

2013

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Recommended Citation

Ping, Wang (2013) "Of Mice and Men (Poem)," *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*: Vol. 12: Iss. 2, Article 8.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/sjsj/vol12/iss2/8>

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Of Mice and Men

Wang Ping

"It was a turning point," said the biologist to the class, "when my professor grabbed the lab mouse and flung it against the wall."

And you had tears in your eyes
As you depicted the hand, pale, hairy
Unapologetic, the hand of a master
And the lab mouse, blind, cancer-ridden
Yet happy to be a mouse, still alive

Then the rage, the fling against the wall
The spine, the brain, the heart
Splashing like asteroids

It awakened something in me, you say
I am no long the same

As you watch the human "mouse"
In the teeth of the revenge machine
Invisible, raged, raging
The same spine, muscle, limbs
The same brain, bones, spirits
Flung across your path

As you stand in the ruins
As you walk through this razor sharp silence
As you wade into the sea of bloody sacrifice

Are you willing to say: it awakens something?

And say: this hand, this yellow, brown, black hand
Makes the same delicious meals
Makes the same beautiful sonnets, art, songs
Splits cells with the same precision?

Are you willing to acknowledge
Our milk is just as white and nourishing
Our blood just as red with boiling spirit
And our need to be men or mice is just as legit?

How do you keep the same
As you watch this human mouse
Flung against your wall of conscience
Over and over and over