

## 8.1 Kama muta moments in Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat*.

Although no one had mentioned it, each of the four knew they were all going to live in Danny's house.

Pilon sighed with pleasure. Gone was the worry of the rent; gone the responsibility of owing money. No longer was he a tenant, but a guest. In his mind he gave thanks for the burning of the other house.

"We will all be happy here, Danny," he said. "In the evenings we will sit by the fire and our friends will come in to visit. And sometimes maybe we will have a glass of wine to drink for friendship's sake."

Then Jesus Maria, in a frenzy of gratefulness, made a rash promise. It was the grappa that did it, and the night of the fire, and all the deviled eggs. He felt that he had received great gifts, and he wanted to distribute a gift. "It shall be our burden and our duty to see that there is always food in the house for Danny," he declaimed. "Never shall our friend go hungry."

Pilon and Pablo looked up in alarm, but the thing was said; a beautiful and generous thing. No man could with impunity destroy it. Even Jesus Maria understood, after it was said, the magnitude of his statement. He could only hope that Danny would forget it.

"For," Pilon mused to himself, "if this promise were enforced, it would be worse than rent. It would be slavery."

"We swear it, Danny!" he said.

They sat about the stove with tears in their eyes, and their love for each other was almost unbearable.

Pablo wiped his eyes with the back of his hand, and he echoed Pilon's remark.

"We shall be very happy living here," he said. (Steinbeck 1935:55-56)

Note the consubstantial assimilation of the prospective commensal drinking and the commitment to feed Danny.

Later, Pilon hopes to find (and steal) a stash of quarter dollars that he believes that a simpleton called the Pirate has collected and hidden. Pilon figures that if the Pirate comes to live with them as Danny's, Pilon will be able to find out where the money is hidden. So Pilon goes to the chicken coop where the Pirate lives with his five loyal dogs, bringing a cookie. The Pirate

divides the cookie with Pilon and the dogs. Pilon tell the Pirate that the Pirate is a worry to his friends.

The Pirate's eyes filled with astonishment. "I? To my friends? What friends!"

Pilon 'explains' that the Pirate does have friends, and they are quite concerned about the conditions in which he lives.

The Pirate was following his words with breathless astonishment, and his brain tried to realize these new things he was hearing. It did not occur to him to doubt them, since Pilon was saying them. "I have all these friends" he said in wonder. "And I did not know it. And I am a worry to those friends. I did not know, Pilon. I would not have worried them if I had known." He swallowed to clear his throat of emotion. (Steinbeck 1935:64)

Eventually the Pirate does come to live with Danny and his friends, feeding all of them every morning from the food he collects at the back doors of restaurants. "And their acceptance of his gifts touched the Pirate more deeply than anything they could have done for him. There was a light of worship in his eyes as he watched them eat the food he brought" (Steinbeck 1935:69-70). It seems that the "light of worship in his eyes" are the tears of kama muta evoked by the Pirate's own generosity. After some time, the Pirate, developing faith in the friends, brings his bag of quarters to Danny's house and entrusts it to them. He explains that when one of his dogs was ill, he promised the patron saint of the local church, San Francisco de Assisi, that he would buy him a golden candlestick. And the dog miraculously recovered, so he's been selling fire wood ever since, saving up the quarters he earns to buy the candlestick.

"Is it one of these dogs" Pilon demanded.

"No," said the Pirate. "A truck ran over him a little later."

Learning that the money is dedicated to San Francisco, Danny's friends cannot steal it; they must guard it. The Pirate has entrusted it to them, and they can be counted on.

The Pirate stood before them, and there were tears of happiness in his eyes, for he had proved his love for his friends." (Steinbeck 1935:74-75)

## 8.2 Kama muta responses to vulnerable, suffering action heroes and robots

Michelle Piazza analyzed her own kama muta responses to the superhero *Daredevil* series, along with responses posted on social media by other viewers (personal communication, 22 August 2016). In the first episode, “Into the Ring,” when Matt is bleeding on the concrete, a flashback goes to his late father, a boxer, after a fight, bleeding in the kitchen when Matt was a boy. Matt is blind; his father puts Matt’s hands on his face, and then, as we return to the present, with Matt bleeding and seemingly defeated, we hear Matt’s father’s voice saying to him, “Come on, Matty, get back to work”—words his father spoke when Matt had recently been blinded, gently urging him to transcend his depression and continue with his homework. This evoked kama muta in Michelle and other viewers, one of whom posted In the second episode, “Into the Ring,” after vanquishing kidnappers in an epic fight, Matt rescues a little boy, cradling the boy in his arms as he carries him to safety. Michelle Piazza comments, “He lost his own father to violence, and there is no mistaking the drive to make sure that the little boy he saves at the end of the episode will see a happier end to his story and be united with his dad. It’s raw and moving.” The 6<sup>th</sup> episode, “Stick,” is about Matt’s relationship with an old blind man, Stick, who had trained Matt when he was a boy. In the boyhood flashback, Matt gives Stick a bracelet he made out of the wrapper from the ice cream cone Stick bought him in park. Stick crumples it up and leaves Matt. But in the present, after a fight in Matt’s room between them—remember they are both blind—and Stick has left, Matt is cleaning up his trashed apartment. His hand grazes something on floor--it’s the bracelet he made for Stick as a child. “The way Matt holds the bracelet, the way he just sits with it in the dark, blank stare but carrying all the emotion in his body, breathing . . . [[my KM response: Made “oh/aww” sound seeing bracelet, warmth in chest , general feeling of wanting to give Matt a hug ]]” (Michelle Piazza, personal communication, 22 August 2016). Other episodes evoke kama muta when Matt unexpectedly lets himself trust and depend on the compassion and care of Karen or Claire.

In fiction and movies, even machines may love and need love. In response to machines’ finding love and acceptance, caring for humans, or loving each other, the human audience may feel kama muta. Naish (2015) reports tearing-up at scenes such as the one with the robot Five, his creator Newton, and Five’s friend Stephanie in the 1986 movie *Short Circuit*.

Number Five begins to develop an individual, yet very childlike, personality and begins his journey of self discovery<sub>{sic}</sub> and awareness as a sentient being. . . . He even christens himself Johnny Five after hearing the upbeat El DeBarge song “Who’s Johnny” on the radio. Seeing Johnny Five as a threat, the military track him down and attack him with an assortment of guns and missiles. . . . When Newton and Stephanie tearfully drive away from the scene of carnage, Johnny .Five suddenly appears in the back of the van, much to the amazement of Newton and

Stephanie, who instantly declare they will go and live on Newton's forty acres of secluded land and raise Johnny as their own.

Similarly, Naish (2015) reports being moved in the 1987 *Star Trek: The Next Generation* by the sacrifice made by Data, a robot with a human appearance whose

response[s] to most situations were tinged with a childlike curiosity. . . . Data's desire to be human, or at least exhibit real human emotions, leads him to sacrifice himself in order to save those that have assisted his development towards humanity. . . . it is the warm father/son . . . relationship between Data and Captain JeanLuc Picard (Patrick Stewart) that ultimately sets the tears rolling.

Naish (2015) indicates that he identifies with the robots because "I saw reflected in their desire for acceptance mankind's own struggles. At least this is what I thought. Imagine my surprise when a lump developed in my throat during Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*". In the 2014 *Interstellar*, two "lumbering monolithic" robots, TARS and CASE, look like "VHS cassette[s] in their cellophane [w]rappers." But CASE and TAR's sacrifices to save humans and their dignity in accepting their fates evoke kama muta. The robots in these movies are programmed machines appear to be fundamentally different from humans; against this background presupposition is the dramatic contrast of their need for love and their compassionate self-sacrifice. The appearance of the figure of CS against this ground evokes kama muta. Moreover, like Rambo and Johnny Five, in some cases the robots' experience of humans is not just exclusion from any warmth or any possibility of belong, but extreme violence, programmed into them as their basic purpose. Yet they overcome their mechanical nature to love and sacrifice for humans – their CS suddenly emerging from their dispassionate software.

These robots were created to serve humanity, in most cases, in the context of aggression and warfare. . . . Johnny Five, Chappie, TARS and CASE . . . exceed their original programming, find peaceful means, and in effect become the better angels of our nature. Replacing the violence that is programmed (or inherent) into them with a resolve and self sacrifice no member of the human race could muster. My own tearyeyed response to robots . . . is based on the fact that our own creations have exceeded us, and bettered our own human nature, shown us up for being the cruel manipulative creatures we are. When I cry for robots, I'm really crying for a version of humanity that doesn't exist. (Naish 2015)

These robots exceed human beings in their compassionate heroic self-sacrifice for the very humans who have programmed them for violence, or from whom they have often experienced great cruelty.

## 8.3 Potential kama muta in composing poetry together

Japanese *haikai* is comic or casual linked poetry about life. Poets often composed *haikai* collaboratively, sometimes face-to-face, with each consecutive verse a response to the previous verse (Shirane 2000). Shirane (2000) characterized the experience of this dynamic composition.

The joy and pleasure of *haikai* was that it was imaginary literature . . . . The basic idea of linked verse was to create a new and unexpected world out of the world of the previous verse. . . . The other participants in the *haikai* sequence joined you in that imaginary world. . . .

For samurai in the [Medieval] era of constant war, linked verse was like the tea ceremony; it allowed one to escape, if only for a brief time, from the world at large, from all the bloodshed. The joy of it was that one could do that in the close company of friends and companions. . . .

Haikai in its most fundamental form, as linked verse, is about linking one verse to another, one person to another. . . . Haikai was also about mutual composition, about completing or complementing the work of others, adding poetry and calligraphy to someone's printing, adding a prose passage to a friend's poem, etc. . . . .

This poetic essence, the cluster of associations at the core of the seasonal topic, was thought to represent the culmination and experience of generations of poets over many years. By composing on the poetic essence, the poet could partake of this communal experience, inherit it, and carry it on. . . .

Poets such as Saigyō and Bashō traveled to famous poetic places - such as Tatsutagawa, Yoshino, Matsushima, Shirakawa - in order to partake of this communal experience, to be inspired by poetic places that had been the fountainhead of the great poems of the past. These famous poetic places provided an opportunity to commune across time with earlier poets. Like seasonal words, famous places functioned as a direct pipeline to the communal poetic body. . . .

First, the brevity and the overt simplicity allow everyone to participate, making it a communal, social medium. Second, the poem can be short and still complex since it is actually part of a larger, more complex poetic body. When the poet

takes up one of the topics at the top of the seasonal pyramid or visits a famous place, he or she enters into an imaginary world that he or she shares with the audience and that connects to the dead, the ancients. To compose on the poetic essence of a topic is, as we saw, to participate in the larger accumulated experience of past poets. . . .

As each participant contributed a verse that connected in an unexpected way with the previous verse, and hence the completed it in a new dimension, we can imagine that in the union of their shared imaginary experience the poets may often have felt *kama muta*.

## 8.4 Painting to share the artist's kama muta experience

We don't know how often kama muta experiences or the intent to share their kama muta with viewers are important motives for painters to paint. But here is a painting and what one artist told us about painting it:



Almost Ready by Meryl Lebowitz

I was always touched by nature and by light, and have felt a need to capture them and share with others the emotions they invoke in me. Much of the impact that their existence has upon me is an understanding that they will not last forever. I grew up in a town with beautiful tree-lined streets, old elms that canopied the main roads. When I was 5 or 6 those trees became diseased and were all cut down. I was heart-broken. I am still moved by walking under an archway of branches, and painting the curves of a tree.

Sometimes I paint from life, and sometimes from photos. I look for the long shadows of morning or late afternoon, and am interested in the play of light off objects and figures. I tend to make things warmer than they really are, even snow. I'm able to take a photograph that is just a second, a flash, a memory, and turn it into something permanent . . . my painted interpretation. My hope is to bring the viewer my story, and have it touch a story in them.

I also love people, and have always enjoyed painting them on their own, or bringing them into a landscape. 10 years ago I was walking on the shore of Vermont's Lake Champlain and I saw this girl, a young woman maybe 16 or 17 years-old, sitting on a rock overlooking the lake. A couple that I assumed were her parents were relaxing together on a bench, not too close by. I imagined that the family was in Burlington visiting the University, and the girl was dreaming about beginning her life away from home. I was touched, and photographed. I did a painting of that girl and I called it "Almost Ready". Her parents never saw it, but a stranger loved it enough to buy it. As often happens when a gallery sells my work, I'm not able to connect with the person who purchased it, but I'm hoping they were touched and my mission was accomplished.



December Village by Meryl Lebowitz

## 8.5 Tattoos inscribed to preserve and revoke kama muta

An anthropology graduate student—a primatologist—was taking a seminar on kama muta. I said we had no evidence for kama muta lasting for more than a minute or two, but it might occur. Here's what she said:

I am a large supporter of body modification; I believe it is a great way to express oneself. I have many body modifications, but many of my modifications are in the form of body piercings and tattoos. In my experience, getting a tattoo is very different than getting a body piercing. Most of my tattoos feature portraits of individual animals (specifically primates) that I have closely worked with at conversation centers, so they have sentimental meaning to me. There are many reasons to get a tattoo; but for me, the tattooing process is an emotional one. For example: in the summer of 2016 I decided to get a portrait tattoo of a Javan gibbon (*Hylobates moloch*) named Simpang. I had the pleasure of working with Simpang at the Gibbon Conservation Center when I was collecting data for my Master's thesis on gibbon facial expressions. I was fascinated with Simpang's shy yet quirky behavior; she quickly became my favorite gibbon. I wanted to remember Simpang and my time at the Gibbon Conservation Center, so I decided to get a commemorative tattoo designed by Matt Soderberg. When Matt first showed me the final tattoo design, I was taken aback. He was able to perfectly illustrate her features and her personality. I choked and teared up; the design took my breath away. The feeling was similar to how I felt when I first visited the Gibbon Conservation Center and how I feel after visiting after a hiatus. However, this feeling persisted for a longer amount of time. Throughout the 8-hour tattooing session that followed I felt as light as a cloud and as bright as the sun. I was in a continuous state of euphoria, and would choke and tear up every time I looked down at the tattoo. I was covered in goosebumps for hours out of sheer happiness rather than pain. Getting Simpang's portrait felt *right*; it was as if I was missing a piece of myself that I had finally found. Simpang was not my first tattoo and is most certainly not my last tattoo; since then I have received more primate tattoos from Matt and have had similar feelings each time. Each time I get a tattoo it brings me back to the same feeling I associate when visiting the Gibbon Conservation Center. With each of these tattoos I have had a close relationship with the animal being portrayed. To me, getting a tattoo is an incredibly moving and addictive experience, and it is very unique. I have yet to experience anything else with such long-lasting intensity before.     Brittany Florkiewicz



The Tattoo of Simpan on Brittany Florkiewicz