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# INTRODUCTION

"Now, to Eden or at least a little east."

(Steinbeck, [1960], 1977, pg. 166)

John Steinbeck began writing *East of Eden* in 1951, although, according to numerous sources, he had been piecing the story together in his mind for many years. During his many correspondences with his editor, Pascal Covici, Steinbeck expressed his great expectations for his upcoming novel, saying that it would be better than anything he had ever written.

> I seem to have been writing this book forever. I guess the last is true, I have been writing on this book all of my life. And throughout, you will find things that remind you of earlier work. That earlier work was practice for this, I am sure. And that is why I want this book to be good, because it is the first book. The rest was practice. I want it to be all forms, all methods, all approaches. (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 148)

The author believed that *East of Eden* incorporates all of the writing techniques that he had come to learn during the writing of his preceding work, and that his new book would be his most popular publication. When it was published by the Viking Press, in 1952, *East of*

*Eden* was not well received by most critics. They denounced, amongst other things, the particularly vulgar and violent scenes of the novel, the similarities between the main narrative and the Book of Genesis and the many lengthy and confusing digressions. Nonetheless, despite the initial reception, the author's anticipations were correct: not even one month after it was published, *East of Eden* made record sales and was placed on the American bestsellers list of 1952. Today, *East of Eden* is a veritable American classic, and is considered by many to be Steinbeck's most ambitious work.

Clearly, the critics who first read the novel could not have anticipated just how successful it would become. However, their first impressions are certainly not false, especially with regards to the complexity of the storyline, as explained by Jackson J. Benson in his biography *John Steinbeck, Writer*:

> Many of his works have almost no plot as such, but instead tend to focus on one situation after another. When he does try to use a strong plot, as in *East of Eden*, the novel becomes very labored and one has the feeling constantly that he is following a plot reluctantly and that what he really wants to say has very little to do with a sequence of cause and effect, an evolving pattern of events that build to a climax and resolution. He didn't think that way. (Benson, [1984], 1990, pg. 181)

According to Benson, the confusing nature of Steinbeck's narratives is a recurring problem. Although I do not necessarily agree with his radical assessment of *East of Eden*, I cannot argue against the idea that the plot does have its inconsistencies, or that it is sometimes difficult to follow. Steinbeck skips from his detailed account of the natural scenes in the

Salinas Valley to describing the lives of the Hamiltons on their small family ranch to introducing the Trask family on their farm in New England, all within the first 100 pages.

When Steinbeck was writing *East of Eden*, the novel was given the temporary title *The Salinas Valley*. Before deciding on the present title, Steinbeck also considered others such as *My Valley*, *Down to the Valley* and *Valley to the Sea*. In the series of letters to Covici, Steinbeck explained that his primary objective was to paint a portrait of the *Salinas Valley*, the place of his childhood. Steinbeck's parents very much appreciated the natural environment of the valley:

> Steinbeck's father felt the constant need to be plugged into the soil, to feel its vibrations. Man must conserve, for man was part of the pattern, the chain of life. On the other side, Steinbeck's mother had the sense that all things about us are enchanted, if we had but the eyes to see. (Benson, [1984], 1990, pg.8)

As his own parents had taught him the importance of being a part of nature, Steinbeck wanted to do the same for his children. His goal was to leave his two young sons with an appreciation for the sounds, the smells and the images of his beloved valley, a project which obviously evolved a great deal during the writing process. The Salinas Valley, one of largest farming communities and the heart of Californian agriculture, is central to this novel, and the images that Steinbeck conjures about the valley are very powerful. Except for the fourth part, which takes place in the city of Salinas, most of the action in *East of Eden* is

set on small family-owned farms in Connecticut and in California. In *Journal of a Novel: The* East of Eden *Letters*, the author explains just how important the valley is to the story:

> Today I introduce the Hamiltons to Adam Trask and my purpose, as you will understand, will be to put down the Salinas Valley from a county man's viewpoint. To show the fine hopes of the people and their ingeniousness. To develop the kind of mind Samuel had and to indoctrinate Adam with the flavor of the Valley. Don't forget he is now a Valley man. (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 83)

To be a valley man, for Steinbeck, is not only to live in the Salinas Valley; it also means to allow the valley to live within you. Having been inhabited by the valley his entire life, Steinbeck has no trouble conveying his affection for the land.

It is against this background that I intend to more closely examine the natural environment in this novel. The main objective of this thesis is to present an ecocritical reading of *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck; imperative to this goal is Heidegger's ecological philosophy. I will focus on the characters of *East of Eden* and show how their way of life alters their connection to the earth, in essence establishing a dialogue between Steinbeck's work and Heidegger's ecocritical philosophy. Often, when we think of the environmental theme in Steinbeck's writings, we think of his essays and non-fictional work such as *Sea of Cortez: A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research* (1941) and *America and Americans* (1966). As for his fictional work, a majority of the ecocritical studies tend to focus on *The Red Pony* (1933) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), without mentioning his other writings.

Because of Steinbeck's intentions in the writing of *East of Eden,* looking at the novel from a Heideggerian ecocritical perspective is, I believe, a particularly relevant endeavour. In order to substantiate this hypothesis, I will examine how the characters perceive the land on which they live, the way they build on this land and the way in which they cultivate it. I will also look at the technologies which come about at the beginning of the 20th century, not only on the farms but on a broader scope. Despite their immediate utilitarian applications, these inventions bring about multiple negative consequences. Finally, I will explore the idea of transcendence, how a person can hope to become a more complete and perceptive individual, and what this means with regards to their relationship with nature. I will also discuss the importance of knowingly facing difficult situations which are inevitable in order to gain this new perspective.

In *East of Eden*, as in many of his works, Steinbeck's approach to nature is unconventional for his time. In the 1950s, ecology, as it is understood today, simply did not exist. Before the loud calls for conservation, before environmentalism became an indispensable tool in every field, from politics to business, Steinbeck had intuitively understood the great importance of the relationship between humans and nature, and the need for humans to protect nature.

> Literary works often precede and foretell the articulation of philosophical concepts. And lovers of the natural world have been among the most devoted readers of John Steinbeck. Maybe it is because they see in his works strong identification with and respect for tillers of the soil and harvesters of the sea as well as an abiding reverence for the

> earth and its pristine state. Maybe it is because Steinbeck's appreciation for nature and his concern regarding humanity's relationship with it is more complex than a simple awe for the power and beauty of creation. [...] A generation before such ideas were popularized, Steinbeck exhibited an ecological understanding and environmental sophistication both rare and unusual. (Gladstein & Gladstein, 1997, p. 162 – 163)

Steinbeck was, in all likelihood, largely unaware of how close he was to the cusp of an entirely new way of looking at the world. It is only towards the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st that the preservation of the environment has become a primary concern. As environmental issues become more and more dire, most of the earth's vast population is conscious of these concerns. Today, especially in developed countries, it is impossible for individuals to be unaware of the environmental plight, unless they voluntarily close their eyes to the situation. The ecological dialogue is visibly gaining attention; ecological literary studies, on the other hand, are still in the stages of infancy.

Ecocriticism is a vast literary philosophy which can sometimes be difficult to define. Greg Garrard, in the first chapter of his book *Ecocriticism* (2004), suggests a definition that I find quite pertinent:

> [E]cocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term "human" itself. [...]
>
> Ecocriticism is unique amongst contemporary literary and cultural theories because of its close relationship with the science of ecology. (Garrard, 2011, pg. 5)

What I find interesting about this particular description of ecocriticism is that it encompasses all of the key environmental themes – wilderness and wildlife, pollution and conservation, for example – and examines the roles and responsibilities that humans, as such, must acknowledge. Although ecocriticism has an inherent relationship with the world of the ecological sciences, my thesis will shy away from this aspect entirely, uniquely focusing on its literary and philosophical implications.

At this time, it is difficult to anticipate which specific philosophical and theoretical approaches will become most prevalent in ecocritical literary theory. Although scholars have been contemplating environmental issues in literature since the 1960s, no organized movement has taken shape until the very recent past. Even today, there are no universally accepted ecocritical philosophies, and the future of ecocriticism is in the process of being decided. Nonetheless, there is one thinker who stands out above all others, according to many experts in the field, as the precursor of the ecocritical vanguard: Martin Heidegger. Not only is Heidegger a legendary philosopher, he is also credited for having developed the deepest and most exhaustive ecological thoughts to this day. Despite his significant contribution, some critics are fighting to keep Heidegger on the sidelines for ethical reasons. In the 1930s, Heidegger became a member of the Nazi political party of Germany. However, it is difficult to assess to which degree he was actually involved in the party. Furthermore, there is no evidence of any anti-Semitic doctrine in his philosophical works.

Therefore, I have chosen to base the majority of the theoretical foundation of this thesis on Heidegger's ecological philosophies, some of the final essays which he wrote.

In his 1951 essay "Poetically Man Dwells," Heidegger exposes the fundamental difference between the two ways in which it is possible to "be" in this world; "being" can be either a basic physical presence or "being" in its essential state. To "be" in the Heideggerian sense, a thing (person or object) must be free to reveal its essence in its own particular and subjective way. The unveiling of a thing's essence often takes place through poetic writing, because poetry destroys all of the restrictions which are imposed by everyday language; poetry is the true nature of language. "It is language that tells us about the nature of a thing, provided that we respect language's own nature." (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg.144) The writing and reading of poetry brings humans to see nature differently, to be in awe of nature, and, in doing so, it brings humans to take on the responsibility of caring for nature. The natural world can become humankind's refuge, but humans must merit this sheltering. Heidegger suggests that humans must learn to live on this earth in harmony with the environment, building in order to regain our identity as human beings, as well as our own true essence. Without a doubt, humanity is at risk if we do not come to understand that we are not the masters of the world but a gift from an entity which is much bigger and far beyond ourselves. For this reason, we must openly give nature the respect which it deserves.

In 1939 in Bremen, Germany, Heidegger gave his famous lecture called "The Question Concerning Technology." According to his philosophy, modern technologies take a thing's essence away. Heidegger condemns all the technological advances which reduce nature to a simple resource, giving things a role which is strictly utilitarian, essentially "enframing" it. "Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 20) The type of revealing which is brought about by modern technology challenges nature; it does not disclose the essence of the natural world. Instead, it creates a standing reserve, a state where things are set aside until they are ready for human consumption. Nothing is unique and everything becomes dispensable. For Heidegger, the effect of enframing is that it creates a loss of enchantment in human beings. To fight this disillusionment, people must look to spare the environment, to save it. "Saving does not only snatch something from danger. To save really means to set something free into its own presencing. To save the earth is more than to exploit it or even wear it out. Saving the earth does not master the earth and does not subjugate it, which is merely one step from spoliation." (Heidegger, [1970], 2001, pg. 148) Saving the earth, according to the German philosopher, is to let it exist in its own state, without making use of the modern technologies which enframe it. Taking a closer look at the evolution of technology is key to understanding the enframing which now takes place on a global scale.

Technology, at its very core, is a form of revealing. The old forms of technology do not steal a thing's essence but, on the contrary, they are a method of showing a thing's true essence. "The instrumental definition of technology is indeed so uncannily correct that it even holds for modern technology, of which, in other respects, we maintain with some justification that it is, in contrast to the older handwork technology, something completely different and therefore new." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 5) The new technological methods bring about the revealing of a thing, just as the more traditional technologies. However, the modern forms do so in a way that implies enframing rather than revealing. Today, the majority of the products that we use on a daily basis are made in immense chain-method factories. Even our homes are built this way. The employees are enframed, being part of a system which aims for the quickest production possible with the least cost. Factory workers are never called upon to use their own individual talents; they are never required to use their imagination. In such a process, no authentic creation can take place. The article which is produced in this type of space has no intrinsic value, other than its immediate use; it is trivial and can be easily replaced. "[W]e bear witness to the crisis that in our sheer preoccupation with technology we do not yet experience the coming to presence of technology, that in our sheer aesthetic-mindedness we no longer guard and preserve the coming to presence of art." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 35) Heidegger suggests that we must return to the use of technologies which give the creative power to those who are doing the creating, allowing them to call upon their own particular talents to make the product in question into a work of art, and thus escaping enframing. It is imperative that we return to a state of building and dwelling on this earth and that we allow the essence of things to shine

forth. In order to clarify this philosophy, I will show how it applies to the characters of *East of Eden.*

The second philosopher who will be an important reference in this thesis is Edward F. Ricketts. Literally unknown on the ecocritical scene, Ricketts is nonetheless considered to be a forward-thinking individual and world-class ecologist. He approached his work holistically; the humanities (music, art, literature) were as important to him as the world of natural sciences. In the first half of the 20th century, it was very typical for scholars to take interest in only one subject matter, becoming a specialist in his or her field and, in doing so, forgoing all unrelated areas of study. Ricketts did not fit into this paradigm; his curiosity was boundless. Before his tragic death in 1948, he had the intention of publishing a philosophical book which would look at, amongst other topics, human cooperative relationships, not only with each other but also with the natural world. Ricketts was very interested in holistic thinking, the idea that everything in the world is connected, and that it is essential to consider things (people, animals, plants, etc.) not only on their own, but also in relation to all other things: "To consider the interrelations between communities and their environment was unique for the time, a pilot project for a way of thinking about the littoral that differed from the prevalent and classic vertical taxonomic approach advocated by biologists and zoologists of his time." (Ricketts, 2006, pg. 7) The littoral, or shore region, had never been studied in relation to the communities which grew at its banks. Ricketts's holistic way of thinking extended much further than his ecological

studies – which although interesting, are not in the scope of this thesis – to more philosophical thinking.

Ricketts was a very pensive man, and he tried to compose a number of philosophical essays. He only had one published in his lifetime, and it was not under his own name. Many of his essays remain unfinished. Ricketts was not educated as a writer; therefore, he found it exceedingly difficult to convey his thoughts on paper, especially due to their elaborate and highly cerebral nature. Ricketts's essay "The Philosophy of 'Breaking Through,'" which he revised for almost two decades, is arguably the most thoughtful piece that he produced. It was published posthumously – along with other essays, journal entries, photos from his work in the field and travelogues – in a book aptly entitled *Breaking Through.* The notion of breaking through is the cornerstone "of his personal philosophy: the belief that moments of transcendence, of integration and deep participation in the universe, could be achieved spontaneously throughout a person's lifetime." (Ricketts, 2006, pg. 22) Transcending, or breaking through, is what a person can achieve when he or she faces a difficult situation willingly, being open to the possibility of changing through the process.

Another interesting reason for taking into account Ricketts's work is his long-lived friendship with Steinbeck. The two men met in Pacific Grove, California. Ricketts moved to the coastal city to study the marine biology of Monterey Bay. According to Benson,

"[t]he friendship that developed between the two was extraordinary, for although fundamentally different in many ways, the two operated on the same wave length." (Benson, [1984], 1990, pg. 185) The bond that Steinbeck and Ricketts shared was very strong. Steinbeck was inspired by Ricketts's persona, and a handful of major characters – Jim Casy in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), Doc in *Cannery Row* (1945) and *Sweet Thursday* (1954) and Ed in *Burning Bright* (1950), amongst others – were based on Ricketts. When the books were published, the scientist found that he had become a modest celebrity, a status with which he was somewhat uncomfortable. Ricketts did not entirely identify with the characters that he inspired, although he did not criticize Steinbeck for the aggrandisement. Due to Steinbeck's narrative liberties, it is somewhat difficult to distinguish the man Ricketts truly was from the written legend. While Ricketts took an interest in Steinbeck's work as an author, Steinbeck had great enthusiasm for the scientific world. The men decided to put the two fields together, undertaking the writing of a few biological books. In the end, only one was ever published: *Sea of Cortez: A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research* (1951). In order to write this book, the two men went on a research expedition on the Sea of Cortez and eventually published their findings. Despite both authors' eminence, each in his own field, this textbook has remained rather obscure.

Two years after Ricketts's death, Steinbeck decided to turn his attention to his past in the Salinas Valley. From his modest apartment in the heart of New York City, he embarked upon the writing of his own history, of a time and place that meant very much to

the author: "In a sense it will be two books – the story of my county and the story of me." (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 13) Throughout *East of Eden*, Steinbeck incorporates long descriptions of nature, some of which are written in proper scientific terms – a vocabulary which he undoubtedly learnt on his expeditions with Ricketts. In a way, *East of Eden* is a return to the vision of the world that Ricketts and Steinbeck created together. From the biggest metropolitan city in all of the United States of America, Steinbeck set his attention on the rural life of his ancestors. The first lines in the novel are about the landscape of the valley, a scene which he paints based upon the memories of his own childhood:

> The Salinas Valley is in Northern California. It is a long narrow swale between two ranges of mountains, and the Salinas River winds and twists up the center until it falls at last into Monterey Bay.
>
> I remember my childhood names for grasses and secret flowers. I remember where a toad may live and what time the birds awaken in the summer—and what trees and seasons smelled like—how people looked and walked and smelled even. The memory of the odors is very rich. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 7)

Speaking of his mysterious childhood games, of the enigmatic figures who populated his past, and of the rich smells of the countryside, it is obvious that Steinbeck had not forgotten the strong connection he felt towards the valley which was instilled by his parents decades earlier. While Steinbeck says that his goal was to write a novel that focused more on the people than the places, he has clearly done both. The natural environment in *East of Eden* cannot be overlooked, as it even takes centre stage in the opening words of the novel.

In my ecocritical study of *East of Eden,* I will look at three different aspects of the novel, each one exposing a different side of the relationship between humans and nature. Contrary to Eden, a seductive and tranquil place to live, the Salinas Valley can be an unforgiving place to call home. The reality of life on the east of Eden is the first subject of this thesis. There is no doubt as to the valley's beauty, that the colours and smells of nature are alluring. Nonetheless, those who work on the land are faced with a much less delicate reality. Many characters in *East of Eden* spend most of their life on the farm, and keeping themselves afloat is a constant struggle. Each character has a very different relationship with the land. Charles Trask, Adam's elder brother, is an example of a man who works very hard to encourage the growth of his land, as is Samuel Hamilton. However, despite their similar intentions, the two men have very different visions of nature, a distinction which will be illustrated in the first chapter of my thesis. The focus of this chapter is to examine the different ways in which people dwell on their land. More specifically, I will consider how the land is cultivated, as well as the types of building that take place. Building and dwelling are both key Heideggerian terms.

In the second chapter, I will look at the technological advances which are present in *East of Eden*, once again through a Heideggerian perspective. According to Heidegger, the change in technological methods which have come about in the last century are largely responsible for the depletion of the earth. Destruction is not an inherent characteristic of

technology. The problem resides in the modern forms of technology. These present a danger for dwelling because they make nature into a marginal resource. The windmill is an example of an ancient form of technology: this invention transforms the wind into energy without changing the wind in its essence. A hydroelectric dam also creates energy. However, the dam transforms the river into a natural resource, and even the most conscientious designs inflict vast devastation upon the surrounding environment. *East of Eden* takes place in the transition from the 19th to the 20th century, a time of many technological changes. The way in which agricultural work is done is hardly recognizable to the older generations. In the novel, the arrival of the internal combustion automobile entirely changes how affluent people live, Adam being one of them. The First World War is also present in the novel, a crisis which brings about countless new inventions. In the second part of this thesis, I will examine these new technologies and explain the impact they have on humans as well as the natural environment.

In chapter three, Ricketts will join the dialogue which has already been established between Heidegger and Steinbeck, the ecologist's vision complimenting that of Heidegger. For this chapter, I will first concentrate on the concept of "transcending" or "breaking through," an idea which comes from Ricketts's philosophy. A person can hope to break through when they are met with a difficult situation. The situation cannot be sought out but must instead come as an inevitable obstacle. Without seeking a struggle, the person must nonetheless be open to face the conflict when it arises genuinely; "an open approach to life

by the man who looks at events and accepts them as such without reservation or qualification, and in so doing perceives the whole picture by becoming an identifiable part of that picture." (Astro, 1973, pg. 38) For an actual transcendence to occur, this person must come to see the world in a holistic manner, grasping that the sum of the world is greater than its parts. Not all trying events can lead to breaking through, and not everyone will live a breaking through in their lifetime. In *East of Eden*, Adam goes through many dark and difficult times. He is the only character in the novel who is able to transcend, finally closing the door on his troublesome past, a past full of unfortunate events over which he has no control. When he breaks through, Adam opens his eyes to realize that he is not the centre of the universe but an integral part of it. Immediately, his contact with nature is altered. In this part of the thesis, I will study the trying events which lead to Adam's transformation.

# CHAPTER I:

# LIVING OUTSIDE EDEN

> "Somewhere in my dust heap there's a richness." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 299)

In order to get a sense of Steinbeck's first allusion to the relationship between man and nature, one need go no further than the title of the novel itself, *East of Eden*. Although my thesis is concerned with the environmental aspects of the book, I cannot entirely overlook its theological references, of which there are many. The title is a relevant example of the parallel which must necessarily be drawn between these two domains. The story takes place in a land that is not Eden, but to understand the setting one must grasp the concept that is Eden to begin with.

According to all three major Western monotheistic religions, the Garden of Eden is where the story of humankind began. As the peaceful cradle of humanity, Eden was a

fertile land rich in everything one would need to subsist without worry. Abounding in fresh water, green vegetation and free roaming animals, this Garden offered the most leisurely of lives to its inhabitants. And then, abruptly, it was taken away. At this point, the scriptures diverge. Nonetheless, what is made clear in all three readings is that life becomes much more burdensome for the original man and woman once beyond the borders of Eden. In giving his novel the title *East of Eden,* Steinbeck sets his story in the timeframe of the latter reality of the world, the place where humankind takes refuge after banishment from the mystical Garden.

During the process of writing *East of Eden*, Steinbeck reserved the left-hand pages of his notebooks for writing daily letters to his long-time friend and editor, Pascal Covici. These letters were eventually printed in a book called *Journal of a Novel: The* East of Eden *Letters*, although Steinbeck had never intended them for publication. The pages served as a type of warm-up for Steinbeck. He wrote on various topics, from ordinary day-to-day events to international affairs, to thoughts on his writing process and the progression of the novel. These letters show how the title of the novel evolved over time. It was when Steinbeck was transcribing the story of Cain and Abel from the Book of Genesis (a major part of chapter 22) that he came across the phrase "East of Eden." Steinbeck writes that the reference is a pertinent representation of the Salinas Valley and the theme of the novel because: "although East of Eden is not Eden, it is not insuperably far away." (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 146)

Most of the novel takes place in the Salinas Valley which is, at the very end of the 19th century, a community of farmers. Like most of Northern California, this valley represents a new start for many immigrant families. These newcomers, usually penniless, come from as far as Europe in order to settle down on a plot of land they can call their own. "They landed with no money, no equipment, no tools, no credit, and particularly with no knowledge of the new country and no technique for using it." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 16) From necessity, the families learn quickly how to clear the land and the methods for building farmhouses, as a well-built home means basic comfort and relative security. Finally, when all of the structures necessary for farm life were erected, the families could begin to sow their land.

The main character of the novel and his pregnant wife arrive in the Valley considerably later than the first surge of immigration. He has grand expectations for his new life: "I mean to make a garden of my land. Remember my name is Adam. So far I've had no Eden, let alone been driven out." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 170) For Adam Trask, as well as many other newcomers, life in the Salinas Valley represents a fresh start in a land of endless possibilities.

## 1.1 The Salinas Valley: From Drought to Deluge

At the turn of the 20th century, the landscape of the Salinas Valley is vastly transformed by its newcomers. "Wheel tracks of buckboards replaced the trails, and fields of corn and barley and wheat squared out of the yellow mustard." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 11) Fortunately for these families, many crops could be cultivated in the base of the Valley, due to the good quality of the soil. At the time, farmers depend heavily on the land in order to keep their families afloat. Generally, a family did not purchase food, instead relying on what they could produce on their farms. As well, most farmers keep certain portions of their plots as grazing fields for livestock.

The wealthier families who arrive at the outset are able to obtain the best land, while the less fortunate take the residual plots. At the time of their arrival, many newcomers come to see the Salinas Valley as a bounteous land as rich as Eden in its original state, an oasis where anything is possible if one is willing to toil hard enough. However, despite the favourable conditions of the land and regardless of the farmers' resolve, the quality of the harvest cannot be foreseen. Plan as one might, the men have no way of predicting the strength of tomorrow's wind, the range of the temperature to come or the amount of rain that will fall during a specific season. In very little time, the newcomers come to realize that the Valley, although capable of being a safe refuge, can just as easily, and with complete indifference, make their dreams and expectations collapse.

In the Salinas Valley, each year brings different weather conditions, which makes speculating an integral part of the farming process.

> I have spoken of the rich years when the rainfall was plentiful. But there were dry years too, and they put a terror on the valley. The water came in a thirty-year cycle. There would be five or six wet and wonderful years when there might be nineteen to twenty-five inches of rain, and the land would shout with grass. Then would come six or seven pretty good years of twelve to sixteen inches of rain. And the dry years would come, and sometimes there would be only seven or eight inches of rain. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 9)

Unbeknown to the recently arrived, the rainfall does follow a somewhat predictable pattern. However, the cycle takes place over such an extensive period of time that only the farmers who persist through the years are capable of observing such a phenomenon. As well, the strenuously dry part of the cycle tends to last longer than the wet and moderately wet years combined.

The amount of rainfall is a closely guarded matter year-round, as is the state of the Salinas River. Due to the people's great dependence on the natural environment, irregularities in weather patterns are not only the subject of town gossip but, moreover, are frequently featured in the local newspapers.

> Sometimes, but not often, a rain comes to the Salinas Valley in November. It is so rare that the *Journal* or the *Index* or both carry editorials about it. [...] Rain at this time is not particularly good in an agricultural sense unless it is going to continue, and this is

> extremely unusual. More commonly, the dryness comes back and the fuzz of grass withers or a little frost curls it and there's that amount of seed wasted. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 515)

Although the rain is usually gladly welcomed by the farmers, precipitation during the wrong cycle of the harvest is capable of indiscriminate devastation. Furthermore, days of excessive rainfall can be as ruinous as times with no rain at all. To make matters more difficult, the Salinas River itself fluctuates as a result of the rain patterns, creating dangerous deluges during periods of heavy rains and sinking below the ground in times of drought.

The Salinas River plays a major role in *East of Eden*, its presence decidedly contributing to the course of the story. For the people of the Valley, the River represents a substantial portion of the water supply. The river provides a steady source of water not only for drinking but also for agricultural irrigation purposes. In dryer times, farmers depend only on human-made wells, as the river recedes into the ground. "The Salinas was only a part-time river. The summer sun drove it underground. It was not a fine river at all [...]. [H]ow dangerous it was in a wet winter and how dry it was in a dry summer." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 8) If the conditions of drought persist for any prolonged period of time, the effects on the valley are clearly visible on the land:

> The year had not been kind to the hills, and already in June they were dry and the stones showed through the short, burned feed. The wild oats had headed out barely six inches above the ground, as

> though with knowledge that if they didn't make seed quickly they wouldn't get to seed at all. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 140)

The consequences of droughts are manifested not only in the poor harvests but also in the condition of the livestock. These farm animals, constantly on the move in search of food and water, often grow gaunt, sometimes even dying from the strain. Inevitably, the families suffer many losses during these times of hardship. The characters of *East of Eden* must constantly readjust to this volatile natural environment.

In the following passage taken from the opening of the novel, the narrator vividly describes a season of harsh drought in the Valley. This scene shows the impact that the dry spells have not only on the environment but also on the inhabitants' resolve:

> The land dried up and the grasses headed out miserably a few inches high and great bare scabby places appeared in the valley. The live oaks got a crusty look and the sagebrush was gray. The land cracked and the springs dried up and the cattle listlessly nibbled dry twigs. Then the farmers and the ranchers would be filled with disgust for the Salinas Valley. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 9)

The dry years bring a dismal feeling upon the people of the valley. The climate is so harsh, with little to no precipitation, sharp winds, and a blinding hot sun, that the Salinas Valley comes to resemble a veritable wasteland. In these times of difficulty, it is not uncommon for entire families to uproot themselves once again in search of less harsh land to settle.

As the water cycle continues to shift upon the Valley, the stifling aridity is replaced with a welcomed abundance of water. At first, the land drinks up the rainfall eagerly and the Salinas River banks fill until once again, water ripples gently in its bed. If the rains persist, the River fills to its brim and the Valley comes to life, the landscape erupting with vivid colours. At this point, any more water is not a blessing for the farmers. If the rainclouds do not disperse, the Salinas River swells and rages, breaking over its banks with an alarming intensity:

> In the winter of wet years the streams ran full-freshet, and they swelled the river until sometimes it raged and boiled, bank full, and then it was a destroyer. The river tore the edges of the farm lands and washed whole acres down; it toppled barns and houses into itself, to go floating and bobbing away. It trapped cows and pigs and sheep and drowned them in its muddy brown water and carried them to sea. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 7)

The narrator describes a particularly wet season in the Valley, a time of immeasurable devastation. The farmhouses, built by hand and made to protect the families from the unpredictable weather, do not stand a chance. Once again, the farmers are faced with a difficult choice: either salvage what they can, in order to rebuild their homes from the ground up, or flee the devastation altogether. And so the cycle carries on.

The people of the Salinas Valley feel very strongly about their local river, a trait that is not altogether unusual for civilizations built near river banks. Depending on the conditions, the farmers may speak of the Salinas River with radiant pride in one moment and overwhelming disgust in the next. Lawrence Buell, in his book *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001), makes an interesting observation on the significant role which rivers play for the settlements built about their beds. In the eighth chapter of the book, aptly entitled "Watershed Aesthetics", Buell goes into great detail on the subject of the river as the point of origin of all human societies. Before any type of civilization can emerge, according to Buell, there must be a river feasibly capable of supporting it. "Without water, no life. Without ample supply, no sizable human settlements. Whole civilizations have been defined by the arterial rivers without which they could not have come into existence [...]." (Buell, [2001], 2003, pg. 243) There is no doubt that the Salinas River, despite its frequent instability, is what makes any farm life possible in the fledgling town. In this chapter, Buell also underlines the fact that all rivers have the capacity to both nurture and destroy their bordering societies. Consequently, farmers have little choice but to constantly adapt to the River's vacillations, and not vice-versa.

## 1.2 Dwelling & Building

Steinbeck was aware of the negative impact that some of the intensive farming procedures had on the environment when writing *East of Eden*. In *Journal of a Novel: The* East of Eden *Letters*, Steinbeck states that "in this book people dominate the land

gradually. They strip it and rob it. Then they are forced to try to replace what they have taken out." (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 56) In the novel, most of the farmers are unaware of the future implications of their actions, thinking only of short-term gain. Indeed, this frame of mind is quite common in the early 20th century in California. Oftentimes, families take more land than necessary, just for the sake of possessing it. As explained by the narrator in *East of Eden*, "an itching land-greed seemed to come over them. They wanted more and more land—good land if possible, but land anyway." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 16) It is inevitable that this way of life can only be maintained for so long.

Progressively from the 19th to the 20th century, as depicted in the novel, people begin to dwell in a very different way. The connection people once had with nature, their direct dependence on the land at their feet, tapers off. Instead of building homes in harmony with nature, people begin to build in order to dominate it, to take as much as possible while giving back the least. In his essay "Building Dwelling Thinking," Martin Heidegger maintains that the need for building in order to accommodate the earth's ever multiplying population is a serious problem at present:

> On all sides we hear talk about the housing shortage, and with good reason. Nor is there just talk; there is action too. We try to fill the need by providing houses, by promoting the building of houses, planning the whole architectural enterprise. However hard and bitter, however hampering and threatening the lack of houses remains, the *real plight of dwelling* does not lie merely in a lack of houses. (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 158-159. Emphasis in the original.)

The philosopher concedes that the lack of adequate housing is a problem which needs to be addressed. Many countries are trying to create places for their ever expanding populations to live, sometimes even providing citizens with both land and building materials. These large-scale productions are geared toward accommodating the greatest number of people all while keeping the costs as low as possible. Unfortunately, wars, climate change and food shortages only add to the difficulty faced by the world's immense homeless population, especially in underdeveloped and developing countries. Despite being aware of these circumstances, which are almost the same today as they have been over the last century, Heidegger maintains that the dwelling crisis does not lie in these challenges and that it can certainly not be solved by a mass market approach to building.

> [R]esidential buildings do indeed provide shelter; today's houses may even be well planned, easy to keep, attractively cheap, open to air, light, and sun, but—do the houses in themselves hold any guarantee that *dwelling* occurs in them? (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 144. Emphasis in the original.)

To this question, Heidegger's answer is negative. Not all buildings are sources of dwelling, although, inversely, dwelling depends directly on the process of building. The dwelling which takes place as a result of mass-produced building projects is not what Heidegger would consider an authentic type of dwelling, regardless of the occupant's quality of life. Since the turn of the 20$^{th}$ century, a gradual loss of respect towards the natural environment has become the norm, due, for the most part, to scientific and technological advances.

Unfortunately, humankind has come to see nature as a disposable resource, cared for solely for its eventual practical use.

Authentic dwelling takes place only when one is conscious of the impact that his or her actions have on the environment. Each and every element in nature has its own authentic way of being in this world, and humankind's duty is to recognize this fact and to act accordingly:

> [R]esponsible humans have an implicit duty to let things disclose themselves in their own inimitable way, rather than forcing them into meanings and identities that suit their own instrumental values. (Garrard, 2012, pg. 34)

Humans must let nature be, let it thrive in its own authentic manner, without attempting to alter it for self-serving purposes. Heidegger considers that it is irresponsible and even dangerous to focus solely on an object's narrow economic worth, its temporary convenience or its general aesthetic appeal. Considering only the instrumental value of a thing leads to enframing, the act of making it part of a system, and strips from it any inherent significance. While humans must let nature disclose itself authentically, they owe themselves the same respect. In order to dwell, people must find a space in which they can regain a sense of their humanity while being a part of nature, not apart from it. Moreover, humans must be conscious of the fact that they are mortal beings here on this earth, and that their very existence depends on the state of the planet.

Recognizing the unique essence of nature, people, and other living creatures is a first step towards reversing the general loss of astonishment towards the wonders that the earth has to offer. The ultimate goal is to allow things to shine on their own accord, manifesting their unique intrinsic value. The process of helping a thing to reveal itself in a way that it could not on its own is known as presencing, and it is one of humankind's foremost responsibilities. Presencing, the act of taking a thing from absence to presence, can be done through building. According to Heidegger, humans must learn to build with the intent to dwell. This can be done by both erecting buildings and by cultivating things that grow. The difference between this type of building (which is a step towards dwelling in the Heideggerian sense) and the type of building that is not dwelling is the person's intention: one must build to satisfy his or her own needs, without being driven by greed, and without taking more than is necessary.

> Real sparing is something *positive* and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own nature, when we return it specifically to its being, when we "free" it in the real sense of the word into a preserve of peace. [...] *The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving.* (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 147. Emphasis in the original.)

The type of restraint which Heidegger considers to be the primary characteristic of dwelling works to recognize a thing's unique claim. For Heidegger, this way of sparing goes beyond the idea of safeguarding something, like building a fence around a garden. Real sparing is

an active pursuit to respect things as they are and to take the necessary measures to help the garden grow into its full potential, authentically.

Dwelling consists of both building by nurturing and building by erecting structures. As one builds a structure with the intention of dwelling, one must take into account not the walls and beams which support it but, instead, the openness the structure creates. A building that is suitable for dwelling is a building that promotes togetherness. Spaces are created by humans, through building, and allow for an openness with the world. "Spaces open up by the fact that they are let into the dwelling of man." (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 154 - 155) A building is a house, but that does not mean that it is a dwelling. If the house allows for the opening of spaces, the gathering of people, then it can be called a home. A house is just a shell; a home is an authentic dwelling. As humans continuously learn to dwell, they become closer and closer to recognizing their own genuine nature, freely and in an undisclosed manner.

Dwelling takes place when a person builds with the intention of creating spaces, when he or she consciously thinks of dwelling and projects to continue to do so in the future. However, to fully grasp the notion of dwelling in the Heideggerian sense, there is one final element necessitating closer examination. We must come to see the role played by language, and more specifically, poetry.

> One of the crucial modes of proper letting be or unhindered disclosure of being is poetry: language, especially archaic or oblique poetic language, rightly understood discloses to us the act of disclosure itself. It enables showing up itself to show up. (Garrard, 2012, pg. 34 - 35)

Poetry is a method of transgressing the conventional restrictions put in place to regulate language. Through time, people have come to create a set of rules with the intention of controlling language, essentially determining which words mean what, the manner in which they can be used, and so on and so forth. As Steinbeck states in his *Journal of a Novel*, "Words are strange elusive things and no man may permanently stick them on pins or mount them in glass cases." (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 153) Words, as well as the languages to which they belong, are not to be catalogued like a collection of butterflies. For Heidegger, the current system of human dominance over language, sticking words on pins and displaying them behind glass, is nothing other than enframing. To reverse this process, humankind must realize that language must be respected in its own nature. "Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man." (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 213) Through poetic writing, one can depart from the day-to-day utilitarian use of language. In doing so, language is freed from enframing.

Moreover, it is through poetic language that a thing's nature can be revealed. As we now understand, this act of letting a thing disclose itself is an integral part of coming to

dwelling on this earth. "Poetry builds up the very nature of dwelling. Poetry and dwelling not only do not exclude each other; on the contrary, poetry and dwelling belong together, each calling for the other." (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 225) If the fundamental aspect of dwelling is preserving, as Heidegger states in his essay "Building Dwelling Thinking," then poetry guides humankind towards this intention. Humans preserve (i.e. spare, protect, nurture, cultivate) only what they love. Reading poems about nature creates a fondness within a person towards the earth as such. This love, easily cultivated by poetry, is what leads people to preserve nature, and thus towards dwelling.

It is now quite clear that there are two modes in which people can choose to live here on this earth; they can decide to either acknowledge their responsibility to the earth at their feet, or on the contrary, they can disregard all accountability. The latter means that a person can spend an entire lifetime being without Being, that is never getting to know his or her authentic self. We can gain a better understanding of the people who surround us in our day to day lives if we examine which of the two alternative ways of life they decide to embrace. The very same can be said for the characters who populate the literary world. Some are responsible people, they build room for spaces and strive to spare nature, while others remain entirely oblivious. In the context of *East of Eden*, Charles Trask and Samuel Hamilton accurately represent the two very different modes of dwelling. First, let us examine the way of life on the Trask family farm.

## 1.3 The Trasks' Dwelling

Before immigrating to the Salinas Valley in the early 1900s, Adam Trask spends most of his life in the New England region of the United States. "Adam Trask was born on a farm on the outskirts of a little town which was not far from a big town in Connecticut." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 17) His mother having died when he was a young boy, Adam is raised by his father's second wife, Alice. Soon after the remarriage, Charles, Adam's half-brother, is born. The Trask household is not a cheerful one, and Adam and Charles never quite get along. Charles even threatens to kill his elder brother on more than one occasion.

After both of his parents pass away and Adam leaves the farm for military duty, Charles becomes the sole person responsible for running the family plot. He takes on this duty with absolute solemnity and technical precision. With his own hands and oftentimes alone, Charles cultivates his land and builds sturdy, reliable structures.

> The farm had never been so well run. Charles cleared the land, built up his walls, improved his drainage, and added a hundred acres to the farm. More than that, he was planting tobacco, and a long new tobacco barn stood impressively behind the house. [...] Charles was spending most of his money and all of his energy on the farm. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 55 - 56)

At first glance, it may appear that the Trask farm is a place of genuine dwelling, as Charles certainly builds and cultivates the land with the intention of carrying on with the same

efforts in the future. As we have learnt from Heidegger's writings, building structures and cultivating the land are both essential parts of dwelling: "Building as dwelling unfolds into the building that cultivates growing things and the building that erects buildings." (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 146) However, before declaring the Trask farm to be a place of open spaces in the Heideggerian sense, it is important to look further into the farmer's intentions and motivations. How can we know if the Trask farm serves as a house or as a home without digging deeper into the dwelling being carried out there?

After many years away serving in the military, Adam returns to his family farm. Austere and business oriented as always, Charles immediately tries to force Adam to fall into his strict daily schedule. A few weeks into his return, Adam fulminates against his brother's exigent demands, asking: "Will you tell me, Charles, what in hell we're working for?" (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 105) In response, Charles avoids the question indignantly, saying only: "You can't lay in bed and run a farm [...]." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 105) Adam never does get an answer to his question, probably because Charles does not himself know why he puts such strenuous effort into keeping the farm running on clockwork precision.

The situation on the Trask farm becomes so unbearable that Adam reenlists voluntarily and disappears without even telling his brother of his deployment. He hates being at war, but not as much as he hates being on the farm with Charles. Upon his second

return to the farm, years later, Adam realizes that his childhood residence is not and had never truly been a place to call home.

> It was not a pretty farm near the house—never had been. There was a litter about it, and unkemptness, a rundownness, a lack of plan; no flowers, and bits of paper and scraps of wood scattered about the ground. The house was not pretty either. It was a well-built shanty for shelter and cooking. It was a grim farm and a grim house, unloved and unloving. It was no home, no place to long for or to come back to. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 66)

Having extended his horizons beyond the fenced-in family property, Adam returns only to realize, once and for all, how little the place actually means to him. The fact that the plot is badly laid-out and that it is in a general state of dilapidation has little bearing on his overwhelming feeling of loathing towards the farm. Adam's uneasiness comes from his lack of attachment due to his longstanding feelings of not belonging there. The house in which he grew up was unloved and the parents who raised him were unloving. Adam always felt like an outsider as a child, and clearly he feels the same coming back to the farm as an adult. Charles, on the other hand, seems perfectly comfortable with his way of life on the farm and sees no reason for change. Never is he compelled to objectively examine his dwelling situation. "Enough will have been gained if dwelling and building have become *worthy of questioning* and thus have remained *worthy of thought.*" (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 158. Emphasis in the original.) Thinking of dwelling is an essential measure to take when on the path towards authentic dwelling.

Despite his lack of contemplation on his state of dwelling, there is no doubt that Charles feels a strong connection to his land and that he assumes his responsibility with utmost seriousness. However, this fact alone is not enough to consider that Charles' dwelling is an authentic one. According to Heidegger, a farmer who dwells does so as he or she "tends the growth that ripens into its *fruit of its own accord.*" (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 145. Emphasis mine.) Charles' major preoccupation is to ensure that he gets out of the land as much as possible, for no obvious reason. Never does he consider the land as something to be spared. Although the farm is being run efficiently, no actual presencing or sparing is taking place. Just as Charles never takes the time to reflect upon the state of the farm, nor does he stop to consider that his land should be brought to reveal itself in its own unique manner. Thus far, the evidence strongly suggests that Charles' relationship with the land is one of dominance.

When Charles takes over his family farm, he sees much work to be done. Within a short period of time, he has the entire plot ploughed and sowed. There is no doubt that Charles is an efficient farmer, and he eventually gains the respect and recognition of his neighbours. The fellow farmers admire Charles' work, and yet they never develop any sort of kinship. Charles does not let others get close to him; he literally builds walls around his property to keep others out. He never makes room for spaces within the fences and walls he puts up. In fact, the only person who Charles allows to live with him on the farm is Adam. The elder brother finds it difficult to live in such an isolated environment. During one of the

brothers' frequent quarrels, Adam expresses his apprehension to Charles: "Come a few years and we'll have the finest farm in this section. Two lonely old farts working our tails off. Then one of us will die off and the fine farm will belong to one lonely fart, and then he'll die off—" (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 106) Charles interrupts Adam, furious with his brother for always questioning his way of life. For Charles, there is no way other than his own.

When Adam leaves the farmhouse, the siblings' relationship comes to an end. Adam never again returns to his home town, while Charles never steps foot off his farm. Their parting is not on friendly terms, Adam leaving Charles with these last, threatening words; "I'm going away. You can buy me out if you want. You can have the farm. You always wanted it. You can stay here and rot." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 125) Charles spends the rest of his days alone, never getting married or having children. Adam, on the other hand, works towards forging on with his new life in California. Rarely does he speak of his past in New England, a past which remains bitter to Adam for years. "When he thought back to his father's house, to the farm, the town, to his brother's face, there was a blackness over all of it. And he shook off the memories." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 158) Instead of being held back by his lonely past, Adam focuses on his present. He makes his way across the country, at last reaching his final destination, the Salinas Valley. Adam is looking to settle himself permanently. His wife, Cathy, is pregnant. He intends to build a substantial homestead to eventually hand down to his unborn child. Therefore, he is

out to find the most fertile and well located land on the market. Upon his arrival in the valley, Adam seeks out the help of most knowledgeable farmer; he is promptly introduced to Samuel Hamilton.

## 1.4 The Hamiltons' Dwelling

The Trask and the Hamilton families are the primary focus of the novel *East of Eden*. Throughout the novel, Steinbeck goes back and forth between the two families. Their paths cross when Adam arrives in the Salinas Valley and is introduced to Samuel and his family. At this time, the Hamiltons have already been settled in the valley for many years. They arrive in the valley near the end of the first wave of families who immigrate to California. Like many others, their dream is to start a new life on their own plot of land. After their long and difficult transatlantic journey, the Hamilton's work is not yet through. To get to California, they have to make their way clear across the country; only now can the young couple begin building a place to call home. Samuel and Liza only have each other to rely on, as they have left their friends and families behind in Ireland. At last when they set foot in the valley, they are penniless and have no material possessions to speak of. And so, out of bare necessity, "Samuel built his house with his own hands, and he built a barn and a blacksmith shop." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 13) Building a home is not the only thing one must do in order to support an ever-growing family; there is always the question of food and water. The Hamiltons quickly learn that the land they own, albeit sizeable, is not nearly fertile enough to support a family which eventually counts nine children. Their

struggle to keep food on the table is a constant one, and although they work very hard, Liza must find ways to stretch every meal to properly feed all the hungry mouths.

The land that the Hamiltons could afford to purchase is indeed just to the east of Eden: "From their barren hills the Hamiltons could look down to the west and see the richness of the bottom land and the greenness around the Salinas River." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 13) Samuel is well aware that his plot of land is nearly barren, especially when compared to the ones at the bottom of the valley, closer to the river. Right away, Samuel tries to learn everything he can about the soil of the Salinas Valley. He comes to understand all of the best ways for farming in the valley, although he can rarely apply them to his own land.

One of the most difficult challenges that Samuel faces is the lack of water on his land. Try as he might, he is unable to find an adequate underground water supply on his plot, and therefore cannot bore a well. To make matters worse, being at the top of the valley means that he has no direct access to the Salinas River.

> If the land had been any good the Hamiltons would have been rich people. But the acres were harsh and dry. There were no springs, and the crust of the topsoil was so thin that the flinty bones stuck through. Even the sagebrush struggled to exist, and the oaks were dwarfed from lack of moisture. Even in reasonably good years there was so little feed that the cattle kept thin running about looking for enough to eat. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 13)

The crucial importance of having an adequate water supply is a matter which is mentioned many times in *East of Eden*. During the dryer seasons, many people in the valley struggle to provide their crops with proper irrigation; for the Hamiltons, the absence of water is a major issue, even in the good years of the water cycle. Without much hope of cultivating his own land, Samuel must be creative in finding new ways to support his family.

Fortunately, Samuel is a resourceful man. Being very experienced in farm work and knowing the ins and outs of the Salinas Valley, Samuel invents numerous tools to make the cultivation process less laborious.

> His clever hands built a well-boring rig, and he bored wells on the lands of luckier men. He invented and built a threshing machine and moved through the bottom farms in harvest time, threshing the grain his own farm would not raise. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 13 - 14)

Ironically, the new technology that Samuel contrives, patents and builds can rarely be used on his own land. Nonetheless, his creations are so innovative for his time that he could have made a comfortable living solely on the profit they generate. However, that is not the case: "Samuel should have been rich from his well rig and his threshing machine and his shop, but he had no gift for business." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 14) Instead of turning a profit and putting money aside, he spends most of it paying for lawyers to take out patents for the equipment he devises. He could also make a decent living from the work he does on

neighbouring farms and in his workshop, but that is not the case either. Too often, customers tell Samuel that they do not currently have the money to pay for his work, but that they will pay him later, which seldom takes place. Other times, Samuel outright refuses to be paid, saying that he is simply doing a favour for a friend.

For the most part, Samuel's goal in creating the machinery is to greatly reduce the time it takes for men to harvest their fields and to dig wells, and to do so with much less effort. Is this a manner of cultivating that can be recognized as a step towards authentic dwelling in keeping with Heideggerian philosophy?

> Usually we take production to be an activity whose performance has a result, the finished structure, as its consequence. It is possible to conceive of making in that way; we thereby grasp something that is correct, and yet never touch its nature, which is a producing that brings something forth. (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 157)

Therefore, the decisive aspect would be in knowing if Samuel's inventions truly bring things from absence to presence, if his technology constitutes a mode of revealing or, on the contrary, if they are a source of enframing. From the information in the novel, it is somewhat difficult to assess if Samuel intends for his inventions to bring forth the true nature of the things they produce. However, there are many more aspects about Samuel which can be examined in order to get a sense of the authenticity of his dwelling, for if Samuel does indeed dwell sincerely, it is justifiable to reason that his technology does not lead to enframing.

The doors to Samuel's blacksmith shop always stand open. Many of his friends and neighbours come by daily to seek his advice and ask him for help.

> Men from all over the district brought him tools to mend and to improve. Besides, they loved to hear Samuel talk of the world and its thinking, of the poetry and philosophy that were going on outside the Salinas Valley. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 14)

The men respect Samuel not only for his practical knowledge but also on a more intellectual level. Unlike the majority of the farmers in the Salinas Valley at the time, he is conscious of what is taking place beyond the local mountain ranges. Having emigrated from another continent, Samuel has a much more vast perspective of the world.

Undoubtedly, some of the men who find their way to Samuel's blacksmith shop think that he is somewhat out of place. He is uncommonly well-read for a Salinas Valley farmer, and besides, one cannot help but to notice his foreign accent. Even so, for many of the men, going to Samuel's shop is an eagerly anticipated event, its significance going far beyond the practical help that Samuel provides.

> It was a bad day when three or four men were not standing around the forge, listening to Samuel's hammer and his talk. They called him a comical genius and carried his stories carefully home, and they wondered how the stories spilled out on the way, for they never sounded the same repeated in their own kitchens.

> [...]
>
> Men coming to his blacksmith shop to talk and listen dropped their cursing for a while, not from any kind of restraint but automatically, as though this were not the place for it. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 14 - 15)

The blacksmith shop permits the men of the Valley to gather in a place where they can feel safe, a refuge from the oftentimes difficult reality which they face daily. The shop also constitutes a hiding place where Samuel keeps his extensive collection of books, a place that is concealed from his wife's scornful eye. Liza, fervently religious, does not approve of her husband's love for literature, as she believes the only book worth reading is the Holy Bible.

Clearly, Samuel's blacksmith shop grows into a place which extends far beyond its physical borders. This disposition to openness is a compelling indication that Samuel may have come to dwell genuinely, in line with Heideggerian philosophy.

> A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary [...]. A boundary is not that at which something stops but [...] is that form which something *begins its presencing*. [...] Space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds. (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 152. Emphasis in the original.)

It is not the walls which Samuel builds that make his blacksmith shop a genuine space; it is the fact that the shop is a place where the men of the valley come together both physically

and, more importantly, to talk and laugh as friends. The four walls actually create openness; unlike what we may at first be tempted to believe, these walls are not a boundary used to keep others away. On the contrary, they bring people together.

At the turn of the 20th century, in the Salinas Valley, education and schooling are not a priority for most farming families. Children from this background are not made to go to school on a regular basis and rarely make it past the eighth grade, and if they do, it takes them many more years than a typical student.

> There was a wall against leaning. A man wanted his children to read, to figure and that was enough. [...] Enough arithmetic to measure land and lumber and to keep accounts, enough writing to order goods and write to relatives, enough reading for newspapers, almanacs, and farm journals, enough music for religious and patriotic display—that was enough to help a boy and not to lead him astray. Learning was for doctors, lawyers and teachers, a class set off and not considered related to other people. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 151)

The Hamiltons are an exception to the rule. They encourage their children to persist with schooling, one of them even becoming a teacher. Most of the children enjoy reading, a habit which they presumably inherit from their parents. Liza is an avid reader, although she reads nothing but the Bible, saying it contains everything she ever needs to know. Samuel takes up all sorts of books, including volumes of poetry, philosophy and even psychology.

Samuel's love of literature is uncommon, especially because he is not a rich man. Rich men are supposed to have books, even entire libraries, because they can afford such futile things:

> But a poor man—what need had he for poetry or painting or for music not fit for singing and dancing? Such things did not help him bring crop or keep a scrap of cloth on his children's backs. And if in spite of this he persisted, maybe he had reasons which would not stand the light of scrutiny. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 41)

Samuel's appreciation for the arts certainly makes him stand out. At first, the people of the valley do not trust the newcomer, full of different ideas and interests. Eventually, the men realize that Samuel means no harm, and with time they see him as part of the community and no longer as a threat.

From a Heideggerian point of view, Samuel's interest in literature, especially in poetry, suggests a deeper connection with dwelling. "[T]he responding in which man authentically listens to the appeal of language is that which speaks in the element of poetry." (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 214) Language, particularly poetic language, is what leads a person to discovering a thing's authentic nature. When Heidegger writes that "Poetically Man Dwells," he means that poetry is an essential element in dwelling. Poetry, itself a form of building, allows for a dwelling to be a dwelling in its genuine state.

> The poetic is the basic capacity for human dwelling. But man is capable of poetry at any time only to the degree to which his being is appropriate to that which itself has a liking for man and therefore

> needs his presence. Poetry is authentic or inauthentic according to the degree of this appropriation. (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 226)

As a mode of building, poetry must allow for a thing to shine in its own light, which means to come forth. Samuel's receptiveness to poetry, as well as his open-minded nature, shows that he truly has the capacity to dwell in the authentic sense of dwelling, as the poetic language brings him towards nature's authentic way of existing in the world. Being so close to the environment means that Samuel is able to encourage the land to grow, all while respecting its essence.

When Adam first sets foot in the valley, he has the intention of sowing vast gardens worthy of the time of Eden. Unfortunately, he cancels his plans before a shovel ever hits the ground. Samuel recognizes that Adam is not sparing his own farm, that he is completely indifferent towards its lifeless state. Ultimately, Samuel confronts Adam on his years of neglecting the land. He can see that Adam is negating both himself and the earth at his feet, and cannot stand by watching any longer. Samuel understands his duty towards the world, and all the living things which occupy its earth, and takes on the responsibility without protest. This desire to bring things to shine on their own accord is a significant aspect of Heideggerian dwelling.

At the beginning of part three, Samuel tells Adam that he is going away from his farm, off to visit his children. Adam is happy with his decision: "Well, won't you like that? You've earned it. You've worked hard enough on that dust heap of yours." (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 299) Samuel knows that his farm is not bounteous, nor has it ever been. He has struggled to support his family for decades, and the situation is never any easier. And yet, he cannot help but to feel a connection with the land: "I love that dust heap. [...] I love it the way a bitch loves her runty pup. I love every flint, the plow-breaking outcroppings, the thin and barren topsoil, the waterless heart of her." (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 299) Through dwelling and building, Samuel comes to appreciate the land for what it is, without becoming preoccupied with instrumental motivations. Anything that the earth gives to him is a precious gift, and no matter the struggle, he always recognizes the farm as his true refuge, continuing to cultivate it accordingly.

## 1.5 Dwelling on the Outskirts of Eden

Understanding the theological background of *East of Eden* is necessary in order to grasp the picturesque and yet apathetic setting of the novel. However, it is not the story's main focus, as clarified by Steinbeck himself:

> The reader I want will find the whole book illuminated by the discussion: just as I am. And if this were just a discussion of Biblical lore, I would throw it out but it is not. It is using the Biblical story as a measure of ourselves. (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 133)

Through his many references to the Bible, Steinbeck calls for the reader to see the stories as a reflection of him or herself. The author writes about these biblical stories because "[w]e carry them along with us like invisible tails—the story of original sin and the story of Cain and Abel." (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 267) He believes that all psychological struggles with which humans are faced stem from these two stories. According to Steinbeck, these narratives still captivate millions of people, even today, because everyone can identify with the ubiquitous feeling of human guilt. The point Steinbeck makes is that their biblical origin is irrelevant; what is fundamental is how humans can take measure of themselves, their actions and their motivations, through these two stories.

For Heidegger, the taking of measure is at the very foundation of dwelling. "Man's taking measure in the dimension dealt out to him brings dwelling into its ground plan. [...]

The taking of measure is what is poetic in dwelling. Poetry is measuring." (Heidegger, [1971], 2001, pg. 219) According to Heidegger, poetry is a form of measuring. Genuine poets learn to look at things as if they are seeing them for the first time, to see their true nature. In his *Journal of a Novel: The* East of Eden *Letters*, Steinbeck describes his feelings about the responsibility of a writer: "This is the time when I am glad I am or try to be a writer – the growth and flowering of something I seem only to plant and nurture for a while." (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 55) Language, when used poetically, can be a compelling mode of revealing. However, this language does not belong to the writer; it is an entity of its own which has its own claim on the humans who make use of it. It is through writing, especially poetic and oblique texts, that one can come to a state of authentic dwelling.

Through a Heideggerian reading of *East of Eden*, we come to understand that real dwelling, regaining one's identity through a relationship of duty and responsibility to nature, cannot take place in Eden. Dwelling is born through struggle, through a conscious effort to preserve the earth, through encouraging things to grow of their own accord, through the writing and reading of poetry. Human beings can learn to connect with nature, can strive to open up and let nature become their true home, only when dwelling on the outside of Eden.

# CHAPTER II:

## TECHNOLOGY: UNVEILING & ENFRAMING

> "Where did all the good stones go, and all simplicity?" (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 131)

*East of Eden* takes place in a time of extensive technological reform. From the end of the 19th century to the start of the 20th century, the people of the Salinas Valley rely more and more on machinery to maintain their way of life. This time of revolution, according to Adam Trask, is not only happening on a local level: "'The whole country's changing,' Adam said. 'People aren't going to live the way they used to.'" (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 434) His prediction is certainly correct. At the time, the American soldiers have secured most of the American territory and people are beginning to settle down, no longer pursuing new frontiers. Its time of growth drawn to a close, the United States is becoming one of the world's leading industrial countries.

In the very first lines of *Part II*, the narrator gives a vivid account of some of the changes he observes taking place at the dawn of the 20th century in the United States of America.

> You can see how this book reached a great boundary that was called 1900. Another hundred years were ground up and churned, and what had happened was all muddied by the way folks wanted it to be—more rich and meaningful the farther back it was. In the books of some memories it was the best time that ever sloshed over the world—the old time, the gay time, sweet and simple, as though time were young and fearless. Old men who didn't know whether they were going to stagger over the boundary of the century looked forward to it with distaste. For the world was changing, and sweetness was gone, and virtue too. Worry had crept on a corroding world, and what was lost—good manners, ease and beauty? Ladies were not ladies any more, and you couldn't trust a gentleman's word. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 131)

The narrator anticipates that the 20th century will be very different from the preceding hundred years. He observes that values and concerns are gradually shifting, as are many traditions which were absolutely fundamental only years prior. One of the main causes responsible for the changes which take place at the turn of the century is the explosion of new technologies. Diverse types of machines start to sprout up all over the country. The goal in creating these machines is, in essence, to save both time and money. Although this objective is met, the impact is much further reaching than the inventors could have predicted. It is during this time of the modern technological revolution that the relationship between humans, nature and technology becomes forever altered. It is a time of enframing which inhibits the shining forth of nature. Hence, the danger of enframing is that it steals

the essence of the environment. The link between enframing and modern technology is, once again according to Heidegger, a dangerous one. "The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [...], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 14) Within the pages of *East of Eden*, there are many examples of this challenging of things generated by the modern forms of technology, as we will see in due course.

## 2.1 Urbanization & Mass Method

In the Salinas Valley in the early 20th century, much like everywhere else on the American mainland, people make use of the traditional farming techniques to settle the land. The means they use are similar to those which have been used for centuries before their time. Gradually, as small, remote communities bloom into larger towns and then more populous cities, people's way of life is shifted, both out of practicality and out of necessity. In modern-day metropolitan areas, it is not possible to live off of the land as one would do in the country. It is very inconvenient to raise livestock in a city, and people no longer own enough land to grow food and feasibly support their families.

In the early 1900s, small towns begin to emerge in California. People from all over the country make their way towards the West Coast. A major proponent of this western shift is the ongoing struggle between the leading railway companies of the time. The companies are constantly building new railroad tracks. In order to attract more clientele, the

companies adopt extravagant measures, taking out advertisements in the newspapers, printing stacks of broadsides and issuing countless booklets to all passers-by.

> The Southern Pacific Railroad [...] had begun to dominate the Pacific Coast not only in transportation but in politics. Its rails extended down the valleys. New towns sprang up, new sections were opened and populated, for the company had to create customers and to get custom. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 135-136)

The railroad companies' advertising techniques prove to be very effective. They succeed in attracting scores of people to California, rich and poor alike. Adam Trask, who is looking for a new place to establish himself with his pregnant wife, Cathy, is one of the many men to be taken in by the publicities:

> The long Salinas Valley was part of the exploitation. Adam had seen and studied a fine color broadside which set forth the valley as that region which heaven unsuccessfully imitated. After reading the literature, anyone who did not want to settle in the Salinas Valley was crazy. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 136)

Wanting to have his own place in Eden, Adam sets his sights on the Salinas Valley. In fact, he has been considering moving to the West Coast for some years, even before meeting Cathy. Often, Adam tries to convince his brother, Charles, to leave their family farm in Connecticut for the more prosperous state of California. No tale is too extravagant in his pursuit to sway his brother's opinion. In one attempt, Adam says: "Look, Charles, things grow so fast in California they say you have to plant and step back quick or you'll get

knocked down." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 105) This embellished account proves ineffective in igniting Charles' desire to migrate.

As Charles lives alone on the farm for the majority of his life, he does most of the work by himself. In doing so, every task is considerably more demanding. At one point, while clearing the land, Charles tries to take on more than he can manage on his own and, to make matters worse, he does not have the adequate equipment to carry out the task:

> He was digging out rocks and sledding them to the stone wall. One large boulder was difficult to move. Charles pried at it with a long iron bar, and the rock bucked and rolled back again and again. [...] He drove his bar deep behind it and threw his whole weight back. The bar slipped and its upper end crashed against his forehead. For a few moments he lay unconscious in the field and then he rolled over and staggered, half-blinded, to the house. There was a long torn welt on his forehead from hairline to a point between his eyebrows. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 48-49)

The whole incident means many weeks of convalescence for Charles. His recovery is long and slow and especially lonely. When he is finally well enough to leave his bed, he realizes that he has been left with a long, dark scar on his face. The mark never goes away.

Although he has the means, Charles does not want to spend any money on what he considers to be luxuries. At one point, before his abrupt departure, Adam suggests to his brother that they should update their living space: "Why don't we build a new

house—bathtub and running water and a water closet? We're not poor people any more." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 109) These amenities are becoming more and more common in the more wealthy households of the time. In response, Charles answers: "You take your fancy ideas away." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 109) Charles, as always, shies away from technology. Adam, on the other hand, is much more curious about the future and the technological innovations which it inevitably brings. Adam does not, however, take into consideration the possible negative results of such progress.

Increasingly through the early 1900s, human workers are being replaced by machines which cost much less and can do their job more efficiently. For some people, the arrival of many new technologies means that their trade is becoming entirely obsolete. For example, in the city of Salinas, there is a man, referred to as Old Martin, who is responsible for keeping the streets clean. Every night, he takes his broom down every street of the city, sweeping away the dirt from the day before. Then, there is talk of a new machine which will shortly be taking his place.

> On Main Street he saw Old Martin sweeping the street with a stable broom. The city council was discussing the purchase of a mechanical sweeper. Old Martin hoped he would get to drive it, but he was cynical about it. Young men got the cream of everything. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 536)

Traditional street sweeping, one of the earliest professions to come about in urban areas, is quietly being done away with. None of the citizens of Salinas give this shift a second

thought. Modern technology creeps up around them, so slowly that it is not perceived as any sort of threat to their former way of life.

Another change which is taking place on the streets is the arrival of the automobile. Becoming increasingly accessible to the broad population, these vehicles are taking up more and more space on the roads, taking the place of the more traditional mode of transportation, the horse-drawn carriage. They are not, however, unanimously popular. According to the postmaster;

> "They'll change the face of the countryside. They get their clatter into everything," the postmaster went on. "We even feel it here. Man used to come for his mail once a week. Now he comes every day, sometimes twice a day. He just can't wait for his damn catalogue. Running around. Always running around." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 371)

Cars are not only changing the landscape of the entire country but also the way in which products are manufactured on a large scale. The Ford Model T, as conceived by Henry Ford and his Ford Motor Company, is the first automobile to be mass produced. This method, decidedly less expensive and much more time-efficient, gives rise to an unprecedented revolution in the way in which factories functioned.

> It is true that two men can lift a bigger stone than one man. A group can build automobiles quicker and better than one man, and bread from a huge factory is cheaper and more uniform. When our food and clothing and housing all are born in the complication of mass

> production, mass method is bound to get into our thinking and eliminate all other thinking. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 133)

Never has the world seen such effective factories, such inexpensive and easily accessible goods. Before the influx of mass production, especially in rural areas, people have to grow their own crops for themselves and raise their own livestock. Clothing is also made by hand, and it is quite rare for the ordinary person to own more than two or three outfits at most. Homes, before the advent of mass method, are built directly on the land, using the supplies and tools at hand, and calling upon family, friends and neighbours for help when necessary. Mass method has made it possible for enormous factories to emerge, supplying not only their own region, but sometimes their entire state or even states across the country. Along with these first assembly lines comes the onset of a very different way of thinking.

Depending increasingly on the mass production system in a growing number of areas of their lives, people expect to work less, giving them more time for leisure activities. People anticipate that the future will assuredly be a time of unrivalled contentment:

> There wasn't any limit, no boundary at all, to the future. And it would be so a man wouldn't have room to store his happiness. Contentment would flood raging down the valley like the Salinas River in March of a thirty-inch year. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 159)

To the many people who witness the rise of mass method, the future seems to be full of promise. After a lifetime of struggle, they believe that the time has come when they can finally have an easier, more comfortable life.

There are some people, however, who watch the changes take place from a more critical perspective, wondering if this new mindset is in fact leading down a path towards excess. Samuel Hamilton is one such individual: "'There's a capacity for appetite,' said Samuel, 'that a whole heaven and earth of cake can't satisfy.'" (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 159) Perhaps, as cautioned by Samuel, the new methods of production and the constant desire for possessions will lead to more problems than solutions, a time when people will be unable to find satisfaction with their reality, always greedy for more.

Casting yet more questions on the future, the narrator suggests that the coming years may not turn out as wonderfully as anticipated:

> I don't know how it will be in the years to come. There are monstrous changes taking place in the world, forces shaping a future whose face we do not know. Some of these forces seem evil to us, perhaps not in themselves but because their tendency is to eliminate other things we hold good. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 133)

This unsettling prediction brings into question the entire concept of modern living. The narrator's foreshadowing calls for a closer examination of the potential consequences of an all-encompassing systematization process.

## 2.2 Dehumanizing Effect of Systems

The changes taking place in the Salinas Valley depicted in *East of Eden* are representative of the veritable transformation which occurred in California during the timeframe of the novel. Although many people look upon the transition into the 20th century as the second dawn of civilisation, they soon learn that not all revolutions are for the better. One such negative event is the shift in the farming process.

In his nonfiction essay *Dubious Battle in California*, written in 1936, Steinbeck gives a detailed account of the battle between the traditional, family owned farms and the large, corporate farms employing swarms of vagrant workers. In his essay, Steinbeck criticizes the methods of the large-scale farms, as they use deceitful tactics to attract labourers, only to repeatedly cut their wages. Giving a background view of farming in the state of California, Steinbeck says: "In sixty years a complete revolution has taken place in California agriculture. Once its principle products were hay and cattle. Today fruits and vegetables are its most profitable crops." (Steinbeck, [1936], 2003, pg. 71) Speaking of the time from the late 1870s to the 1930s, Steinbeck notes a shift not only in agricultural production but also in the mentality of those running the farms. In the *Journal of a Novel*, Steinbeck explains the very first changes beginning to take place in California agriculture:

> You must know that refrigeration was the reason for the great change in the Valley. And out of that Valley came a large part of the pioneering which has changed the food supply of the world. And the crazy thing is that the men who worked at it first all failed. But there's the beginning of it. (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 188)

Steinbeck's portrayal in *East of Eden* is, as mentioned above, historically accurate. As the Salinas Valley develops into a significant farming centre, its citizens start seeing the boundless potential in the exploiting of their land. As described in the novel, people expect that the future will bring about the invention of the necessary tools and machinery to cultivate on a larger scale.

> There were others who prophesized, with rays shining on their foreheads, about the sometime ditches that would carry water all over the valley—who knows? maybe in our lifetime—or deep wells with steam engines to pump the water up out of the guts of the world. Can you imagine? Just think what this land would raise with plenty of water! Why, it would be a frigging garden!
>
> Another man, but he was crazy, said that someday there'd be a way, maybe ice, maybe some other way, to get a peach like this here I got in my hand clear to Philadelphia. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 159)

Adam mulls over the idea of shipping fresh produce across the country in earnest. He anticipates that the colder parts of the country would be a lucrative market for fresh fruit and vegetables, depending on the season.

> Now in the cold parts of the country, don't you think people get to wanting perishable things in the winter—like peas and lettuce and

> cauliflower? In a big part of the country they don't have those things for months and months. And right here in the Salinas Valley we can raise them all year round. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 434)

After having purchased a small ice making plant in Salinas, Adam plans a very unique train journey: "As he got ready, businessmen spoke of him as farseeing, forward-looking, progress-minded." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 436) He loads six cars with lettuce, packed tightly with ice and sends it clear across the country to New York City. When the train makes it there, however, the lettuce is not fit for consumption. "What arrived in New York was six carloads of horrible slop with a sizeable charge just to get rid of it." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 437) A large snowdrift, followed by unseasonably warm weather and finally some confusion in railroad orders ruins Adam's carefully planned project. The unpredictable nature of the weather, as well as the eventuality of human error, is not taken into account in Adam's scheme. Although Adam is not successful in his attempt, a similar method eventually does allow for California farmers to ship its fresh produce all over the country.

As the state of California opens its market to the rest of the country, its own people are neglected, taking second place behind profit and production. In his 1938 essay *Starvation Under the Orange Trees*, Steinbeck shares his reproachful opinion of the corporations which monopolize the farming industry, known as the Associated Farmers:

> The Associated Farmers, which presumes to speak for the farms of California and which is made up of such earth-stained toilers as chain banks, public utilities, railroad companies and those huge corporations called land companies, [...]. (Steinbeck, [1938], 2003, pg. 84)

Steinbeck condemns their direct "contribution to the hunger of the men and women who harvest their crops." (Steinbeck, [1938], 2003, pg. 84) He also explains how the small-scale farm owners are powerless in trying to help the hungry:

> The small farmers, who do not belong to the Associated Farmers and cannot make use of the slop chest, are helpless to do anything about it. The little storekeepers at crossroads and in small towns have carried the accounts of the working people until they are near to bankruptcy. (Steinbeck, [1938], 2003, pg. 84)

In this highly critical essay, Steinbeck explains how the large corporate farms slowly go about taking control of the agricultural landscape of California. The process he describes is one of gradual enframing, a taking over of the land and the people who harvest it. As Steinbeck explains, systematic enframing is an integral part of California's agricultural history:

> Before the white American migrants were here, it was the custom in California to import great numbers of Mexicans, Filipinos, Japanese, to keep them segregated, to herd them about like animals, and, if there were any complaints, to deport or imprison the leaders. This system of labor was a dream of heaven [...]. (Steinbeck, [1938], 2003, pg. 85)

The way in which the business of farming is managed makes it possible for the workers to become an expendable resource. Despite California's capacity to provide fresh produce for most of the country, the farmhands go hungry, for they simply cannot afford to feed themselves and their families. With every harvest, the workers watch the food they picked, gathered, and packed being shipped away to the highest paying customer. "Next year the hunger will come again and the year after that and so on until we come out of this coma and realize that our agriculture for all its great produce is a failure." (Steinbeck, [1938], 2003, pg. 86) As the corporate farm owners are doing nothing to make the situation better, it is only getting worse. In the process of busying themselves with profitability, they neglect to recognize the suffering of their own employees, the people without which they would not even have a business.

Emphasizing the dehumanization process brought about by the changes in the farming methods even further, Steinbeck compares the workers to a domesticated farm animal.

> If you buy a farm horse and only feed him when you work him, the horse will die. No one complains of the necessity of feeding the horse when he is not working. But we complain about feeding the men and women who work our lands. Is it possible that the state is so stupid, so vicious and so greedy that it cannot feed and clothe the men and women who help to make it the richest area in the world? (Steinbeck, [1938], 2003, pg. 87)

When they are not needed, the workers are expected to shrink away into the shadows, to be neither seen nor heard, like a farm horse. Evidently, the system behind large-scale farms, as well as other similar businesses, makes it possible for the overseers to treat their human workers with less respect and dignity than an animal. Even the state plays a part in turning a blind eye to the people's suffering, focusing on profit before all else.

## 2.3 Apparatuses of War

When discussing the period of transition into the 20th century in the United States, war is an inevitable topic. The first battle to be portrayed in *East of Eden* is the one which takes place between the American Confederate and Union soldiers. In 1862, Adam's father, Cyrus Trask, briefly takes part in the American Civil War. Within minutes of his arrival on the battlefield, Cyrus takes a bullet to the leg, which is quickly amputated. After his recovery in a military hospital, he is sent home. "He came home six weeks after Adam was born. His right leg was off at the knee. He stumped in on a crude wooden leg he himself had carved out of beechwood." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 17) In his first experience in the military, Cyrus is a private soldier. He has genuinely enjoyed his time in the military and, some years later, he reenlists.

> He had a genius for the military. More than that, he was one of those responsible for the organization of the G.A.R. as a cohesive and potent force in the national life. After several unpaid offices in that organization, he took a paid secretaryship which he kept for the rest of his life. [...]
>
> His private life was also laced through with his new profession. He was a man devoted. His house and farm he organized on a military

> basis. He demanded and got reports on the conduct of his private economy. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 21)

Upon his return from his first deployment, he begins to read every newspaper and magazine article referring to the army. Through his training, his brief experience and his readings, Cyrus' mind is taken over by the strict military methods of enframing. He runs his entire life like an army regiment. He believes that joining the army is the best way to take boys and to shape them into real men, which is why Cyrus desperately wants Adam to enlist. Cyrus often glorifies the role of a soldier to his son. Secretly, Adam has no interest in military service.

> Cyrus took Adam to walk with him one late afternoon, and the black conclusions of all his study and his thinking came out and flowed with a kind of thick terror over his son. He said, "I'll have you know that a soldier is the most holy of all humans because he is the most tested—most tested of all. I'll try to tell you. Look now—in all of history men have been taught that killing of men is an evil thing not to be countenanced. Any man who kills must be destroyed because this is a great sin, maybe the worst sin we know. And then we take a soldier and put murder in his hands and we say to him, "Use it well, use it wisely." We put no checks on him. Go out and kill as many of a certain kind or classification of your brothers as you can. And we will reward you for it because it is a violation of your early training." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 27)

Adam never finds the words to tell his father that he does not want to join the army, that the thought of unrestrained violence on other human beings repulses him. Eventually, Adam

reluctantly agrees to enlist, which brings tears of joy to his father's eyes. Cyrus could not be more proud of his eldest son.

Adam is aware of what to expect from his training camps, as his father had spent much time extolling the benefits of the experience to his son. "They'll first strip off your clothes, but they'll go deeper than that. They'll shuck off any little dignity you have—you'll lose what you think of as your decent right to live and to be let alone to live." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 28) This experience, which is a positive one according to Cyrus' point of view, will help Adam to learn to act and to think like the others, and to take orders without asking questions. That is the way of the military:

> The whole machine devotes itself coldly to the destruction of [a man's] difference. They'll beat your spirit and your nerves, your body and your mind, with iron rods until the dangerous difference goes out of you. [...] They only do it to protect themselves. A thing so triumphantly illogical, so beautifully senseless as an army can't allow a question to weaken it. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 28)

The process of robbing young men of their identities, essentially enframing them, serves only one purpose: control. These men are willing to sacrifice their lives for the cause, without giving it a second thought, because they no longer identify themselves as individuals worthy of consideration. They are part of the military system, and if necessary, they can easily be replaced by another identical man. Cyrus, in his fervent military mind, can think of no better way to train Adam.

Reluctantly, Adam goes off to join the cavalry as a marksman. Unlike his father's active enlistment, which is cut short due to his injury, Adam is in the service for ten years. For the most part of the decade, he takes part in several bloody battles.

> By this time the Indian fighting had become like dangerous cattle drives—the tribes were forced into revolt, driven and decimated, and the sad, sullen remnants settled on starvation lands. It was not nice work but, given the pattern of the country's development, it had to be done.
>
> To Adam who was an instrument, who saw not the future farms but only the torn bellies of fine humans, it was revolting and useless. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 37)

Adam, along with many other young men, is part of a system which is designed to murder and pillage indiscriminately, all in the name of territorial expansion. Even though he is a part of the system, trained to do what he is told without thinking, Adam cannot help but feel as though the violence is necessary.

Another military struggle which has a significant presence in *East of Eden* is the Great War, the war which is today is known as World War I. The world had never seen such a large scale conflict before and did not think that one would ever take place again: "There were people who gave everything they had to the war because it was the last war and by winning it we would remove war like a thorn from the flesh of the world and there

wouldn't be any more such horrible nonsense." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 518) The First World War ranks as the second most deadly armed conflict of the 20th century. The main reason for the high mortality rate is the rapidly expanding weapons market. The new mass production methods make large-scale weapons manufacturing the standard, which means it is much easier to arm the troops. Moreover, the weapon technology itself is evolving.

World War I saw the first use of aircraft in armed combat. In those years, people were still getting used to the idea of aviation for humans. Some people, like the narrator's mother, cannot conceive of such an apparatus. "I must tell you that there are certain things in the existence of which my mother did not believe, against any evidence of the contrary. One was a bad Hamilton and another was the airplane. The fact that she had seen them didn't make her believe in them one bit more." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 154) The soldiers on the battlefields, on the other hand, know beyond any doubt that airplanes do in fact exist, and moreover, that they are a deadly tool in combat.

Another new addition to the battlefield is the tank. As the gasoline powered engine has just been commercialized, inventors integrate this technology to power the first models of tanks. They are introduced by the Allied forces as a response to the highly effective German-made trenches.

> We remember World War I as quick victory, with flags and bands, marching and horseplay and returning soldiers, fights in barrooms with the goddam Limeys who thought they won the war. How quickly we forgot that in that winter Ludendorff could not be beaten and that many people were preparing in their minds and spirits for a lost war. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 571)

Erich Ludendorff is the German general who plans and directs the digging of highly fortified trench systems, a new defence tactic contrived in the First World War. This new form of trench warfare, as well as the advent of the tank, renders the cavalry regiments essentially obsolete. With every new invention, the face of the army is revolutionized.

Suddenly, instead of overcoming enemies by the sheer number of soldiers, the battles are being decided by individuals who are not even on the battlegrounds. Inventors, scientists and strategists, all taking part behind the scenes, use the soldiers as peons. Their ultimate goal lays in the end result, a victory for their country. In the First World War, as well as in most of the subsequent armed conflicts, the military leaders are detached from the concrete consequences of their actions. This type of warfare inescapably leads to the dehumanization of the people on the ground.

> There is no dignity in death and battle. Mostly that is a splashing about of human meat and fluid, and the result is filthy, but there is a great and almost sweet dignity in the sorrow, the helpless, the hopeless sorrow, that comes down over a family with the telegram. Nothing to say, nothing to do, and only one hope—I hope he didn't

> suffer—and what a forlorn and last-choice hope that is. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 518)

The work of a soldier, according to Cyrus, is to subdue any thoughts about death, because "he must learn coldly to put himself in the way of losing his own life without going mad." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 29) Even many of the soldiers' families have trouble understanding what they are sending their men into. That is, until they receive a notification of death. The death of a soldier across the ocean does not mean anything until a recognizable face can be associated to the deceased. Until then, the essence of the tragedy is obscure.

Furthermore, it is during World War I that the submarine is introduced in large scale to the battlefront. Armed with the new technology of the self-propelled torpedo, the German submarines wreak havoc on the Allies' ships. It is when the German Chancellor declares unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917 that the United States sends over its first troops.

> It was May before we had as many as twelve divisions in the field, and summer had come before our troops began to move across the sea in numbers. The Allied generals were fighting each other. Submarines slaughtered the crossing ships.
>
> We learned then that war was not a quick heroic charge but a slow, incredibly complicated matter. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 571)

As the American soldiers begin their crossing, German submarines carry on the decimation of any vessel which passes through the English Channel, even civilian ships from countries which are not engaged in the war. This is yet another example of the war taking on such a proportion that the end is used to justify any and all means.

## 2.4 Technology's Reforms

Undeniably, there is a link to be made between the evolution of technology and the change in the mindset of a large portion of the population. In his 2012 book entitled *Ecocriticism,* Greg Garrard suggests that Heidegger's philosophy is a pertinent starting point when discussing technological revolution. "Heidegger's thought is among the most profound critiques of industrial modernity because it combines a poetic awe before the Earth's being with a savage deconstruction of the death-denying project of world mastery we are taught to call 'progress.'" (Garrard, 2012, pg. 34) According to Heidegger, the first step when examining modern technology is to discover what technology truly means, to get an idea of its essence. "The essence of modern technology has for a long time been concealing itself, even where power machinery has been invented, where electrical technology is in full swing, and where atomic technology is well under way." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 22) In the novel *East of Eden*, Adam's servant, Lee, explains his thoughts about the impact of such technologies and people's trouble in coming to terms with the new enlightenment these technologies bring about:

> "Maybe the knowledge is too great and maybe men are growing too small," said Lee. "Maybe, kneeling down to atoms, they're becoming atom-sized in their souls. Maybe a specialist is only a coward, afraid to look out of his little cage. And think what any specialist misses—the whole world over his fence." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 540)

Although technology is all around us, although it has come to be an integral part of most people's everyday activities, we tend not to fully understand what technology really is, or the repercussions of its near ubiquity. All invasive forms of technology and science do not bring us closer to nature but, on the contrary, they alienate us from a nature's intrinsic essence.

The most common definition of technology is limited to an entirely instrumental understanding. "The manufacture and utilization of equipment, tools, and machines, the manufactured and used things themselves, and the needs and ends they serve, all belong to what technology is." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 4 - 5) This definition is basic but clear, and yet it is not adequate in showing the real essence of technology. Technology is fundamentally linked to the act of revealing:

> What has the essence of technology to do with revealing? The answer: everything. [...] If we inquire, step by step, into what technology, represented as means, actually is, then we shall arrive at revealing. The possibility of all productive manufacturing lies in revealing.

> Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing. (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 12)

It is through the implementation of technology that a human can bring forth the revealing of a thing. Technology, in its original form, is closely related to the poetic. It "is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 13) Through the use of equipment, tools and machinery, a person brings something from absence to presence, without altering the thing's authentic nature.

In *East of Eden*, Adam commissions his friend and neighbour, Samuel Hamilton, to dig a number of wells on his newly acquired land. "Adam went happily about building and planning his Eden. Samuel and his boys brought in a well at forty feet and put down the newfangled expensive metal casing, for Adam wanted the best." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 186) The technology used in well boring was manufactured, for the most part, by Samuel himself. Samuel and two of his sons, Tom and Joe, live on Adam's land while they work. They together in a small tent and cook their food on an open flame. Although Samuel is experienced in the digging of wells, each new project brings on new challenges. The first well he digs for Adam is finished quickly and with no complications to speak of. However, he encounters some trouble during his second dig:

> Samuel knelt in the sandy soil, looking at the torn broken edges of his bit. Just before they had stopped for lunch the drill had found

> something thirty feet down that had mangled the steel as though it were lead. Samuel scraped the edge of the blade with his pocketknife and inspected the scrapings in the palm of his hand. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 186)

Samuel estimates that it is probably a piece of meteorite, fallen to earth centuries earlier. Not at all discouraged, he sends his son home to fetch the necessary equipment. "Tom, you get all the tools gathered up. And go back to the ranch and sharpen the metal. Bring back the box of powder that's on the shelf in the tool shed, and go easy with it as you love your arms and legs." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 188) The well digging process used by the Hamiltons does not challenge the earth, nor do the wells themselves. In dredging up water from the depths of the soil, the well transforms the groundwater into an easily available source of water for the farmers. Nevertheless, a well is not a means of aggressively stripping nature, as the water at the bottom of the well still flows freely. A well is not a form of modern technology, as it does not pull water away from the earth in order to store it for future exploitation. It is the water which is fetched out of the well that is made use of itself; it is not dragged away to a factory and transformed into a commercial or marketable good. Neither the process of creating a well nor the technology used in a well lead to an enframing of the water or the land on which the well is settled.

In his essay *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger draws the line between traditional technology, which lets nature shine-forth authentically, and the more modern forms of technology.

> The work of a peasant does not challenge the soil of the field. In the sowing of the grain it places the seed in the keeping of the forces of growth and watches over its increase. But meanwhile even the cultivation of the field has come under the grip of another kind of setting-in-order, which *sets* upon [...] nature. It sets upon it in the sense of challenging it. Agriculture is now the mechanized food industry. (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 15. Emphasis in the original.)

The old technique for working the land is compared to the more modern form of automated agriculture. Traditionally, when farmers sow a field, they follow the rhythm of the seasons, planning their harvest around the cycles of nature, not according to their own whims. This acknowledgement of nature's claim is a demonstration of genuine respect. According to Heidegger, the latter method leads to a challenging-forth.

> The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth. The challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew. (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 16)

Modern technology, like traditional technology, is a way of revealing. The trouble with the use of modern technological forms is that they destroy nature without heed, making it possible to rob nature of its energy, to transform and to store it almost infinitely. Modern

technology undoubtedly leads to enframing. To see a thing as a standing-reserve is to refuse to acknowledge its essence, to recognize it no further than for its immediate or eventual instrumental use. This is the precise nature of enframing.

The Salinas Valley, in the early 20th century, is in fact treated as a standing-reserve. "In that day the railroads—growing, fighting among themselves, striving to increase and to dominate—used every means to increase their traffic." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 135) Promoting the valley as a present-day Eden, the railroad companies spend a substantial portion of their budgets trying to attract foreigners to settle down. Before their time, there had been the small and humble Native American tribes. Then, the Spaniards arrive, their intention to explore the land, not attempting to settle it. They make maps and name each part of the territory, even naming the Salinas Valley.

> Then the Americans came—more greedy because there were more of them. They took the lands, remade the laws to make their titles good. And farmholds spread over the land, first in the valleys and then up the foothill slopes, small wooden houses roofed with redwood shakes, corrals of split poles. Wherever a trickle of water came out of the ground a house sprang up and a family began to grow and multiply. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 11)

The railroad companies are responsible for the hasty populating of the Salinas Valley, their sole motive being monetary gain. They extol the beauty of the plants and flowers, create extravagant myths about the fertility of the earth and predict ideal rain patterns. The companies' actions prove to be a challenging of the land. The railroad companies do in fact

give rise to the revealing of the Salinas Valley, however, their sole objective is profit. The administrators never take the time to question whether or not the valley is capable of supporting the ever expanding population. They trample through the valley, blindly cutting down trees to set down their new tracks. Never do the engineers consider the impact of the railroad tracks on the natural environment in the valley. Guided by greed, these companies show no respect towards the Salinas Valley's inherent claim upon them.

The invention of the automobile brings on a whole new way of challenging the land. It contributes to further removing people from the earth. The automobile becomes a type of mobile wall, constantly surrounding the people inside it. Enclosed inside the vehicle, the driver and the passengers lose the connection with nature which exists when one travels on foot or makes use of animal-drawn carriages. A person can now go from their home, into their vehicle, go about their business and come back home, all without spending but a few moments outside. When driving, people hardly have the time to appreciate the nature surrounding them, only focusing on the end of the journey. In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger explains that a more complex machine, such as an airplane or an automobile "is not thought at all from out of the essence of technology within which it belongs. Seen in terms of a standing-reserve, the machine is completely unautonomous, for it has its standing only from the ordering of the orderable." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 17) Not only is the automobile itself set upon, but so is the environment which it occupies.

Labyrinths of roads now crisscross nearly every part of the United States, making the automobile a terribly convenient mode of transportation.

The new method of mechanized mass production which is brought about by the popularization of the automobile creates an even larger-scale type of challenging. Modern technology makes it possible for human beings to become part of the standing-reserve. "Enframing does not simply endanger man in his relationship to himself and to everything that is. As a destining, it banishes man into that kind of revealing which is an ordering." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 27) Whether speaking of workers in fields, factories or those behind the scenes sitting at a desk, the implementation of modern technological forms has made people no more important than any other cog in the system directed exclusively at production and profit. People who are enframed are called upon when needed, expected to be ready at all times, and quickly swept aside when the work is finished.

Let us consider, once again, the military, as it is yet another system which steadily engages in a challenging forth. It creates a process whereby people are not seen as such, but as either an obstacle or a weapon aimed at accomplishing a specific task. This type of systematic enframing is an integral part of modern warfare.

> [T]he soldiers went to Mexico and it was a kind of painful picnic. Nobody knows why you go to a picnic to be uncomfortable when it is so easy and pleasant to eat at home. The Mexican War did two

> good things though. We got a lot of western land, damn near doubled our size, and besides that it was a training ground for generals, so that when the sad self-murder settled on us the leaders knew the techniques for making it properly horrible. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 132)

This battle takes place in the mid-19th century. Already, the dehumanizing effects of war are becoming apparent, what the narrator describes as a type of self-murder. The armed forces bring about the enframing not only of their enemies but also of its own constituents. A soldier trains for battle, he is paid to drill and to stand guard, and even when he is off duty, he must be prepared at all times to be deployed. "Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call in the standing-reserve [...]." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 17) The men in the military represent nothing more than a standing-reserve to their superiors. What makes it more difficult for the people immersed in this type of system to escape it is that they are generally unaware of their position. "This entrapping disguises itself, in that it develops into the setting in order of everything that presences as standing-reserve, establishes itself in the standing-reserve, and rules as the standing reserve." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 36 - 37) This quotation, taken from Heidegger's essay *The Turning*, explains that the role of a system is to make it seem as though there is no system at all. In *East of Eden*, Cyrus explains the reason why the military must slowly take over the soldiers' free thinking: "I can understand why a system built on a pattern must try to destroy the free mind, for that is one thing which can by inspection destroy such a system." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 134) Hence, the cycle of the military

supressing the individuals which make up its ranks is propagated. It is a question of destroying the men's free will and critical thinking.

In such all-encompassing systems, it is not only the low-ranking men and women who are enframed. Even the military commanders, the supervisors of the factories and the managers of the companies are enframed by the system. Although it may be easy for them to believe that they are the true masters, that they are in control of everything, including the system itself, they are wrong:

> As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but does so, rather, exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve. (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 26 - 27)

According to Heidegger, no matter which role you occupy in a system based on modern technology, there is no escaping its challenging-forth. Everyone and everything inevitably becomes part of the ordering. The only way to escape enframing is to not be caught up in a system in the first place.

## 2.5 Technology's Own Claim

To state that technology constitutes an inherent danger for all human beings is to ignore technology's own authentic claim. "What is dangerous is not technology. There is no demonry of technology, but rather there is the mystery of its essence." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 28) Technology is a mode of revealing. As such, it has the potential to bring things from absence to presence. However, technology also has the power to destroy and enframe things.

> The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already affected man in his essence. The rule of Enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth. (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 28)

Technology becomes a threat when it is used to force things into an ordering. The danger is that people cannot themselves remain apart from the ordering, or standing-reserve, which they create. The further into an ordering one is dragged, the more difficult it becomes to see the enframing process for what it is. A thing's claim, to be disclosed in its own unique way, is hence more easily ignored.

For Heidegger, the essence of technology can only be discovered through thinking about technology and tracing it back to its origins, which is done fundamentally through

questioning. It is far too simple and entirely incorrect to say that the essence of technology is itself technological.

> Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other hand, fundamentally different from it.
>
> Such a realm is art. But certainly only if reflection on art, for its part, does not shut its eyes to the constellation of truth after which we are *questioning*. (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 35. Emphasis in the original.)

The realm of art extends from concrete artistic creations to the artistic use of language, mainly poetry. The appreciation of poetry is very important to Heidegger as it "thoroughly pervades every art, every revealing of coming to presence into the beautiful." (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 34) Poetry allows for humans to break free from enframing and to once again be astonished by the world around them. It is essential, according to Heidegger, to fight the loss of astonishment caused by modern technologies and the parallel world of modern science. Through art, a genuine form of creating, people are able to escape from the standing-reserve. Art, in saving humans, also saves the things which they help to reveal.

> What does it mean "to save"? Usually we think that it means only to seize hold of a thing threatened by ruin, in order to secure it in its former continuance. But the verb "to save" says more. "To save" is to fetch something home into its essence, in order to bring the essence for the first time into its genuine appearing. (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 28)

Therefore, people must not use technology to satisfy their desire for monetary gain, accumulating material possessions, or acquiring power. According to Heidegger, technology should be used only so far as to create and invent things which help humans on their path towards genuine revealing.

# CHAPTER III:

# BREAKING THROUGH

"Out of the gray throbbing an ecstasy rose."
(Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 328)

*East of Eden* is known by many to be Steinbeck's last great novel, his only influential novel published after 1948. Some critics believe that there is an explanation for the author's decline; "[...] it hardly seems coincidental that Steinbeck's fictional genius declined after Ricketts's death. Rather, it seems apparent that the train that killed Ricketts set off a series of reactions that helped kill Steinbeck as a serious novelist." (Astro, 1937, pg. 228) This point of view certainly does not lack dramatic flair. It can be argued – quite easily – that such a statement is much too drastic, that the situation is far too complex to be simplified in such a way. While it is best to take Astro's radical declaration with a grain of salt, he does nonetheless refer to an interesting individual who merits closer examination; Edward F. Ricketts.

Ricketts is a relatively well-known ecologist, especially on the American west coast. Before his sudden death in 1948, he intended to publish a philosophical book about human

cooperative interactions, not only amongst each other but also regarding their relationship with nature. Ricketts's book was eventually published posthumously. It spans a great many topics, from his extensive biological surveys to a timid literary analysis to his most well-known philosophical essay, "The Philosophy of 'Breaking Through.'" Central to most of Ricketts's work is the concept of holism, the fundamental belief that everything on this earth is interconnected, that the whole which constitutes the basis of all existence is more important than the simple sum of its parts.

In the first two chapters of this thesis, we learnt from Heidegger's philosophy that there is an essential and permanent link between human beings and the environment. One cannot thrive at the expense of the other. An understanding of this mutually dependent relationship is expressed in much of Steinbeck's work;

> Humanity and the environment are linked in a delicate interplay. [...] Respect for this linkage, seeing the land as it is in its own right, as a living a delicate thing, not only ennobles humanity and ultimately liberates humanity but also grants self-knowledge and validation through a loving and harmonious relationship between humanity and the land. (Timmerman, [1992], 1997, pg. 322)

In *East of Eden*, Adam Trask suffers greatly when he loses sight of this linkage. His relationship with the environment is altered by a traumatic event, brought on by his wife, Cathy. At first, it seems as though this change is permanent. Only when Adam becomes strong enough to face the woman who causes him many years of suffering does he create a rupture in the destructive story of his life. Now, he can finally close the door on the violent

events of the past and become conscious of his present and future. At last, after being in a fog for so many years, Adam comes out of his phantom-like state of existence. As we will see in this chapter, it is when Adam finally reaches a point of breaking through that his connection with the world around him is reignited once and for all.

## 3.1 Adam's First Glory

Adam Trask wanders around aimlessly for the first three decades of his life. His childhood memories of growing up on a farm in New England are overshadowed by mental and physical abuse, as well as the absence of a mother figure. Enlisting twice in the military and wandering listlessly across the country, Adam spends many years in a state of constant dejection. "Adam Trask grew up in grayness, and the curtains of his life were like dusty cobwebs, and his days a slow file of half-sorrows and sick dissatisfactions, and then, through Cathy, the glory came to him." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 134) With the arrival of Cathy, a complete stranger who quite literally stumbles upon his doorstep, Adam's life is forever altered.

Adam and his brother, Charles, argue a great deal. Charles takes his role as a farmer very seriously, always planning how to better work the land, but Adam is not so committed; he is constantly distracted by the desire to leave the farm behind and to travel the world. One day, they are in the midst of yet another disagreement when they hear a noise coming from the door. Opening the door tentatively, the brothers are startled by what they find.

> A dirty bundle of rags and mud was trying to worm its way up the steps. One skinny hand clawed slowly at the stairs. The other dragged helplessly. There was a caked face with cracked lips and eyes peering out of swollen, blackened lids. The forehead was laid open, oozing blood back into the matted hair. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 112)

When the brothers find Cathy lying on their front porch, she is on the verge of death. Against Charles' will, Adam brings the stranger into the house, places her delicately in his bed and immediately tends to her wounds. "Adam couldn't remember ever having been so happy. It didn't bother him that he did not know her name. She had said to call her Cathy, and that was enough for him. He cooked for Cathy, going through recipes used by his mother and his stepmother." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 118) Slowly, over many days, she begins to heal in Adam's gentle hands. Wishing to keep her dark past a secret, she lies to Adam and says that she does not remember anything that happened before he finds her. She tells him that she does not know why she was beaten so brutally, that she cannot remember who attacked her, which is also not true.

The narrator suggests that there is something fundamentally off about Cathy that has nothing to do with the way in which she is brought up. On the contrary, he believes her psyche has been troubled since birth:

> It is my belief that Cathy Ames was born with the tendencies, or lack of them, which drove and forced her all of her life. Some balance wheel was misweighted, some gear out of ratio. She was not like other people, never was from birth. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 74)

Cathy is able to manipulate people with ease, and does so in a destructive manner. She continually harms the people around her for her own benefit, putting herself, her own comfort and her well-being before all else. Her utter selfishness and complete lack of empathy even bring her set fire to her home, murdering her own parents. She commits this act in cold blood for one simple reason: she wants the freedom to start a new life on her own.

> By sunrise everyone in town was tight-packed about the smoking black pile. [...] Enough remained of Mr. and Mrs. Ames to make sure there were two bodies. Near neighbors pointed out the approximate place where Cathy's room had been, but although the coroner and any number of helpers worked over the debris with a garden rake they could not find tooth or bone.
>
> The chief of the volunteers meanwhile had found the doorknobs and lock of the kitchen door. He looked at the blackened metal, puzzled, but not quite knowing what puzzled him." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 88 - 89)

The chief finds the doorknobs but cannot find the key to the door. The door is locked, as though no one had tried to escape. The key is never found in the charred home, although it should have been there. In fact, Cathy takes the keys with her as she flees with the money from the family safe. To get away without being detected, she stages a robbery, trying to lead the police to believe that the fire has been set by the burglar. A cloud of suspicion remains over the arson and the robbery, and no one is charged with the crime. At first, it is believed that Cathy has been murdered by the bandit. With time, people of the town begin to wonder if she is possibly still alive, having found no evidence to suggest her death.

Some years later, when Adam rescues Cathy on his doorstep, he has no way of knowing what type of life she has led. He cannot guess that Cathy has run away from home, killing her parents, only to take on a new identity as a prostitute. There is no way for him to know the reason for Cathy's savage beating. Knowing the truth, that Cathy's former whoremaster attacks her with the intention of murder, he may have some doubts as to Cathy's past. However, nothing that Adam learns about Cathy leads him to question her character. He knows nothing about her, and is quite content in his ignorance. Adam finally finds a purpose for his life, caring for Cathy and raising a family with her, all on his own plot of land. Suddenly, for the first time in his life, Adam takes an interest in the idea of farming, in order to provide for this woman that he has only just met. Knowing so little about her, Adam slowly fills in the blank parts of Cathy's persona with ideas that stem from his own mind.

> Whatever Cathy may have been, she set off the glory in Adam. His spirit rose flying and released him from fear and bitterness and rancid memories. The glory lights up the world changes it the way a star shell changes a battleground. Perhaps Adam did not see Cathy at all, so lighted was she by his eyes. Burned in his mind was an image of beauty and tenderness, a sweet and holy girl, precious beyond thinking, clean and loving, and that image was Cathy to her husband, and nothing Cathy did or said could warp Adam's Cathy. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 135)

Adam is so taken by Cathy that only a few days after having found her, he asks her to marry him. Soon after, the couple rides to the town and gets married in a hurried, secretive ceremony.

> Five days later, when Charles had gone to buy some calf feed, Adam drove the buggy to the kitchen steps. He helped Cathy in, tucked a blanket around her knees, and put another around her shoulders. He drove to the county seat and was married to her by a justice of the peace. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 125)

Adam takes Cathy to the justice of the peace behind his brother's back, knowing that he would never approve of their marriage. Charles senses that there is something not quite right about Cathy, and he has not been afraid to voice his opinion. Cathy is herself eager to leave the farm, feeling threatened by Charles. It is the first time that Cathy encounters someone who distrusts her immediately, and she is alarmed. She does not want Charles to influence Adam's lucent opinion of her.

Fleeing Charles' animosity, the newlyweds quickly make their way from Connecticut to California. Cathy wants to leave the farm, but she does not want to migrate clear across the country, repeatedly telling Adam that she does not want to go to California. Adam does not listen to her as he is set on the idea of purchasing a plot of land on which to raise his family. Soon after their arrival in the Salinas Valley, Cathy finds out she is expecting. Once again putting her own ambitions before all else, Cathy secretly tries to abort her pregnancy. Her attempt is unsuccessful. According to the narrator, Cathy sees her pregnancy more as a sickness than a joyous time in her life. "I've built the image in my mind of Cathy, sitting quietly waiting for her pregnancy to be over, living on a farm she did not like, with a man she did not love." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 185) Even though she

wants Adam to marry her, and even though she is happy to leave the farm in Connecticut far behind, she is still profoundly unhappy.

Adam plans on building an extravagant estate for his wife, and looks forward to eventually passing it on to his unborn child. He is more than willing to pay any price to bring his farmland to life, and he certainly has the money to do so.

> One day, and not too far away, you'll see the whole valley green with alfalfa—see it from the fine big windows of the finished house. I'll plant rows of gum trees, and I'm going to send away for seeds and plants—put in a kind of experimental farm. I might try lichee nuts from China. [...] And once the baby's born you can ride over the whole place with me. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 176)

Due to the inheritance Adam is left by his father, he sees no limit to the possibilities for building his new life in the Salinas Valley. It is to Cathy, however, that he gives all of the merit for having awoken his imagination and stirred his newfound consciousness and desire to be a part of the earth.

Adam, knowing nothing about Cathy's past, could never have expected what is about to take place. After the birth of their twin boys, Cathy completely shuts herself off from the outside world. She refuses to see Adam or to take care of her sons. Adam goes about trying to settle the ranch, not knowing what Cathy is planning to do. Behind the

locked bedroom door, Cathy is preparing to leave Adam and the Salinas Valley behind for good. When she finally emerges from the bedroom, she has her plans made and her bags packed. Innocently, Adam tries to hold Cathy back, thinking that she is making a mistake by trying to leave. He tries to convince her to stay. Unfortunately, her decision is already made, and there is nothing that Adam can do to stop her. To show Adam that she is serious, Cathy goes to the most extreme measure: "She shot him. The heavy slug struck him in the shoulder and flattened and tore out a piece of his shoulderblade. The flash and roar smothered him, and he staggered back and fell to the floor." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 202) The physical injury is serious, but the emotional pain is much worse. Cathy's violent departure sends Adam spiralling back down into his familiar state of depression; only he falls much further than ever before. He once again loses all touch with reality, with the natural world by which he is surrounded.

### 3.2 A Fallow Man

Nothing could have prepared Adam for his loss. When the sheriff arrives at his home, launching an investigation into the shooting, Adam refuses to tell him what had taken place, still trying to get a grasp of it himself. "On the Trask place Adam drew into himself. The unfinished Sanchez house lay open to wind and rain, and the new floorboards buckled and warped with moisture. The laid-out vegetable gardens rioted with weeds." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 253) Adam ceases to exist. He goes from dreaming of recreating the Garden of Eden to being completely out of touch with the world in which he lives.

For more than a decade, Adam reverts to being no more than a shell of a man, drifting through life in a blanket of fog.

> Adam seemed clothed in a viscosity that slowed his movements and held his thoughts down. He saw the world through gray water. Now and then his mind fought its way upward, and when the light broke in it brought him only a sickness of the mind, and he retired into the grayness again. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 253)

He takes shelter in the numbness, because it is easier for him to do so than to face the reality of his situation. Even after ten years, he still cannot come to terms with Cathy having abandoned him and their then newborn sons. For the entire decade, there is no one who is able to shake Adam out of his state of stupor.

> His neighbors drove up into his little valley, and every one of them would have understood anger or sorrow—and so helped him. But they could do nothing with the cloud that hung over him. Adam did not resist them. He simply did not see them, and before long the neighbors stopped driving up the road under the oaks. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 253)

Not knowing how to react to Adam's state, most of his acquaintances give up on trying to help him, leaving him to his chosen path of self-destruction. Samuel Hamilton, the person who persuades Adam to settle in the valley in the first place, is very concerned for Adam. Samuel, who had befriended Adam, does not know what to make of his condition. He suggests that Adam must get some sort of satisfaction from his self-indulgent destructive behaviour; "Some people think it's an insult to the glory of their sickness to get well."

(Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 266) For Adam, the gratification comes from holding onto his memory of Cathy, a memory which is, for the most part, his own fabrication.

During his years of depression, Adam neglects everything, from the immense projects he had planned for his farm to his own growing children. For an entire year, the boys are not even given a name. Concerned about the babies, Lee, Adam's servant, informs Samuel. Samuel is furious. "I'll come. I'll bring a horse whip. No names! You're damn right I'll come, Lee." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 256) Samuel makes plans to see Adam right away, to force him to give his boys a name, to acknowledge their existence. He is worried, however, that his wife, Liza, will forbid him from returning to the Trask ranch. In the past, she has made it clear that she does not want Samuel to visit Adam. "'I want you to stay away from there,' she said. 'You come back a changed man. Samuel, you don't change him. He changes you. I can see the look of him in your face.'" (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 253) Samuel, unlike the rest of the visitors, brings some of Adam's fog home with him. Worried about his wife's reaction, Samuel explains the situation on the Trask farm. To his surprise, Liza agrees that the situation has gone on for too long, that the children are being neglected. In her eyes, the fact that they have yet to be named is an inexcusable abomination. Liza tells her husband that he must remedy the situation at once, or that she will take the matter into her own hands. "If you do not get those boys named, there'll be no warm place in this house for you. Don't you dare come whining back, saying he wouldn't do it or he wouldn't listen." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 257) And so, Samuel sets off to

try to make some sense of the situation and to force Adam into recognizing his sons' existence. That very day, after a long and trying conversation between Adam, Samuel and Lee, the boys are finally given names; Aron and Caleb.

The conversation between the three men brings Adam back to the surface, but only briefly. He quickly slips back into a state of unconsciousness. Aron and Caleb grow up to see Adam as an empty body, a father who has no interest in his sons, who is hardly aware of their existence. "They knew him as a presence—as ears that heard but did not listen, eyes that looked and did not notice. He was a cloud father. The boys had never learned to tell him of their interest and discoveries, or of their needs." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 353) As a child, Adam had to come to terms with not having a mother to care for him, and a father who cared but who went about showing his affection in the most twisted ways. Sadly, he cannot see that he is putting his own children in the same situation. In Adam's absence, it is Lee who takes on the duty of raising the twins. Lee understands just how important it is for the boys to grow up feeling loved. According to Lee, "[t]he greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell he fears." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 271) Lee, aware that the twins have no one else to rely on, becomes their only reliable parental figure.

In a moment of clarity, during the conversation about naming the boys, Adam explains to Samuel the major source of his pain. Samuel asks Adam if he thinks that Cathy had attempted to kill him. Adam responds:

> No, I don't think she meant to kill me. She didn't allow me that dignity. There was no hatred in her, no passion at all. [...] I guess I wouldn't have minded so much if she had wanted my death. That would have been a kind of love. But I was an annoyance, not an enemy. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 263)

This complete lack of consideration for human life is very typical of Cathy, as she has shown her indifference many times in the past. Adam, not wanting to see any further than the illusion of Cathy he had painted on the canvas of his mind, had never known what his wife was truly capable of, that is until she fires on him with a shotgun and flees. For Adam, the worst part is her indifference to him. She does not care whether he is dead or alive, she only wants to be left alone. As we will soon see, there is only one event which can bring Adam to regain consciousness of the world around him; he must come to a breaking through.

## 3.3 Unconventional Perspectives

In the course of studying any given literary piece, an interesting and decidedly informative undertaking is to examine the text from different points of view that can seem, at first sight, somewhat extraneous. Doing so can lead to a more complete understanding of the diegetic world itself. According to Richard Astro, this venture outside of the customary patterns of literary analysis is especially beneficial in the case of Steinbeck's work.

> In all fairness to previous Steinbeck scholarship, it must be said that many of the flawed conclusions by the critics resulted from their being forced to operate without many indispensible facts about the writer and his work. More often, though, the problem lies in the [critics'] limited horizons, because most critics carry out their investigations within the constricted framework of literary patterns and traditions. In some cases, this approach may be sufficient, but with Steinbeck it is disastrous. (Astro, 1973, pg. 4)

This method is indeed disastrous because of Steinbeck's far-reaching interests. In order to study Steinbeck's genius, one must be willing to step outside of the more conventional and somewhat closed-minded methods of study. The advantage of doing so is the fortuitous and unique point of view which can emerge.

In a further paragraph, Astro adds: "No analysis of Steinbeck's world-view, his philosophy of life, can proceed without a careful study of the life, work, and ideas of this remarkable human being who was Steinbeck's closest personal and intellectual companion for nearly two decades." (Astro, 1973, pg. 4) Who is this remarkable person of which Astro speaks? Edward F. Ricketts. Generally speaking, Ricketts is known for his extensive and comprehensive work as a marine biologist. He grew quite concerned with the slow-creeping defilement of the marine environment. However, his interests were not limited to the natural sciences;

> Art, music, literature, philosophy—the fact that the humanities were as much a part of his life as the natural sciences was a great part of what made Ed Ricketts so unusual. Indeed, his basic approach to life and to the problem of understanding it was one of synthesis; his

> approach to biology was often as much philosophical as it was scientific. [...] His mind stretched from the tidepool to the music of the entire universe, and he saw the arts and sciences as all of one piece. (Benson, [1984], 1990, pg. 187)

Ricketts was a true polymath, and it is this boundless curiosity that Steinbeck is said to have greatly admired. Jackson J. Benson, the author of one of the most highly regarded Steinbeck biographies, also names Ricketts as one of Steinbeck's most thought-provoking companions: "Of all the people Steinbeck came to know during the course of his life, the one who most influenced his thinking and writing was Edward F. Ricketts." (Benson, [1984], 1990, pg. 183) Steinbeck's friendship with Ricketts is well documented. The two men shared many interests and had frequent and lengthy discussions on a wide variety of subjects, from daily mundane events to deep metaphysical hypotheses and everything in between.

In taking Astro's advice, that is to step outside of the somewhat restricted forms of traditional literary studies, I have interpreted the first two chapters of this ecocritical study of *East of Eden* from a Heideggerian perspective. Heidegger's philosophy is certainly not the most conventional approach for examining literature. Now, in continuing with this objective, I will take a closer look at Ricketts's philosophical writing, despite it being relatively unknown and quite often overlooked. It is an interesting point of analysis for *East of Eden*, specifically with regard to the difficult struggle that Adam faces when Cathy runs away, taking with her Adam's newfound will to live. Interesting to note is that Steinbeck

may have taken part in the elaboration of Ricketts's philosophy of breaking through, that perhaps the friends exchanged views on the very topic in question. It is a possibility, as the men spent a considerable amount of time together, always talking about the world around them and trying to gain a better understanding of what they observed.

> Very many conclusions Ed and I worked out together through endless discussion and reading and observation and experiment. We worked together, and so closely that I do not know in some cases who started which line of speculation since the end thought was the product of both minds. I do not know whose thought it was. (Steinbeck, [1951], 2000, pg. 256)

There is no question that Steinbeck and Ricketts's long-standing friendship meant a great deal to each of the men, that they both grew considerably from their time spent together. However, if Ricketts became the foremost authority of the marine biology of the California shore, and Steinbeck, for his part, one of the most celebrated American fiction authors, it is because each of the men was very talented in his own right. Although not to be ignored, Steinbeck and Ricketts's relationship is not the focal point of this particular study of *East of Eden.* In this specific context, what is most interesting is the writing which each man published individually.

The term 'Breaking Through,' which is the title of this third chapter, was taken from Ricketts's 1940 essay entitled "The Philosophy of 'Breaking Through.'" To grasp the process of breaking through, or transcending, the first step is to examine what inspired Ricketts to develop this philosophy. In fact, the term itself was borrowed from *Roan*

*Stallion*, an epic poem by Robinson Jeffers. The philosophy behind breaking through is an aggregation of numerous sources, from the thoughts and observations Ricketts made while carrying out ecological surveys, to the texts of poets and authors he revered, and especially from his studies of Zen Buddhism and Taoism.

According to Ricketts, breaking through can take place only when a person is faced with adversity. "Struggle, especially, seems to be a necessary prerequisite of the beyond quality, and the greater the struggle, the greater the possible breaking through." (Ricketts, 2006, pg. 96) The bigger the conflict, the more fundamental the transcendence can be. However, the mere presence of such a conflict does not guarantee breaking through.

> Although it will be granted that intense struggle is one of the commonest concomitants to a great emergent, the presence of the former is no invariable index of the latter. Where there is refusal to accept the hazards of grief and tragedy, as occurs more frequently than not, I should expect to see the struggle belittle, rather than deify, since whatever is has to be taken and accepted in order for development to proceed. (Ricketts, 2006, pg. 97)

According to Ricketts, one must fully accept the challenge with which he or she is faced. Oftentimes, the possibility for breaking through presents itself but is simply not acknowledged by the individual—consciously or not. The person must see this struggle as a temporary state, all while understanding that the changes which result from the conflict are permanent. People must come to see that it is "not dirt for dirt's sake, or grief merely for the sake of grief, but dirt and grief wholly accepted if necessary as struggle vehicles of an

emergent joy—achieving things which are not transient by means of things which are." (Ricketts, 2006, pg.95) An individual must come to see the struggle as a vehicle, not as a final conclusion. The significant role which is played by the anima makes it possible for two people who go through the same struggle to have a different kind of breaking through. It is also possible for one person to get through the situation not the slightest bit enlightened. Whether the choice is conscious or not, it is essential that the person acknowledges the impending struggle as an opportunity for growth.

> The successful person (the growing person; success as often used implies compromise to the point of smugness or stultification, mistaking the earmarks of success for success itself, as with material wealth, fame, or acquisitions in general) welcomes the struggle as a vehicle. (Ricketts, 2006, pg. 99)

The 'successful' person, According to Ricketts, is able to see further than the struggle itself. He adds that "there is not only the necessity for struggle but also an equal necessity for accepting it when, but only when, it arises *inevitably in the natural flow of events.*" (Ricketts, 2006, pg. 99. Emphasis mine.) A person cannot intentionally put him or herself into a difficult situation and expect to come to a genuine breaking through. The struggle must arise on its own accord, it cannot be forced. These inevitable conflicts can originate at any place and time throughout one's life.

As explained by Ricketts, there are three types of struggles that arise more frequently than others: "The common conflicts are between individual and society, persona

and anima. Such challenges, honestly met, may give over into the new thing." (Ricketts, 2006, pg. 97) The two types of exterior conflicts can take place between themselves and society (whether or not they belong to said society), or between themselves and other individuals. The kind of struggle which is born internally, between a person and his or her own inner self, can be just as moving as the preceding two.

Central to Ricketts's philosophy of breaking through is the necessity for a person to embrace a holistic understanding of the world. For Ricketts, this means "that the whole is more than the sum of its parts; that the integration or relation of the parts is other than the separate sum of the parts." (Ricketts, 2006, pg. 95) The whole which is created becomes a new element, yet remains as equally important as each of the parts, as they all have their own significant place and purpose. It is through breaking through that one can hope to get a glimpse of this life-altering reality.

Although the vocabulary is somewhat different, the philosophy of breaking through has many resemblances with Heidegger's notion of dwelling. In this philosophy, there is also a merit which arises from facing adversity. In one of his most widely acclaimed essays, "...Poetically Man Dwells...," Heidegger touches upon this subject. Dwelling is man's authentic way of being in this world. Dwelling is born through struggle, through a conscious effort to preserve the earth. It comes about when people encourage things to grow on their own accord. All of this takes place when man does so poetically. A

poetic thinker does not want to dominate his environment; rather, this individual feels like he or she is an integral part of the whole. Both philosophies mean that if you take care of the environment, it will in turn take care of you. This holistic vision of the world is a further congruence between these two philosophies. As the German philosopher explained during his course *Introduction to Metaphysics* at the University of Freiburg in 1935, "All things of earth, and earth itself as a whole, flow together in reciprocal harmony. But this confluence is not a blurring." (Parkes, 1990, pg. 136) By not being a blurring, according to Heidegger, each thing also exists in its own right and has its own authentic claim, despite the mutual dependence on all the other things, or reciprocal harmony. As well, it must not be forgotten that each thing has a way of being in this world which is inherently its own. All things call upon humans to treat them as such. It is also the humans' responsibility to enable these things to disclose themselves in their own, unique manner.

Seeing as the two philosophies – one written by a well-respected biologist and the other by a world-acclaimed philosopher – are so similar, why not concentrate on just one, the eminently obvious choice being Heidegger? There is no doubt that Heidegger's philosophy is very thorough, that he is an indispensable reference and a fundamental basis of any ecocritical study. Nonetheless, I believe that it is relevant to put forward both philosophies, as they are complementary to one another. More importantly, being receptive to both ultimately leads to a better understanding of Adam's struggle in *East of Eden.* Whereas Heidegger's discourse is about building, dwelling and the importance of

poetry – the focal point of the two first chapters of this thesis – Ricketts's major emphasis is on the human factor of facing adversity, and the benefits which can ensue from seeing a struggle as a chance for growth. Ricketts sees great value in regarding the world as a holistic entity and in striving to be a part of nature. Heidegger's philosophy extols the same benefits from being close to nature. It may be tempting to try and find a common ground between these two philosophies, a source of inspiration which can explain the striking similarities between the two.

> What prompts us to want to say that in such cases thinkers from disparate traditions are saying the same thing is the desire, when faced with congruent patterns in different discourses, to posit some *ground* for the congruences, to say that the discourses are being patterned by the same thing, or event, or process. [...] [T]he patterns reflect underlying similarities in "forms of life," or deeper truths about what it is to be a human being. (Parkes, [1987], 1990, pg. 4. Emphasis in the original.)

Whether or not Ricketts and Heidegger had a common stimulus is impossible to tell. However, both men could have arrived at a similar conclusion because they came to understand a deeper truth, something that is common to all humans on a fundamental level, without ever having been pointed in the same direction by an outside element.

In Ricketts's philosophy of breaking through, the transcending that takes place after the period of struggle is more than just an ordinary lesson of life. It also goes much further than anything one can come to understand from scientific observations and inferences. The new perspective which is gained is greater than any idea or any value that the person held

beforehand. "For those few minutes, we were really living, we were 'beyond,' things had a new meaning, so that the former values must have seemed dwarfed and strange if we had stopped to think of them." (Ricketts, 2006, pg. 91) Breaking through leads a person to the realization that, at one point in their life, every being on this earth could be faced with a similar struggle. This mutual understanding increases a person's sensitivity to other people's suffering, an awareness which goes beyond any physical, cultural or economic boundaries. Having been through such a drastic change allows for a person to see the full potential in others. The person who has had a breaking through is better able to understand and to show the rightful respect towards not only humans but all of the world's living creatures, bringing him or her even closer to nature. Ultimately, breaking through creates a new way of feeling about the entire world; the person comes to realize that all of the parts of the world are closely interconnected, that each part is best understood with reference to the whole. In this way, nature becomes a part of each person, as each person is a part of nature. What is ironic is that to recognize this, one must first be apart from it. "Once away in the first place [...], the way back is long and uncertain, but the journey deeply enriches the recovered home to those who achieve it." (Ricketts, 2006, pg. 103) Returning to the context of *East of Eden,* it is obvious that Adam has completely lost touch with life, that he is unaware of the world that is carrying on without him. The only way for Adam to return to existence is for him to willingly embark on this long and uncertain journey, a journey to breaking through.

## 3.4 Adam's Struggle

If it is Cathy who awakens Adam for the first time in his life, she is also responsible for sending him back to nihility. After Cathy shoots him and leaves him for dead, Adam's worst injury is not his physical pain; it is his spirit which is damaged beyond recognition. Immediately, Adam sinks deeply into himself. He begins to neglect all of his responsibilities; he no longer has any interest in taking care of himself or his sons, or even the plot of land that he put so much effort into making his own only months prior. Many of his neighbours notice that Adam lets his great expanse of land go to waste, but they do not understand why. Clearly, they simply cannot understand his grief. If any of his neighbours had themselves experienced a breaking through, they may have been able to recognize Adam's state. Samuel Hamilton is alarmed by this broken connection between his friend and the soil; "there's all that fallow land, and here beside me is all that fallow man. It seems a waste." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 297) Having only a small and meagre plot of land of his own, Samuel does not understand how Adam can be so indifferent to the state of his soil.

Samuel is well aware of the extensive plans that Adam had for the ranch because he was supposed to help bring them to fruition, before Adam hurriedly cancels each and every project. Adam himself is not able to explain his change of heart because he is not in a conscious, rational state of mind. Frustrated, Samuel explicitly asks Adam about his plans for the cultivation of his land. Despondently, Adam responds: "I think that kind of energy is

gone out of me. I can't feel the pull of it. I have money enough to live. I never wanted it for myself. I have no one to show a garden to." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 273) Slowly, Samuel comes to the understanding that there is nothing that he can do to convince Adam of the importance of taking an interest in his own life or that of his sons. Samuel realizes that in order to shake Adam out of his spiritless existence, something drastic must be done.

Samuel resolves to try once more to shock Adam back to life. He understands that Adam aches to know why Cathy fled, but Samuel does not hold the answer to that question. He decides that he must tell Adam what he does know about Cathy, about her whereabouts and the business she runs. Unsure of his decision, Samuel asks Adam: "If I had a medicine that might cure you and also might kill you, should I give it to you?" (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 308) Adam, frustrated, says that he wants to hear what Samuel has to say. Samuel relates all the information he has heard about Cathy over the years:

> Adam, Cathy is in Salinas. She owns a whorehouse, the most vicious and depraved in this whole end of the country. The evil and ugly, the distorted and slimy, the worst things humans can think up are for sale there. The crippled and crooked come there for satisfaction. But it is worse than that. Cathy, and she is now called Kate, takes the fresh and young and beautiful and so maims them they can never be whole again. Now, there's your medicine. Let's see what it does to you. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 308)

Samuel knows that the information will either save Adam from his steady decaying or, inversely, that it will ruin his life. At first, Adam is completely overwhelmed by what Samuel tells him.

> Adam stood swaying in the lantern light and then he turned and ran. They could hear his heavy steps running and tripping. They heard him falling over the brush and scrambling and clawing his way upward on the slope. The sound of him stopped only when he had gone over the brow of the hill. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 308)

It is very difficult – if not outright impossible – for Adam to equate the description given by Samuel to the Cathy that he had created for himself in his own mind. He refuses to believe that Cathy has changed her name Kate. She could not be that person. In his heart, Adam only sees Cathy as pure and good, even spurning the fact that she shoots him, intentionally, and leaves him writhing in his own blood.

Adam does not feel compelled to verify the information that Samuel thrusts upon him, and eventually the shock settles and he becomes completely numb once again. Adam is not yet ready to face the difficult event in order to come to a breaking through. According to the narrator, this denial on Adam's part is likely to be, for the most part, unconscious: "I believe there are techniques of the human mind whereby, in its dark deep, problems are examined, rejected or accepted." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 328) Adam's unconscious mind simply rejects the information and goes back to its familiar, vacant state.

Then one day, quite unexpectedly, Adam learns that Samuel has died. He is devastated. He goes to Samuel's funeral, which takes place in the city of Salinas. Leaving the funeral, Adam decides that he wants to see Cathy. After having quite a few drinks,

Adam leaves to seek her out, despite the bartender's advice to stay away from her brothel. Drunk, Adam makes his way through the streets, staggering about until he comes upon the right place. "He looked in through the gateway at the dark porch, slowly opened the gate, and went up the overgrown path. In the half-darkness he could see the sagging dilapidated porch and the shaky steps." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 316) Adam goes inside and, after some arguing with the woman at the front desk, is let into Cathy's office. For the first time since he had met her, Adam is able to see Cathy for who she really is. He recognizes her, but she suddenly seems very ugly to him, even repulsing. The transformation is so profound that Adam has trouble to believe that she had ever truly been a part of his life. "I know, but I can't believe. I know I won't believe it in the morning. It will be a nightmare dream. But no, it—it can't be a dream—no. Because I remember you are the mother of my boys." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 325) Only the fact that she gave birth to his sons reminds Adam that he had once been absolutely spellbound by Cathy. Adam proves that this is no longer the case when she tries to seduce him; he pulls away in disgust, no longer wanting anything to do with her. The image of Cathy he had held so dear is shattered, once and for all. This time, it is Adam who walks out on Cathy, as she calls for him to stay. "He turned slowly. He smiled as a man might smile at a memory. Then he went out and closed the door gently behind him." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 327) From this moment onward, Adam is no longer the same man. He has had a breaking through, winning the conflict between himself and his own mind, finally letting go of the misery of his past.

## 3.5 Adam's Return to the Land

The day after Samuel's funeral, Adam makes the long journey back to his ranch. Slowly, he becomes conscious that he is a changed man.

> On his drive back to the ranch Adam found that he was noticing things he had not seen for years. He saw the wildflowers in the heavy grass, and he saw the red cows against the hillsides, moving up the easy ascending paths and eating as they went. When he came to his own land Adam felt a quick pleasure so sharp that he began to examine it. And suddenly he found himself saying aloud in rhythm with his horse's trotting feet, "I'm free, I'm free. I don't have to worry any more. I'm free. She's gone. She's out of me. Oh, Christ Almighty, I'm free!" (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 330 - 331)

Adam feels better than he has for over a decade. His freedom from Cathy brings him back to life, back to nature. At last, he is able to return to being a part of nature and to recognize that nature is a part of him. He is once again moved by the world around him.

> He reached out and stripped the fur from the silver-gray sage beside the road, and when his fingers were sticky with the sap he smelled the sharp penetrating odor on his fingers, breathed it deep into his lungs. He was glad to be home. (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 331)

Adam savours all of the senses that his natural surroundings awaken deep within him. For the first time in over a decade, he is glad to be home, because he is finally capable of feeling at home. He is no longer a prisoner of Cathy's ghost.

When Adam walks into the house, Lee immediately senses a change in him. Adam realizes that Lee has raised his sons thus far, that he has been a miserable father, absent from his sons' life for over ten years. He can hardly tell Aron and Caleb apart, despite their having a very different appearance and personality. After his transcendence, Adam can see his sons as distinct young men, each needing him in different ways. After his first encounter with the real Cathy, Adam becomes an involved and caring father. Later that day, Adam tells Lee about his meeting with Cathy and about the change that it provoked. "'I seem to have come out of a sleep,' said Adam. 'In some strange way my eyes have cleared. A weight is off me.'" (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 332) Although Adam can see, for many years he remains blind to the acres and acres of land at his fingertips. Wide-awake, he is embarrassed by what he has done to his land. For many years, Adam refuses to acknowledge the conflict with which he is faced. Instead of taking on the situation as an occasion to grow, he remains a victim of Cathy's brutality. When he is finally ready to move on, Adam goes out in search of answers. What is gained from his accepting of the struggle is not only an immediate transformation, but also a permanent one; Adam finds himself at a point of breaking through, literally grasping a second chance at life, a second chance to treat his plot of land as it deserves to be treated. At long last, he is no longer that fallow man living on a fallow plot of land. Now, the Garden of Eden of which he dreamt so long ago is once again within reach.

# CONCLUSION

"His eyes closed and he slept." (Steinbeck, [1952], 2000, pg. 602)

For Steinbeck, *East of Eden* was to be his most impressive masterpiece; "This is my big novel. I'm going to use every bit of technique I have learned consciously and I am also going to let it go unconsciously – you will see if there is anything to see." (Steinbeck, [1969], 1977, pg. 33) He often questioned himself and his work during the writing process, because his expectations for the novel were so overwhelming that he was afraid of not doing it justice. What was at first a desire to portray the most important memories of his childhood for his own sons grew into a multi-generational saga; in Steinbeck's eyes, *East of Eden* seemed to take on a life of its own. In many ways, the author was happy to watch the novel grow as it pleased, watching the characters determine their own paths. At many times, he expressed his fear of the novel never coming to an end. Steinbeck truly recognized that what he was writing did not belong to him, that he was only part of a struggle to create something which truly belonged to the world of poetry.

Many times in the past, *East of Eden* has been overlooked by scholars in the field of ecocritical studies, which is altogether unfortunate. There is no doubt that the studies which have been carried out about this novel have been fruitful; from feminist critiques to the analysis of the ubiquitous Biblical references, there is a lot to be said about this particularly dense novel. Nonetheless, I believe that it is time to look at *East of Eden* from a more 'green' perspective. Throughout this thesis, I have tried to show how this novel lends itself in a natural and compelling way to a Heideggerian ecocritical interpretation. To do so, I have divided my study into three different parts.

In the first chapter, I have attempted to show how difficult it can be to cultivate the land as a primary source of caring for one's family. Even in the Salinas Valley, a picturesque Eden of sorts, life does not come easily. The people of the valley are entirely at the mercy of their natural surroundings. The farmers who have pieces of land which border the Salinas River are much better off – and yet this advantage does not guarantee repose. When there are periods of drought, which can go on for years, the river recedes into the ground. During these times, it is difficult for all of the inhabitants alike. Some of the families admit defeat, pack up their belongings and leave, literally in search of greener pastures. The truth that these people must come to face is that no land is perfect; no matter where you go, there will always be some sort of challenge. In *East of Eden*, there are two main characters who serve as an example of individuals who confront the challenges of life on a farm with resourcefulness and determination. One such man is Charles Trask; alone,

for the most part, Charles does everything in his ability to cultivate his land. His plans are methodical and carried out to the letter. And yet, despite all his hard work and sacrifice, there is still something missing from the process. Samuel Hamilton puts a similar effort into his modest plot of land. However, there is a fundamental difference in the way that the two men care for their farm. According to Heidegger, the question of the relationship between humans and the earth is of central importance. To find a connection to the land, one must care for it, not only in the present, but must also plan on continuing to do so in the future. As farmers cultivate their fields, they cannot come to see them as a standing reserve; this means that people must take only what they need, not depleting the soil in order to store the goods away for future use. According to Heidegger, it is also important that humans build on their land. Furthermore, these buildings must not cause any sort of strain on the surrounding natural environment. After considering these ideas, it becomes clear that Charles' methods involve enframing, which means that he does not dwell authentically. Samuel, on the other hand, builds and dwells in the Heideggerian sense, fully embracing the earth at his feet.

In the second chapter, my goal was to look at the technology which is present throughout *East of Eden* in order to study the repercussions that it can have on both humans and the natural environment. Seeing as the novel is set in the transition between the 19$^{th}$ and 20$^{th}$ centuries, the slow mutation of some major technological methods is plain to see. The arrival of the internal combustion automobile brought about two significant changes; first

of all, it had an immediate impact on the people's day to day life. Businesses, services, towns and cities, which take days to commute to in the past, suddenly become accessible with very little effort. This means that the roads change too, as carts with oxen and horses are slowly replaced by motor vehicles. The second change is perhaps both more obscure and more pervasive; the chain-method by which the automobiles come to be made completely revolutionize how almost every product is made, even today. The strategy is to hire unskilled workers to do small, menial jobs, as part of a chain. Employees with no special abilities are more likely to accept lesser wages. This mass-method also makes it possible for products to be made more quickly. During the First World War, machinery and equipment are made in these types of factories. The war also is a catalyst for many new inventions developed for the purposes of spying, killing enemy troops and healing friendly troops. All of these changes, according to Heidegger, are sending humanity down a dangerous path. The solution, according to the philosopher, is to question the new forms of technology, and to revert to former technological practices which do not negate nature. By this, Heidegger is not suggesting that people busy themselves trying to live the way of our ancestors; his warning is simply that humankind must seek out the technologies which bring about an authentic form of revealing, one that does not engender enframing.

The third chapter is about Ed Ricketts's philosophy of breaking through. In this final chapter, I have attempted to explain the idea of breaking through, and to show the benefits of such an event. A person can hope to reach transcendence, or breaking through,

only once he or she has faced a difficult situation. This type of transformation cannot take place if a person intentionally puts him or herself in danger; the struggle must come about of its own accord. The person must embrace the struggle, seeing it as an opportunity for growth. Even when each of these criteria are met, it is still possible for a person to come through the experience without having been enlightened in the slightest. A shift takes place when a person reaches transcendence and becomes inhabited by the fact that he or she is an integral part of this earth. This means that the individual understands that each decision he or she makes can have an impact on the entire world, because everything shares a common bond. This new holistic way of thinking shows people that they are not at the centre of the universe, but that nonetheless, they play an important part in the whole. In *East of Eden*, there is only one clear example of a breaking through. It is Adam who reaches transcendence, after a trying decade of unconsciousness. Despite their best intentions, showing Adam how his plot of land is neglected and how his sons do not have a father, Adam's friends are not able to bring him back to his body. In fact, Adam remains a ghost until his dear friend Samuel's death, when he finally decides that he must take control of himself. After meeting with his estranged wife, Adam finally is able to regain interest in the world around him, most importantly his ranch and his twin boys.

It is obvious that this ecocritical study could not have been done without referring to both Heidegger and Ricketts's philosophies. Although they seem quite distant from one another at first glance, that may not be the case. There is evidence which suggests that both

philosophers were inspired by the teachings of the Tao, a Chinese religion whose origins date back to the 6th century BCE. It is a widely accepted fact that Heidegger attempted to translate the Lao-tzu, one of the most important and well-known Taoist philosophical texts. As for Ricketts, it has been thoroughly documented that he took up the studying of the way of the Tao, which states that everything on this earth – from trees to animals to people – have an equally important place as part of the whole and are all made from the same substance. What benefits an individual the most is what benefits the entirety, and it is a human's inherent job is to ensure that all of the parts are able to flourish. I find it quite surprising to see just how many resemblances there are between Taoism and Heidegger and Ricketts's philosophies. More and more philosophical studies are drawing parallels between Heidegger and oriental thought. As Western philosophers are only beginning to look towards the East, we can see that Heidegger had the foresight to begin the exploration of Oriental thought decades before our time. I believe that it would be a most interesting and enlightening endeavour to follow this great philosopher down this relatively uncharted path, as he teaches us, once again, an entirely new way of thinking.

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