A2 *Grapes* Seminar

August 26, 2014

Alex Gruber: Second question… what broader argument from *Grapes*? Overall idea: Injustice… the market, working conditions. Connection to Chomsky… lack of opportunity. Connected the cops in the Hooverville to the cops in Ferguson, overuse of power.

* Andrew: Question—How do the Joads compare to the modern-day immigrants? Connected to Schlosser. What they’re willing to do to support their families. “Strawberry Fields,” remittances… connected with *Grapes*
* Aiden: Smaller farmers… there’s a sense of a big, ominous organization… an illuminati…
* Zane: Relating to modern day… immigration. Like Aiden pointed out with the cops, just started shooting at Floyd. Connected to Ferguson.
* Harrison: What does this say about human nature? Wealth versus no wealth… are we more likely to help? The Wainwrights, working together in the government camps. People with less power are more likely to help each other.
* Kevin Collins: Cooperation within a community. Meeting up with the Wilsons.
* Eble: Anything political behind this kindness?
* Aiden: Tom, Casy… if we stick together, like the people in Appalachia, we can change what’s happening. In the context of this book, I don’t know if that could happen. Discussed the Appalachians. Not a massive migration. People in Appalachia already had a basis; Okies didn’t.
* Alex Gruber: People helping each other out… rich / wealthier people. Why are the rich people rich? Likely because they exploit the less-wealthy people. Poor folks
* Aiden / Zane talked at once… Aiden won! At some point and time, 90% of human beings farmed. At one point, people were once poor as hell. If exploitation is hereditary, people learn the practice of taking advantage of others. Genetic kind of thing?

Jake Wermes: Steinbeck makes a broad argument about humanity. Forming communities, working alongside each other.

* Sam W.: Violation of human rights… just wages.
* Jake W: Government at times seems just as oppressive, ominous as a machine. Much like the sun and the dust, so too does the government.

Logan Cooper: Steinbeck brings up the concept of the Over Soul, especially through Casy. The Joads try to work together with people, like the Wilsons. Then, on the contrary, there’s the bank, Joe Davis’s kid, Lizabeth Sandry…

* Eble: People who stand against that… denying something human?
* TJ: People knew their jobs, places…
* Aiden: Logan brought up the Bible-thumper… wasn’t she right?
* Logan: On the surface, that’s what happens. But Rose of Sharon’s breastfeeding is a kind of testament. Concern about baby, selfishly thinking about herself.
* Andrew Smith: Shows Rose of Sharon’s character; believes Ms. Sandry. Once the baby is dead, she’s upset. Then, though, when she breastfeeds the older man, she shows a giving side.
* Eble: The “mysterious smile”
* Sam: Maybe she miscarried because of her emotional state.
* Eble: Ending… what the fuck? Spoke about pregnant women…
* Aiden: Mysterious smile… I didn’t think deep enough for that. I thought she went insane.
* Jeff Shagena: I was confused because I expected something worse. Seemed strange… they don’t end happily.
* Harrison: They were pretty much screwed. Flooded home, Al stayed with the Wainwrights, no food, dead baby, people gone (Tom…)
* Spencer: Ending solidified the unification ending. She still had the care to help another human in need.
* Jake W: Happy ending because she wanted her baby; in a dead setting, she nurtures someone else.
* Aiden: Did she just become the food source?
* Eble: Talked about breastmilk.
* Jake W.: Rose of Sharon was a useless character to the family. Even Connie didn’t help. Becomes life-saving at the end.
* Logan Cooper: She grows from a child / teenager to someone more like Ma. Development into adulthood.
* TJ: She’s dependent on Connie for everything… if Connie was still there, the ending may not have taken place.
* Zane: Personally, towards the end of the book, I thought that Rose of Sharon gave up on the baby a bit (she wanted to pick cotton)
* Logan: Not necessarily giving up, but realizing the situation she’s in. While she may be the most in-need, she feels obligation to sacrifice for family. She had been the weak link.
* Zane: I understand that, but, logically-speaking… why would she get up?
* Eble: Tough to discern where Rose of Sharon stands here…
* Aiden: Tom kills a guy… Rose of Sharon wants to get him out. Ma says “I knew you would…”
* Eble: The instinct takes time… read from Chapter 26, Rose of Sharon defending Tom.
* Aiden: Chapter 28—quote about men / women… Ma quote: “Men live in jerks… “ then goes into the river… Men are impulsive, women flow from situation to situation…
* Eble: Damnit, that’s good.

Chase Hawkins: Question about morality, connecting *20 Myths* / *Grapes.* What do you think about their faith? In general, did faith increase? Or decrease? Christians being persecuted in Iraq—threatening them has only increased their faith.

* Andrew Smith: Depends on the character in *Grapes.* Spoke about Ma, then Tom…
* Chase: You’re right about Ma. Doesn’t know for sure if handbills are correct, but she has faith.
* Sam W.: Immigrants / migrants have faith… only constant thing.
* Andrew Smith: Referenced the USCCB statement—makes us one.
* Alex Gruber: Two ways to go here: Turn away from God or embrace God. “Why me?”
* Aiden: Depends on where you start. May give it a different name.
* TJ: Many people were like Casy. Filled with the “sperit.” Still said prayers, sort of believed in the unity of each other.
* Harrison: Especially with Jim Casy… less about faith, more about reality. Prayers were more about sermons, less about praying for help.
* Chase: A hollow faith…
* Eble: Jim Casy, Tom… Tom’s words, Christ figures versus judgmental folks.
* Logan Cooper: Claim against structured faith. Granma asks for prayers, doesn’t listen. Casy doesn’t understand the whole Over Soul thing, is transitioning from a preacher to whatever he is at the end of the book. Moving out of the old country into the new: There’s a new, separate faith in action.
* Aiden: J.C. / Jesus initials.
* Eble: Jim Casy / Moses…?
* TJ: Showed people the way… never saw the fruits of his labor. The Promised Land is in front of them.
* Jake: Moses questioned God, didn’t make the Promised Land; Casy has the same experience.

Andrew Smith: Power of family—just seemed like Pa.

Eble: Requested a summation…

* Spencer: Injustice of wealthy / poor, faith in each other, unity.