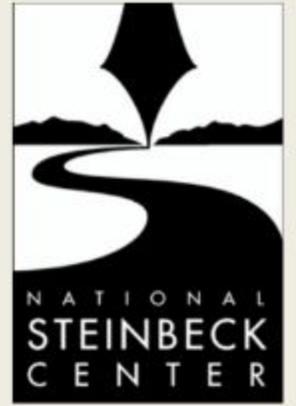


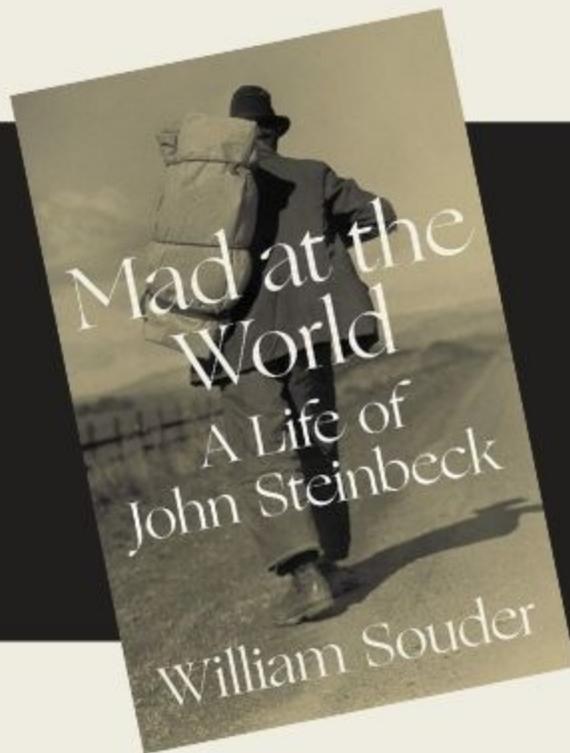
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# MAD AT THE WORLD

## A Life of John Steinbeck

by William Souder

Pulitzer Prize finalist for *Under a Wild Sky*

“A comprehensive, eloquent exploration of the life and career of John Steinbeck. . . . Steinbeck fans could not ask for a more nuanced account of this troubled giant of American literature.”

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“An authoritative and sympathetic account of the life of the Nobel laureate. . . . A lively and perceptive portrait of the artist as a complicated guy.”

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“William Souder’s *Mad at the World* is a stupendous biography of John Steinbeck. By connecting California’s fog, farms, forests, and fisheries to Steinbeck’s growth as an artist

Souder has elevated the great Nobel Prize–winning novelist to relevancy in today’s depression-stuck America. The backstories on how Steinbeck wrote *The Grapes of Wrath* and his relationship with marine biologist Ed Ricketts are extraordinary. Throughout the narrative Souder provides first-rate literary analysis and gorgeous prose styling. This is a book for the ages. Highly recommended!”

—Douglas Brinkley, Katherine Tsanoff Brown Chair in Humanities and professor of history, Rice University, and author of *Rightful Heritage: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Land of America*

“Brilliance follows brilliance in this illuminating biography of John Steinbeck. William Souder reveals his with a vibrant narrative and prose worthy of the master himself. Every page comes alive with the force of history, the wonder of place, and the friends, strangers, and dogs that shaped the sensibilities of the man who became the conscience of modern America.”

—Jack E. Davis, Pulitzer Prize–winning author of *The Gulf: The Making of an American Sea*

The first full-length biography of John Steinbeck to appear in a quarter century, **MAD AT THE WORLD: A Life of John Steinbeck** [W. W. Norton & Company; October 13, 2020; \$32.00 hardcover] illuminates what has made the work of the Nobel laureate an enduring part of the literary canon: his capacity for empathy. Pulitzer Prize finalist William Souder explores Steinbeck’s long apprenticeship as a writer struggling through the depths of the Great Depression, and his rise to greatness with masterpieces such as *The Red Pony*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *The Grapes of Wrath*. Angered by the plight of the Dust Bowl migrants

who were starving even as they toiled to harvest California's limitless bounty, fascinated by the guileless decency of the downtrodden denizens of Cannery Row, and appalled by the country's refusal to recognize the humanity common to all of its citizens, Steinbeck took a stand against social injustice—paradoxically given his inherent misanthropy—setting him apart from the writers of the so-called “lost generation.”

A man by turns quick-tempered, compassionate, and ultimately brilliant, Steinbeck could be a difficult person to like. Obsessed with privacy, he was mistrustful of people. Next to writing, his favorite things were drinking and womanizing and getting married, which he did three times. And while he claimed indifference about success, his mid-career books and movie deals made him a lot of money—which passed through his hands as quickly as it came in. And yet Steinbeck also took aim at the corrosiveness of power, the perils of income inequality, and the urgency of ecological collapse, all of which drive public debate to this day.

Steinbeck remains our great social realist novelist, the writer who gave the dispossessed and the disenfranchised a voice in American life and letters. Eloquent, nuanced, and deeply researched, **MAD AT THE WORLD** captures the full measure of the man and his work.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**William Souder's** books include biographies of John Steinbeck, Rachel Carson (a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year), and John James Audubon (a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize). He lives in Grant, Minnesota.

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