



Renaissance Man of Cannery Row: The Life and Letters of Edward F. Ricketts (Alabama Fire Ant)

Edward Flanders Ricketts, Katharine A. Rodger

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This portrait of one of John Steinbeck's closest friends illuminates the life and work of a figure central to the development of scientific and literary thought in the 20th century.

Marine biologist Edward F. Ricketts is perhaps best known as the inspiration for John Steinbeck's most empathic literary characters Doc in *Cannery Row*, Slim in *Of Mice and Men*, Jim Casy in *The Grapes of Wrath*, and Lee in *East of Eden*. The correspondence of this accomplished scientist, writer, and philosopher reveals the influential exchange of ideas he shared with such prominent thinkers and artists as Henry Miller, Joseph Campbell, Ellwood Graham, and James Fitzgerald, in addition to Steinbeck, all of whom were drawn to Ricketts's Monterey Bay laboratory, a haven of intellectual discourse and Bohemian culture in the 1930s and 1940s.

The 125 previously unpublished letters of this collection, housed at the Stanford University Library, document the broad range of Ricketts's interests and accomplishments during the last 12 and most productive years of his life. His handbook on Pacific marine life, *Between Pacific Tides*, is still in print, now in its fifth edition. The biologist's devotion to ecological conservation and his evolving philosophy of science as a cross-disciplinary, holistic pursuit led to the publication of *The Sea of Cortez*. Many of Ricketts's letters discuss his studies of the Pacific littoral and his theories of "phalanx" and transcendence. Epistles to family members, often tender and humorous, add dimension and depth to Steinbeck's mythologized depictions of Ricketts. Katharine A. Rodger has enriched the correspondence with an introductory biographical essay and a list of works cited.

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