Steinbeck's and Kazan's East of Eden and the Virgin Land paradigm

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DIPLOMSKI RAD

STEINBECK'S AND KAZAN'S *EAST OF EDEN* AND THE VIRGIN LAND PARADIGM

(Smjer: književno – kulturološki, amerikanistika)

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Contents

1. Introduction

The mere notion of the Virgin Land turns our attention to Henry Nash Smith and his groundbreaking book *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth.* "One of the founding scholars of American Studies, Henry Nash Smith, uses the myth-symbol approach to explain the history of the American West and its effect on American policy. He defines myth-symbol as collective representations rather that the work of a single mind… an intellectual construction that fuses concept and emotion into an image" (Plumley). The Virgin Land is one of the crucial paradigms of American studies. Its importance is unquestionable and that has been proven numerous times in many works within American Studies imbued with it. "Scholars following Smith's footsteps used Virgin Land as a stepping stone, making it a key, although sometimes outdated, text for landscape and American studies (Plumley).

One of the examples is *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck, and consequently, Elia Kazan's film inspired by Steinbeck's novel. Steinbeck once wrote to a friend that he would like to write a story of this [Salinas Valley] whole valley; "of all the little towns and all the farms and the ranches in the wilder hills. I can see how I would like to do it so that it would be the valley of the world". He did so by writing his epic novel about the Salinas Valley, *East of Eden* (steinbeck.org). Steinbeck writes about couple of notions that are crucial to the Virgin Land paradigm, such as: the yeoman farmer, the agricultural frontier and the spatial imaginary.

Other elements that will be discussed in this paper are: biblical connotation within *East of Eden;* here, the nature of characters and their connection to the characters of Cain and Abel will be discussed. We will then move on to the central theme of the paper, the connection of the Virgin Land and *East of Eden,* within which, we will discuss in detail the notions of the agricultural frontier and the yeoman farmer. After that, Elia Kazan's film *East of Eden* will be briefly discussed and at the end we will analyze the differences (and similarities) between the *East of Eden* book and the film. At the end, we will conclude the subject.

Steinbeck's book beautifully depicts the landscape and the people's mindset in particular time frame. By doing so, it also depicts the ideas of the Virgin Land paradigm, which will, as we said before, be discussed in detail in this paper. Elia Kazan, as an award-

winning director[1], made justice to the Steinbeck's novel, by filming a masterpiece of a film with the biggest movie star of that time, James Dean. The entire notion of the Virgin Land paradigm within the *East of Eden* book and movie is an intriguing instance and that is precisely why this paper is being written. I hold that this paper will be of an importance to the American Studies in a sense that it hasn't been written about this connection yet, so I hope to make a small contribution to the field by writing about the Virgin Land paradigm and *East of Eden* works.

[1] He won the Academy Award (the most prestigious award in filmography), three times, and also multiple others.

2. American Studies

The field of American Studies had its roots in the 1920s and 1930s, but it's full development took place after the World War II. This corresponds to taking the field overseas and with the higher education boom in the postwar US. Naturally, many people started attending colleges and the returning soldiers were incorporated into education following WWII. The US higher education scene experienced a complete transformation; it became more diversified and many universities were established.

The main idea of American Studies was the enigma of America, scholars wanted to identify its ID, was it an idea, a state or maybe even a project? American studies are identified as an interdisciplinary field or a network that is continually changing, an ongoing research protocol that has a moral/ethical/political task of tackling current problems. It is a body of knowledge(s), myths of origin/being, self-representation and self-understanding that has accumulated throughout the 20th century, since the 1920s/30s, in the works by different authors from different fields (historians, literary critics, economists, anthropologists) who attempt to answer the question "What is America?" and "How did America come to be?". The development of interdisciplinarity is related to how the definition of culture expanded. However, we do need to emphasize that the very definition of culture is not fixed, but it changes throughout history, as we can see in the following examples. In the 19th century, Arnold defined culture as what has been best taught and best defined in human history (qtd. in Miraglia) which is an elitist/exclusive conception of culture, restricting culture to the greatest works of art (also naming it high culture); in the 20th century, Raymond Williams (in his work Culture and Society from 1958) defined culture as a way of life, which is an inclusive conception, encompassing popular culture, work habits, technology etc. (Miraglia).

In 2003, Fluck and Chaviez define American Studies as a joint, interdisciplinary academic endeavor to gain systematic knowledge about American society and culture in order to understand the historical and present-day meaning and significance of the United States (Fluck et al. 2003). Another definition of American Studies is proposed by Stanley Bailis: "American Studies have thus emerged not as a discipline, but as an arena for disciplinary encounter and staging ground for fresh topical pursuits. It embraces America in a Withmanish hug, excluding nothing and always beginning (qtd. in Wise 293). The early American Studies practitioners wanted to develop a countermovement to formalist approaches and New Criticism (and its focus on poetic texts). They argued for an interdisciplinary approach, but restricted themselves to interdisciplinary dialogue between history, literature and religion.

“Americanists sought to make the case that the American culture was worth studying, or, as Gene Wise would later write, to free the study of American Literature from its role as an appendage to Anglo-Saxon literature” (Jacobs 4). Later, American Studies scholars called for a broader study of national character and for that purpose developed the first recognized interdisciplinary paradigm – the myth-and-symbol-school of the 50s and 60s. In order to study what was specifically recognizable as an American, it went into American cultural heritage, connected literary works (e.g. Moby Dick, the central work of American Studies) to popular culture, politics, anthropology, sociology and economics, and tried to uncover the basic myths of what constitutes the American ID. In 2013, Jacobs paraphrases Spiller and Tate’s work from 1973 by writing: “The goal was not to do more „intellectual history” or “literary history” but to use the ideas and literature of the time to inform the understanding of American culture in a more synthetic or holistic manner” (Jacobs 5).

“The end of World War II and the start of the cold war gave additional impetus to the pursuit of a more unified exploration of American culture. The twin challenges of fascism and communism led many scholars to rise to the defense of freedom and democracy” (Gleason, 1984). Given the prominence of democracy in the founding documents of the United States, it was “a short step from the promotion of democracy in general to the celebration of American culture as a cradle and a bastion of democratic ideals” (Jacobs 5). Also, one major theme when it comes to American Studies is the notion of American exceptionalism and the national character studies. “During the 1950s, the relatively scant attention to America as a civilization worthy of study seemed incongruous given the rise of the United States as a world power. In outlining the context for the creation of American Studies programs in foreign countries, Robert Spiller wrote that “at the end of World War II, the United States suddenly found itself to be the major political and economic power of the west, whereas its culture had as yet almost no part in the curricula of most European countries” (qtd. in Jacobs 5). Therefore, Americanists called for a curricular reform and wanted to see interdisciplinarity, firstly, introduced into American curricula, with the basic connection between the humanities (esp. literature) and social sciences (sociology, economy, etc.) and secondly, expanded into the curricula of European countries.

Also, one crucial concept in desperate need of mentioning, when speaking about American Studies, is the notion of American exceptionalism. Grgas writes: “I hold that the dominant and underlying paradigm of American Studies, is the notion of American exceptionalism (5). He goes on to mention the definition of the term itself, as proposed by

Donald Pease (the foremost critic of the idea of American exceptionalism). Pease describes the concept as meaning "that America is 'distinctive' (meaning merely different), or 'unique' (meaning anomalous), or 'exemplary' (meaning a model for other nations to follow), or that it is 'exempt' from the laws of historical progress (meaning that it is an 'exception' to the laws and rules governing the development of other nations)" (qtd. in Grgas 5, 6). It is important to note that the term of American exceptionalism was never seriously questioned. Neither in Europe, nor in the United States. "In Europe, the exceptionalism of the United States has never been in serious dispute" (Jacobsen 4). Although Ronald Reagan never actually used the term 'exceptionalism' per se (as far as we know), many consider him to be "the most eloquent modern exponent of exceptionalism" (Ceaser 8), and this passage shows why:

> I've spoken of the shining city all my political life, but I don't know if I ever quite communicated what I saw when I said it. But in my mind it was a tall proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, wind-swept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace, a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity, and if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here. That's how I saw it, and see it still. (Reagan 19:05-19:42)

When we look at the discipline itself, Grgas continues, American Studies lets "certain things be seen while others are marginalized or entirely passed over" (7). As an example, he mentions the prefaces to the canonical texts of the discipline and highlights the preface of Perry Miller's *Errand Into the Wilderness* in which he writes that it was "obvious" to him that he had "to commence with the Puritan migration" "to begin at the beginning" in articulating his "vision." The aside reads: "I recognize, and herein pay my tribute to, the priority of Virginia; but what I wanted was a coherence with which I could coherently begin" (qtd. in Grgas 7). "Needless to say, Jamestown in Virginia was not only prior to Plymouth but, more pertinent to my argument, it was blatantly a commercial enterprise" (Grgas 7). It is, therefore, clear that leaving out facts which were not suitable for defining the discipline was a common practice. Again, I would like to quote Grgas, who perfectly summed up this phenomenon and its perils:

> If American Studies is viewed as a "mnemonic regime," to borrow a term from Tatjana Jukić (2011), which tactically and therefore politically allows the work of memory to be enacted, choosing this or that parcel from the warehouse of historical evidence, then they come dangerously close to being an ideology. As such, that regime

> determines what is to be incorporated into the archive of the discipline, what is to be emphasized, how is the thusly recuperated past to be used and narrativized and, of course, what is to be left out, obliterated (11).

Also, another notion which grows out of the discipline's exceptionalist status is capitalism. That is, the absence of capitalism. Grgas calls this "a blind spot that more than any other subverts its (American Studies') exceptionalist status (10). As noted before, leaving out particular instances in American history was not an unfamiliar occurrence in American Studies, and the appearance of capitalism was one such instance. American Studies, of course, holds its exceptionalist status, but "now with the caveat that capital is exceptional in a way that has not been properly registered in American Studies" (Grgas 10).

Furthermore, one cannot speak about American Studies and its exceptionality without touching the subject of economics. Such a great country must have its postulations deeply rooted in the discipline of economics. "The power of the United States affects the very discipline of economics" (Grgas 14). Norbert Häring and Niall Douglas go even further than that, writing that "economics has been molded typically to benefit the wealthy and the elite of the United States" (qtd. in Grgas 14). They argue that the United States, given its powerful global status, have an immense influence over the flow of modern economics. The importance of economics for the United States is clearly seen in Phillip Fisher's statement that American society is "an economy rather than a culture" (qtd. in Grgas 8).

To wrap up this part on American exceptionalism and the role of capitalism in American Studies, we might say that not only is capitalism a great part of the United States' doctrine, but it is an extremely important part. The American flow of capitalism actually helped to spread it throughout the entire globe. Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin note that "the American state, in the very process of supporting the export of capital and the expansion of multinational corporations, increasingly took responsibility for creating the political and juridical conditions for the general extension and reproduction of capitalism internationally" (qtd. in Grgas 17).

Today, when we discuss the notion of American Studies, we cannot but mention the central elements of the study, which are the paradigms within the field. The function of paradigms is all ideological, they do not represent any form of scientific data, but a way of comprehending the complex field of American Studies. It can be sad that paradigms are symbols, myths or lines of thought. Gene Wise defines the paradigm as a consistent pattern of

beliefs held by a person, a group, or a culture (297). One of the paradigms that this paper will revolve around is the Virgin Land paradigm (of movement). This paradigm falls in the category of the paradigms that rely on the notion of the spatial imaginary. This paradigm is still relevant today, because it can be used to understand the patterns of American behavior.

2.1. Spatial imaginary

The spatial imaginary denotes the human practice of giving meaning to space (i.e. nature, setting, the natural world, physical environment, geography etc.). Instead of being neutral, a mere natural extension, a mere physicality, which it is for natural sciences like geography and geology, it grows to be something completely different. Humanities view space in relation to the cultural and social, its extensiveness is transformed into a particular place. A place depends on human intervention and how humans perceive it, they isolate places from space and create identities for them based on past experiences and stories, these places are individual representations, they are not neutral but have a past significance, they are used for constructing the national ID. The spatial imaginary, therefore, is not a map of a country and doesn't reflect objective geographical facts or reality, what it wants to say is that some places are more important and some less important for the formation of national ID. What needs to be mentioned, however, when speaking about the spatial imaginary is that it is not binding for all members of the society, it can be differentiated by class, gender, race etc., and if often excludes many groups in favor of a white, masculine image (Bailly).

3. Virgin Land paradigm

Virgin Land as a term (as we know it today) was first coined by Henry Nash Smith, one of the founding scholars of American Studies, when he wrote one of the discipline's key texts and most prominent books, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth.* He uses the myth-symbol approach to try and paint a picture of the American West and its effect on American policy. He defines myth-symbol as "collective representations rather than the work of a single mind…an intellectual construction that fuses concept and emotion into an image" (Schneider 86). The book itself is divided into three sections: Passage to India, the Sons of Leatherstocking, and Garden of the World. The first part focuses on the individual's desire to travel West and develop a sort of relationship with the land, and in the process, to obtain wealth. The second section deals with the myth of the Western hero, while the last section provides us with three main ideas; the idealized yeoman farmer, the West seen as a sort of safe haven for those who need it to be just that, and the relationship between nature and civilization.

When speaking about the paradigm itself, it falls under the category of spatial imaginary, as mentioned earlier in the text. In the hierarchy of paradigms of the spatial imaginary, the West is the most mobilizing, that is, the most dynamic paradigm. The West is a geographical fact, but it's also a powerful social, economical and political ingredient. As mentioned above, it's also a relative term, it was constantly shifting towards the Pacific (in Cooper's time the West was New York). Since the settlement of America started on the eastern coast, there is a geographical reason for American expansion from the east to the west. This movement also underlines the general movement of American culture, but also, the identity of the WASP culture was formed[2]. It is important to note that the premise of John Nash Smith's work has been heavily critiqued by postcolonial writers because he relies on the notion of virgin land and writes American existence onto it without mentioning its indigenous people.

Also, one of the significant notions of the Virgin Land paradigm is the cowboy who has become the common stereotype of Americans, even though the West has lost some of its significance. This type of hero even got transposed into other, non-Western settings, i.e. John Wayne in a WWII movie, later in the Green Beret (Vietnam); Clint Eastwood as an urban

[2] WASP is an abbreviation for White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. This represented the basic axis of American culture arising from the genteel, centered city seaboard into the plains.

cowboy in Dirty Harry; Space Cowboys. More about the cowboy and its importance will be discussed in the following paragraph.

4. Film and its connection to American studies

As mentioned above, American studies began to spread all over the world with the emphasis on the literature; different genres started to emerge (e.g. Autobiographies) and the entire canon was revisited. Also, new "hybrid" forms of representations came to be, such as graphic novels, but maybe even the most important novelty that emerged was intermediality. Intermediality refers to the interconnectedness of modern media of communication. As means of expression and exchange, different media refer to and depend on one another, both explicitly and implicitly; they interact as elements of various communicative strategies; and they are constituents of a wider social and cultural environment (Bruhn Jensen). What became important were the visual materials (paintings, photographs, cartoons, but most importantly, films). A phenomenon in which there is a shift in emphasis in the humanities and social sciences toward an increasing concern with the importance of the visible is known as the *visual turn.* This is exactly what happened. With the emergence of the film industry and the Golden age of Hollywood[3], films became the medium through which it was the easiest to convey information and ideas to people all around the world. "By the 1930s and 1940s, after all, Hollywood cinema had become the most popular artistic mass medium of the twentieth century, a fact that was surely not lost on scholars interested in analyzing American beliefs, values, and practices by way of its cultural expressions and productions". It can be said that there are "various ways in which American studies professors have approached film as a resource for understanding U.S. culture" (Auerbach 31).

American studies scholars discarded and completely avoided film as a valuable resource for American studies until they simply couldn't ignore it "even though American studies and film would appear to be a self-evident pairing, film studies itself does not substantially enter the American academy until the early 1960s, a full decade after the founding of American studies programs and departments" (Auerbach 33). What testifies even more to the importance of films is the fact that even Henry Nash Smith (according to Auerbach 34), the creator of the groundbreaking book *Virgin Land* mentions the need for something, that would later be conceived as a film, in his preface of *Virgin Land*:

> All these midcentury writers on Hollywood come very close to articulating the agenda of the 'myth and symbol' school of American studies emerging at precisely the same

[3] „The Golden age of Hollywood is a term used in film criticism to describe both a narrative and visual style of film-making which became characteristic of American cinema between the 1910s (rapidly after World War I) and the 1960s" https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/.

> moment: scholars such as Henry Nash Smith, whose milestone book *Virgin Land* (1950) sought, as he says in his preface, to probe the fusion of 'concept and emotion into an image' or 'collective representation' that exerted 'a decided influence on practical affairs' in his case the settling of the western frontier. (Auerbach 39)

Quickly, the film became an important tool to understanding the concept of American history and culture. Furthermore, universities began to introduce courses on film because "the meanings gained from film inform students' historical insights in multiple ways" (Beattie and Gordon 79). The first genre that was recognized as valuable and important was the documentary film. Beattie and Gordon said: "the documentary film has become a major, possibly the most important, means for learning about the past. In an age when reading is in decline, the documentary, much more than theater, newspapers, or feature films, may well be the only serious access people have to history once they have left school" (79). People soon began to understand the power films as mass media had on the entire world and couldn't ignore this advantage. "The very fact that film could so fluently articulate as well as mold mass desires made it worthy of careful academic study, if not from a strictly aesthetic point of view, then from the perspective of social science (Auerbach 37).

The importance of films was firstly recognized as "a great power of mass media to sway public opinion" (Auerbach 37), but soon after, it was evident that it can also be very useful in teaching about the American way of life. The eminent actor Edward G. Robinson stated that he believes motion pictures speak a universal language. He detected that "the primary purpose is entertainment, but he also believed at the same time they serve to bring the world a little bit closer" (Burrows 79).

The most prominent film characters, themes and actors of the beginning of the golden age of Hollywood are the cowboys, westerns and most prominent of all, John Wayne (although, there were many more actors famous for their portrayals of cowboys[4], but no one comes close to John Wayne's status). Westerns became the 'American' films, in which, there would usually be John Wayne (as the most famous actor of that time), portraying the protagonist, a cowboy. Cowboys soon became the common stereotype of Americans given the immense popularity films quickly obtained. Nowadays, we are aware of the importance films have in people's minds. Countless true stories were popularized and public knowledge about American history was deepened throughout the powerful media that are films. The reason

[4] Other actors known for playing in westerns: James Stewart, Burt Lanchester, Gary Cooper etc.

why films are perhaps the best way of conveying a story to the general public is the likeability of it all, the fact that a person can sit comfortably in their home and be given a detailed explanation of a certain event in just a two hours-time is undeniably tempting. This is why many books are later turned into films, because, if done properly, a film can transfer the general idea and theme of the book in just a couple of hours, which would take us a significantly more time if we were to read a book.

5. John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck (full name: John Ernst Steinbeck Jr.) was a Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning American novelist. He was born February 27th, 1902 in Salinas, California. His family was one of low income, but as the author once said himself: "we were poor people with a hell of a lot of land which made us think we were rich people" (scribd.com). During his lifetime, before becoming an author, he took on various jobs (he was apprenticehood-carrier, apprentice painter, caretaker of an estate, surveyor, and fruit-picker). Interesting enough, "his native region of Monterey Bay was later the setting for most of his fiction" (scribd.com).

It may also be said that "his writing has grown out of a special region" (Champney 348). His works are heavily influenced by this part of the country and for most of them, this is the setting of his stories. His best known works are *Of Mice and Men*, *East of Eden* and *The Grapes of Wrath,* for which he ultimately won a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award. His works are considered to be the classics of American literature and he is highly praised in contributing to telling the story of the country of America. He is even regarded as "a social truth-teller [and is an] authentic realist" (Flood 2), because of the themes of his works and the way he presents his characters. "Steinbeck's novels can all be classified as social novels dealing with the economic problems of rural labour, but there is also a streak of worship of the soil in his books, which does not always agree with his matter-of-fact sociological approach" (nobelprize.org).

He usually writes about a common man, "the people he writes about are primarily nonintellectuals and his acquaintance with such people and his intuitive feeling for what makes them tick are probably his greatest strengths as a writer" (Champney 362). Considering the fact that he himself was a common man who didn't have much growing up, we can understand his point of view and why he wrote about these people. What made Steinberg interesting and different is his everlasting curiosity. He always wanted to know and see more, especially when it came to the US. He wanted to go back to the land, to explore it and to acquaint it once again. He also wanted to know more about the Vietnam War, mainly because his sons were both a part of it. "Steinbeck was, throughout his career, curious and engaged, a writer to the end" (steinbeck.org).

As mentioned before, he won numerous awards, one more prestigious than the other, and while presenting him with his Nobel Prize in Literature in 1962, the Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy Anders Osterling said: "his is realistic and imaginative writing,

combining as it does sympathetic humor and social perception" (qtd. in steinbeck.org). The most fascinating thing is that, even today, 52 years after his death, his work is still relevant and is still being taught and discussed among youth. "Steinbeck's works, which explore pressing social problems, rating from poverty and racism to immigration and environmental destruction, still speak to contemporary Americans" (Hicks 87).

John Steinbeck is an important and well reputed writer. Not only is he a writer that dedicated a bulk of his work to the portrayal of what can be described as the American, but he also writes about the main specifications and ways of the American way of life, sort of as a guideline for people wanting to know more about the United States. Considering that Steinbeck was born in Salinas Valley and that he has been involved in writing both about the Vietnam War, and about the American country and its way of life, gives him a status of a true American who knows a lot about the country itself and of a person with a lot of life experience behind his written words. R. Sandler, Member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, on the night Steinbeck received his Nobel Prize for Literature, said: "Your *Travels with Charley* is not only a search for but also a revelation of America, as you yourself say: This monster of a land, this mightiest of nations, this spawn of the future turns out to be the macrocosm of microcosm me. Thanks to your instinct for what is genuinely American you stand out as a true representative of American life" (nobelprize.org). All above taken in consideration, we can clearly see the importance Steinbeck holds within the American Studies field. Being the prominent writer he is, and having written such important works, we can say that he indeed did deserve the status of the well reputed figure within the field he holds today.

5. 1. Steinbeck and films

Steinbeck was an enthusiastic author, but he also valued cinema and the power films had on people. "However, apart from films others made of his works, Steinbeck stands alone in having made several excursions into the realm of producing original screenplays. This was no dilettantism, for he believed in the influential power of both cinema and television" (Burrows 68). It was often said that he wrote some of his works as if he was imagining them being transformed into the big screen. Burrows even calls his prose writing in the novels a kind of a "cinematic point of view" (69). The case in point for this thesis is the fact that a large number of his writings got turned into movies (i.e. The Grapes of Wrath, Pearl, Of Mice and Men, The Forgotten Village, The Moon is Down, Lifeboat, A Medal for Benny, The Red Pony, Viva Zapata!, East of Eden, The Wayward Bus, Flight, Cannery Row, The Winter of

Our Discontent, America and Americans, Travels with Charley etc.). He was personally connected to the cinema and even assisted Charlie Chaplin with *The Great Dictator,* but refused a further involvement (Burrows).

Perhaps we could say Steinbeck was a man ahead of his time. He understood the true proficiency in the cinema: "I've been lucky with the men who put my books into films – men like Ford, Kazan and Milestone" (Burrows 79). He highly appreciated the honor of his works being transformed into films, and of course, films helped people get acquainted with him once again. The enormous success of the films *The Grapes of Wrath, Of Mice and Men* and *East of Eden* was a way of shifting people's focus back at him and his work. We would be lying if we said that Steinbeck's contribution to film was a momentous one, but it wasn't insignificant either. "Although Steinbeck's personal contributions to film is a comparatively minor, it ranks far higher than similar efforts by Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, or Faulkner" (Burrows 79).

Knowing that Steinbeck acknowledged the importance of films and cinema, and more importantly, that he approved with enthusiasm the film adaptations of his works, can be a way of reassuring us that Kazan's adaptation of his Steinbeck's East of Eden is truly a great one. The most prominent purpose of film adaptations in the first place is the hope that it does justice to the book and that it can successfully convey the main ideas and messages of the book itself. And with Steinbeck giving his blessing to Kazan's film, we can say that Kazan's work was successful. On that note, we are moving forward to the analysis of the book and later on, the movie itself.

6. East of Eden by John Steinbeck

The book East of Eden by John Steinbeck was first published in 1952 and is one of his latter works. He always had big plans for this book, he wanted it to be the big work of his career and it was dedicated to his sons. In the diary that he wrote simultaneously with the novel, he also explained why he chose to address the novel to his sons:

> I am choosing to write this book to my sons. They are little boys now and they will never know what they came from through me, unless I tell them…I want them to know how it was, I want to tell them directly, and perhaps by speaking directly to them I shall speak directly to other people… And so I will tell them one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest story of all—the story of good and evil, of strength and weakness, of love and hate, of beauty and ugliness… I shall tell them this story against the background of the county I grew up in. I shall try to demonstrate…how these doubles are inseparable. (Steinbeck 7)

In the same diary, he also mentions that he sees this novel as his masterpiece and notes that "this is the book I have always wanted and have worked and prayed to be able to write" (Steinbeck 6). He considered it to be his greatest novel and was immensely proud of it. Knowing all this, it is easy to see how much of an importance this book holds, for both Steinbeck himself, and for all of us trying to reason out the true meaning and value of the novel.

The novel is set mainly in the Salinas Valley and it's partly based on the author's family history. We might look at the novel as a mixture of three different genres: allegory, autobiography and epic. The main story revolves around the two families, the Hamiltons and the Trasks and the way their lives intersect from the Civil War to the First World War. Within the main story, we can also notice that the lives of the Trasks and the Hamiltons actually reenact two of the most famous biblical tales: the fall of Adam and Eve and the rivalry of Cain and Abel. Based on the aforementioned dedication to his sons, we can assume that Steinbeck wanted to teach them about grief, identity and what it means to be a human being. This book was also important for the Salinas Valley because "it is through the popularization of East of Eden that the Salinas Valley was truly transformed into "the valley of the world"; a place where everyone is able to find a piece of themselves in the golden, rolling hills" (steinbeck.org).

6.1. Short summary

As mentioned above, the novel follows two families and the way their lives interrelate with one another. By describing the Trask family and the Hamilton family throughout the generations, the story parallels the biblical tale of Cain and Abel and the original sin. By leading us through the generations of these two families, Steinbeck carefully sets the tone and the story to fit its main characters in the latter part of the book; those of the Trask family members, the father Adam and his sons, Caleb and Aron and their loyal cook and housekeeper Lee and the friend/neighbor, the head of the Hamilton family, Samuel. Cathy, later on known as Kate, is the ultimate antagonist of the entire story, with something evil in her from the very childhood. She commits a number of crimes, from murder, cheating, stealing, prostitution, fraud, without a trace of remorse. She marries Adam Trask and births him twins, Caleb and Aron. Soon after, she shoots Adam and leaves them to go into Salinas Valley, where she would take over the whorehouse and lead a life she always wanted for herself. Using allegory and hidden meanings, Steinbeck presents the two twins, immensely different from one another. Caleb, i.e. Cal (representing the Cain-like persona) and Aron (who mimics Abel's part of the story), their sorrow stricken father Adam, who cannot stop regretting the loss of his wife Cathy and Abra, s girl who falls in love with both twins. The story revolves around Cal being the 'bad, evil one' and Aron the 'good one' and the challenges this predisposed analogy throws at them. One night, as they often would, Adam, Samuel and Lee had one of their discussions, about the very story of Cain and Abel, in which Lee presents the central theme of the entire book, the term *timshel* (*"thou mayest"*) which would mean that a person has the power to make his/her own choice of determining what kind of person he/she wants to be, that it is not predetermined in us whether we are good or evil. Throughout their growing up, the twins pine for their father's attention and affection (just as their father and his brother Charles did before with their own father). Cal is presented to be the bad brother who gambles, goes out at night and visits brothels all the while being jealous over Abra's love of Aron, Abra is the good hearted daughter of a crooked politician who also comes to question if it's possible to inherit the parent's evil nature. Abra and Aron fall in love and start their relationship and in the meantime Cal discovers the truth about what kind of person his mother is which drives him to be an even angrier person. Soon, Abra comes to the realization that Aron is in love with her glorified image and slowly comes to like Cal instead. In his attempt to, in a way, buy his father's love, Cal goes into business to earn a large sum of money his father recently lost. That plan backfires, causing Adam to reject Cal's gift with contempt, realizing that he made

that money by taking advantage of farmers during war time. As a result, driven by jealousy and anger, Cal decides to take Aron to Kate's brothel to show him what kind of person she really is, an act he never before thought of doing, having known that Aron wouldn't be able to handle the truth and always protecting him of it. After the visit to the brothel, Aron breaks down and runs away to join the Army and dies soon after. Upon meeting Aron, Kate commits suicide, while Adam, when discovering his son enlisted, and afterwards died, grows heavily ill. The book ends with Cal confessing everything to Adam and begs his forgiveness with the help of Lee and his girlfriend, Abra. With his last breath, Adam manages to say a single word to Cal, indicating that he has forgiven him and urging him to find the best version of himself possible, because he has a choice of doing so, and that word is *timshel.*

6.2.Question of character (Biblical reference)

The one thing that is heavily represented in the novel, and that is not a part of the Virgin Land paradigm is the biblical reference that the book holds. We cannot find the extremely emphasized Cain and Abel parallel from the book in the Virgin Land paradigm. But, being an enormously important part of the novel, we will discuss it briefly.

> Adam and Eve are the obvious archetypes for Adam Trask and his wayward wife, Kate; Cal and Aron are clearly patterned on their Biblical counterparts, Cain and Abel. The film's title is an undisguised reference to Scripture ('And Cain went out from the presence pf the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden…'), which one of the film's peripheral characters (Sam, the sheriff) quotes verbatim to Cal during the film. (Rathgeb 31)

The biblical reference is evident from the title itself, *East of Eden.* In the Genesis 4:16 in the King James Version of the Bible (Jerusalem Bible), there is a line that says "So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden" (The New Jerusalem Bible). The main biblical tale that this story echoes is the one about Cain and Abel. Not only are the generations of the Trask family "destined" to live out this tale, but we can see how Steinbeck cleverly hints which characters are playing the "Cain part" or the bad one, and which the "Abel part", or the good one by naming them in a way that their names start with the letters C and A. Cyrus, Alice, Adam, Charles, Cathy, Caleb, Aron, Abra. We can see a lot of similarities in Cain and Abel counterparts of this story with one another; Charles and Caleb and Adam and Aron. Just to name a few: Both "Cain characters" were restless, visited brothels, had tempers, had some sort of a cruel quality in them, were smart and knew how to

get their way, were more capable than their brothers, were bolder, gave their fathers expensive gifts in an attempt to buy their love, and most importantly, were least loved by their fathers. On the other hand, both "Abel characters" were timid, "straight arrows", often bullied by their brothers, outsmarted by their brothers, were their father's favorite children, joined the Army, idolized their women to make them something that existed only in their heads, and at some point, both of their women chose their brothers over them.

However, if we were to say that Cain's and Abel's destiny is something meant to happen, and already written in history as fated, then we come across a significant difference between the biblical tale and the novel. The main theme of the novel is said to be the term *timshel,* a Hebrew word which Lee translates as *thou mayest,* meaning, "you can if you want to". This refers to one's ability to choose which moral path he will take, instead of it being predestined and chosen for him. The very importance of this notion is highlighted when Steinbeck finishes the novel with that word. While lying on his death bed, and while his son begs for his forgiveness, Adam manages to utter a single word with his dying breath: *timshel.* This elevates the importance of the term and sets it to be the main theme of the story. Speaking about the term, Steinbeck himself wrote the following in his Journal of a Novel: "Here is the individual responsibility and the invention of conscience. You can if you will but it is up to you. This little story (from the Bible) turns out to be one of the most profound in the world. I always felt it was but now I know it is" (Steinbeck 45).

7. East of Eden and Virgin Land paradigm connection

When speaking about the ways in which East of Eden and the Virgin Land paradigm cross paths, one can't help but to see the ways in which Nash Smith writes about the key factors of the paradigm in his work. To start off, we have the obvious individual's desire to travel East and develop a relationship with the land, and of course, to obtain wealth (Adam's journey to California) and his desire to build his 'empire' there. There's also the glaring notion of the idealized yeoman farmer who is presented by Nash Smith in the character of Samuel Hamilton (more about this in the next chapter), the sense of safety and tranquility residing in the West. This we can see in a number of characters, but in different ways for each of them. Adam hopes to find his purpose and the proper way of living his life in the West, Cathy (or Kate) runs to the West because she feels safe and untouchable here, she has created her safe haven here, and she believes, or maybe, better fitted word is hopes, that her past crimes can't come back and hurt her here. Samuel also came in hopes of creating his own piece of heaven here. His wishes were to own a piece of land where he and his family can enjoy and spend the rest of their lives there. As we can see, this book holds a great number of immensely different characters, but each one of them has their high hopes of the expectations of the West.

Furthermore, the important notion of the Virgin Land paradigm falls on the relationship between nature and civilization, and that distinction we can see in Adam and Samuel's relationship. In that sense, Samuel would represent nature, while Adam would represent civilization. These two are both very closely connected and, at the same time, quite easily distinguished from one another. Just like when we think about the nature and civilization's relationship, Samuel and Adam are extremely different people, each with their own faults and virtues, but when they share their thoughts and ways of looking at life with one another, we can clearly see how they complement each other and the ways in which the quality of both of their lives is improved when taking advice from one another. The best example of the way Samuel improves Adam's life is the part in which he tells him about Cathy, in hopes of that rousing Adam and allowing him to continue with this life. Samuel is the only one who is completely honest with Adam and who doesn't spare his feelings, but tells him the truth, even if it will hurt him at first, in order to get better. In the middle part of *East of Eden*, Steinbeck writes about the exchange between Samuel and Adam:

"Do you take pride in your hurt?" Samuel asked. "Does it make you seem large and tragic?"

"I don't know."

"Well, think about it. Maybe you're playing a part on a great stage with only yourself as audience."

A slight anger came into Adam's voice. "Why do you come to lecture me? I'm glad you've come, but why do you dig into me?"

"To see whether I can raise a little anger in you. There's all that fallow land, and here beside me is all that fallow man. Is it a good feeling to let your life lie fallow?"

"What else could I do?"

"You could try again." (351)

Samuel improved Adam's life in many ways, from being his friend who always had wise advice, to delivering his sons. On the other hand, Adam influenced Samuel's life in a different way. He was the one who gave Samuel a chance to do what he likes and what he is good at, finding water and building a garden out of Adam's land. Adam gave Samuel a sense of purpose and value. Even after Adam relinquished the idea of building his garden, Samuel was always the one on which Adam could rely on and that was one way of feeling valued after all of his children had gotten married and moved out of the ranch.

7.1. Spatial imaginary

As mentioned earlier, this paradigm falls under the category of spatial imaginary. The West is not only a geographical fact, but it's also a powerful social, economical and political ingredient. Likewise, the West being the most mobilizing, or, the most dynamic paradigm (in the hierarchy of paradigms of the spatial imaginary), it is important to emphasize the way in which the West was portrayed in the book.

The center of the plot takes place in the Salinas Valley. Given that Steinbeck himself is from Salinas Valley, we can see why he chose this place to center his story in. The first words a reader lays his eyes on when opening the book are: "The Salinas Valley is in Northern California" (7). Steinbeck devotes the first seven pages of the book to the Salinas Valley and its detailed description giving it a great importance. He writes about the Gabilan Mountains, the changing seasons , the Valley's past, the settlers and he introduces us to the story we're about to read with the words: "And this is about the way the Salinas Valley was when my grandfather brought his wife and settled in the foothills to the east of King City"

(12). Throughout the 720 pages of the book, every once in a while, Steinbeck gives attention to the Valley and the way it changed as the years came by. He pauses the narration about the characters and writes about the Valley and the people in it. The 571st page of the book holds the idea of American exceptionalism rooted in Salinas Valley: "In Salinas we were aware that the United States was the greatest and most powerful nation in the world. Every American was a rifleman by birth, and one American was worth ten or twenty foreigners in a fight". (…) "One American was as good as twenty Germans." (571) We can clearly see his love for his hometown and the American excaptionalism also rises to the surface every once in a while: "We thought we invented all of it in Salinas, even the sorrow." (615)

7.2. Agricultural frontier

The entire premise of the East of Eden is fraught with the notion of agricultural work and efforts, which is not odd since the agricultural land is the land most frequently associated with Steinbeck. The residents in Salinas Valley chose their land based on the condition in which it is, depending on the possibility of a fruitful and lucrative land. Such luck was denied to Samuel Hamilton, but was granted to Adam Trask. The person who knows how and who wants to work on his land and nurture it was struck by bad luck when it comes to the lucrative land. Samuel's estate was dry and there was no water to be found there. As opposed to Adam's which was incredibly endowed with water and had a great potential to be one of the best estates around and to become a great garden. In the third book, or, section of the Virgin Land we come to inspect the idea of a Virgin Land as a *Garden of the World.* The Garden of the World was one of the dominant symbols of the 19th century American society that defined the premise of American life. The image of a land so fruitful to be called the Garden, or an agricultural paradise, in the West survived so long that it became a force in American thought and politics. In fact, Jefferson was primarily interested in the political implications of the agrarian ideal. He saw the cultivator of the earth, the husbandman who tilled his own acres, as the rock upon which the American republic must stand (Grgas). The cultivator, in this case, is Samuel Hamilton, who is asked to transform Adam's land into a beautiful Garden. Steinbeck writes the following exchange between Adam and Samuel:

"Look, Samuel, 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."

"It's the best reason I ever heard for making a garden," Samuel exclaimed. (201)

Samuel, as a true cultivator, a rock upon which the American republic must stand, is delighted with the idea of transforming Adam's land into the best version of itself that could possibly be, and starts with the work right away. He is delighted with the sight of water and enthusiastically imagines the way it will look when he's finished. This is why he is also devastated when Adam changes his mind and decides he doesn't want the garden after all when Cathy leaves him. Here we can also see the rights and wrongs with the reasons for which two men were excited about the garden. Adam was enthusiastic for the wrong reasons (if we're looking through the eyes of the Virgin Land paradigm), he wanted a garden simply because of Cathy: "And now I've told you why I want the wells and a garden. I have to repay somehow for value received. I'm going to make a garden so good, so beautiful, that it will be a proper place for her to live and a fitting place for her to shine on." (202) Adam is infatuated with Cathy and wants a garden to be made in her honor, so that she has a place that's worthy of her beauty, as he sees it. Samuel, on the other hand, is excited about building a garden for Adam because of the right reasons. He sees the immense potential Adam's land has and he wants to utilize it the best way possible. He wants to make a garden for land's sake, so that it looks and feels the best way it possibly can. He doesn't attribute garden to something else to give it value, the garden itself is important and valuable to him, the value is in the land, not in the person we are building a garden and transforming the land for. And those are the values of a true cultivator and a yeoman farmer.

7.3. Yeoman farmer

When speaking about the Virgin Land, we can talk about two distinct Wests: the domesticated agricultural frontier and the uncivilized wilderness, and each has its own distinctive heroes. One is the frontiersman/noble savage or the hunter and the other is the yeoman farmer. The yeoman farmer is the representative figure that emerged in the 19th century and he is also known under a set of different names such as a yeoman frontier farmer, freehold farmer, freeman, husbandman, cultivator. He was a part of an agricultural society, plowed the virgin land, transformed the interior of the continent into the Garden of the World and was rewarded for his efforts and virtue. The myth of the Garden of the World depicts America as an agrarian paradise and glorifies the interior valley as an area of fecundity, bliss and virtue. Also, the yeoman as the symbol of American identity played an important role in the development of democratic ideas in the United States because they represent economic and social opportunity for settlers of all classes to own land and live in prosperity. His

economic status was not necessarily high, but he has become the hero of the myth of the 19th century America and he was also able to read into the reality of agricultural labor (Grgas).

Interestingly enough, the yeoman farmer is a character whom we can easily associate with Steinbeck. When talking about East of Eden, we can find the attributes of the yeoman farmer in Samuel Hamilton. Although having immigrated to the United States from Ireland, Sam Hamilton has a set of qualities we can attribute to the yeoman farmer. He came to the Salinas Valley and became the person who everyone associated with the land most. He worked on his land with great pleasure and dedication and he was the one whom Adam Trask employs to transform his land into a "Garden of the World". "Look, Samuel, 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. – It's the best reason I ever heard for making a garden, Samuel said" (Steinbeck 201). Samuel had a great talent of locating water in the land, so, naturally, Adam asked him to do so for him. Once Samuel was employed by someone, he wanted to get the job done: "And I'll dig your wells if I have to drive my rig to the black center of the earth. I'll squeeze water out like juice from an orange" (Steinbeck 203). Adam had a vision of making his land a new and improved Eden and the person he chose to help him make his wish come true was Samuel. "And Samuel Hamilton resolved to help greatly with Salinas Alley Eden" (Steinbeck 213). We can probably best understand the deep love Samuel had for his land when he realized he was soon going to die (after receiving Olive's invitation to come visit her and her family). The first thing he did was to spend some time alone with his land and to inspect it thoroughly one more time. "Halfway up the hill Samuel squatted down and took up a handful of the harsh gravelly earth in his palm and spread it with his forefinger, flint and sandstone and bits of shining mica and a frail rootlet and a veined stone. He let it slip from his hand and brushed his palms. He picked a spear of grass and set if between his teeth and stared up the hill to the sky. (…) Samuel stood in the doorway of the forge and looked at the land. They say a mother loves best an ugly child. (…) Places were very important to Samuel. The ranch was a relative, and when he left it he plunged a knife into a darling" (Steinbeck 342, 346, 349). The undying love he had for the land, and his great connection to it was the very thing that separated Samuel from the rest. Even though his own land was not an arable one, his made great effort to transform Adam's (which was very fruitful) into a garden he always wanted.

8. East of Eden film by Elia Kazan

The film East of Eden came out in 1955 and it was the first major screen role for James Dean, cult icon of the Golden Age of Hollywood. It remains to this day the only one out of his three films (other two being the Giant and Rebel Without a Cause) to have been released during his lifetime and the only one Dean personally viewed in its entirety (due to his untimely death at the age of 24). Also, to the importance of this film, speaks the fact that it was named by the American Film Institute as one of the best 400 American films of all time (Dirks). Moreover, in 2016 the film was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant.

This film was the film with which James Dean's career launched and the one where he proved what kind of acting abilities he had. To watch him crying in pain and anguish for his father's approval and love and torn between his own temper and reason is truly a privilege. "James Dean, Icon of Youth, Beauty & Genius is what we have, and it survives in an immortal triple bill from the mid-1950s: East of Eden (1955), Rebel Without a Cause (1955) and Giant (1956)" (Duncan 44).

The film opens with a shot of a beautiful coastal imagery and then, focus is shifted to the agricultural scenery. We then find out that this is the director's way of contrasting two places which are so near to each other, but at the same time, very much different; Monterey and Salinas Valley. After these shots, the screen becomes filled with words: "In Northern California, the Santa Lucia Mountains, dark and brooding, stand like a wall between the peaceful agricultural town of Salinas and the rough and tumble fishing port of Monterey, fifteen miles away". We learn right away that Kate resides in Monterey, while the Trask boys and their father live in Salinas.

"East of Eden is one of Kazan's most visually compelling and stylistically impressive films" (Rathgeb 31). The entire film is imbued with symbols and visual clues that try leading us to some conclusions. "In imposing his personal vision on *East of Eden,* Kazan uses the physical placement of the characters, as well as those characters' symbolic associations with trees, water, and earth, as visual metaphors for the themes he explores" (Rathgeb 31). For instance, when we are first introduced to Cal and Kate, their attire and posture tell us a great deal about their characters. Kate is first seen dressed in black and strolling down a street in a confident way. Her black attire echoes a woman in mourning of something and we can

assume that this represents her failed marriage and a wasted life because she's been dead to her family since the day she abandoned them, and they have been dead to her. The Trask twins were raised to believe her mother did actually die giving birth to them and their father never wanted to discuss her. Her face is hidden behind a veil and her posture is cold and confident. Kazan is quick to point us in the direction he wishes us to go; he parallels Cal and his mother in order to point out the differences between the two. Cal, on the other hand, walks in an uncertain and childish way, reflecting an inner turmoil. He is dressed in bright colored clothing, giving us a sense of relaxation and innocence:

> At one point in the sequence, Kazan frames Cal with a waving American flag in the background, suggesting not only a sense of allegiance within Cal – his role as a member of the family and a community – but also an essential goodness which has been repressed and which will reveal itself at the film's conclusion. Kate, however, has no allegiance, no human ties. Such symbolic contrasts are central to an understanding of *East of Eden.* Though Cal believes he is evil like his mother, he is in truth quite different. Kazan's objective symbolism contradicts Cal's subjective vision. (Rathgeb 32)

8.1. Camera positioning

Furthermore, the director's positioning of the camera holds a great importance when talking about symbolism in *East of Eden.* More precisely, in determining who holds the dominant position in a certain scene. When we see Cal and Kate for the first time, he is in a sitting position, while she is walking down a street. The way director positioned the camera makes it seem like she is bigger than Cal, pointing out that Cal feels subordinate to her. He adds to this metaphor even more by placing Cal in a seated position by her feet and looking up to her as if admiring her. Further, the scene at the dinner table shows just how cleverly Kazan places his characters in order to show the audience their relationships. Cal and Adam are placed at the different sides of the table, indicating their emotional distance while Aron sits at his father's right side (perhaps again hinting at the biblical connotation of God's right hand) and in the back, distanced from the table, stands a female housekeeper, symbolizing the position women hold at Trask family, thus echoing Kate. Kazan also tilts the camera slightly to the left when Cal is in the frame to emphasize his subordination in this particular scene (Rathgeb 34).

In the next scene, when Cal goes to see Kate at her house, he falls before her kneeling as if she were a deity, again, needless to say, assuming the subordinate position. It is interesting to

see how subordination – domination motifs shift from person to person over the course of the film. For instance, in the following scene in which Kate loans the money to Cal, this motif is changed various times in a single scene. Firstly, Kate sits at her desk, while Cal stands. Given the connotation of authority that desk holds, they are now in equal position which is already a shift from his earlier inferiority. Then, Cal sits across the desk from Kate, now, sharing the power with her, and lastly, when Kate finally gives the check to Cal, he is standing across the desk from her, assuming the dominant position at last. In this scene, interestingly enough, Kate notices glaring irony of giving her 'dirty, or evil' money to Cal in order to save his 'pure, good' father and in a way, abandons her position of a conventional villain to perhaps make amends (Rathgeb).

Finally, this metaphor of subordination and dominance comes to a full circle in the scene where Cal and Aron visit Kate's brothel. While entering the room, Cal is standing and Kate is half asleep in her chair. His stance and posture vibrate with dominance and power. He pushes Aron headlong onto their mother and closes the door behind him, smiling sardonically. But, just by making Aron 'dirty', this does not mean that he is now good. That is why, upon returning home that night, he is still in a sullen mood and even quotes his biblical counterpart when asked by Adam where Aron was, saying "I don't know. I'm not my brother's keeper".

The last scene in which Cal finally begs his father for forgiveness and ultimately, for love, is perhaps the most important one in terms of subordination – domination metaphor. Adam lies dying in his bed, and Cal and Abra hold the superior positions standing over him. After firing the callous nurse, Cal happily decides to honor his father's wish to take care of him all by himself and pulls up a chair beside his father's bed to indicate that he no longer wishes to be his father's superior, but his equal. After the two men have reconciled and patched up their broken relationship, the camera pulls back to a high shot, eliminating all differences between Cal, Abra and Adam, who are now in different positions (Abra is standing, Cal is sitting and Adam is lying down), but that doesn't matter anymore, because this high camera angle shows us that they are now, finally, all equals.

8.2. Symbolism

Kazan deals profusely with symbols in his film. Throughout the film, we can notice numerous symbols representing various things, some in accordance with Steinbeck's novel, and some differing from it. Some of the most prominent symbols Kazan implements in his work are: water, trees, war and lastly, Abra herself.

8.2.1. Water

Water images are also an important symbol in the film. As said before, the first shot we see at the film's beginning is the ocean waves crashing against a shore. After that, the water tower figure dominates the following seconds of the film, heavily stealing the scene in three shots (outside of the bank where Kate is making a deposit, reflection in the glass as Kate walks by and two women gossip about her and dominating the left side of the frame as Cal continues to follow Kate to her house). The water images reappear throughout the film and they mean different things to different characters. As Rathgeb explains, Cal's inner turmoil and struggle to find his identity is shown through the waves battering the rocks, because his life has become a series of batterings he seeks to calm, he wishes to settle the waves of jealousy and resentment he holds for Aron, Adam and Kate. The water tower represents Kate's inner state; her life has become remote and inaccessible, out of reach for anyone but herself. When speaking about Adam and his favorite son, Aron, water in the shape of ice has become a symbol of worship:

> Ice becomes the literal preserver of Adam's lettuce crop and a symbol of his rejection of love, his inability to temper his stern moral code with humanity. For Abra, Aron's betrothed and the object of Cal's jealousy, water becomes a purifying agent, the means by which she forgives her father's sin of remarriage" by throwing the ring he gave her new stepmother in the ocean. (Rathgeb 32)

The sequence in Adam's ice house adds up on the water symbolism. Its coldness makes the viewer draw a parallel with the coldness of Adam's own house, that is, his emotional neglect of his other son, Cal. The act of pushing ice down the chute shown Cal's rage towards his father's constant neglect, an attack on the symbol of his father's worship and a growing resentment of Aron. This imagery continues on when Adam's lettuce business goes awry. Because a snow slide in the mountains has blocked the tracks ahead of the train transporting lettuce, the ice has melted and the lettuce has rotted. "The water imagery recurs: since Adam worships ice and hopes to be redeemed by it, then water itself (with which we identify Cal) must be Adam's foe. It is water that destroy Adam's hopes for success. Kazan adds further irony by making snow cause the train's delay" (Rathgeb 35). But also, "the melting ice represents not only the ascendency of Cal and Adam's decline, but also the genesis of their eventual reconciliation. For it is the loss of the lettuce crop which impels Cal to earn the money back, replace his father's losses, and thus regain his love" (Rathgeb 38).

8.2.2. Trees

"In *East of Eden,* Kazan uses trees to represent the desire for knowledge and experience, taking as his inspiration the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in Genesis. Eve's sin was one of disobedience, of rebellion; yet, her goal was not to become evil, but rather to gain a knowledge of worldly experience" (Rathgeb 33). In the first scene where we see Aron, Abra and Cal together, the two lovers are casually strolling down a path while Cal skulks in between the trees. Abra finds something about Call's experience with other women and the way world functions strangely appealing, she even asks him about his many girlfriends in a few different situations.

In a scene where we see Abra and Cal alone for the first time, they are in a field of flowers underneath a tree, they are enjoying themselves, talking with one another and having fun. Kazan draws an interesting parallel when he, again uses his "tree-of-knowledge metaphor, this time substituting the reality of war for worldly knowledge" (Rathgeb 35). During the parade, Abra and Aron stand under a tree. Aron is in a sullen mood and despises the very idea of a war and Abra is in a positive mood. Soon, Cal joins them underneath a tree and the three of them talk about the war. One thing we can notice is that both Cal and Abra are good-humoured, while Aron is not, for the first time in the film. "It is significant that Aron's first association with trees coincides with his change from idealistic dreamer to sullen malcontent; similarly, Abra's first association with trees brings her closer to Cal" (Rathgeb 33).

The climax of the tree metaphor occurs after Adam has rejected Cal's birthday present, and Cal angrily runs out from the house and stands under the willow tree in their front yard. Abra joins him and tries to comfort him, but Aron commands her to let him talk to his brother and that she leaves. Aron lectures Cal about Abra all the while Cal is partly hidden behind the tree's branches and he looks almost as a ghost. Fed up with his brother's righteousness, Cal comes to light, snakelike and sardonically tells Aron "Maybe our mother didn't die and go to heaven after all" (East of Eden 1:38:47-1:38:50). "During the scene, Kazan is careful to place Cal close to the willow tree (and then to other trees in the yard), while Aron remains on the periphery, resisting Cal's efforts to draw him in" (Rathgeb 36). Here, Cal assumes the position of a snake, overcome with his father's rejection that he wants to hurt Aron too. Here, the tree metaphor serves as a way of showing the audience Aron's inability to accept that all people have both good and bad in themselves and that the right thing to do is to even them

out. Cal is aware of that fact and he can now be the one to prove his point to Aron, and ultimately, to his father, who shares this faulty assumption about life.

8.2.3. War

The war is not seen as a historical fact and a tragical event, but rather as a symbol of all that is evil in the world. Kate, Cal and Will Hamilton profit from the war (from their business with beans), Adam looks at it as an invention of the city people exclaiming "What's a farmer got to do with war?" while Aron grows more and more depressed by it and rejects even the thought of enlisting telling Abra (while watching the parade): "Nothing will ever make me go, nothing. I just don't believe it's right" (East of Eden 1:06:27-1:06:35). Aron is completely sullen and disrespectful towards the thought of war, while Abra's and Cal's attitude is somewhat different. Abra is dressed in a nurse's uniform and is in festive mood, she doesn't share Aron's rejection of war any more Cal does. His partnership with Will and positive mood during the parade suggest he understands it and accepts it much more than Aron does. We might say that Abra's and Cal's positive stance towards the very thing Aron so resolutely rejects signifies their acceptance of evil in the world (an in themselves).

8.2.4. Abra

We might say that throughout both the film and the book, Abra has represented (both Kazan's and Steinbeck's) ideal character. She was "initiated into the hard realities of the world (her father's remarriage, the acceptance of war and death, the suffering of Cal, Aron's disillusionment), yet optimistic and willing to heal old wounds" (Rathgeb 37). She was the one who pushed Cal to repair his relationship with Adam, and the one who attempts to reestablish balance in their family. Her significance is further acknowledged by making her a part of the last and most important scene in which, finally, Adam and Cal forgive each other and reconcile. She is the one standing in the bedroom with the two men and more importantly, she is the one who made it happen, first by convincing Cal to go to his father and seek forgiveness and then by reassuring Adam to forgive Cal and to prove him that he does love and appreciate him. This results in the closure all viewers are hoping to see; Cal and Adam reconciled, and Cal and Abra finally admitting their feelings and accepting who they are. "Closer inspection, reveals an entirely different film, a film thematically complex and rich in symbolism and visual metaphor. This undiscovered East of Eden reveals as well the single creative vision of a master director" (31).

9. The differences between the novel and film

When discussing the similarities and differences between the book and the film, the most important thing to mention is the fact that the film only deals with the last 100 pages of the book. "When one considers that the film encompasses only the last third of Steinbeck's novel, Kazan's accomplishment appears all the more impressive" (Rathgeb 38). It is remarkable how much Elia Kazan has been capable to put in just two hours of screening time. To start with, Steinbeck's book contains a sea of characters, of which, Kazan included just a few. The director decided to include just a couple of secondary characters in his story. The characters from the book that remain in the film are: Cal, Aron, Adam, Kate, Abra, Will Hamilton, Joe, Sam (the sheriff), Anne, and the automobile mechanic. It came as a surprise to see that Kazan didn't include Samuel Hamilton and Lee, two of the most prominent characters in the book. But upon reflection, one might find that their exclusion was for the best because those two characters are immensely profound and it would be difficult and quite challenging to try and portray them on the big screen in such short amount of time.

The important themes of the book, such as the relationships between parents and children are kept in the film. Although the relationships between Adam and Aron and Adam and Cal are similar, if not the same in the book and the film, we can see a slight difference in the relationship between Cal and Kate. In the book, Cal knows for a long time what kind of person his mother is, and comes to terms with that but he has no positive feelings towards her. He understands it, but he still wants nothing to do with her, while in the film, he goes to Kate to borrow the money he needs to invest in the beans business to help his father out. Having known that, Kate still gives him the money, but doesn't forget to point out the irony in her giving her 'evil, dirty' money to help out 'good, clean' Adam. While watching this scene after having read the book, one gets a feeling that the book version of Kate never would have done that because of her complete lack of empathy and understanding towards anyone.

While speaking of Adam, we have to point out that in the film, he doesn't know anything about Kate. He simply thinks "she went East" (*East of Eden* 0:23:00-0:23:04) and has no knowledge about her whereabouts and her business. He finds out about her only at the end of the film after Cal brings Aron to Kate and introduces them. We might say that it is understandable why Kazan felt he needs to make a few changes regarding Adam's knowledge about Kate and about Cal borrowing the money. On both occasions in the book, the central character involved in these occasions was Lee. He was the one who borrowed Cal the money and who told Adam about Kate's new lifestyle when the twins were still children. Having

omitted Lee from the story altogether, Kazan needed to find some other way to explain these two events to the audience.

Kazan decided to portray the main characters identically as they are portrayed in the book, with one exception. He chose that exception be Kate. Although she is the mother who abandoned her children, a wife who shot her husband and a person who came to be the leader of a whorehouse, Kazan made her much less evil and cruel than Steinbeck did. Steinbeck chose to portray her as the archetype of an evil and distorted character, attributing her crimes such as murder, blackmail, prostitution, manipulation and much more. In the film, we see a mean and cruel character, but her compassion and fragility come to light. We can see that in the scenes with Cal and Aron, when she gives Cal the money, we can see that she is a serious business woman who appreciates other smart business men (e.g. Will Hamilton). The only instance in the book when a reader catches a glimpse of her humanity is at the end, when she takes her own life upon meeting Aron and leaves him all her possessions. She is, without a doubt, a complex character and her portrayal might have gone differently, but Kazan chose to soften her out a bit. We can say that might have been a good choice given the limited time a director had to tell the story to the audience. It might have been too challenging and difficult to try and portray her with the same detail and background story that Steinbeck did in his 720 pages long book.

The central theme of Steinbeck's book is the notion of *timshel.* Steinbeck explains it as follows: "But the Hebrew word, the word *timshel* – 'Thou mayest' – that gives a choice. It might be the most important word in the world. That says the way is open. That throws it right back on a man. Thou mayest rule over sin. Why, that makes a man great, that gives him stature with the gods, for in his weakness and his filth and his murder of his brother he has still the great choice. He can choose his course and fight it through and win" (Steinbeck 361). This notion echoes throughout the book and Steinbeck even chooses to finish up with that word precisely. While Cal sits beside him on his deathbed, he manages to whisper a single word before closing his eyes, and that word was *timshel.* This being the most important idea of the entire book, Kazan simply couldn't ignore it and omit it altogether, so he found a way to include it in his version of this impeccable work. As said before, having excluded Lee and Samuel Hamilton from the film, this was the hardest thing to explain because it was precisely the conversation between the two and Adam where we were first introduced to this notion. That is why Kazan didn't even try to present it the way Steinbeck did, with the exact term *timshel,* but he included it in another way. In the scene where Adam and Cal talk, Adam is the

one to present this notion, saying to Cal: "You can make of yourself anything you want. It's up to you. A man has a choice. That's where he's different from an animal" (*East of Eden* 0:21:48-0:21:55). The audience is led to believe that Cal wasn't even paying attention to his father's words, but Kazan makes sure to show us that he did, very much so. Just like in the book, the film also ends on a *timshel* idea. As Adam lies paralyzed in his bed, Cal comes to him begging for his forgiveness and recites his words about a choice (that is, about timshel) back at Adam: "I believed I was born bad and that I couldn't help it, but that isn't so. A man has a choice. You used to say that was where a man was different from an animal. See, I remember. A man has a choice. And that choice is what makes him a man. See, I do remember" (*East of Eden* 1:53:53-1:54:13). The *timshel* idea is implemented in both the book and the film as the central idea around which the plot is centered.

Lastly, we must mention the Lee and Abra correlation. In the book, Lee is the wise and advice-giving character, who always knows the best thing to say and the best way to say it. He is the one who teaches us about *timshel* and the one who ultimately convinces Adam to forgive Cal and to let him know he loves him just as he loves Aron. "Adam, give him your blessing. Don't leave him alone with his guilt. Give him his chance. Let him be free. That's all a man has over the beasts. Free him! Bless him!" (Steinbeck 714). In the book, Lee and Abra share a deep connection, almost a father – daughter like relationship. She loves coming to the Trask house and to talk to Lee. She admires him and loves him. In the film, Kazan, having excluded Lee completely, had to find a sort of replacement for Lee, someone to perform a difficult task of being an important and kind figure to Adam and someone Adam would listen to. He decided to make Abra that character. Throughout the film, we can see that Adam and Abra share a deeper connection than they do in the book and that Adam cares about her as if she was his daughter. So, when the time came for someone to talk to Adam and make him want to forgive Cal, Abra was the only one who could do it. She talks to paralyzed Adam and pleads him to forgive his son and give him his blessing, echoing Lee's actions in the book:

> Mr. Trask, it's awful not to be loved. It's the worst thing in the world. It makes you mean and violent and cruel. And that's the way Cal has always felt, Mr. Trask. All his life. You never gave him your love. You never asked for his. You never asked him for one thing. Cal has got to forgive you for not having loved him or for not having shown your love. And he has forgiven you. I know he has. But you must give him some sign, Mr. Trask, some sign that you love him, or he'll never be a man. All his life he'll feel guilty and

> alone unless you release him. I love Cal, Mr. Trask. And I want him to be happy and strong and whole. And only you can do it. Try. Please try. Find a way to show him. Ask for something. Let him help you, so he knows you love him. Let him do for you. (*East of Eden* 1:51:05-1:52:22)

Upon hearing this, Adam does exactly what Abra asked him to do. He shows Cal that he loves and that he needs him, asking him to take care of him himself, without the help of a nurse or anyone else. This brings Cal the ultimate joy and he can now be happy and whole, something he hasn't been his whole life. So, in a way, Abra assumes Lee's role in this scene, as the moral compass, a wise person who tells the things as they are in order to heal the broken father – son relationship.

Also, another thing worth mentioning is the sentence that appears both in the book and in the film, but also in the biblical counterpoint of the story, the story about Cain and Abel. Cal (representing Cain), upon taking Aron (representing Abel) to their mother and shattering his illusions of the world and of good and evil, wickedly answers his father's question about the whereabouts of Aron by a single sentence: "I'm not my brother's keeper" (*East of Eden* 1:42:11-1:42:13). This is the only sentence that we can find in the biblical counterpoint, the book and the film. Both Steinbeck and Kazan must have seen this sentence as too powerful to be left out because it gives us the right feeling of the resentment and anger and provocation inside Cal that Aron and Adam rise. It was interesting to see that both of these men chose to insert it in their works to paint just the right picture of Cal's character.

Furthermore, upon closer inspection, we can see the details in the final scene and the final shot of the film. Kazan uses color in a compelling way. By having Abra and Cal dressed in earth colors, same as Adam's blanket, and having the wall painted deep green, we get an image of the Garden. Perhaps this represents that Garden that Adam so excitedly wanted in the book:

> This use of color transforms Adam's bedroom into a microcosm of the natural world. Adam will die, but Cal and Abra will marry and regenerate life for the future. This final scene also serves as a microcosm of Kazan's creative technique in *East of Eden,* incorporating both his use of natural symbols and his complex thematic structure developed through visual metaphor. This pattern clearly transcends the narrative flaws and thematic simplicities of both Steinbeck's novel and Paul Osborne's screenplay. (Rathgeb 38)

The fact is that both Steinbeck and Kazan are men of great talent in their fields and that the story of Steinbeck's book has only been rediscovered and made more popular by Kazan's interpretation. "It should be self-evident that Kazan is as much the author of *East of Eden*, the film, as Steinbeck is of *East of Eden*, the novel" (Rathgeb 38).

10. Conclusion

In this work, we have presented the importance of the Virgin Land paradigm within the domain of American Studies and some of its important elements which hold relevance to the topic of this paper; the spatial imagery, agricultural frontier and the yeoman farmer. In analyzing John Steinbeck and his *East of Eden* and the aforementioned elements of the Virgin Land paradigm within his work, we can safely say that he carefully thought through the very act of writing this novel, because as we mentioned above, it was the novel he always wanted to write; the one that celebrates his hometown and gives it an elevated position in the history of the United States. Also, by inspecting Elia Kazan's adaptation and his own version of Steinbeck's novel, we can say that it is evident how interesting and groundbreaking *East of Eden* was to him. His movie version of the novel shows us his take on the entire story and it was interesting watching Steinbeck's words recited on the big screen. By having incorporated the heavily imbedded biblical connotation, both the novel and the film are made that more interesting.

The central part of the paper deals with analyzing the connection between the Virgin Land paradigm's elements and the story of *East of Eden.* As mentioned above, the novel is full of the examples of people's movement throughout the country (and wider, in the case of the Hamiltons, who came to the US from Ireland) in hopes of finding a better lives and futures for themselves and their children. Also, the agricultural frontier is heavily emphasized throughout the novel, centering the entire Salinas in the agricultural work. Steinbeck also makes sure to include one important character who would represent the yeoman farmer and all of his merits, and he chooses that to be Samuel Hamilton, the only character who immigrated from Ireland to the US in hopes of a better life.

This paper clearly shows the importance the Virgin Land paradigm holds in the field of American Studies, but also, the importance Steinbeck's *East of Eden* holds in the entire American literature. Kazan's version of *East of Eden* only demonstrates further how intriguing and fascinating Steinbeck's novel actually is and how profound it is; given that Kazan only managed to show the last 100 pages of the book in the film. We might say that, a part of the importance of this paper, is the fact that it indicates, in detail, the immense biblical connotations of the *East of Eden* and the inability to neglect them, having been such vital part of the story.

All things considered, the relevance of the Virgin Land paradigm and of *East of Eden (*both the book and the film), should not be second guessed and neglected, given the evidences of its significance both in the field of American Studies and the American history altogether.

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to inquire about the significance of the Virgin Land paradigm within the American Studies field and to gain insight into the ways in which John Steinbeck and, consequently, Elia Kazan incorporate certain elements of the paradigm into their works. We have shown various ways in which both John Steinbeck and Elia Kazan are important figures in their line of work and the ways in which they masterfully manage to transfer their ideas onto their audiences. The novel succeeds in showing us Steinbeck's true values as a writer and in incorporating important Virgin Land features, such as the spatial imaginary, agricultural frontier and the yeoman farmer, which Steinbeck decided to represent in the character of Sam Hamilton, an important secondary character. Kazan, on the other hand, deals only with the last part of the book and focuses on Cal and Aron's relationship and people surrounding them. By having omitted the first two thirds of a book, Kazan allows himself to inspect the last third with great detail and to show us the elements of the book he chooses to, but also, to insert some of his own ideas into the story. The Virgin Land paradigm is crucial to the American Studies field and it should be studied in great detail in order to gain an insight into the entire story behind the field itself. Likewise, when studying the paradigm itself, it would be good to look at it from a different perspective, such as through the eyes of a writer or a director, to understand the different ways in which the paradigm can be represented.

Key words: American studies, Virgin Land, East of Eden, Steinbeck, Kazan