of the state became clear to the altruistic builders which followed Nordhoff's generation. This increased self-consciousness coincided with the rise of the profiteers, and these two schools of influence have existed ever since.

Nordhoff was still a part of the building generation that may have known that collateral damage to people and the land was an inevitability of expansion, but thought it a small price to pay. With good intentions for the nation, and certainly not a setback for

his own well-being, Nordhoff elicited a message of prosperity that would appeal to almost any reader. In his Preface, he claims that far more Americans have seen Rome, Paris, and the Alps than Yosemite. He then pleads, as he sells both his guide book and the state of California to them, “I have no objection to Europe; but I would like to induce Americans, when they contemplate a journey for health, pleasure, or instruction, or all three, to think also of their own country, and particularly of California, which has so many delights in store for the tourists, and so many attractions for the farmer or settler looking for a mild and healthful climate and a productive country” (11). Through this tourist promotion, he delights the imaginations of the East with California’s perfection, comparable only to the grandest European destinations.

He steadily layers an argument for the all but guaranteed prosperity of the settler and the ease with which it is to be acquired, reminiscent of the hand-bills distributed throughout Steinbeck’s southwest. Suggesting fast profits and immediate results, he asserts that “men do here more easily what they used to do in Illinois and Indiana—buy a farm, and with their first crop clear all their expenses and the price of the land” (121). He suggests a new revolution in the American journey, making explicit references to the other established farmlands in the East which had demonstrated the most beauty and bounty. Not only is the good life to be had within the first year, but it comes to the farmer through far less toil, associating the land to the biblical Eden.

Furthering the myth’s suggestion that one is rewarded according to their investment, Nordhoff ignites the dream in the hard-working reader of becoming rich. Stated concisely and as a matter of fact, he declares that “there is nothing here, except idleness, ignorance, and unthrift, to prevent farmers, in a few years, becoming rich”

(228). This depiction of economic and thus social improvement is clearly an idealized version of what could be for a select few in California, likely to be only those who came with a great deal of money to begin with or social or political connections allowing them to acquire the scant few tracts of truly available and arable land. Nonetheless, he continues to make sweeping statements that insist on everything for nothing. In explaining homestead, anti-monopoly, and railroad land laws of the day, and how the Great Central Valley is the physical embodiment of Manifest Destiny, he proclaims, "Thus the great fertile San Joaquin Valley is kept open by law for homes for the homeless" (197). Such a statement is more dangerous than other booster based images of perfection in that it targets those who already have no home in the east and are likely to come to California with not only greater expectations than those leaving land behind but with a greater likelihood of failing to thrive. This is the first time that white Americans were lured to California under the pretenses of fulfilling the American Dream only to be met by defensive, early-arriving settlers and convoluted land laws that confounded even the most astute citizen. The subtle ironies of this dispossession are fully unpacked in chapter four, examining Steinbeck's disdainful protest of this occurrence during the Great Depression.

In a statement which completely disagrees with Horace Greeley's assessment of the situation fourteen years earlier, Nordhoff insists that "no state in the Union is better supplied with schools" (123). It could be true that the construction of schools throughout the state grew exponentially during this period, but it is more likely another example of hyperbole seeking to reassure the skeptical Easterner of the culturally refined and socially conscious nature of the new West. He had as many myths to deconstruct as support in

regard to the cultural sophistication, or lack thereof, assigned to the scantily settled West in general and the ruffian-populated lands of California in particular.

Likewise, he insisted that the infrastructure required to execute the construction of modern towns and profitable farms was in place, simply waiting for people to take advantage of it. He goes on to suggest that now is the perfect time for an unparalleled opportunity. In speaking of the San Joaquin Valley being now irrigated, he says, “This work was completed during the summer of 1872, and the whole great valley is now open to settlement, while the two railroads, which are being energetically prosecuted by wealthy companies, will give to farmers a quick and certain access to market” (129). And later, “But the truth is that agriculture is yet in its infancy in California” (227). Echoing the words of Greeley to nearly the exact intent and phrasing, Nordhoff approaches the end of his text with a final paraphrase of the myth of success through hard work in California. Like Greeley, he emphasizes the properly intended designation of the land as meant for long term settlement and small scale farming according to an agrarian model. Differing from profiteers that follow, Nordhoff believed in the spirit of expansion as something actually acquirable by every hard-working and optimistic family. Western plantations were not the intent, nor were absentee landlords invited; a true model of democracy was the message which resonated with these builders: “There is magnificent opportunity in this great Valley for industrious and thrifty farmers. Millions of acres of fertile land lie open to settlement, and are reserved by Government, at a low price, for actual settlers” (227).

Unfortunately, Nordhoff’s idea of democracy, prosperity, and the American dream was as equally whitewashed as those of his forebears and peers. Written in 1873,

California had received hundreds of thousands of Chinese immigrants since the beginning of the gold rush. Yet as opportunities in the gold market waned and the transcontinental railroad was completed, a great deal of racist hostility to the Chinese resonated throughout west coast culture. This same racist perspective was true for Native Americans and Mexicans as well, but to a slightly lesser extent; these groups were more assimilated or of such small unthreatening numbers that they received only a fraction of the overt hostilities rained upon the Chinese. On the copyright page of the 1973 centennial reprinting of Nordhoff's text by Ten Speed Press, the publisher posts a disclaimer of sorts, saying as respectfully as possible that the racist content of the text is a reflection of the times and culture in which it was originally written. It reads, "To retain the historical perspective of Nordhoff's study, no attempt has been made to expurgate his quaintly-expressed social attitudes." Nordhoff also dedicated the text "to General E.F. Beale, in memory of pleasant days at the Tejon." E.F. Beale was California's Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the 1850s, and owned the largest private span of land in California named the Tejon Ranch. While a defender of some Indians, he also became wildly rich through the acquisition of what was formerly their land. This is an ambiguous friendship at best in terms of race relations and the influence on Charles Nordhoff's writing.

As a final glimpse into Nordhoff's *California for Travellers and Settlers*, I've selected a quote which reveals the hyperbole and propaganda that grew more prevalent in regional tracts as time went on. The big opportunities for land grabbing and staking treasures had passed, requiring writers of the latter years of the nineteenth century to stretch the prospects of the state ever further. As half truths about the land and the

opportunities it held grew into schemes for profit, the line between builders and abusers blurred all the greater. The generalizations stated below by Nordhoff are comically absurd, yet stated with utmost seriousness. Implying a direct relationship between robust physical health and the perfectly temperate climate, he states, “the climate is most kindly to little children, which is perhaps one of its best tests. One can not travel anywhere in California without noticing that the forms of the women who have lived some years here are more full and robust than with us; while the children are universally chubby, fat, and red-cheeked. […] All animals also fatten easily here, and horses are very commonly so fleshy that they would be thought unfit to drive or ride in the East” (198-99).

Health and prosperity cannot be avoided in the climes of the west; for any traveler willing to shed prideful misgivings of a culturally unrefined region and make the trip, affluence and beauty await. This is the same message delivered by the profiteers from roughly 1893 through today. The only difference between them and the builders before them is that there still were remnants of land and avenues to success available before this date. The builders wanted to believe in the myth of boundless expansion and attainable wealth for every individual, but the profiteers that followed knew the potential impact yet proceeded to connive the nation with unflinching sincerity and optimism. Benefiting themselves rather than reflecting the strained realities of the land and its citizens, the literary works of these entities starkly portrayed the injustices committed by means of perpetuating a by-gone myth. As the California Dream was offered on an ever broadening scale, the people and landscape of California fell deeper into a hierarchy of power sustained by a beautiful sounding promise. The next era of social and environmental advocates, led by Muir and Steinbeck, accepted the overwhelming challenge of refuting

the myth that had grown like a cancer on the landscape of California and on the minds of the nation.

Profiteers

The explorers "discovered" it, the builders then developed it, and the profiteers of the next generation abused it for personal or corporate gain. Intentions as widely various as evangelism to highway robbery may have comingled throughout the earlier phases of California history, but the selfish pursuit of profit appears to be secondary to the altruistic intention of nation building. However, by the end of the 19th century, perpetuating the myth seemed driven by a singular intention and the singular, though broadly represented, effect of violence. This section highlights the darkest and most oppressive expression of the California Dream. Unfortunately, this era includes today.

My analysis of California's profiteering age moves ahead in a loose chronology from 1893 on, highlighting the perpetuation of the myth both topically and anecdotally. The use of this "shotgun" approach rather than the more traditional literary analysis approach used in the *explorer* and *builder* sections is mostly due to the massive span of time it represents and the almost incalculable assortment of cultural representations found in it. The best evidence of the encyclopedic undertaking necessary to capture this span of history is seen in Kevin Starr's eight book *Americans and the California Dream* Series of the history of California.

Being the product of the state's builders, the profiteers likewise found themselves in the philosophical crux between nation building and economic advancement. There is no doubt that many boosters believed both could happen simultaneously, but they did not

count the costs to the land or the backs on which profits would be made. As noted in Greeley's wrestling reflections on the state's future, the main unresolved environmental conflict in the minds of the builders was wanting the resources used in such a way that would build the West into a dynasty, at the same time being conscious of the dangers inherent in unregulated use of these resources. Ultimately, this generation justified the environmental abuses for the sake of their higher cause, which was democratic expansion in the form of both agrarian homesteads and industrial juggernauts.

Yet, as the resources dwindled or were chaotically parsed among various independent industries, the negative effects of unregulated commercialism exponentially exploded in California. As a new century approached, the philosophical conflict between profiteers and concerned citizens became much more identifiable in the culture and thus literature of the day. The Gilded Age and all that came with the rise of industrialization was met by the Progressive Era bent on social, political, and economic reform favoring the rights of the citizen rather than industrial monopolies and their aristocratic leaders. As Jack Hicks describes, many voices of the late 19th century held an "increasingly self-critical view of the cost and value of the Golden Dream" (203). This burgeoning battle between the haves and the have-nots, between the profiteers and the preservationists, took place in the monopolizing medium of the printed word. The coincidence of an established reading culture and a national identity crisis was at once a perfect opportunity and a terrible curse; the means of selling or saving the state's potential was as easy as controlling the sentiments and capturing the imagination of the reading public. The battle was on.

Ironically, both the protesting artists and the pandering industrial giants functioned with a shared understanding concerning the reception of their carefully constructed Californias—that what they put in print or pictures would be as good as truth, and would be responded to accordingly. Both sides of the battle over America's imagination explicitly understood the mechanisms of social construction and the power of printed media as it pertained to the public's perception and treatment of place. Berger and Luckmann, theoretical founding voices of social construction, explain that institutionalized meanings must be forcefully impressed on the consciousness of the recipient repeatedly, even if "by coercive and generally unpleasant means. Furthermore, since human beings are frequently stupid, institutional meanings tend to become simplified in the process of transmission, so that the given collection of institutional 'formulae' can be readily learned and memorized by successive generations. The 'formula' character of institutional meanings ensures their memorability" (70). This systematic pattern of simplified acquisition sounds a great deal like the print, radio, and television ads since the inception of mass media, but could also be identified as standardized literary techniques used by voices of protest. While both sides shared techniques, the content and intent of their work was of course intensely polarized. This simplifies the complexities of mass communication into a good guy/bad guy dichotomy, but the literature of the era reveals very little gray area in this battle. Almost nothing has changed in this struggle for possession of the popular imagination.

The transition from building to profiteering did not need Frederick Jackson Turner to tell the world that the frontier was officially closed. The realities of the West, particularly the swelling state of California, were apparent to everyone there, and many

forms and degrees of profiteering had already been taking place. In fact, the myths of Gold Mountain, as California was called by the Chinese, had already drawn tens of thousands across the Pacific in hopes of a glorious future only to have their bodies broken and deported once the transcontinental railroad was completed and the gold became more elusive. To the same degree, the unfulfilled promises of the dream had reached a critical mass among the thousands of settlers who expected one thing and experienced a harsh reality far from it. Henry Nash Smith explains the emotional weight of this: "Given a break in the upward curve of economic progress for the Western farmer, the myth could become a mockery, offering no consolation and serving only to intensify the sense of outrage on the part of men and women who discovered that labor in the fields did not bring the cheerful comfort promised them by so many prophets of the future of the West. The shattering of the myth by economic distress marked, for the history of ideas in America, the real end of the frontier period" (188). He goes on to say that "the scope of this contrast between image and fact, the ideal and the actual, the hope and the consummation, defines the bitterness of the agrarian revolt that made itself felt with increasing force from the 1870's onward" (193). The psychological effects of Turner's broadly endorsed announcement of a closed West, however, was the catalyst that prompted an electric urgency and anxious self-consciousness not yet experienced amidst California's ambiguities of opportunity and hardship. Though there are other specific events which could be used as the hinge on which the state's future swung, this one is clearly the precise philosophical moment of crisis, which is rare in the slippery science of historicism.

After the epiphany of 1893, the expansionist spirit of America was in need of a new catalyst to draw its people into a still sparsely populated Far West. Patricia Limerick describes this instinct of America at this time in her book *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*, noting, “When ‘civilization’ had conquered ‘savagery’ at any one location, the process—and the historian’s attention—moved on” (26). The nineteenth century’s perspective of the West was less a place than an idea or process with which America was infatuated. When the process was halted by no more land, the maintenance of the dream depended on revealing a newly discovered and magical icon of hope or altering the paradigm of the dream altogether[5].

I assert that the profiteers did the latter, expanding the California Dream to include suburban, urban, and industrialized paths to prosperity. Simultaneously, Muir and other like-minded artists sought a revision of the California Dream based on social cohesion and ecological interdependence, a reflection of the Progressive ethic of reform that was sweeping the nation. America was going to respond one way or another to the unfulfilled promises of the Dream. It would either be in violent expressions of self-legitimizing power over land and man, or driven by a new philosophical inspiration to be illuminated by the artists of the day. Muir and his contemporaries sought to shape this new national creed through the microcosm of California. This alternative perspective still allowed for the American Dream, yet elevated the intrinsic value of the every-man and the land. Social and environmental abuses were no longer justifiable in the name of expansion; we had reached the shore, and with no other land to conquer, all abuses of the

[5] An examination of America’s imperialist patterns since 1893 as an expression of this irrepressible archetypal instinct is certainly a relevant and fruitful one, but for the sake of a continental examination of the myth, that is left for another study.

land and its people were self-inflicted wounds that countered the spirit of American freedom and opportunity.

Annette Kolodny confirms Turner's theory as the turning point in the life of the myth, but also points to the naturally explosive reaction of a dream deferred. She reminds the activist-minded citizen that redemptive violence inflicted by disappointed pilgrims upon the withholding land must not go unchallenged. In her call to imagine a new pastoral and curb the injustice the old one brought, she points to Muir, Steinbeck, and others who have since pursued this very goal:

> As with all frustrations that cannot be either mediated or resolved, the frustration of the pastoral impulse was finally expressed through anger—anger at the land that had seemed to promise and then defeat men's longings for an ambience of total gratification. It is an anger that, unlike this chapter, did not end with the nineteenth century. What appears today as the single-minded destruction and pollution of the continent is just one of the ways we have continued to express that anger. That we can no longer afford to do so is obvious; our survival may depend on our ability to escape the verbal patterns that have bound us either to fear of being engulfed by our physical environment, or to the opposite attitude of aggression and conquest. Twentieth century pastoral *must* offer us some means of understanding and altering the disastrous attitudes toward the physical setting that we have inherited from our national past. (137)

In this brief indictment of profiteers between 1893 and today, the usual suspects of inbred social aristocracy are held to account. The railroad and land barons, entities of tourism (including the state itself) and local chambers of commerce, agribusiness, and the entertainment industry are the perpetrators singled out here. Some of these entities are monopolistic carry-overs from the Gilded Age while others come on the scene later in the 20th century. All of them, however, are guilty of psychological sabotage for promising the blessings from a California that no longer existed. Far and away, John Muir's calculated and masterfully crafted literature of protest led the fight against these social and ecological threats.

The Progressive Era, loosely assigned to the years 1890-1915 by historians, continued to be a season of profits for railroads and land developers following the era of infrastructure building throughout the continent but most notably profitable in the Far West. Reform was the word of the day, yet these entities, along with the "marketeering" city builders in Southern California and the San Francisco Bay area in particular, continued to tap into the newly challenged California Dream as a symbolic springboard for new ideological frontiers such as charming middle-class family living, headquartering industrial companies, and travels in paradise.

The selling of this new myth is best exemplified in the popular national advertising campaigns of the day. KD and Gary Kurutz's image-rich text *California Calls You: The Art of Promoting the Golden State, 1870 to 1940*, explains: "As boosterism gained momentum, its florid language demanded equally vivid illustrations. Artists of all interests and backgrounds borrowed from prevailing styles of the fine art and commercial worlds to create visually stunning images. Posters, postcards, pamphlets and fruit crate

labels created in the late 19th century set the tone and format for the advertising campaigns that continued into the 20th century" (19). By 1907, the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railways had laid track along the Pacific Ocean from San Diego to Seattle, as well as their trans-continental connections. The opportunity to capitalize on the western scenery was never overlooked by these industrial giants. In fact, "many promotional brochures of the late 1800s and early 1900s were written from the vantage point of the train traveler" (Kurutz 23). Railroad companies used many techniques in their elaborate marketing strategies, including "See America First" campaigns, resort stops, and promises of a comfortable and clean experience (23).

They also instigated the nation-wide consumerist desire for the "tropical" fruits that abounded in California, being the only rapid means of mass transport of these products to the Midwest and East Coast.[6] Likewise, advertisements of California destinations included lush imagery of fruited plains and Edenic gardens. Another money-making ploy used by railroads was aimed at settlers, offering parcels of land owned by the railroads at the best market price (24). Not only was the traveler coerced, but the settler was immensely influenced by the opportunities made so available and communicated so plainly by railroad-funded brochures and pamphlets. One poster, created in 1905 by Southern Pacific, has an idyllic picture of two farmers working under a blue sky with a title that reads, "Come to California and See for Yourself: Millions of Chances for Happiness and Riches." The bottom of the poster targets would-be settlers

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[6] For examples and a more detailed explanation of the techniques and effects of the marketing of California's harvest, also see McClelland, Gordon T., and Jay Last. California Orange Box Labels: An Illustrated History. Beverly Hills: Hillcrest Press, 1985, *and* Salkin, John, and Laurie Gordon. Orange Crate Art: The Story of the Labels that Launched a Golden Era. New York: Warner Books, 1976.

with promotional travel prices: "Colonist Rates in Effect Until June 15th to California from: New York: $50.00, Chicago: $33.00, Buffalo: 42.50, New Orleans: 30.00, Cincinnati: 39.00, Omaha: 25.00. Stop Over Privileges at All Points in California. For details inquire of any agent of the SOUTHERN PACIFIC" (29).

Since the railroads held titles to so much land and profited from every other industry in the state as its provider of transportation, they were more than willing to get the traveler or settler to California for a low rate, knowing that their presence translated into eventual profit one way or another. This monopolistic hold on the market by the Southern Pacific in particular is described by Starr as "the most obvious instance of what was grossly wrong with California: a very few of the super-rich virtually owned the state—its land, its economy, its government—and were running it as a private preserve" (*Inventing* 199). Despite such an oligarchy of power that guaranteed immense profits for these few competing railroads, they still battled it out for every dollar. This occasionally "served" the consumer, as described here: "Competition between rival rail companies led to notorious 'fare wars' that greatly benefitted the emigrant. So high were the stakes that, at one point, the fare from St. Louis to California dropped to $5.00, and for one astounding day, ticket prices plummeted to fifty cents" (Kurutz 24). Throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, rail lines developed vacation destinations to attract the traveler and compete with the growing automobile industry. They frequently hired well-known artists and writers to develop brochures for them that proved to be iconic (25). Images of the natural wonders of the state were frequently implemented for their striking dimensions and allure. Grizzly bears, trout-filled lakes, giant sequoias, and snow-capped peaks overlooking verdant valleys were common images, along with endless

pristine rows of orange trees and other agricultural tableaus. Ironically, these iconic entities are the very things either threatened by mass emigration (Grizzly bears, giant sequoias, etc.) or the source of social oppression (large scale agriculture). These are precisely the battles instigated by the Edenic myth fought by Muir and Steinbeck.

At the heart of the myth maintenance were chambers of commerce and city builders competing for citizens to fill their shops, homes, and tax coffers. These regional efforts were frequently backed by railroad companies, who of course stood to profit from increased travel and settlement. Particularly as other money-making schemes in the state cooled over time, "the expansive gesture inviting anyone and everyone […] to come to California would evolve into more selective 'targeting' of potential home seekers in the 20th century" (Kurutz 19). Kurutz explains more fully here:

> California's most energetic promotional efforts were championed primarily by community leaders who formed local chambers of commerce and formed on boards of supervisors. Other efforts came from the State Board of Trade, convention bureaus, Californians, Inc., the Sunset Homeseeker's Bureau and formalized women's groups. Business leaders behind each of these organizations saw California's growth linked to land investment, business diversity and solid communities. […] The Chamber's [Los Angeles] campaign strategies involved advertising, product displays, publications, and mass mailings to other chambers throughout the country. Within its first decade the Chamber

> published some thirty-five pamphlets with a distribution to at least one million readers. (39)

By the 1920s, and certainly ever since, the Hollywood film industry has been the epicenter of culture-shaping through commercialized imaging and iconic actors and landscapes. The location which manufactures the cultural mythology of Western civilization seems best suited for a highly mythed place, so it is no surprise that Hollywood became the global epicenter of myth-making, now a powerfully engrained synergy between actual beauty and make believe. Beginning in the early 20th century, famous actors and artists increasingly called places like Palm Springs, Carmel, and affluent Los Angeles communities "home." This of course added to the larger-than-life qualities of the place that famous people are likewise associated with. It seemed the only place magical enough for such figures to hold residence, a Mount Olympus for America's gods of culture.

The entertainment industry has never missed an opportunity to sell the myth for profit, particularly in times of crisis when the nation needed a dream to escape to or pursue. Philip Hanson explains in *This Side of Despair: How the Movies and American Life Intersected During the Great Depression*, that "far from being removed from the tensions of the Depression crisis, movies built themselves out of the anxieties of the period. Films that present some escape from an individual's worrying about a job lost at a bank or a failing farm nevertheless appealed to their audiences by offering indirect ruminations on central aspects of the Depression" (168). These movies of distraction and hope were made and often set in California, thus associating the redeemed fictional world on the screen with the place. The California Dream lived on, only in many more

dimensions than the pastoral paradise of its earliest representations. In speaking of the motion picture industry after WWII, Starr notes that it "plunged itself into the effort of imaginatively reconstructing (as well as deconstructing) the American identity" (*Embattled Dreams* ix). Clearly, the California Dream stood as a microcosm of the hope needed by a nation in healing. Hollywood was of course more than willing to provide the mythic salve, but Steinbeck offered real medicine in the form of a new spirit of interdependence and brotherhood.

Meanwhile, a number of brochures from specific cities, counties, or regions touted them as "the garden of the world," or as made up of working class citizens, as creative inspirations to artists, possessing the best school systems, the best climate, the best highway system, local economic stability, and aesthetic charm (Kurutz 42-3). KD and Gary Kurutz's insightful text *California Calls You* cites a 1931 publication titled *The Wonder City, Los Angeles*, explaining the intentions and effects of the decades-long advertising campaigns for the region: "Southern California has built its market according to a simple formula. Through advertising it has attained over one million tourists annually. These tourists spend over eight million dollars a week and each 100,000 of them return to become residents and permanent consumers. Thus the tourist business causes a rapid, yet sound, transplanting of buying power from other sections to southern California—a fundamental necessity to the creation of industry here" (43). The marketing strategies worked, and California was successfully making the myth pay off long after the gold and the land ran out. This success story of a region in the pre-war era of the 1930s, though ultimately an elegy of the land and its people, is summed up by historian Kevin Starr: "In so many inter-related pursuits—sport, leisure, fashion, architecture, urban and

suburban lifestyles—the creativity of pre-war California defined and broadcast a message of great social significance to the rest of the nation: California had arrived and, in arriving, had achieved the good life for increasing numbers of Americans" (*Dream Endures* vii).

Even when the silver screen and local boosters weren't fortifying the California Dream, the metropolises of the state were quite literally doing so, albeit with temporary constructions of grandeur to play host to the ever-enchanted world audience. "More than sixty years before the gates of Disneyland opened, California was creating cities of dreams, complete with castles, rides, and costumed characters. Between 1894 and 1940, California held five world's fairs on its soil" (Barron 69). Discussing the events of the 1939 World's Fair in San Francisco hosted on Treasure Island, Kurutz succinctly explains this dynamic between fantastic facades and reality:

> Once again, hundreds of thousands of people, from all points of the compass, heeded the call to California and the lure of *golden dreams*. This Fair did not disappoint. However, as with previous expositions, the enchanting buildings and attractions erected for the celebration were not meant to last. Eugen Neuhaus, a noted art historian commented: *After it has run its relatively brief course, the site so magically created and transformed will be cleared to become an aviation field of the Federal Government… We should make every effort to accomplish some lasting results in applying the inspiring lessons of the Exposition to the permanent improvement of our cities and the West generally*. (151)

This elaborate drama of what California was not, but desired to be perceived as, is a perfect example of local and state boosterism which promised to ensure long-lasting revenues on a global scale, be it through tourism, entertainment, or the more elusively valued cultural influence. The critical comments in the above quote regarding the magical setting of the Fair being transformed into an air field is ironic in that California again positioned itself as the land of opportunity in the midst of a world war, marketing itself in different ways to the federal government, private military contractors, and the public as a region full of unique potential.

Before considering the game-changing effects of World War II on the California Dream in general and its specific role in the fate of the Dust Bowl migrant, an indictment of agribusiness practices throughout the Great Central Valley during the 1930s must be highlighted. Chapter four more fully examines the crimes of the imagination performed by this industry through the lens of Steinbeck's protest novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. In summary, industrial farming corporations and labor contractors in California used labor and land advertisements to trigger the pastoral impulse in the people of the Central Plains, Midwest, and Southern farming cultures, who put their trust in it despite its being a tangibly broken promise. In defense of the sharecroppers and bankrupt farmers of these regions, the drought and Depression left them with few other options, so chasing the Dream all the way to California cannot be held against them with too much weight. But this unfortunate circumstance of having no other option makes the propaganda of hope from the corporations in the West seem that much more sinister, knowing that an already broken people would meet more hardship once they arrived, even if they were among the few who attained employment of some kind. Between the radical proliferation in

mechanization which revolutionized the labor market and the altering of the landscape by overgrazing and land appropriation for farming, the story of American farming may be the best example of how the California Dream created an ecological and social nightmare.

While voices like Steinbeck did much to challenge the myth and invoke public and legislative change, the same patterns of injustice on the land and its workers are still seen in every generation since. Describing other promotional materials of the Great Depression targeted at the cross-section of the population that sought California as an agrarian refuge in a time of drought, Kurutz notes that “brochure illustrations portrayed sturdy laborers busily at work in fields or factories, their faces glowing with optimism. Most of these publications showed Californians entertained by their world’s fairs and enthralled with structural feats such as the Golden Gate Bridge, accomplishments meant to boost the economy and to distract the weary. The brochures described communities with balanced growth, healthy industries, and strong schools” (151). Of course the plantation-like system of farming and social bigotry against the Okies was left out of the “optimistic” depictions of the Golden State.

As America committed itself to action in World War II and the battle escalated in the Pacific arena, California used the myth as a war industry opportunity. It sold itself to the government with its geographically strategic location and deep and wide ports, to the military industrial contractors with praises of a skilled and plentiful working class, and the unemployed public with the promise of good paying defense work in abundance. As expressed by many historians, economists, and politicians, nothing ends a bad economic depression like a good war. There is no question that the war ended the nation’s

economic woes, but the cultural development of post-war America encouraged a voracious pursuit of pleasure and gluttonous consumerism which swung as far into the extremes of prosperous living as the Depression swung into impoverished fear. Kevin Starr summarizes it as “a time of growth and abundance, and this, in turn, engendered a persistent note of optimistic boosterism in public discourse” (*Golden Dreams* x). The California Dream, always evolving to suit the public’s fancy, was back in business.

Unfortunately, it was the booming war-time industries and not an altered social philosophy that provided a hand up to many of the Okie families who had migrated west in the 1930s, and provided new fodder for the profiteers to boast of the thriving and promising landscape of California. The war coincidentally drowned out the re-examination of social philosophies seeking equality and justice that were prompted in Steinbeck’s revolutionary work. Instead of following the momentum catalyzed in the New Deal era and Steinbeck’s work, the state quickly traded one victimized people group for another-- in the form of Mexican farm laborers—and a new age of war-time nationalist propaganda ensued, reinvigorating the tenets of the myth at the very moment it came closest to falling. World war was perhaps the worst thing that could have happened to California spiritually, socially, and environmentally, despite its immense economic effects.

In speaking of the complex relationship between myths and their cultural interpretation, Henry Nash Smith says that “they cannot motivate and direct action unless they are drastic simplifications, yet if the impulse toward clarity of form is not controlled by some process of verification, symbols and myths can become dangerous by inciting behavior grossly inappropriate to the given historical situation” (ix-x). The continued

application of a "drastically simplified" archaic myth by each generation has indeed proven dangerous to the well-being of the land and its people. Even with contemporary culture's continued attempts to anachronistically apply it to the modern world, it is John Muir and John Steinbeck that engage the American imagination in the "process of verification." They expose the California Dream as a psychological relic, intending to retire it and replace it with one grounded in egalitarian peace and interdependent balance. Starting with Muir and his contemporaries and building ever stronger through each generational wave of cultural enlightenment, the fight to wake the nation from this terrible dream has advanced.

Chapter Three: Many Californias: Muir's Sermon on Diversity and Justice in California Landscapes

The "California Dream," or the articulation of America's mythology of promise as applied to the continent's western-most edge: *"California is the endlessly bountiful and expansive place to start over and find prosperity—hard work on its beautiful and consecrated land will always result in fulfillment."*

"California is elusive. That's true largely because so many who look for it think they already know where and what it is. Outsiders are often more certain of their versions than are natives because outsiders are seldom burdened by facts or knowledge of the state's actual diversity. They don't know the many Californias."

--Gerald Haslam

This quote, taken from Gerald Haslam's *Many Californias*, insightfully cuts to the core of this chapter. He notes that the native Californian is unable to define the state in simple terms in light of its social and ecological diversity encountered every day, while outsiders are that much further from understanding California for exactly the opposite reason—it is encapsulated in just a few fantastic thoughts or images: the warm sandy coastline of the Pacific dotted with beautiful people, Hollywood Boulevard with cafes patroned by movie stars, and verdant rolling hills dotted with happy talking cows, perhaps. It is a rare exception when vast deserts, irrigated orchards, high mountain passes, or the intersection of these regions come to mind for the outsider when thinking

of California. But for those that live there, the "burden" of its diversity is a daily reality held with much less mythologized grandeur. Since landscape is such a fundamental shaper of the culture of the people who live on it, California's culture is far from homogenous with its many and diverse points of intersection.

The inherent dangers in maintaining an "unburdened" mythology of California are developed here. This chapter challenges the environmental implications of the California Dream, emphasizing the specific concepts of California being an "endlessly bountiful and expansive place" set aside as a "beautiful and consecrated land." The Dream has *land* and *social* aspects to it which are innately connected. While I emphasize the land ethic aspects with Muir and focus on the social ethic with Steinbeck, it is made apparent throughout the research that both aspects are always engaged in the reconciling tension of correcting the myth.

The sources of this myth have been established in chapter two, but it is worth mentioning some of the major origins here for the sake of continuity. The boosterism and propaganda of the early years of the West seem to have never left. It is a distinct trait of California in particular to advertise itself as a paradise under the setting sun, and pander the same handful of images in every possible medium of communication. Besides the images of golden cities and idyllic vineyards originating even before the writings of Spanish conquest and the missions which followed, the California of American statehood has always created more than its share of associations to paradise. The shining discovery in 1848 and the chaotic land rush that followed, the harvest of Sierran natural treasures soon thereafter, and the Southern California real estate development during the first two decades of the 20th century are but a few of the most significant episodes of strategically

marketed boosterism. Whether it was in the name of national pride or personal gain, the many larger-than-life images and descriptions that came out of the state established an identity of unmatched bounty and beauty that remains to this day. The state's two entities of greatest social influence on the nation, industrial-scale farming and Hollywood, continue to sell an idealized existence to the masses. Today, these two entities, along with the state itself that profits greatly from tourism, continue to be the most significant obstacles to an accurate representation of the environmental and social diversity of the state.

John Muir's voice strives to reveal the diversity of California and the significant environmental dangers inherent in pushing the balance of co-existing regions to their limits. Through his 1911 book *My First Summer in the Sierra*, he depicts an environmental ethic which respects the many intrinsic qualities found in various regions of the land. Meanwhile, society's abusive attitudes and appropriation of the land fail to differentiate the iconic harvests of food and beauty from the Central Valley and neighboring Sierras. Man-land reconciliation is an issue of knowing the land intimately. If one has an intimate relationship with the land, these writers assert, s/he will not perpetuate patterns of injustice. Thus Muir takes the reader with him on his pensive journeys as a shepherd, allowing them to see the land as benevolently as he sees it. He fights against unregulated resource acquisition and tourism, pushing for the preservation of the Sierra's natural wonders. Be it trees or valleys, he insists that the greatest resource from nature is its intrinsic spiritual value. The world sees the sweeping granite vistas of the Yosemite Valley flanked by Half Dome and El Capitan, but they are not aware of the struggle for and loss of its sister valley Hetch Hetchy. Likewise, the world sees fresh

produce in today's supermarkets labeled and boxed in images of the Golden State, but they do not know about the pesticide-induced illnesses assailing the workers who pick it. This half-informed perspective, this thin glossy cover over a place as much dystopic as Edenic, and its dangerous location in the American consciousness is what Muir strives to make whole.

The history of protesting responses to the California Dream does not pre-date 1893 due mostly to the fact the these voices of the Progressive Era were catalysts of change rather than simply rhetorical and artistic exercises received as such by America. David Wyatt confirms these intentions of change in Muir's writing, noting that "his is a language aimed at something beyond the interrogation of its own procedures; it is aimed at changing the world. It magnificently passes this political test. Emerson and his heirs build their own worlds at the price of powerlessness in any immediate historical arena; Muir sacrifices an answerable style in order to locate a place in the popular mind. Muir finds salvation in surrender to landscape, and his attempts to know it from within can preclude a more visionary possession" (45). Also, Muir and Steinbeck are simply two representative perspectives and styles from two of the most significant eras of protest over the last century. American writing is protesting by nature, born out of the spirit of revolutionaries who re-wrote the means of civilization onto a "new" continent.

There were certainly a number of 19th century voices such as James Fennimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman, who intimated questions or offered at least embryonic theories concerning the nation's archetypes and what they revealed about the national identity. But it wasn't until the generation of Frederick Jackson Turner, John Muir, Frank Norris, and Mary Austin at the turn of the

20th century that it was explicitly communicated by a voice of the people which significantly impacted the collective culture. William Everson explains it in these words: "For as we earlier saw, in the heart of the American, despite his creedal adhesions, the two terms, God and Nature, were covertly interchangeable. Nature *is* divine, the American soul was saying. And it was Muir who, more than anyone else, confirmed the intuition, spelled out the potentiality, brought it to concrete specification. Perhaps, given the pragmatic American temper, it could only have been done by a naturalist, the scientist rather than the poet or novelist. True, it was Emerson and Thoreau who put the vision in Muir's head, but until the scientist spoke, the middle American simply nodded and remained content in his materialistic dream" (49-50). Everson also implies here that the reader of the Progressive era tended toward the expert, scientific, or rational, another reason Muir stands as the first bearer of overt protest. Muir's embodiment of a balance between inspirational and scientific also describes the essence of the Progressive era in which he flourished. Kevin Starr's definition of the era could as easily be a description of Muir, characterizing it as "intense to the point of evangelism, by turns visionary and pragmatic, [it] was energized by forces bubbling up from deep within the collective Protestant bourgeois psyche" (*Inventing* 199).

The early 20th century American reader was a collective of these overlapping philosophies. They didn't trade one perspective for the other according to shifts in contemporary thought, but were rather a product of many rapid and overlapping layers of aesthetic and cultural exposure. Muir sought to use his literary voice to invoke a preservationist ethic in the nation as it attempted to reshape an environmental ethic. He accomplished this with the nearly simultaneous publications of *My First Summer in the*

Sierra and *The Yosemite* in 1911-12, taking aim at the public's latent Romantic leanings, expectations of realism, and ever-growing respect for expert voices of science. These two texts fully used all of these avenues in speaking to the American imagination. One was overt (*The Yosemite*) and the other covert (*My First Summer in the Sierras*) in its message of change and rhetorically persuasive style. Thus while *The Yosemite* analytically speaks for itself as the overt expression of change, this examination looks closely at the intentions, techniques, and effects of *My First Summer in the Sierra*, a more nuanced yet equally powerful protest against the proliferating effects of the California Dream.

Muir seemed the perfect man for attempting such a convergent literary work. He was a converted transcendentalist from a deeply rooted Christian tradition, who happened to be trained as a natural scientist. In other words, his literary style, or voice, was created by the same multiple and diverse philosophical proclivities of his readership, allowing him access to every reader's set of principles from which they lived. The social and literary mandate of the day was Progressivism, an era of reform throughout the spectrum of America's societal constructs. This backlash of the Gilded Age is best defined by the policies and structures resulting from the period roughly located between 1890-1915. Among them, the United States had "created a central banking mechanism (the Federal Reserve system), adopted an income tax, established national regulatory agencies (the Federal Trade Commission), and amended the Constitution to have senators elected by the people rather than by state legislatures" (Gould ix). Quoting a progressive from another of his works, Louis Gould summarizes the spirit of the era: "Americans now believed that governments were created 'for the protection of the weak against the encroachments of the strong' and served as 'the familiar forum of the contest between the

strong and the weak, the powerful and the helpless, the many and the few, between the general and the special interests'" (ix). Thus, Muir had an attentive audience receptive to new ideas promoting justice for the land and its people. He had established himself as the preeminent sage in environmental reform.

To be clear, the Progressive Era was as much a result of increased egalitarian ideals as it was the cause; all epochs of history and the events which define them are a result of many diverse factors. Ultimately, the need for Muir's voice to help the nation reimagine another kind of relationship with the land fortunately came at a cultural moment of great receptivity, sparking a lineage of protest that has not stopped since. Everson describes Muir's marriage to the Sierras as what "precipitate[d] him into an encounter with the time, when the archetype that forged his soul broke him on the anvil of the consciousness of his people" (51). The subjective whims of coincidence once again projected themselves into the objective calculations of history and challenged its best of efforts at logical explanation.

I approach Muir's text with a three part analysis. I first establish his *intentions* in terms of his desired reception from the reader and effects on society in general. These intentions center on the preservation of natural spaces that possess unique beauty and resources, thus placing them at risk for exploitation. He also necessarily targets the general perceptions of nature, or landscape, pursuing a land ethic centered more on interdependence rather than on utilitarianism. Once I establish and defend these intentions, I analyze the various *techniques* used by Muir in creating literature that promotes environmental justice and persuades the reader to be a part of the change. For Muir, writing in non-fiction is a device in and of itself, promoting rapport and trust with

his readers while revealing new perspectives toward the land that they experience firsthand. In terms of specific techniques, he implements religious associations, classical rhetorical strategies, expert opinion, plot structure, and photography to accomplish his desired effects. The analysis of these techniques brings focus to the text, proving my assertions.

The third section of analysis—the social *effects and reception* of the text—requires a bit of imagination. Interpreting and extrapolating the social effects of the text and its effect on the individual's perception of California is a very difficult task. Book reviews and sales only suggest so much about the book's reception, or for that matter its ability to accomplish its creator's desired effects. I couple this limited information with other social and legal events of the era, and identify correlations between the immediate effects of the text and residual patterns in present-day culture. Obviously, John Muir's influence stands the test of time, and many of the ways in which we interact with and think of nature have a direct lineage to his work. We now begin in the past, climbing up the mountain with Muir before descending to the hot Valley floor and the social injustices revealed by Steinbeck.

"God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand tempests and floods. But he cannot save them from fools."

–John Muir

Citing Roosevelt's well known quote about being "west of the west" while in California, Gerald Haslam notes, "like many outsiders, Roosevelt failed to recognize that

there were—and are—many Californias and that those Californias are constantly changing. At the very time he saw a version of the state that wasn't western, vaqueros and cowboys herded cattle over much of the state's open territory; shepherds trailed their flocks toward fresh grass; America's last 'wild Indian,' Ishi, struggled to survive in hills and canyons east of the Sacramento Valley; and miners still haunted this state's deserts and foothills" (*Many* 1-2). John Muir did much to change this narrow perception of the west for Roosevelt and for America at large as he recorded his excursions through valleys and over mountain tops, countering the myth that California is bountiful, coastal, and beautifully temperate everywhere and has a homogenous perfection and geographic sameness to it. Perhaps more than any other message next to the call for preservation, Muir revealed California's diversity. This diversity of climate and landscape in and of itself is a rare national treasure worthy of being preserved.

As a naturalist and environmentalist, Muir found himself in a unique place of power in the early part of the twentieth century. Not only did he have an intimate and holistic knowledge of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the urgent dangers they faced, but he also had an established audience with America as a well known and respected nature writer. As an advocate of preservationist thought, Muir realized that with the knowledge of what was happening to America's wild places— being pillaged for its resources and overrun by unregulated commercialization—comes a responsibility to speak out against it. In speaking of Muir's writing, Donald Worster notes: "in a nation of over 200 million people, with a far denser web of artifice obscuring the natural order, [a] private quest had become difficult. Environmentalism was, therefore, not a private relationship, not a kind of retreat, but a decidedly public engagement" (351).

His Yosemite journal from 1869 represented the bygone days of private exploration and spiritual and intellectual gratitude drawn from nature, but the realities of 1911 demanded that it be transformed into a "public engagement" of protest. Thomas Vale describes this social metamorphosis rooted in a love for the land, explaining that "his attachment to this place was so profound, in fact, that it anchored him emotionally as well as physically, and it eventually led him away from the life of an inward-searching naturalist to that of an outward-looking activist" (6). As a citizen, Muir implemented all of his civil rights in the political arenas of his state and nation in an effort to protect national treasures such as Yosemite Valley. As an artist, he implemented all of his genius to persuade the reading public to do the same. Yet where political persuasion often calls for overt rhetoric, changing the American public's perception of nature and their relationship to it requires a greater aesthetic sensitivity. By appealing to the ideas of beauty and morality as modeled in wild nature, Muir approached the needed philosophical transformation of America's perception of nature through the readers' intellect, as well as their artistic and literary tradition of viewing nature through a Romantic lens. His philosophical paradigm and religious insights also prompted him to integrate spiritual metaphors in an effort to locate nature in a more benevolent-- rather than adversarial-- perspective. Working with content and a style that aligned with the readers' sensibilities, Muir used literature to legislate change in the hearts and minds of the American people, and therefore in the laws of the land. Noted as "a great figure of the past who devoted himself to the interpretation of the West" (Leighly 309), Muir's influence on the contemporary American perception of nature is immeasurable.

Upon a first reading, without an historical or political context, his *My First Summer in the Sierra* appears a docile, meditative prayer book for the mountain lover. Frankly, I believe Muir intended that when it was being written in 1869. Yet, I suggest that Muir edited and published this personal journal in a particular time (1911) and style so as to alter the way in which the law protected and the American public viewed natural spaces. In other words, it was a political tract arguing for the preservation of the doomed Hetch Hetchy Valley, an environmental manifesto declaring where America should locate nature in their value system, a literature of protest against the degradation of nature's sacred places.

Unfortunately, the original journal is among the few works of Muir's not included in his expansive archive held at University of the Pacific, eliminating the possibility of comparative stylistic analysis between the original and published texts to consider any later manipulations. However, in a series of letters between Muir and Ferris Greenslet, the representative of Houghton Mifflin who corresponded with him regarding matters of publication and payment, there is a clear intention to link art with activism. After gratefully receiving a pamphlet for publication on the Hetch Hetchy issue, Greenslet calls for the manuscript of the 1869 journal, noting that "it would be a particularly timely season for such a book" (John Muir Correspondence, Jan. 5, 1910). Muir, in like manner, confirms he is working on this project and plans to send it off soon, speaking specifically of the Hetch Hetchy battle in the next sentence without so much as a transition phrase: "We are having a hard fight on the Hetch Hetchy Dam scheme.I wish you would come to our help by writing to the President and Secretary Ballinger and the Chairman of the

Public Lands Committees if you have not already done so. We must keep protests flying about them thick as storm snow flakes" (Feb. 11, 1910).

Ultimately, this text of masterful persuasion and political maneuvering used the public's sentiments to accomplish three essential goals, and each of these intentions has a correlating technique which Muir used to see that intention effectively promoted in the text. His primary intention was to relocate nature in the American consciousness from an adversarial entity to one of advocacy and interdependence, placing it *with* humanity as a divine product of God. The use of spiritual metaphors grounded in the natural environment, the personification of non-human nature, and a plot structure which alludes to the Christian faith journey are his primary means. This narrative association acts as a moral appeal to the readers, directing them to see the interconnection between humanity and nature, and the innate godliness in the natural world which therefore requires respect.

The second significant intention is a corollary of the first. Muir argues for the innate value in beauty as a spiritually and philosophically transforming agent. Therefore, his intention was to reveal the immeasurable beauty of the Sierras to establish the necessity for the preservation and protection of this purifying national resource. The primary technique in forwarding this concept is imagery; not only was Muir's detail and diction as elevated as the peaks he spoke of, but his detailed illustrations and accompanying photographs also sought to capture the unique beauty of this place which was ever so worthy of preserving.

The third intention in publishing this text was to recruit advocates for preservation from various camps, as well as deepen his rapport with the public as the benevolent ambassador of nature. Like other writers of protest before and after, Muir spoke to the

common citizen first, letting others listen in and likewise be moved in support of his cause for environmental justice. Displaying his vast personal experience, altruistic intentions, and expertise as a naturalist gained him a partnership and trust with his readers.

The effects and reception of this work often blend together with the rest of his life's work as an advocate for the preservation of natural spaces. The specific reception of the book as a literary text was very positive, as seen by a number of book reviews and successful sales. His effect on society in terms of how they viewed nature, valued beautiful landscapes, and advocated for the land is nearly immeasurable. He is unanimously acknowledged as the single most influential voice of preservation, shaping the way the modern world thinks of and interacts with nature.

The lineage of influences in Muir's life contextualizes his thinking in the larger scope of environmental history. The literary exposure of his childhood was almost completely limited to the bible, of which his father would insist he memorize lengthy passages. As he found independence from the extremely conservative control of his father's house, he read from the great literary voices of the past, and voraciously consumed the contemporary transcendentalist philosophers and writers such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. The exposure to, and alignment with, these writers further explains his pantheist perspective of nature and the inclusive universality of his philosophy. It is not unfair to assert that the world would not have a Muir if it did not have an Emerson and Thoreau.

A brief biographical sketch may at least reveal various associations and general sources of inspiration for this uniquely American figure[7]. Born in Scotland in 1838, he explored the bogs and plains of his coastal home before moving with his family to Wisconsin at the age of 11. Being the year of the great California gold rush, the lure and legend of California undoubtedly swelled in his young and newly Americanized mind. While working as an unpaid farm laborer for his father, he occupied his free time with memorizing the New Testament and developing inventions of varying practical application. At the age of twenty-three he began his two and a half years of geological and botanical study at the University of Wisconsin under Dr. Ezra Carr, husband of his mentor and benefactor Jeanne Carr. At the age of twenty-eight he published his first work, *Calypso Borealis*, in the *Boston Recorder*, and a year later set off on his first of many long excursions. He walked from Indiana to Florida, and extended this trip to Cuba. On this now famous thousand-mile walk from Louisville to the Gulf of Mexico, John Muir was more than spartan in his provisions. Perhaps too comfortable a trip would have distracted him from an intimate contact with the nature that constantly surrounded him. He was, after all, on a spiritual journey that would later place him at the helm of the great environmental movement of the twentieth century. However, he found it necessary to pack certain words of inspiration for this trek, pointing to the truth that all great shapers of history are to some degree or another shaped themselves by the great minds that preceded them. Gretel Ehrlich writes of his trip, “traveling light as usual, he wore a gray

[7] This information, unless otherwise referenced, was found on the “John Muir Exhibit” website created and maintained by the Sierra Club.

suit and, besides the plant press, carried Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a volume of poems by Robert Burns, and the New Testament" (62).

It was at this point that Muir travelled to California for the first time, soon to write of his Sierran adventures in *The Mountains of California* (1894) and *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911). Though his first Sierran trek occurred in 1869, it is still important to consider the philosophical, political, and cultural influences that came after his initial journaling since *My First Summer in the Sierra* was not actually published for another forty-two years. These in-between years were a formative time in which Muir developed a passion and knowledge of the land that he so fervently fought to defend, thus influencing his timing and, no doubt, editing of his first and most intoxicating encounter with the Sierra Nevada Range. Had he not met renowned geologist Joseph LeConte in 1870, his philosophical muse Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1871, academic contemporary Asa Gray in 1872, and visited Hetch Hetchy Valley in 1871, there may not have been the traveling lectures of 1876 lobbying for the preservation of more natural spaces or the thirty-eight years of advocacy that followed. By the time he chose to publish *My First Summer in the Sierra*, Muir had founded the Sierra Club (1892), camped with two presidents, and received honorary doctorates from prestigious institutions such as Yale, Berkeley, and Harvard. Clearly, he had an agenda beyond offering a bucolic tale of his politically naïve youth.

If today's environmental ethic is to be sluiced for signs of Muir's legacy, his philosophies must first be specifically identified in order to be recognized. This is no simple task, since his perspectives toward the organic world are sprinkled throughout his immense body of writing, rather than collected as a set of tenets in a single place. In

assessing the greatest philosophical influences on his life, and therefore on his body of work which shapes the contemporary American land ethic, the most distinct and consistent are transcendentalism, Christianity, and the practical concern for the land that comes from decades of farming. However, Muir was a product of an era in flux between spirituality and science. While Emerson, Thoreau, Jesus Christ, and St. Francis were his spiritual and philosophical muses, he was also greatly influenced by science. The thinking of Darwin, Mendel, Humboldt, and Ben Franklin certainly took part in shaping his world view.

There are five basic concepts that generally encompass his perspectives, each having roots in the past and progeny in the present. The first of these concepts is that which attempts "to counter an implicit corollary of [the belief that] the chief end of nature is to serve man" (Payne 91). No longer is the human being the sun around which all other entities revolve. He sought to dissolve the hierarchical chain of being that dominated as a social norm. Furthering this concept, Robert Gottlieb labels Muir as "an advocate of the notion that wilderness maintained a separate value as a 'fountain of life,' independent of its utility as a resource" (57). In Muir's mind, the fact that nature serves humanity in a spiritual and utilitarian sense is secondary to the fact that nature is, in and of itself, independent from the influences of man. Though man without nature would not survive, nature without man would flourish. He was not alone in this breaking away from hierarchical structures of domination; the transcendentalists of his day were in agreement with such a perspective.

According to Payne, "Muir's break with the anthropocentric view of man's place in nature is even more clearly stated than Thoreau's" (85). This position closely equates

to Muir's second ecological concept-- he believed in preservation while Pinchot and Roosevelt took the politically supported angle of resource use and management for commercial exploitation, the difference between reverence and utilitarianism. In other words, these natural monuments of God's creativity should be available for the world to experience as they are, and should not be manipulated to serve other purposes requiring the alteration of the natural ecosystem. Ironically, Muir worked in a saw mill during his younger years, so he was not against the use of timber for fulfilling the needs of civilization. His fear was that a perspective of utilitarianism would become legislated and cemented as the only way in which America addressed the wild.

The third concept that shaped Muir's environmental ethic dealt with the identity of nature and how it possessed and reflected the sacred. Not only was nature an equal to humanity in Muir's pantheist philosophy, but it also possessed a spiritually "elevating" potential not regarded by cultural custom. Peter Hay cites John Rodman regarding Muir's ecological philosophy as one that thought "certain natural areas were sacred places where human beings could encounter the holy" (31). The following excerpt, taken from Muir's last major book *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth*, perhaps communicates these sentiments best. "They tell us that plants are perishable, soulless creatures, that only man is immortal, etc.; but this, I think, is something we know very nearly nothing about. Anyhow, this palm was indescribably impressive and told me grander things than I ever got from human priest" (319). Peter Hay uses bits of Muir's own musings to flesh this idea out even more, addressing wilderness as "full of God's thoughts, speaking to people spiritually through their intuitive capacity to apprehend the very soul of the universe. Wild country has 'a mystical ability to inspire and refresh', and there is in wilderness 'an

ancient mother-love' that is central to the bodily, intellectual, and, above all, spiritual health of the individual—as against civilization, which has distorted our sense of 'relationship to other living things' (14). This dichotomy between nature and culture, especially in an age of exponential industrial and national growth, make clear his reasoning for his fourth fundamental principle of the environment.

Despite his inventive tinkering, Muir was an anti-modernist, perhaps as much as anything influenced by his humble agricultural roots in Scotland and Wisconsin. He associated the wilderness as the polar opposite of the industrialized city where the spirit is distracted by the bustling pace. To Muir, wildness was a necessity for each human being, its simplicity and beauty able to transform the spirit far better than any modern advancement. This most basic of human rights is what he so passionately fought for; going to the mountains for John Muir was always going home.

The final general principle of Muir's environmental ethic was "the unity of all living things" (Payne 87). "Muir eloquently and passionately insisted that the natural world be preserved for its own sake as well as for humanity's. Everything in the universe, he maintained, is 'hitched' to everything else, and humans tampering with any one part were interfering with the great cosmic plan" (Shabecoff 3). Shabecoff rightly summarizes that "the environmental movement is guided by [this] dictum" (51). Muir was certainly influenced in this mode of thinking by the great American poets and philosophers of his day, especially those calling themselves transcendentalists such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. This life of abundant adventure and revolutionary influence perpetually tied to the natural world shaped John Muir into the voice of protest he will forever be, and offers the scholar great insight into the intentions and techniques of his literary craft.

Like the minds of every other traveler to the Golden State, Muir's conception of the American landscape was powerfully altered by his visit to California and the necessity to reconcile a physical limit with the boundless American ideal. Perhaps his experience would have been different if the western-most land of the continent lacked the extreme contours it possesses. As it is, he encountered a flowering valley of Edenic proportions flanked by a snow-capped mountain range that overwhelmed the imagination. If ever a landscape acted as a catalyst prompting a desire for preservation from the ills of industrial and cultural expansion, the dramatic intersection of these two unique regions did so in Muir as he encountered them for the first time. Hicks labels Muir's 1894 book *The Mountains of California* as the medium through which Muir navigated his thoughts and discoveries, calling it one of the "first voices in the conflicted modern discourse on the relationship between the human and the wild" (202). In his opening and closing chapters, titled "The Sierra Nevada" and "The Bee-Pastures" respectively, Muir paints a picture of the Central Valley on his way into and out of the mountains. His observations are based on his experiences during the seasons immediately preceding his writing of *My First Summer in the Sierra*, the winter and spring of 1868-1869. These excerpts highlight what the Great Central Valley was like before widespread industrial farming, and considers what it is and will become at the hands of "civilized" man. It acts as an introductory and supplementary perspective to *My First Summer in the Sierra*, adding a multi-regional dimension to his consideration of the man/nature relationship. It also highlights the diversity of the state from region to region and season to season, challenging the perceptions of "outsiders" who have only traveled to California

in their imaginations or by way of the perpetuated myths of its homogenous serenity and landscape.

The following opening lines capture the unified yet diverse nature of California. They also detail the striking beauty of the sublime scene, making numerous Biblical allusions to the New Israel of the Judeo-Christian heaven as it is described as an "adamant[ine]" "celestial city" "wholly composed of [light]." All of Muir's persuasive intentions are addressed in these few swaths of the pen:

> Making your way through the mazes of the Coast Range to the summit of any of the inner peaks or passes opposite San Francisco, in the clear springtime, the grandest and most telling of all California landscapes is outspread before you. At your feet lies the great Central Valley glowing golden in the sunshine, extending north and south farther than the eye can reach, one smooth, flowery, lake-like bed of fertile soil. Along its eastern margin rises the mighty Sierra, miles in height, reposing like a smooth, cumulous cloud in the sunny sky, and so gloriously colored, and so luminous, it seems to be not clothed with light, but wholly composed of it, like the wall of some celestial city. Along the top, and extending a good way down, you see a pale, pearl-gray belt of snow; and below it a belt of blue and dark purple, marking the extension of the forests; and along the base of the range a broad belt of rose-purple and yellow, where lie the miner's gold-fields and the foot-hill gardens. All these colored belts blending smoothly

> make a wall of light ineffably fine, and as beautiful as a rainbow, yet firm as adamant. (*Mountains* ch.1, par. 2)

In his closing chapter, "Bee Pastures," Muir is clear in his description of the Central Valley—it is not a pristine land of milk and honey. In fact, this very allusion to the Biblical Promised Land of Canaan to Moses and the Israelites is flipped on its head as Muir identifies the environmental devastation brought on by the pilgrims from the East. Both in 1894 (when this was published) and today, this description of a California never to be seen again is made painful in its beauty; Muir shows us what was, and follows it with what has taken its place, an overt statement of protest against a land ethic that disrespects beauty and disregards the value of diversity. He reflects on the treatment and status of the Valley upon descending the mountain:

> When California was wild, it was one sweet bee-garden throughout its entire length, north and south, and all the way across from the snowy Sierra to the ocean. […] But of late years plows and sheep have made sad havoc in these glorious pastures, destroying tens of thousands of the flowery acres like a fire, and banishing many species of the best honey-plants to rocky cliffs and fence-corners, while, on the other hand, cultivation thus far has given no adequate compensation, at least in kind. (ch.16, pars. 1-2)

He deepens the painful plow lines that mar this garden by showing the reader what it looked like before ranches and farms overtook the land en mass:

> The Great Central Plain of California, during the months of March, April, and May, was one smooth, continuous bed of honey-bloom, so marvelously rich that, in walking from one end of it to the other, a distance of more than 400 miles, your foot would press about a hundred flowers at every step. Mints, gilias, nemophilas, castilleias, and innumerable compositæ were so crowded together that, had ninety-nine per cent. of them been taken away, the plain would still have seemed to any but Californians extravagantly flowery. The radiant, honey-ful corollas, touching and overlapping, and rising above one another, glowed in the living light like a sunset sky--one sheet of purple and gold, with the bright Sacramento pouring through the midst of it from the north, the San Joaquin from the south, and their many tributaries sweeping in at right angles from the mountains, dividing the plain into sections fringed with trees. (ch.16, par. 4)

The pristine beauty of the past and the destructive patterns of the present were both effective in revealing to America not only the impending doom of the idyllic California landscape but the myopic and reckless manner in which the myth related to natural spaces. Appropriately, Muir offers his prophetic images of what such a destructive land ethic will do to California's beauty and diversity. As a final effort at persuading the readership to consider their role in California's transformation from wild and beautiful to "civilized" and "prosperous," he mourns the extinction of species at the hands of ignorance. While precisely correct regarding the redistribution of the rivers from

the sea to the fields, he was wrong in assuming that it would likewise harvest general prosperity. Later articulated by Steinbeck, the manipulation of the land for the sake of industrial-sized profits only creates factories in the fields, by which slaves are made. As a farmer by trade, Muir hopes for the best for the land and the people of the Valley as it develops, but acknowledges that one dream is always sacrificed for another. The land may bring great harvests, but it will be forever more barren of its first fruits. He parts with his audience with these prophetic images of the Central Valley's future: "The time will undoubtedly come when the entire area of this noble valley will be tilled like a garden, when the fertilizing waters of the mountains, now flowing to the sea, will be distributed to every acre, giving rise to prosperous towns, wealth, arts, etc. Then, I suppose, there will be few left, even among botanists, to deplore the vanished primeval flora" (ch.16, par. 23).

Muir's Intentions

Throughout his writings, Muir made numerous statements of his persuasive intent to his readers, openly pleading for their open-minded reception of nature's gifts which would spur a greater awareness of, and concern for, the threats made upon the land. In his preface to *Our National Parks*, published in 1901, he concedes, "In this book, made up of sketches first published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, I have done the best I could to show forth the beauty, grandeur, and all-embracing usefulness of our wild mountain forest reservations and parks, with a view to inciting the people to come and enjoy them, and get them into their hearts, that so at length their preservation and right use might be made sure." To be sure, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, whether received by every reader as a

political and philosophical manifesto or not, was just that. On the surface it may not appear to have such an agenda, but the beautifully depicted vistas revealing what is at stake in the conflict between nature preservation and utilitarian commerce and law show otherwise. Rhetorical techniques throughout the narrative grant the text political agency, seeking to change perceptions and laws through moral obligation and philosophical argumentation. According to Richard Lillard, "the traditional nature book is a non-fiction work that is lyrical, informational, and apolitical" (537). On the surface, *My First Summer in the Sierra* is all of these, yet the timing of its publication coupled with the reception of its message made it a device of political influence. Muir understood that ethics shaped politics, and in order to accomplish a political culture that pursued a preservationist ethic, he had to move the value assigned to nature in the minds of the masses. This insight and effective implementation of such intentions make Muir the father of American environmentalism, a man unwilling to be confined physically or philosophically to the deadening anthropocentrism of "civilization."

In order to make any difference at all in the minds of the reader, Muir had to place an "emphasis on wilderness as a palpable reality" (Powici 75). He was fighting against centuries-old representations of the wilderness as the uncivilized land "out there" on the perimeter of society, a place where evil lurks yet opportunity awaits. The wilderness has always been an alluring and horrifying entity of the American imagination, and to alter the nature of wild spaces from a mysterious psychological entity into a tangible and inviting resource of beauty was no small task for Muir in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet this was exactly the transition that America needed to make, having stretched itself to the edge of the continent and crossed it with a railroad. Terry

Gifford describes Muir's efforts the following way: "Muir was fighting for an end to the frontier mentality of the conquest of nature and rediscovering an essential inner frontier experience for urban visitors to wilderness preserves" (Powici 76). In many ways this corresponds to the European location of natural spaces which identified the innate spiritual and aesthetic values in visiting and preserving such places.

There are no documents available to the scholar which explicitly state Muir's intentions in publishing *My First Summer in the Sierra*. I've gleaned comments from personal correspondence and other writings, considered the work in light of the rest of his life's work, and examined the text's content, style, and its social and critical reception as the source of my assertions. As for his reasons for writing the journal in 1869, it is clear from the text itself that his intention was to study the flora, fauna, and geology of the Sierra Nevada Range as closely as possible, permitting him to document his findings as any scientist would. He likely planned on seeking publication of these findings. From the outset of his journey, I believe that he wrote with the intention of having a broad audience later read his thoughts. By 1871, the *New York Tribune* was publishing his articles about the Sierras for the general population, so he demonstrated an intent to write for an audience even beyond the bounds of his scientific field of study, sharing his philosophical thoughts and highland adventures with the average citizen. While it may have been for personal comfort or as a keepsake such as a diary may be, evidence points to a premeditated audience as he framed his narrative. In the entry dated July 20, he hints as much as he sketches the North Dome of Yosemite Valley, saying "I sharpen my pencils and work on as if others might possibly be benefited" (91). Even as a casual remark, this establishes his self-conscious efforts in the journal.

Still, the degree to which he intentionally structured the book according to literary protocols is certainly debatable. It can be argued that the text was originally written for self-gratification in the form of a diary and never intended to be “re-performed” by readers. However, there are a number of points that complicate this argument. First, the very nature of chronicling one’s predetermined events from one moment in time to another automatically implements a linear structuring, assisting the reader in processing text, and provokes an anticipation for the coming pages. Indeed, Muir wonders if his work will ever hold audience with someone other than him. Sketching from atop the North Dome on a perfect July afternoon, Muir reflects, “Whether these picture-sheets are to vanish like fallen leaves or go to friends like letters, matters not much; for little can they tell to those who have not themselves seen similar wildness, and like a language have learned it” (91).

Having established his intention of an audience, the next challenge is to ascertain what those intentions were in the summer of 1869. Again, the text itself, and the context of his life and times, give a number of clues. Some of the messages he undoubtedly desired to communicate were the sheer beauty of California’s Sierra Nevada Range, to celebrate America’s rich natural wonders, to identify a spiritual presence and value in the mountains, and to catalogue the diverse species of this elusive region. All of these intentions remained, even at the time of its publication thirty-eight years later. However, during that time he developed a greater understanding of the adversarial and thus dangerous location of such majestic natural places in the minds of America, and a greater call to preserve what he saw as a purifying conduit for the individual and the nation.

This conflict between preservation and appropriation of the environment culminated in the battle over Hetch Hetchy between the years 1906 and 1913, at which point Muir's efforts were defeated and the beautiful sister valley of the Yosemite was dammed for San Francisco's growing water needs. Using his good name and literary savvy as leverage for popular support, Muir published *My First Summer in the Sierra* in 1911, revealing the transforming beauty and holy craftsmanship that first overwhelmed him in 1869. All of this is to be lost, he argued, if these "stone temples" are to be filled with water. Therefore, his intentions in publishing the text in 1911 centered on (1) informing the public of Yosemite's inspirational potential and unique beauty, preserving and protecting nature and its transforming power; (2) altering the relationship with nature from adversarial to friendly, relocating nature in America's consciousness as sacred and interconnected, made by God just as humanity is; and (3) recruiting advocates from various camps (religious, scientific, nationalist, etc.) and maintaining rapport and trust as nature's ambassador.

His writings, activities, and philosophy throughout his lifetime further supported the validity of these intentions. It is important to note such patterns since they model the century of activism that followed his death in 1914. In 1873 he began writing about protecting Yosemite Valley, heightening the awareness of the threats and dangers to such a magnificent place, and began a specific lobbying campaign for its preservation in 1876. After years of hard work, including some influential articles in 1890 seeking to make Yosemite a national park, Yosemite was given such a title in that very year. 1892 brought Muir's establishing of the Sierra Club, which he led as its president until his death. A number of articles "in Harpers Weekly and Atlantic Monthly create[d] popular support

for protecting forests" in 1897, and in 1899 Mt. Rainier National Park was established after Muir advocated on its behalf in a number of writings. The year 1901 brought Theodore Roosevelt into office and a new partnership in the mission to save the wilderness. "Less than two months after his inauguration, Roosevelt delivered his first message to Congress directly on the question of resource development, a speech that would become the benchmark in the rise of conservationist politics" (Gottlieb 56). In 1903 Muir accepted an offer by Roosevelt to camp alone with him in Yosemite, where the two giants in history solidified a friendship and somewhat of a shared mission. Inspired by his relationship with Muir, Roosevelt was able to establish preservation strategies in the political realm in such a way that Muir had never achieved through literature. Three years later Petrified Forest was named a National Monument by Roosevelt, one year after Muir campaigned for its protection. The same year also saw Yosemite come under the control and protection of the federal government, ensuring that it would not be abused by loggers and miners despite its title as a national park. In 1908, Grand Canyon National Monument was established. Muir continued to use friendship with presidents as a tool to defend the wilderness, as seen by his personal leading of Taft through the Sierra Nevadas in 1909. Clearly, the publication of *My First Summer in the Sierra* was more than an old man's nostalgic recollection. It was politically informed, skilled in prose, and keen to the pulse of the American consciousness, Muir placed this lovely narrative in the hands of the nation as a radical and subversive form of protest and perceptual influence.

In establishing the validity of John Muir's primary intention in publishing *My First Summer in the Sierra*, I begin with a quote from the text that succinctly captures it.

His intention was to alter the relationship with nature from adversarial to friendly, relocating it in America's conscious as a sacred manifestation of God and thus interconnected to humanity. In short, he evangelized the gospel of nature in an effort at converting the public. In a private conversation with his fellow shepherd Billy in which he urged him to recognize the majesty of Yosemite Valley, Muir confesses that he "pressed Yosemite upon him like a missionary offering the gospel" (*My First Summer* 102). There is a clear and consistent effort throughout the text to assign the wonders of the Sierras as products of God. A man of deep spiritual convictions founded in Christianity and flavored in the philosophies of transcendentalism, Muir also knew that his national audience was by and large a Christian culture which would be able to relate to and be impacted by spiritual metaphors and Biblical allusions he scattered throughout the text. He sought to engage readers on a spiritual level, certain that this was the most incisive medium through which to reach them. He spoke their language, while attempting to help the public see the natural world with eyes freed from the scales of America's old cultural covenant of earthly dominion.

Muir's writings altered America's tradition of viewing nature as an adversary, reshaping the American mind in regard to its characterization of nature by the same means as Christians are shaped by the Bible. The specific biblical parallels throughout the text extend to the work as a whole and the author as the messenger, with John the "apostle" writing a homiletic epistle to a specified group of believers needing instruction. In considering this somewhat static mode of teaching, philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer makes an insightful clarification concerning the relationship between the reader, the writer, and the content of the text: "It is not really a relationship between persons,

between the reader and the author (who is perhaps quite unknown), but about sharing in what the text shares with us" (391). Muir's text acts as a created space of exchange in which the author and reader establish shared meaning. He hoped to communicate nature's benevolent essence, yet like the apostle Paul struggling to express the nature of God, Muir reveals the difficulty with which this is accomplished: "No words will ever describe the exquisite beauty and charm of this mountain park—Nature's landscape garden at once tenderly beautiful and sublime" (145). This difficulty in translating, or perhaps reconstructing, the reverent nature of a place is therefore remedied through biblical association, a lexicon both known and sacred to the reading public. Through a parallel construction of nature and God's willful creation, Muir successfully accomplishes his intent to "convert" the reader.

Muir counted on his readers to decipher these spiritual sentiments. John Leighly states, "Muir wrapped a covering of interpretation drawn from his emotional experiences in the presence of the phenomena observed, and these experiences were what he was most eager to report to his readers. It was not merely shallow sentiment that Muir invited his readers to share. He was convinced that the emotional rewards of association with nature increase with intellectual understanding, and his writings confirm that conviction" (312). I go further in suggesting that Muir was convinced of spiritual rewards through the sacred associations made with nature. This may be what Leighly refers to as "shallow sentiment," but Muir is sincere in his alignment between the natural and the sacred. He respected the intelligence of, and desire for knowledge in, his modern audience, yet he also coupled reason and science with spiritual values to shape a pattern of respect for nature. In a wonderfully creative text retracing the steps taken by Muir on that first

ramble through the Sierras, Thomas and Geraldine Vale consider the influential effects of reading such a text that models symbiosis with nature. "[He] committed himself that summer of 1869 to recording faithfully an insight worthy to be seen as the 'ulterior intellectual perception' sought by Emerson. Although he did not originally write the journal with the idea of sharing it with others, his highly personal perspective serves well as a guide for our individual engagements with nature, so that we, as he, might stand 'one step nearer to things' and 'see the flowing or metamorphosis' of nature" (114). While I disagree with their claim that he didn't originally intend on sharing his journal, I agree with their point that his language shaped the text into a more intimate way of seeing nature. Forever changing the way nature is viewed by humanity, Muir's poignant retelling of his transformation of love stands as a significant early example of wilderness literature as an instrument of broad environmental change.

Two textual examples that highlight this intention include a blessing from man and the curse of man. As Muir sat writing on the afternoon of June 13, he said of a nearby lizard, "Heaven bless you all and make your virtues known! for few of us know as yet that scales may cover fellow creatures as gentle and lovable as feathers, or hair, or cloth" (28-29). This blessing serves as a moral instruction to the reader. He speaks of man's insistent tendency to create hierarchies among the organic kingdoms and challenges this pattern as one of earthly ignorance. He later goes on to highlight humanity as the single most destructive entity in the organic world, chiding not only our anthropocentric perspectives but also our ravaging actions: "And so the beauty of lilies falls on angels and men, bears and squirrels, wolves and sheep, birds and bees, but as far as I have seen, man alone, and the animals he tames, destroy these gardens" (65). Ultimately, Muir reveals

the limits of California's bounty through the devastation wrought upon the fragile and balanced ecosystems of the Sierra Nevadas by two thousand sheep. He also celebrates the diversity and creativity of California's varying regions, yet warns against the dangers of America's tendency to perceive and treat all natural landscapes in the same manner. Like humanity, nature is sacred yet finite, and like humanity it was made diversely and beautifully in God's image. Muir's primary intention was making this understood by the reader.

Accomplishing this first intention greatly furthered accomplishing the second. He sought to inform the public of the inspirational potential and unique beauty found in specific California landmarks, encouraging the protection and preservation of them and their transforming power. In fact he wrote in his journal only two years later, "Heaven knows that John Baptist was not more eager to get all his fellow sinners into the Jordan than I to baptize all of mine in the beauty of God's mountains" (Payne 85). Muir combined beautiful places with beautiful truths in the name of preservation, yet he also knew that nature was not the only winner of a revised land ethic. The transforming power it has over the pilgrim ties beauty and truth together here, making the preservation of beautiful places not only the morally responsible thing to do, but the most personally and socially beneficial choice. Muir's own transformation from monk to evangelist is beautifully explained by Thomas Vale:

> During his first Sierran summer, Muir was Knower and Sayer but not Doer, an entity he would become only after coming down from the Yosemite Sierra in 1873. . . Muir sought truth and beauty for himself, for his own growth and development, which he later

> translated into words that help us to see with the clarity of the deep pools of the Merced and with the sharpness of quartz crystals of Cathedral granite, what we, as individuals, might gain from our own "studies" of the Yosemite landscape. (115)

His style of applying his philosophy of love to writings in the natural sciences was unique to his time. Yet even though few of the naturalists of his generation appealed to it, many of them recognized a moral obligation toward nature (Leighly 313). At times pantheistic, Muir's frequent divine metaphors of nature force the reader to consider the sanctity of creation, therefore leading them into a moral, preservationist response. Indeed, he aligns the reader's sympathetic and embracing attitude toward nature with the very interests of God:

> Everything is perfectly clean and pure and full of divine lessons. This quick, inevitable interest attaching to everything seems marvelous until the hand of God becomes visible; then it seems reasonable that what interests Him may well interest us. When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe. One fancies a heart like our own must be beating in every crystal and cell, and we feel like stopping to speak to the plants and animals as friendly fellow mountaineers. (110)

The following quote reveals the connection between these two intentions, where he appreciates the beauty and power of a fern glen: "Only spread a fern frond over a man's head and worldly cares are cast out, and freedom and beauty and peace come in. The waving of a pine tree on the top of a mountain—a magic wand in Nature's hand—every

devout mountaineer knows its power; but the marvelous beauty power of what the Scotch call a breckan in a still dell, what poet has sung this? It would seem impossible that anyone, however incrusted with care, could escape the Godful influence of these sacred fern forests" (27). He further convicts the morally grounded and culturally astute reader by portraying the ignorance of his fellow shepherd to the value of the place, encouraging them not to be as base and without spirit as a sheep: "Yet this very day I saw a shepherd pass through one of the finest of them without betraying more feeling than his sheep. 'What do you think of these grand ferns? I asked. 'Oh, they're only d—d big brakes,' he replied" (27).

Though Muir assigned value to every region, he clearly argued that some landscapes held greater aesthetic value than others and should therefore be protected from utilitarian or capitalist influences. The following quote contrasts the beauty in places like Yosemite Valley and others such as the Central Valley, where he accurately describes the climatic realities of the flatlands. In fact, he begins his text with these images, juxtaposing the harsh aridity of summer all the more with the verdure of the mountains: "In the great Central Valley of California there are only two seasons—spring and summer. The spring begins with the first rainstorm, which usually falls in November. In a few months the wonderful flowery vegetation is in full bloom, and by the end of May it is dead and dry and crisp, as if every plant had been roasted in an oven" (1). Muir quenches the reader's thirst for verdant beauty as he ascended higher into the Sierras day by day, the aesthetics of nature increasing with elevation above the comparably crusty valley floor where he started. This contrast, which depends on humanity's tendency to place greater value in entities broadly seen as beautiful, also works on the moral norms of the

culture. This ethic asserts that beautiful things hold innate value and should be preserved from alteration.[8]

Along this line of thinking, phenomenologist Hans-Georg Gadamer suggests that "when we find the beautiful forms of nature beautiful, this discovery points beyond itself to the thought 'that nature has produced that beauty'." Furthermore, "that nature is beautiful arouses interest only in someone who 'has already set his interest deep in the morally good'" (50). Muir knew the spiritual makeup of his readership, confident that when exposed to something "innately" beautiful, or divinely created, their response would be dictated by their engrained moral code. This theory explains Muir's persuasive intent to portray nature in God's image, and places the reading participant in nature as the enlightened pilgrim. Ironically, Muir accesses the same psychological location of the God-nature relationship which perpetuates the California Dream so that he could preserve the landscape rather than dominate it. William Everson explains Muir's intent to remind the reader of the sanctity of creation as such: "in mobilizing public opinion to save the Hetch Hetchy he appealed directly to the American's native sense of identity between Nature and God. […] it was the occasion upon which he tapped the archetype and caused it to surface in the nation's consciousness" (Everson 52). Renowned philosopher and writer George Santayana also noted America's receptivity to nature as a living metaphor

[8] This perspective aligns closely with Immanuel Kant's aesthetic theory, yet Gadamer disagreed with nature possessing innate beauty on account that it "does violence to the concept of taste [and its] variability" (58). In his essay "The Nature Book in Action," Richard Lillard takes a similar stand against nature as innately possessive of morality or beauty. He asserts that, "in the context of nature, nothing is in itself beautiful or ugly. It is functional. It is. No good nature book imposes on other species any human-being system for aesthetics, morality, economics, comfort, or danger" (538). Gadamer also defines the role of the aesthetic, for the sake of truth and beauty, in this case Muir's writing, as a limited one since no understanding is free of all prejudices (490).

of art and religion in the same year of *My First Summer in the Sierra*'s publishing, saying, "'I am struck in California by the deep and almost religious affection which people have for nature and by the sensitiveness they show for its influence . . . It is their spontaneous substitute for articulate art and articulate religion" (qtd. in Everson 7). The following passage reflects Muir's plea for nature's beauty to appeal to humanity's moral sensibilities:

> A few minutes ago every tree was excited, bowing to the roaring storm, waving, swirling, tossing their branches in glorious enthusiasm like worship. But though to the outer ear these trees are now silent, their songs never cease. Every hidden cell is throbbing with music and life, every fibre thrilling like harp strings, while incense is ever flowing from the balsam bells and leaves. No wonder the hills and groves were God's first temples, and the more they are cut down and hewn into cathedrals and churches, the farther off and dimmer seems the Lord himself. The same may be said of stone temples. Yonder, to the eastward of our camp grove, stands one of Nature's cathedrals, hewn from the living rock, almost conventional in form, about two thousand feet high, nobly adorned with spires and pinnacles, thrilling under floods of sunshine as if alive like a grove temple, and well named "Cathedral Peak." (101-102)

His assignment of divine beauty to these metaphorical cathedrals makes their destruction a sacrilegious event, attacking not only the reader's artistic sensibilities but also his spiritual convictions.

The philosophical insights of Hans-Georg Gadamer further enlighten this discussion of Muir's intent to appeal to the public's artistic perceptions of beauty and morality for the sake of an increased preservationist ethic. In *Truth and Method*, he examines the phenomenological reception of these concepts, establishing a grounding for the persuasive intellectual techniques used by Muir. In particular, he defines the parameters for the perception of art and nature as being beautiful and moral, as well as where art and its representation of nature intersect. Art is both an acting mediator of the natural entity it represents, and in need of mediation with the viewing participant by means of some intellectual interpretation. On the other hand, "beautiful nature is able to arouse an immediate interest, namely a moral one" (Gadamer 50). Here lies the crux for the nature writer and the preservationist. Art is a means of exposure, education, and added preservationist interests to the reader through an aesthetic medium that approaches but, according to Gadamer, never fully equates to experiencing nature proper.

If, as Gadamer suggests, interaction with nature brings forth a moral response in the participant through nature's free beauty, then the highest calling of the nature writer would be to create literature that likewise acts as a catalyst for a moral response to nature. This does not seem attainable in light of the theoretical separation between the interpretively mediated experience of reading and the innately moral response provoked through experiencing nature itself. Yet the intent of the nature writer to preserve natural space as a means of moral interest is never negated simply because it can never be fully

or perfectly accomplished. Clearly, both the natural and artistic sources of beauty are dependent upon one another, synergistically thriving or fading on parallel horizons. Muir recognized this need for both a thriving literature of natural places and a thriving of nature itself. In pursuing such ends on both of these fronts, the content and style of his literature and his preservationist lobbying reflect his awareness that beauty would arouse a "moral interest" in his audiences. Therefore the preservation of nature also preserved the morality of a nation, while literature also worked toward this end, albeit interpretively.

A brief demonstration of Muir's expression of the sublime beauty of nature follows, revealing the purifying qualities available through this unique and endangered place: "These blessed mountains are so compactly filled with God's beauty, no petty personal hope or experience has room to be. Drinking this champagne water is pure pleasure, so is breathing the living air, and every movement of limbs is pleasure, while the whole body seems to feel beauty when exposed to it as it feels the campfire or sunshine, entering not by the eyes alone, but equally through all one's flesh like radiant heat, making a passionate ecstatic pleasure-glow not explainable" (91). *My First Summer in the Sierra* was an intentional aggressive appeal to the cultural and artistic sentiments of the American public, revealing to them just what was to be lost if capitalist expansion and utilitarian perspectives of nature prevailed. America needed to forge a new psychological trajectory of its landscape, and John Muir used the power of Yosemite's beauty to do it.

Muir's third intention is the practical outcropping of the first two. He certainly wanted to change the psychological location of nature in the reader's mind and preserve the beauty it uniquely offered, but he also knew he needed a diverse band of allies in the

continual battle for such preservation. Thus, he intended the text to effectively recruit advocates from the religious, scientific, and political/nationalist fronts, and in so doing maintain his trusted rapport with the public as nature's ambassador. Each of these parties had much to fight for; the religious community saw its preservation as an act of responsible stewardship, the scientists acknowledged the vast body of study available in the fields of earth and life sciences, and national pride was at stake for those who desired the best for the legacy of a young nation. He spoke to a diverse audience and used a plethora of devices appropriate to the needs of each group. "From an early age he saw how effectively the use of logic and the proper authority—in his father's case, the Bible—could sway a seemingly intractable opponent. While Muir's personal reasons for wilderness preservation were spiritual, he was remarkably adept at couching his arguments in utilitarian terms when he knew that these would have a greater effect on his intended audience" (Payne 87). An excerpt taken from September 1 seems openly directed at the academic world, in which Muir had many friends and admirers. He creates a veritable paradise for the student of rock, animal, and plant, tempting them with insights to the unique mysteries of the Sierras. He exclaims, "How interesting everything is! Every rock, mountain, stream, plant, lake, lawn, forest, garden, bird, beast, insect seems to call and invite us to come and learn something of its history and relationship. But shall the poor ignorant scholar be allowed to try the lessons they offer? It seems too great and good to be true" (167). In truth, Muir needed these partners among the people and law makers as much as they needed such a persuasive and eloquently provocative leading voice. It was without a doubt his life's mission to preserve and protect the natural places of the world, but he desired it to likewise be the intention of every other citizen.

Muir's Techniques:

My First Summer in the Sierra was only one of many publications released by Muir between 1910 and 1914. The intent of *My First Summer in the Sierra* seems quite clear when these writings are looked at together. In isolation it appears to be the nostalgic if not academic ruminations of a bygone botanist, but next to his fiery attacks at his detractors it stands as perhaps the most divisive protest literature of his lifetime. The sharp juxtaposition of tone, style, and content between this journal and his overt political commentaries was an intentional strategy to highlight Yosemite's spiritual value as the greatest of its attributes. In *The Yosemite* (1912), Muir writes, "These temple destroyers, devotees of raging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar." Clearly, his presence on the page was as bold and invasive as his intentions. A closer look at his persuasive rhetorical techniques reveal him as both a literary master and social philosopher ahead of his time, establishing a methodology of environmental protest that was to be emulated for the next century.

John Muir lived most of his years as an environmental advocate in the midst of radical cultural transition. His adult years encompassed the Civil War and Reconstruction, the ages of science and progressivism, the shift from Romanticism to realism, the waning of Christianity as the central construct of cultural formation, and the impending Great War. This span of time hinged by the turn of the century is arguably the most revolutionary and dynamic era in American history. Never before or since have so many fundamental tenets of art, science, religion, economy, politics, and culture been challenged at the same time. This kinetic quality of America's culture made it particularly

difficult for artists to target a broad audience, being that the scale of understanding and belief had been broadened exponentially. Another way of looking at this task is to consider the cultural consciousness of the day as a moving target, changed almost daily by the developments in art, science, or politics.

This cultural reality makes Muir's use of various techniques that much more impressive, each one of them extending itself toward a sector of society so as to speak to America in its entirety. His intentions have been clearly stated, summed up as an attempt to alter people's perceptions and treatment of nature which were all the more reinforced by the California Dream. His techniques were therefore sourced in appropriate rhetorical modes intended to influence his diverse readership. The primary technique was rooted in the spiritual identity and lineage of the nation's majority which viewed the world through a Christian world view. His use of holy metaphors in nature established God as its creator and advocate, requiring a perspective of reverence and preservation.

The second significant technique addresses the cultural value of aesthetic beauty. Muir was speaking to an artistically discriminating audience in the early 20th century; as the inheritors of Romanticism and adopters of realism, the mature turn of the century American was fluent in the philosophical exercise of assigning moral and cultural values to art and beauty. Emerson's transcendentalist perspectives combined with the pragmatic tastes of a new century through the works of Carleton Watkins and Jacob Riis, respectively, to create a general belief that "seeing things as they really were" held innate potential for spiritual and cultural uplift. Therefore, he applied elevated imagery through diction, photography, and personal sketches for the sake of capturing the beauty of nature and invoking a desire to preserve and protect it.

Finally, Muir tapped into the intellectual orientation of the era, invoking the powerful and trusted influences of science and expertise most widely expressed through literary realism and naturalism. Modernity was birthed from the finite absolutes of scientific fact, and as stated, one of the Progressive Era's basic characteristics was to put faith in the opinions of experts. This particular cultural location served Muir perfectly as he used his taxonomic skills in describing the flora, fauna, and geology, and his widely acknowledged expertise in rhetorical appeals advocating a new understanding of California's diverse, yet limited, resources.

These three cultural trajectories are not only isolated in the turn of the century consciousness, but are enduring issues that post-modern America continues to debate. The spiritual, cultural, and intellectual engagement of this book maintains relevance in terms of its influence on the location of nature in the contemporary consciousness. By publishing his journal, he overcomes time/place limitations. In discussing language as a medium of hermeneutic experience, Hans-Georg Gadamer's theories elucidate the implicit power of Muir's use of literature to move not only his contemporary readers toward a preservationist ethic, but also future generations of Americans who will continue to determine the spiritual value of America's sacred natural places. Gadamer's language implicates Muir as a literary lobbyist, using this medium of communication to share his message with all of humanity. According to Gadamer, "writing is no mere accident or mere supplement that qualitatively changes nothing in the course of oral tradition. Certainly, there can be a will to make things continue, a will to permanence, without writing. But only a written tradition can detach itself from the mere continuance of the vestiges of past life, remnants from which one human being can by interference

piece out one's existence" (391). Muir exerted his preservationist will on his readers through the reshaping power of language, hoping to write it into being for generations.

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer speaks about the relationship between the reader and the text, highlighting the complexity and power inherent in this interaction. "Nothing is so purely the trace of the mind as writing, but nothing is so dependent on the understanding mind either" (163). That is, without parallel understanding between the text's intended meaning and the reader's interpretation of it, all of the power of text is lost. Yet in the experience of truly deciphering and interpreting it,

> a miracle takes place: the transformation of something alien and dead into total contemporaneity and familiarity. . . A written tradition, once deciphered and read, is to such an extent pure mind that it speaks to us as if in the present. That is why the capacity to read, to understand what is written, is like a secret art, even a magic that frees and binds us. In it time and space seem to be superseded. People who can read what has been handed down in writing produce and achieve the sheer presence of the past. (163-64)

Regardless of temporal and spatial displacement of *My First Summer in the Sierra*, readers actually join Muir on his walk, but more importantly adopt the sentiments toward nature that go along with the experience. This is accomplished because of Muir's construction of ideas familiar to the mainstream cultural consciousness, and nothing is more embedded in it than Christian principles. He touches on various nuances of the Christian perspective which more fully responds to the moral conscience of the reader.

These associations include the revelation of God's divinity through nature, nature as God's creative workmanship, nature as a conduit for spiritual growth, humanity's shared likeness with nature, and the moral corruption inherent in the abuse or disdain of nature.

Muir's primary intent in using spiritual associations is to demonstrate that nature is a lens through which the divine can be seen. If this concept is found to be accessible to the reader, the rest of his message has a chance of being heard. Muir proclaims early on in his ascent that the depth to which one can understand and experience God is measureless in the mountains: "Oh, these vast, calm, measureless mountain days, inciting at once to work and rest! Days in whose light everything seems equally divine, opening a thousand windows to show us God" (41). He likewise elevates the beauty and experience of being in the mountains to that of heaven, the limitless throne room of God himself. He begins his June 18 entry with these words: "Another inspiring morning, nothing better in any world can be conceived. No description of Heaven that I have ever heard of or read of seems half so fine" (39). Establishing the mountains as the holy of holies and as the tangible reflection of God's workmanship is a very clever metaphor. The reader deduces that holding the mountain in less than holy esteem is disgracing its maker. Muir is often overt with this message, such as seen when he says, "God himself seems always to be doing his best here, working like a man in a glow of enthusiasm" (40). Even at the outset of the journey as Muir crests the first bluff and looks upon a section of the Merced Valley, he assigns a sacred influence to the beautiful landscape: "The whole landscape showed design, like man's noblest sculptures. How wonderful the power of its beauty! Gazing awestricken, I might have left everything for it. […] Beauty beyond thought everywhere, beneath, above, made and being made forever" (9). Like humanity's great

works of art preserved and protected from damage, Muir places this holy natural landscape in its company for safekeeping.

Muir summarily argues that nature is a window to God. He notes how one can learn spiritual truths from nature as he describes the sheep camp where “plant people are standing preaching by the wayside” (11). He also gets to “hear the stone sermons” (138) of Cathedral Peak, his “first time [going to] church in California” (173), explicitly assigning nature an innate holiness which is revealed to the astute pilgrim. Nature’s metaphorical relationship to humanity furthers this intimate personal connection with nature. This symbiotic status again implies the necessity for respect and protection, for in preserving it humanity, made in the image of God, preserves reflections of itself and its Creator.

The use of metaphor which compares nature to man also seeks to familiarize the reader with nature as a related and intimate entity rather than an oppositional one. Yet he highlights this gap in humanity’s understanding of fellow bodies of life formed by the same Creator, lamenting in his limited ability to receive their knowledge rather than claiming anthropocentric superiority: “The horizon is bounded and adorned by a spiry wall of pines, every tree harmoniously related to every other; definite symbols, divine hieroglyphics written with sunbeams. Would I could understand them!” (13-14). In a passage revealing the technique of spiritual association perhaps more than any other in the text, Muir elevates nature as not only the temple of worship, but the celebrants that fill the temple with praise. Using multiple Biblical allusions to the Psalms, such as Psalm 96 which reads, “Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy; they will sing before the Lord, for He comes” (NIV), Muir convinces the reader of nature’s sacred identity. He

suppresses man's self-appointed dominance over nature upon seeing its unending worship which shames the best efforts by humanity, and through the reference to its Biblical creation which preceded that of humanity.

> A few minutes ago every tree was excited, bowing to the roaring storm, waving, swirling, tossing their branches in glorious enthusiasm like worship. But though to the outer ear these trees are now silent, their songs never cease. Every hidden cell is throbbing with music and life, every fibre thrilling like harp strings, while incense is ever flowing from the balsam bells and leaves. No wonder the hills and groves were God's first temples, and the more they are cut down and hewn into cathedrals and churches, the farther off and dimmer seems the Lord himself. (101-02)

This parallel spiritual identity with nature radically contrasts the way in which turn of the century America was living out the California Dream. No longer an adversary or an entity to be cheaply pillaged, the natural world as shown through Muir's eyes is not only a fellow creation and worshiper of God, but a mediating agent between God and man.

The use of personification at times subtly and other times overtly communicates the concept of nature as an equal in the hierarchy of God's creation. The examples of Muir's use of this device abound in so great a number that to record them all would be redundant and unnecessary in proving its effective use. This does suggest, however, that in assigning personage to various parts of the landscape, Muir communicates many messages to the reader. Among them, he challenges the anthropocentric perspective of humanity as God's only concern and argues for a brotherhood with nature, establishes

these entities as holy vessels of worship, and celebrates the diversity among organic nature equal to that seen in humanity. To offer a flavor of Muir's use of personification I include two examples here. In a passage speaking of the purpose and intrinsic value of poison ivy and oak, he challenges the common anthropocentric perspective: "Like most other things not apparently useful to man, it has few friends, and the blind question, 'Why was it made?' goes on and on with never a guess that first of all it might have been made for itself" (17). Later he acknowledges the intrinsic spirituality and inviting call of nature's organisms, saying, "Every morning, arising from the death of sleep, the happy plants and all our fellow animal creatures great and small, and even the rocks, seemed to be shouting, 'Awake, awake, rejoice, rejoice, come love us and join in our song. Come! Come!" (45-46).

On occasion, Muir rebukes any unmoved Christian reader by equating him to the unrefined shepherd Billy, of whom Muir says, "Such souls, I suppose, are asleep, or smothered and befogged beneath mean pleasures and cares" (102). Of course no reader wants such a label, which categorizes one as not only separate from God but intentionally immersed in worldly concerns counter to His will. He also reveals the spiritual discord representative of the current broken relationship between man and land early in the adventure. As he warns against the greedy manipulation of the world, he also hints at the need for a land ethic that aligns with Christian principles of benevolence and humility: "This quickly acquired wealth usually creates desire for more. Then indeed the wool is drawn close down over the poor fellow's eyes, dimming or shutting out almost everything worth seeing" (14).

In publishing *My First Summer in the Sierra*, Muir worked as an agenda-driven artist rather than an artistic lobbyist. While politicians use rhetoric rarely worthy of being labeled "art," Muir used his mastery of the written word to bring more change than a short-lived propagandist campaign. In so doing, he constructed a compositional framework for the story that catered to the literary savvy and tradition of the early 20th century reader. In other words, his choice of structure and style added a depth of meaning to the text not found in the narrative. Specifically, Muir drew from America's love for the pastoral tale so intimately tied to the American Dream, and the time-honored and often borrowed Puritan jeremiad plot structure. With the use of these compositional techniques come a series of thematic meanings and nuances of tone that were highly familiar to the readership of the day. Gadamer speaks directly to this invisible power built into the infrastructure of literature, noting that "Schleiermacher's conception of 'artistic thought' [in which he includes poetry and rhetoric] is concerned not with the product but with the orientation of the subject" (189). That is, the compositional structure of narrative such as that found in Muir's writing is the primary device by which a literary work is persuasive or appealing.

It can be argued that Muir used the familiar thematic literary plot of the American pastoral tale, originating with the bucolic depiction of shepherds and metamorphosing into the American farmer. This symbol reflects a moral, idealized way of life in a pristine natural setting innocent to civilization, where the shepherd leads a musical and romanticized life. Being so completely perfect, there is often a whimsical sense of otherworldliness to it, sadly unattainable but all the same longed for by the reader. These ideas, revived during the Renaissance and again in the age of Romanticism from first

century Greek poetry, can at times be elegiac in nature, mourning the passing of life as the unavoidable result of time. Hints of this melodramatic tone season Muir's writing here and there, as seen when he proclaims, "each one of these [sights] is of itself enough for a great life-long landscape fortune—a most memorable day of days—enjoyment enough to kill if that were possible" (84). It isn't a coincidence that Muir was literally herding sheep in this story; the imagery of the sweeping plains, fecund valleys and perfectly clear-skied vistas as the backdrop for a shepherd and his flock are standardized to the point of cliché.

The difference in this version of the tale, which would be strikingly obvious to a reader of 18th and 19th century literature and classic verse from the Renaissance, is that this is paradoxically a dark shepherd's tale. Though celebrating the beauty that surrounds him, he is not at peace with his shepherding role, and the sheep in no way work with the rest of the pastoral setting in a symbiotic or balanced manner. This is clearly a statement about the imbalances brought into a perfect landscape by man's commoditized control and manipulation of nature. In this case, the sheep represent this broken trust between man and the land, allegorically representative of other contemporary examples of nature's destruction by man for the sake of expansion and commercialism. In his chapter "Through the Foothills with a Flock of Sheep," Muir juxtaposes the harmonious life of a Scottish shepherd with the land and profit-hungry misery of the California shepherd, portraying the broken life and soul that comes with such a perspective. He says the Scotch shepherd "has probably descended from a race of shepherds and inherited a love and aptitude for the business almost as marked as that of his collie. He […] sees his family and neighbors, has time for reading in fine weather, and often carries books to the

fields with which he may converse with kings" (15). Yet the California shepherd, "in haste to get rich," sacrifices moral wealth for worldly gain. He is "likely to be degraded by the life he leads, . . . [and] coming into his dingy hovel-cabin at night, stupidly weary, he finds nothing to balance and level his life with the universe. […] Of course his health suffers, reacting on his mind; and seeing nobody for weeks or months, he finally becomes semi-insane or wholly so" (15). Having duly challenged the idealized pastoral, Muir then addresses its ecological impact.

For the 1911 reader, this allegory as it related to the battle over Hetch Hetchy Valley and other overzealous utilitarian projects of the Sierra Nevada Mountains would be easily recognized. John Leighly asserts that "a good part of the motivation of his later work for the preservation of the forests of the West was his knowledge of the damage done to the mountain vegetation by [sheep]" (Leighly 316). The following two excerpts, though there are many, attest to Muir's implication of mankind (and in this case, ironically, himself) in this destructive mishandling of nature. First, in speaking of his 2,000 and more detested sheep that scour the fields in unnatural numbers, he says, "They cannot hurt the trees, though some of the seedlings suffer, and should the wooly locusts be greatly multiplied, as on account of dollar value they are likely to be, then the forests, too, may in time be destroyed" (66).

The American jeremiad derives its origins with the narrative structure used in Puritan conversion narratives of the late 17th and early 18th centuries, as well as in captivity narratives of roughly the same time period. In its basic form, it consists of three parts: an acknowledgement of man's sin, a descending of God's wrath and teaching, and a rising back to a place of renewal ("V" shaped plot line). It generally parallels Paul's

conversion experience that began on the road to Damascus. Muir also borrows from this very popularized plot structure that, being so frequently used in classic American tales, would be known to almost any literate person of the time. However, like the pastoral, Muir alters this stock structural device in order to reveal his benevolent philosophy toward nature to his readers. By inverting the plot line ("Λ" shaped plot line), he goes up into the mountain wilderness as a pilgrim from a fallen valley below for the purpose of attaining a loving and enlightened relationship with God. As he ascends the mountain trail, so does his spirit. Meeting God at the highest of peaks, he descends back down to the Valley where his spirits descend along with the elevation. The verdure and wonder of the high Sierras is starkly contrasted to the landscape and climate of the Valley as he opens and closes this narrative. The last entry of his travels down the mountain laments: "A terribly hot, dusty, sunburned day, and as nothing was to be gained by loitering where the flock could find nothing to eat save thorny twigs and chaparral, we made a long drive, and before sundown reached the home ranch on the yellow San Joaquin plain" (182). These raw depictions of the Valley notably counter the springtime images which opened this chapter, taken from his 1894 text *The Mountains of California*. These differences highlight the seasonal diversity of California, provoking in and of itself, but it also indicates the likelihood that Muir was indeed structuring his tale on a plot line which called for a spiritual descent to match his drop in altitude. This inverting of the jeremiad structure successfully highlights the corruption so often found in "civilized" places. It also urged for the preservation of these unaltered mountain peaks as sacred places where one and all can find peace that is so elusive in the ever-growing American metropolis.

In his book *The Yosemite*, printed just one year after *My First Summer in the Sierra*, his allegorical intentions were made overtly clear when he labeled his developer foes "temple destroyers," proclaiming in a satirical tirade, "Dam Hetch Hetchy! As well dam for water tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man" (261-62). A man of great literary and scientific genius, Muir used both to promote the preservation of a waning wilderness that offered salvation to its visitors. His message of radical conversion can be seen in the following passages, with italics added: "We saw another party of Yosemite tourists to-day. Somehow most of these travelers seem to care but little for the glorious objects about them, though enough to spend time and money and endure long rides to see the famous valley. *And when they are fairly within the mighty walls of the temple and hear the psalms of the falls, they will forget themselves and become devout. Blessed, indeed, should be every pilgrim in these holy mountains!*" (*My First Summer* 71-72). And also: "We are now in the mountains and they are in us, kindling enthusiasm, making every nerve quiver, filling every pore and cell of us. Our flesh-and-bone tabernacle seems transparent as glass to the beauty about us, as if truly an inseparable part of it, thrilling with the air and trees, streams, and rocks, in the waves of the sun—a part of all nature, neither old nor young, sick nor well, but immortal. . . *How glorious a conversion, so complete and wholesome it is"* (10). Through both Christian allusion and a structure denoting a pilgrimage, Muir converted many minds from viewing nature as an adversary to that of a symbiotic partner likewise made by God. Yet for those whom such a persuasive technique could not reach, Muir coupled it with a multi-dimensional portrayal of nature's beauty which insisted on being assigned aesthetic and moral value.

Claiming the sublime beauty of the Sierras as a thing beyond description, and then attempting to describe it, is an example of Muir's persuasive genius. Regardless of the depth and detail assigned to the Yosemite region, the reader will always assume that, in reality, it is a place at least slightly more beautiful than that created in their mind's eye. Even with the inclusion of photographs, which is a brilliant and now standard method of environmental protest, there is a lapse in the dimensionally exaggerated quality of the place which cannot be reproduced. Coupled with "heavenly" characterizations, the scientific exactness and implied honesty of a personal journal inform the reader that what he describes is really as he says it is, only more grand. In word, photographs, and sketches, Muir submits the beauty of this natural place to the artistically savvy and aesthetically appreciative audience of the early twentieth century. Facing the threat of seeing such a canvas submerged in water and ruined forever, the artistic and moral indignation of such an audience would surely join him in protest.

Muir was well aware of the challenge facing him as a writer—how to describe the indescribable through a limiting medium. There was no doubt a sense of anxiety and insecurity about his endeavor, prompting him to say in his and the land's defense, "No words will ever describe the exquisite beauty and charm of this mountain park—Nature's landscape garden at once tenderly beautiful and sublime" (145). Despite this impossible task, he did his best to paint the vast landscapes with color, movement, light, dimension, and texture. This occurs throughout the text, but a couple of selected excerpts do well to represent the flavor of his imagery. Here Muir describes the bird's eye view of the Yosemite Valley, without a doubt the most famous and inspiring view of the region. He says, "Nearly all the upper basin of the Merced was displayed, with its sublime domes

and canyons, dark upsweeping forests, and glorious array of white peaks deep in the sky, every feature glowing, radiating beauty that pours into our flesh and bones like heat rays from fire. Sunshine over all; no breath of wind to stir the brooding calm. Never before had I seen so glorious a landscape, so boundless an affluence of sublime mountain beauty" (80). Though the reader is aware that this is written in 1869, preceding Muir's travels to other exotic and geologically dramatic places on Earth, to hear this man claim the Yosemite region as the most beautiful place he had ever seen certainly carried weight with them as they re-created the images in their mind.

In stark and painful contrast to this beauty are images of destruction wrought by the economic endeavors of the white American. This is a case in which great detail strikes fear and disgust into the hearts of the readers rather than awe and reverence, prompting them to consider the myopic and ruinous effects of the California Dream. What's more, Muir contrasts this devastation of the land at the hands of white miners to the gentle ways of the Native Americans, doubly convicting his often bigoted readers as the ones who have a subordinate heathen culture. He notes,

> Indians walk softly and hurt the landscape hardly more than the birds and squirrels . . . […] How different are most of those of the white man, especially on the lower gold region—roads blasted in the solid rock, wild streams dammed and tamed and turned out of their channels and led along the sides of canyons and valleys to work in mines like slaves. Crossing from ridge to ridge, high in the air, on long straddling trestles as if flowing on stilts, or down and up across valleys and hills, imprisoned in iron pipes to strike and

> wash away hills and miles of the skin of the mountain's face, riddling, stripping every gold gully and flat. These are the white man's marks made in a few feverish years, to say nothing of mills, fields, villages, scattered hundreds of miles along the flank of the Range. Long will it be ere these marks are effaced. (37)

Sadly, Muir did not hold an equally egalitarian perspective of Native Americans as he did of the natural world. He was clearly convicted by his own ambivalence toward them, and what he considered a stark contrast between the "dirty" "savages" and that of their "pure" Sierran environment (143). Though his racism is to some degree redeemed by his final wishes of brotherhood, other depictions of Native Americans in the text are far from a paradigm of social justice one would expect from such a defender of all things organic. After he was "besieged" along the trail by a band of Mono Indians and later glad to see them go, he reflects that "it seems sad to feel such desperate repulsion from one's fellow beings, however degraded. To prefer the society of squirrels and woodchucks to that of our own species must surely be unnatural. So with a fresh breeze and a hill or mountain between us I must wish them Godspeed and try to pray and sing with Burns, "It's coming yet, for a' that, that man to man, the warld o'er, shall brothers be for a' that" (153).

The following passage is taken from the chapter "A Strange Experience." Among other things, it reflects that even an authentic encounter with this majestic place does not guarantee to appeal to the aesthetics of all people:

> It seems strange that visitors to Yosemite should be so little influenced by its novel grandeur, as if their eyes were bandaged

> and their ears stopped. Most of those I saw yesterday were looking down as if wholly unconscious of anything going on about them, while the sublime rocks were trembling with the tones of the mighty congregation of waters gathered from all the mountains round about, making music that might draw angels out of heaven. Yet respectable-looking, even wise-looking people were fixing bits of worms on bent pieces of wire to catch trout. Sport they called it. Should church-goers try to pass the time fishing in baptismal fonts while dull sermons were being preached, the so-called sport might not be so bad; but to play in the Yosemite temple, seeking pleasure in the pain of fishes struggling for their lives, while God is preaching his sublimest water and stone sermons! (132)

In this case, he is also imploring the reader not to be oblivious to the power of nature or presence of true beauty, but acknowledge its moral and aesthetic value. He persuasively makes them self-conscious, not wanting to be like the dolts who miss the grand spectacle for the sake of baiting a hook. This first-hand disregard for the inspirational potential of the place by some visitors also reflect that adding photographs and sketches to the text doesn’t guarantee the closure of the experiential gap between written text and reader. Likewise, an image will not with any certainty change the public’s constructs of beauty as seen in nature. Yet for some, photography in particular helps translate this terrifyingly beautiful and majestic landscape so as to ensure its preservation. He takes the reader a long way on the journey with his words, and tries to lead them to the summit with images.

The 1911 publication of *My First Summer in the Sierra* was sprinkled with twelve photographs by Herbert W. Gleason and twenty-one sketches by John Muir taken from the original journal. Photos are highly persuasive in a way that words cannot be, in a sense becoming some of the "extra-aesthetic elements that cling to it […], significant enough inasmuch as they situate the work in its world and thus determine the whole meaningfulness that it originally possessed" (Gadamer 85). An important milestone in Gleason's career was his work for the National Park Service photographing the nation's early national parks and wilderness areas that were under consideration for national park status (Handling). Clearly possessing an eye for the sublime, his photos had been used for the very purpose of pleading the case for nature in other venues. Muir knew his work to possess aesthetic quality, and Gleason likewise knew the preservationist intentions of Muir as he captured the regions represented in the journal. This time, Gleason's audience was the American public rather than Congress, but both parties were deciding the same issues. This technical addition, as much as any other, points to Muir's intentional framing of his text in a persuasive framework.

Along with these photographs, Muir's sketches add a broader context to the places in the journey, as well as a personal connection and credibility to the storyteller. In a passage taken from his time in Yosemite Valley, Muir acknowledges that, like his words, his sketches fall far short of capturing what his eyes see. At the same time his hints that he was considering an audience for his work establishes accountability for an accurate representation of the Valley and a general validity to his work.

The use of imagery appealed to the cultured and opinionated masses of modernity's Progressive era in a way that no other persuasive approach could.

Combining the waning influences of Romantic natural depictions with the edges of scientific knowledge, public policy, and a modern form of art, Muir successfully mediated the cultural gap between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Piling device upon device in an attempt to re-create the sublime, Muir concedes that "every attempt to appreciate any one feature is beaten down by the overwhelming influence of all the others" (92).

Muir's third significant technique was taking advantage of his immense popularity and respect in order to alienate anyone who disagreed with his land ethic. In so doing, he established a land ethic dichotomy of right and wrong, forcing a fact-dependent and politically progressive society to either join him or be labeled unenlightened "temple destroyers." There is nothing in the text itself, save a reference to Mr. Delaney's suggestion of Muir's future fame (176), which panders his popularity. However, in 1911 his was a household name and he was aware of the text's large distribution to, and resulting added trust with, the public. In fact, the Houghton Mifflin publication of the full text was postponed by about a year to allow for *Atlantic Monthly* to first print it in a series of installments, a strategy acknowledged in personal letters between Muir and his publisher as an even greater opportunity for its cultural saturation ("John Muir Correspondence," June 9, 1910). Thus the timing of its publication was a calculated technique of sorts on the macroscopic level as he sought environmental justice for the Sierras and nature in general. His popularity and respect as an expert had never been higher, and the release of such a text would never possess more potential sway than precisely when it was published. At the moment when America's perception of nature

and the national philosophy of preservation began to take shape in both Washington and the minds of its citizens, *My First Summer in the Sierra* did all it could to argue his case.

As it has been established, Muir had a captive audience in 1911. The indisputable tone of scientific expertise through a taxonomic diction was an adjunct to his fame and influence, establishing his argument as informed and all others as sophomoric. In an almost off the cuff manner, he demonstrates his depth of knowledge of the flora in the Sierras, noting, “Saw a few columbines to-day. Most of the ferns are in their prime—rock ferns of the sunny hillsides, cheilanthes, pellaea, gymnogramme; woodwardia, aspidium, woodsia along the stream banks, and the common *Pteris aquilina* on sandy flats. This last, however common, is here making shows of strong, exuberant, abounding beauty to set the botanist wild with admiration” (26). Though most readers cannot follow the genus and species assignments, they are impressed by the fact that such things appear as common knowledge to Muir. Their appreciation of the diversity and beauty of the Sierras correlates with his as they assume his admiration for the setting.

This concept of being a rightful and humble expert plays itself out in terms of his disdain for the insensitive pilgrims previously described, analogous to his political battles with the utilitarian perspectives of Gifford Pinchot, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service. Certainly there are readers who would be just as out of place in Yosemite as these tourists, and are perhaps on a differentiated journey with the text. However, such passages as this one invite the reader to align with the intimacy and union with which Muir functions in nature, explicitly revealing a falseness to the perspective that man and nature must be adversaries, or hierarchically controlled and subservient to humanity. Likewise, he works the Progressive bent in the minds of the populace, declaring in his

supplementary texts that the Sierras are firstly a park for America's people rather than another natural resource to be plundered by the mining, logging, and transportation profiteers of the Gilded Age. He shapes a negative opinion of people who interact with nature on such dislocated and calculating terms, requiring each reader to consider his attitude toward the natural world. By not excluding himself and his destructive sheep run of 1869 from this censure, he further aligns himself with the reader as a fellow pilgrim seeking transformation and establishes the trust required to win them over.

Clearly, by the time he was an older statesman of the forest, he was revered as the preeminent figure in environmental affairs. His writings and peripheral work all point to activism rather than art, making his intentions clear. As noted in Devall and Sessions' *Deep Ecology*, Payne observes that "modern advocates of environmental reform are often forced to use the language of resource economists in making the case for wilderness protection. So was Muir, but despite this impediment he never fell into the trap of confining his argument to a cost-benefit analysis of wilderness protection" (97-98). Nor did he strictly spiritualize nature, but rather wrote moving descriptive narratives combining the two rationales. Politically immersed, skilled in rhetoric, and perceptive to the pulse of the American mind, Muir placed this lovely narrative in the hands of the nation as a radical and subversive form of protest. He addressed the spiritual, cultural, and intellectual tendencies of turn of the century America in a way that no one had before, changing policy and public perceptions of his era and establishing a legacy of protest that has reached far beyond his last words.

<u>The Reception and Effects of Muir's Writing:</u>

In considering the effectiveness with which Muir accomplished his intended goals, I examine the degree to which the California Dream itself was altered in the American imagination. Muir not only shaped the nation's perceptions of California but also that of natural, or wild, places everywhere. Again, this effect was driven by his three main intentions: alter the relationship with nature from adversarial to friendly by depicting it as sacred, reveal its inspirational potential and unique beauty for the sake of preservation, and recruit advocates in the defense of natural places. These intentions have been well established, as have his techniques in pursuing them. What remains is the need to consider the level of success accomplished through this act of literary protest. Did he reshape the way America thought of California, thus attaining a greater environmental justice? This question is answered in three parts: the effects and reception of *My First Summer in the Sierra* in 1911, the text's potential for influence in the 21st century, and most significantly the cumulative effects of John Muir's life's work. He lost the battle over Hetch Hetchy, but I argue that he won the war over America's perceptions of California and the location of wilderness in the national psyche.

There is a limited amount of data recording the reception of the text, but enough biographical and publishing records to make some very strong assertions concerning the range of audience he reached. He had long since established a devout and informed readership, seen in the fact that "he produced an astonishing number of articles in the eighteen-seventies. Most of these were published in the *Overland Monthly* of San Francisco, but a number appeared in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, and so reached a large audience" (Leighly 310). *My First Summer in the Sierra* was his fourth full-length book,

all of which had a clear slant toward the celebration of geographic diversity and preservation. By this time in his respected career, Muir certainly had a captive audience that was keenly aware of his agenda.

Information that reflects the reception of this text by Muir's 1911 readers is limited. Looking back, the scholar is left mostly with conjecture and small pieces of history that must be liberally interpolated. One provocative theory regarding the ways in which Muir sought to "fuse horizons" with his readers is explicated by Leighly as such: "Muir's articles intended for the general public are as carefully written and contain as detailed and accurate observation as any scientific writing. They differ in that the evidence carefully marshaled is not focused on an objective intellectual problem, but rather on the reader. In them Muir is attempting to share with the reader his emotional reactions to his observations" (312). If the reader is the object of analysis in terms of literary reception, the radical shift in environmental thought that followed his life's work is more than enough evidence that he succeeded in reaching and changing the public's perception of nature. Yet small bits of readers' responses have also been found in book reviews and advertisements of the day, clearly reflecting name recognition and a label of greatness to his previous book which laid out his preservationist philosophy for all to adhere. It also appears that his bucolic text offered readers an alternative to the industrial grind of the times, journeying with Muir out of the city and into the "park for the people." His goal was to bring people to the Sierras, or perhaps bring the Sierras to the people, by means of literature and for the purpose of persuasion. Nearly a century later, "the [Sierra] club's Exhibit Format books offer an ironic variation on Muir's old scheme of creating conservationists by depositing [readers] in the Sierra" (Fox 317). Though there is little

record of *My First Summer in the Sierra*'s reception, the pieces of data that are available seem to suggest that it effectively captured the imagination of the reader, thus planting a sequoia-sized seed of love for Yosemite in the hearts of the readers.

The critics and reviewers of the text seem to support its beauty and relevance, as well as the author's expertise in the field. An expectation of truth and adventure had preceded its release through Muir's other writings and the support of the critics, allowing the text to persuade without the peripheral impediments of authorial obscurity or harsh reviews. As advertised in the *New York Times* in June of 1911, the brief description of the text reads, "John Muir, whose account of 'Our National Parks' has become almost a classic, now publishes his diary of the summer of 1869" (9). In August of the same year, the *New York Times* again gave the book a charming review, warming the reading audience with biographical insight. Titled, "When John Muir Was 'Hard Up': His First Summer in the Sierra When He Worked as a Sheepherder," the reviewer describes it as "one of the most satisfying outdoor books of the season." It was further described as able to "make one feel the visible and audible beauty of a mountain stream" and "somehow charged with the awe that dwells in mountain silences." It closed with this line: "there is none of the fever and bustle of the twentieth century in this book." And finally in December of 1911, the *New York Times* advertised the text for sale, this time quoting a reviewer as saying, "It would be hard to find a record more completely saturated with the mountain spirit."

It is very hard to disprove that *My First Summer in the Sierra* was placed firmly in the minds of the masses as another philosophical inquiry into the place of wilderness in the American mind. In discussing early 20th century American culture, the renowned

environmental historian Roderick Nash notes, "the groundswell of popular enthusiasm for wilderness [...] by the early twentieth century had attained the dimensions of a national cult" (139-40), of which Muir was the eminent icon. The centrality of nature as a public concern was certainly a general victory for Muir, one he would not trade for any single environmental cause. Yet, saving Hetch Hetchy Valley may have come close. However, the rhetoric developed in the debate over this ultimately doomed valley may have been the catalyst for a greater public self-consciousness about America's land ethic. It was the turning of the tide which, though begun in defeat, ultimately developed into a tangible change. William Everson describes this historical moment as the point at which "the implicit religious attitudes of the people gained explicit status, and though by a kind of reflex America violated its conscience, dammed the Hetch Hetchy, opted for the norms of the past rather than those of the future, a blow that sent Muir to his grave, nevertheless the corner was in fact turned. In this turning the Western archetype was intensely visible" (53). Paradoxically, Hetch Hetchy was lost, but a new land ethic based in preservation and ecological justice was gained.

Muir's message continues to influence American culture through his texts, selling thousands of copies annually through publishers like the Sierra Club. He is also widely anthologized in middle school through university-level textbooks. Reading a Muir text today carries with it all of the associations it did in 1911, as well as the legacy of his efforts which have extended now nearly a century after his death. This is a significant point in terms of reception. The 21st century reader lives in the midst of an environmentally aware society, by and large instigated by the life and legacy of Muir. While his contemporary readers and the many generations throughout the twentieth

century were still developing a new land ethic that leaned more towards preservationist than utilitarian principles, today's society is three to four decades into a preservationist ethic that continues to advance as environmental awareness grows. Basic lifestyle concepts such as recycling, carpooling, energy conservation, vehicle emissions standards, and the obsolescence of aerosol products containing chlorofluorocarbons would be foreign to American culture a century ago. In light of this generally increased consciousness toward environmental responsibility, the text of *My First Summer in the Sierra* would be a very different experience for today's reader.

Not only are Muir's philosophies central to the history of the preservationist movement since his death, but the strategies of mainstream environmentalism have also aligned with his. Kevin Starr places Muir in an historical context as an ageless interpreter of the mountains: "At the turn of the century Americans in California needed John Muir as a prophet and propagandist, and after his death they continued to need him as a reminder of what sort of relationship to the Sierras had once been possible" (Americans 190). The following is the chronological legacy of Muir's influence, noting the significant voices and events that were specifically inspired by his life and writings and have continued his activism by constructing the contemporary environmental ethic. Indeed, it was not simply a philosophical battle Muir was fighting, but a battle of constructing a nature-conscious civilization requiring a fundamental shift in the way humanity encountered it. "While the legacy of the environmental movement will be measured surely by its legislative achievements, so too will it surely be judged by its ability to persuade average Americans to back up their words with action and to change their voting patterns, buying habits, and lifestyles" (Guber 175). This contemporary call

to the practice of environmental activism by Deborah Guber is itself an effect of Muir's influence.

During the ten years following his death in 1914, books, articles, and journals of Muir's were frequently published. Yet according to Robert Duffy, environmental groups that were established in the early 20th century (such as the Sierra Club) avoided overt political involvement throughout the first half of the century, with the exception of Muir's failed effort to save the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park from being dammed (45). The literature did its job, but the movement lacked a dynamic leader until David Brower's successful efforts to stop the damming of Echo Park in Utah, which led into the "Golden Age" of preservation activism in the 1960s. Until then, environmental conflicts involved the philosophical debate surrounding "sportsmen and outdoorsmen—hunters, trappers, fishermen, hikers, bikers, and campers—as well as those of loggers, miners, and ranchers, who would profit financially from a Pinchot-formulated multiple-use policy reconciling preservation of the land's aesthetic and ecological values with carefully managed and controlled exploitation of its resources" (Miller 6). In 1938 the John Muir Trail was completed, forever associating his life and philosophy with the Sierras (Wood). That same year, Berkeley's John Muir Association joined the campaign for the protection of the Giant Sequoias of Redwood Mountain Grove in Kings Canyon. Ansel Adams published his first book, "Sierra Nevada: The John Muir Trail" in 1939, expanding Muir's influence into the world of art and photography (Wood). American forester Aldo Leopold started writing in the 1930's and established his work as a benchmark for modern nature writing. He possessed preservationist values much like Muir and termed 'ecological conscience'— "a respect for life in all its

manifold forms.” To the sentimentality and spirituality of the Muir-era wilderness movement, Leopold added hard-edged scientific and ethical principles rooted in ecology. His simple yet wise ‘land ethic’ could very well be taken as something written by Muir-- “a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Hay 15).

In 1940, Kings Canyon National Park was established, dropping the original title, "John Muir-Kings Canyon National Park" contained in the 1939 bill and incorporating much of the area that Muir had originally proposed for the park decades earlier. Linnie Marsh Wolfe published *Son of the Wilderness in 1945*, a Pulitzer-prize winning biography of Muir that once again brought his eccentric and eco-centric views into the public eye and celebrated a life and philosophy that continued to shape a nation. Three years later Ansel Adams published *Yosemite and the Sierra Nevada*, which contains Adams' photographs and selections from the works of John Muir, and a brief biography of John Muir by the book's editor, Charlotte E. Mauk (Wood). Within the artistic and literary world, Muir never went long without some form of prestigious recognition or being the direct source of inspiration.

The post-WWII era is a dead zone of environmental advocacy, perhaps due to the industrializing of the nation at break-neck speed. A couple of events, however, continued the discussion of a preservationist ethic. In 1955 the Sierra Club made the film *Two Yosemites*, which compares the damming of Hetch Hetchy to plans to dam Dinosaur National Monument. A year later the John Muir Memorial Association was organized in Martinez , California, its purposes being "to perpetuate the memory of John Muir and his contributions to mankind, to apply his principles to the conservation of our natural

resources, to cause his home in Martinez to become a public shrine and to educate school children and adults in the love of nature, [and] to preserve and protect the forests, streams, and mountains of America" (Wood). This invited the philosophies of Muir into the public education system and furthered their advancement into the symbolic national understanding and formation of a wilderness ethic.

Perhaps it is this almost complete lack of representation for two decades that required such an intense response from the 1960's. Issues such as nuclear fallout, toxic waste, pesticides, and ozone depletion caused a growing ambivalence toward technology. However, according to Andrew Glenn Kirk, the majority of Americans during this time period "remained dedicated to the ideal of progress achieved through science and technology" (146). This philosophical chasm in the American people between an advocacy of nature preservation and a utilitarian view of natural resources created an ever-growing need for reconciliation between the two sides. If a balance could not be struck, nature was sure to be the victim and the environmental movement would be in an irreversible crisis. As Kirk characterized the 1960's, "this bipolar configuration [conservation vs. preservation] . . . tended to obscure more than it illuminated. The majority of people who dedicated themselves to the protection of the nonhuman world fit neither the strict utilitarianism of Pinchot nor the evangelical Pantheism of Muir" (66). Hay goes even further in distinguishing the activities of the 1960's from the activities of Muir, suggesting that "[t]he membership of the burgeoning environment movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s . . . had virtually no familiarity with Muir and Thoreau, and hence cannot be said to be the lineal heirs to the traditions of these men. . . . [T]hey have

been discovered *post facto* by people seeking a theory for a scientifically inspired movement born largely in a social theory vacuum" (16).

I disagree with this analysis, arguing that Muir's environmental philosophy was a pervasive part of the American environmental ethic by this time, explicitly shaping the thoughts and actions of a rejuvenated movement. Though Hay and others argue that today's lineage starts with Rachel Carson's investigative book *Silent Spring* in 1962, the foundation laid by Muir at the turn of the century stands as the inspiration, however long dormant, of a newly kindled advocacy of nature. Carson's work is certainly the benchmark text of the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, but she stands on the shoulders of an earlier naturalist sounding a similar alarm. Another significant event of the sixties that suggests Muir's ever-present influence was the 1964 passage of the U.S. Wilderness Act in which the John Muir Wilderness Area was established as one of fifty-four wilderness areas (Wood).

This same generation established Earth Day in 1970, and "in the generation that has passed since the first Earth Day in 1970, environmentalism has become woven into the fabric of American life" (Guber 1). It is now celebrated annually on John Muir's birthday, April 21, which is only fitting since he is the father and source of today's preservationist efforts. "Since 1970, surveys have demonstrated widespread public concern for a growing list of environmental problems, including air and water pollution, nuclear power, energy conservation, deforestation, and urban sprawl. Public opinion polls show that the environmental movement has likewise earned the sympathetic support of a large majority of Americans, many of whom claim the label *environmentalist* as their own" (Guber 2). Since the late 1970s, special interest groups such as the Sierra Club have

become significant players in the political election process through donations to particular candidates (Duffy 50). Muir's legacy took on a particularly political emphasis in the 1980s, as seen in 1984 when "environmental groups were involved in at least one-third of congressional races as well as in many state and local elections" (Duffy 50). One study conducted by Robert Lowry estimates that among the largest national environmental groups, each was spending an average of $17 million a year on lobbying and related activities [by] the early 1990s (Duffy 48).

Muir was also changing the way other nations viewed wilderness. In his last year of life, Muir influenced Ryozo Azuma to become a conservationist and mountaineer, considered today as "The John Muir of Japan" (Wood). Muir's birth nation, Scotland, founded the John Muir Trust in 1983, an organization dedicated to the conservation of wild land. The John Muir Trust made its first purchase that year, of "3,000 mountain acres at Li and Coire Dhorrcail in Knoydart, on the wild shores of Loch Hourn, including the summit of Ladhar Bheinn (1020 metres)" (Wood). Back in the U.S., Interior Secretary Don Hodel proposed tearing down O'Shaughnessy Dam and restoring Hetch Hetchy to its pristine state in 1987, an historic revisiting of Muir's biggest heartbreak (Wood). And in the spirit of Ansel Adams, who revered Muir as the literary equivalent to his photographic lens, Galen Rowell published *The Yosemite in 1989,* combining his photographs and Muir's words from his text *The Yosemite* (Wood).

The 1990s was a watershed decade for land preservation in Scotland through the John Muir Trust, purchasing approximately 31,000 acres of land to be forever protected (Wood). Not only that, but in 1995 Dunbar's John Muir Association established the John Muir Centre as Scotland's leading institute for environmental education and sustainability

(Wood). The Sierra Club did its part in educating the next generation of Americans by publishing the John Muir Study Guide, a curriculum targeted at k-12 learning (Wood).

More recently, former President Clinton proclaimed in 2000 a “Giant Sequoia National Monument, believed by many at the time to have effectively completed John Muir's dream of preserving all the Giant Sequoia Groves between the Kings River to the Kern River of the southern Sierra. National Monuments can be created by the President without Congressional approval, as specified by the Antiquities Act of 1906. John Muir was instrumental in urging President Theodore Roosevelt nearly a century ago to protect America's treasures under this act (Wood). Muir’s memory and influence continued to be honored in 2004 with his likeness placed on the California State quarter, becoming the defining symbol of a state rich in history and culture. On nearly any given day, the residual effects of Muir’s relentless defense of a voiceless nature can be identified in the current issues of the environment, shaping humanity’s approach to nature through philosophy, activism, literature, and legislation. Truly, his legacy continues to grow.

Muir established legal precedent for nearly all things “environmental,” making it a lens through which all land development and cultural norms have to be viewed and considered. The environment is now even a central election topic of which candidates must often stake a strong preservationist claim if they plan on being elected. His legacy also stretches beyond social and legal influences to include nature writers. “Many elements of his natural theology (particularly those consonant with an ecological paradigm) have influenced generations of nature writers and, through them, the shape of environmental thinking today” (Tallmadge 78). His writing style and intimate voice with which he befriends the reader is also a fairly standardized technique that has been carried

on in the works of those who have followed. Art has always been a tool for celebrating life or influencing a change in the way it is viewed, and Muir joins a short list of names such as Thoreau and Emerson which have shaped the stylistic and philosophical landscape of American environmental rhetoric.

In spite of the current elevated awareness of environmental concerns in general, the limits of sustainability and the strain it puts on the balance of California's diverse biotic makeup continue to be mythologized as endlessly and uniformly perfect. Therefore, a text such as *My First Summer in the Sierra* still holds value today for the sake of revealing the diversity and fragility of California's many bioregions. The average modern reader is not aware of the original historical and cultural context of this text, thus is unbiased by the environmental battles that surrounded it in 1911. The biases held by today's reader are those of the contemporary environmental ethic, which I claim has come a long way since the turn of the century. As Gadamer explains, it is the distinguishing of "the aesthetic quality of a work from all the elements of content that induce us to take up a moral or religious stance towards it, and presents it solely by itself in its aesthetic being" (Gadamer 85). This is where Muir's literary artistry speaks to the readers that encounter his text outside of the context in which it was originally presented. Thus, the modern reader is only moved by the beauty of the text, which in the case of *My First Summer in the Sierra* still points him/her towards a symbiotic and spiritually infused view of nature. The reader's ability to differentiate between the original inspiration of the art, and the art outside of the context in which it was created, requires the artist to infuse the art with universal constructs that will point the participant in the intended direction regardless of spatial, temporal, or cultural displacement. This is

particularly necessary when the art in question is intended to influence its audience in a particular manner. This is what it still does—provokes an assignment of spiritual agency and influence from the modern reader.

It is not reasonable to suggest that the current environmental ethic was directly transplanted from the soul of John Muir, but it is fair to interpret his philosophies as "retold" and built upon for a century. Just as cultural stories and songs are passed from one generation to the next, some of the content is altered about the fringes, but the body of the story remains the same. So too does the corpus of Muir's philosophy compared to today's environmentalist community. In trying to understand the origins of public opinion on environmental issues, Guber cites Van Liere and Dunlap as saying that "one finds considerable dissensus with respect to both the evidence itself and the interpretation" (10). This ambiguity is likely attributed to who is doing the research, who is interpreting it, and what they want the research to say. My sources of evidence for tracing the influence of Muir on today's environmental ethic come largely from academic research and logical correlation. In speaking of John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, and Theodore Roosevelt, for example, Philip Shabecoff writes in *Earth Rising: American Environmentalism of the 21st Century* that "over time, many, if not most, Americans, informed and prodded by the environmentalists, came to understand and integrate their values. […] American environmentalism—or conservation, to give it its birth name—was essentially a child of the 20th century, and Muir, Pinchot, and Roosevelt were indispensable in its creation" (2-3). There continue to be many creative approaches by environmental advocacy groups to more accurately identify the public's opinions of

wilderness in order to better market a healthy perspective of nature. Many of these groups model their efforts after Muir.

One such group, known as the Biodiversity Project, "seeks to help environmental organizations craft and implement communications and education strategies on issues that promote smart growth, wilderness protection, endangered species, and habitat loss. Its goal is to help its partners develop a clearer understanding of people's attitudes about environmental issues in order to design more compelling and consistent messages" (Duffy 102). Their desire is to create a public education strategy "that is based on reaching people through messages that speak to their core values, defined as those deeply held beliefs that form the foundations of people's attitudes and behavior (Duffy 104). In other words, some activists are seeking to shape "people's attitudes" about nature by identifying their core values and speaking to them in a meaningful way, and it is my assertion that the "compelling and consistent message" being created for the public is based largely around the ideas of nature's innate value and beauty forwarded by Muir. Speaking to the hearts of the people was also Muir's literary approach, being used today for the same purposes. This desire to increase awareness of nature's needs is seen in the mission statement of the Sierra Club, "America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization" (*Sierra*). Their mission is to "1. Explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the earth, 2. Practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystem and resources, 3. Educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment, and 4. Use all lawful means to carry out these objectives" (*Sierra*).

There is historical evidence suggesting that the Sierra Club has held on to the founding principles set forth by John Muir and other co-founders. One such example is found in the actions of David Brower. As president of the Sierra Club from 1952-1969, he "maintained pursuit of its historical mission in a series of successful battles to preserve Dinosaur Monument and Point Reyes, establish North Cascades and Redwoods National Parks, block the construction of two hydroelectric dams in the Grand Canyon, and, most notably, promote the enactment of the Wilderness Act in 1964. The tactics he employed in these efforts, however, were distinctly more political than the Sierra Club's old guard" John Muir (Miller 93). This political emphasis is due to the lesser literary efforts of Brower, the diffusion of a reading public, and a radicalized social era rooted in public protest. Though the approach to activism and change on behalf of the environment has evolved into more of a political realm than a literary one, Muir's dreams continue to be fulfilled. His legacy as identified in today's environmentalists is split in half: some activists have adopted his philosophies and use political maneuvering to promote them, while the activists in the world of literary environmentalism continue to promote his philosophy through literary techniques established by Muir. By looking at one of his lost campaigns for preservation, prohibiting the building of Hetch Hetchy Dam, it was still "a valuable learning experience for the Sierra Club and other preservationists, and served to galvanize public opinion regarding such depredations on the national parks. Perhaps even more important in the long run was the skillful way in which Muir brought spiritual and ethical issues into the debate over environmental reform, and brought the assumptions regarding the anthropocentric view of the world into question" (Payne 102). It is not simply a debate of science, nor of spirit only, but a complex dialogue happening both in

Washington D.C. and in publishing houses around the world in large part due to John Muir.

Robert Gottlieb notes in his book *Forcing the Spring* that Martin Melosi, president of the Environmental History Association, suggests the contemporary version of environmental history is heavily influenced by the environmental movement of the late 1960s. Environmental historians seem to share the same values of the movement such as an ecocentric world view and a belief in the intrinsic value of nature. This is also the distinct perspective of Muir, suggesting a philosophical influence. "During the 1980s, those approaches had broadened to begin to integrate urban, public health, and industrial themes as part of an environmental history previously dominated by its focus on wilderness. By the 1990s, issues of race and justice had come to preoccupy both movements and historians alike, changing the very nature of environmental discourse" (44). I would again suggest that these broadening terms of environmentalism align with Muir's philosophy, noting that he was an anti-modernist who spoke out about the dangers of industry on the living conditions of both humanity and wilderness. This version of environmental history that Melosi speaks of tremendously affects the way in which the contemporary perspectives of nature are shaped. In the post-modern industrialized and urbanized world, a shift is taking place in the form of a "revisionist history that places environmental history and its various historical movements within the context of an evolving urban and industrial order" (Gottlieb 46). The definition of environmentalism has broadened from wilderness to global concepts dealing with "place." This is a distinct shift from Muir's sense of *place* when referring to environmental issues, but there is very little difference in the philosophical response to these issues between Muir and his

modern day peers. Just as Muir realized that the salvation of nature rested on the hope that people would change the way they thought of and viewed it, so too do today's environmentalists. Before people move into action in defense of a noble idea, they must all be united on what it is they are defending. "Perhaps the greatest problem the environmental movement will have to face," Shabecoff says, "lies not in the external world but inside the heads of the American people" (26).

California scholar Jack Hicks explains one of the most significant psychological constructs that problematizes a fully realized change of perspective. "While geography still plays its role—with the Pacific shoreline as the Western edge, and the massive Sierra Nevada range rising to the east—the physical boundaries that shape the place on the map have come to contain a singular and always seductive place in the mind" (1). This monolithic perspective is dangerous. It correlates to the dangers of the good intentioned but fundamentally destructive cultural assimilationist perspective prevalent in the 1980s, as well as the patterns of globalization since then, which emphasize unity and "one human race" while simultaneously implying a devaluing of specific cultures and traditions. In terms of California, which is arguably the most socially and environmentally diverse region in the world, this singularity in associative identity hides the realities of the diverse masses who have little say in California's globalized profile. This means that not only the diverse beauty of the state and its people often go unacknowledged, but more frighteningly oppressive trends to the land and its people go unseen. Hicks is wise in describing California's location in the popular mind as "seductive;" it is such in the beautiful images that portray it, but it is also this convenient lack of displayed hardships that comforts the general public. As Muir crossed through

these neighboring regions from valley to peak, he highlighted their distinct uniquenesses from one another. One hundred years later, his voice proves to be as relevant as it ever was, while the socially constructed mainstream identity of a culturally and economically progressive state remains riveted to misleading and dangerously perfect narratives.

Muir has reshaped the way in which modern Americans view their relationship to nature more than any other single entity, ironically using the influences of the archetypal dream. In writing the introduction to Muir's collected works, William Bade writes, "Thousands and thousands, hereafter, who go to the mountains, streams, and canyons of California will choose to see them through the eyes of John Muir, and they will see more deeply because they see with his eyes" (xi-xii). This is also true for those who only go to California in the pages of *My First Summer in the Sierra*, experiencing its endangered beauty and fragile diversity. There is a potentially harmful paradox in his preservationist efforts that portray California's natural places as beautiful enough to be saved. Despite the incredible diversity of landscape and climate throughout California, the perpetuated myth of the state as a land unilaterally beautiful and balanced can override the many significant environmental concerns of the lesser celebrated regions, keeping them from surfacing or gaining traction due to the deeply pervasive idealized associations. When this happens, social and environmental injustices go unchecked. When environmental issues swell large enough to gain a national audience, the perception may be that it is but a temporary and isolated blemish on an otherwise perfect landscape.

As cited from *John of the Mountains*, "The people are now aroused. Tidings from near and far show that almost every good man and good woman is with us. Therefore be of good cheer, watch, and pray and fight!" (437). Muir knew by the time of his death that

America had been enlightened regarding humanity's relationship to nature to such a degree that the world would never be the same. He, I believe, was also discerning enough to understand that much of this awakening to the need for such advocacy came from his own writings, his own spirit. In reminiscing upon his good friends Joseph and John LeConte, Muir may have best described his own influence on the world, saying, "In my mind they still stand together, a blessed pair, twin stars of purest light. Their writings brought them world-wide renown, and their names will live, but far more important is the inspiring, uplifting, enlightening influence they exerted on their students and the community, which, spreading from mind to mind, heart to heart, age to age, in ever widening circles, will go on forever" ("Reminiscences").

As Muir descended the mountain and again entered the expansive plain of the Great Central Valley in 1869, he began his own concentric influence on America's understanding of nature and the California Dream. He could not have imagined the "ever-widening circles" of environmental and social manipulation that would ferment and finally rupture there seventy years later, but he saw the origins of it when he described the Valley of 1894 to his readers in *The Mountains of California*: "the attention of fortune-seekers--not home-seekers--was, in great part, turned away from the mines to the fertile plains, and many began experiments in a kind of restless, wild agriculture. […] Thus a ranch was established, […] centers of desolation." These two forces of social and environmental conflict ultimately clashed in the Central Valley, and seventy years after Steinbeck's protest, this region still finds itself immersed in a war between myth and reality. The well-being of humanity and the land that provides for it hangs in the balance.

Chapter Four: Steinbeck's Alteration of a Malignant Mythology

The "California Dream," or the articulation of America's mythology of promise as applied to the continent's western-most edge: *"California is the endlessly bountiful and expansive place to start over and find prosperity—hard work on its beautiful and consecrated land will always result in fulfillment."*

"In fiction I think we should have no agenda but to tell the truth."

–Wallace Stegner

*"*The Grapes of Wrath *is arguably the most significant indictment ever made of the myth of California as a Promised Land."*

– Robert DeMott

"This ain't no lan' of milk an' honey like the preachers say."

– Tom Joad

John Steinbeck successfully counters the myth of California as the perfect place for new beginnings and answered dreams, a misperception which instigates and conceals the pervasive social injustices of Central Californian farm labor. The pages that follow examine Steinbeck's intentions in writing *The Grapes of Wrath*, the techniques used toward accomplishing those intentions, and the novel's reception and effects on America's perceptions of the Central Valley and the region's intensely pervasive myth of

omnipresent opportunity and answered dreams. Each of these sections reveal a dominating spirit of change and point to the value and success of literature as a shaper of justice in American society.

Despite Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* being wildly popular, it is clear from the perspective of a seventy year span that its positive effects on the plight of the California farm worker were not permanent. Yet this does not mean that Steinbeck's efforts as a literary activist failed. Like most circumstances in culture, the farm labor issue swings back and forth on the pendulums of justice, social concern, and exposure. From its publication in 1939 to the attack on Pearl Harbor, it established new limits on the spectra of justice, concern, and exposure for the humanitarian crisis centered around California farm labor. Emotions and legislation about the rights of farm laborers subsided as the war in the Pacific surged, but the legacy of this text reaches beyond its era and continues to be *the* representative icon of an issue that, never having gone away completely, finds itself as a central social concern in the 21st century. Relevant and hauntingly prophetic, this text maintains its validity and power as the pendulum again rocks full-tilt toward conflict. *The Grapes of Wrath* continues to be read in classrooms around the world for its literary, historical, and contemporary value. As the culture of the Valley shifts atop a seemingly immovable agricultural industry committed to the status quo, this perspective is as relevant and provocative as it has ever been.

Attention shifted to the concerns of the war soon after original publication, which had just as significant an impact on changing the lives of the American farm workers as any literary or social movement. As the military industrial complex exploded, particularly along the Pacific seaboard, so did the opportunity for acquiring well-paying government-

funded factory jobs, which were largely filled by the newest wave of white settlers. While this provided financial stability for thousands of white Americans, it only further indentured the fate of the farm-laboring minorities and migrant workers that replaced them. This, of course, never made the headlines or the best sellers list. While one group of dreamers found an avenue toward the life they were looking for, albeit in a factory rather than a field, another cross section of dreamers found themselves bound from such a fate while ironically immersed in the western soil thought to free them. This page of history reinforced the time-honored American tradition of classism by color while also allowing the salvific California Dream to live on. California literature scholar Jack Hicks addresses the psycho-geographical mythology of renewal and how it is so frequently acted out in California by the global community:

> It is a frequent situation, in writing from the far West, that a character's present will be played against a past from another region, or another country: the East Coast, or the South, or Mexico, or China. [. . .] It has been a feature of the West Coast that people arrive continually from somewhere else, with high hopes or no hopes, to start over or to play the final card. The edge of the continent looms as a kind of psychospiritual border, so that the dialogue between California and the realms left behind is among several recurring themes. (Hicks 5-6)

Just as Marx and Kolodny assisted in explaining the foundational psychological trajectory of the California Dream, and Turner and Limerick revealed the decomposition of it near the end of the nineteenth century, Steinbeck held that myth up to the 1939

readership as both a failed endeavor and yet a principle worthy of continued pursuit. The entire nation was afflicted with some form of hardship during the Depression years, but the injustices being done to the migrant farm families from the Midwest and South went beyond hardship and landed squarely in the realm of injustice. It was a time for the nation to draw inward and hold on to its core principles of identity, the very thing Steinbeck asserted was being torn away from the proud and colonial-spirited Central Valley migrants. He believed that the American people still held enough enduring idealism and national identity in the spirit of Manifest Destiny that such injustices being done to their fellow citizens would generate a public outcry leading to immediate and decisive change. By revealing the California Dream as manipulated and hollow, he challenged the public's desire for such an idea to be true, to stay true, or to once and for all be made true. This literary engagement of a critical mass in the name of social justice stands as one of the most effective examples of protest literature in America's conflicted history. Steinbeck reflects to his readers the paradox of what a fulfilling place California could be and what a violent manipulation of its idealized form it is in reality. This juxtaposing of hope and victimization began with the first wave of westering settlers, and seems today to have no end in sight.

Steinbeck's intentions in writing *The Grapes of Wrath* are clear. Above all else, his desire was to challenge the California Dream in the imaginations of the nation, revealing it as a false and dangerous promise ironically leading to social injustice. His second intention was a response to the first—replace the old Dream with a new one, achieving a philosophical transformation of a state and national identity by invoking a new land ethic based on interdependence rather than profits. Essentially, he deconstructs

the myth and offers an alternative. Louis Owens notes the significance of this momentous effort in literary history: ". . . for the first time in American literature an author has set out not only to demonstrate the fatal delusion implied in the Eden myth in America, but, more significantly, to replace that myth with a more constructive and attainable dream (. . .)—to place and to mankind, 'the whole thing, known and unknowable'" (Owens, *John* 129-30). It is represented, among many other moments in the text, in Rosasharn's eventual transformation from self-centered passivity to communal action. Finally, it was his intention to bring swift humanitarian aid to the victims of the myth, and political change which would reshape an infrastructure of injustice.

Many of the techniques used by Steinbeck are obvious, such as the use of traditional rhetorical strategies like facts and statistics, personal testimony, generalization, and appeals to logic, ethics, emotion, and authority. However, in the analysis of the fictional *The Grapes of Wrath*, there are a number of more nuanced techniques also at work on the minds of the reader. Among them, Steinbeck implements character tropes, stylized plots, and associative imagery and allusion from various genres of literature familiar to the American reader. The combined effect of these techniques provokes intended changes in the readership's perspective of California and its agricultural practices. Ultimately, Steinbeck used whatever technical means necessary to make his intended message come to life.

The reception and effects of literature on society establishes the degree to which his intentions were met, and the California Dream challenged. The text catalyzed legal and philosophical changes that shaped the immediate experience of Central California. It also received a positive literary reception from the academic and popular communities in

general and was immediately translated into a cinematic success, furthering the widespread social saturation. America's perception of the great Western myth was forever altered. Yet, while many of these effects were immediate and tangible, the long-term reshaping of personal philosophies and national identities has been an unending process. I suggest that the novel stands as an unparalleled model of literary protest for the generations which follow.

Steinbeck's Intentions:

"The American myth of the Eden ever to the west is shattered, the dangers of the myth exposed."

--Louis Owens

John Steinbeck's intentions in writing *The Grapes of Wrath* held psychological, philosophical, and social immediacy, all of which were necessary victories if his purpose was to be fully realized. That is, he attacked the false myth, the broken land ethic, and the deficient legal rights in California. It wasn't simply a matter of dropping off bread and clean water to the squatters in the rancid Hoovervilles, or federally funding the expansion of government managed migrant labor camps. These responses, while necessary, were temporary. Steinbeck also desired a long-term change in what America sees when it looks in the mirror, or looks west at day's end and fantasizes about a better, more perfect opportunity just on the other side of the mountains. He sought to engage a national audience in the exercise of reconsidering the foundational myth of America that is granted so much power over the ways in which we perceive others. He also asked

America to reevaluate the ways in which democracy was understood and lived out among its citizens. And of course he intended on aiding the victims of the nation's manipulated and misled perceptions of itself through the conduits of humanitarianism and legal recourse. The clearest indicator of Steinbeck's intentions is the text itself, but biographical evidence in his memoirs and correspondence bolster this view of his aim. His artistic instruction of a nation was aimed at their minds and hearts, and he knew that moving just one or the other would fall short of accomplishing the shifts necessary for long-term change. Put simply, there was a big problem with a good system, and Steinbeck sought to enlighten its citizens and motivate them toward a solution.

Steinbeck's fundamental intention resonates with the overall trajectory of my argument—he sought to deconstruct the myth of the Golden State as a land of new beginnings that leads to certain prosperity. Debunking the mythical California Dream had to be a success or failure on a psychological warfront as much as in the fields themselves. However, Steinbeck's approach wasn't simply a pessimistic disregard for the hopefulness found in the larger American idea. He believed in the power of hope and the potential in the land to produce it, yet he argued for an informed and realistic perspective to be held by citizens at large, rather than a blind and ignorant belief in the long-idealized philosophy of Manifest Destiny. The American Dream can exist, he would argue, but does not currently offer itself in the western landscape because of an antiquated paradigm perpetuated by greedy individuals.

Western scholar Louis Owens describes this paradox of hope and hard realities as he suggests one of the central intentions of nearly all of Steinbeck's work: he wanted America "to see the ugly reality beneath the façade of the Eden myth and still maintain

and nourish a belief in the future" (*John* 134). Such an intention is clearly based in philosophical transformation with an application of practical changes, and suggests that the reader/citizen is ultimately the one responsible for the deprivations of thousands of families due to their mythological idealism. It places the responsibility of change also on the shoulders of the citizen-- the individual-- rather than solely on the government, the large land owners, or the victims who have been demoralized beyond recovery. The industrial agriculturalists consistently rejected any personal accountability, feigning ignorance and lack of choice in the matter as they pass the buck to the inanimate and elusive monster known only as "the bank." The tenant and small independent farmers have no say in the management of the land or the shaping of an agrarian-based culture. Rather, this right is monopolized exclusively by the banks and big owners, characterized as impersonal and monstrous. The owners tell the tenants—"It's not us, it's the bank. A bank isn't like a man. Or an owner with fifty thousand acres, he isn't like a man either. That's the monster" (*Grapes* 45). Trying to relate to the displaced farmer while evicting him, Steinbeck shows the unwillingness of the parties involved to be held accountable for the displacement of an entire region of farmers.

Furthering the process of scapegoating and victimization, Steinbeck has the land owners perpetuate the very myths that degraded the soils of the Midwest. The owners consciously lie to the tenants and send them deeper into an irrevocable poverty as they suggest: "Why don't you go on west to California? There's work there, and it never gets cold. Why, you can reach out anywhere and pick an orange. Why, there's always some kind of crop to work in. Why don't you go there?" (46). Explaining to the tenants that they plan to monocrop the land until it gives out, the owners reveal the destructive land

ethic that not only uprooted the tenant farm family, but that they will use again to manipulate other families in the East who also dream of an agrarian existence "out west." The tenant farmers protest for the sake of their soil,

"But you'll kill the land with cotton."

"We know. We've got to take cotton quick before the land dies. Then we'll sell the land. Lots of families in the east would like to own a piece of land" (44-45).

By simply showing the actual events and mentality of both the perpetrators and the victims of the Dust Bowl and the drought-stricken Central Valley fields, readers have nowhere to avert their eyes and no choice but to reevaluate their long-held misperceptions of the California Dream and their role in it. This "revolting" tension is highlighted in the novel's title, taken from the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Steinbeck himself wrote to his literary agent Elizabeth Otis that he liked it "because it is a march and this book is a kind of march—because it is in our own revolutionary tradition and because in reference to this book it has a large meaning" (DeMott, Introduction viii). His confidence that America's innate spirit of protest and justice would win out over its myopic dreams of a salvational landscape was immense, noted in a book title that alluded to revolution and negatively contextualized the harvest of the land.

Believing that the reading public would at least be open to the concept that the promises of the California Dream need to be reconsidered, Steinbeck was keenly aware that he would have to provide a new vision in which the people could believe. This new perspective had to be made clear to everyone, be accessible by everyone, and be waiting for them to adopt at the moment they decided to do so. Pointing out the faults of a system has limited power both as literature and as a catalyst of social change. It must be

coupled with viable and clear alternatives, which Steinbeck did with some success. He was tempted by the personally therapeutic qualities of writing a rabble-rousing and myopic attack on the powers that be. In fact, he acted on those desires when he wrote the play "L'Affaire Lettuceberg," but destroyed the draft once he had purged himself of some of the poison that tainted his ability to craft a meaningful work of art with more objective repute[9]. Instead, Steinbeck turned to *The Grapes of Wrath*, where, as Owens wrote, his amended dream sought to awaken America to the need for a truly just perspective still grounded in individual prosperity while sensitive to one's neighbor and land:

> The "new seeing" Steinbeck proposed would exchange the myth of an American Eden, with its dangerous flaws, for the ideal of commitment—commitment to what Steinbeck called "the one inseparable unit man plus his environment." In nearly every story or novel he wrote, Steinbeck strove to hold the failed myth up to the light of everyday reality and to stress the necessity for commitment to place and to man as a way out of the wasteland defined by writers of the twenties. (*John* 4-5)

The whole of the writing project was derived from his first-hand interactions with the thousands of workers and families that were dispossessed by their own land and people, and this realization that each citizen was as rightful a recipient of a decent life as the next. He was personally invested, and while this certainly enhanced the passion with which he wrote, the burden of truth wore heavily on his health. He wasn't an artist for

[9] In Jackson Benson's essay "The Background to the Composition of *The Grapes of Wrath*," he recounts the decision by Steinbeck to destroy the draft because it intentionally sought to "cause hatred through partial understanding," according to Steinbeck, and would not have done justice to the dignity of the subject and its victims (69-70).

art's sake, but truly an activist for social justice that perceived his craft as an expression of its creator. It was this "everyman" philosophy that gave his work purpose more and more as he was increasingly exposed to and shaped by the shared humanity he found in the squatter camps throughout the Valley. As noted by Susan Shillinglaw and Kevin Hearle, "working people are the soul and guts of his fictional world. He sought urgently to 'understand' and to help readers see clearly as well. 'In every bit of honest writing in the world,' he observes in 1938, 'there is a base theme. Try to understand men, if you understand each other you will be kind to each other'" (5-6). Ultimately there is a simple benevolence about his aggressive intentions, a deep caring for the individual and corporate livelihood of America. His fully realized social model believed in the fulfilling potential of the American idea birthed out of the agrarian principles of Thomas Jefferson. He offered his part as an artist and a voice of the people in an effort to move the nation toward that place, a chore that "pulls no punches" and is strong enough to warrant "a foreword warning sensitive people to let it alone" (*Life in Letters* 168).

There is no doubt that Steinbeck strove to tell the truth about the Central Valley farming experience in order to facilitate a psychological revolution in the reader and to prompt social change. It seems a simple and promising task to tell the truth, yet he was intensely aware of the firestorm that awaited him upon the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Many people of power in the business and agricultural sectors depended on the proliferation of California's Edenic myth. Without its propagation they would stand to lose millions of dollars per year, not to mention a firm grip on the social structure of the state which allowed them the rights and lifestyle of aristocrats while the field workers struggled through an ostracized and subsistent existence. This utter lack of democratic

ideals made it an epic battle worth entering, and Steinbeck intended on winning it with the use of unshakable facts and indisputable realities.

In reference to government camp data collected by Tom Collins, a camp director and close associate of Steinbeck's, he notes in his work journal, "I need this stuff. It is exact and just the thing that will be used against me if I am wrong" (Steinbeck *Working* 33). The implicit tone of conflict and fear come through these ruminations loud and clear, revealing that Steinbeck went into this dangerous venture with his eyes wide open to the unavoidable yet necessary fallout that would ensue. In a 1938 letter to Elizabeth Otis, he acknowledges this, saying, "when I have finished my job the jolly old associated farmers will be after my scalp again" (*Life in Letters* 158). Incontrovertible evidence exposing a long-held ideal as irrevocably fallen is often the only thing that will change a philosophical perspective as deeply rooted as a national mythology. His driving intent was to create an accessible document that was founded on real circumstances which could not be ignored by even the most sheltered or idealistic believers in the invincible California Dream. His intention was not to shatter the hope of a generation or to devalue the right to strive for a better life, but to offer these very rights to a cross section of America that was recklessly denied them. Without a fundamental change in America's understanding of its broken system, a new, more egalitarian dream would never have a chance to flourish.

It is tempting to regard Steinbeck's intentions as focused on one region; he wanted to change the minds of Californians and therefore change the lives of its farm workers. However, this was a national issue in terms of the psychological relocation of the West that needed to take place. The country, not just the region or state, had to be

awakened to a new land ethic which directly dictated the social realities of its inhabitants in terms of culture and legal rights. Observing the disjunction between families and the land and perception and reality, Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor concluded their 1939 documentary book *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* by offering a number of practical suggestions. They too recognized a need for "new patterns" of thought and action which would preserve the integrity of the individual while recognizing the value of ideals which consider the larger group:

> In order to preserve what we can of a national ideal, new patterns, we believe, must be developed. Associations of tenants and small farmers for joint purchase of machinery, large-scale corporate farms under competent management with the working farmers for stockholders, and cooperative farms, are developments in the right direction. These devices conserve both the economies of machinery and organization and those elements of our national ideal which require security and a full share of the benefits for those who till the soil. (155-56)

Central California was both the ultimate realization of the myth of certain prosperity and the death of it. As the geographical edge of the continent, the issues of the state force a conflicted mediation between America's social and environmental realities and the blind idealism that created them. Reconceiving the western landscape was not reserved just for the residents of California's borders, but it involved the nation as a whole. Louis Owens notes that the nation at this time still had a "profound fascination with and acute sensitivity to California's place in the American consciousness—an

awareness of California as the literal and symbolic terminus of the American Eden myth" (*John* 5). Steinbeck acted as the artistic mediator of this confluence of truth and myth, and offers readers a number of conflicting images that demand a response.

The text as a whole worked toward the reconfiguration of the west in the minds of the nation, but there are specific passages that directly address the ugly truths hiding behind idealized fantasies. In the mindset of the individual and of the entire region, Steinbeck reflects a corruption of the human spirit that thrives on the gullible beliefs of easterners in the guaranteed prosperity of the California Dream. A spectral pauper returning from California's fields, having lost a wife and child to hunger and disease, tries to explain the merciless labor game played and won by the farmer's associations and labor contractors through misleading handbills and second day wage reductions. "You see now? The more fellas he can get, an' the hungier, less he's gonna pay" (259). With labor supply flooding labor demand, the owners have developed yet another solution, with the help of the California Dream, to their need for cheap labor and large profits. This insular and exclusive attitude toward others valued solely on their monetary potential is shown to pervade the entire culture of the west.

Steinbeck reflects the prevalent hatred and fear of outsiders among "native" Californians, which is a bigoted and divisive perspective, considering that many of those citizens took a similar journey under similar circumstances only one or two generations earlier. "The owners hated them. And in the towns, the storekeepers hated them because they had no money to spend. There is no shorter path to a storekeeper's contempt, and all his admirations are exactly opposite. The town men, little bankers, hated Okies because there was nothing to gain from them. They had nothing. And the laboring people hated

Okies because a hungry man must work, and if he must work, if he has to work, the wage payer automatically gives him less for his work; and then no one can get more" (318). Rather than hope and brotherhood, manipulation and disdain awaited the hopeful American seeking his fortune in the wide open West. Additionally, there was no more land to be had, and if one was to be a farmer, it would be on a stranger's farm as a day laborer for hardly enough money to eat on and no guarantee of work the next day. Steinbeck highlights this stark reality of labor and land in racially charged terms of slavery, all the more juxtaposing the imagined with the real: "Now farming became industry, and the owners followed Rome, although they did not know it. They imported slaves, although they did not call them slaves: Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Filipinos. They live on rice and beans, the business men said. They don't need much. They wouldn't know what to do with good wages. Why, look how they live. Why, look what they eat. And if they get funny—deport them" (316).

Suddenly, white Americans of western European descent are likened to demeaned and despised slaves of foreign birth, tapping into the shock and anger that would accompany the racially segregated social structure preferred by many white Americans. And "as white, Christian, native-born Americans, the migrants presented to California agriculture a more threatening image of the inequality and injustice of the agricultural economy than had previous Asian or Hispanic migrant labor populations" (Shindo 2). Here Steinbeck subtly raises another point about the "Okie invaders" that further complicate the issue for the American reader-- these slaves of the agricultural industry are citizens and cannot be deported or forcibly relocated. As such, they possess the same rights that every other American has, and likely possess the same heritage of pride and

protest when an injustice is done to them. For all who accepted the caveat to the California Dream that it applied only to those chosen few of the white race, even that fantasy has been deconstructed in a few deft strokes, and the reader must decide if there are still other exceptions to the dream that must be made in order to keep it intact, or must it truly be deemed a bygone truth only to be historicized.

Perhaps America psychologically needs California to be Edenic—it's the proof that the westward journey and its social and ecological devastation was worth it, or can at least be justified in that a paradise prevailed. The Joads' failure to see through the myth of California represents America's refusal to let California be less than ideal. They end up destitute, a prophetic word for a nation which refuses to acknowledge a faulty ideal. Just as each member of the Joad family sees the false front of paradise in their own time and way, so Steinbeck urges the reader to look beyond the myth and see the reality for the sake of social and environmental restitution. This is the very intention he spoke of in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 1962, saying that the writer "is charged with exposing our many grievous faults and failures, with dredging up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams for the purpose of improvement" (qtd. in Shindo 55).

The second of Steinbeck's three core intentions in writing *The Grapes of Wrath* is to achieve a philosophical transformation in light of a reconsidered mythology of California. He prompted society to reconsider how they oriented themselves with the land and with each other. In the midst of a global depression, Steinbeck and other artists were keenly aware of the uncertainty of the nation's economic and social well-being. Only one thing was clear—the business of being a capitalist-driven democracy could not go on as it always had; something at the foundation of America's philosophical approach to socio-

economic stability had to change. Morris Dickstein describes how this self-conscious discourse played itself out in the artistic productions of the era, noting that "the crisis kindled America's social imagination, firing enormous interest in how ordinary people lived, how they suffered, interacted, took pleasure in one another, and endured. […] They provide us with singular keys to its moral and emotional life, its dream life, its unguarded feelings about the world" (xiv). David Peeler extends the influence of the social novelist of the 1930s from mere cultural historians to shapers of hope. Describing the vivid portrayals of injustice as a persuasive technique, Peeler asserts that these artists "did not stop with protest, however. Having created characters modeled upon real life, they were unwilling to say that either their protagonists or actual people were everlastingly stuck in an unjust world" (151). New Deal policies such as "the Tennessee Valley Authority, the social security system, farm subsidies, minimum wage standards, the National Labor Relations Board, and public housing" (Zinn xv) had acted as a philosophical prime for these artists to engage the popular culture in much the same way as the Progressive era did for its writers. Steinbeck was following the lead of New Deal reform, which began to engage in "government intervention in the economy to prevent depression, to help the poor, and to curb ruthless practices in big business" (Zinn xx-xxi).

A direct product of deconstructing the great American myth of opportunity is the fundamental re-conceptualization of the nation's socio-spatial realities that must take place in its wake. Soil degradation, unemployment, and regional displacement were topics on every citizen's mind and in every newspaper as the nation struggled to adjust to the devastating realities of economic and ecological losses. Steinbeck thus offered a philosophical agenda in writing *The Grapes of Wrath*, one that countered the traditional

hegemony of power with a philosophy that called for greater altruism and brotherhood. In *The Harvest Gypsies*, Steinbeck decries the current state of affairs, saying, “If, […] as has been stated by a large grower, our agriculture requires the creation and maintenance at any cost of a peon class, then it is submitted that California agriculture is economically unsound under a democracy” (61). Some literary critics and social opponents cast the specter of socialism and even communism over his version of social structuring and philosophy, yet Steinbeck himself viewed it as possessing the greatest qualities of a patriotic democracy engrained in the founding principles of the Union. His philosophical intentions were such that the pride and value of individualism would no longer innately disagree with concepts of social responsibility. A marriage of the two was possible and necessary, he posited, in light of the social and geographical realities of 20th century America, where the entire frontier had been staked up to the immoveable edge of the Pacific Ocean.

One of the clearest examples from the text of this intention is seen through the encouragement of the incarcerated preacher Casy, who teaches the others that more can be accomplished by a group voicing concern than just one individual. This principle of enacting change through social unity is exactly what Steinbeck hoped for from his readers. He hoped that the informed leaders of the future would be “committed not to leading the people somewhere else but to making this place, this America, the garden it might be” (Owens “Culpable” 115). Steinbeck does not wish to eliminate the dream as much as shift it from an imagined archetype to a lived-out philosophy of reconciliation. He called for “a new consciousness of commitment in place of removal, engagement instead of displacement” (115). There was nowhere else to go, no new and uninhabited

frontier allowing for withdrawal and a fresh start. We must make good with what we have and where we are, insists Steinbeck, and our greatest resources are one another and the land that we at once embrace and decimate. The symbol of the lone frontiersman such as seen in James Fennimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* must be replaced by a new icon of collective resilience, hinted at by Steinbeck with tableau images of community such as the government camps, square dances, Hoovervilles, and train car hovels.

This new commitment to the value of a place and its people was a move towards a greater land ethic aligned with democratic agrarian principles. He "looked upon agrarianism as a way of life that would enable us to realize the full potentialities of the creed" (Eisinger 150). Some of this was to be accomplished through legislation, such as damming the Columbia River, as suggested by FDR (Stein 209). Ultimately, Steinbeck believed in the *spirit* of the California Dream, but not the innate guarantee of it. When realities change, so must the rules and perspectives. Steinbeck hoped to move society's implementation of the myth from its individualistic values to the symbiotic concerns of the land and of all people. This is a completely countercultural philosophy, yet a necessary one in light of the ecological and social crises of the Dust Bowl. In his critical essay "Pilgrim's Politics: Steinbeck's Art of Conversion," Stephen Railton notes the inevitability of this change and how it counters the core principles of a centuries-old national structure: "The system that is dying we can call American capitalism, the roots of which had always been the promise of individual opportunity and of private property as the reward for taking risks and working hard" (29). A personal ethic motivated by land acquisition must be replaced with a collective investment motivated by land reclamation and shared community rewards. Ultimately, a new perspective and treatment of migrant

labor has to be achieved, and for this task Steinbeck not only had to be a gifted psychologist but a persuasive philosopher.

Beginning with a consideration of the newly shaped social perspective Steinbeck longed for, he strives to make the point that the social structures lived by and the patterns of thought that have shaped them are society's servants, not masters. He reinforces the fact that America's forms of freedom and justice are fully dependent upon personal and collective choices which can be revisited and reshaped when they no longer align with or represent the people. It is as if he was reminding the reader that the agency of change is and has always been at their disposal, and society need not be led further down a path of classism and narcissism than it already has. Steinbeck's own voice is heard coming through the text as he says, "We all got to figure. There's some way to stop this. It's not like lightning or earthquakes. We've got a bad thing made by men, and by God that's something we can change" (*Grapes* 52).

The social hierarchy of the Californians in the novel is built on fear and wealth. Wealth in this case can be understood to be in the form of land and property, or social status acquired over time in a given community. In his attempt to deconstruct those structures of oppression, Steinbeck forces the reader, particularly the readers of the West, to remember. He asks all of America to remember their story of migration, their move from east to west, their struggles in transit and upon arrival, and their honest intentions and character throughout the process of seeking a better life through movement. He paints the historic mural in such simple strokes that every citizen can easily connect to the journey: "Then, with time, the squatters were no longer squatters, but owners; and their children grew up and had children on the land" (315). He reminds the "natives" that

they and the Okies share an identity as squatters, separated only chronologically, and to categorically degrade their value as citizens and human beings is the ultimate insult to their own struggles for advancement in the spirit of the California Dream.

This fear of association, this shame of being cousined with such bedraggled people, is a crime against the self and the American ethic of brotherhood, as Steinbeck frames it. The persecuting locals convince themselves, albeit with subtle tones of guilt and shame, of a social hierarchy as a form of justification for their bigoted actions. “And the men of the towns and of the soft suburban country gathered to defend themselves; and they reassured themselves that they were good and the invaders bad, as a man must do before he fights” (386). Steinbeck continues to challenge the prevalent class-based social structure from all sides; not only are the “haves” of California only two steps removed from the migrants, but much of the middle class is also only two steps away from joining them on the road as vagrants at the hands of big business and industrial agriculture. Steinbeck portrays this fearful reality in the following passage: “As time went on, there were fewer farms. The little farmers moved into town for a little while and exhausted their credit, exhausted their friends, their relatives. And then they too went on the highways. And the roads were crowded with men ravenous for work, murderous for work” (387). All of this was intended to change peoples’ perspective of who they thought the migrants to be and how it is they came to be in such terrific straits.

Casy’s philosophy of group agency and unified dreams is presented to the reader as new yet “sensible” ideas, promoting the notion that even the uncalled layman, or everyman, can take part in shaping a new social perspective: “Ain’t got the call no more. Got a lot of sinful idears—but they seem kinda sensible” (27). Steinbeck is being coy

with the conservative and tradition-bound readers, trying to say that the way it's been or the way things have been perceived aren't necessarily the best way; they are often nonsense, in fact. Yet while a new view is different and coming from a source outside of the traditional bases of power, it can be credible. Casy notes the human tendency towards a reliance on stagnant perspectives when he says, "Fella gets use to a way a thinkin', it's hard to leave" (69). Casy's theology may be put to task by some, but as a social philosopher, his approach is deeply democratic to the core. "'Maybe,' I figured, 'maybe it's all men an' all women we love; maybe that's the Holy Sperit—the human sperit—the whole shebang. Maybe all men got one big soul evr'body's a part of'" (32-33). This social perspective of collective accountability and concern as taught to Tom by Casy has no place of value in the minds of the powerful who benefit from the propagation of fear and segregation among the masses. As long as the masses continue to fight over a paltry existence, the oligarchy of power can continue to benefit from it. The contagion of hope, however, is their greatest enemy. This is clearly shown through the local's murder of Casy, the hunting down of union organizers, and the attempts at destroying the government camps. Tom explains this "radical" social perspective to Ma, as taught to him by Casy—"Says he foun' he jus' got a little piece of a great big soul. Says a wilderness ain't no good, 'cause his little piece of a soul wasn't no good 'less it was with the rest, an' was whole" (570).

This social philosophy which advocates the concern for a common good above the manipulation of others for one's own well-being took hold in the forms of a powerful and broadly accepted Communist Party and the near election of socialist Upton Sinclair as governor, to name two. Along with various forms of governmental aid throughout the

New Deal era, these entities of social welfare represented a field ready for harvest. As Ma came to understand near the end of the text, "Use' ta be the fambly was fust. It ain't so now. It's anybody. Worse off we get, the more we got to do" (606).

A picture of America's dream of the West as it is fully realized is captured by Steinbeck in chapter seventeen, yet it is inverted to reflect the social realities of the Depression in California. In painting a picture of a roadside shanty town made up of homeless and starving migrants, Steinbeck demonstrates this new social perspective in action. The irony and power of the scene is of course in the fact that it is accomplished by a group of people who have nothing and have been cast aside by those who are in most ways just like them: "In the evening a strange thing happened: the twenty families became one family, the children were the children of all. The loss of home became one loss, and the golden time in the West was one dream" (264). If the dispossessed wanderers in the deserts of California can thrive with so little, how much more could a region and a nation thrive with a shared social philosophy of brotherhood? This is the question found between the lines of this powerful tableau.

The "everyman" philosophy as it applied to societal constructs was intimately connected to the ways in which the land of the west was perceived and treated. Just as Steinbeck intended on shaping a new social perspective, he also sought to facilitate a reimagining of the land that, though fertile, was limited in its abundance to what its settlers invested in it. As explained in Robert DeMott's analysis of Steinbeck's land ethic, the Promised Land of the American people was wherever they committed to making it, rather than merely a mythic place around the next bend that burst with spontaneous and unsuppressed bounty: "Steinbeck discovered that it was no longer necessary to lead

people toward a distant new Eden or illusory Promised Land; rather, the most heroic action was simply to learn to be present in the here and now, and to inhabit the 'wherever' fully and at once" (Introduction xxxvii). This is a call to change the very culture of rural America, and at least the perceptions of the rest of it. Yet the transient qualities of the era perfectly juxtaposed this philosophy of intrinsically valuing one's place. As more workers of the Midwest transitioned from planted farmers to uprooted migrants, the fate of the land they left and the land they were moving toward became increasingly eroded. A cultural identity founded in the land was giving way to an identity in mechanization and gross profits.

Due to this growing perception of the land as an organic factory, massive monocropping and industrial farming techniques abounded, furthering the development of a mechanized land ethic, rather than stewardship-based, sustainable, balanced, and interdependent. According to Charles Shindo's analysis of Steinbeck's land ethic, "man would survive by working in harmony and understanding with nature and would perish by exploiting or otherwise working against nature. This was simply the way of things. The role of the writer, according to Steinbeck, was to educate and bring this organic understanding to the mass of people, who, in thinking that man was at the center of the universe, misunderstood man's place in the grand scheme of things. Man must learn to adapt to life instead of controlling it" (56). Moving themselves and profits out of the center of the equation allows for the development of a healthy and balanced social sphere.

As the tenant farmers emptied their homes and barns of the memories and trade tools that defined their intimate connection to the land, the very fabric of their identity

was being challenged by the transition between agrarian and industrial principles: "Their social life changed—changed as in the whole universe only man can change. And the thought, the planning, the long staring silence that had gone out to the fields, went now to the roads, to the distance, to the West" (*Grapes* 267). The pervasive trend of migration and manipulation of the soil grew on the hearts of the migrants as they moved west into a region which functioned according to the post-colonial perspective of America's founding land ethic in which the grower is the abuser, taker, destroyer. This ethic was certainly residual in the land ethic of the Midwest farmers and Great Lakes loggers even before encountering the more entrepreneurial California territory, seen in the fact that much of their soil had grown worthless in part by clear cut logging, overfarming, and monocropping. As a culture of land degradation prevailed, the changing of the land ethic in the voices of the migrants and established Californians moved from dreams of prosperity to value-based outcomes: "Never seen no cotton like this here California cotton. Long fiber, bes' damn cotton I ever seen. Spoil the lan' pretty soon. Like a fella wants to buy some cotton lan'—Don't buy her, rent her. Then when she's cottoned on down, move someplace new" (555).

To some degree the faltering land ethic of the migrants can be excused as they desire any piece of land which might harvest a survival for them, hardly considering the feasibility of a permanent homestead after encountering the realities of California. First expelled from their farms and region they had given so much to, and then crushed by the hopeless and hate-filled realities of California, it is understandable that many a migrant would then view California as a place where only cunning and machine-like objectivity allow for survival. This separation from the land as a nurturing provider came into being

under different circumstances, however, for the mighty land owners of the Valley. While the farmers of the Midwest had to work twice as hard for half the returns, the farmers of the Great Central Valley developed a forgetfulness in terms of the land's intrinsic value and their intimate relationship with it. They quickly went from farming in the fields to "farming on paper" as the size and security of their farms proved to correlate with their profits:

> And the hunger was gone from them, the feral hunger, the gnawing, tearing hunger for land, for water and earth and the good sky over it, for the green thrusting grass, for the swelling roots. They had these things so completely that they did not know about them any more. These things were lost, and crops were reckoned in dollars, and land was valued by principle plus interest, and crops were bought and sold before they were planted. Then crop failure, drought, and flood were no longer little deaths within life, but simple losses of money. And all their love was thinned with money, and all their fierceness dribbled away in interest until they were no longer farmers at all, but little shopkeepers of crops, little manufacturers who must sell before they can make. (315-316)

Steinbeck's intent to reshape a national identity by invoking a renewed land ethic based on an intimate relationship with one's place could not be more clear. This sensitivity to the contours and value of the land live in the principles of the yeoman farmer, not the "machine" farmer of the expansive Valley farms. Ultimately, Steinbeck begs for a shift in the way America views the land, not because he was an

environmentalist or because he followed a nature-based pantheism, but because he understood the inseparable relationship between the ways in which humanity perceives its environment and its fellow men. This concept is clearly demonstrated throughout the text as the mechanized land owners of the west mutually manipulate their fields and field hands for every bit of worth they can without giving much back to them. The callous objectivity with which the land owners of the Valley perform their trade is starkly countered to the organic, somehow intuitive qualities of the relationship between the land and the migrant farmer, not yet fully deluded by the industrial way:

> The man who is more than his chemistry, walking on the earth, turning his plow point for a stone, dropping his handles to slide over an outcropping, kneeling in the earth to eat his lunch; that man who is more than his elements knows the land that is more than its analysis. But the machine man, driving a dead tractor on land he does not know and love, understands only chemistry; and he is contemptuous of the land and of himself. When the corrugated iron doors are shut, he goes home, and his home is not the land. (158)

Images of spiritual death, linear isolation, and calculated greed used to capture the fallen nature of the industrial farmer are taken one step further by Steinbeck as he equates this mindless robotic interaction with the land and its people to methodical and passionless rape. There is no personal connection, no "making love" and life with the land. Everything is done *to* the land rather than *with* the land, countering both the social

and ecological ethics that represent the better principles of the American way which are needed more than ever in the midst of a catastrophic depression:

> A twitch at the controls could swerve the cat', but the driver's hands could not twitch because the monster that built the tractor, the monster that sent the tractor out, had somehow got into the driver's hands, into his brain and muscle, had goggled him and muzzled him—goggled his mind, muzzled his speech, goggled his perception, muzzled his protest. He could not see the land as it was, he could not smell the land as it smelled; his feet did not stamp the clods or feel the warmth and power of the earth. [. . .] He loved the land no more than the bank loved the land. [. . .] Behind the tractor rolled the shining disks, cutting the earth with blades—not plowing but surgery, pushing the cut earth to the right where the second row of disks cut it and pushed it to the left; slicing blades shining, polished by the cut earth. And pulled behind the disks, the harrows combing with iron teeth so that the little clods broke up and the earth lay smooth. Behind the harrows, the long seeders—twelve curved iron penes erected in the foundry, orgasms set by gears, raping methodically, raping without passion. The driver sat in his iron seat and he was proud of the straight lines he did not will, proud of the tractor he did not own or love, proud of the power he could not control. (48-49)

Shifting a nation's perspective of its land and its fellow man is no small task. Yet Steinbeck reminds the reader that we are the makers of our collective conscience, and just as a culture can be made by humanity, it can just as well be altered when necessary. He challenges the intractable determinism and traditional tendencies of the human psyche and insists that we can and must do better. Industrialized farming challenges the yeoman farmer principles and the very way in which a person perceives "making a living"— "Crop land isn't for little guys like us anymore. You don't kick up a howl because you can't make Fords, or because you're not the telephone company. Well, crops are like that now." Steinbeck challenges the narrow philosophy of the tractor driver who tells the evicted tenant farmer, "Nothing to do about it. You try to get three dollars a day someplace. That's the only way" (50). A new way of interacting with people and place which promotes justice and peace is available, argues Steinbeck, yet it requires a faith in humanity and a more than monetary valuing of the land.

The third significant intention in writing *The Grapes of Wrath* called for Steinbeck to be a politician as well. His humanitarian instincts were stirred to action as he encountered thousands of homeless workers during his journalism assignments preceding the summer of 1938. The most immediate and practical purpose of the novel was of course to bring immediate necessities to the exposed and hungry families victimized by the propagated myth of opportunity, and to encourage immediate enactments of state and federal laws protecting the innocent from callous manipulation and legalized deprivation. Biographer Jackson Benson captures this shared nature in Steinbeck and camp director and friend Tom Collins, saying that "they both had a deep sense of justice and injustice, while at the same time, they both had faith that our democratic institutions, through the

pressure of an enlightened citizenry, could and would correct the inequalities which appeared at the time to be tearing the fabric of society apart" (*True* 190). *The Grapes of Wrath* is a prose version of an earlier journalism compilation titled *The Harvest Gypsies*, which broadly reported on the state of affairs in the California agricultural labor industry. In his concluding piece in that series of articles, Steinbeck recommended some solutions to the philosophical and economic rift between the land owners and the laborers which would create subsistence farms, establish a migratory labor board, encourage unionization, and punish vigilante terrorism (58-61). These suggestions demonstrate the humanitarian responses and organizational structuring that Steinbeck continued to pursue in his fictional documentary.

The agricultural lobbyists in Sacramento and Washington were incredibly powerful, yet Steinbeck believed like most artists that creative representations of social ills can powerfully alter the public's perception and invoke responses which counter the injustice. If people were made aware of the shameful events in the Valley, therefore, governmental agencies and elected officials who represented them would be held to a higher, more just account for their actions. Thus, the story needed to be told in order to shift power and resource allotment. Even more immediately, Steinbeck wanted to see humanitarian aid in the form of food, medicine, and clothing expedited to the camps while legal wranglings which were sure to be accomplished at a typical bureaucratic pace continued. To do so, he called upon one of America's most influential shapers of public opinion—Hollywood. This unlikely adoption of benefactors put additional pressure on the law makers as the public's discontent grew from a low buzz to a steady roar. It also

brought in immediate financial aid to bankroll relief efforts in the areas hit hardest by flooding and disease.

Steinbeck's benevolent intentions were no secret to the public; he openly communicated his discontent with the oppressive farming system in the west and revealed the altruistic perspective of his efforts. He once told San Francisco *News* columnist John Barry, "every effort I can bring to bear is and has been at the call of the common working people to the end that they may eat what they raise, use what they produce, and in every way and in completeness share in the works of their hands and their heads" (DeMott, Introduction xxiv). Charles Shindo places the civil rights of the migrants as "uppermost" in Steinbeck's mind (63), and Nicholas Visser goes so far as to place the basic needs of the impoverished workers as his sole intention, stating that he "saw his role in writing *The Grapes of Wrath* as contributing to an effort to change their immediate conditions rather than providing in addition a critique of the social and economic structures and relations that create and maintain such conditions" (213). While I disagree with him based on the evidence previously presented, this scholarly interpretation highlights the significant degree to which Steinbeck's intentions were geared toward immediate tangible relief. In a quote taken from his personal letters shortly before undertaking his great novel, he makes his working intentions and his personal sentiments clear as he reflects upon the problem. He also gives invaluable insight into the closed culture of the established Valley region and the hostilities he knew he would face:

> I don't know whether I'll go south or not but I must go to Visalia. Four thousand families, drowned out of their tents are really starving to death. The resettlement administration of the

> government asked me to write some news stories. The newspapers won't touch the stuff but they will under my byline. The locals are fighting the government bringing in food and medicine. I'm going to try to break the story hard enough so that food and drugs can get moving. Shame and a hatred of publicity will do the job to the miserable local bankers. (*Life in Letters* 159)

He saw that his already strong reputation as a writer gave him access to a large audience and the chance to effect some good. Much of his work from 1936 to 1939 was on behalf of the migrants. His first-hand experience and tone of urgency also gave an immediacy to the situation, never softening the fact that people were literally starving and living in cardboard houses. He was also quoted as saying, "If I can sell the articles I'll use the proceeds for serum and such" (*Life in Letters* 159), reflecting his personal investment in the remedy of this social injustice.

On the legal front, Steinbeck found it quite valuable to be well connected, much like the lobbyists of the agricultural giants who were, if not causing the problems, certainly not working toward a just solution. Yet Steinbeck didn't bother with senators and assemblymen. Rather, he held personal conferences with President Franklin Roosevelt, and just as importantly with the First Lady, Eleanor. Their support and confidence in Steinbeck was quite public, which did wonders for his various humanitarian and legal causes. It is clear that he intentionally "sought to strike terror into the hearts of the authorities in California, and he appears to have been successful in this last regard" (Seelye 30). There is an ironic historical note regarding his connection to the presidency and his role as a shaper of social opinion. Steinbeck served Roosevelt in the Office of

Coordinator of Information (COI), where he, among other things, gave advice on how to frame information made public during the post-collapse years (Rice 77). As an artist and a servant of the state, Steinbeck was one of the most insightful "readers" of public perception of his generation, and was deeply aware of the potential for a piece of literature to shape the response of an entire society. He worked intently toward this end for the psychological, philosophical, and humanitarian renewal of a generation and a region victimized by its own dreams.

Steinbeck's Techniques:

"If only I could do this book properly it would be one of the really fine books and a truly American book. But I am assailed with my own ignorance and inability. I'll just have to work from a background of these. Honesty. If I can keep an honesty it is all I can expect of my poor brain—never temper a word to a reader's prejudice, but bend it like putty for his understanding."

--John Steinbeck

The Grapes of Wrath has been categorized and labeled everything at various points in its critical reception, being variously complimentary or derogatory. The critical debates over its style, literary value, political intent, symbolic meaning, and social effects have continued without break since its original release in the spring of 1939. It has and has not been naturalist, modernist, documentary, propaganda, and sentimentalist, according to esteemed scholars on both sides of each debate. Steinbeck both follows and breaks the tenets of each of these literary locations according to the critical community.

Yet the best response to this debate is that it is unreasonable and unnecessary to need or pursue an absolute answer, whether it be Steinbeck's work or any other artist's. He freely borrows from all of these styles and methodologies to create the product he intended.

This multiplicity of style speaks to an artistic genius rather than erudite free-wheeling. He was not as much concerned with functioning within the confines of a pre-selected methodology or theory as he was with seeking to appropriate techniques which offered the best means of crafting his message into a pre-conceived end. He knew his intent and desired effects, and the techniques used were born out of various schools as needed to accomplish them while maintaining artistic integrity and socially defensible truth. In particular, Steinbeck used traditional persuasive strategies such as appeals to emotion, logic, and morality, he developed characters in such a way that they were real and relatable to all readers, he stylized the plot and overall structure of the novel to further promote his intended layers of meaning, and consistently implemented associative imagery and allusion to parallel the story's meaning and significance with known and revered motifs such as found in the Bible and in foundational symbols of American history.

Steinbeck was keenly aware of the enormity of the project he was undertaking, as well as the demands it would place on every facet of his artistic abilities as a teller of stories. He wrote to himself in his work journal, "When I am all done I shall relax but not until then. My life isn't very long and I must get one good book written before it ends. The others have been make shifts, experiments, practices. For the first time I am working on a real book that is not limited and that will take every bit of experience and thought and feeling that I have" (Steinbeck *Working* 26). He worked from an encyclopedic pool

of potential technique and style, knowing that a technically homogenous approach to any argument is a weak one. A multi-dimensional art and rhetoric is certainly a basic approach to communication which seeks to effect full-scale change in those exposed to it. This diversity also challenges the culture of academic criticism which insists on rigid classification of stylized literary works, and their literary and social potential, therefore. Likewise, Steinbeck's decision to hover over many methodologies and dip his quill into many ink bowls, as it were, models to the contemporary writer how literary art, particularly that which is intended to invoke an elevated social consciousness, can be most effectively created and broadly received. Is a piece of art not more effective when it elicits more power and meaning through panoply of devices? The answer, in this case, is found in the overwhelming social response to this literary classic.

Steinbeck uses many persuasive techniques with a deft assurance that they would move the reader into a new, darker reality of California's largest crisis, thus invoking meaningful action and change in the individual and the nation. One of the most overt techniques is his appeal to the reader's emotions, linking associative connections between reader and character as the one experiences the injustices of the other. In *The Figure of Theater*, Marshall observes that "if the spectators withhold sympathy, they remain spectators. If they grant sympathy—if they enter into the sentiments of the person they are beholding, if they become in some measure the same person as him, identify themselves with him through a transfer of persons and characters—then they stop being spectators" (192). By taking the readers to the flooded camps and burned out Hoovervilles, by placing dead mothers and stillborns in their arms, and by forcing them out of their homes and off of the land they love, Steinbeck goes far in accomplishing his

intentions of both bringing aid and change to the immediate scene and developing a new social and ecological perspective in the American psyche.

The textual examples just mentioned are but a few of the most memorable and powerful. Certainly the traumatic experiences of death, relocation, and violence have the greatest frequency of transference between individuals and therefore create the greatest impact, but Steinbeck couples these overt and perhaps even expected scenes with moments which capture a more subtle emotional devastation. He attacks the full range of the reader's emotions with softer scenes of interpersonal pain and sacrifice, a reality of life that everyone can relate to. As Ma goes through her shoebox of memories, Steinbeck places the sacred keepings of each female reader before her and asks them to cherish those trinkets of family history and identity before pushing all but a select few into the fire. As explained by John Seelye, this scene of loss intended to "arouse the sympathy of the reader/viewer for Ma Joad, and through her for all of the women who were displaced by the godawful Dust Bowl depression and forced to join the westward moving army of the kinds of people we now call the Homeless" (21). The humanizing effects of seeing someone recount sacred memories in familiar objects is a universal experience. By extension, as Seelye explains, the loss and sacrifice of every woman relocated from the Dust Bowl is made more tangible in the reader. A book of one's father, a pipe, a hat, jewelry, pictures and letters—Steinbeck cuts to the core of the experience as his third person narrator acting as Ma's internal voice asks, "How can we live without our lives? How will we know it's us without our past?" (*Grapes* 120). Even before the journey begins, Ma knows innately that the California Dream will not be magical enough to replace the family's identity.

Seelye further considers the persuasive value in accessing the emotions of the mother figure in the story, connecting readers not only by gender and experience, but also by class. Many Americans would be classified with Ma and the Joads in terms of a family trying to make ends meet any way they can in the midst of the merciless Depression. "Much as Harriet Beecher Stowe reached out to touch the hearts of her middle-class, white women readers by asking them if they had ever lost a child—not to slavery, of course, but to death—so Steinbeck is playing the same tune, albeit in a minor key, which in a protest novel in the United States must be gauged to harmonized with the values of the great American middle class, always the instrument of change then and now in this country" (21). The presence of Ma in nearly every emotionally clutching scene is not a coincidence. Her stoic endurance and steely defense of the family coupled with moments of vulnerability and loss measured the full length of the reader's emotional connections to her and who she represented. As she swaddled the corpse of Granma Joad through the twilight and wrestled with the impossible circumstance of a hungry family and starving Hooverville kids yet only one small pot of stew, many readers come to know her, or be her, in a small but very powerful way. Thus, the location of the myth in the reader's imagination is likewise challenged as the California Dream increasingly proves to be a false promise for Ma.

This emotional connection to the victimized circumstances of the Okies also goes beyond the individual character and matriarchal instincts of Ma. In many of the intercalary chapters, Steinbeck creates scenes which depict the generic Okie and the common patterns of loss experienced by them. These events generally reflect the specific circumstances of the journeying Joad family, but it should be remembered that they too

represent an extended metaphor of the mass of humanity moving west in search of a better life. There are frequent depictions of the Okies being victimized by every sector of the market place and in every region they pass through, whether it is buying a freshly painted jalopy from an Oklahoman used car dealer, getting hustled by a junk broker from the same region, or the price gouging in a California farm's company store. A series of particularly gripping appeals on the reader's emotions again implement the images of victimized children. An early image of this is seen when a junk broker makes a quick buck on the misfortunes of the dispossessed tenant farmers forced to sell their farm equipment and animals for pennies on the dollar: "Oh, take 'em! Take 'em quick, mister. You're buying a little girl plaiting the forelocks, taking off her hair ribbon to make bows, standing back, head cocked, rubbing the soft noses with her cheek. You're buying years of work, toil in the sun; you're buying a sorrow that can't talk" (118). This particular grouping of images not only suggests a taking away of an irreplaceable child-like innocence from an entire generation of Midwestern children by means of petty theft, but it also begins to communicate Steinbeck's justified wrath which grows in the craw of the victims with each layer of abuse.

A second scene which evokes powerful emotional response through character association is painted by the spectral pauper in the roadside campgrounds, returning from the west after his wife and child starved to death. As Pa and Tom Joad listen in, he warns the westering pilgrims of what awaits them with a prophetic gravity that chills one's senses: " 'I can't tell ya about them little fellas layin' in the tent with their bellies puffed out an' jus' skin on their bones, an' shiverin' an' whinin' like pups, an' me runnin' aroun' tryin' to get work—not for money, not for wages!' he shouted. 'Jesus Christ, jus'

for a cup a flour an' a spoon a lard. An' then the coroner come. "Them children died a heart failure," he said. Put it on his paper. Shiverin', they was, an' their bellies stuck out like a pig bladder'" (260). These images are no doubt sourced in the tragic scenes witnessed first-hand by Steinbeck in the years preceding the summer of 1938 as he traveled the Valley roads as a journalist writing articles about the ever-worsening crisis. Even the most disbelieving and emotionally sterile reader is forced to see such striking images and acknowledge the possibility of such inhumane happenings in the Golden State of California, surrounded by mile upon mile of America's most abundant agricultural produce. While the dark irony of this scene certainly confounds the mind, the sickening inhumanity of it overwhelms the stomach and the heart. These "new" images of California obviously begin to reshape the California Dream and promote public outcry leading to humanitarian aid and political change.

An analysis considering the emotional appeals of the text would be incomplete without a mention of Rosasharn's stillborn and it's watery grave near the end of the story, considered by most to be the summative symbolic episode of the text. Uncle John's brief yet moving eulogy for the child brings the migrants' mingling of pain and wrath together with a deep meaning and a final emotional confrontation between the reader and his conscience. Steinbeck sets up a social dichotomy here which makes anyone not living in a migrant camp a part of the oppressing collective, the silent and unassisting "they" that require the sight of a nameless decomposing infant corpse to be awakened to the realities in the fields. As the fruit box holding the corpse (a telling symbol of a harvest of death) floats away and turns over to release the body into the stream, Uncle John delivers the blow to the reader as he addresses the baby: " 'Go down an' tell 'em. Go down in the

street an' rot an' tell em' that way. That's the way you can talk. . . . Maybe they'll know then" (609).

Just as the emotional appeals do much to promote Steinbeck's intentions of a social and environmental reorientation and a humanitarian response, various scenes through both the words of specific characters and the omniscient narrator further these causes. Ma singes the consciences of the reader at the company store as she convicts the weasel behind the counter who had forgotten that he is also a victim of the system. The reader must again place himself on one side of the social structure or the other, cleverly forcing them to identify themselves as either poor and good, or wealthy and callous: " 'I'm learnin' one thing good,' she said. 'Learnin' it all a time, ever' day. If you're in trouble or hurt or need—go to poor people. They're the only ones that'll help—the only ones'" (513-514). Through the voice of the omniscient narrator in the intercalary chapters, he again plays on the dark ironies of the Valley that decide life or death with the value of a single piece of fruit, a harvest destroyed if the market dictates but defended with bullets if taken in the name of survival: "And in the south he saw the golden oranges hanging on the trees, the little golden oranges on the dark green trees; and guards with shotguns patrolling the lines so a man might not pick an orange for a thin child, oranges to be dumped if the price was too low" (319). The stark juxtaposition of tone through the diction describing the ambrosia-like oranges and the violence inflicted by man and market alarm the reader. Morally reconciling such actions is not reasonably possible, and the reader grows more certain that the events of the fields are not just market-based greed but moral crimes. The California Dream is shattered, a new social order is needed, and aid to the victims are all accomplished here through character association and imagery.

Rhetorical techniques also sought to change the way citizens viewed their fellow man, and inspired immediate response to the basic needs of the victims. In so doing, they also revealed the dark realities of the idealized California Dream for what they really were. As Steinbeck used the rhetorical strategy of appealing to the intellect of the reader and the enlightening patterns of history, it is clear that his intention of de-mything the state became his primary goal. By revealing past and present actions and attitudes of California's land owners and early settlers, the spirit of exceptionalism and the onus of guilt is assigned to them. While not every land owner was corrupt nor citizen exclusionary, Steinbeck used the broad strokes of history to inform the public that the spirit of brotherhood does not abound in the Golden State as the fruit on the trees does. William Howarth supports the historic validity of Steinbeck's work by relating it as an artistic product of the documentary-focused period, citing the objective intentions privately shared by Steinbeck with trusted confidants: "The Grapes of Wrath is often truthful because it strives to emulate documentary genres: case study, informant narrative, travel report, photo-text. Steinbeck wanted his migrant book to be honest and moral, an act of social expiation. As he wrote to his agent, 'I'm trying to write history while it is happening and I don't want to be wrong'" (83). Steinbeck biographer Jay Parini seconds this journalistic viewpoint from which he wrote, stating that "his Depression-era novels, in particular, possess a distinctly journalistic flavor and might be thought of as part reportage" (150).

Steinbeck alludes to philosophers of revolutions to invoke the magnitude of the situation and to grant greater credence to his argument through association. A new social perspective is only fully realized when it is embraced by all classes, yet he suggests that

the power of the ruling class has and can again be overruled by the sheer magnitude of the collective: "If you who own the things that people must have could understand this, you might preserve yourself. If you could separate causes from results, if you could know that Paine, Marx, Jefferson, Lenin, were results, not causes, you might survive. But that you cannot know. For the quality of owning freezes you forever into 'I,' and cuts you off forever from the 'we'" (*Grapes* 206). The presence of Steinbeck's personal tone of cautionary outrage escalates as the text progresses. He continues to develop an argument of inevitable revolution while maintaining that it is the wealthy few who reflexively draw inward with their resources that are to blame for their own eventual undoing. This technique, if not frightening, inspires a self-absorbed populace toward philosophical revision. "And the great owners, who must lose their land in an upheaval, the great owners with access to history, with eyes to read history and to know the great fact: when property accumulates in too few hands it is taken away. And that companion fact: when a majority of the people are hungry and cold they will take by force what they need. And the little screaming fact that sounds through all history: repression works only to strengthen and knit the repressed. The great owners ignored the three cries of history" (324).

As a final example of the use of logic to deconstruct the California Dream, Steinbeck depicts the logical yet myopic defense of the residents of California against the Okies. As they reflect upon the effects of the migrant influx on their stability, Steinbeck reveals to the reader that the mindset of the residents of California is also built upon logical deduction; however, their paradigm of who is involved is much too small. They see the livelihood or collapse of only their family, and fail to recognize that a national

intervention of both governmental and social revision is the only means by which they will keep from going under. Rather than standing together for a larger change, each household stands alone against a tide of dispossession far too powerful and momentous to stop. The paradox of Americans having a sense of security only through mutual debt reveals the passive and visionless citizenship that Steinbeck warns against. It is all the more ironic that the Okies are debt free yet seen as lower-class citizens by Californians, as well as starving to death: "And the clerks who drilled at night owned nothing, and the little storekeepers possessed only a drawerful of debts. But even a debt is something. Even a job is something. The clerk thought, I get fifteen dollars a week. S'pose a goddamn Okie would work for twelve? And the little storekeeper thought, How could I compete with a debtless man?" (386). The dream of prosperity can still live in the American imagination, he asserts, but not a prosperity in isolation. It is acquired and retained collectively. This explicitly argued perspective likely affected the readers whose emotions were not moved by character association and imagery.

Steinbeck worked both the emotions and the mind of the reader, giving him no way out but through the gauntlet of the text, hopefully breaking down ill-fated traditions and uninformed myths while building up a more conscientious citizen willing to look beyond himself and toward the greater democratic principles which make him fully human. Much of his technique in accomplishing these ends is demonstrated above, but he continues to challenge the reader through the use of characterization, developing polarized character types of good and evil that insist on the reader's alignment with one or the other. As readers engage the cynicism of the natives and the enduring hope of the migrants, they find themselves wrapped in a literary experience in which their moral

integrity and patriotic alliance hang in the balance. They must maintain an unjust ethic from traditional mythology, or transform their ethic into one which promotes greater social justice. Steinbeck realized that one of the most effective ways to convince mainstream society that the Okies were of the same fundamental caste as them, despite the regional separation, was to demonstrate a parallel history and perspective between the two. This is accomplished through characterization that confirms the hard-working and well-intentioned nature of the Okies while simultaneously castigating the philosophy and actions of the industrial-size land owners. Steinbeck's journalism coverage of the life of the migrants in California was originally published as a series of articles in the San Francisco *News* in 1936 titled *The Harvest Gypsies*. At the outset he strives to make it clear to the reader that his subjects were good people of the same stock as the land-owning citizens of California, only they had suffered the loss of land and security due to widespread drought. He tells their story in such a way that it communicates their "Americanness:"

> They are small farmers who have lost their farms, or farm hands who lived with the family in the old American way. They are men who have worked hard on their own farms and have felt the pride of possessing and living in close touch with the land. They are resourceful and intelligent Americans who have gone through the hell of the drouth, have seen their lands wither and die and the top soil blow away; and this, to a man who has owned his land, is a curious and terrible pain. […] The names of the new migrants

> indicate that they are of English, German and Scandinavian descent. There are Munns, Holbrooks, Hansens, Schmidts. (22-23)

Steinbeck calls on the traits of land ownership, ethnicity, and ingenuity in depicting these victims of circumstance. He uses this same technique in characterizing the Joads as well, hoping that readers would adopt them as their own. *The Harvest Gypsies* likewise parallels *The Grapes of Wrath* in that it reveals the worst of the monopolistic land owners to be utterly contemptible, abusing the democratic rights of the individual to such a degree that they infringe on the abilities of others to likewise acquire liberty through land.

The persuasive technique of associative characterization is obviously limited to the subjective genre of fiction. It allows the artist to heighten reality rather than suppress it, accomplishing through detail and omniscience what is often there yet overlooked in the essentially one-dimensional world of non-fiction. In William Howarth's essay, "The Mother of Literature: Journalism and *The Grapes of Wrath*," he speaks of Steinbeck's choice to use a fictional medium: "He chose fiction to make his story more artful, not truthful. In fiction he could fabricate at will, making up people and events by splicing and reshaping materials gathered by research" (83). Here, "artful" should not be considered synonymous with fictional, but rather an elevated or creative form of reality which potentially furthers the intended effect. Howarth describes this creative tension for Steinbeck as being "caught between literary and journalistic impulses." While at one point Steinbeck believed he could best "put a tag of shame on the greedy bastards who are responsible for this" by publishing in newspapers (*Life in Letters* 162), the articles, while good, did not allow for the complete development of the human story and could not reach the wide audience a novel could. By working so closely with Arvin's government

camp director Tom Collins, and through his engagement with countless migrants, "Steinbeck summoned all the concrete details of human form, language, and landscape that ensure artistic verisimilitude, as well as the subtler imaginative nuances of dialect, idiosyncratic tics, habits, and gestures that animate fictional characterization" (DeMott, Introduction xxxii). This associative characterization connecting the reader to the migrant is implemented immediately in the text, establishing a shared internal tension that is sustained through the final page: "After a while the faces of the watching men lost their bemused perplexity and became hard and angry and resistant. Then the women knew that they were safe and that there was no break. . . . Women and children knew deep in themselves that no misfortune was too great to bear if their men were whole" (*Grapes* 6-7). This attention to physical detail throughout the novel coupled with omniscient commentary in the intercalary chapters makes these fictional figures real people with realities comparable to those of the readers. They can now better imagine the real nightmares occurring in California.

Tom Joad is also immediately implemented as an intermediary between Steinbeck's intentions and the reader. Revealing California as a place of antagonism rather than opportunity, and realigning the public's perception of the Okie, Tom initiates an appeal to class consciousness. He connects himself with middle-class Americans-- the average citizen-- who he characterizes as being pushed around by the wealthy class. "His argument is powerful to the truck driver, who wants to be a 'good guy' and so reluctantly takes him along. Steinbeck counts on his audience to want to consider themselves 'good guys' too; he 'traps' them just as Tom traps the truck driver. The exchange has undertones of class-consciousness— Tom casts himself and the driver against the 'rich

bastards'" (Warford 169). Soon the entire Joad family is present and acts as a collective character immersed in the national story, allowing all Americans to relate as citizens of a shared history. This is true for white citizens which made up the popular majority, the only people group in the history of America not to be racially discriminated against. Steinbeck knew that the racial makeup of the Joads' was the most influential trait about them. Indeed, the racial alignment in the hearts of America, whether overtly expressed or not, was a time-proven cultural construct that Steinbeck was counting on in order to convict the hearts and offend the principles of the popular readership.

This intelligently implemented technique of portraying the issue through a racial lens ironically plays on America's racism and pride as a means of greater humanitarian aid and philosophical change. Gregg Camfield states, "it could be argued that most events that have moved a nation toward a democratic ideal have been catalyzed by the problem of race as articulated in sentimental terms" (6). Steinbeck taps into the fears of white America as he reveals the hardships of the white Okies, suggesting the potential for more widespread victimization among whites and catalyzing a race-centered prideful resistance to the forces of oppression. More or less silent in the midst of Mexican, Chinese, Native American, Japanese, and Filipino abuses throughout the development of the West, white America was suddenly faced with pathological abuses inflicted upon their "own" people and had too much at stake to remain unmoved.

Steinbeck also considered his readership and era as he developed an approach to characterization that would prove most effective in influencing his audience toward a new social and ecological ethic. In his study of the proletarian novels of the same decade, scholar Jon-Christian Suggs asserts that "between 1929 and 1940, in general, Americans

read romances and mysteries, and looked for big books, historical novels epic in range and filled with many strong typical characters in support of one or two romantically conceived central figures" (154). According to these data, *The Grapes of Wrath* was in many ways a product of the times, catering to what would be appealing and therefore popular in order to acquire a larger readership and exposure.

Both genders have significant weight in the book in terms of meaningful roles and their influence in the story. While the agrarian principles of identity call out to male readers through the thoughts and actions of male characters such as Tom and Pa Joad, the female reader often finds women as the center of moral code. Ma Joad is the true center of the family, either sacrificing or fighting for its stability depending upon whichever response was called for in the moment. Of course Rosasharn's moral dilemma in the final scene is by far the most provocative moment in the novel, placing the burden of sacrifice and sustenance again on the females of the novel. These gender-normed symbolic characterizations are explained by Janet Casey, who identifies the synergy of meaning between the farming men and women of the Dust Bowl: "By the late 1930s, the farmer had long been established as the virtual embodiment of the American way, ensuring that the displacement of the Okies would carry a symbolic weight that could not be approached by parallel Depression narratives of urban impoverishment. And if the farmer epitomized Jeffersonian ideals of autonomy, nobility, virtue, and thrift, then his wife became the ground upon which such ideals were realized" (96). Ma was made to be the noble family leader. Steinbeck grants her significant power as the role of matriarch, the organic and roughshod American goddess making the Joads normal and relatable, especially to other women: "Her hazel eyes seemed to have experienced all possible

tragedy and to have mounted pain and suffering like steps into a high calm and a superhuman understanding. She seemed to know, to accept, to welcome her position, the citadel of the family, the strong place that could not be taken" (*Grapes* 100). This was not a novel for men or women, but rather a novel for the American citizen.

While the characterization of the Okies did much to influence the benevolence of the reader, the portrayal of native Californians held equal power in inciting outrage and indignation concerning labor practices and social injustices in general. With each expression of hate delivered from a native Californian, the reader is drawn into a deeper alliance with the Okies, whom they have come to know as good folks from American stock. The Joads' unfulfilled dream increasingly becomes the readers' loss as well. Divisive epithets begin at the border of California, where the men and Ma simultaneously experience them in separate settings. As the Joad men soak in the Colorado River near the Arizona/California border, a migrant and his son heading back to the Midwest try to explain the new identity that awaits the Joads as they enter the much dreamed of Golden State: "Well, Okie use' ta mean you was from Oklahoma. Now it means you're a dirty son-of-a-bitch. Okie means you're scum. Don't mean nothing itself, it's the way they say it" (280). Meanwhile, Ma attempts to rest under the tarp but is harassed by a state official: "A brown-faced man bent over and looked in. . . . 'If you're here tomorra this time I'll run you in. We don't want none of you settlin' down here. . . . You're in California, an' we don't want you goddamn Okies settlin' down'" (290-291). Portraying such acts of indecency is a direct attack on the character of state officials of many ranks and jurisdictions. Steinbeck reveals the corruption within official entities run at the state and

local levels, callously following through with their unlawful agreements to maintain abusive social hierarchies and the exclusion of basic human rights.

Once in California, the authorities' bold disregard for humanity only worsens. At one point a police officer clears out a Hooverville with the threat of violence when the migrants didn't acquiesce to the labor contractor's manipulative offer—" 'Might be a good idear to go,' he said. The thin smile was back on his face. 'Board of Health says we got to clean out this camp. An' if it gets around that you got reds out here—why, somebody might git hurt'" (360). The demeaning arrogance and corruption in every depiction of public servants of peace brings fear to the reader as they consider the threat to true democracy by such actions. What's more, the local farmer's association is shown to be the source of corruption and antagonism, paying off local police, encouraging vigilantism, and seeking to incite a riot in the government camps so that local officials could enter and destroy it.

The representation of a pervasive hate for the Okies by the native citizens reveals the bigotry of the people and highlights the culture of racism projected onto every other minority group in the history of America. despite the Okies being white. Their bigotry proves the invented nature of the California Dream, which promises a bountiful Eden in which all may find paradise. Viewed as either animals or machines by the locals, Steinbeck demonstrates the inescapable social stratum the Okies find themselves in, promoting responses such as the pursuit of legal rights, humanitarian aid, and the individual consideration of how one should view his fellow Americans. Two brief quotes that capture the bigotry of the Californians are seen here, the first from a service station boy appraising the Okies: " 'Them goddamn Okies got no sense and no feeling. They

ain't human. A human being wouldn't live like they do. A human being couldn't stand it to be so dirty and miserable. They ain't a hell of a lot better than gorillas'" (301). The other succinct example comes from the Joads' first night in California as they consider where to first seek their fortunes. They come upon a vigilante group at the county line and are told, "You turn right around an' head north. An' don't come back till the cotton's ready" (382). While the native citizens of California regard the Okies as animals or machines, Steinbeck likewise characterizes local law, farmers, and businessmen by the same terms. They methodically perpetrate a social and land ethic which harvests hatred, division, and pathological abuse. Steinbeck's characterizations of the Okies and the locals reorders the social hierarchy to inspire the pursuit of justice.

A third technique implemented by Steinbeck to accomplish his intentions of reshaping the perceptions of the west in the minds of the readers is his structural approach to the novel and the plot as a whole. At the most general level, the tale mirrors the devastating realities of the Okies as life becomes worse for them in California than it was in the barren plains of the Midwest. Steinbeck delivers a plot that communicates in no uncertain terms what the Joads and the people they metaphorically represent really walked into: unemployment, homelessness, starvation, political corruption, economic polarity, anger, and classism. He fleshes out this dystopic tale through a plot which steadily descends from optimism to devastation, and a structure that alternates between general portrayals of the West's response to the land and its workers, and specific narrative chapters which characterize the issue through one family's journey. Steinbeck believed that he took the medium of the novel as far as he could through this structural method, corresponding to a friend, "I've worked the novel—I know it as far as I can take

it. I never did think much of it—a clumsy vehicle at best. And I don't know the form of the new but I know there is a new which will be adequate and shaped by the new thinking" (*Life in Letters* 194). An American version of fiction, of prose, is most appropriately democratic, free to move and change and represent many styles interchangeably, to experiment and challenge old orders, and to borrow from the past what is necessitated in the present. This is the philosophy with which Steinbeck attempted to create a truly American product. In naming *The Grapes of Wrath* and Frank Norris' *The Octopus* as examples, Richard Lehan asserts that "There are always traces of previous narrative forms in new modes. Elements of both the romance and transcendentalism can be found in the realist/naturalist novel—especially the American version" (30). By working across stylistic boundaries, Steinbeck successfully created a narrative structure that most effectively promoted his intentions of change.

The single most analyzed aspect of Steinbeck's narrative approach in *The Grapes of Wrath* is the presence of general, or intercalary, chapters between the traditionally dramatic chapters about the Joad family. He uses an expanding and contracting rhythm between the general and specific chapters, working between "a generalized, panoramic view of the plight of the migrants followed by a close-up of the plight of representative individuals, the Joads" (Owens, *John* 131). Robert DeMott describes the thematic nature of the general chapters as " jazzy, rapid-fire 'interchapters' [which] work at another level of recognition by expressing an atemporal, universal, synoptic view of the migrant condition" (DeMott, Introduction xi). He earlier states the many and diverse sources of influence which shaped the pendulum-like formation of the book's structure:

> To execute The Grapes of Wrath he drew on the jump-cut technique of John Dos Passos U.S.A. trilogy (1937), the narrative tempo of Pare Lorentz's radio drama Ecce Homo! and the sequential quality of such Lorentz films as The Plow That Broke the Plains (1936) and The River (1937), the stark visual effects of Dorothea Lange's photographs of Dust Bowl Oklahoma and California migrant life, the timbre of the Greek epics, the rhythms of the King James Bible, the refrains of American folk music, and the biological impetus of his and Edward Ricketts's ecological phalanx, or group-man, theory.

While some scholars have labeled Steinbeck's use of these general chapters as a remark on his "conviction that the migrants' culture was not sufficiently developed for direct education in the role of a democratic government in an organic universe," (Shindo 57) most critics assign these chapters as structural genius. Steinbeck is praised for his willingness to draw from all genres of artistic communication in order to express his message, and was also engaged in his artistic and humanitarian work with like-minded yet stylistically diverse artists. There is no debate that *The Grapes of Wrath*'s primary stylistic influence is journalism. William Howarth notes this influence in his essay "The Mother of Literature: Journalism and *The Grapes of Wrath*" when he states, "This debt was evident to Joseph Henry Jackson, who in 1940 first noted how *The Grapes of Wrath* borrowed its techniques from newsreel, photo-text, radio drama, and proletarian fiction—the peculiar hybrid forms of art, journalism, and propaganda that James Boylan calls *Depression reportage*" (73). His journalist-based work *The Harvest Gypsies* is a strong

example of how this method was an entrenched one for him in terms of both communicating the issue and personalizing it. He had also experienced widespread success and acquired influence over the readership through this method, encouraging him to create *The Grapes of Wrath* in a similar style. Jan Whitt argues that "it was the time Steinbeck spent in professional journalism and his obvious gifts for observation and reporting that account for his skill as an ethnographer and for his ability to write novels celebrated as examples of documentary realism" (49).

Biographical evidence suggests that there was significant influence on the stylistic qualities of *The Grapes of Wrath* from cinematic sources. Steinbeck had a close personal friendship with Pare Lorentz, the most influential maker of documentaries during the Depression era, and they were known to have discussed style and intention. With or without this creative resource, Howarth suggests that Steinbeck would still have accessed various cinematic techniques due to his engagement with such a culturally transformative art form: "Principles of cinematic narrative sprang directly from fiction, and by 1938 Steinbeck had absorbed enough movies to recognize their enormous power to move and inform" (89).

The alternating effect of thematic and dramatic chapters is clearly the most significant byproduct of the cinematic influence. The varying close-up personal portraits and panning landscape shots, much like those seen in the documentaries named, suggest an equivalent or parallel between the personal and the national (Howarth 74). The "oscillation" between general and specific chapters builds a "dialectic between nature and humanity, the masses and the Joad family" (75). Barry Maine, in his essay "Steinbeck's Debt to Dos Passos," further defends the intentionality of this dialectic, and argues that

the intercalary chapters "comment on and expose the social and economic conditions that the Joad family must face. Conceptually, the purpose of these chapters is, as in *U.S.A*., to broaden the scope of the novel, to allegorize the Joad family saga by placing it in the larger context of American culture and economic conditions" (153). In essence, Steinbeck trusted that while the issues at a national level may seem too overwhelming, complicated, or distant for the average citizen to understand, coupling this information with a personal story which intimately demonstrates the effects of the problem would make it both real, comprehendible, and important to the common reader.[10]

Without the technical pairing of the macroscopic and microscopic realities of the California migrant, *The Grapes of Wrath* may not have reached the nation to be the cultural shockwave that it was. Steinbeck once explained that the interchapters were expressly designed to "hit the reader below the belt. With the rhythms and symbols of poetry one can get into a reader—open him up and while he is open introduce things on a [sic] intellectual level which he would not or could not receive unless he were opened up" (DeMott, Introduction xi). While other techniques worked on the reader through the dramatic story of the Joads, the structure and style of the thematic chapters diversified the reception of the text in order to accomplish a greater range of impact. This synergy consistently delivers a one-two punch aimed at hardened assumptions and false mythologies, ultimately leading to transformed perspectives.

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[10] Louis Owens takes the opposite stand in his consideration of the effects of the intercalary chapters on the reader. In his essay "The Culpable Joads: Desentimentalizing The Grapes of Wrath," he suggests that the interchapters "offset the intimacy of the narrative chapters," establishing distance and withdrawal between reader and characters(109). He goes on to suggest that if the reader is aware of the larger concerns at the national or global level, it is difficult to become overwhelmed by the singular person (110).

In closing my analysis of plot and structure as a technique implemented to affect specific change, it is necessary to consider why he closes the text the way he does. To many readers, the final tableau of Rosasharn breastfeeding the starving stranger while every other strand of the story remains frayed is unsatisfying in that it avoids closure. Steinbeck plays on the fact that readers have been trained to anticipate and desire a tidy ending, a technical manipulation at work on the emotions and expectations of the reader. The final moment reflects a greater alignment with reality in that life does not happen in clean chapters but perpetually folds one scene into the next. In this case, it is the California Dream yet to be fulfilled. Secondly, it causes either moral or narrative angst in the reader, and by extrapolation threatens worse things to come. This is also a rare instance in prose in which the structure of the story, in this case the freeze-frame nature of the closing scene, demands such a powerful emotional response. This is more frequently accomplished through the plight of a character or images of loss, but in this case the very fact that the story ends with such alarming open-endedness and moral ambiguity creates sympathy, or sentiment, in the reader.

In *The Sentimental Education of the Novel*, Margaret Cohen defines the nature and effect of the tableau in works possessing sentimental qualities. “In sentimentality, the tableau occurs when the two conflicting moral imperatives confront each other with full force in the protagonist’s soul. At this moment, language breaks down, the protagonist stages the confrontation with gesture, and solicits sympathy not only with the intensity of his or her reaction but by sacrificing individual freedom for collective welfare” (143). The striking alignment between her description and the final scene in *The Grapes of Wrath* indicates that, whether or not the entire text was sentimental in nature, the final

scene likely engenders a powerful emotional response from the reader. These emotions may not be able to be articulated clearly in some readers, other than to say that a deep resonance of sustained emotion lingers. Such unreconciled emotions promote philosophical provocation, precisely what Steinbeck desired in his readers as they turned the last page only to realize that they were forced to then reconcile for themselves the gap between myth and reality.

The fourth significant technique which shattered the myth of the western Eden—symbolic allusion-- challenged the social and ecological patterns of thought and inspired legal and humanitarian responses. Steinbeck calls on the subconscious and culturally embedded associations to pioneering Americana, the Bible as the primary textual shaper of American culture, and the industrial takeover of agrarian culture. The conjuring of allusions connected to the founding and shaping principles of America at large and the West in particular establishes an epic tone and likewise grants the message of the text with a significance that acknowledges the cultural weight and primacy of these allusions. In presenting and then deconstructing the pioneering, biblical, and industrial structures of American culture, Steinbeck attempts to communicate the idea that the traditional views (and contemporary versions) are old patterns forced upon 20th century America. He challenges the California Dream by bringing it to the surface of the reader's psyche, showing its errant and even damaging effects, and demanding a re-visioning of land and humanity.

I have no desire to revisit the clouded debate over the degree to which *The Grapes of Wrath* is a sentimental work, but am indebted to Gregg Camfield's consideration of how associations must be presented to the reader as I attempt to explain

Steinbeck's approach. In *Sentimental Twain: Samuel Clemens in the Maze of Moral Philosophy*, Camfield asserts, "[F]or sentimental literature to promote moral change, it must recreate in the reader's mind a sense of psychic reality. Such responses depend on shared associations and sympathy. Still, such sentimental reactions are easily upset by conflicting associations and by anything that might impede sympathy. Thus, by these standards, a writer must purify representations of external reality in order to evoke pure, ideal, morally uplifting responses" (7). Steinbeck consistently upsets the shared associations of the American reader by dismantling these representations once they've been presented. Accordingly, the response of his readers is not pure, ideal, or morally uplifting, but rather indignant, anxious, and self-conscious. Ironically, this wrath is the "ideal" harvest he was looking for, knowing that the reconciliation of these feelings comes about in the form of psychological and social transformation.

The age of modernity so fundamentally shifted the human experience that the old views of the world and humanity's place in it were completely incompatible with reality. Richard Lehan captures literature's treatment of this moment in cultural history, noting that, just as cultural perspectives needed to change, literary expressions of the human experience likewise needed new approaches. The preceding pages of this chapter discuss how Steinbeck did just that. "The death of an agrarian society and the birth of an industrial one produced a change both in the subject matter and technique of the novel. The heroic was diminished; the capacity for unqualified good was questioned; conflict could no longer be resolved by sentiment; the banal competed with the extraordinary; contradictions prevailed" (4). Steinbeck was aware of the tectonic shift in American culture, and placed its oldest and dearest philosophies at the crux of his story and style in

order to rewrite them into a brave new world in such a way that they would remain revolutionary. Robert DeMott identifies many of these qualities in *The Grapes of Wrath*, labeling it "part naturalistic epic, part jeremiad, part captivity narrative, part road novel, part transcendental gospel" (Introduction x). These deeply American literary and cultural tropes have shaped a nation's perceptions for four centuries, and *The Grapes of Wrath* asks the reader to reconsider the integrity of these anachronistic molds.

The first and most prevalent association examined is that of the pioneering American family, whose lineage of sacrifice and patriotism trace back to Puritans and plantations of the seventeenth century. Steinbeck consistently aligns the history of the Okie families with these images of the American ideal in an effort to humanize them and connect their fate with the readers. They are of the same bloodlines that originated in a western European culture, cleared forests and expanded west, and fought in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars: "We ain't foreign. Seven generations back Americans, and beyond that Irish, Scotch, English, German. One of our folks in the Revolution, an' they was lots of our folks in the Civil War—both sides. Americans" (317-318). These irrevocable passports into full citizenship and commonality stamped by the investment of their blood and sweat strike a deep chord with readers of like history. Suddenly there is a kinship, if only through shared sacrifices, with these dispossessed families. Steinbeck continues to tap into the heritage of colonization that defines the proud American ethic of Manifest Destiny and the sovereign right to own land. Arguing his case for the right to stay on his Oklahoman homestead, Steinbeck's representative Midwest farmer says, "Grampa took up the land, and he had to kill the Indians and drive them away" (45). This is a proud declaration rather than a shameful confession, yet it begins to develop an ironic

negative association to this American ideal as the white man is now the one being "killed," driven away by the same oppressor. The old trope no longer fits; it is no longer safe to simply be white and have an historical connection to the land. The reader begins to see that if these citizens are having everything taken from them, nothing will prevent such a thing from happening to them.

Steinbeck continues to warp and satirize the traditionally idealized image of the American pioneering settler. At the end of chapter five, he implements a tableau of the American prairie family in which the virile and confident frontiersman takes from the earth what he sees fit. However, this picture shows the man to be emasculated and mute. His powerless rifle hangs limp and his dreams are crushed as land is seized *from* him rather than *by* him: "The tractor cut a straight line on, and the air and the ground vibrated with its thunder. The tenant man stared after it, his rifle in his hand. His wife was beside him, and the quiet children behind. And all of them stared after the tractor" (53). This inverted experience of victimization rather than appropriation again startles the reader as the image and the outcome don't mutually compute with their expectations. In essence, Steinbeck warns his generation that the forces now shaping the land and culture will not swerve to avoid a rifle or an individual family. Every middle-class citizen is in danger of having his American Dream plowed under. A final example of this westering narrative being demythologized is depicted with a somewhat sardonic tone. The plantation-like social hierarchy that developed among the migrants, though on an incomparably lower scale, reflects just how bad their conditions were even under the best possible circumstances: "The Joads had been lucky. They got in early enough to have a place in the boxcars. Now the tents of the late-comers filled the little flat, and those who had the

boxcars were old-timers, and in a way aristocrats" (559). Rather than reinforcing the brave and adventurous characterizations of the American settler, Steinbeck soils it with irony and loss.

These nostalgic associations to national identity and pride did not act alone in rewriting the California Dream. They were joined by the religious representations that had traditionally justified the actions of America's western conquest. Biblical allusions abound throughout *The Grapes of Wrath* at both a structural level and in specific moments. There are a number of Biblical allusions which allow for the entire novel to be read as an extended spiritual metaphor. The story stretches across Route 66, paralleling the Christian journey told through the sixty-six books in the bible. A parallel epic of dispossession and sacrificial redemption, the Joads travel through a desert to a Promised Land which ultimately remains a contested space between old and new tribes only to be redeemed by mutual hope. This is a reflection of the plot's jeremiad structure which is modeled on Old Testament Jewish history and the fallen yet redeemed philosophy of the Christian faith. Having fallen as far as possible, the final scene reflects a glimmer of hope in Rosasharn's sacrificial saving of another life.

Specific characterizations and allusions to well known biblical passages and principles abound. The somewhat overt and overused symbol of the Christ figure is created in the old preacher Casy, intending his words and actions to hold prophetic sanctity. This is particularly true when the Christ figure is martyred for being a benevolent revolutionary. This is Casy's fate, and just before he leans into the death blow that crushes his skull, he paraphrases Jesus Christ's words from the cross, "You don't know what you're a-doin'" (527). The messenger of the persecuted people, Rosasharn's

dead baby, acted as Moses as it floated off between the reeds toward town to convict the hearts of the oppressors and announce the rights of the captives. Tom is also projected to become a disciple and voice of hope for the oppressed. Ultimately, this line of allusions makes the plight of the Okies a spiritual matter. As they align with the chosen people of God, the reader develops a moral obligation to take their side in the social battle or face the guilt of aligning with sinners. The effect of choosing earthly wealth and power over living in grace with others is made explicitly clear at one point as a swindled farmer explains to his opposition in the style of a parable, “There’s a premium goes with this pile of junk and the bay horses—so beautiful—a packet of bitterness to grow in your house and to flower, some day. We could have saved you, but you cut us down, and soon you will be cut down and ther’ll be none of us to save you” (118).

In Richard Lehan’s text *Realism and Naturalism: The Novel in an Age of Transition*, he notes in his introduction that literary naturalism, a classification placed on *The Grapes of Wrath* by many scholars, reveals that “civilization is the jungle or wilderness in disguise” (xxiii). This is a reference to the fundamental American plot of sending white settlers on an ‘errand into the wilderness’ to redeem the land and its people. Since our national psyche is so reinforced and powerful, it is difficult to overwrite this valued myth of expansion with a more democratized and informed view. This is why Steinbeck brings them to the surface and then alters their direction, rather than attempting to rewrite America’s understanding of a healthy and sustainable relationship with the land. In the perspective of the 20th century, the boundless potential found in industrialization has replaced the expansive geographic landscape, yet Steinbeck warns that to go as far as industry allows would be a mistake. He highlights the spiritual connection between

humanity and land in an agrarian construct that is utterly lost in the industrial market. This cunning manipulation of a spiritual calling to the land which effectively equates to the "errand into the wilderness" perpetuates an inherently spiritual connection to land while downplaying the righteous classism associated with it. Again, Steinbeck finds it easier to alter the dream rather than wholly condemn it.

The tractoring under of the family farms of the Dust Bowl symbolize the coldness of mechanization and the men that drive it. These tractors are the icon of the system and philosophy that perpetuate a further separation between haves and have-nots. They are characterized as cold and precise "snub-nosed monsters, raising the dust and sticking their snouts into it, straight down the country, across the country, through fences, through dooryards, in and out of gullies in straight lines" (47). This image of the linear and objective advancement demonstrates the total lack of consideration for the contours of reality. Other associative images of war assigned to the tractors, such as the correlation made between them and tanks (*Grapes* 205), play off of escalating concerns with the war in Europe and align industrial force with aggression and violence. Steinbeck also reveals how the most important symbol of the American family, once the hearth of the home, has been replaced by the automobile. Industrialization acts as a catalyst of the cultural shift from grounded stability to movement. No longer able to sink roots and connect to a place, the nomadic family now gathers around the car they so deeply depend on to transport them into a new identity: "The family met at the most important place, near the truck. The house was dead, and the fields were dead; but this truck was the active thing, the living principle. . . . this was the new hearth, the living center of the family" (135-136). By association, Steinbeck places every reader into the same circumstance, eliminating the

safety and tradition of the American home and pushing every family out on the highway in search of the American dream which had now become a moving target.

Steinbeck was always aware of the form, aware of its power over the reading experience. He consciously crafted his writing with a variety of devices, chosen as needed to accomplish his intentions. A combination of techniques drawn from varying genres makes for the most influential and effective novel, taking the benefits of each and artfully weaving them together to have the most impact. It speaks to a broader cross section of sensibilities among the readership, and functions in universals, reading beyond the cultural and stylistic specifics of its point of creation. This universal quality grants it the potential to be larger and more powerful than what its immediate reception offers it. The highly charged literary and cultural reception of *The Grapes of Wrath* and its lasting effects on the mythology of the West, both seventy years ago and still today, is the most conclusive evidence that his technical approach to the novel was highly effective.

The Reception and Effects of Steinbeck's Writing:

Shelter line stretchin' 'round the corner

Welcome to the new world order

Families sleepin' in their cars in the southwest

No home no job no peace no rest

The highway is alive tonight

But nobody's kiddin' nobody about where it goes

I'm sittin' down here in the campfire light

Searchin' for the ghost of Tom Joad

--Bruce Springsteen, 1995

At the beginning of this chapter I emphasized three specific intentions of Steinbeck in writing *The Grapes of Wrath*. As I now consider the reception and effects of the text on society and their perceptions of the California Dream, it is worth naming them here again in order to identify the degree to which his efforts were successful. The primary and overarching intent was to expose the Edenic myth of California as false and dangerous. This myth is articulated in this study as: *California is the endlessly bountiful and expansive place to start over and find prosperity—hard work on its beautiful and consecrated land will always result in fulfillment*. He also intended to reshape America's perspectives of their relationship to one another and to the land, and bring humanitarian aid and legal change for the victims of the migrant situation. Obviously these are not small tasks. Likewise, *The Grapes of Wrath* proved to be a work of art not easily dismissed. I divide the analysis of the book's reception and effects into three categories: 1) the literary and cultural reception and saturation of the text, 2) its effects on the culture and farming practices in California, Oklahoma, and the U.S.A. in general, and 3) the nation's overall perception of the California Dream. The first two categories speak to the third, which is the central query yet most difficult to assess in quantitative terms.

It goes without saying that the effect of *The Grapes of Wrath* on the nation was profound, surprising even Steinbeck, who in his charming humility was sure it would not be a "popular" book (*Life in Letters* 173). It inspired stories in national newspapers and magazines, prompted tours of the migrant camps by Eleanor Roosevelt and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, instigated congressional hearings, and inspired a wildly successful Hollywood movie. Carey McWilliams took middle-class benevolence workers on tours of the migrant camps so they could see with their own eyes how "the other half" lived; and after her trip to California, Eleanor Roosevelt famously testified that she never thought *The Grapes of Wrath* "was exaggerated" (*Life in Letters* 202). The novel also prompted President Roosevelt to declare, "I would like to see the Columbia Basin devoted to the care of the 500,000 people represented in 'Grapes of Wrath'" (Wyatt Introduction 3). Even Upton Sinclair, the modern prophet of literary protest, proclaimed, "I remember how Elijah put his mantle on the shoulders of Elisha. John Steinbeck can have my old mantle if he has any use for it" (Stein 203). These brief highlights indicate that, to some notable degree, all three of Steinbeck's asserted intentions come to fruition.

The most measurable means of assessing the effectiveness of *The Grapes of Wrath* as a tool for change is by looking at its literary and cultural reception and saturation. It would not become a best seller if it didn't powerfully appeal to thousands of readers, nor would it or its author be selected for prestigious literary awards unless it held merit. Yet this was exactly its fate. Soon after its official publication in April of 1939, *The Grapes of Wrath* was the top selling novel and remained so for nearly a year. After mid-1939, "Americans could no longer hear the word 'migrant' without thinking of the

Joads" (Stein 191). Its popularity and widespread critical praise led to it being granted the National Book Award and Steinbeck winning the 1940 Pulitzer Prize.

The work of John Steinbeck was furthered greatly when the book was adapted into a movie, thoroughly saturating society with its message of injustice and its plea for change. Produced by Darryl Zanuck and directed by John Ford in 1940, it was wildly popular and made the harsh realities of the symbolic Joad family common knowledge. It earned Ford an Oscar for Best Director, and was nominated as Picture of the Year for 1940. It was later selected (1989) for preservation in the National Film Registry for its historic and cultural influence. In Walter Stein's *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, he writes that "residents of the valley towns were flocking to see the film. The Zanuck version of the novel was second only to Gone With The Wind in box-office attraction in the San Joaquin Valley in 1939 and 1940. Camp managers reported that The Grapes of Wrath was producing a vintage of sympathy for the migrants, and local newspapers echoed that conclusion" (204). Legendary folk singer Woody Guthrie also wrote a song titled "Tom Joad" the night he saw the film, adding yet another medium of mass communication through which Steinbeck's message was distributed. It was also adopted by causes and organizations that didn't align with Steinbeck's intent, appropriating the text and the social influence that came with it without authorial permission.

In light of the widespread popularity of the novel and the film which followed, the cultural reception of *The Grapes of Wrath* was assimilated into many perspectives. While "reviled as communist propaganda and a promoter of class war, on the one hand, it was also considered a pamphlet for socialism and a stirring expose of the economic royalists of California." It was also supported by a couple of socialist pamphlets in Oklahoma

(Fossey 27). It makes sense that social and political movements hustled to posture their views in context to *The Grapes of Wrath*, knowing that it was a cultural conduit through which nearly every American was processing the issues at hand. Ultimately, what is important from a rhetorical perspective is that the general public perceived the novel to be an accurate portrayal of the situation. Wheeler Mayo, the editor of the Sequoyah County Times of Sallisaw, Oklahoma, the Joads' hometown, testified before Congress as if the Joads were actual residents of his county (Starr, *Endangered Dreams* 257-58). Journalists' and politicians' practice of invoking the Joad name to refer to migrants as a whole quickly became common. That even FDR referred to them in a Fireside Chat as if they were real people indicates the rhetorical success of the novel (Starr, *Endangered Dreams* 258-59). Making light of the magnitude to which *The Grapes of Wrath* had grown, something that burdened Steinbeck, he wrote to Otis, "And Grapes dropped from the head of the list to second place out here and about time too. It is far too far when Jack Benny mentions it in his program" (Warford 189).

There is little doubt that the generally positive book reviews for *The Grapes of Wrath* influenced the public's reception of the book, but there is also a synergistic relationship that occurs between the reader and the critic—as the masses embraced it more and more (making it a best seller), edgier reviews softened in light of the unsuppressible supportive critical mass. The same mechanism of influence that shaped the public's perception of the book applied pressure on literary scholars as well, polarizing the more liberal worlds of academia and the media from those of the farmers and the states involved. Another major influence on the reception of the work was the significant critical and popular success previously attained by Steinbeck. His general

popularity was largely solidified by his bestseller *Of Mice and Men* in 1937, but his reputation as a sympathizer of the people and an informed voice on the issue preceded him, especially with works *In Dubious Battle* and *The Harvest Gypsies*, as well as countless newspaper and magazine articles. Having a well established readership, therefore, gave him clout as an authoritative voice and artistic master.

I've placed a chronological compilation of book reviews in the appendix with brief comments. The chronology allows for the identification of critical patterns over time and, as each review notes the site of publication, demonstrates the likely slant and size of each review's readership. An exhaustive collection of reviews would be a book unto itself, thus I've selected reviews that are diverse in their treatment and focus. As stated, this is an enlightening, although subjective, method of analysis in measuring the effects of *The Grapes of Wrath* on society at large. While this measurement of reception is particularly academic in nature, I argue that public sentiment likewise influenced the presentation of the text by the reviewers. Ultimately, a cross section of these documents of reception can be trusted as a fair means of representing the collective reader.

Its reception in literary and public circles was clearly positive. The most common exceptions were of course regionally centered in the Valley and Oklahoma. This is looked at more closely below, but in simple terms the local publications deplored the novel as untruthful propaganda that was philosophically dangerous. While these objections centered on socialist accusations and on the depiction of Oklahomans and California farmers, other communities and individuals rejected the book's value based on its vulgar language. This reflects the culturally conservative nature of the country at the time. It went so far that, "on November 3, copies of the book were ritually burned in East

St. Louis, Illinois. [. . .] 'Critical reception' is for this novel too tame a term" (Wyatt, Introduction 2).

Besides mostly raving reviews, Steinbeck also certainly benefited from the creation of other contemporary works of documentary art which helped tell the story of the migrants and deliver images which powerfully coupled with the words. Among them were Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor's *American Exodus* (1939) and Pare Lorentz's films *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936) and *The River* (1937). Carey McWilliams' research-oriented book *Factories in the Field* served as perhaps the single most complimentary work of art which validated and empowered *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The cumulative effects of these works of art appeared to be the impetus for change that California farm culture had long needed. The nation was informed and involved with the harsh realities of the state as never before, but that focus of energy was soon shifted to issues of global significance as the war in Europe escalated and America's involvement in it also increased. As explained by Elisa Warford, "In 1940 the Toland Report, a congressional investigation on the 'Migration of Destitute Citizens,' had already lost its rhetorical occasion, as the nation was more concerned with the impending war. The war ended the crisis in an unexpected way, with migrants gratefully filling the sudden demand for factory labor and becoming permanent residents of California, though not in the way Steinbeck had imagined" (209). The waning focus on the migrant issue became all the more the case once the white Americans in the fields got the factory jobs that surfaced in response to global warfare. The transition of labor groups from pre-Depression ethnic to Depression-era white, and then back to an ethnic-based labor class defined by the Bracero Program in war time and beyond, all occurred in about a decade.

Many of the same disturbing practices of industrial agriculture continued as before, yet since the victims were not Americans of western European descent, it no longer concerned the white majority as it had before. Sadly, attention to these injustices did not resurface on the national stage until the protests of the United Field Workers beginning in the 1960s, led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta.

Despite being a preeminent literary example of the ability of art to persuade in the name of justice, its legacy is based in literary achievement as much as social transformation. Abuses in the agricultural industry still exist, but Steinbeck's text began a work in the minds and hearts of a nation that could not have come this far without it. *The Grapes of Wrath* was the cornerstone of Steinbeck's Nobel Prize in 1962, and as recently as 1995, Bruce Springsteen's album *The Ghost of Tom Joad* continues to reflect the mainstream presence of this iconic novel. It is one of the most widely read texts in American high schools and colleges. Thus, while it does not stand as the historical marker at which the factories in the fields were dismantled, *The Grapes of Wrath* created long-term conceptual change and established a precedent for the worker's revolution three decades later.

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, many legal and social effects that aided the well-being of the farm worker took place in response to *The Grapes of Wrath* and other documentary art that informed America about California's problems. There was the inclusion of farm workers in the National Labor Relations Act, the California Supreme Court striking down the state's forty year old anti-migrant law in 1941, and the recruitment of migrant families into war-time industrial jobs (DeMott, Introduction xli). The Senate's La Follett Committee investigated the goings-on of the

Valley farms. And President Roosevelt was personally inspired, wanting to designate the reclaimed Columbia Basin as land to be developed by the migrants (Wyatt, Introduction 3).

Ultimately, not enough changed about the Californian farm culture to ensure lasting effects. Walter Stein discusses this far too narrow window of attention, explaining that "not until 1939 did the specific problem of the Great Plains refugees in California receive serious interest from Congress or the President and then only after the publication of The Grapes of Wrath had made the condition of the Okies a blatant fact of American life" (140). What's more, the U.S.'s involvement in the war did more to change the scenario for the workers than did law or perceptual change, unfortunately. In the case of the white workers, World War II was a good change. But for minorities, it stifled the momentum that could have, for the first time in the history of the state, altered the ways in which minority laborers were treated.

The third and most significant consideration in assessing the effects of *The Grapes of Wrath* is that of the general location of the western myth in the minds of America. His intent was to move the locations of identity and place in the minds of the readers from mythological and hierarchical to a place of justice for the western landscape and people. The idea that California is the place to start over and find prosperity, a place where hard work always results in fulfilled dreams, was no longer an accurate or reasonable perspective. The granting of innately bountiful and beneficent qualities to any place allows for misrepresentations and unacknowledged abuses of the land and its people. This philosophical message was Steinbeck's central intent, but it was lost to some readers who held on to the more overt layers of meaning aligned with social protest.

These messages were victories, to be sure, but within a couple of years the white migrants from the Southwest and Midwest found long-term and well-paying jobs in the wartime economy. “Mexicans once again predominated as agricultural migrants, and the problem lost its urgency in Anglo-Saxon eyes” (Gold 65).

Each generation has had to pick up where *The Grapes of Wrath* left off, seemingly only breaking even in making up the lost ground between its efforts and those that have come before. Expressions of activism that stand for generations as the consummate solution to the problem are rare or even nonexistent. It is the job of each generation of artists and citizens to build on and invoke the voices which have laid the foundation for justice. This has happened in every generation in California and across America through various expressions. The formation of the National Farmworkers Association (now the United Farm Workers, or UFW) in 1962, under the leadership of Cesar Chavez, is the most notable product against racial prejudices and labor injustice birthed to some degree out of Steinbeck’s efforts. The UFW has continued to fight for better wages, working conditions, and collective representation ever since, making great strides through its values of non-violence and empowerment.

Was Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* an ineffective means of protest and transformation since these social and psychological patterns still exist? It is not fair to place these expectations on any one body of work; the pursuits of social injustices never tire, but it is the role of the artist to lessen the strain of inequality on humanity. *The Grapes of Wrath* changed its generation and continues to be a metaphor through which today’s wrongs can be understood and righted. In the story of California’s land and people, John Steinbeck represents a significant advocate for justice against the social ills

born out of broken dreams. It can be well argued that voices such as Muir and Steinbeck would not have the power today that they had over their contemporary audiences due to their homogenous racial trajectory of a multicultural problem. But just as cultural representation in America has progressed, a diverse body of literary voices representing them has likewise grown. Voices of protest change radically over time, both in who and what they defend and the stylistic means through which they do so. Just as the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s called for a certain style of protest, so does the 21st century as it faces new versions of the same social and environmental injustices which challenge an equitable pursuit of happiness.

Chapter Five: The Great Central Valley Testifies: Muir and Steinbeck in the 21st Century

"You call some place paradise, kiss it goodbye."

*–Don Henley, "*The Last Resort*," Hotel California*

According to an article in the *Fresno Bee* dated April 22, 2000, "a Chowchilla police officer was checking on a rented van that contained methamphetamine-related chemicals when he noticed a man wearing only a plastic bag around his waist. The 22-year-old man claimed to be the devil and Jesus Christ. He led authorities to a large methamphetamine laboratory capable of producing 50 pounds at a time on a farm in Madera County" ("Chowchilla"). This bizarre and almost comical news story taken from the Central Valley reflects one product of social and environmental injustices founded in utopian dreams, yet the regularity of such disturbing events is a sobering reality. The victims and means of victimization vary greatly in story after story from California's heartland, but each headline is a telling metaphor of the perceptual and physical patterns of failed endeavors which oppress much of this land and its people. Valley residents are all too aware of the many forms of victimization that plague their region, but the battle for ownership of the larger public perception of the California Dream is still alive and well among protest writers and propagandists.

The methamphetamine epidemic is one of the most devastating contemporary counter-narratives of the California Dream, exposing both the social and ecological tolls paid. Its dangerous effects on low-income users and the labor force exemplify a drug epidemic birthed out of the pursuit of happiness. The fact that it is such a powerful and

dangerous drug, and that its use is so widespread throughout the state among the lower and middle class and minorities, reflects the hollow reality of the California Dream. It ultimately serves as a means of sustaining the myth, a means of altering reality that temporarily evaporates hardships. The extreme nature of its highs and lows perfectly match the vaunted myth of California, likewise "hitting harder" than other dreams.

Demographic data on meth makers and users is hard to come by; incarceration and rehabilitation data may be the best indicators, but much of that information is not available. What is known is that making meth is a means of making money that can't be made by traditional means, and is the method so many disillusioned Californians choose to escape their realities. Whether it is the profit to be made by its sale or the escapist effects of the drug itself, meth represents the new lows to which the dream has fallen. "The big *rock candy* mountain" of the 21st century West isn't just an idealized folksong fantasy, but a very real social and environmental toxin.

Most of the methamphetamine in California is produced in the Central Valley, once an idyllic rural cover for the manufacture of a deadly drug, and a region flush with expendable makers and disillusioned users. However, it has become a well-known epicenter since the late 1990s. Despite millions of dollars and thousands of man-hours annually invested by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, its presence continues to increasingly pervade the Valley. Its social abuses are horrifying. Not only does it destroy the lives of its users, made up primarily of the spectrum of ethnicities in the lower class, but this toxic "poor man's cocaine" also threatens the lives of its makers, who are often illegal immigrant farm laborers hired on by powerful drug trafficking organizations (DTOs). As an ironic microcosm of the California Dream, DTOs

(representative of the traditional power structure, or profiteers) offer their makers and dealers access to the good life by working for them. Yet much like their economic identity within the farm labor industry, these poor workers are often viewed as "expendable."

This deadly perspective is matched by the health risks at the hands of the chemicals themselves, which are deadly if breathed or touched. "Hydriodic acid, much more caustic than the muriatic acid used in swimming pools, eats through not only skin but concrete. If inhaled, its fumes cause chemical pneumonia, which can bring a quick, painful death" (Arax and Gorman). Once lured into the production process, they often find themselves quickly trapped, having told the Mexican DTOs to who and where to send their earnings back in Mexico. Ringleaders then confirm a family connection, which all but enslaves the workers to these drug lords out of the fear that a lack of acquiescence or loyalty will lead to the death of a wife, child, or other relative. "Farm labor is a dangerous occupation," said Merced County Sheriff's Detective Mario Anaya. "Unfortunately, they are trading that job for an even more dangerous one" (Arax and Gorman). Other cultural effects of meth include its significantly higher rate of use in rural rather than urban areas (a general description of population dispersal in the Valley), its renown as the single greatest drug threat throughout the region[11], and the fact that most

[11] 87.3 percent of state and local law enforcement agencies in the Pacific Region (dominated statistically by the Central Valley) characterize methamphetamine as the greatest drug threat in their jurisdictions, compared with 29.4 percent of agencies nationwide (National March 4, 2010).

violent and property crime in the Valley is meth-related, including domestic violence, child abuse, and homicide induced by its side effects[12].

This heartless cycle of injustice to humanity confirms again that wherever social injustice is, environmental injustice abounds also. The ecological damage incurred by meth's predominantly rural manufacture is equally devastating. Toxic effects of production burden the same land that holds the water tables and grows food for the nation. The production of one pound of methamphetamine yields approximately five pounds of waste chemicals such as lye, red phosphorus, hydriodic acid, and iodine that contaminate land, streams, rivers, irrigation canals, public sewer systems, and the walls and furnishings of homes and businesses. Based on estimated production and cleanup quantities, California alone has anywhere from 77,000 pounds to 1.75 million pounds of toxic waste dumped into these same waterways and topsoils[13]. In California, farmers use an annual total of twenty million pounds of carcinogenic pesticides ("Pesticide"). Though this is a far greater amount of chemicals distributed on California fields compared to meth dumping, it is done so in a highly regulated, distributed, and scrutinized manner. The toxins of meth production, in contrast, are added directly into water, soil, and air systems in large quantities and concentrated doses, not to mention that they are a

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[12] These patterns, as well as the environmental data that follows, are recorded in a number of reports (2001-2010) posted on the Department of Justice's National Drug Intelligence Center web site. Gang-related violence is also a result of meth manufacture, but more a product of gang culture than the use of meth.

[13] The low number is based on the amount of meth seized in recent years (National Meth Threat Assessment, 2009) and multiplied by ten to account for all unconfiscated meth (Arax). Not only is it likely that more than ten times the meth production hits the streets than is confiscated, but according to a 2002 report the DEA funded 7,255 removals of toxic pollutants ("Final" 38), with the average weight of pollutants per sight being 47 pounds (39). This adds up to roughly 350,000 pounds of toxic waste *found* per year, which could be multiplied by ten to account for undiscovered labs (3.5 million pounds). Roughly half of these removals occur in California (1.75 million pounds).

commingling of unstable chemicals which react in a volatile manner with one another. Somehow the worse of two evils seems to be meth pollution.

The uncertainty of experts as to the exact depth and breadth of these actions only adds to the sense of danger, while the fact remains that livestock, crops, and entire waterways have been poisoned to various degrees throughout the Valley, ultimately affecting the well-being of the entire region. Water and soil remediation and quality assessment is an expensive and imperfect task, and authorities believe the damage to be "substantial," still unsure as to how to best remediate the area of a lab ("Methamphetamine"). Not even mentioned yet are the aerosol byproducts of the production of meth, consisting of multiple ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons. These CFC's are used primarily as refrigerants and industrial solvents, and when released into the air migrate into the upper atmosphere and destroy ozone, Earth's natural protectant from the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation. DEA agents consistently identify the use of many of these CFC's in California's meth labs. As part of the manufacturing process of meth, these chemicals are typically released directly into the atmosphere ("Businessmen"). Though much more difficult to measure than solids, the vaporous byproducts of meth production are just as dangerous. In many ways these aerosol pollutants are more harmful or of greater concern since they cannot be recovered. Remediating the ozone layer is a project beyond the auspices of just the EPA, DEA, or any other defeated acronym; when they lose, we all lose.

The public's lack of response to the meth epidemic reveals the corrosive effects of the California Dream on our value of interdependence. The value system of the state and nation is still fundamentally shaped by the myth of individual rights while ignoring more

invasive issues at the ecological level which actually affect everyone. The lack of outrage and exposure to the facts over the toxic epidemic of meth is an example of this self-serving institutionalization of the myth. An attitude of advocacy in the public at large for the sake of social and environmental justice, as expressed through legal and political change, must take place in order to curb the long standing effects of such passive and dismissive responses to collective concerns. As suggested by Jan Hancock in *Environmental Human Rights: Power, Ethics, and Law*, our very system of values must shift from individual-centered (dominated by property rights) to community-centered (ecological rights that currently get dismissed).

> The accommodation of toxic pollution in law illustrates the way in which legal concepts have been selectively interpreted and applied to protect existent relations of production, exchange and consumption. […] The harm incurred by pollution has in contrast been downplayed, indeed denied by law, even though, unlike contraventions of property rights, toxic pollution incurs physical harm that can lead to diseases and even death. Law thereby focuses on and protects exchange relations at the expense of ecological concerns. (117)

This kind of activism has happened more in recent years, but usually at the grassroots level from people groups or perspectives at the fringes of society, rather than in the mainstream. This is due in part to a pattern of victimization which primarily affects underrepresented groups or those without institutionalized social agency. The story of the

Central Valley tells of a dream longed for in many forms by many people who are collectively disenchanted by the lack of returns on their sweat and sacrifice.

Ironically, the appropriated lexicon of the California Dream, though a proven myth to most residents, is the tired language with which so many Central Valley towns boost their image. It is almost as if communities hope to someday become a boomtown by not letting go of the idea; it is also a prudent and necessary marketing decision by local leaders. Associations with the Gold Rush or Yosemite, for example, sell the nostalgia of the myth in a region which is both indebted to, and oppressed by, its application. Every town on the Valley floor that has a major access road to the Sierra Nevada Mountains has branded itself with 19th century dreams, seeking both regional significance and residual profits. Clovis is the "Gateway to the Sierras," and Merced is the "Gateway to Yosemite," while every smaller town to their east adopts a similar title and depends on its tourist draw to stay afloat. Ultimately, these communities find themselves in a paradox between retaining the profitable mythology of the past and claiming the more gritty and heterogeneous realities of the present.

An attempt to express the many ways in which the myth is represented in 21st century California could fill volumes of books. The residual effects of over a century of promotion are so pervasive and second-hand in every medium of culture that it doesn't even stand out or surprise. In that sense, the myth has succeeded in becoming the mainstream identity of California, while at the same time implying that the public has been desensitized to the magic of the myth and is thus less influenced by it. In short, the degree to which the promoted myth affects the public perception of California can be debated, but the fact is that the myth is still being widely promoted. Music, movies,

regionalized slang, representative images, the marketing of products, regional and city identifications, and an endless proliferation of the California Dream all portray the experience as flashy, healthy, or wealthy. The three dynamos of the state-- tourism, agriculture, and entertainment—offer the most representative examples of myth proliferation. Not surprisingly, these are the same perpetrators that gave the California Dream such momentum over a century ago.

The alternative messages in the literature of John Muir and John Steinbeck are still the preeminent artistic mediators between today's social, environmental, and philosophical crises and a false, yet thriving, myth. They engage in influential conversation with small Valley farmers losing their land, Valley farming corporations making the rules, the smog-shrouded view of the Sierras, the decrease of wild flowers and spaces, the selfish soul and myopic vision of the Valley landowner, a politicized utilitarian appropriation of its natural resources, and the senseless and destructive ways in which nearly everyone continues to invest in an idea of the place that never truly existed. They did it early and did it best, demanding that their readers engage in the collective shaping of their region and their communities.

John Muir and John Steinbeck continue to translate the angst in the hearts of the oppressed and disempowered, and demand a testimony of defense from those who continue to perpetrate injustices against the land and people of the Valley. In no uncertain terms, though in quite different styles, these men made it known that the California Dream is to be fundamentally challenged as inherently misleading and destructive. Their texts, *My First Summer in the Sierra* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, stand as an entry point into this reevaluation of California in the imagination of America and the social and

environmental application of such beliefs. They put an imaginative asterisk next to the idea “dream*,” invoking a consciousness of the land and people that stretched beyond one’s own well-being. They recast this region so deeply in countercultural ideas that it still resonates in the imaginations of its residents, and acts as the muse for many writers who have come after them. Their legacy is seen in today’s covert and overt artistic protests. Like Muir, many celebrate the beauty, diversity, and uniquenesses of the Valley worthy of preservation. And like Steinbeck, many artists bring light to the darker social realities that stem from free-market industrialization masquerading as opportunity.

Muir, Steinbeck, and likeminded artists have created works which include stirring depictions of what to fight against, what to strive toward, and how to dream without the expressions of that dream limiting the prosperity of others. Total “victory” for these writers would be a revolutionary accomplishment-- the death of a nostalgic mythology that has resided at the core of the American and Californian identities from their inceptions. Such a victory would also mean that the national archetype of “land as life” would be replaced with a more egalitarian perspective reconciling humanity to itself and its land.

Ultimately, such a crisis of national and state identity would be greatly beneficial. California historian Kevin Starr suggests that this transition away from the decayed California Dream is well under way, yet he describes it as more of an apocalyptic crisis than a transformative liberation. In his 2004 text *Coast of Dreams: California on the Edge, 1990-2003*, he no longer sees California “to be found first in its myth and then in reality. California [has] become, rather, a reality in search of a myth that had once been believed in, had been lost, but never fully repudiated” (629). The days of the California

Dream being reduced to a cultural artifact are long off, but if Starr is right in his assessment of a California groping for a new identity, it will be the voices of Steinbeck and Muir that surface to serve a 21st century culture overwhelmed by social and environmental injustice. Even in the highlighted case of meth, the descendants of Steinbeck's Okies and the *braceros* they joined in the fields are among the most generationally victimized people by this drug, and Muir's environmental advocacy inspires today's loudest defenders of ecological protection and rehabilitation from its toxic by-products. They both left a blueprint for a better way of thinking about the human place in the world.

In her essay, "Coping with Industrial Exploitation," Cynthia Hamilton gets to the heart of the dominant social and environmental ethic of the West and points to a solution grounded in both action and thought. Ultimately, it is an alarmingly accurate paraphrase of the literary efforts of Muir and Steinbeck:

> It must become understood that human progress in the Western world has largely been seen as synonymous with the alienation of human beings from each other and the natural world. Domination and the rise of corporate capitalism can be explained, in part, as a consequence of this alienation. Individuals and societies can no longer stand apart from nature and other people. Overcoming the divisions within society and between society and the natural world must be the goal of the environmental justice movement. Only this struggle against alienation's perversion of humanistic and ecological values can bring us closer to an alternative way of life

> predicated on a healthy, just, and sustainable relationship to the natural world and each other. This must become our ultimate task. (75)

Land and people are inseparably bound by the same imaginative constructs and thus suffer the same fate when either is abused. However, this reciprocal relationship also reflects the shared potential to move from an expressly debased status into one founded on interdependence and respect.

The contemporary voices of the Valley pursuing a new Dream are diverse—men and women of varying ethnicities and generations possessing unique opinions and histories. Yet the common thread throughout all of them is an honesty about the realities of this region: racial tensions, movement/migration, economic inequality and strife, environmental problems, migrant labor, and the cultural impact of corporate farming practices. They are working against a backdrop of a media-saturated culture fluent in the iconic language of happy cows roaming green pastures, super model beach babes, "imposter" chickens longing to be California's finest, dancing raisins, and nostalgic Old West allusions. Whether it is this version of utopian branding or a specific perspective of history that perpetuates an idealization of life in Central California, the regional writer of the 21st century is perpetually fighting to break through the "high def" and "wireless" onslaught of media through literature. Clearly, the literary voices are outnumbered and perhaps even using an outdated medium, prompting a call for more writers and artists to candidly and creatively tell the truth about their region for the sake of social and environmental awareness and action.

The current age of environmentalism that now influences the cultural and intellectual perspective of America is rooted in these minority discourses that call for a new ethic grounded in social and environmental stewardship. Muir, Steinbeck, and their inheritors of protest continue to invoke change in spite of their debased locations on the scale of social agency, working against the mainstream with a literature that "gives distinctive shape to long-accumulating grievances, claims old rights, and demands new ones. It creates space for argument, introduces doubt, deepens perception, and shatters the accepted limits of belief. American protest writers recognize the failed promises of the democratic experiment and redraw its blueprints" (Trodd xix).

Every generation of writers has contemporary movements or social philosophies which either invoke a call for justice or support the voices that do. For Muir, the myth expressed through utilitarian industrialization was his nemesis while the Progressive Era was his benefactor. For Steinbeck, opposition likewise came from agribusiness while aid in the form of New Deal philosophies supported his cause for social justice. The ethnic diversity of the Central Valley in the 21st century guarantees an audience for its contemporary writers more so than any influences from larger social epochs such as post-modernism or new-environmentalism. Thus while the parties retaining the myth are still the same, today's Valley resident represents a very different collection of traits to be claimed. Muir and Steinbeck may have shared a cultural perspective with the majority of the Valley in their era, but that is no longer the case. Today's greater inclusion of perspectives more fully reveals the complex realities of class, education, crime, resource degradation, and environmental hazards which directly reflect the standard of living for every group of people in the Valley. As phrased by Mark Arax in the foreword of

Highway 99: A Literary Journey Through California's Great Central Valley, the Valley story is best told "not by the writer with nostalgia fogging his eyes but by a Hmong or Sikh or Oaxacan whose grandfather took the long road to the valley in 1980 or 1990" (xxvii).

Room must be made for multiple Central Valleys if its social and ecological diversity is to be fully represented. This principle is in fact a point of unification among regional writers striving to reflect the complex tapestry of culture and experience. The voices of protest which follow in the footsteps of Muir and Steinbeck are likewise avoiding the codification of the Valley. Rather, they are seeking to layer together the unrepresented perspectives of the land and its people in order to effect imaginative change. This is a very functionalist perspective of literature, which can suggest that the aesthetic concerns of the writer are secondary to social effects. Yet, as noted in the introduction chapter and revealed throughout the body of this study, these two sources of intent are synergistic in nature, not any less interchangeable than social and environmental concerns and how they correlate with one another.

The concern with a literature's function, or effect, is not exclusive to protest writers; it is the same principle of intent held by propagandists who pander the California Dream for profit or for the preservation of ideas which secure their social station. In essence, the authentic voices of the Central Valley and their ideological counterparts both use the same rhetorical tools, yet craft very different products in a battle for public perception. Muir and Steinbeck knew innately that they were in the midst of a power play against opponents who had all of the same weapons at their disposal yet also had the advantage of the engrained traditional mythologies of California on their side. This

polarized dynamic between the artist and the myth corresponds to the efforts of minority discourses starting with the mid- to- late-20th century writers telling their story in spite of the oppressive omniscience of traditional narratives. These new voices also reflect the diversity that is rewriting the Central Valley today, while still in the ever-present shadow of agricultural propaganda.

As Kevin Starr considers the future of California through today's cultural realities, he remains the objective historian, not daring to project events onto this always-promised but never-fulfilled land. Rather, he identifies the mass of complexity in every aspect of its existence and wisely leaves tomorrow as an open question. I suggest that this new identity will be grounded in the past. However, this "rediscovered" mythology will be the one often praised but rarely followed, as manifested in the voices of John Muir and John Steinbeck.

> California continues; but where is it going and what it will become—how, that is, it will handle the diversity of its people, the confusions of its values and culture, the global-colonial nature of its economy, the trade-offs between its militant environmentalism and concern for local well-being with the demands of its industrial infrastructure, and, most important, how it deals with the possible loss of one California and the ambiguous imposition of a new and uncharted identity—remains […] an open question. (*Coast* xiii)

My boldness in asserting that the voices of Muir and Steinbeck have and will remain central lenses for regional identification rests in the realities of this place. Leaving the outer perimeter of any Valley town, you are always met by some version of roughly

the same image—a line of modern-day jalopies and port-a-potties on hitches parked along rows of artichokes or lettuce or peach trees, with long-sleeved men picking, thinning, or pruning as they sing a chorus from a *corrido* under the backdrop of a gray-white sky where the snow-capped Sierras used to be visible. Down the road is a sign posted by the State of California boasting of its Blossom Trail, directing tourists along miles of symmetrically planted fruit orchards with enough wild space occasionally left along the edges of cultivated fields to see the ecological remnants of a region long plowed under. In these sights and sounds I see and hear the legacy of injustice and the lingering hope for a new Dream leading to a better reality.

Appendix:

Chapter Three:

- "How deep our sleep last night in the mountain's heart, beneath the trees and stars, hushed by solemn-sounding waterfalls and many small soothing voices in sweet accord whispering peace!" (21).
- "Near camp the trees arch over from bank to bank, making a leafy tunnel full of soft subdued light, through which the young river sings and shines like a happy living creature" (23).
- In speaking of the sugar pine, Muir says, "at the age of fifty to one hundred years it begins to acquire individuality, so that no two are alike in their prime or old age. Every tree calls for special admiration" (34).
- In describing the morning, he says, "the dew vanishes, flowers spread their petals, every pulse beats high, every life cell rejoices, the very rocks seem to thrill with life. The whole landscape glows like a human face in a glory of enthusiasm, and the blue sky, pale around the horizon, bends peacefully down over all like one vast flower" (86-87).
- In describing Half Dome, he says, "a most noble rock, it seems full of thought, clothed with living light, no sense of dead stone about it, all spritualized, neither heavy nor light, steadfast in serene strength like a god" (89-90).

- “The whole wilderness seems to be alive and familiar, full of humanity. The very stones seem talkative, sympathetic, brotherly. No wonder when we consider that we all have the same Father and Mother” (165).
- “Comprehended in general views, the features of the wildest landscape seem to be as harmoniously related as the features of a human face. Indeed, they look human and radiate spiritual beauty, divine thought, however covered and concealed by rock and snow” (176).

Chapter Four:

- 15 April 1939, *The Nation*, Louis Kronenberger: He calls it “the most moving and disturbing social novel of our time,” and quotes the publishers as saying that it is “perhaps the greatest single creative work that this country has produced.” He also identifies it has having “those two qualities most vital to a work of social protest: great indignation and great compassion.” He notes the intentionality of its construction when he says “no novel of our day has been written out of a more genuine humanity, and none, I think, is better calculated to awaken the humanity of others.” This reviewer also shapes the reality of the circumstances surrounding the manipulative mass distribution of handbills, which was largely blamed on Arizona farmers upon further investigation.—“handbills lure them there with promises of work. But the real purpose of the handbills is to flood the California market with such a surplus of workers that the price of labor sinks to almost nothing.” Steinbeck’s characterization of the Joads receives mixed reviews: “The picturesqueness of the Joads, for example, is fine wherever it makes them live

more abundantly, but false when simply laid on for effect. Steinbeck's sentimentalism is good in bringing him close to the lives of his people, but bad when it blurs his insight" (440-41). Clearly, the overall tone of the review is two thumbs up.

- 17 April 1939, *Newsweek*, Burton Rascoe: He seems to be less impressed by the text, offering a soft attack on Steinbeck's worth as an American writer and granting no value to the content of the plot-- "you have to admit that not one of his books, except in the superficie of idiosyncratic cadence, remotely resembles any of his other books. He is not a school, as Hemingway is. [. . .] I can't quite see what the book is about, except that there are 'no frontiers left and no place to go'" (46).
- 22 April 1939, *The Boston Herald*, Charles Lee: Though starting the review by assigning it as propaganda, saying, "When the great propagandists of literature are listed hereafter the name of John Steinbeck must stand with that of Stowe and Dickens" (47), he later says that "it is doubtful whether this book could be such a tremendous experience were truth not at its core" (Lee, "Tragedy" 49). Ultimately, he praises it as one of the finest pieces of American literature ever. In another review in *The Boston Herald* in June of the same year, Lee says, "Steinbeck's novel is one of the few perfectly articulated soarings of genius of which American literature can boast. One must go to Melville, Poe, and Whitman for comparisons" (Lee, "Tops" 51). This is arguably the greatest compliment possible to the writer and the work reviewed.

- Spring 1939, *Partisan Review*, Philip Rahv: The tone here is more edgy, suggesting sentimentality and manipulation by Steinbeck. The review seems to live up to its journal's title. "The book is at the same time a detailed exposure of dreadful economic conditions and a long declaration of love to the masses. [. . .] Mr. Steinbeck spares us not a single scene, not a single sensation, that could help to implicate us emotionally. And he is so much in earnest that a number of times he interrupts his story in order to grapple directly with his thesis. Thus several chapters are devoted to outright political preaching from the standpoint of a kind of homespun revolutionary populism" (111-12).
- May 1939, *New Republic*, Malcolm Cowley: One of the most "important" literary critics of the century gives *Grapes* high praise as well, saying that "It belongs very high in the category of the great angry books like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that have roused a people to fight against intolerable wrongs" (383). It also directs the reader quite clearly in the ways in which he should respond upon reading it. It is not simply an aesthetic experience, but a catalyst of social protest.
- June 1939, *Canadian Forum*, Earle Birney: Titled "A Must Book," his review insists on its high quality, but remains critical of its sentimentality—"In the ending especially there is theatricality; pain and cruelty are sometimes sensationalized in the manner of Faulkner and Hemingway. There are overtones of mysticism and sentimental individualism which occasionally confuse the dominant social philosophy." In speaking of proletarian literature, he says that "this is no 'proletarian novel.' It is rather the only thing a class-conscious artist can write so long as the working people of the earth . . . suffer and die like this

under their economic overlords." Like Cowley, Birney explicitly communicates how the masses should respond to the text-- "Steinbeck is not so much warning the rich, whom he sees cannot help themselves, as arousing the poor, who can, to courage, endurance, organization, revolt."

- 28 July 1939, *Commonweal*, James Vaughan: This review is complimentary of the writing and suggestive of the appropriate reader response-- "His tale of pain, starvation, wretchedness and death, Mr. Steinbeck relates with tenderness and even with detachment so far as the mere story is concerned. [. . .] The impact of this book is very powerful. Whoever reads it will find he has gained a better total grasp on the need in this country for rectification of any and all conditions which now or hereafter may correspond in any degree with the terrible plight of the dust bowl tenant farmers" (342).
- Summer 1939, *North American Review*, Charles Angoff: Angoff places Steinbeck among the all-time greats, supporting his artistic integrity while debasing that of the negative critic-- "With his latest novel Mr. Steinbeck at once joins the company of Hawthorne, Melville, Crane, and Norris, and easily leaps to the forefront of all his contemporaries. [. . .] The book also has the proper faults . . . faults such as can be found in the Bible, Moby-Dick, Don Quixote, and Jude the Obscure. [. . .] The greatest artists almost never conform to the rules of their art as set down by those who do not practice it" (387-89).
- October 1939, *Wilson Library Bulletin*, Stanley Kunitz: He notes that it is the most popular title in libraries at the time. He then points out in a mild tone of judgment that Kern County has banned the book and the Associated Farmers are

attempting to get it banned statewide. He also supports its truthful depictions, saying, “*Factories in the Field*, a factual study by Carey McWilliams, ought to convince any skeptic that Steinbeck used more than nightmarish imagination in depicting the plight of the migratory farm workers.” His closing lines pack a strong punch for the reader’s conscience-- “You cannot muzzle a good book. You cannot keep the truth from being told” (165).

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