

and described this experience in *The Sea of Cortez* (1941). The mysteries of biology had always fascinated Steinbeck and had given him a love and respect for life in all its forms. Steinbeck immortalized Ed Ricketts, who deeply shared this feeling, in the character of Doc, the hero of *Cannery Row* (1945).

In 1962 Steinbeck's name was added to those of Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner among the very small group of American novelists to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. He died 6 years later.

William Saroyan and Other Writers

Like Steinbeck's Salinas, William Saroyan's native town of Fresno provided much of the best material for his writing career. When Saroyan was 3 years old, his Armenian-born father died, leaving the family in poverty. From the age of 7, Saroyan sold newspapers on the streets of Fresno and later worked as a telegraph messenger and grape picker. He left school at 15, never received a high school diploma, and never went to college.

His first book, *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*, consisted of 26 short stories, written at the rate of one a day in a furnished room in San Francisco in January 1934, when he was 25 years old. The title story describes the thoughts and fantasies of a young writer on a day when he has nothing to eat and is completely destitute except for one penny that he finds on the sidewalk.

To Saroyan the vital ingredient in literary style was creative spontaneity, and he worked to establish what he called a "tradition of carelessness," or a "jump in the river and start swimming immediately" style of writing. His most famous novel, and probably his best, was *The Human Comedy* (1943). It dealt mostly with the alternately touching and delightful experiences of two boys who were called Ulysses and Homer Macauley, but were obviously William Saroyan and his older brother, in a town that was called Ithaca, California, but was obviously Fresno.

He wrote several plays, including *My Heart's in the Highlands*, *The Time of Your Life*, and *Love's Old Sweet Song*, all produced in 1939. In *The Time of Your Life*, the characters are the habitués of a San Francisco waterfront bar who are able to find their inherent virtue when a wealthy drunk gives them money to pursue their aspirations. This play won a Pulitzer Prize in 1940, but Saroyan declined to accept the \$1000 award because he believed that "any material or official patronage . . . vitiates and embarrasses art at its source."

Louis B. Mayer brought Saroyan to Hollywood, but Saroyan detested Mayer and he disliked Hollywood. Nevertheless, *The Human Comedy* and *The Time of Your Life* were made into successful films in 1943 and 1948. Following World War II, Saroyan shunned the public limelight, saying that creativity required isolation. He divided his later years between Paris and Fresno and died in his hometown in 1981.

Saroyan was only one of several major novelists and playwrights who were attracted, however briefly, to southern California in the late 1930s and 1940s by the film industry. Two of the most important of these writers were Nathanael West, a native of New York who came to Hollywood as an aspiring scriptwriter, and the

English novelist Aldous Huxley, who moved to Los Angeles in 1937. Both West and Huxley were powerfully struck by the contrast between the grim reality of depression-era southern California and the fanciful image of the region presented in the movies.

The Los Angeles of Nathanael West was a city built of illusion and artifice. In *The Day of the Locust* (1939), West describes the desperate quest of people who have been attracted by the California dream of opportunity and romance, but who find themselves impoverished and defeated. The dream becomes a nightmare, and in their desperation the people turn to violence. West's novel ends with an apocalyptic vision of Los Angeles in flames. Huxley shared West's distaste for southern California, regarding Los Angeles as a symbol for corrupt values and deception. In *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (1939), Huxley satirized the excesses of southern California's architecture and its religious and scientific cults. The major focus of the novel is a California tycoon, modeled on William Randolph Hearst, whose opulent mansion became for Huxley a bizarre Los Angeles in miniature.

William Randolph Hearst and Other Journalists

Until his death in 1951, at 88, William Randolph Hearst continued to exert a powerful influence on California journalism and on several other aspects of California society and culture. His publishing empire, at its peak in 1932, included 26 newspapers in cities from Boston to Seattle and from Baltimore to Los Angeles. In California, he owned and controlled the *San Francisco Examiner* and *Call-Bulletin*, the *Los Angeles Examiner* and *Herald-Express*, and the *Oakland Post-Enquirer*. In total circulation of California newspapers in 1932, Hearst papers ranked first, second, third, and fifth, with Harry Chandler's *Los Angeles Times* ranking fourth. Thus, a fantastic amount of power and influence was attached to the whims of one man who had never entirely ceased to be a spoiled child.

In 1919 Hearst had begun the building of his "castle" at San Simeon, which ultimately cost at least \$30 million and was one of the most expensive and lavish residences in the world. On an eminence he called La Cuesta Encantada, The Enchanted Hill, he commissioned architect Julia Morgan of Berkeley to design three palatial guest houses and a fourth and much larger structure called La Casa Grande. This central castle had 100 rooms, many of them transported from Europe with all their paneling, ceilings, and furniture. The rooms were filled with art objects and antiques, and the gardens and terraces with statuary. A huge, rocky hillside was planted with hundreds of full-grown trees at enormous expense because Hearst found its bareness unpleasant. The grounds were stocked with his own private zoo.

In his will Hearst expressed the wish that his castle should go to the University of California as a memorial to his mother, but the university felt that it lacked the funds to maintain the site. Hearst's sons then persuaded the state of California to accept it as a gift in 1957. The fears that it would prove a massive and costly white elephant were not borne out. Half a million people visited it within the first 2 years