ForeWord Reviews

HISTORICAL

The Silver Lotus
Thomas Steinbeck
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The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a time of prosperous trade with the Orient, an exciting backdrop for Thomas Steinbeck's new novel. Filled with rich, meticulous detail, *The Silver Lotus* portrays two culturally diverse lovers determined to make their mark on the developing Northern California coast.

Captain Jeremiah Macy Hammond, an American merchant, and Lady Yee, a gifted daughter of a wealthy Cantonese family, combine their ambition and talent to form a unique and sterling partnership. Sophisticated and subtle, this heroine leads with tenacity and patience, using positive suggestions and formidable organizational skills to combat every obstacle in her path.

> *What little power she possessed to influence matters could only be maintained if she adopted a regal and unapproachable bearing. As her husband had humorously pointed out, it would serve her purposes far better to have people be in awe of the Lady Yee, than to have them believe she was just a uniquely intelligent, and beautiful Chinese girl, named Silver Lotus, who had rebelled against all tradition and, in search of adventure, had married a barbarian Yankee.*

The book's narrative voice is distinctive. With minimal use of dialogue, Steinbeck approaches the reader like an old-fashioned, campfire raconteur, telling rather than showing the course of events: "The captain let out a hearty laugh, slapped the table, and raised his wineglass to toast 'The Queen of the Shadows.' Then he smiled sweetly and said it gave him great peace and satisfaction to know that Lady Yee was his wife and partner, and not his competition. To which Lady Yee replied that she was luckier than most Chinese women. She'd had the good fortune to marry for love." While this method of plot delivery is generally frowned upon, the

author's eloquent phrasing and manipulation of ordinary words sets this work apart from the average historical novel.

Thomas Steinbeck is the author of *Down to a Soundless Sea* and *In the Shadow of the Cypress*. He is also a public speaker as well as a producer and screenwriter with numerous screenplays, documentaries, and adaptations of his famous father's work to his credit.

This inspiring story of a strong woman in the throes of an oppressive society deserves acclaim for its sensitive portrayal of an early feminist thriving in a world resistant to change.

Julia Ann Charpentier