

physical appearance is most like an animal. He is first described as looking like a bear with big paws, walking heavily. In the same scene he is also compared to a small dog—"a terrier who doesn't want to bring a ball to its master" (9). Lennie's "fawning" approach to Crooks, in the doorway of the black man's quarters, is also like that of a shy dog who desperately wants to make friends with a hostile human. And at the end of the story, when George puts the gun behind his head to kill him, Lennie is identified with Candy's old dog, who has earlier been killed in the same way with the same gun. Lennie's simplemindedness as well as his attraction to animals, especially the rabbits and the puppy, would seem to fix him as animal-like.

Candy is another character who is identified with an animal who, like Candy, is old and sick and considered useless. Candy and the reader note the similarities between him and his crippled old dog, "a dragfooted sheep dog, gray of muzzle, and with pale, blind old eyes" (24). "Got no teeth," Carlson says of the dog. "He's all stiff with rheumatism. He ain't no good to you, Candy. An' he ain't no good to himself" (44).

The irony is that Lennie and Candy, compared with a lumbering bear and a lame sheep dog, are not the truly animal-like characters in the story, for these two weak men at least exhibit human sympathy and compassion. Those who display the basest elements of nature are Curley and Carlson, who lack all sensitivity, all compassion for those more helpless and weaker in mind and body than they are. Carlson shows his animal-like nature in pushing Candy into allowing him to shoot his beloved old dog. Curley is the epitome of man's lower nature: he is driven to compete constantly, as if he lives in a world where only the physically fittest survive and, as with the lower animals, must act only for self-survival and self-gratification. Curley is like an undersized tomcat who has to challenge everyone he sees to a fight. Like a chicken, he is compelled to pick on weaklings in his own species, like Lennie, whom he discovers to be simpleminded. Like some wild animal, Curley is in a constant state of suspicion, and like all lower animals, he lives only to gratify himself, joining the single ranch hands in visiting a house of prostitution in the nearest town even though he is recently married. And like an ill-tempered and scared wild animal, Curley is "mean"—a word used repeatedly to describe him. Animal-like, Carlson and Curley seem incapable of sensitivity, of em-