John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* As a Naturalistic Novel

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Preface:

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath(*1939) exposes the desperate conditions that surrounded the migratory farm families in America during the year of the Great Depression from the Naturalistic point of view. It combines his adoration of the land and his simple hatred of the corruption resulting from Materialism and his faith in common to overcome his hostile environment. It attempts to present the problem of the workers of the lower classes, and exposes the unusual family, conditions under which the Joads, the migratory farm family, was forced to live during these years. The progress the government intended to spread on the Oklahoma fields and ranches sheltered families a part and reduced the migrants to beggars suffering from deprivation and hunger. His California novels attack the counterfeited image of paradise that people held when they set their migration to California.

Naturalism, Great Depression, Materialism, Darwin's *Origin of Species*

1-Introduction

Darwin's biological theories, Comte's application of scientific ideas to the study of society, and Taine's application of deterministic theories to literature formed the new view of man as a creature determined by heredity, milieu, and the pressures of the moment, Naturalism believes that everything exists is a part of nature and can be explained by nature and material causes, not by supernatural, spiritual or paranormal causes. The essence of Naturalism is then a pessimistic determinism, expressing resignation and despair, at the spectacle of man's impotence in a mechanistic universe.**1**

In the nineteenth century the scientific method, deistic faith, and biological discoveries began to converge upon man and suggesting not only that his nature was good but also that his natural self was his ultimate self. This trend was accelerated by the positivism of August Comte and the Darwinian theory of evolution. Positivism was presented as an empirical, naturalistic method of finding truth. It stresses accuracy and

objectivity and affirms that the only significant reality is the content of experience. The function of science is to observe facts and formulate laws which explain those facts. Comte was impelled by a desire to establish society and its institutions on a more solid foundation. He sought a new faith that would use the intellectual advantages of the age to unite men in a common purpose. In his *Cours de Philosophic Positive* (1830) Comte devised his famous law of the three stages of thought as it progressed toward maturity. They are the theological, the metaphysical, and the scientific. He classifies the sciences in the order of their complexity, dependency, and perfectibility. He concludes that sociology was the most complex and it became the unifying discipline of human thought and its purpose was the perfect organization of human society.**2**

Darwin's *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection (1859)* was a culmination in the field of biology of the naturalistic temper of the period, presenting a hypothesis toward which many streams of thought and investigation had been converging. Darwin employed the positive method to show how natural selection operated to produce new species. Studying man in the perspective of his biological development emphasized his animal nature. The theory of evolution posits that plants and animals develop by gradual modification from existing forms of life. With the publication of this book, the theory of evolution became the most controversial topic of the age. Darwin maintained that man descended from the lower animals and that in animal's life there is a struggle for existence which leads to the survival of the fittest by a process of natural selection.**3** The Naturalists' view of man is directly dependent on the Darwinian picture of his descent from the lower animal.

The Naturalists' Darwinian view of man was supported by the theory of heredity, which is in a sense a variant on evolution within the human realm. Heredity was one of the main principles of Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893), whose function was that of "go-between science and literature".**4** In the preface to the second edition of his *Essais de critique et d'histoire*(1866), he popularized this theory which was itself indebted to the Darwinian theory of evolution. Taine maintained that the human animal is a continuation of the primitive animal, and in both the primary molecule is inherited, and its acquired shape is passed on partially and gradually by heredity. He added to the scientific method and heredity a third factor that contributed to the development of Naturalism which is the immediate circumstances. To the Naturalists; man becomes an animal whose life is controlled by heredity, determinism and the pressure of the moment.

Thus Naturalistic authors emphasize man's accidental and psychological nature, rather than his moral or rational qualities, seeing man as helpless product of heredity and environment; motivated by

strong instinctual drives from within, and harassed by social and economic pressures from without. Since in this view man has no free will, the Naturalistic writer does not attempt to make moral judgment, and as deterministic he, leans toward pessimism. There is no hero in the Naturalist novel because the heroic is alien to the scientific view of man. External and internal forces control the behavior of man. This belief is called Determinism.[5] Though all the determinists believe in the existence of will, this will is often enslaved by different hostile forces. The conflict in the Naturalist novel is either between man against man or man against nature.

The school of Naturalism was inaugurated by the French writer Emile Zola (1840-1902) who established the main principles of the Naturalistic novel. In 1880 he published *The Experimenter' Novel* which called for the creation of a new scientific literature, and it held that the naturalistic writer ought to deal with life as it was really lived instead of depending on their intellectual faculties in building worlds of imagination. In his view men's lives and actions were determined by environment and heredity. Zola's school eradicates the literature of the past and create a new type of literature worthy of an age of machines. He disregarded morality in his scientific novels believing that the role of the Naturalist was not to judge but only to observe and record.

In the USA, Naturalism is even more closely linked to social and economic changes than in Europe. The victory of the North over the South that ended the Civil War in 1865 meant far more than the abolition of slavery. It amounted to the triumph of industrial capitalism over the traditional agrarian economy. Industrialization brought great mechanical- and material advances but also severe difficulties in the form of labor disputes, economic depression and strikes that erupted in violence. It showed the degeneration of man from the biological point of view derived from Darwin. It stressed the ascendance of industrialization and capitalism over agrarianism. The basic theme of the American Naturalism is the exploitation of the poor and their struggle to survive. Often the dire struggles of the poor and the machinations of the capitalists are the theme of Naturalist writing.

This movement takes two forms: the first form is Regionalism which used rural settings and colloquial dialogue to portray given rural regions which were associated with the names of the regionalists. The second form is Agrarianism which is chiefly concerned with the problems of farming and rural populations. In this way American Naturalism owes more to local factors than to outside influences, and it is worth recalling the so-called 'local colour'[6] tendencies of the1870s and 1880s which carried on into Naturalism. It could be said Naturalism has started with the Civil War and

reached its peak during the first decades of the 20th century in America with John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) .

2- Steinbeck life and career

Steinbeck's life spanned exactly two-thirds of the century that saw Americans change from horse-drawn provincials to jet-propelled megapolitans. The United States has also changed from a great country for immigrants seeking freedom and personal dignity to an exclusionist country-a closed cooptation with limited preference for the kindred of the earliest share holders. Actually, this country has changed from 'a sanctuary rigidly isolated from international power-politics to a self appointed world policeman hopelessly bogged down in a thankless struggle in a remote area of the world'7. Steinbeck was born in the agricultural trading center of Salinas, in a Northern Central California valley about two-thirds of the way from Los Angeles to San Francisco on the major highway closest to the Pacific coast. It is the county seat and the trading and shipping center for the lower part of the valley. The Salinas valley, famed for truck farming, is especially known for its lettuce and its broccoli.

In the United States as in the rest of the world, the 1930's were the years of the Great Depression, the period of mass unemployment and economic collapse which followed the stock-market crash of 1929. The tenant-farmers could neither satisfy their landlords nor get enough for themselves and their families to live on. These were the climate and economic conditions which drove tens thousands of men whose incomes had been dependent upon farming prosperity to leave their homes on the Great Plaints and make their way to California. These men were native-orn american, representative of that small-farmer class so cherished in traditional American thinking from the time of Thomas Jefferson onwards.The implications of this situation are fully explored in *The Grapes of Wrath* which reflects the tension between the natural independence of the characters and the appalling pressures of needs and of sheer starvation, to which they are subjected.8

The seed for *The Grapes of Wrath* was sown when Steinbeck visited the migrant workers' camps near Salinas and Bakersfield in order to prepare a series of seven articles called "The Harvest Gypsies," for the *San Francisco News.* His description of the Joads' frustrated pilgrimage across America from the barren farmland of Oklahoma to the fruit orchards of California captures the harsh realities of the Depression in American history. He wants to prove that the endless accumulation of suffering changes the Joads' initial puzzlement to discontent, from discontent to hopelessness, and from hopelessness to the terrible wrath of the book's title, an angry certainty of the injustice of the system that has pauperized and enslaved them. The country was originally colonized as a

result of the Pilgrim Fathers' voyage across the Atlantic, and its frontiers were expanded by those great moves westward in the nineteenth-century.**9**

The Joads' enforced pilgrimage from Oklahoma to California is an ironic recapitulation of earlier American journeys. Like the original settlers, the Joads uproot themselves to escape tyranny and go off in search of a better land. The present settlers- landowners, shopkeepers, and policemen- have a hypocritical attitude toward the immigrants. They abuse people like the Joads by calling them 'Okies'and try to exploit their labour.

3-Naturalism in The Grapes of Wrath

The novel elucidates the philosophy of Naturalism which shows man as animal in a purely material world, and it presents man as controlled by forces of environment and change from without and by instincts and derives from within. It does not have a sympathetic character or a hero or even someone who moves the action forward. The basic subject of the book is the odyssey of the Oklahoma migrants, small farmers whose property has been taken over by the banks because in a capitalist society cotton-growing must be highly industrialized to be profitable. These people, dispossessed of their ancestral land and attracted by the false promises of the large landowners of California, are heading west to hire themselves out as farm workers. They have no free will; they are controlled by their social and economic environment and circumstances. The theme of the common man is one of the elements of Naturalism in this novel. Steinbeck's heroes are not idealized characters, but simple rural folic whose only hope is to see justice spread in the society before they should revolt against the injustice. But he believes in their ability to change the heartless and merciless forces that exist all around them, and he sees the government as the untrusting enemy that holds back man from reaching a better life. Their cooperation is necessary to face the hostile forces of nature.

Tom is no thinker. When Casy tells him "They gonna to come a thing that's gonna change the whole country," he simply replies, "I'm still layin' my dogs down one at a time" (p.237). Uncle John, who has been responsible for the death of his wife, has come closest to understanding that there is something beyond the family, but he has attributed that failure of his isolated pride to "sin" and indulged in disorganized acts of charity, so that, as Pa explains,, he "give away about ever'thin' he got, an' stil[l] he ain't very happy" (p.72).

Ma views the trip to California in terms of personal success. She ponders, "I wonder-that is, if we all get jobs an' all work-may be we can get one of

them little white houses" (p.124). Although she burns her souvenirs to cut herself off from her past, Ma does so because she thinks primarily of herself as important to the family. When Tom asks her if she is "scared a goin' to a new place?" and if she has thought about the life there, she replies:

> "No, I ain't....Up ahead, they's a thousan' lives we might live, But when it comes it only be one... it's just the road goin' By for me.... All the rest get upset I done any more than that. They all depend on me just thinkin' about that". (pp.168-169)

When Ma threatens Pa with the jack-handle to prevent the party's splitting up, she acts to preserve the integrity of the family, arguing:

> "What we got lef in the world?... All we got is the family unbroke. Like a bunch of cows, when the lobos are ranging stick all together. I ain't scared while we're all here, all that's alive, but I ain't gonna see us bust up". (pp. 230-231)

Although the Joads are neighborly toward the Wilsons, Ma still seeks rationalizations that will bring the Wilsons into the family rather than make assistance to them seem . "We got almost a kin bond," she tells Sairy, "Grampa, he died in your tent" (p.227), and she still insists that Cast' not write the note to be pinned on Grampa's body, because he "wan't no kin" (p.195).

The family disintegrates in spite of Ma's brave efforts and bold protests. The dog is killed on the highway (p.177); Grampa dies of a stroke before the family leaves Oklahoma (p.188) and Granma dies during the trip across the California desert (p.311). Although each of these deaths symbolizes an inability to adjust to changed conditions the migration is imposed upon the family, they do not challenge the basic unity of the family. Ma is more severely shaken by the departure of Noah, which causes her to observe "Family's fallin' apart... I don' know. Seems like I can't think no more," (p.294). She is also shaken by the disappearance of Rose of Sharon's husband, Connie Rivers (pp.371-372) which is especially an affront to tradition, both because the young couple have already threatened the family's security with the talk of strike out for themselves (p. 224) and because a family unit is shattered as it is forming.

Ma's family pride is also shaken in other ways. She is disturbed by the California border patrolman from whom she first hears the term "Okie" and.- who tells her, "We don't want none of you settlin' down here" (p. 291). Then she is upset by the vigilance committee which tells the family, "We ain't gonna have no goddamn Okies in this town" (p.383). Despite to

these affronts to her dignity and her insistence on sharing with the Wilsons over their protests, she still thinks primarily in terms of the family unit. Her reaction upon arriving in Bakersfield is that "the family's here" (p.311) and in the encounter the vigilantes she counsels Tom to do nothing because "the family's breakin' up" (p.381).

3-1. The Skeins of American Thoughts

The Grapes of Wrath brings together four skeins of American thought. It begins with the transcendental oversoul, Emerson's faith in the common man and his Protestant self-reliance. This faith is joined with Whitman's religion of the love of a man and his mass democracy. Besides it combines mystical and poetic ideas of the realistic philosophy of pragmatism with the agrarianism of Jefferson ideas and its emphasis on effective action. The fourth skein of American thought. Steinbeck was closer to Jeffersonianism than were the agrarians who sought to resurrect not only an agricultural way of life but also the traditional cultural values of Europe. Steinbeck like Jefferson was concerned with democracy, and looked upon agrarianism as a way of life that would enable us to realize the full potentialities of the creed.**10** Steinbeck had dealt with this theme of man's relationship to the land in most of his novels, believing that this relationship is mystical, symbolic, and mythical. But in *The Grapes of Wrath*, man's identification with the growth cycle is also seen as pragmatic, socially practical in Jeffersonian terms. The human erosion is as much the result of a separation from the land as it is of poverty. The greatness of Steinbeck is that he brings together four important skeins of American thought in the concrete forms of art.**١1**

This growing awareness in the novel is paralleled by Tom and Casy. At beginning of the book, Tom's attitude is individualistic. lie is looking out for himself. As he puts it, "I'm still laying my dogs down one at a time," and climb fences when I got fences to climb." His first real lesson comes when Casy strikes out against the trooper to save his friend and then gives himself up in his place.

The first significant change in the family's attitude occurs in the Weedpatch government camp where the Wallaces share their work with Tom and the self-governing arrangement makes the Joads feel like decent people again. In this section Tom's education is advanced still further. By the time Casy is killed, Tom is ready for his conversion, which he seals by revenging his mentor. While Tom is hiding out in the cave, after having struck down the vigilante, he has time to think of Casy and his message, so that in his last meeting with his mother, in which he asserts

his spiritual unity with all men, it is evident that he has moved from material and personal resentment to ethical indignation, from particulars to principles.

Evaluating her recent experiences, Ma says, "... in Needles, that police, he done somepin' to me, made me feel mean. Made me feel ashamed. An' now I ain't ashamed. These folks is our folks..... Why, I feel like people again" (p.420) but she prefaces her remarks with the reminder, "We're Joads," and she still talks of the little white cottage. At the camp the Joads meet people who do not think of co-operation as charity, while another lesson in co-operation is taught Ruthie by the children who ostracize her when she tries to dominate their games (p.434). All is not harmony at Weedpatch, as is shown by the religious bigot's attack upoil. Rosasharon and the report of a garbage fight between the women. Pa Joad is still far from converted to Casy's way of thinking. "I can't starve so's you Cali get two bits," he tells another man in a quarrel over taking others' jobs for lower wages (p.463).

The atmosphere at the government camp, where "We're all a-workin' to gether"(p.488) is in striking contrast to the atmosphere at the Hooper Ranch, where the prevailing mode of thoughtis epitomized in the checker's remark that putting holes in the bottom of buckets "keeps people from stealing them" (p.506). It is here that Ma observes, "I'm learning one thing good... if you're in trouble or hurt or need-go to poor people. They're the only ones that'll help-tile only ones" (pp.513-514). The Joads still think of help. When Casy pleads with Tom to support a strike against the Hooper Ranch, Tom says, "Pa wouldn' do it... I know 'im. He'd say it was none of his business.... Think Pa's gonna give up his meat on account a other fellas?" (p.524).

A crisis is precipitated at this ranch by Tom's impetuously disregarding the family's best interests and killing the man who has killed Casy. He decides that he must run away, because he "can't go puttin' this on you folks."

> Ma retorts angrily, "... goin' away ain't gonna ease us. It's gonna bear us down. There was a time when we was on the Ian'. They was a boundary to us then... ail' we was always one thing-we was the fambly- kinda whole and clear. An' now we ain' clear no more....We're crackin' up, Tom. There ain't no fambly now" (p.536).

She pleads with him to stay and he agrees. The family does leave the ranch to protect Tom not in protest against the strikebreaking. Ma's suspicion of any idea beyond that of loyalty to the family appears in her remark when Tom protests "You can't .... They wouldn' be no way to hide out., You nobody. But you can trus' us. We can hide you, an' we can see you get to eat while your face gets well" (pp.545-546).

A major change in attitude comes at last in the final interview between Tom and Ma. Ruthie has undone the family by boasting about it; in a childish quarrel, she has revealed that her brother is a killer, who is hiding out nearby. Ma realizes that Tom must go. While hiding, Tom has been thinking over Casy's ideas, and when his mother says that she, is worried that she may not Anow what has become of him, he tells her:

> Well, may be like casy says, a fella aint' got a souls
>
> but on'y a piece of a big one-an' then ... it don' matter. Then I'll be aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there.... An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build-why, I'll be there".
> (P.572)

Tom has thus lost his clannishness and replaced it with the concept that one must give help anyone who needs it. Gradually the family comes to share this concept.**12**

Pa's learning the lesson of co-operation is shown in his action of building a dam to hold the flood-water out of the cotton-pickers' camp; he cries, "We can do her if ever'body helps" (p.595). Although there is no indication that his idea co-operation goes as far beyond an immediate situation as Tom's. Uncle John, too, finally breaks with tradition in a negative way in order to teach the world a lesson, when instead of giving Rosasharon's stillborn child the kind of family burial Pa had talked of when Grampa died (p.190), he sets it adrift in a creek, saying, "Go down in the street an' rot an' tell 'em that way. That's the way you can talk. Don't even know if you was a boy or a girl. Ain't gonna find out" (p.609).

Ma's acceptance of the idea of a responsibility that extends beyond the family after her last meeting with Tom is shown in her conversation with a neighbor, whom she thanks for help during Rosasharon's birth agonies:

> The stout woman smiled "No need to thank. Ever'body's in the same Wagon. S'pose we was down. You'd a give us ahan'.
>
> "Yes," Ma said, "we would."
>
> "Or anybody."
>
> "Or anybody. Use'ta be the fambly was lust. It ain't so now. **It's** anybody. Worse off we get, the more we got to do". (p.606)

3-2. Old Testement and the structureof the novel

This structure has its roots in the Old Testment. The novel three sections correspond to the oppression in Egypt, the exodus, and the sojourn in the land of Canaanm which in both account is first viewed from the mountains: the plagues (erosion), the Egyptianss (banks), the exodus (journey), and the hostile tribes of Canaan (Californians).**13**

The development of Jim Casy is similar to that of Tom. He moves from Bible-belt evangelism to social prophecy. At the beginning of the book he has already left preaching and has returned from his sojourn "in the hill, thinkin', almost you might say like Jesus went into the wilderness to think. His way out of a mess of troubles". Although Casy is already approaching his revelation of the Oversoul, it is only through his experiences with the Joads that he is able to complete his vision. As Tom moves from material resentment to ethical indignation, from action to thought to action again, so Casy moves from the purely speculative to the pragmatic. Both move from stasis to action. Casy's Christ-like development is complete when he dies saying, "You don't know what you're a-doin'." His development, like that of Tom, is symbolic of the changing social condition which is the novel's essential theme, paralleling the development of the Joad family as a whole. Cast' resembles Emerson because lie discovers the Oversoul through intuition and rejects his congregation in order to preach to the world.

In the final chapter, Ma Joad leads the remnants of her family from their flood engulfed box-car to a dry barn on high land; Rosasharon, whose baby has been stillborn, feeds from her breast a man on the point of death who can take no other nourishment. Ma's unstated suggestion that Rosasharon give her milk to him carries into practice the idea that "worse off we get, the more we got to do". Having come to the barn with almost nothing, the family through Rosasharn gives the one thing it has left to offer. The last chapter compactly reenacts the whole drama of the Joads' journey in one uninterrupted continuity of suspense. The rain continues to fall; the truck and household goods must be abandoned; the little mud levee collapse; Rosasharn's baby is born dead; the boxcar must be abandoned; they take to the highway in search of food and find instead a starving man. As Rose of Sharon offers to feed this starving man, the novel's' two counter themes are brought together in a symbolic paradox. Out of her own need she gives life; out of the profoundest depth of despair comes the greatest assertion of faith.

The scope and diversity of this novel forced Steinbeck to write an unusual structure with separate, philosophic interchapters. The novel can be

divided into three sections. Firstly, chapters 1 to 10 deal with the drought in Oklahoma. Chapters 11 to 18 describe the journey to California and thirdly chapters 19 to 30 describe the migrants' struggle to establish a new life in California. The first 14 chapters narrate the experiences of the Joad family but the sixteen short intercalary chapters do not mention by name any of the characters introduced in the narrative. These intercalary chapters explain the hard conditions of the migrants proving that the Joad family represents numerous other families. This migration forms a central part of the novel's structure and involves a process of learning for characters like Tom, Ma, and Rose of Sharon. Each comes to acknowledge a responsibility to all people rather than simply to themselves or their family. Chapter one describes in panoramic terms the drought which forces the Joads off their land. Capter five is mostly a dialogue between two generalized forces, the banks and the farmers, presenting in archetype the coflict in which the Joads are caught up. Chapters seven and nine depict the buying of jalopies and the selling of household goods. In chapter ten Al explains why he chose this particular vehicle and that before they ought it he ensured that the gearox and differential had no sawdust in them. Chapter eleven describes a decaying and deserted house which is the prototype of all the houses abandoned in the dust bowl.

Almost every aspect of the Joads' adventures is enlarged in the interchapters and seen as part of the social climate. The remaining three intercalary chapters (19, 21, and 25) have the function of providing such historical information as the development of land ownership in California, the consequent development of migrant labor, and certain economic aspects of the social lag. So the action progresses through three movements: the drought, the journey, and California.

3-3. Symbolism in the novel

This Biblical structure is supported by a continuum of symbols and symbolic actions. The symbolic relationship between the Joads and the animals is brought about by the turtle whose slow, tough progress survives to hit it. This anticipates the survival of the Joads, who will manage another journey along a road, emerging like the turtle from incredible hardships surrounded by symbols of fertility, much like the turtle's "wild cat head" which spawns three spearhead seeds in the dry ground. Wilson notes the way in which the forced pilgrimage of the Joads, adumbrated by the turtle's indestructibility, is 'accompanied and parodied all the way by animals, insects and birds,' as when the abandoned house where Tom finds Muley is invaded by bats, weasels, owls, mice, and pet cats gone wild.

Tom and Casy witness the unsuccessful efforts of a cat to stop the turtle's slow progress. The turtle being run over deliberately by the tractor's driver could-be shaken as a symbol of the large companies walking over the weak and the poor farmers. At the same time the insistence of the turtle to go on its progress symbolizes the insistence of the migrants to survive. In the early days of their journey, the Joads' dog is run over by a large speeding car. This is the reason why the Joads must simply keep going ahead on their journey until they reach California; otherwise the rest of the society which is on its own quest for survival will run them down just as the car runs down the dog. The Joads art so simple people that they think only of the necessities of life that helps them to survive. "A human being wouldn't live like they do. They ain't a hell of a lot better than gorillas." (p.203). In the deserted house, Muley describes himself as having once been "mean like a wolf," whereas now he is "clean like a weasel." Ma Joad describes the law's pursuit of Pretty Boy Floyd in animal terms: "they run him like a coyote an' him a-snappin' an' a-marlin', mean as a lobo." Young Al boasts that his Hudson jalopy will "ride like a bull calf." In the interchapter describing the change, the growing wrath triggered by the wholesale evictions of the tenant farmers, the western states are "nervous as horses before a thunder storm."

Later, Ma Joad protests the break-up of the family: "All we got is the family unbroke. Like a bunch of cows, when the lobos are ranging." Tom tells Casy that the day he got out of prison,he ran himself down a prostitute "like she was a rabbit." Even the endless caravans of jalopies are described in terms which echo" the plodding endurance of the turtle. After a night in which "the owls coasted overhead, and the coyotes gabbled in the distance, and into the camp skunks walked, looking for bits of food..." the morning comes, revealing the cars of migrants along the way crawling out "like bugs." After the relatively peaceful interlude of the Government Camp, Al comments on the practice of periodically burning out the Hoovervilles where the dispossessed farmers are forced to cluster,… they jus' go hide the willows an' then they come out an' build them another weed shack. Jus' like gophers." Toward the end, Ma expresses her longing to have a settled home for Ruth and Winfield, the youngest children', in order to keep them from becoming wild animals. For by this time Ruth and Winnie emerge from their beds "like hermit crabs from shell"(p.603).

The persistence of this imagery reveals at least part of its service. In the first place biology supports and comments upon sociology. The primacy of the family clan, the threat and utility of industrial machinery, the alienation and hostility of the law, the growing anger at economic

oppression, the arguments for human dignity, are all expressed in terms of zoological images. In the second place, the presence of literal and figurative animals is more frequent when the oppression of the Joads is most severe. Biological functions survive in the Joads' elementary fight for life, in the animal preoccupation with finding food and shelter, and in the essence of death and procreation.**14**

The most pervasive symbolism is that of grapes which can symbolize bitterness, vengeance and wrath, or it symbolizes abundance and renewal. The references to grapes often allude to the Bible and also to Julia Ward Howe's song "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" which was published in 1862 during the American Civil War.**15** He is trampling out of the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored". This title is itself a reference to Revelation XIV which states that those who ‘’worship the beast and his image' will ‘ drink of the wine of the wrath of God', and it goes on to say that 'and the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of wrath of God.' (p. 14). Similarly, Moses' song in Deuteronomy XXXII warns of God's vengeance on those who forsake Him: "For their vine is the vine of Sodom, and the fields of Gomorrah :their grapes are grapes of gall, their cluster are bitter. Their wine is the poison of serpents…."(p.32). In Jeremiah XXXI: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and their children's teeth are set on edge." (p. 31).

In this novel the migrants grow angry at the conditions in California and Steinbeck exploits the biblical allusions to express this 'in the eyes of the hungry there is a growing wrath. In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy for the vintage'(p.369).

The biblical allusions imply that in their wrath the migrants act as an agents of God's wrath and judgment.**16**

Steinbeck also uses grapes for symbols of plenty, as the one huge cluster of grapes which Joshua and Oshea bring back from their first excusion into the rich land of Canaan is symbol of plenty, a cluster so huge that "they bare it between two on a staff.". Reading her Bible, Ma Joad's frequent assertion that "We are the people." is associated with this latter symbolic meaning of grapes and the land of Canaan. They are the people who pick up life in Oklahoma (Egypt) and carry it to California (Canaan) as the turtle picks up seeds and as the ants picks up their eggs in "The Leader of the people." These parallels to the Israelites of Exodus are all brought into focus when, near the end of the novel, Uncle John sets Rose of Sharon's stillbrn child in an old apple crate like Moses in the basket, sets the box in a stream "among the willow stems," and floats it toward the town saying, "Go down an' tell 'em".

As the Israelites received the new Law in their exodus, so the migrants develop new laws: "The families learned what rights must be observed-the right of privacy in the tent; the right to keep the past black hidden in the heart; the right to refuse help or accept it; to offer help or to decline it; the right of a son to court and the daughter to be courted; the right of the hungry to be fed; the right of the pregnant and the sick to transcend all other rights."

Through this supporting Biblical structure and context there are interwoven two opposing themes which make up the book's plot. One of these themes, the negative one, concerns itself with the increasingly straitened circumstances of the Joads. At the beginning of their journey they have 154 dollars, their household goods, two barrels of pork, a serviceable truck, and their good health. As the novel progresses they become more and more impoverished, until at the end they are destitute, without food, sick, their truck and goods abandoned in the mud, without shelter, and without hope of work.

This economic decline is paralleled by a similar decline in the family's moral. This is illustrated by the Joads, who start off as a cheerful group full of hope and will power and by the end of the novel are spiritually bankrupt. They "feel that paralyzed dullness with which the mind protects itself against too much sorrow and too much pain." When the Joads enter their first Hooverville they catch a glimpse of the deterioration which ties ahead of them. They see filthy tin and rug shacks littered with trash, the children dirty and diseased, the heads of families "bull-simple" from being roughed up too often, all spirit gone and in its place a whining, passive resistance to authority. Although, he novel before the Joads come to this point, in the last chapter they are well on ends of their way.

As the family declines morally and economically, the family unit itself breaks up. Grampa dies before they are out of Oklahoma and lies in a nameless grave; Granma is buried a pauper; Noah deserts the family; Connie deserts Rosasharn; the baby is born dead; Tom. becomes a fugitive; Al is planning to leave as soon as possible; Casy is killed; and they have had to abandon the Wilsons.

These two negative movements are balanced by two positive movements. Although the primitive unit is breaking up, the fragments are going to make up a larger group. The sense of a communal unit grows steadily through the narrative of the Wilsonand the Wainwrights, "One man, one family driven from the land; this rusty car creaking along the highway to the west. I lost my land, a single tractor took my land. I am alone and I am bewildered. And in the night one family camps in a ditch and another family

pulls in and the tents come out. The two men squat on their hams and the women and children listen.... For here 'I lost my land' is changed; a cell is split and front splitting grows the thing you [owners] hate- 'We lost *our* land!' ". Oppression and, the relief offered by a intimidation only serve to strengthen the social group; federal migrant camp only gives them a vision of the democratic life they can attain by cooperation, which is why the local citizens are opposed to these camps.

Steinbeck shares Casy's and Tom's belief in union organization as the solution to the immigrants' problems. His attitudes seem traditional, very like the inherited values of the Okie farmers themselves. He dislikes machines, as 'his moving description of the tractor raping the Joads' land makes clear , and feels farming should be the product of a harmonious relationship between man and the soil. He is suspicious of large abstract organizations, like the banks that take over the small farmers' land at the opening of the book. He prefers small units of people: communities like the Government camp, the wayside campsites and, above all, the family. His code of belief is humanistic and humanitarian. It is based on the insistence that people are more important than things. The fleshand-blood needs of the dispossessed Okie farmers are more important than banks, profit margins, or abstract theories of economy. The message of the novel is that co-operation can be achieved only through the willingness of individuals of their own volition to put aside special interests and work towards a common purpose.

Unlike other Naturalistic novels, *The Grapes of Wrath* combines two criteria: realistic Naturalism and moral optimism. Although his special care for the working people and his interests in scientific observation contributed to his being one of the pioneers of Naturalism in American literature, he also maintains that "human free will is not really absent from the Naturalistic novel" but is "taken from the protagonist and the other characters and transferred to the reader and to society at large". *The Grapes of Wrath* ends with an image that is purely poetic and does not put a final period to the plot by showing Rose of Sharon breastfeeding a man dying of hunger whose ruined stomach can digest nothing but milk, which no one has the money to buy for him. We are not told even what has happened to Tom, what the Joad family will do, or what will happen to the mass of dispossessed farmers. Still the story of the Joad is completed in the barn, for this book is not the tale of the family's quest for security, but of their education of the heart.**17** Steinbeck believes that the only lasting and meaningful reforms originate in the individual human heart. So *The Grapes of Wrath* is neither riddle nor tragedy but it is an epic comedy of the triumph of the holy

spirit.**18** The Joads have not yet been saved from the physical privation, but they have saved themselves from spiritual bigotry.

Conclusion:

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* is one of the classic documents of the Depression which describes the frustrated pilgrimage of the Joads' across america from the barren farmland of Oklahoma to the fruit orchards of California. In this novel, Steinbeck dislikes machines and large abstract organizations and he feels that farming should be the product of a haronious relationship between man and the soil. Instead he prefers small units of people and communities like the Government camp, the wayside campsites and, above all, the family. His code of belief is humanistic and humanitarian based on the insistence that people are more important than things. So he wants to prove that the flesh and blood needs of the dispossessed Okie farmers are more important than banks, profit margins, or abstract theories of economy. So *The Grapes of Wrath* is not a tale of concerning with the frustrating physical migration but as with the accompanying spiritual movement that is the education of the heart, when they have triumphed over familiar prejudices. This education results in a change from their jealously regarding themselves as an isolated and self important family unit to their regarding themselves as part of a vast human family that, in Casy's words, shares "one big soul everybody's a part of" (p.33).

Notes:

1 Warren French, *John Steinbeck.* Second Edition, lnc., New York, 1975.G.K.Hall@Co.,1975, p. 37.
2 John D. Jump(ed.), *Naturalism: The Critical Idiom*. Cox @WymanLtd., Fakenham, Norfolk, Great Britain, 1971,p. 33.
3 Ibid, pp.15-16.
4 Ibid, p.17.
5 Claude Edmonde Magny, *The Age of the American Novel: The Film Aesthetic of Fiction Between the Two Wars,* Fredrick Ungar Publishing Co, Inc., New York,1972, p.169.
6 Boris Ford (ed.), *The Present: Of the New Pelican Guide To English Literature*. Volume 8. Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1983, p.29.
7 Magny, p.171.
8 John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*. The Heinmann Educational Books Ltd, 1965, p.v.
9 George Perkins(ed.), *The American Tradition in Literature.* Six Edition. Random House, New York, 1956,p.1296.
10 Peter Lisca, *The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck: A Collection of Critical Essays.* , Robert Murray Davis (ed.). Prentice-Hall, Inc, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. New Jersey,1972, p.82.
11 Ibid.
12 Warren French, *John Steinbeck.* Twayne Publishers, lnc., New York, 1961,p.106.
13 French 1975, p.100.

14 C.W.F McKenna, *John Steinbeck The Grapes of Wrath.* Longman York Press, 1980, p.47-48.
15 Ibid,p.48.
16 Ibid.
17 Davis, pp.96-97.
18 Magny,p. 196.

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9) Jump, John D (ed.). *Naturalism: The Critical Idiom*. Cox @WymanLtd., Fakenham, Norfolk, Great Britain, 1971.
10) Magny, Claude Edmonde. *The Age of the American Novel: The Film Aesthetic of Fiction Between the Two Wars,* Fredrick Ungar Publishing Co., Inc., New York,1972.
11) McKenna, C.W.F. *John Steinbeck: The Grapes of Wrath.* Longman York Press, 1980.
12) Ousby, Ian. *An Introduction to Fifty American Novels.* Pan Books, London and Sydney, 1979.
13) Perkins, George(ed.). *The American Tradition in Literature.* Six Edition, New York, Random House,s 1956.
14) Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. The Heinmann Educational Books Ltd, 1965.
15) Walcutt, Charles Child. *American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream.* Grenwood Press Publishers, 1956.

روايــة عنـاقيـد الغضـب للكـاتـب جــون شتـاينـبــك

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الجامعــة المستنصريــة/ كليــة الآداب – قسم اللغة الانكليزية وآدابها

الملخص:

إنَّ رواية عناقيد الغضب (١٩٣٩) للروائي الأميركي جون شتاينبك توضح الظروف القاسية التي واجهت العوائل المهاجرة في أميركا في عام الانتكاسة. تكشف هذه الرواية ولعه بالأرض ورفضه للفساد الذي نتج من النظرية المادية وإيمانه بقدرة الإنسان على التغلب على بيئته القاسية. تناقش هذه الرواية معاناة عمال الطبقة الفقيرة من خلال افراد عائلة الجودز خلال هذه الأعوام.

إن محاولة توسيع الأراضي في مزارع اوكلاهوما أدت إلى تشتت هذه العوائل ومضاعفة معاناتهم وتحويلهم إلى متسولين يعانون من الحرمان والجوع. جميع رواياته عن كاليفورنيا تهاجم الصورة المزيفة للفردوس التي كونتها العوائل في أثناء هجرتهم إلى كاليفورنيا.