chapter seven

The Joads:
Flight into the Social Soul

"Highway 66 is the path of a people in flight."
From as far back as *Cup of Gold* (1929) to his most recent work, John Steinbeck has shown a proclivity for dealing with people who are searching for a golden land of happiness, the fulfillment of a dream, quests that of course entail an escape both into and away from the past. Indeed, the past in the novels of Steinbeck constantly forms the design not only of rare exotic moments but of those more mundane periods in the daily lives of his people, who are tied to those earlier times that produced them and that gave birth to what has come to be called the American Dream.

Like that first modern American novel of escape, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) is not only a book of travel but a novel of escape—as in Tom Joad’s instance, from the consequences of his acts; as in the instance of the Joad family, from the conditions and economics of the land; as in the instance of Preacher Casy, from an untenable past with its irreconcilable split between what the preacher is (or becomes) and the tenets he has long preached but now no longer believes in. If Tom Joad is the hero of this novel of escape, he is a hero who shares the characteristics of countless picaresque heroes who so often seem to be fleeing from something that threatens their well-being. But if he shares something of the tradition of the picaresque hero, he shares that tradition with the comic overtones omitted.

As in so many escape novels, *The Grapes of Wrath*, early in the book, includes a passage that foreshadows the escapes that are to come and that will set the tone for the book itself. We are given this suggestion in Preacher Casy’s words about that ever recurrent and symbolic turtle: “The preacher nodded his head slowly. ‘Every kid got a turtle some time or other. Nobody can’t keep a turtle though. They work at it and work at it, and at last one day they get out and away they go—off somewheres.’ ” ¹
There are a number of escapers in *The Grapes of Wrath*, ranging from the turtle at a rudimentary level—which Casy uses as an example to illustrate his own condition—to such disparate individuals as Noah, Tom's retarded brother; Uncle John, his guilt-stricken uncle; and Connie Rivers, his weak-kneed brother-in-law. Since this is so, it would be well to point out that although these escapers have one thing in common—the urge to flee their predicaments—the reasons for their flights, and the way they make them, must be clearly distinguished.

The first of the escapers is, of course, Tom Joad, both in importance for the structure of the novel and for the symbolic implications Steinbeck vested in him; for Tom, like so many escapers in the novel of escape, has the ability to rebound from defeat, to be reborn into a new, if still far from whole, man. Tom's status as an escaper is thus twofold: he is fleeing from the law (the breaking of his parole), and he is fleeing Oklahoma. But both are incidental in Tom, for when he decides to join his family in their flight from Oklahoma, he himself is under no obligation to flee anywhere; it is only because his family is going, and because of his strong family identification, that Tom decides to go along with them. Certainly there is nothing left for him in Oklahoma. Thus, though he is a breaker of parole, and therefore a fugitive, Tom is not so much running away from his status of parolee as ignoring it. Nevertheless, regardless of his reasons for leaving Oklahoma, he is still a fugitive from the law.

The two homicides—both of which Tom perpetrates if not instigates—are the precipitating causes of Tom's later predicaments and the flights that grow out of them. The first homicide takes place during a brawl: Tom is set upon by a drunken man for an imagined slight to the latter's sense of honor, whereupon Tom kills the man in self-defense. Thus, the first killing has no larger significance than the drunken brawl out of which it grew.
What, however, does seem of significance is that there is no conscious malice on Tom's part. It is simply a fight, though of course a fight that leads to a killing and its consequences. Tom, in his explanation to the preacher, tells how it all happened:

We was drunk . at a dance. I don' know how she started. An' then I felt that knife go in me, an' that sobered me up. Fust thing I see is Herb comin' for me again with his knife. They was this here shovel leanin' against the schoolhouse, so I grabbed it an' smacked 'im over the head. I never had nothing against Herb. He was a nice fella. Come a-bullin' after Rosasharn when he was a little fella. No, I liked Herb. (pp. 72-73)

The brawl and the killing that comes of it are almost casual in their lack of deadly intentions; indeed, as we see, Tom had actually liked his assailant. What he had done, though hardly to be condoned or justified except as an act of self-defense, was one of those actions that are either to be understood and forgiven or unqualifiedly condemned out of hand. Yet for Tom there is no sense of guilt; and even though he crows a little about the deed, there is little joy either.

His second homicide is the killing of a California deputy for having, in his turn, brutally slain the nonviolent Casy. Tom, like the biblical Moses—who also killed to avenge another injustice—has no more compunction about his act than Moses presumably had when he slew one of Pharaoh's taskmasters. Like Moses, Tom experiences no sense of guilt but only the urge to flee those who would prosecute him; and though he does not try very hard to justify the act, he had felt no worse at the time (as he later tells Ma Joad) than "if he [had] killed a skunk" (p. 545). Thus, in both instances, Tom is able to justify—morally, if not legally—his acts while still retaining a clear conscience. Curiously, in both killings Tom uses a tool of labor
to commit the acts. It is almost as if, lacking the opportunity for constructive labor in that time of depression, Tom finds himself using tools as murder weapons. Thus, by implication, the "dignity of labor" is grotesquely parodied when the implements of that "dignity" become the weapons of human indignity.

Tom's second escape contains within it the need to leave behind a past that has led to his plight. In the first escape there is no such intention, for he returns to his family, ready to take up his life as he had lived it before going to prison. But after he kills the California deputy, Tom must escape into a completely different way of life. If the first killing had come about because of Tom's instinct for self-preservation, the second had been precipitated by an angry impulse of the moment; thus, there is less justification—in the eyes of the law at least—for this second killing. If Tom is caught and found guilty by a court of law, as is likely, his chances of getting off lightly on the second occasion are virtually nil. Ma Joad's role in Tom's flight is to recognize this probability; even perhaps more than Tom himself she sees the necessity for his escape. In this sense she becomes the vatic mother figure oracularly telling Tom what he must do as opposed to what he ought to do: "You got to go away, Tom."

The outcome of Tom's escape is what I have preferred to call the flight into the social soul. When Tom leaves on this second flight, he leaves as a reborn individual who has taken on a new identity; he is no longer the Tom Joad who had stepped out of a penitentiary in Oklahoma, nor is he the Tom Joad of the trek to California, who merely believes that the way to get by is to put down one foot at a time. Tom has seen two ways of life: the first, that of the road and the Hoovervilles; the second, the government-operated camps, where cooperation rather than the struggle for existence is a way of life. He has thus been initiated into the knowledge of greater possibilities
for himself and his people. When Tom avenges Casy's death, the events subsequent to his escape have an initiatory effect on him; and when after the killing of the deputy he climbs out on the other side of the stream, across which he has fled, Tom is no longer the man he was before his encounter with the deputy. Like those escapers by water before him, he emerges from the "baptismal" immersion a newborn man, who now realizes that he must take up the struggle where Casy had fallen.

Tom Joad's personality thus undergoes an evolution (or change) brought on by the kind of education he has received at the hands of society—most specifically, at the hands of the deputies who for him represent that society. His resentment, rooted at first in the material and the personal, expands later into the larger, slower-burning, more sustained indignation that grows out of the greater injustices his people suffer. If his first transgression—the murder of a man in a drunken brawl—has no large significance, the second (the murder of the deputy) has about it, if murder can ever be justified, something of a "higher law." For Tom has committed himself to the cause of another human being; he has avenged Preacher Casy, who has come to embody everything Tom has begun to respect.

Our view of Tom is that of a man in flight: as a parole violator from an Oklahoma penitentiary in the first instance, and as a fugitive from California law in the second. Yet escaper though he is, Tom's flight toward the end of the novel is no longer a blind flight born out of desperation and panic alone; his flight now has a purpose larger than the flight itself. For, paradoxically, escape leads him directly back into the larger society of the social soul (as distinct from the oversoul), to all those who belong to the fraternity of the damned and the oppressed, in which the words "dignity of labor" have become empty and ritualistic, and where the demand, or even the request, for a living wage has become synonymous with the
words "dirty red." Out of this education comes Tom's credo in the form of an answer to his mother's concern for his safety and the ultimate destination of his flight: "I'll be all aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where—wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there." (p. 572).

Perhaps the second most important escaper in *The Grapes of Wrath* is the ex-preacher Casy. We have already suggested that one reason for his desertion of gospel-preaching was his inability to reconcile his urges as a sensual man with his other-worldly preachments. Resolving that dilemma would have made a hypocrite of him. Thus, for Casy, the alternative is to accept himself for what he is and, indeed, even proclaim its rightness.

Casy's pilgrimages away from society and the decisions that come of them—unknown to Casy at the time—set in motion those events that not only will involve Casy, but will draw Tom Joad along with them too. As a foreshadowing of this eventuality, early in the novel Casy makes known his desire to accompany the Joads on their trek west: "The preacher stood looking into the coals. He said slowly, 'Yeah, I'm goin' with you. An' when your folks start out on the road I'm goin' with them. An' where folks are on the road, I'm gonna be with them.'" (p. 77). The statement foreshadows Tom's credo expressed to his mother at the end of the novel, perhaps even influencing the attitude that inspires that credo. Noteworthy is the switch from the more personal "your folks" (my italics) to the more generalized "folks," for Casy has begun to see himself as responsible not only to the Joads but to all people everywhere in flight. In spite of those intentions, however, the Joads still see Casy in his role as preacher, still expect him to say a grace at meals and preside at burials, as on the occasion of Grampa's death. If Casy no longer considers himself a preacher, he has yet to convince the Joads. Thus, spiritually, he is as necessary to them in spite of his transformation (or trans-
figuration) as they are to him because of it. And when the Joads make their exodus from Oklahoma, the preacher, like Tom, has nothing left to stay for either. Now the parched wasteland of Oklahoma symbolizes for him the arid doctrines he had preached for so long in that land. Thus, no longer having a purpose or a place on that land, Casy joins the family on their trek to California.

The Joads, then, continue to look to the preacher for moral sustenance on their pilgrims' progress toward a better life; for them, Casy plays the role of an articulate liberator. Of course, his idea of liberation is not limited merely to a physical escape from the old life; it embraces a new spiritual comprehension. Yet his is no purely philosophical liberation either, but a liberation of the soul through the body, through the good things of this life. In this sense Casy is still, in spite of his intentions to the contrary, the spiritual guide of the Joads and their community. Above all else, Casy is the articulate member of the group; he is not only a Christ figure (as many have suggested) but an Aaron, playing the articulate brother to Tom's impetuous Moses.

As liberator and spokesman Casy is able to make the first conscious and articulate appraisal of the larger migrant flight into the West:

Casy said, "I been walkin' aroun' in the country. Ever'body's askin' that. What we comin' to? Seems to me we don't never come to nothin'. Always on the way. Always goin' and goin'. Why don't folks think about that? They's movement now. People moving. We know why, an' we know how. Movin' 'cause they got to. That's why folks always move. Movin' 'cause they want somepin better'n what they got. An' that's the on'y way they'll ever git it." (p. 173)

The utterance, of course, could fit any number of escape situations, whether in life or in the novel that attempts to portray
that life; it might itself be the statement or the central idea of this study: "That's why folks always move. Movin' 'cause they want somepin better'n what they got." However, these statements of Casy are not blurted out in moments of impulse; they have been simmering in him for a long time. When he finally utters them, he does so as a result of the changes that have long been taking place within him. In the months before we come upon him, he had been absorbed in his own spiritual growing pains, though few traditional conservative Christian creeds would possibly care to apply the word spiritual to what Casy had been experiencing. Although it is not my intention here to stress the transcendental element in Casy's growth—quite the contrary!—there does seem to be a trace of the inner light in Casy's drift away from the old religion, an Emersonian renunciation, if one wishes, of the former doctrine, though nowhere is the suggestion made that Casy has renounced his old unEmersonian joys of the flesh.

Casy's escape is primarily an escape from his past, from what he was—spiritual rather than (as in so many escapes) primarily geographical. Yet it is not an escape merely from the older religious dispensations, or from the soul into the oversoul, as some critics have suggested; it is into something more down-to-earth. Although it is true that Casy uses the transcendental terminology (unwittingly, of course, and with Steinbeck furnishing the lines in the wings), and though it is possible that he may even vaguely sense some extramaterial significance in the words, he is, for the most part, in this world; and his actions, if they can be called religious at all, spring from the same motivations as those of Abou Ben Adhem, the man who loved God best because he loved his fellow man.

In contradistinction to what has so often been stressed, Casy's escape is primarily an escape into the social soul rather than into the oversoul. I do not mean to suggest that transcen-
dental implications ought to be brushed aside—especially in Casy's growth as distinct from Tom's, where both are assumed to have experienced, in a greater or lesser degree, a "transcendental" transformation; what I do suggest—and I wish to sustain the distinction—is that Casy's drift away from the old religion is perhaps due as much to a change in his social consciousness as it is to an expansion of his human into a cosmic consciousness. Casy, at the request of the Joads, respectfully fulfills his old role as preacher by saying grace at meals. But he uses one occasion as an opportunity to speak of the inner change he has undergone:

Nighttime I'd lay on my back an' look up at the stars; morning I'd set an' watch the sun come up; midday I'd look out from a hill at the rollin' dry country; evening I'd foller the sun down. Sometimes I'd pray like I always done. On'y I couldn't figure what I was prayin' to or for. There was the hills, an' there was me, an' we wasn't separate no more. We was one thing. An' that one thing was holy. (p. 110)

This passage, suggesting Casy's transfiguration as a transcendental phenomenon—before and after his death—has been frequently alluded to, to prove that transfiguration. But if illumination it was, it was an illumination that led Casy directly from the oversoul into the social soul. And though the passage has often been cited, another passage that follows quickly upon it and still forms a part of Casy's story has often been slighted, or perhaps unintentionally neglected. It is a passage that shows that Casy's view of the world was not limited to any abstract sense of oneness with a cosmos, whether metaphysical or social, but rather extended into a roughhewn, but nonetheless real, ethos of love:

An' I got thinkin', on'y it wasn't thinkin', it was deeper down than thinkin'. I got thinkin' how we was holy when we was one
thing, an' mankin' was holy when it was one thing. An' it on'y got unholy when one mis'able little fella got the bit in his teeth, an' run off his own way, kickin' an' draggin' an' fightin'. Fella like that bust the holiness. But when they're all workin' together, not one fella for another fella, but one fella kind of har­nessed to the whole shebang—that's right, that's holy. An' then I got thinkin' I don't even know what I mean by holy. I can't say no grace like I use' ta say. I'm glad of the holiness of breakfast. I'm glad there's love here. That's all. (pp. 110–11)

The third escaper in this novel of collective escape is Uncle John. As we have already indicated, Uncle John wishes to escape from a bad conscience. Like Tom, Ma, Pa Joad, and the preacher, Uncle John is attempting to make his own break with the past. Tom’s break is from his status as ex-convict; the preacher’s, from his former calling. But even when Uncle John as a guilt-laden supernumerary accompanies the Joads on their trek west, he is still the victim of his relentless guilts; to run from them, Uncle John escapes into drink. But drinking is ineffective as escape, since drunkenness only seems to intensify his guilts. The issueless result of his late wife’s pregnancy, interestingly enough, foreshadows in its barren outcome the sterility of the land itself—that erosion brought on by a similar nonmalicious mistreatment that the pregnant woman had experienced; and Rose of Sharon’s stillbirth later on is also brought on by the hard times that she experiences in sharing the general hardships of the Joads themselves. In its own way it is as certain and symbolic an outcome of the escape from sterility as was Catherine Barkley’s misfortune in Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*. Sterility is not only a part of the eroded land; it becomes part of the lives of the people of that land, physically and spiritually.

Connie Rivers, Rose of Sharon’s young husband, is unable
to stand the apparent hopelessness of the Joad's plight, to which he sees himself tied; at the first opportunity, he deserts his wife. Perhaps in another time Connie might have succeeded in withstanding the stress of the westward trek; but now, in this fourth depression-ridden decade of the twentieth century, the values of the Westward Movement—that high optimism and the vigor of a country in its youth—seem to have fallen into desuetude. Connie, however, in reneging on his responsibilities, does not stay put, but continues to move on. Since he cannot go back, he goes forward; it does not matter where, so long as it is away from responsibility. Unlike his westering predecessors of a previous generation, he is neither staunch nor determined. If there is a trace of determination in Connie, it is the determination to get as far away as possible from Rose of Sharon and her people. In this he shows up in strong contrast to the pioneer husbands (at least to the legendary picture we have of them) who, for the most part, were supposed to have stuck by their womenfolk and protected them. In pioneer times the family was presumably a more cohesive unit, if for no other reason than common protection. Even the squatter Ishmael Bush in Cooper's novel *The Prairie*, reprobate though he is, possesses a deep loyalty to his family. Indeed, as its head, he rules it with an iron hand. But if Ishmael Bush is a cross between the stern biblical patriarch and the pioneer father, what a falling-off there has been for the fathers of twentieth-century migrants! In this later time the men are either weaklings who desert their wives, like Connie Rivers, or, like the uprooted Pa Joad, fathers who must play a secondary role. It is Ma Joad who assumes the leadership of, and becomes the moral goad for, the family. Where, in an earlier time, the menfolk had led, now the women take over the guidance and running of the family; yet ironically they do so at a time when the family itself has
begun to disintegrate. The disintegration had already begun, of course, when Grampa Joad had died before the family was out of Oklahoma.

Yet who is to say that Connie is not the one (comparative) realist among the entire family? The others trust in handbills telling of nonexistent work in California, but Connie has never believed in them. Even after the Joads are told that the handbills lie, they still push west, desperately, doggedly, hoping that the truth itself may turn out to be a lie.

In contrast to the optimism and self-reliance of an earlier generation, Connie has already lost the optimism, if not the self-reliance that was supposed to inspire it. If there is any self-reliance left in him—and there must be some, for he has cut his moorings to the group to fend for himself—it is the element of self-reliance transmuted into the baser metal of social Darwinism: each for himself and the devil take the hindmost! Connie’s act is an act of desperation (as are those of all the escapers). Perhaps the logical end of self-reliance, then (as represented by Connie—or by John Andrews and Frederic Henry before him), is the defeat of hope, when the self is no longer capable of accomplishing tasks only masses of men can presumably better succeed in bringing about. For the turbid currents of the 1930s were bringing sweeping changes that, although they certainly included and affected the individual, nevertheless carried him along on those more powerful currents that were ultimately heedless of him or his struggles. Against hostile Indians, arid wildernesses, even starvation and sickness, one might put up a fight—providing that the bright hope could be sustained and could justify the suffering. But without hope, the hunger, the tedium, the hardships of the road, the hostility of townsfolk and deputy sheriffs—these finally cannot be endured. Thus, with the old hope gone, the newer pessimism lies up ahead, a dark cloud threatening storm.
I should now like to turn to the Joads' flight west as a collective phenomenon. First, it must be stressed that the immediate causes of their flight do not lie in volition but in circumstances over which the Joads, individually or collectively, have little or no control. Thus, although in a loose sense the Joads happen to be in flight from the conditions that have forced them from the land, they are not so much escaping from the land as they are *driven* from it. To all intents and purposes, their exodus has about it all of the essential elements of flight—so much so that (to allude to the biblical parallelism again) their flight has frequently been compared with that of the ancient Israelites from Egypt. (Even in their hurry to leave Oklahoma—the hasty preparations—there is the similarity to the earlier Exodus.) Thus, the central postulate concerning the Joads' escape is that it is not quite like that of any other escape dealt with here. Virtually every escaper discussed thus far has in some way been held in the grip of a motive strong enough to want to escape, even though these motives have frequently been the result of great pressures on him. This is the most important difference between the motives of the Joads and those of other escapers. In the others, one senses a strong desire to be off—to anywhere but where they happen to be: Huck, aboard his raft or into the Territory; Theron Ware, to Seattle; George Willard, to the big city. However, in the Joads there is almost a sense of nostalgia for the land that has served them as home for generations. For the Joads differ distinctly from the other escapers in that, for the most part, when the time comes for them to leave, *they do not want to go*; this cannot be stressed enough. They are forced off the land by the banks and the large farming interests, which can farm the land much more cheaply and efficiently than individual tenant farmers; the Joads are therefore forced to take to the road by such circumstances as drought, erosion, the obliteration of the individual farm, and
the expulsion of the individual tenant farmer in order to make room for the larger combines. The only escaper in the conventional sense (in which escape has most frequently been discussed here) is Tom Joad. But even Tom goes along with the family because there is nothing left for him to do.

But whether the Joads are driven from the land or flee it, the effect upon them is still the same; they become refugees. The exodus is not merely from the land but from the conditions that have made the land what it has become—a wasteland. “And now they were in flight from the sun and the drought” (pp. 274–75). Sun and drought are, of course, two apparently indispensable conditions under which wastelands so often “flourish,” and which make for both physical and spiritual aridity. The escape, or flight, as it indeed becomes once the Joads are on the road (for there is no turning back now should they wish it) is thus not voluntary but forced upon them.

The Joads not only learn what it means to be fugitives—in flight from a set of circumstances beyond their control—but, like Huck Finn, they learn to become the protectors of fugitives in flight from more specific and imminent dangers. In their departure from the Hooper ranch, in California, they conceal Tom (now a hunted man because he has killed a deputy) in the rear of the truck, between mattresses. Thus, the Joads, in the eyes of the law, become accessories to Tom’s act, for they have knowingly concealed a murderer. When they leave the Hooper ranch to head north, they too are caught up in Tom’s predicament, for they are helping him to make good his escape; they compound their participation in Tom’s crime by concealing the criminal. These are the facts, whether the crime be morally justified or not. The Joads, together with Tom, now find themselves outside, if not opposed to, the law; and here is a paradoxical, though significant, instance of family loyalty in a novel
that depicts families and loyalties in the process of breaking up in favor of the larger "family" (the migrants) and its larger loyalties. The flight of the Joads from the Hooper ranch therefore takes on, in all of its tensions, the qualities of Tom's flight from vigilante "justice" as well as from the more general, though nonetheless pernicious, evils of the society buttressing that justice. Thus, when Tom strikes the blow, he strikes it not for Casy alone, nor even for himself, but for the Joads and people like them.

Apart from their concerns for Tom, there are other ramifications in the Joad flight from the Hooper ranch. For them, the ranch has become, like Oklahoma before it, another Egypt. Tom, like Moses, has murdered an oppressor. But beyond, their exodus from the ranch lies partly in its intolerable conditions—the low wages, the hovels they live in, and the chronic strike-breaking warfare; thus the exodus from the Hooper ranch becomes a repetition of the exodus from the country around Sallisaw, Oklahoma. By the time the Joads have been rousted from the Hoovervilles that are continually threatened with arson by irate townfolk, or take their leave from the Hooper ranch, flight has become a chronic way of life for them. They are forever forced—either by people or by drought, flood, and hunger—to flee from one place to another, always on the move, always searching for a way out of their plight. Eventually, the westward flight of the Joads turns inward upon itself; and after their arrival in California, it is no longer a flight west but simply a flight, chronic and labyrinthine, down the road, to the next government camp, to another ranch, to a hundred and one dead ends of hope. The flight of the Joads thus becomes a chronic mode of existence.

The further west the migrants flee, the more they undergo a change of character. "They were not farm men any more, but
migrant men' (p. 267). This may partly explain the transformation in the roles of the men and the women, as in the case of Ma and Pa Joad; immemorially farm life has been the life of the patriarchal society. Now, uprooted, homeless, the basic social unit—the family—has disintegrated; and with its disintegration, the values by which the family has lived have disintegrated. It is not simply an isolated family here and there that seems to be on the move; it is virtually an entire country—or at least a social stratum of that country. The flight of the migrants westward is like a huge and disastrous military retreat; but unlike a retreat in conventional warfare, what lies away from the battle zone may be even more disastrous than what lies behind, in it.

I trust that it is now clear why I have preferred to speak of the oversoul, which certain critics have attached to the feelings of Tom and Casy, as the social soul. Yet, if what Tom and Casy experience is an escape into the oversoul—"Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of"—it is an escape revamped to fit the social predicament of their time. For if the Emersonian oversoul has at last come down to earth, it has come transformed into the social soul, where the individual no longer tries to become part of the larger, more nebulous (and mysterious) cosmos, but now attempts to become a part of the more familiar human cosmos—the society of his fellow men.

Spiritual salvation alone is no longer as important as it once was in this struggle for survival itself; certainly, it is no longer as important as social salvation. Tom, in inheriting Casy's mission and quest, comes to see that the nature of his mission is social rather than religious (or transcendent). Perhaps Casy had to die in order for Tom to be reborn—a familiar theme. When Ma Joad worrisomely questions Tom as to where he will go to seek refuge from his pursuers, Tom deemphasizes the idea of refuge and concentrates on more vigorous and spirited
intentions. It is then that he voices his credo of the social soul, of his union (or reunion) with mankind rather than with a disembodied cosmic force:

"I'll be all aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where—wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. If Casy knewed, why, I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad an'—I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build—why, I'll be there." (p. 572)

Finally, the flood with which the novel culminates, bears within it its own symbolism; for like the flood that engulfs the Joads and other migrant families, the social soul is already beginning to absorb these scattered families, broken up, fragmented, and divided, in order to bring them together into a greater cohesive whole, prepared to engage in the struggles that lie ahead. Thus, the flight into the social soul is, in its truest sense, a flight back into a greater, more challenging reality—not for the Joads alone but for all men in their condition everywhere.

1. From THE GRAPES OF WRATH by John Steinbeck, p. 28. Copyright 1939, renewed © 1967 by John Steinbeck. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc., and McIntosh and Otis, Inc. All further quotations are taken from this edition.

2. Hereafter, whenever I refer to the "Joad Family" or "the Joads," the terms should be taken to mean not just those members of the family bound by blood ties but also Connie Rivers, who has married into the family, and Preacher Casy who joins and identifies himself with them.

3. The biblical parallels and symbolisms of this novel have been adverted to so frequently, and with such widespread persistence on the part of so many critics, that they have virtually become common property whenever The Grapes of Wrath is discussed. Thus, I wish to disclaim any credit or
originality on this score and, indeed, to stress my indebtedness to all those critics whose treatments of The Grapes of Wrath have touched on biblical allusions and whose concerns with these have preceded mine.

4. I shall have more to say about this distinction, which is most important to the thesis that, contrary to much criticism, Tom is hardly a "transcendentalist"—in spite of those final comforting words to his mother.