days, he's smiling, and maybe not only with self-satisfaction. Maybe his own late-life and posthumous success would convince even him that there remains a sizable audience for old-fashioned books that bring into focus what is worthy and enduring in human experience. The wholest writers are those with a complex sense of responsibility to nature, history, community, culture—to values that transcend their private epiphanies and miseries, to whatever it is that holds them in its sights and demands the most of them. Wallace Stegner was that kind of writer. For sixty years, every morning till noon, he extended a carefully considered pathway out of the nineteenth century through the broad terrain of modern American life. That path, inconspicuous but clearly defined, democratic but demanding, is one of the routes most likely to lead us to a future we want to inhabit.

CHAPTER FOUR

RUMINATIONS ON STEGNER'S PROTECTIVE IMPULSE AND THE ART OF STORYTELLING

MELODY GRAULICH

In Wallace Stegner's *Crossing to Safety* (1987), the narrator, Larry Morgan, a fiction writer, muses about the nature of storytelling: "Drama," he says, "demands the reversal of expectation, but in such a way that the first surprise is followed by an immediate recognition of inevitability."[1] His "quiet" story of friendship, he goes on to say, will offer no such drama. Yet after a particularly intimate conversation with his friend Sid Lang, Larry finds that to his surprise he has begun to feel "a little protective" of his friend.[2] Larry may be surprised, but the longtime reader of Stegner's work immediately recognizes the inevitability of Larry's desire to protect Sid.

Often in search of their own "safe places," to quote Astrid from *The Spectator Bird*, the characters Stegner most admires, or those with whom he most closely identifies, are commonly aspiring "protectors" who finally fail in a host of ways to protect those they love. In *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*, Elsa Mason tries to protect her young son Bruce from his father's rages, but she can offer no real safety or sanctuary. The middle-aged Bruce Mason of *Recapitulation* tries to "preserve" control, to defend himself, by "inking out" his younger self; his "safe place" comes at great cost. In *Angle of Repose*, Oliver Ward's efforts to preserve his wife's role as one of the "protected" women of her time only reinforce her distance from

subtle dynamics of the scene, he sympathizes with her feelings of powerlessness and guilt, those absolving her of blame from his point of view, yet causing her to blame herself, from her own. To return to the Leopold quote, the issue of human responsibility becomes murky and complex. Effort is more important than success. The authorial voice fails to protect Elsa from her own judgments, which acknowledge her failure and her responsibility, but it does protect her from his own.

Because the scene is told from Elsa's point of view, Stegner has to find a way to express Bruce's terror dramatically: the child babbles incoherently, but the "visible" expression of his terror is his crossed eyes, which his older brother Chet worries will remain that way his whole life. This detail seems particularly significant—especially given Stegner's use of the "lens" image in describing the author's role in storytelling: "All you want in the finished print [that is, in the story] is the clear statement of the lens, which is yourself, on the subject that has been absorbing your attention."[5] On one level, we might imagine that Stegner cannot tell the story from Bruce's point of view because his vision of it is too "crossed," too wounded, too internalized; the finished print will be blurred. On another level, however, we might turn Stegner's metaphor around and imagine that when issues of vulnerability, control, and protection arise, Stegner's lens always crosses—that is, powerful emotions surface and entangle.

This scene concludes with a characteristic Stegner move from personal tragedy to the larger failures of life to protect "all the little live things" vulnerable to the accidents of fate, whether drowning, cancer, polio, or a host of other threats. As Elsa and the children leave Washington, they discover that the children's bunnies have fallen into a well and drowned.

A later scene on the family homestead in Montana again concerns the death of one of those little live things and implicates Bruce in his family's failures to protect. The passage is framed by references to its ostensible villain, the shrike, or butcher-bird, which kills "just for the fun of it." Bruce hates the shrike, and wants to kill it for draping a trophy sparrow on the wire fence. After a visit to some neighbors Elsa likes and Bo finds pretentious, Bruce observes his parents taunting one another; he hopes his mother will "keep still, because if she didn't she'd get [Bo] real mad and then they'd both have to tiptoe around the rest of the day" (p. 226). In this scene we are again trapped in the point of view of a character who feels a desire to protect but is powerless to do so. As the fight accelerates, Bruce tries further to intervene, interrupting his mother, "anxious to help the situation somehow" (p. 227). This time Bo decides to take out his anger elsewhere. In response to his wife's "If you shoot that harmless little bird!" and Bruce's "Don't, Pa!" he shoots a sparrow. Bruce is appalled and Elsa sarcastically remarks that "your father will want to hang it on the barbed wire" (p. 229). At the end of this scene Bruce first acknowledges that he hates his father.

This time both Bruce and Elsa have failed. Despite Bruce's best efforts to manage his parents' relationship, his father's moods, he has protected neither his mother, himself, nor the innocent bird. Indeed, the bird's death produces a feeling of loss seemingly beyond proportion for a child whose daily activities include killing various creatures. Perhaps Bruce's intense feelings of loss are connected to guilt: he recognizes that in some perverse way the sparrow has been sacrificed to protect him. He takes responsibility for its loss, asking his mother, "Ma, what'll I do with it?" (p. 228). This scene seems crucial in Stegner's evolving preservationist ethic. Throughout most of it, the boy is playing with the very gun his father uses to kill the sparrow, sighting down it, imagining killing the shrike in revenge. As he is always powerless against his father, Bruce and later Stegner characters will be powerless too against the forces of destruction his father represents. But instead of leaving trophies of death behind, they will side with the vulnerable, the wounded, will take a position of protection and responsibility. Bruce stops looking through the gun sights and starts looking through his own lens.

In one of his interviews with Richard Etulain, Stegner uses an interesting pair of images to describe the effect of his father's violence. "The effect, I'm sure, of such a dominating and hairtrigger kind of father on many kids is to breed a kind of insecurity which may never be healed. I was probably looking for security."[6] The sparrow, so secure in its life, is suddenly dead—such scenes of apparently random threat or death reverberate throughout Stegner's work. Indeed, the metaphor echoes through his work, as is suggested by a line John Daniel cites in his essay in this volume: "As surely as any pullet in the yard, I was a target and I had better respect what had me in its sights."[7] While the hairtrigger father may have been the cause for the insecurity, the mother was not able to offer the child security either. In fact, few characters in Stegner's fiction can offer anyone protection or security—"safe places"—just oases of momentary sanctuary.

In yet another example involving his mother, Stegner hints at the result of that "insecurity which may never be healed." In the letter Stegner wrote

to his own long-dead mother "much too late," it is his unresolved relationship with her that leads to the wound. He describes her as "at once a lasting presence and an unhealed wound."[8] Filled with love, the essay is also filled with guilt, even shame. Among many regrets, Stegner regrets the way he told his mother's story: "I am afraid I let your selfish and violent husband, my father, steal the scene from you and push you into the background in the novels as he did in life."[9] (One is led to wonder whether Bo "stole" the two scenes I've just discussed.) Framed negatively, Stegner's wound is a gnawing guilt created by his failure to protect his mother in life and in art. Framed more positively, the wound is one of "responsibility," a value he learned from his mother. "Your morality counselled responsibility for what you did," he writes.[10] As a lasting presence, she reminds him of inevitable human failures despite our best intentions.

Here Stegner's impulse to protect leads to narrative intervention. In *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*, teen-aged Bruce sometimes leaves his dying mother alone to go out with his friends and feels guilty about it. After many years of such guilt, perhaps desiring to offer his mother the "recompense" he said he wanted to give her, Stegner revises Bruce's actions in *Recapitulation*.[11] There Bruce leaves a party to take his girlfriend Nola to meet his mother, just to please her. Yet when they arrive, he empathizes with Elsa's embarrassment at how disheveled she looks, thinking that she "deserves protection and disguise. He should have thought of that."[12] With his own scars, Bruce is quick to recognize vulnerability, to seek to protect; in retelling his story, Stegner makes the same move—and ironically confronts yet another failure.

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When asked by Etulain if the life of Mary Hallock Foote, on which Stegner based much of *Angle of Repose*, reminded him of the life of Elsa Mason, Stegner responded that he had discovered "all kinds of connections" only after he finished the later novel.[13] Although he does not list his concern with the reciprocal protection between a mother and child—or grandchild—as one of these connections, surely his interest in the Foote materials had much to do with the issues of protection so central to her life, her illustrations, and her writing about being a woman artist in the West. Stegner borrows from the historical record, for instance, Foote's comment that she was "one of the protected women of her time" and her interpretation, too, of the costs of "the protected point of view" on her art

and her marriage.[14] "You can't protect me from everything!" Stegner's Susan Ward cries out to her husband, Oliver.[15]

As Oliver Ward tries to protect Susan from western experience, so too does Susan attempt to protect—in some views, overprotect—her children. This theme too might have originated in the historical record, as one can see in Foote's celebrated illustrations. While "First Steps" (Figure 1) and "The Baby's Sunny Corner" (Figure 2), both set on the porch of Foote's house outside Boise and drawn to accompany poems for children in *St. Nicholas Magazine*, may seem generalized, other Foote illustrations specif-

Figure 1. Mary Hallock Foote's illustration for the poem "First Steps" (by "M.M.D."), *St. Nicholas Magazine*, April 1888, p. 449.

Figure 4. Foote's illustration "The Coming of Winter," from "Pictures of the Far West," *Century Magazine*, December 1888, p. 163.

ested in Foote's life and to base his novel on her work. But he fictionalizes her life in order to meditate on how a storyteller, a historian, struggles with his responsibilities to his subjects. Given Foote's almost obsessive focus on the protection of children, it is intriguing that Stegner's crucial *departure* from the historical data of her life turns on a moment when a mother fails to protect her daughter—a plot change that tells us much about Stegner's own interests. As readers will remember from the narrator Lyman's speculations about the decisive moment of his beloved grandmother's life, she goes out along one of her husband's irrigating canals to meet Frank, her emotional if not her physical lover; they talk; her daughter Agnes—plucked, like the adulterous Hester Prynne's Pearl, from a rosebush—the child most like her, wanders off; and is later found floating dead in the canal. Susan is well punished in a further succession of losses: Frank, who Lyman presumes possesses the "same view of individual responsibility that Grandmother did," kills himself; Oliver pulls up the rose garden and leaves her; her son Ollie refuses to speak to her, essentially for the rest of her life.[16] Foote's life actually followed the much calmer banks of her placid "Irrigating Ditch": she never had an affair, returned to her husband, and lived

Figure 5. Foote's illustration "The Last Walk on the Beach," *St. Nicholas Magazine*, November 1886, frontispiece.

happily with him for another fifty years. The major tragedy of her life was indeed her daughter Agnes' death, of appendicitis, when she was a young woman.[17]

The implications of these changes—which focus on Susan's failure to protect her daughter, her loss, exposure, and guilt, are significant to our understanding of the novel, as I have explored more fully elsewhere.[18] Here they can show us how Stegner ruminates on protection through his novel's narrative technique. Like Bruce's crossed eyes, these events are only the visible signs of feelings and motives Lyman can never know. No letters exist from this period. Lyman can never enter the minds of any of the characters: "I have to make it up, or part of it. All I know is the what, and not all of that; the how and the why are all speculation."[19] Yet as Stegner chose to tell the earlier scenes from the perspective of failed protectors, so too does Lyman imagine his grandmother's point of view in the dramatic conclusion to the section:

> She never blamed her husband for abandoning her in her grief and guilt, she never questioned the harshness of his judgment, she did not turn away from those dead roses that he left her for a sign. She thought he had suffered as much as she, and she knew that for his suffering she was to blame.[20]

How does Lyman know? Why is it important to him to believe his grandmother felt this way? This passage is sharply ironic. Not so many pages earlier, struggling to assess his grandmother's life, Lyman looks to a much admired historical forefigure and says: "I shall go on writing the personal history of my grandmother, following Bancroft's advice to historians: present your subject in his own terms, judge him in yours."[21] Why does Lyman decide to "judge" Susan in her own terms?

Stegner's decision to climax Susan's life with such a "failure of protection" reverberates with his own concerns. Susan is stripped bare, exposed, yet her acceptance of responsibility dignifies her. Lyman imagines Susan Ward as feeling herself "responsible, willing to accept the blame for her actions even when her actions were, as I suppose all actions are, acts of collaboration."[22] This passage has a kind of odd Doppler effect in that Susan, who lived long before Elsa Mason, almost seems her descendant. For one of the qualities Stegner valued most in his mother was that "[her] morality counselled responsibility for what [she] did."[23] This passage simultaneously reveals Lyman's reluctance to judge his grandmother and allows him to expose her, even blame her (as indeed he has done throughout the book).

This is a characteristic narrative stance for Stegner: he exposes his characters, then offers them narrative sanctuary.

Stegner's narrative technique becomes clearer in contrast to another Foote illustration, "The Engineer's Mate" (Figure 6), and a passage from one of her novels, *The Last Assembly Ball* (1889).

> When an eastern woman goes West, she parts at one wrench with family, clan, traditions, clique, cult, and all that has hitherto enabled her to merge her outlines—the explanation, the excuse, should she need one, for her personality. Suddenly she finds herself "cut out," in the arid light of a new community, where there are no traditions and no backgrounds. Her angles are all discovered, but none of her affinities.[24]

This description of an awkward rebirth, the self "cut out" and exposed, stresses images of separation and boundary. And its linear quality reveals

Figure 6. Foote's illustration "The Engineer's Mate," for "The Conquest of Arid America" by Willam E. Smythe, *Century Magazine,* May 1895, p. 90.

the illustrator's eye: her outlines no longer "merged" with those around her, her personality no longer "explained" by her background, she becomes a "cut-out" figure whose three-dimensional qualities, her depth, her "affinities," remain undiscovered.

Although published separately, "The Engineer's Mate" might have been drawn to illustrate this passage about isolation and exposure. The drawing contrasts the Eastern "tradition," with all its cultural baggage and fancy clothing, with Western space, vast and empty, though defined by the engineer's telegraph wires and railroad tracks. Preposterously out of place, the "cut-out" figure of the woman is framed by her husband's occupation, the perspective established by his "lines" pulling her into the far distant emptiness, her identity labeled by his career. (Her own career is in evidence, however, in the fold-up easel that is part of her baggage.) This self-portrait is simultaneously humorous and threatening, revealing Foote's ironic sense of her own absurdity and an anxiety about being observed, vulnerable, and alone. She offers herself no protection.

Instead of presenting Susan Ward in this way, cut out, exposed, Stegner offers her a narrative frame, a character who vacillates between being a judgment man and a mercy man. From exploring Susan's guilt, from her own point of view, Lyman moves to separate himself from those who have judged her:

> Nevertheless, I, who looked up to [my grandfather] all his life as the fairest of men, have difficulty justifying that bleak and wordless break, and that ripping-up of the rose garden, that was vindictive and pitiless. I wish he had not done that. I think he never got over being ashamed, and never found the words to say so.[25]

In Lyman's projections, Oliver's shame results from a pitiless failure to forgive and accept. If Susan cannot defend herself, Lyman will question the harshness of the judgments he imagines leveled against her, partially by accepting blame himself. Yet given his tragic reading of his grandmother's life, surely this is yet another example of failed protection.

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As much as Stegner—his implied author, his narrators—would like to protect others, he recognizes the danger. "Pitying others indiscriminately," Stegner writes, "we are pitying ourselves, and there is no more romantic and dangerous kind of moral obfuscation than pity, or self-pity, gone out of hand."[26] He almost quotes himself near the end of *Crossing to Safety*.

After a long discussion with some of the Lang children about how he should write a book about their lives, perhaps recalling his desire to protect their father, Larry Morgan asks, "I wonder if I could recreate any of us without my portraits being tainted by pity or self-pity."[27] *Crossing to Safety* explores how to achieve a balance in judging other's lives.

The novel's beautiful but baffling title, which comes from a poem by Robert Frost called "I Could Give All to Time," addresses this struggle. The poem's narrator questions:

> But why declare
> The Things forbidden that while the Customs slept
> I have crossed to Safety with? For I am There
> And what I would not part with I have kept.

This speaker does find sanctuary "there." But he is unable or unwilling to "declare" what he carried with him, what he "would not part with." Larry, and his creator, carry with them that ethic of protection: the understanding that all we can offer one another is solace for our inevitable wounds.

The protective impulse, once again on multiple levels, is at the heart of *Crossing to Safety*. Charity Lang reveals the dark side of protective impulses; she uses the desire to protect to disguise her willful need to control others' lives. In "protecting" her husband from the pain of her loss, the inevitability of death, she denies him the right to his own need to offer her a protective love, failed though it may be. Nor can Larry protect his friend Sid from his complicity, his "acts of collaboration," in his marital failures, from being the man he is. There is no sanctuary even in Eden. Unable to protect his wife from polio, Larry Morgan spends the rest of his life trying to achieve a balance between caring for her, yet another wounded creature, and respecting her need for independence. (One thinks here, too, of Joe Allston's desire to protect Marion in *All the Little Live Things*.)

Larry struggles to achieve that same balance in his narrative stance. Like his creator, Larry Morgan might well believe that he would not protect his friend in the story he tells; he admits, for instance, to feeling ashamed for Sid. But he also acknowledges pitying him, and Stegner's description of writing his novel tells us how the narrative struggle to understand can become intertwined with the impulse to protect:

> I suppose I wanted to justify their lives, bring them together, lay their ghosts.
>
> In that effort I wrote very close to memory and fact. I resisted

> whenever I felt myself wanting to adjust or improve or straighten out. . . . What I wrote was a labor of love and bafflement.[28]

Larry writes as a sympathetic friend. He achieves a balance between pity and honesty, between care and the recognition that ultimately we cannot offer our friends—or characters—"safe places."

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STEGNER'S PROTECTIVE IMPULSE extends into his nonfiction writing as well. Much of his writing about western literature and history can be read as an effort to protect the West against the mythologizers. His books on the Mormons are historically honest, sometimes critical, but written partly to defend them against stereotyping as either Saints or Zealots. His attitude is best captured in an image from *Recapitulation*, when Bruce Mason revisits Salt Lake City and his memories: "Though [Bruce] found that he couldn't admire [the Mormon Temple] architecturally, it struck him as comforting and safe—he felt protective about it."[29] And most significantly, Stegner finds the impulse to protect at the heart of the American conservation movement. The most often repeated words in "A Capsule History of Conservation" are: protection, preservation, sanctuary, reserves. He honors "preservationists" like Muir, says "wilderness preservation" is one of the best ideas America ever had. Yet the constellation of ideas that he sees as orbiting protection ultimately influence the way he argues for preservation. In arguing for the need for wilderness areas in "Wilderness Letter," for instance, he presents wilderness as a spiritual rather than a literal sanctuary: "The reminder and the reassurance that it is still there is good for our spiritual health, even if we never once in ten years set foot in it."[30] No doubt influenced by Leopold, he also argues for the preservation not just of pristine wildernesses but of "wounded" areas: "in a dry country such as the American West the wounds men make in the earth do not quickly heal. Still, they are only wounds; they aren't absolutely mortal. Better a wounded wilderness than none at all."[31] Balancing pragmatism with idealism, he knows that protection will inevitably fail, that wounds will be inflicted, but our spiritual health, he says, lies in the idea of preservation.

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TO CLOSE, I offer three quotes to ponder. The first comes from a book Stegner much admired. Terry Tempest Williams' *Refuge* is about a threatened bird sanctuary, which recalls Bruce Mason's desire to offer refuge to a sparrow. One scene in particular seems to speak elliptically about Stegner's work. Out walking with her mother and grandmother, Williams sees a killdeer fluttering around. It is apparently wounded, but Williams offers this interpretation: "We must be close to its nest. She's trying to distract us. It's a protective device."[32] As the pitiful "trophy" sparrow of *Big Rock Candy Mountain* is a symbol of cruelty and destruction, this killdeer is symbolic of efforts to preserve life.

Perhaps the killdeer offers a metaphor for a narrative stance. Describing the role of the storyteller, Stegner writes:

> Some writers want to expose themselves, some to disguise themselves, some to efface themselves. Some who appear to expose themselves are distorting themselves for reasons of their own. There is more than one way to impose order on your personal chaos; but since good writers write what is important to them, they are bound to be in there somewhere, as participants, or observers or ombudsmen.[33]

Or, I would add, as protectors.

Stegner's friend Robert Frost called the imposition of order on personal chaos a "momentary stay against confusion." Writing from the protective impulse, Stegner offers a momentary stay against modernist despair. Through the protective Joe Allston, yet another bird-watcher, the protagonist of Stegner's story "A Field Guide to Western Birds," and the narrator of *The Spectator Bird*, Stegner provides a hopeful vision of refuge and finally an example of reciprocal solace for life's inescapable wounds:

> It is something—it can be everything—to have found a fellow bird with whom you can sit among the rafters while the drinking and boasting and reciting and fighting go on below; a fellow bird whom you can look after and find bugs and seeds for; one who will patch your bruises and straighten your ruffled feathers and mourn over your hurts when you accidentally fly into something you can't handle.[34]

24. Wallace Stegner, "Bugle Song," in *Collected Stories of Wallace Stegner* (New York: Penguin, 1991), p. 13.

CHAPTER 3
Wallace Stegner's Hunger for Wholeness

This essay first appeared in the August 1997 issue of the *High Plains Literary Review.*

1. Wallace Stegner, *The Sound of Mountain Water: The Changing American West* (New York: Dutton, 1980), pp. 41–42.
2. Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow: A History, a Story, and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier* (New York: Viking, 1962), pp. 1–2; subsequent pages are indicated in the text.
3. Stegner, *Sound of Mountain Water,* p. 210.
4. Wallace Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West* (New York: Random House, 1992), p. 218.
5. Ibid., p. 32.
6. Kay Bonnetti, *Interview with Wallace Stegner,* Audio Prose Library, February 1987.
7. Wallace Stegner, *One Way to Spell Man: Essays with a Western Bias* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982), p. 156.
8. Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings,* p. 10.
9. Bonnetti, *Interview with Wallace Stegner.*
10. Stegner, *One Way to Spell Man,* p. 141.
11. Wallace Stegner and Richard W. Etulain, *Conversations with Wallace Stegner on Western History and Literature* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), p. 197.
12. Stegner, *One Way to Spell Man,* p. 67.

CHAPTER 4
Ruminations on Wallace Stegner's Protective Impulse and the Art of Storytelling

1. Wallace Stegner, *Crossing to Safety* (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 139.
2. Ibid., p. 51.
3. Wallace Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West* (New York: Random House, 1992), p. 130.
4. Wallace Stegner, *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* (New York: Penguin, 1991), pp. 124–126; subsequent pages are indicated in the text.
5. Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings,* p. 227.

6. Wallace Stegner and Richard W. Etulain, *Conversations with Wallace Stegner on Western History and Literature* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), p. 43.
7. See John Daniel, "Wallace Stegner's Hunger for Wholeness," Chapter 3 in this volume.
8. Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings,* p. 24.
9. Ibid., p. 24.
10. Ibid., p. 25.
11. Stegner and Etulain, *Conversations,* p. 43.
12. Wallace Stegner, *Recapitulation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 137.
13. Stegner and Etulain, *Conversations,* p. 47.
14. Levette Jay Davidson, "Letters from Authors," *Colorado Magazine* 19(3) (July 1942), 123.
15. Wallace Stegner, *Angle of Repose* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), p. 239.
16. Ibid., p. 536.
17. Stegner's use of the Foote materials—quoting nearly verbatim passages from her letters and reminiscences and constructing his novel around metaphors and images ("angle of repose" is one) she used in her own writing—has been a source of some controversy among readers of both Stegner and Foote. For more information see Mary Ellen Williams Walsh, "Angle of Repose and the Writings of Mary Hallock Foote: A Source Study," pp. 184–209 in Anthony Arthur, ed., *Critical Essays on Wallace Stegner* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982). As the present discussion of Foote's work suggests, she deserves much wider attention as a fine western writer and illustrator whose work in many ways anticipates themes of New Western History; she wrote, for instance, about water rights, the effect of eastern capital on the development of the West, and mining and engineering. Stegner was one of the first writers to give her that attention by teaching her work in his classes at Stanford and reprinting her stories. Critical response to *Angle of Repose* has also drawn more attention to her work. Exploring the ways in which Stegner used his historical sources, and departed from them, can help us understand the novel more fully.
18. See Melody Graulich, "The Guides to Conduct That a Tradition Offers: Wallace Stegner's *Angle of Repose,*" *South Dakota Review* 23 (Winter 1985):87–106; and "Book Learning: *Angle of Repose* as Literary History," in Charles E. Rankin, ed., *Wallace Stegner: Man and Writer* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), pp. 231–253.
19. Stegner, *Angle of Repose,* p. 524.
20. Ibid., p. 540.
21. Ibid., p. 475.
22. Ibid., p. 534.
23. Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings,* p. 25.

24. Mary Hallock Foote, *The Last Assembly Ball and The Fate of the Voice* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1889), pp. 39–40.
25. Stegner, *Angle of Repose*, p. 540.
26. Wallace Stegner, *The Sound of Mountain Water: The Changing American West* (New York: Dutton, 1980), p. 181.
27. Stegner, *Crossing to Safety*, p. 196.
28. Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings*, pp. 226–227.
29. Stegner, *Recapitulation*, p. 25.
30. Stegner, *Sound of Mountain Water*, p. 147.
31. Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings*, p. 151.
32. Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge* (New York: Vintage, 1992), p. 119.
33. Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings*, p. 218.
34. Wallace Stegner, *The Spectator Bird* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), p. 213.

CHAPTER 5
Wallace Stegner's Practice of the Wild

1. James R. Hepworth, "Wallace Stegner's *Angle of Repose*: One Reader's Response" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Arizona, 1989). The best-known collection of interviews is Wallace Stegner and Richard Etulain, *Conversations with Wallace Stegner on Western History and Literature* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983); reprinted as *Stegner: Conversations on History and Literature* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1996). Readers interested in my interviews with Stegner should consult the appendixes to my dissertation. Excerpts have been published in *The Bloomsbury Review* (March/April 1990), *The Paris Review* (Summer 1990), and *Stealing Glances: Three Interviews with Wallace Stegner* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, forthcoming).
2. Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild* (San Francisco: North Point, 1990), p. 16. My essay draws heavily on Snyder's definition of wilderness in *The Practice of the Wild*, especially the essay entitled "The Etiquette of Freedom" (pp. 3–24). So far, the only discussion of the relationship between Wallace Stegner and Gary Snyder appears in Jackson Benson's biography *Wallace Stegner: His Life and Work* (New York: Viking, 1996) in the chapter entitled "Trouble in the Sixties." Because Stegner's readers still tend to view him as a provincial thinker and confuse him with his narrators—especially "establishment" reactionaries like Joe Allston and Lyman Ward—I'm hoping to help mend a few fences in this essay. In my opinion, Stegner's impatience with the "counterculture," I think, has been overrated. Insofar as it did exist, it was rooted in his own steadfast belief in moderation and self-control, but especially in his cyclical view of history. As early as 1958 Stegner had written a defense of

art and artistic freedom, mostly as a critical assault on the nation's all-consuming love affair with science, "progress," and the empirical method. That essay ("One Way to Spell Man") speaks forcefully against the prevailing view that the "arts and literature are charming frills," but [mere] "hangovers from the days of witchcraft and wonder." Science, in this view, will sooner or later render the arts unnecessary. Stegner, by contrast, believed that the arts and sciences are complementary and even supplementary, that the arts are the cultural carriers of truths that science is hopelessly inadequate to explain, and that artistic rebellions are necessary episodes that imitate and repeat each other throughout the evolution of civilizations.

Stegner, I believe, viewed the cultural revolutions of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s as necessary reactions to the cultural malaise of the nation that he had diagnosed early in books like *One Nation* and *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*. Certainly he believed in tradition—in the great community of human thought. Consequently he feared "immoderate zeal" and held "passionate faith" suspect. On the other hand, Stegner never lost sight of the need for artists to rebel against their traditions. He was himself a rebel. But his rebellion was against the anti-educational, anti-intellectual position of his father and, consequently, toward history and tradition. It was a rebellion, too, against literary fashion and experimentalism for the sake of experimentalism. As an artist, however, Stegner was all his life an "outsider." In the introduction to his biography, Benson is eloquent on this point, which is a subtle and paradoxical notion to convey. But Stegner was nevertheless quite clear about the artist's need to rebel. Consider, for example, the following paragraph:

> But if art is in good part tradition, its truths, being linked with response, are the kind that will vary in kind or intensity with different responders. More than that, the most extreme rebellions by artists against their traditions are both possible and desirable. Picasso's violences against perspective, like Schoenberg's against key signatures and Faulkner's against syntax, are as radical as if in medicine some research doctor had declared against the germ theory of disease, and yet they are vital, healthy, and necessary. They assert the fullest freedom to question experience in any terms. [*One Way to Spell Man: Essays with a Western Bias* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982), p. 14.]

Although Stegner was impatient with the drug culture and the counterculture's self-righteous and extreme positions, he nevertheless came to view Gary Snyder as a consummate artistic rebel. Moreover, the point is that Stegner and Snyder bridge a gulf between generations. Although differences certainly count, their views of wilderness, art, culture, race, gender, love, and marriage are far more compatible than antagonistic. Although Benson doesn't say so, it appears almost certain that Stegner read an early copy of Gary Snyder's essay "Four Changes" (1969). From this Snyder piece Stegner cut snippets and integrated them into "The Mesa" section of *Angle of Repose*. It appears almost equally certain that Snyder was not amused. The two of them had already ex-