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INTRODUCTION: STEINBECK'S LIGHT BURNS CLEAR

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“. . . whose light burns clear.”
—Dedication to Steinbeck's sister Beth,
The Winter of Our Discontent

IN A VERY REAL SENSE, this issue of *The Steinbeck Review* is a celebration for those of us with dog-eared, falling-apart, paper clipped, well-marked and annotated copies of Steinbeck's works lying on our bookshelves and lingering in our hearts. We are those who have taught his works in our college and university classrooms—to the delight of our students and, for some of us, to the disdain of some of our colleagues in academe. For us, Steinbeck's light has always burned clear, and we have been most eager to pass it on to another generation of students who might not otherwise discover him on their own. We have written, published, taught, and presented; but, as Stephen George so aptly notes in “The Future of Steinbeck Studies in America, Japan, and Beyond,” all too often our best efforts have drawn what John Milton would describe as a “fit audience, though few.” Stephen George and Paul Douglass deserve our accolades for bridging a long-existing gap between Steinbeck scholars and for laying the groundwork for combining into one journal San Jose's *Steinbeck Studies* with Scarecrow Press's *The Steinbeck Review*. They have opened the way now for new vistas, new scholars, and renewed collegiality.

Fittingly, the first part of this issue is devoted mainly to essays from the Sixth International Steinbeck Congress held in June 2005 in Kyoto, Japan—the third such event hosted by the John Stein-

beck Society of Japan—taking its title, “John Steinbeck: Global Dimensions,” from the Congress’s theme. Kiyoshi Nakayama’s “Preface” praises the spirit of collegiality among Steinbeck scholars and pays special tribute to those to whom this Congress was dedicated: Professor Yasuo Hashiguchi, Dr. Tetsumaro Hayashi, and the late Elaine Steinbeck. “What we have done,” he states, is just following up on what they have done for us all, their legacy and tradition, and we can so easily cross the bridges they have so graciously built.

Yasuo Hashiguchi’s “Looking Back on Past International Steinbeck Congresses” provides an overview of five Steinbeck Congresses—1976 in Fukuoka, Japan; 1984 in Salinas, California; 1990 in Honolulu, Hawaii; 1997 in Monterey, California; and 2002 in Hempstead, New York. As a participant in four of these Congresses, he follows the dictates of Confucius, who observed that those worthy of becoming teachers learn that which is new by keeping in mind that which is familiar.

In the first of three new approaches to Steinbeck’s work, Mimi Reisel Gladstein’s “Steinbeck’s Dysfunctional Families: A Coast to Coast Dilemma” examines family relationships in *East of Eden* and *Winter of Our Discontent*, noting the conflict between the American myth of family and the realities of family life in the United States. She observes that “if *East of Eden* is John Steinbeck’s creative response to that question of what are Americans like today, then the answer is a decidedly pessimistic one. The family Steinbeck creates to represent “the story of my country and the story of me” (*Journal of a Novel* 2) is a sad representation of the domestic unit.” Gloria Gaither’s “John Steinbeck: the Postmodern Mind in the Modern Age” takes a theoretical approach, exploring works from *To a God Unknown* to *The Winter of Our Discontent* and arguing that Steinbeck’s works may be more appropriately read from a Postmodern rather than a Modern perspective.

In “Horrifying Conclusions: Making Sense of Endings in Steinbeck’s Fiction,” Scott Pugh uses principles of narrative theory to investigate “some of the constraints on fictive resolution in Steinbeck’s world” and evaluates the endings of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *East of Eden* on the basis of “the implied author, text, and reader which determine resolution.” Pugh finds in the interpretation of these works a “dynamic interplay of overreading and underreading.” Since fiction generates many meanings, he concludes, narrative theory may be a more profitable approach

to these endings than the reiteration of the reader's desired interpretation.

Kyoko Ariki's "From 'Flight' to *The Pearl*: A Thematic Study" observes connections between the short story and the novella, tracing the development of Steinbeck's interest in dispossessed Latinos and suggesting that the author's vision will achieve full fruition in two later screenplays: *The Forgotten Village* and *Viva Zapata!*

"Crossing the Oceans: The Future of Steinbeck Studies in America, Japan, and Beyond," Stephen K. George's closing address to the Kyoto Steinbeck Congress, brings full circle Hashiguchi's overview of past Congresses in his opening address. George's suggestions for avenues for future study—interdisciplinary, comparative, aesthetic, and pedagogical—provide scholars a plenitude of fruitful examples and approaches. His call for "a new spirit of collegiality and goodwill" informs and guides our united efforts in the interest of Steinbeck studies.

The Intercalary chapter, new to *The Steinbeck Review*, incorporates some of the tone and popular appeal of *Steinbeck Studies*, carrying on the tradition fostered so ably and devotedly by Susan Shillinglaw, editor of that journal. Mark Bennion has contributed a poem that finds its themes in *The Winter of Our Discontent*. John Ditsky's "The Man with the Glass Arm: Steinbeck and Sports" comments on Steinbeck's 1965 response to *Sports Illustrated* editor Ray Cave, who had requested a contribution. Steinbeck's reply, titled "Then My Arm Glassed Up" uses structural irony to write an essay telling why he cannot write an article on sports, in the process showing himself "eminently fit to do just that." Richard Hoffstedt's "Steamy Steinbeck: Paperbacks: 1947-57" traces the history of paperback books, the influence of flashy covers on pulp magazines, and the lack of relationship between the content of a book and the design on its cover. After discussing some of the provocative cover images and blurbs for Steinbeck's *To a God Unknown*, *Tortilla Flat*, *Pastures of Heaven* and *Cup of Gold*, Hoffstedt observes in conclusion that current Steinbeck paperbacks have "covers and comments that more accurately reflect the story inside." The "Steinbeck Today" section rounds out the Intercalary chapter with a miscellany of news and quotations of interest to Steinbeck aficionados.

Stephen and I welcome Paul Douglass as our co-editor of *The Steinbeck Review*, beginning with this issue. He has contributed much to the design, images, and intercalary chapter that will

continue to add to the journal's appeal in the future. We also appreciate the efforts of Charles Etheridge, Assistant Editor, for his help in getting this issue ready for publication. We believe the combined efforts have resulted in a good read as well as some significant Steinbeck scholarship. Together we can assure that Steinbeck's light continues to burn clear.