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***The Idea of Post-War America in Selected
Novels by John Steinbeck and John Dos Passos***

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To the memory of my grand-father and all my relatives

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Abstract

This dissertation attempts to study the idea of the ‘Other’ according to John Dos Passos (1896-1970) and John Steinbeck (1902-1968). We have analyzed the position of the two authors towards major post-war issues. Throughout our thesis, we have referred to the numerous social, racial, gender, political, and economic issues that arose as a result of the aftermath of the First World War. Our appropriation of the New Historicist theory has enabled us to make a historical and literary diagnosis of John Dos Passos’s case and John Steinbeck’s fiction. We have endeavored to demonstrate that both Dos Passos and John Steinbeck share the same idea, position, and vision towards a fragmented, class-based, ‘white supremacist’ and capitalist post-war America. To reach our objective, we have selected some ‘target’ novels that will be decisive throughout our analysis. These novels are Steinbeck’s *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Of Mice and Men* (1937), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), and John Dos Passos’ trilogy *U.S.A* (1938). The study of *Of Mice and Men* and Dos Passos’ *U.S.A* is investigated from the perspective of racial discrimination and gender issues. Indeed, the Hispanic community of *Tortilla Flat*, the unique black character of the novella *Of Mice and Men* ‘Crooks’, and the two Italian Italian-born anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti experience the same hatred, racism, and discrimination. In addition, we investigated women status within post-war American society. This study also explores another post-war theme, i.e, the struggle **proletariat vs. big business**, this proletariat theme is an influential part of Dos Passos’ trilogy *U.S.A* and Steinbeck’s epic novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. Our ‘proletariat’ reading attempts to demonstrate that the two authors share the idea that post-war America is composed of two-nations; one of them belongs to the rich and privileged and the other one to the have-not and the powerless.

General Introduction

Introduction:

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the idea of the other in post-war American fiction according to John Dos Passos's trilogy *U.S.A* and John Steinbeck's novels *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Of Mice and Men* (1937), and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). Indeed, the aftermath of the Great War knew several upheavals and agitations in America in terms of race, politics, and society. Anti-foreign attitudes attained their climax in the years just after the Great War. Spokesmen for '100 percent Americanism' influenced the enactment of anti-immigration laws. In addition, the revival of the Ku Klux Klan triggered a racist atmosphere all over the country. Moreover, the outburst of the Red Scare also coincided with the post-war era. Communists, radicals, anarchists, and labor figures were pursued and condemned throughout the nation. The famous Sacco and Vanzetti's trial illustrated this fear towards the 'Reds'. The two Italian-born anarchists were condemned for the murder of F.A.Parmenter, i.e, who was a paymaster of a shoe factory, and his guard Alessandro Berardelli.

Sacco and Vanzetti were executed on August 23, 1927. It is worth mentioning that John Dos Passos, among other intellectuals, participated in the several mobilizations so as to free Sacco and Vanzetti. He wrote a pamphlet entitled *Facing the Chair* (1927) to support the two accused. Their execution constituted a true '*événement déclencheur*' that urged John Dos Passos to write his landmark trilogy *U.S.A* (1938). He referred to Sacco and Vanzetti's '*cause célèbre*' in the third sequel of his trilogy that is entitled *The Big Money* (1936). He wrote after their execution that '*all right we are two nations*' (1). With the publication of the trilogy, he became the '*artistic and intellectual spokesman for the far left*' (2) during the 1930s.

Another milestone issue during the post-war era in America was the Great Depression. The latter began in 1929 after the Great Crash of Wall Street. It was the longest and most severe depression ever experienced by America. The economic crisis left millions of homeless

families and unemployed all over the country. The depression era also experienced another catastrophe. The latter concerns the 'Dust Bowl' that struck the Great Plains in the early 1930s. Thousands of American families migrated to California in order to find a more decent life. A literary work that summed up the bitterness of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl was John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). John Steinbeck as a Californian was a direct witness of the arrival of these migrant workers to California.

Therefore, we can say that Dos Passos's and John Steinbeck's works reflected the issues of their era throughout their novels. The two literary figures shared some characteristics. Both of them were foreign descendants, i.e, the grandfather of Dos Passos was a Portuguese and Steinbeck's grandfather was German. In addition, the two authors exercised as journalists, and they borrowed some journalistic and modernist techniques to their fiction. Moreover, they were sympathizers of socialist and left ideas. Furthermore, Dos Passos's *U.S.A* and Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* were collective novels, i.e, their protagonists were groups of people without an individual hero.

Review of the Literature:

Dos Passos's and Steinbeck's novels have been the centre of interest for many critics. Criticism on John Dos Passos's fiction has been carried out under multiple angles. Laura Browder in her book entitled *Rousing the Nation: Radicals Culture in Depression America* (1998) devotes a long chapter to John Dos Passos. She sustains that Dos Passos is a '*historian of American life*' (3) throughout his depiction of America in the trilogy *U.S.A* (1938). She emphasized that the trilogy's characters range from radicals, Wobblies, and big business figures. Therefore, this 'multi-social' depiction offers to the trilogy a 'socio-cosmopolitan' dimension.

Moreover, John Trombold (1995) tackles another issue with his study that concerns the impact of the popular songs that are launched throughout the trilogy *U.S.A* (1938) on a growing revolutionary spirit of the post-war era. In this sense, John Trombold maintains that “*Dos Passos’s use of these songs in the sixty-eight Newsreels reveals the songs were for him laden with associations signifying the possibility of cultural revolt. Thus the small space allotted to the fragmented of song belies their actual significance for the trilogy.*” (4).

Another illustrative critic who enlarges the scope of Dos Passos criticism is Joseph Fichtelberg (1988). Indeed, the latter argues that the author’s fiction embodies a ‘picaresque’ element (5), i.e, the term means ‘tale of the road’. According to Joseph Fichtelberg, Dos Passos’s characters are somewhat ‘desperate’ vagabonds (6). He adds that Dos Passos’s protagonists experience solitude, seek a substitute home, and they are savagely beaten and jailed by ‘high-class’ protectors of the society they seek to enter. In this respect, one can refer to the prologue of *U.S.A* that denotes this ‘picaresque’ idea in Dos Passos’s fiction

The young man [...] must catch the last subway, the streetcar, the bus, run up the gangplanks of all the steamboats, register at all the hotels, work in the cities, answer the wantads, learn the trades, take up the jobs, line in all the boardinghouses, sleep in all the beds. One bed is not enough, one job is not enough, one life is not enough. At night, head swimming with wants, he walks by himself alone (7).

Several other critics deal with the various ways in which Dos Passos uses historical materials to write fiction. One of these critics is Barry Maine (1985). He emphasizes that Dos Passos’s *U.S.A* is a literary work that stands “*somewhere between history and fiction*” (8). For him, Dos Passos chooses the term ‘chronicle’ (9), i.e, a written record of historical events, in order to combine fact and fiction altogether. This echoes Dos Passos’s assumptions “*I put some slice of history back to life*” (10). Therefore, Dos Passos combines history and fiction

thanks to the contents of *U.S.A.* The trilogy is composed of factual contents such as: the newspaper clippings, popular songs, and biographies of several American figures. Barry Maine also maintains that Dos Passos borrows the language, form, and structure from the cinema to write his trilogy *U.S.A.* He explains that “*the titles of two of the four narrative sequences “Newsreels” (11) and “Camera Eye” (12) are obvious borrowings from the language of pictures”* (13). This denotes the influence of the cinematic genre on Dos Passos’s trilogy *U.S.A.*

Barry Maine opened another angle within Dos Passos’s criticism. He sustains that Steinbeck is in ‘literary’ debt to Dos Passos. Barry Maine explains that Steinbeck read and admired Dos Passos’s work during the 1920s and 1930s. He refers to the use of ‘interchapters’ in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). For him, the so-called ‘interchapters’ are inspired by the trilogy *U.S.A.* In the latter, Dos Passos interrupts his fictional narratives with the ‘Newsreels’, short biographies of public figures, and the technique of the ‘Camera Eye’. In the same manner, the interchapters in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) interrupt the development of the fiction, so as to highlight the severe and painful socio-economic conditions that the Joad family must experience. Barry Maine states that the objective of the interchapters of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), as in Dos Passos’s *U.S.A.*, is to enlarge the dimension of the fiction by exposing a large picture of the American society. “*Steinbeck does experiment with different kinds of narration within these interchapters, and the effects he appears to strive for are markedly similar to those of U.S.A”* (14).

This is a short and succinct review of the most representative critics of Dos Passos’s trilogy *U.S.A.* Concerning John Steinbeck’s *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Of Mice and Men* (1937), and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), they have received a considerable bulk of criticism. Philip D. Ortega maintains that John Steinbeck ‘caricatures’ the image of the ‘Chicanos’ by

presenting them as drunken, lazy, and errant characters. Philip D. Ortega (1996) refers to Steinbeck's assumptions in the novel, when Steinbeck wrote that the 'paisanos' are "*clear of commercialism, free of the complicated systems of American business*" (15). According to Ortega, Steinbeck depicted the Hispanics as 'flat' characters.

According to Charles R. Metzger (1995), there is 'essentialism' in Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat*, because John Steinbeck "*does not purport to do more than present one kind of Mexican-American, the paisano errant, in one place, Monterey, and at one time, just after World War I*" (16). Moreover, Louis Owens wrote articles entitled '*Reading Steinbeck*' published by '*The Californian*'. Owens criticizes the treatment of the paisanos in Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat*. He maintains that the author "*doesn't offer a great deal to multiculturalism. His treatment of women and what today would be called people of color leaves a lot to be desired. He was a white, middle class from Salinas. He was a product of his times*" (17).

Charlotte Cook Hadella (1993) sustains that Curley's wife is the main cause of Lennie Small's downfall and that Steinbeck "*makes Curley's wife the instrument of destruction of the land dream. The mythical discourse of the fiction dictates that a woman precipitates the exile from paradise*" (18). The dream of George and Lennie to possess their 'own' farm is ruined by the devastating charm of Curley's wife. The latter provokes Lennie with her attractive softness without knowing that her provocation is the first step towards her destruction. The novella tells the tragic story of two migrant workers, George Milton and Lennie Small, who endeavor to fulfill their dream, i.e, to own a farm, but the husky and disabled Lennie kills Curley's wife because he is attracted by her softness.

Another critic who has studied John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937) is Mickael J.Mayer (2009). He maintains that loneliness and isolation are the central themes of the novel. He emphasizes that all the characters of the novel experience loneliness. The 'black stable

buck' Crooks, Curley's wife, and Candy are described as being lonely characters without concrete 'inter-social' connections. Nonetheless, Mickael J. Meyer explains that George is in double position towards loneliness, i.e, sometimes he rejects solitude and sometimes he wishes to live alone. Indeed, George often hopes that his bond with Lennie can be broken. George finds that Lennie represents a burden for his actions. In this respect, Mickael J.Meyer sustains that "*George often finds his companion to be more a trial than a blessing since his mentally challenged friend impedes George from the pleasures in life he most desires....*" (19). Despite George's will to live alone, he is too attached to Lennie and he cannot break the bond.

Apart from George's psychological reading, Brian E. Railsback proposes an anthropological analysis of Steinbeck's fiction in his essay *On Darwinism*; he emphasizes that Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* echoes Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. According to him, "*in no other book is Steinbeck's dramatization of Darwin's theory more clear; the novel resonates with the naturalist's ideas*" (20). This epic novel is the 'sum-total' of Darwinism, i.e, the novel includes the essential elements of evolution: the struggle for survival, existence, and the natural selection's determinism. Brian E.Railsback demonstrates that the migrant workers try to survive by their migration to California. However, the tough and rigid 'natural selection' of California complicates the daily life of the Joad family and the other migrants. This echoes Darwin's assumptions "*In the survival of favored individuals and races, during the constantly recurrent struggle for existence, we see a powerful and everacting form of selection.*" (21). Under the effect of this natural selection, some characters have a sense of victory. The harsh socio-economic conditions of the 1930s urged Ma Joad and Tom Joad to undermine these difficulties in order to survive.

In addition to the psychological and anthropological perspectives on Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), Malcolm Cowley (2005) has suggested a sociological reading. His study concentrates on John Steinbeck's sympathy for the migrants and their endeavor to unite themselves against their 'economic' oppressors. According to him, *The Grapes of Wrath* is classified among the angry books of American literature, it belongs "very high in the category of the great angry books like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that roused a people to fight against intolerable wrongs" (22). Frederic I. Carpenter (2005) tackles the same theme of solidarity. He emphasizes that the Joads move from "I" to "We" (23) in order to escape from chaos. A new Joads's social group is forming, based on the term '*en masse*'. Each character is a social contributor within the general framework of the Joad family.

Issue and Working Hypotheses:

From this review of the literature about John Dos Passos and John Steinbeck, one can notice that many studies have already dealt with their novels. Hitherto, little research has been devoted to their similar vision of post-war America. This dissertation attempts to add a new perspective within the post-war analysis of John Steinbeck and John Dos Passos's respective fictions. Indeed, this thesis analyses the idea of post-war America as it is articulated in Dos Passos's *U.S.A* and Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937), and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). Our intention throughout this dissertation is to demonstrate that Dos Passos and Steinbeck share the same idea, vision, position towards America after the First World War. The two authors present a fragmented, class-based, and racist America during the 1920s and 1930s. To achieve our task, we will refer to the numerous racial, political, social, economic, and gender issues of the era. The investigation of the history of the idea of post-war America will help us understand how economic and political causes can lead to racial and proletariat hysteria. The

hysteria was articulated around three types of othering: the ethnic, proletariat, and the gendered other.

Our analysis will be conducted on three major axes. The first axis is Steinbeck's and Dos Passos's portrayal of 'non-wasp' characters. Therefore, we will refer to the unique black character in the novella *Of Mice and Men* "Crooks", to the community of Hispanics in *Tortilla Flat*, and also to the Italian-born anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti in order to justify the idea of Dos Passos that America is composed of two nations, i.e., one of the oppressed and one of the racial oppressor. The racial discrimination, that Crooks, the paisanos, and Sacco and Vanzetti experience, reflects the racial tensions of the post-war era. It also reflects the Red Scare propaganda of the aforementioned era that considers Sacco and Vanzetti as 'threats' to the political and racial 'equilibrium' of the American nation.

The second axis of our analysis concerns the denunciation by the two authors of the ravaging effects of Capitalism and the growing social awareness of the proletariat during the Great Depression era. In fact, the two authors through the trilogy *U.S.A* and *The Grapes of Wrath* present the capitalist's greed and its devastating consequences within the socio-economic tragedy of the early 1930s. The third axis of our analysis deals with the position of women during the post-war context. Since the post-war epoch metamorphosed the position and standing of American women; one can not engage within an analysis of the aforementioned period without referring to them. The two authors 'historicize' women through offering them a voice, standing, and impact on their fiction. Ma Joad in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and Mary French in Dos Passos's *U.S.A* illustrate the new standing of American women. Therefore, we shall argue that Dos Passos and Steinbeck share the same idea of post-war America in terms of race, ethnicity, class, and gender.

Method and Materials:

It has so far been clear that the materials selected to study and analyze the idea of post-war America of John Dos Passos and John Steinbeck concern the trilogy *U.S.A* (1938), *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Of Mice and Men* (1937), and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). As for methodology I will appeal to the theory of New Historicism.

New Historicism is a school of literary theory that arose in the 1980s with Stephen Greenblatt as its main proponent. It aims to understand the literary work through its historical context. In this sense, Aram Veesser notes that New Historicism “*attempts to explain facts, by reference to earlier facts...I mean the attempts to find explanation and relevant material in social sciences other than the one which is primarily under investigation*” (24). Thus, the essence of the New Historicism is that “*literary history cannot be seen in isolation from other historical forces*” (25). The principles of the New Historicism are strongly opposed to the view that the study of literature should be done independently of social and political contexts. Instead, these New Historicists argue that literature is part of the historical process and should be engaged in the political management of reality. Thus, within the New Historicism there is a closer relationship between literature and history.

New Historicism seeks to restore contexts of time, authorship, and culture in literary works. These contexts are ‘inseparable’ from these works. New Historicists argue that literature is created by a society or culture, but it is “*part of the creation of that society or culture*” (26). To achieve this task, i.e, the connection between culture and literature, the New Historicists analyses texts and documents from the ‘target’ culture to learn about the lives of the people and their socio-political issues. It is useful to note that there are two major ‘theoretical’ influences on New Historicism. The first influence is the French philosopher Michel Foucault, who sustains that the norms of a culture are established and formed by those

who hold power. This point echoes Dwight W. Hoover's idea that "*The New Historicism argues that there is no universal meaning or truth in history and that the meaning imputed to history reflects power relations at the time of writing as well as the time of the events occurrence*" (27). The second 'theoretical' influence on the New Historicism is the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), who broadens Foucault's assumptions by sustaining that every history "*includes resistances to the dominant power*" (28).

The New Historicism also sustains that actual truths are conceived within history, and they are subject to interpretations. To explain this idea, one can refer to Cynthia Burkhead's assumptions:

[...] Actual truths are entirely historical creatures, directed at history, and grown in a historical chain, as interpretation refers to interpretation throughout history... We use our imagination to decompose old worlds and to compose new worlds, through weighting, ordering, supplementing, deleting, and 'deforming', i.e. correcting or distorting (29).

Therefore, the task of a New Historicist is to interpret the past in a 'non-mimetic' way, i.e. an interpretation based on imagination and creation without mimetic connotations. So, the New Historicism interacts, initiates, creates, and recreates the past. However, the interpretive imagination is limited to what past history 'permits' and 'accepts'. Indeed, the limits and barriers that are fixed by history are insurmountable and inaccessible. "*When history fails, there is no escape from the suffering and its repercussions*" (30)

It is worth noting that the New Historicism offers a 'multidisciplinary' scope for scholars. The theory undermines the doctrine of 'non-interference' between disciplines. In this respect, Aram Veesser maintains in his book entitled *The New Historicism* (1989) that "*the New Historicism has given scholars new opportunities to cross the boundaries separating history, anthropology, art, politics, literature, and economics*" (31). In addition, the theory

evaluates how a literary work is influenced by the time in which it was achieved and produced. It also analyses the social and historical background of a given author. Tom Lewis throughout his article *The New Historicism and Marxism* argues that there is a link between Marxism and New Historicism. The latter endeavors to look for ways in which populations or masses are marginalized, discriminated, and otherized through a literary work. In a word, “*the New Historicism proposes a universal model of historical change based upon Karl Marx*” (32).

The relevance of the New Historicism on the following research is based on different points. The theory offers the possibility of creating, reproducing, and recreating the past. This echoes Dos Passos’s trilogy *U.S.A* (1938), where the author ‘historicizes’ women through portraying them in his fictional narratives within a socio-political standing. Moreover, the New Historicism maintains that there is no escape from the cruel destiny of history. To illustrate this view, I shall refer to the characters of John Dos Passos’s trilogy *U.S.A* and John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* who are facing the tumultuous post-war era without escaping from their ‘fragmented’, class-based, and exploitative society.

A new historical study of Steinbeck’s *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and Dos Passos’s *U.S.A* (1938) concerns the position of American citizens who are not descended from the white, Puritan, and conservative origin. Since the New Historicism proposes to join the social, political, and ethnic contexts within literature, I shall study the ethnic and socio-political tensions of the post-war era. These tensions are incarnated through Sacco and Vanzetti’s ‘*cause célèbre*’ in the trilogy *U.S.A*. Similarly, John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* (1937) recounts the same racial discrimination through the character of Crooks. The latter is discriminated and isolated in the ranch because of his color and ethnic origin.

Methodological Outline:

I shall divide the work into four chapters. In the first one I will deal with the times and life of John Steinbeck and John Dos Passos. I will also emphasize the several tensions and upheavals during the post-war epoch. The second chapter deals with the idea of the ethnic other and racial discrimination in the fiction of the authors, while chapter three examines the idea of the proletariat other. The fourth chapter analyses the idea of the gendered other and the female representation according to selected novels by John Steinbeck and John Dos Passos. The general conclusion will consist of a condensed restatement of the ideas developed all throughout this thesis.

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- 8)- Barry Maine. "U.S.A: Dos Passos and the Rhetoric of History" in *South Atlantic Review*. Vol. 50, No.1, January 1985, p. 75.
- 9)- Ibid. p.6.
- 10)- Ibid.
- 11)- Newsreels: they are short motion pictures of current events that were introduced in England in 1897 by the Frenchman Charles Pathé. They covered expected events, such as parades, demonstrations, and inaugurations. John Dos Passos uses this technique throughout his trilogy *U.S.A* through launching actual headlines and excerpts from news stories and popular songs. The Newsreels are arranged in juxtaposition,i.e, each part comments on the other and the whole framework of the Newsreels issued a vast social and historical background for the fiction.

See Barry Maine,Ed. *John Dos Passos: The Critical Heritage*, London: Routledge, 2005.
- 12) - Camera Eye: is a series of prose poems that are presented as installments in a form of an autobiography. The Camera Eyes recount the author's participation in the life of his times. Therefore, the 'Camera Eye' sections reflect John Dos Passos's own life and experience. The Camera Eye sections begin with Dos Passos's experiences as a child with his mother and progress to recount his time at Harvard and his engagement with the ambulance corps during the World War I.

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Chapter One:
Times and Life of John Dos
Passos and John Steinbeck

Introduction:

Since John Dos Passos's trilogy *U.S.A.* (1938) spans the years from 1900 to 1929, and John Steinbeck's novels *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) coincided with the Great Depression era, we will make in the following chapter a general survey or a kind of 'historical' diagnosis of these postwar years to illustrate the socio-political tensions of the era. The choice of these two writers is the most appropriate because our two authors reflected the issues of their age.

The First World War is considered as a historical phase that plunged human beings into chaos, disorder, and traumas. Post-war societies who experienced this 'war' experience knew several upheavals in terms of politics, economy, culture, and society (1). In 1914, Americans were shocked by the 'European' impressive warlike desire. Britain, France, and Italy were the 'Allies'; Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire were the 'Central Powers'. President Wilson declared the American neutrality and urged Americans to "*be impartial in thought as well as in action*" (2). Nonetheless, Americans entered the Great War to defend national interests against German aggression following the sinking of American merchant ships. Wilson had in mind a new vision of a 'new world order' based in the 'Fourteen Points', i.e, he called for a 'general association of nations' to prevent future wars (3). The war ended on November 11, 1918 with millions of victims.

The Aftermath of the war:

The year 1919 was considered as a damaging year for Americans. Indeed, the booming war economy marked a stop just after the war. Four million workers went on strike as unemployment and inflation rose. Seattle and Boston launched general strikes in order to protest against their precarious socio-economic situation after the Great War (4). Furthermore,

1919 viewed the advent of the Spanish flu epidemic in the United States. It caused about 675,000 deaths. The same year saw several race riots across the country; they were labeled as the 'Red Summer' of 1919. It is called so "*because the blood of blacks and whites flowed freely together in the streets of American cities*" (5). In addition, the racist attempts to limit Afro-Americans freedom led to great racial tensions in Chicago on July 27-31, 1919. These riots were called 'Chicago race riots'. Images of white mobs beating African Americans to death, or black mobs setting fire to white houses were extremely shocking. These riots left 38 dead, 537 injured and more than 1500 homeless. Moreover, the riots intensified racial frictions and hostilities throughout the country and created an electric racial climate.

African Americans had faced 'white' mob assaults. In Chicago white rioters were surprised to see 'black' mass resistance. It goes without saying that the 'New Negro' philosophy of militant defiance was a by-product of the First World War. Thousands of African-Americans joined the army during the war, strongly influenced by W.E.B Du Bois and other prominent black leaders like Marcus Garvey. Therefore, black's veterans returned back from the Great War military and politically 'enlightened'. They were determined to defend their racial community. In 1919, Du Bois wrote "*We return, we return from fighting, we return fighting*" (6). So, the 'New Negro' endeavored to reach black's affirmative identity and emancipation.

The year 1919 also marked the outburst of the 'Red Scare' in the United States of America. Indeed, after the end of the Great War, many Americans kept a feeling of suspicion and distrust towards radicals and foreigners. The communists and anarchists were the target of a vehement social and political racism all over the country. The Red Scare symbolized the post-war hysteria and tension towards non-wasps.

Americans abandoned their anti-German hysteria for anti-radical hysteria after the Great War. Henceforward, Americans would act against a new 'menace', i.e, socialists, communists, radicals, anarchists, and union figures. They were labeled with a generic term 'Reds'. The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the establishment of the third international in 1919 enhanced the American 'phobia' towards the Reds. In this respect, Thomas G. Paterson (1988) explains the reason of the American anti-communist attitudes:

Americans have been anti-communist because they perceive Communism as truly threatening and alien. It is obvious that Communism contrasts sharply with American ideology and experience. Americans celebrate private ownership of property, private profit, individual initiative, and the free marketplace of Capitalism. Americans proudly even arrogantly, proclaim their economic and political liberties and invite people of other nations to match them. Americans believe that Communism denies these liberties...(7)

There were about 70,000 Communists in the United States in 1919; they were viewed by Americans as the scapegoats of the overall post-war turmoils and agitations. The 'Red Scare' touched several areas of American life. For instance, labor unions were thought to be 'contaminated' with such 'Reds'. Schools and colleges were supposed to be invaded with Reds. Thousands of teachers were fired or obliged to sign 'anti-communist' oaths (8). The anti-communist hatred attained its zenith with the creation of a new American civil liberties union; it was called the '*Bolshevist Front*'.

The Attorney General A.Mitchell Palmer played a decisive role in launching this national 'witch-hunt'. Indeed, Palmer was infuriated when his house was bombed on June 2, 1919 by an anarchist. This incident intensified the 'Red Scare' that Bolshevik radicals were planning a revolution in the United States. To counteract, the Attorney General Palmer 'orchestrated' a series of attacks on radicals and anarchists and some 1,400 people, citizens, and aliens were arrested in 1919. (9)

The 'Red' menace attained the political domain and sphere in April 1920. Five socialists who were legally elected in New York were expelled by the New York State legislature. This expulsion shocked Americans who endeavored to secure the principle of representative government. Moreover, Palmer's several excesses began to reduce popular support for the witch-hunt. For example, when the Attorney General announcement of a great radical agitation on May 1, 1920 proved ineffective and wrong, Americans began to question his recurrent anti-communists hysteria. In addition, the Communist Party in the United States was damaged by the threat. In the presidential election of 1924, its presidential candidate received 'only' 36,000 votes. By the summer of 1920, Palmer's vehement campaign against labor radicals was ineffective. Public opinion condemned the Attorney General's campaign against radicals because he anticipated a Bolshevik revolution that did not happen.

Thus, Americans rejected the Red Scare propaganda and engaged towards an era of normalcy and prosperity. The 'non-happening' of the Bolshevik revolution throughout the American soil consolidated and reinforced the idea that American exceptionalism survived to the sociological, economic, and political crises that occurred after the World War I.

Back to 'Normalcy':

The new Republican president Warren Harding who was elected in November, 1920 proposed a return to 'normalcy', he offered "*no nostrums but normalcy...not surgery but serenity*" (10). Harding argued for a return to an 'isolationist' policy by abandoning all forms of international activities in which it had engaged during the war. In fact, Harding's government enlarged its role in the economy through suppressing anti-trust laws and reducing income taxes. Thus, it was a return to a clear economic plan proposing what the historian K.Murray called "*a wedding of government and business in what amounted to a joint enterprise*" (11).

This economic policy reflected suspicious ties between the Republican Party and big business. Several officials of Harding administration went to prison for taking bribes from big business, as the ‘Teapot Dome’ scandal revealed the existence of corrupt public officials. Harding died of a heart attack in San Francisco on August 2, 1923. Calvin Coolidge assumed the presidency, and he was elected in 1924. The American people enjoyed peace and prosperity under Coolidge. His presidency saw business boom and the restoration of integrity in the branches of government. In a word, in 1924 Americans were happy to “*keep cool with Coolidge*” (12). Since we are dealing with the history of ideas, one can argue that the idea that was re-affirmed at the political level is George Washington’s idea of the necessity of an isolationist policy defended in his famous and landmark *farewell address*. Therefore, the 1920s brought dramatic changes in terms of economy, morality, politics, and culture in the United States.

The Roaring Twenties:

The Roaring Twenties is one of the most influential decades in American history. The era ‘rebuilt’ a new America, a nation of huge cities, rapid industrialization, several inventions, and noticeable changes in social and moral attitudes. The essence of the period was linked to modernity. Modern technology with its various automobiles, radio, and movies metamorphosed the daily life of the American population. To ‘repress’ the horrors of the First World War, Americans focused their interests in amusement, fun, dance, and jazz.

During the era, the automobile industry attained its climax. Ford’s ‘Model T’ became the symbol of a new age. By 1927, Henry Ford sold 15 million ‘Model T’ throughout the country. The automobile industry opened up new vistas and horizons for American people through offering thousands of jobs and reducing unemployment. In addition, the Roaring

Twenties saw the 'birth' of the radio. It became the medium of the masses and a symbol of mass culture with its immense audience.

America's alteration from a 'rural-agrarian' nation to an urban-industrial one was one of the characteristics of the twenties. The 1920 census noted 54 percent of the American population was urban (13). The census confirmed that Americans became increasingly concentrated in big cities and they were living under better conditions from those who lived in the 'standard' rural areas and small towns. Undoubtedly, the American nation entered a new era of urbanization and industrialization based on the concept of the 'big city', as James H. Shideler sustains “ *During the twenties the big city became the predatory instrument of modernization, prizing costly bigness and gaudy proliferation of material goods to be sold, enjoyed, and discarded*” (14). In terms of the history of ideas, we note that what was reaffirmed in modern terms is the Jeffersonian idea of democracy that is incarnated in the language of democracy of goods. In an urban setting, Jefferson's idea of yeoman democracy wherein every farmer has a piece of land is translated into a material democracy wherein every American has the right to share in the consumption of goods including cultural ones.

The 1920s introduced several changes in terms of morality and social behaviour for American people. For women, the era created an opportunity to undermine restrictive gender roles and stereotypes. The 'New Woman' of the 1920s “*shed her steel corset, wore shorter skirts, and bobbed her hair as acts of self-liberation*” (15). The appearance of 'flappers' (16) changed the 'traditional' image of women. It goes without saying that the 'New Woman' was more independent than her 'antecedents'. The 'New Woman' asked for equality and the possibility of combining professional career with family tasks. Furthermore, new professional opportunities were offered for women, “*by 1928 five times as many women were employed as in 1918*” (17).

The 19th Amendment which was passed at the beginning of the 1920s guaranteed for women the right to vote. Therefore, the amendment secured a new political status for the 'fair sex', but it also created the opportunity to ask for further social advantages and emancipation.

African Americans, like women, were also 'benefited' from this 'non-usual' decade. 500,000 sharecroppers left the rural South for the urban North during the First World War. The black's migrants faced a racist vehemence in the North, where they were obliged to work for low wages and to live in 'non-human' ghettos. But, these black migrants escaped from rigid Jim Crow segregation and enjoyed the right to vote (18). Henceforward, African-Americans would begin to enjoy a cultural 'effervescence' with the literary movement called the '*Harlem Renaissance*'. The latter, protested against racial oppression, injustice, and celebrated the black culture and history. In a nutshell, the leitmotiv of the movement was the total black's emancipation and the pride of being black.

Moreover, Harlem was the 'militant basis' of Marcus Garvey's *United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)*. The purpose of his movement is summarized by his famous motto "*back to Africa*" that encouraged black's racial pride, self-affirmation, and separation. Garvey refuted the idea of integration and urged his 'racial' comrades to rely on themselves in order to achieve emancipation. This black's endeavor to reach emancipation gave birth to a new 'actual' identity for blacks the '*New Negro*'. The latter was epitomized by the '*Harlem Renaissance*', *i.e.*, the flowering in literature and art of the Negro movement of the 1920s incarnated by the anthology of Alain Locke *The New Negro* (1925) that gathered the work of the most talented Harlem Renaissance writers, such as the poets Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Claude McKay and the novelists Rudolph Fisher, Zora Neale Hurston, and Jean Toomer. Alan Locke argued that the 'New Negro' was different from the 'old negro' in terms of self-confidence and self-affirmation (19).

The 1920s knew the high tide of prohibition. In 1919, the Eighteenth Amendment prohibited the sale, manufacture, transportation, and consumption of the liquor. Businessmen hoped that prohibition would enhance labour productivity; workers expected that prohibition would reduce poverty, and progressives thought that it would facilitate the assimilation of immigrants. Herbert Hoover called prohibition “*an experience noble in purpose*” (20).

Nevertheless, this ‘noble purpose’ was undermined by the rise of a ‘counter-business’ that was called ‘bootlegging’. The latter was a highly profitable business that became involved with organized crime. Al Capone built a ‘criminal’ empire based on bootlegging. One can argue that prohibition provided the contrary purpose, “*ironically, prohibition undermined rather than elevated public morals. It fostered hypocrisy and disrespect for the law, it made criminals wealthy, and it strengthened the public’s appreciation of hard liquor.*” (21).

The complexity of the 1920s was also expressed through religious ‘*fundamentalism*’. The latter is a religious movement that advocated a strict conformity to sacred texts. According to these Fundamentalists, the Bible came directly from God and was ‘infallible’; they were in total contradiction within modern life principles. For instance, they totally rejected Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. For them, the Bible contained a coherent and complete account of God’s creation of man, so, any other ‘extra’ explanations were rejected and severely condemned. In 1925, following these fundamentalist’s ‘preachings’ on Darwin’s theory, the Tennessee legislature forbade the teaching of the theory of evolution in the state’s colleges and schools. In a reaction, the American Civil Liberties Union challenged the Tennessee’s decision by supporting a 24-years old high school teacher John T. Scopes. The teacher decided to defy the state’s law and announced the teaching of Charles Darwin’s theory.

The American Civil Liberties Union wanted to make this challenge a ‘test case’; it engaged the famous attorney Clarence Darrow to defend John T. Scopes, whereas the state engaged the Attorney William Jennings Bryan. With a hundred reporters, radio microphones, and movie cameras, the ‘*Monkey Trial*’ as it was labeled was considered as one of the most important ‘media events’ of the decade. In the end, John T. Scopes was convicted and the teaching of Charles Darwin’s theory remained ‘outlawed’ until 1968 in Tennessee. Nonetheless, the American Civil Liberties Union gained a strategic case within the Monkey Trial. The latter revealed the ‘ridiculous’ aspects of Fundamentalism for American people.

It is worth mentioning that other social and ethnic conflicts ‘perturbed’ the unfolding of the 1920s. For example, the feud between the cities and the countryside denoted this social tension in America (22). As we have already mentioned, by 1920 a majority of the population lived in towns and cities. Indeed, the ‘rural’ America defended its identity and way of life against the ‘devastating’ modern way of life and its cosmopolitan organization. A concrete instance that illustrated this urban-rural clash was prohibition. In rural areas the consumption of alcohol declined, but in the urban cities the consumption of liquid alcohols was persistent. The second segment of this ‘urban-rural’ clash concerned the wave of immigrants. Nativism attained its climax in rural areas because the majority of immigrants lived in cities.

Nativism:

Anti-foreign attitudes reached their zenith in the post-war era which were years of business depression, agricultural downfall, and severe unemployment. Nativism took its appellation from the ‘native-American’ parties (23). The roots of this movement were located in the social anxiety of the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. This period witnessed a large inflow of immigration to the United States. ‘Non Wasps’ (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants) were considered as hostile or aliens to the ‘purity’ of the American nation.

Moreover, movements such as “100 percent Americanism” took advantage of the post-war climate to achieve their objective of launching laws that would eliminate immigration from the land.

The Ku Klux Klan represented the spirit of nativism ‘*par excellence*’. The first Klan flourished in the South during the 1860s, and then collapsed by the early 1870s. The second Ku Klux Klan appeared at the beginning of the 1920s. The creed of the organization vehicled the racism and the persecution of non-Anglo-Saxon groups, and the main principle of the organization was to maintain the white supremacy and to promote racism as it is explained in the Ku Klux Klan’s creed

We avow the distinction between the races of mankind as same has been decreed by the Creator, and shall ever be true in the faithful maintenance of white supremacy and will strenuously oppose any compromise thereof in and all things...that the Ku Klux Klan has announced a set of principles that are much needed today is undoubted. She stands for American idealism...her defense of the American home... (24).

At its peak in the mid-1920s, the Klan ‘proudly’ affirmed to include 4,5 million members, it became “*the most rigorous, active and effective organization in American life*” (25). Moreover, the second Ku Klux Klan was a vehicle of racism, anti-Catholicism, anti-communism, and anti-Semitism. The objective of the Klan was to recreate a ‘native, white, and Protestant’ America. But, several revelations about suspicious and illegal practices by Klan leaders, and a national denunciation of the Klan’s violence paved the way to the organization’s rapid decline.

Nativists thought that immigrants would ‘inundate’ the United States and create a ‘race suicide’. For them, “*the gate must be closed!*” (26),i.e, immigrants and foreigners are not welcomed in the United States of America. In the 1920s, the congress enacted certain laws

under these 'nativist' pressures. For instance, the Congress passed in 1921 the *Emergency Quota Act* that restricted immigration from any country to 3 percent of the population of that nationality. In 1924, the Congress reinforced its restrictive policy through launching the *National Origins Act*. The latter tolerated immigrants from north-west and Southeast Europe, and eliminated all immigration from Asia. The new policy secured the desired goals. Immigration's average was maintained to 300,000 immigrants per year during the rest of the decade. President Coolidge exclaimed after the enactment of the act "*America must be kept American!*" (27).

The nation's hatred and animosity towards Southern European immigrants reappeared within the 'celebrated' case of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

Sacco and Vanzetti:

Sacco and Vanzetti were two Italian immigrants and anarchists who were convicted in 1920 of the assassination of a paymaster and a guard in South Braintree, in Massachusetts. Nonetheless, the evidence against Sacco and Vanzetti was incoherent and lacking validity and the trial was 'orchestrated' against the accused. From 1920 to 1927, this '*cause célèbre*' was debated in the press and in the courts.

The trial of Sacco and Vanzetti began on May 31, 1921. The two men had been armed when they were arrested, this fact triggered their condemnation. In fact, they were armed because they wanted to defend themselves from any attack, i.e, their arrests coincided with the 'Red Scare' era, and being classified as 'anarchists' they were 'potential victims' of the Red Scare propaganda (28). In addition, the evidence against Vanzetti was almost inexistent; only one witness affirmed that he saw him at the 'crime' scene. It was the same case for Sacco,

when the prosecution affirmed that the '.32' bullet which was found in the body of the guard was fired from Sacco's revolver. In this sense, Philip Foner (1994) maintains that

The prosecution expert, Captain William Proctor of the State Police, testified that the bullet was 'consistent with' having been fired from Sacco's gun. He later admitted that the prosecution had carefully coached him in that exact wording after he had said he could not make a positive identification. He added that he did not believe Sacco's gun had fired the shot.(29)

It follows from this, that the prosecution 'manipulated' the course of the investigation so as to condemn Nicolas Sacco. It is clear that in an atmosphere of hatred towards radicals and foreigners, the prosecution thought that no solid evidence was 'essential' in order to victimize or to condemn Sacco and Vanzetti.

The trial was considered as a series of hostilities and attacks towards the two defendants. This prejudicial treatment of the accused shocked the public opinion. For instance, Frank Sibley who was one of the reporters who covered the trial described the suspicious attitude of the judge Webster Thayer, he sustains that the judge Thayer's "*whole manner, attitude seemed to be that the jurors were there to convict these men...the rulings against the defendants were done with the air of prejudice and scorn*" (30). Later on, the Judge Thayer declared 'arrogantly' "*Did you see what I did to those anarchist bastards?*" (31).

The two defendants were sentenced to death in the electric chair. Their 'fault' was that they were foreign-born and anarchists. These two characteristics were not 'welcomed' in the 1920s. During the long trial, Sacco and Vanzetti's case became a symbol of resistance. Indeed, radicals demonstrated, intellectuals protested, and general strikes were organized in Europe in order to protest against Sacco and Vanzetti's condemnation (32). The slogan

“*SACCO AND VANZETTI MUST NOT DIE*” (33) was a recurrent motto during the several demonstrations throughout the world.

An array of writers endeavored to defend the accused through their engagement so as to save Sacco and Vanzetti. Writers such as: H.L. Mencken, Heywood Brown, Dorothy Parker, and John Dos Passos. The latter was highly involved within the case, he covered the trial as a journalist and wrote a powerful pamphlet entitled *Facing the Chair* (1927) urging the audience to denounce the condemnation of the two accused. Moreover, in his landmark trilogy *U.S.A* (1938) he referred to this ‘cause célèbre’ in the ‘Newsreel’ LXVI’ and the ‘Camera Eye’ (50). Dos Passos within a sad tone wrote “*all right you have won you will kill the brave men our friends tonight*” (34).

From the beginning of the trial in 1920, the communists made an ‘all-out’ effort to clear Sacco and Vanzetti. For example, *The Liberator*, which was the communist cultural publication, published a series of articles and pamphlets in order to ‘internationalize’ the case. On November 15, 1924, the date of Judge Thayer’s condemnation, the Communist International with some peripheral organizations launched an appeal from Moscow announcing that it “*should stir the labor movement of America from one end of the country to the other*” (35). According to the Worker’s Party of America, Sacco and Vanzetti’s case was the overall working-class concern and preoccupation. For them, the assaults on the two defendants are equivalent of an assault on the proletariat. The party believed that the imprisonment of Sacco and Vanzetti was just another ‘politico-judicial’ manoeuvre in order to weaken the working-class.

March 17, 1925 was a symbolic day during the Sacco and Vanzetti’s famous case. The American Worker’s Party launched the ‘*Sacco and Vanzetti day*’ throughout the United

States of America. Thousands of Americans participated in demonstrations and parades under the leitmotiv “*Make Sacco and Vanzetti’s Day a Red Day for Freedom*” (36).

On April 9, 1927, the judge Thayer confirmed the sentence of death on Sacco and Vanzetti, and the execution was ‘programmed’ on August 23, 1927. After, the announcement of the verdict, Vanzetti exclaimed “*I am suffering because I am radical and indeed I am radical; I have suffered because I was an Italian and indeed I am an Italian*” (37). As expected, Sacco and Vanzetti were executed on August 23, 1927 despite the impressive national and international mobilization.

Sacco and Vanzetti’s condemnation was another proof that America was in a crucial questioning of its racial and political identity during the post-war era. The execution of Sacco and Vanzetti coincided within the end of the 1920s, and the onset of a terrible historical phase throughout American History, i.e, the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The Great Depression:

The ‘New Era’ reached an unprecedented peak in the late 1920s. Herbert Hoover was elected in 1928; his election coincided with a stock market boom. Prices doubled in 1929 transforming Wall Street into the ‘business’ center of the world. In March 1929, Hoover announced that “*the future is bright with hope*” (38). Reasoned by this ‘financial’ euphoria, millions of new American investors dared to enter the stock market. Therefore, the number of stockholders attained 9 million throughout the country. Americans were encouraged by the several ‘from rags to riches’ stories of workers and ordinary citizens who became millionaire thanks to their actions. Thus, for many individuals, the stock market proposed a tempting ‘get-rich-quick’ plan. Billions of dollars were drawn from the banks into Wall Street. By September and early October 1929 prices began to decline, but speculation continued thanks

to individuals who had borrowed money to buy shares. This practice could be effective only as long as stock shares maintained their rise. Nonetheless, on October 18, 1929 “ *the market went into a free fall, and the wild rush to buy stocks gave way to an equally wild rush to sell*” (39).

The first day of ‘financial’ panic occurred on October 24, 1929 that was labeled as the ‘Black Thursday’. On that day a record of 12, 9 million shares were traded because investors wanted to reduce their losses. Between October 24 and October 29, 1929, the stock market lost 40 percent of its initial value. Furthermore, prices continued their fall during the beginning of the 1930s. Despite Hoover’s promises of a great revival of prosperity and an imminent return towards profits, the Great Crash ‘parachuted’ America into the Great Depression.

Several factors contributed to the downfall of the stock market. Among the most decisive causes were the era of speculations, the ‘avalanche’ of holding companies and investment trusts, and an economic recession that began in the summer of 1929. Whatever its causes, the Great Depression plunged the United States into a crisis. Since the word ‘crisis’ had negative and ‘alarming’ connotations, many government figures avoided the use of the term. Republicans and members of the Hoover administration wanted to downplay the unprecedented malaise through showing self-confidence towards the public opinion. But, Democrats argued that America had entered a devastating depression. In this respect, Franklin D. Roosevelt declared in his inaugural address in March 1933, that America was “*a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world*” (40).

The Depression era caused a personal crisis for many individuals and touched all the social categories. The business’s collapse obliged the American firms to fire millions of workers. For instance, at the depression’s climax in 1933, they were 13 million Americans

unemployed. In big cities such as Chicago and Los Angeles, the unemployment rate attained 50 percent of the workforce. In addition, unemployment created a social unrest. The loss of a job threw families into chaos, triggered suicides, created socio-economic tensions, and favored homelessness throughout the United States of America during the Depression era. Moreover, thousands of renters were evicted from their houses for nonpayment of rent. A certain number of these renters took refuge in shanty towns that were labeled as *Hooverilles*, i.e., “*the shelters made by the homeless from salvaged wood and tin*” (41).

History books also referred to the Depression era as the ‘Fervent Years’, the ‘Angry Decade’, and the ‘Years of Protest’. Indeed, the 1930s was a decade of social struggle ‘par excellence’. To illustrate this ‘Angry Decade’, one can refer to the First World War veterans who were evicted with their families from their temporary camps around Washington D.C in 1932. Being unemployed and destitute, these veterans came to Washington to ask for the immediate payment of a ‘war’ bonus, but they faced a harsh refusal by the Congress and a violent dispersal by the army. So, two protestors were killed. This episode triggered the outburst of several protest movement across the nation. Race riots were launched in Harlem in 1935 to react against the death of an African American shoplifter. In effect, rumors circulated that “*he had been beaten to death by white police*” (42). Furthermore, the Midwest witnessed the rise of the farmer’s ‘Holiday Movement’.

Labor’s malaise and uncertain social situation escalated into violence. In Ohio, battles between the authorities and labor strikers occurred when the American Worker’s Party demanded the recognition of a local union. Other labor strikes and demonstrations ended with violence throughout the United States during the 1930s. The summer of 1937 was a perfect illustration of this ‘labor-industrialists-authorities’ clash. Indeed, ten steelworkers were killed in the infamous ‘*Memorial Day Massacre*’.

This conflict between unionists and industrialists paved the way to the consolidation and even the *'renaissance'* of left-wing radicalism in America. The ideals of Marxism, and Communism found an echo in the American soil during the 1930s. In addition, the 'myth' of Capitalism was undermined by the rapid collapse of the American economy. *The American Communist Party (the CPUSA)* became to be somewhat 'revolutionary' by proclaiming that "*nothing less than the reconstruction of American society on the Soviet model would constitute a proper use of the opportunity the Depression presented*" (43). Thus, one of the most striking changes brought by the Great Depression was a shift from the 'consumption-based' society towards a pragmatic society based on cooperative values.

The Great Depression era was a terrifying period for Americans; it was associated with business collapse, unemployment, and catastrophes. One of these devastating catastrophes was the Dust Bowl. It was considered as one of the worst environment crisis that the United States has ever experienced.

The Dust Bowl:

The Dust Bowl lasted from 1930 to 1940 and touched the Great Plains states. Its coincidence with the Great Depression complicated the daily life for millions of farming families. In 1930, a harsh drought began on the Great Plains. The region received half of their habitual rainfall during the 1930s. Furthermore, high temperature and strong Great Plains winds resulted in severe dust storms across the area that attained its climax in 1935 and 1937. At the high level of the dust storms, 50 million acres of land knew devastating crops and destroying fields. After the passage of this environmental catastrophe, the making of agriculture was almost impossible in the Great Plains (44). It is useful to note that in the past the Great Plains had suffered from similar dust storms, but the storms of the 1930s were particularly devastating.

The impact of the Dust Bowl on agriculture was significant. The severe drought and storms complicated the practice of agriculture. In addition, the Great Depression lowered agricultural prices, so “*the prices farmers received for the crops and animals, they did raise failed to meet the costs of production.*”

The conditions of the 1930s urged thousands of people to quit the ‘apocalyptic’ Great Plains towards more ‘clement’ lands such as California, Oregon, and Washington in the quest for prosperity. These Dust Bowl migrants faced abominable conditions in their new homes. Like the fictional Joad family in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) who migrated from Oklahoma to California. The experience and plight of these ‘Okies’, i.e, so-called because many Dust Bowl migrants came from Oklahoma, was vividly portrayed in John Steinbeck’s novel . These migrants found only low-wage, and menial labor.

It is worth mentioning that the majority of Dust Bowl inhabitants took the decision to remain in the region. Those who decided to stay in the Great Plains experienced years of anxiety and perturbation. Between 1930 and 1940, 700 storms had been registered. These interminable dust storms gave birth to a new distress that was called ‘dust pneumonia’ in 1934. It was a kind of respiratory illness caused by inhaling too much dust; it killed the vulnerable people, i.e, the young and old people.

The catastrophe and its harmful consequences on agriculture urged the federal government to take some important decisions in order to metamorphose the shape of agriculture on the Great Plains. In this sense, Ballard Campbell (2008) argued that

The Social Conservation Service, part of the New Deal agricultural program, paid farmers to undertake conservation projects, such as planting trees and drought resistant crops and using conservation tillage. Federal money allowed farmers to apply improved techniques to millions of acres of land. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration paid farmers to restrict production of crops such as wheat, and reduce the number of livestock on

their farms. The Resettlement Administration relocated approximately 25,000 farm families from the most severely damaged lands to new model homesteads. The federal government also sponsored the planting of shelterbelts across the West in order to control wind erosion.” (45)

It goes without saying that these agricultural reforms were a part of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s program *‘The New Deal’*. The program sought to bring immediate and effective relief in industry, economy, finance, and agriculture through launching a series of reforms.

The New Deal:

Roosevelt’s administration wanted to halt the damaging effects of the Great Depression. Therefore, between 1933 and 1939, Roosevelt engaged himself in a series of reforms in order to liberate the country from its ‘economic’ chains and to reactivate the economy of the nation. The term was taken from Franklin D. Roosevelt’s speech accepting the Democratic nomination for the presidency on July 2, 1932, i.e, in the speech Roosevelt promised a *“new deal for American people”* (46).

The ‘aura’ of the Great Depression continued its damaging effects between the election of Franklin.D.Roosevelt in November, 1932 and his inauguration in March 4, 1933. In effect, Roosevelt’s election coincided within a terrible context,i.e, the majority of the nation’s banks were closed, and 13 million were unemployed throughout the country. Roosevelt surrounded himself with people from different ‘political’ backgrounds and views because he was attacked to pragmatism.

Roosevelt’s staff elaborated the New Deal plan based on recovery and reform. These ‘new dealers’ had one supreme objective,i.e, immediate solutions for the economic crisis and ‘erasing’ previous policies that plunged the country into an unprecedented economic chaos. During the first hundred days of Roosevelt, he closed all the banks and took the decision to

reform the bank system, and he also introduced reforms in agriculture. A milestone reform of the Hundred Days was the National Recovery Administration (NRA), it was launched to introduce 'voluntary' fair-competition rules and principles in major industries. This act was piloted by big Business and labor. It set production limits and secured some elementary rights for workers in terms of wages and working conditions.

Other acts were enacted so as to reactivate the American economy. For instance, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was popular and efficient. It was directed by the army, the latter, sent 2, 5 million young men into the rural areas throughout the United States to "*plant trees, fight fires, stock fish, control insects, and build wildlife shelters, lookout towers, roads , and trails*" (47). In addition, to halt unemployment Roosevelt's administration decided to set up the Civil Works Administration (CWA). Under this act 4, 2 million were employed in an effort to reduce unemployment.

Despite the efforts of Roosevelt and his staff, ten million were still unemployed in 1934. Thus, critics began to be harsh towards the 'New Deal' plan. In this context, the Supreme Court declared the National Recovery Administration (NRA) unconstitutional in 1935, and threatened to reduce the prerogatives and powers of the congress over the economic issues. 'Right' wing critics emphasized the government waste of money and energy on 'ineffective' reforms, whereas 'left' wing counterparts such as the Governor of Louisiana Huey Long who became famous for his '*Share Our Wealth*' motto. The latter advocated rigid and severe taxes on the rich, advantages for the poor, and a national minimum wage. After these critics, Roosevelt decided to react through launching new reforms in 1935 in terms of employment and economic recovery.

At the light of all what have been said, one can argue that the Great Depression was not simply one of the major economic disasters of the twentieth century, but it was considered

as a social tragedy for millions of Americans. Thus, the post-war era in the United States was marked by multi social, economic, racial, and ethnic tensions. These tensions were vividly portrayed in the literature of the post-war period. It follows from this that John Dos Passos and John Steinbeck captured the history of the aforementioned ideas throughout their novels. Before embarking to the analysis of the authors' selected novels, a short literary background of the post-war era is required so as to comprehend and to have a general picture of the literary standard on which the two authors built their literary creations.

Post-war Literary Background:

The aftermath of the First World War was particularly prolific in terms of literary creation in the United States. Indeed, the high tide of modernism coincided with the 1920s. Modernism as a literary movement arose in response to the complexity of the modern life. In other words, it was born out of a cultural crisis. Moreover, Modernism was a search for a style and for innovations in terms of new techniques and literary devices. The movement questioned the 'myth' of language as a unique 'medium' for explaining the world. To define modernism, one can refer to Peter Childs assumptions

As an international art term it covers the many avant-garde styles and movements that proliferated under the names of Expressionism, Imagism, Surrealism, Futurism, Dadaism, Vorticism, Formalism and, in writing if not painting, Impressionism. Its forebears were Darwin, Marx and Nietzsche; its intellectual guru was Freud. Modernist writing is most particularly noted for its experimentation, its complexity, its formalism, and for its attempt to create a 'tradition of the new'...Modernism has therefore almost universally been considered a literature of not just change but crisis (48)

Modernists such as T.S Eliot with his landmark *The Waste Land* (1922) and Ezra Pound's long poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920) are perfect illustrations of the post-war moral and physical turmoil that deeply tormented the American nation.

Furthermore, post-war disillusion gave birth to a 'literary' massive exile just after the Great War. A group of American literary notables chose to live in Paris because of their disillusionment and cynical vision about the world. They were labeled by Gertrude Stein as the '*Lost Generation*'. The generation was 'lost' in the sense that its "*inherited values were no longer relevant in the post-war world and because of its spiritual alienation from America*" (49). The term embraces Hemingway, John Dos Passos, F Scott Fitzgerald, E.E. Cummings,

and many others who made Paris *'the center of the literary and artistic world during the Twenties'* (50).

As we have noticed through our historical account of the 1930s, the Great Depression had a profound psychological impact on many Americans. The era annihilated the 'myth' of Capitalism. The ideas of equal opportunity, and that success were devoted for hardworking, deft, and dynamic individuals were no longer accepted.

The Great Depression gave birth to a proletarian concern in American literature. The term 'proletarian literature' described any literary that has sympathy towards the working-classes or that was critical of the capitalist ideals. Thus, these 'proletarian' writers highlighted the damaging and devastating effects of American Capitalism. This genre of literature flourished during the 1930s. Poets such as Kenneth Fearing, Muriel Rukeyser, and Carl Sandburg explored proletarian themes. A multitude of novels also appeared during the 1930s that dealt with such themes, including Gold's *Jews Without Money* (1930), Nelson Algren's *Somebody in Boots* (1935), Henry Roth's *Call it Sleep* (1934), John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), and the novel trilogy of John Dos Passos *U.S.A* (1938) The latter through his trilogy revealed the ravages of Capitalism in the United States. John Dos Passos described the United States 'two nations', one of the rich and privileged and one of the poor and powerless proletariat. For him, "*all right we are two nations'* (51).

John Dos Passos's trilogy *U.S.A* embarked on a modernist design, juxtaposing different genres of writing in order to represent the "*sounds of America's many voices'* (52). The lives of twelve fictional characters were narrated from the beginning of the century to the Great Crash. These twelve fictional characters were 'juxtaposed' within the biographies of twenty-seven real characters from American history, such as the socialist figure Eugene Debs and the president Woodrow Wilson. It is useful to emphasize that the trilogy contained sixty-

sections of headlines collages, song lyrics, and speeches that were labeled '*Newsreels*'. The trilogy also offers fifty-one sections that are called as the 'Camera Eye'. The latter was considered as his most experimental writing (53), it employed modernist devices of stream-of-consciousness, incomplete, fragments of sentences, and a vivid subjectivity to establish poetic meditations on the period. Thus, the fragmentation of the text is a metaphor of the anxiety and social upheavals of the post-war era.

These writers of the 1930s were galvanized by the painful depression era and the menace of national split and disintegration. Many writers thought that they should play a central and influential role in both a cultural and political renaissance. Amazed by this 'proletarian' commitment, the Communist movement offered to these writers the '*John Reed Clubs*' ,i.e, writer's schools and small magazines that encouraged them to pursue their vocation. One can argue that at the moment of Capitalism collapse, American writers believed in the need for a 'socially –engaged' literature (54) that could function as a "literary" weapon in the presumed unavoidable revolution.

John Dos Passos and John Steinbeck were the most outstanding literary representatives of their age. They endeavored to describe a fragmented, depressive, chaotic, and class-based society. Their literary contribution helped us to understand and apprehend the idea of post-war America.

Life of John Dos Passos and John Steinbeck:

John Dos Passos (1896-1970) was considered as one of the most influential writers in America during the 1920s and the 1930s. He was born on January 14, 1896 in a Chicago hotel room where his father, a lawyer from Washington of a Portuguese descent, forced his mistress to give birth to their son in secret. He was named John Madison, taking the last name of his

mother. Then, his father John R. Dos Passos sent him with his mother to Europe. He returned with his mother to the United States at the age of ten. In 1910, his first father's wife died; his parents married and John took the last name of his father. At the age of sixteen, he entered to Harvard University, where he obtained a degree in 1916. Then, he studied art in Spain.

It is worth emphasizing that Dos Passos served with ambulance units in World War I (55). He initiated the writing of his first novel *One Man's Initiation* (1920) in the trenches. His several travels in Spain and other European countries while working as a newspaper correspondent during the post-war years reinforced his sense of history, enlarged his social vision, and shed light on his radical sympathies. Besides, as we have mentioned earlier in this chapter, John Dos Passos was one of the major novelists of the 'Lost Generation'.

His early novels dealt with the terrible shock with the 'new' post-war world. For instance, *Three Soldiers* (1921) was a vivid anti-war novel. Then, Dos Passos sharpened his social perception through *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) that derived its title from the station in the Meadowlands of New Jersey where "*passengers caught the train to Manhattan*" (56). The novel offered a panoramic view of the American people in the city. It was set from 1896 to 1923 in the first 'mega metropolis of the United States, i.e, New York. The most important theme was the 'literary' comparison of Manhattan with the great biblical cities of Babylon and Nineveh that were ravaged by God because of the immoral values and actions of their people.

The novel gave an apocalyptic vision of the city. Moreover, *Manhattan Transfer* saw his first concrete engagement within modernism. Dos Passos was greatly influenced by the metamorphosis that Modernism brought to literature. He sought to "*apply the concepts of Impressionism, Expressionism, and collage...and the cinematic technique clearly influenced*

him” (57). These modernist techniques and devices were further explored in his landmark trilogy *U.S.A.*

When Dos Passos wrote *Manhattan Transfer*, he was “*admitted fellow traveler*”, it means that he endorsed the ideals of the Communist Party, but he was not a member. His radical positions were clearly emphasized through his participation in labor strikes in New Jersey, and his relentless efforts to free Sacco and Vanzetti from 1920 to 1927. Sacco and Vanzetti execution profoundly affected Dos Passos, the case strengthened his image of America as ‘two nations’, one of the rich and one of the poor and weak. Thus, through his trilogy *U.S.A* (1938) Dos Passos recounted this ‘American’ polarization. The trilogy consisted of *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), *1919* (1932), and *The Big Money* (1936).

The author innovated through launching new techniques such as the ‘Newsreels’, i.e, selected actual newspaper headlines and popular songs of the era. He also injected biographies of several biographies of American figures as Henry Ford, Woodrow Wilson, J.P. Morgan, Eugene V. Debs, and the Unknown Soldier of the Great War. He also added the ‘Camera Eye’ sections that were “*installments in a kind of autobiography, tracing the author’s participation in the life of his times in Joycean stream of consciousness*” (58).

The publication of the three volumes of *U.S.A* and his widely involvement in the Sacco and Vanzetti protests, along with several written appeals for leftist causes had made him “*America’s leading proletarian writer*” (59). Nonetheless, John Dos Passos ‘re-evaluated’ his political position within the Spanish Civil War. The latter exposed the cynicism and cruelty of Communism after the execution of John Dos Passos’s friend ‘Jose Robles’. The execution stood for the breaking point within Communist’s ideals.

U.S.A was followed by another trilogy *Adventures of a Young Man* (1939) that clearly departed from the style of *U.S.A* and that portrayed the abuse of a young Communist member by his party. In addition, the following novels *Number One* (1943), and *The Grand Design* (1949) recounted Dos Passos's disillusionment with the labor movement and the radical ideology. Another literary figure who reflected the social issues of the post-war era was John Steinbeck.

John Steinbeck was born on February 27, 1902 in Salinas, California. He was the third of four children and the only son of John Ernst Steinbeck and Olive Hamilton Steinbeck. Steinbeck's grandfather, John Adolph Grossteinbeck, immigrated to the United States in the 1860s from his German hometown of Dusseldorf. Steinbeck's three sisters, Elizabeth, Esther, and Mary, and his parents offered him a special treatment as the only boy in the family. Nonetheless, he exhibited a kind of rebellious spirit against his parents' demands for self-discipline, elevated maturity, and responsibility. Steinbeck was admitted at Stanford University in California. He constantly announced an ambition to fulfill a writer's career, so he registered himself only on courses that were relevant to his literary aspirations (60).

It is worth mentioning that during Steinbeck's six years scholarship at Stanford University, he used to take a leave of absence, so as to earn money for his ongoing scholarship with a multitude of jobs such as store clerk, cotton picker, and ranch hand. From these several experiences, the author began to express a deep sympathy and admiration toward the working class (61). This sympathy for the proletariat would prove seminal and influential to his outstanding works of the 1930s.

Steinbeck met two Stanford professors in literature who had a great influence on his writing. The first professor was Margery Baily who became his 'literary' mentor through instilling confidence in his literary skills. Another professor who helped Steinbeck was Edith

Mirrieless. She ‘injected’ a spirit of creative writing in John Steinbeck literary mind. Nevertheless, John Steinbeck left Stanford without a degree. Later on, with the help of his uncle, Joe Hamilton, he was engaged as a reporter for the newspaper *New York American*. But, he was fired because he wrote articles within an imaginative and figurative tone. Thus, John Steinbeck returned to his hometown ‘Salinas’, where he finished his first novel *Cup of Gold* (1929).

In June 1928, while he worked at a fish hatchery in Lake Tahoe, he met his future wife Carol Henig. They decided to move to San Francisco where Carol introduced him to a group of socialists. Though Steinbeck never joined this group or the Communist Party, he was taxed of being a Communist after the publication of *In Dubious Battle* (1936), and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939).

Steinbeck achieved popularity with his first literary success *Tortilla Flat* (1935), a description of Mexican Americans in California during the post-war period. His next novel *In Dubious Battle* (1936) witnessed his first involvement within proletarian concern. The novel gave a vivid account of a strike by agricultural laborers and a ‘tandem’ two Marxist labor figures who organized the strike. Moreover, in 1937 John Steinbeck published his poignant novella *Of Mice and Men* (1937). It told the tragic story and destiny of two migrant laborers ‘George Milton’ and ‘Lennie Small’.

It is useful to emphasize Steinbeck’s encounter with Ed Ricketts, i.e, who was a biologist, triggered his attention to towards the idea of the ‘phalanx’. This idea “holds that groups consisting of individuals are connected to a large drive or spirit with a separate will and that , functioning as part of a group, individuals will work to fulfill the will of the larger entity. This process causes a shift from “**I**” thinking to “**we**” thinking.” (62).

The phalanx novel '*par excellence*' was Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). Indeed, the novel recounted the migration of a dispossessed family from the Oklahoma Dust Bowl to California. The novel also chronicled their overall exploitation by the cruel system of agricultural industry and economics. *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) won the 'Pulitzer Prize' in 1940.

Conclusion:

Throughout this chapter we discovered the extent the post-war era was particularly tumultuous for America. Indeed, social, political, economic, gender, and racial issues dominated the era. We also emphasized that both John Steinbeck and John Dos Passos constituted an important segment of the American post-war literary scene throughout their literary contributions.

One can advance that John Steinbeck as a California inhabitant was a 'direct' witness of the great western migration after, the Dust Bowl, an event that was at the centre of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). Similarly, John Dos Passos's activities for the radical left and his vivid involvement to free Sacco and Vanzetti were the starting point for the writing of his landmark trilogy *U.S.A* (1938). Therefore, the Dust Bowl and Sacco and Vanzetti's execution were the '*événement déclencheur*' of their literary creations. The next segment of our dissertation will be devoted to the exploration of the idea of the ethnic other in John Dos Passos and John Steinbeck selected novels. We will use these historical evidences that were highlighted in this chapter in order to contextualize our literary analysis in the following segment of our dissertation.

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Chapter Two:
The Idea of the Ethnic Other
in John Dos Passos's *U.S.A*
and John Steinbeck's *Of*
Mice and Men* and *Tortilla
Flat

Introduction:

Our intention in the following chapter is to examine one major thematic characteristic of the post-war epoch, which is racial discrimination. The chapter will analyze the portrayal of some characters that are labeled as being 'outcasts'. Our study will be conducted on certain 'target' characters, such as the Hispanics in *Tortilla Flat*, Crooks in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937), and Sacco and Vanzetti in John Dos Passos's *U.S.A* (1938).. We intend to demonstrate that John Dos Passos and John Steinbeck share the same idea that post-war America was divided into 'two nations', one of them belongs to the **segregating** and the other to the **segregated**.

Racial Discrimination in John Dos Passos's *U.S.A* and John Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat*, and *Of Mice and Men*:

A new historical study and reading of John Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and John Dos Passos's *U.S.A* (1938) concerns the place of American citizens who are not descended from white Puritan ancestry. The three literary works are set in a period of rapid metamorphosis and anti-foreign attitudes in America. The unique black character Crooks in *Of Mice and Men*, the Hispanics of *Tortilla Flat* and Sacco and Vanzetti in *U.S.A* experience racism. Before embarking into further analysis, a definition of racism is necessary. John Arthur who is one of the most influential race theorists published a book entitled '*Race, Equality, and the Burdens of History*' (2007). The book deals with a sort of chronological and contextual analysis of racism throughout the United States history. John Arthur defined racism as an attitude of racial contempt. In this regard and perspective, the author sustains:

Some writers have thought of it as an attitude; others claim that it includes beliefs, systems of oppression, or a combination of those. I argue that at its

core racism is neither a belief nor an oppressive institutional structure. Instead, it is an attitude of racial contempt” (1).

Therefore, for John Arthur racism is an attitude people take toward other persons in order to ‘dehumanize’ the ‘other’ race. In this regard, one can argue that the paisanos, Crooks, and Sacco and Vanzetti face the ‘institution’ of racism. Crooks in *Of Mice and Men* is disparaged and isolated because he lives in a society that regards a Negro as the ‘anti-thesis’ of a ‘true American’. As for Sacco and Vanzetti, they are condemned and marginalized because they are Italians and anarchists. These two racial and political characteristics were not welcomed during the post-war era.

Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* (1937) recounts the tragic story of two migrant workers George Milton and Lennie Small who endeavor throughout the novella to fulfill their ‘sacrosanct’ dream. The dream consists of owning their ‘own’ farm. Furthermore, Loneliness is a central theme in the novel. Indeed, George and Lennie are ‘errant’ characters without a fixed home and place. George tells to Lennie that

guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don’t belong no place. They come to a ranch an’ work up a stake and then they go into town and blow their stake, and the first thing you know they’re pound-in’ their tail on some other ranch. They ain’t got nothing to look ahead to (2)

All the characters of Steinbeck’s novella experience loneliness. Crooks incarnates loneliness and homelessness in the novella; he suffers from his isolation in the ranch. In one of the most ‘poignant’ passages of the novella, Crooks says

A guy sets alone out here at night, maybe readin’ books or thinkin’ or stuff like that. Sometimes he gets thinkin’, an’ he got nothin’ to tell him what’s so an’ what ain’t so. Maybe if he sees something, he don’t know whether it’s right or not. He can’t turn to some other guy and ast him if he sees it too. He can’t tell. He got nothing to measure by. I seen things out here. I wasn’t

drunk. I don't know if I was asleep. If some guy was with me, he could tell me I was asleep, an' then it would be all right. But I jus' don't know (3).

From this quotation, we realize that Crooks's loneliness is a 'by-product' of the racism that is exerted on him. Crooks is described throughout the novel within a second-class status. He is the most segregated and isolated character because of his color and ethnic origin (4). Since, New Historicism attempts to "*explain facts, by reference to earlier facts*" (5), a succinct historical reference to the Black ethnic category is required to comprehend Crook's racial discrimination.

The Southwest as a 'multi-racial' land included the presence of the black community. The majority of the blacks who arrived to the West coast settled in California before the Civil War. At the end of the sectional conflict in 1865, a new 'influx' of blacks arrived to the Southwest mainly to cultivate the 'Southwestern' lands (6). It is worth noting that the black population in the Southwest was small in comparison to the general population of the area. In a nutshell, blacks were not drawn to the West in great numbers. Furthermore, the black people in the region shared the same 'lot' as Hispanics. Indeed, blacks were 'otherized', discriminated, and considered as 'inferior' people. In this sense, David E. Kyvig argues in his book entitled *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1939: Decades of Promise and Pain* that

Smaller minority population were found elsewhere in the country. Hispanics lived primarily in the Southwest and Asians on the west coast. These groups found themselves in similar situations to that of African Americans: socially isolated, politically powerless, and economically disadvantaged (7)

Therefore, Crooks as the other African Americans greatly suffered from the Great Depression. At that time, they became "*targets in a society that was bold about its racial preferences*" (8). These historical facts prove that racial discrimination against Crooks in the

ranch is a continuation of a 'racist' tradition. The opening of the fourth chapter of the novella predetermines Crook's isolation and solitude. He is introduced as "*Crooks, the Negro stable buck, had his bunk in the harness room*" (9). Crooks lives in the harness room because he is segregated and isolated from the 'high born' white members of the ranch. One can advance the idea that George, Lennie, and Curley stand for the concept of the 'white supremacy' (10). So, Crooks is the unique 'non' white man on the ranch as he affirms to Lennie "*now there ain't a colored man on his ranch*" (11).

Crooks keeps his distance from the others and when Lennie 'dares' to enter inside the harness room, he exclaims "*you got no right to come in my room. This here's is my room. Nobody got any right in here but me*" (12). Then, Crooks permits Lennie to enter the harness room. Their brief interaction reveals the complexity of racial prejudice in California. In the south segregation is historical and it is a legacy, so it has become natural whereas in California, i.e, the land of dreams and of a new world, racial segregation is supposed to be hardly acceptable. Thus, this 'Californian genre' of racial segregation is spatial. In other words, the idea of segregation was re-affirmed in California through the same codes and practices that were 'in vogue' in the rigid and segregating South. Moreover, Crooks asserts his 'Californian' identity when he says "*I ain't a southern Negro...I was born right here in California*" (13). Even if Crooks was born in California, unlike many Southern blacks who had migrated, he is still treated like an 'outsider' in his 'homeland'.

Crooks is described as a person who desires reading books; they represent the 'true' companion for him. He enjoys reading books all night long in order to soften his suffering from solitude. In this sense, Crooks says to Lennie "*S'pose you didn't have nobody. S'pose you couldn't go back into the bunk house and play rummy' cause you was black. How'd you*

like that? S'pose you had to sit out here and read books. Sure you could play horse-shoes till it got dark, but then you got to read books” (14).

Sadly, and because of racial discrimination, Crooks is locked inside himself. His hostility at the thought of companionship reveals how comfortable he has become with isolation. He seems resigned to accept the lack of acceptance from his fellow farmhands. The harness room has become a safe, non-oppressive, harmonious, and secure environment. One can argue that he fears that the intrusion of others will cause devastating effects and would ‘enhance’ his discrimination. His room is his own territory and he endeavors to “*protect his space from those who would encroach on its boundaries*” (15).

In addition, Crooks is described as being a ‘coward’ and a weak person without any affirmative and imposing personality. For instance, the fourth chapter of the novella demonstrates this point. Curley’s wife enters into the harness room asking for her husband ‘Curley’, but Crooks says coldly “*you got no right comin’ on a colored man’s room*” (16). Curley’s response is an instance of racial discrimination “*You just keep your trap shut, nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain’t even funny*” (17). After hearing this threat of lynching, Crooks seems to be a ‘coward’ person. He was reduced “*to nothing. There was no personality, no ego- nothing to arouse like or dislike*” (18).

This incident shows that even a woman is more aggressive, affirmative, and imposing than Crooks. The latter is ‘womanized’, and Curley’s wife is ‘dewomanized’ after the barn’s incident. The climatic conflict during the barn’s incident takes place when Curley’s wife threatens Crooks to be lynched. This threat represents the white supremacist agenda. Indeed, white women are viewed as ‘sexual’ targets to the black man. So, Curley’s wife menace of lynching is symbolic; it acts as a protection of white’ women’s ‘purity’ from the sexual greed and sexual advances of the Blacks.

John Steinbeck portrays Crooks as a bookworm, but the author does not mention what he reads. One can argue that Crooks “*is reading books by black Americans of his time during the Great Depression; works by such Harlem Renaissance writers as Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neal Hurston, books by Richard Wright, and Du Bois, who graduated from Harvard*” (19). Crooks’s love for books echoes Du Bois’s experience with books in his *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903) where the author recounts his ‘literary’ voyage with Balzac, Dumas, and other landmark literary figures. One can add that this Harlem Renaissance’s reference incarnated the spirit of the New Negro. Consequently, the idea of the New Negro received a ‘literary’ echo through Crooks. He was the New Negro.

Crooks has a ‘double’ burden, i.e., he is crippled and a negro. His physical handicap complicates his ‘segregated’ daily life. Besides, the portrait of Crooks contradicts with Slim’s physical description in the novella. Slim is described as being a “*white, tall, and ageless, with ‘God-like eyes’*” (20) and he has “*gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke*” (21). In a word, Slim is the ‘anti ego’ of Crooks.

Another instance of Crooks’ negative portrayal is provided by Charles Johnson throughout his article. He asserts that Crooks is a “*bitter man who does not want Lennie, and Curley’s wife to penetrate his isolated ‘territory’*”. Moreover, Crooks uses rude and offensive vocabulary when he refers to the white men in the bunkhouse. He says “*They play cards in there, but I can’t play because I’m black. They say I stink. Well, I tell you, you all of you stink to me*” (22).

Furthermore, Crooks’ bitterness is also highlighted when he torments the ‘simple’, ‘disabled’, and ‘husky’ Lennie with the possibility that his companion George could one day abandon him, or simply ignore their friendship. Crooks demonstrates that without George’s companionship, Lennie is seriously in great danger. He says to Lennie “*They’ll take ya to the*

booby hatch. They'll tie ya up with a collar, like a dog" (23). Crooks obtains pleasure through tormenting a fragile and mentally disabled Lennie because "*Crooks' face lighted with pleasure in his torture*" (24). This action reveals another facet of his personality, i.e., a sadistic nature.

In brief, Crooks suffers from segregation in a 'racist' ranch, and in order to escape from this growing discrimination and segregation, he finds a 'refugee camp' within the harness room. The latter stands for a non-oppressive and secure environment. The racial discrimination against Crooks reflects the racial tensions of the post-war epoch. It echoes the *paisanos* othering in *Tortilla Flat* (1935).

In 1935, Steinbeck published *Tortilla Flat*, whereas his two first novels simply include Mexican-American characters, *Tortilla Flat* is articulated and built around this ethnic group. The novel has a humorous tone; it tells the story of a group of *paisanos* who are very poor inhabitants of an "underground" district of Monterey, ironically labeled as 'Tortilla Flat'. The *paisano* is a mixture of Hispanic cultures and origins. John Steinbeck in his *Tortilla Flat* depicts and portrays with a sober irony and a grain of humour the daily life of the 'non-privileged' pole of the American post-war society: the *paisanos*. Throughout the novel, this ethnic community is presented as being isolated from society and as dissenters because they did not validate the capitalist system. They are at odds within the WASP ideology. In other words, they are economically 'offside'. "*The paisanos are clear of commercialism, free of the complicated systems of American business, free of the complicated systems of American business, and, having nothing that can be stolen, exploited or mortgaged, that system has not attacked them very rigorously.*" (25). From this quotation, one can affirm that any 'materialist' form is perceived by the *paisanos* community as a threat or a dangerous disease. One can also

argue that these Hispanics that are portrayed by John Steinbeck are facing a society that is materialistic, oppressive, and racist.

Since we are dealing with the history of ideas, we can argue that this Hispanic racism of the post-war period was just a ‘historical’ revival of the numerous racial and ethnic prejudices that knew the Hispanic community in the Southwest especially after the end of the Mexican-American war in 1846. In this respect, Martha Mechaca (1995) maintains that

Following the war, an Anglo-Saxon dominated social order gradually replaced the rancho system in California. By 1870, the rancho economy and all the Mexican institutions were dismantled. When Anglo Americans took possession of the land, they became the new property owners and transformed the Mexican population into a landless and economically dependent laboring class...the Anglo American settlers thirst for land was not satisfied by purchasing the property of the Anglo elite. By using force, the new comers also took possession of the ranches owned by the Mexican and Indian farmers. (26)

Thus, the Hispanic community was at the centre of an ethnic and economic hysteria. For instance, during the second half of the nineteenth many immigration and naturalization laws prohibited the Hispanics who were not descended from Caucasian origin to own property or to be naturalized. Therefore, this ‘old’ idea’ of othering was doubled and revitalized with the growth of a nativist feeling in the United States.

Tortilla Flat introduces a notion of ‘multi-culturalism’ or a commingling of races when he described the paisanos:

Who is a paisano? He is a mixture of Spanish, Indian, Mexican, and assorted Caucasian bloods. His ancestors have lived in California for a hundred or two years. He speaks English with a paisano accent and Spanish with a paisano accent. When questioned concerning his race, he indignantly claims pure Spanish blood and rolls up his sleeve to show that the soft inside of his arm is nearly white. His color, like that of of a well-browned meerschaum pipe, he ascribes to sunburn. He is a paisano, and he lives in

that uphill district above the town of Monterey called Tortilla Flat, although it isn't a flat at all. (27)

In addition, the paisanos are marginalized. For instance, the paisanos's employment opportunities in Monterey are limited to the most degrading jobs. The paisanos are 'relegated' to the shantytown in Monterey away from the view of white Californians. "*In Monterey, that old city on the coast of California....These are the paisanos. They live in old wooden houses set in weedy yards, and the pine trees from the forest are about the houses.*" (28).

The novel is articulated around the 'Arthurian' brotherhood. A leader is chosen by the people and dies during the dissolution of brotherhood. John Steinbeck used the Arthurian brotherhood model to demonstrate that "*the problems of the 1930s in America could be solved, although he knew that ultimately the brotherhood solution would not work.*" (29). To make a new historical parallel, one can also advance that the Arthurian idea was reaffirmed within John Steinbeck's novel. In *Tales of King Arthur*, Sir Thomas Malory portrays the ups and downs of a 'brotherhood of knights' who attempt to preserve and safeguard peace during the early history of England. In *Tortilla Flat*, Steinbeck presents the paisanos's brotherhood trying to improve the basic conditions of their lives in Monterey during the depression era. Like the knights of the 'Round Table', Steinbeck has his own 'knights' drawn from the under classes and unprivileged 'pole' of the American nation to look for an impossible grail.

As the story begins, Danny, a young paisano, has recently been released from the army and has returned home. Danny is poor and sleeps in the forests and he is presented as being a 'vagabond'. When Danny was a young boy "*he preferred to sleep in the forest, to work on ranches, and to wrest his food and wine from an unwillingly world.*" (30). This negative portrayal of Danny is reinforced by his 'penchant' for alcohol. He drinks heavily, and is jobless. At one point, Danny learns that his grand-father died and left him an unexpected legacy of two houses. In spite of this information, "*he forgets about them and continues his*

aimless life". (31) Like Crooks in *Of Mice and Men*, Danny as a Hispanic experiences loneliness before he meets his paisanos comrades. He is "*lonely...loneliness still on him.*"

Danny as a non 'WASP' character is afraid of responsibility. He takes refuge in alcoholic pleasure so as to escape the harsh reality. When he learns about his sudden legacy, he "*was a little weighed down with the responsibility of ownership. Before he ever went to look at his property he bought a gallon of red wine and drank most of it himself. The weight of responsibility left him then, and his very worst nature came to surface.*" (32).

Danny meets Pilon, i.e., an old friend, so he remembers that he has a house. Danny invites Pilon to share his new home with him. Then, he offers the second house to Pilon. The latter invites two paisanos to live with him: Pablo Sanchez and Jesus Maria Corcoran. Then, Pilon's house burns down, and the paisanos go to live with Danny forming a small Hispanic community. These two other paisanos joined the community, the 'Pirate' and Big Joe Portagee. The pirate works daily in order to save money to fulfill his dreams, i.e., to buy a gold candlestick for San Francisco. The pirate is convinced by his comrades to leave the money in the house. This episode reveals another negative facet of these Hispanics. Indeed, the paisanos hope to use the pirate's money.

When Danny moves out of the house, he does not inform the others that he is leaving. His comrades tried to find him, but "*while the other paisanos seek him in the woods, someone breaks into the house and steals blankets and all the food*". According to the paisanos "*it was difficult to keep house now, for Danny had stolen nearly everything in it...Now all peace was gone from Danny's house, and there was only worry and sadness*" (33). This incident shows the immoral side of the paisanos.

Furthermore, when Danny died, the other paisanos lose their guide and 'spiritual' leader. They are afraid of this new established order. As 'ethnic others', they need a spiritual

father or a 'tutor' to guide, planify, and organize their daily life. Therefore, the paisanos worry about what happened to the house. Their solution is almost evident

Thus it must be, O wise friends of Danny. The magnet that drew you has lost its virtue. Some stranger will own the house, some joyless relative of Danny's. Better, that this symbol of holy friendship, this good, this good house of parties and fights, of love and comfort, should die as Danny died, in one last glorious, hopeless assault on the gods. (34)

After that, the paisanos burn the house and after the destruction, the paisanos "*turn and [walk] away, and no two [walk] together*" (35). The paisanos who are living with a 'tribal' code' honored and respected their leader Danny during all their cohabitation in the house. Pilon tells Danny "*Thou art lifted above thy friends. Thou art a man of property... He had been raised about his fellows.*"(36). Danny with his 'elevated' status in the house has a bed, whereas his comrades sleep on the floor. "*For all his kindness, his generosity, Danny never allowed his bed to be occupied by anyone but himself*". (37)

Even after the death of Danny, no one in the house 'dares' to sleep in Danny's bed. His empty bed is compared to "*the rider less charger of an officer which follows its master to his grave*" (38). So one can say that even in death, Danny is the leader. Their 'tribal' and somewhat 'primitive' status survived after the death of their 'chief'.

The paisanos have a specific code of social behavior. Their social codes demand that they take care, trust, and respect each other; and live in an enclosed community so as to escape the racial prejudices of the 'white' environment. This point recalls Crooks 'self' isolation in the ranch from his direct environment in *Of Mice and Men*.

It is worth emphasizing that the paisano's lifestyle is articulated around some specific themes: freedom, acceptance, life for the moment, non-materialism, and harmony with nature. Some critics argue that the paisanos are 'living dolls' that Steinbeck creates to amuse his audience; they are not quite human. Edmund Wilson, for example, sustained that Steinbeck

'animalized' the humans in *Tortilla Flat*. The paisanos are relatively 'primitive' people who pursue their internal desire and instincts. These paisanos are "*some of Steinbeck's innocents who are not contaminated by society.*" (39). However, I shall argue that each episode of the novel has a moral parable in which a paisano is highly tempted by basic symbols of American business, but he fights back and survives from this temptation.

The daily life of the paisanos is related to a sort of routine of changelessness of their environment

On Tortilla Flat, above Monterey, the routine is changeless...In Danny's house there was even less change. The friends had sunk into a routine which might have been monotonous for anyone but a paisano—up in the morning, to sit in the sun and wonder what the pirate would bring" (40).

Furthermore, the paisanos avoid any friction or conflict with the modern world. As Frederick Bracher (2002) sustains "*The inhabitants of Tortilla Flat...have no wish to become involved in the contradiction of a civilization which drives itself to the verge of a nervous breakdown finding new ways to cure the sick and kill the healthy, to pamper the body and stultify the spirit.*" (41).

Another illustrative detail that reinforces the other 'process' of these Hispanics is their attitude toward time. Danny and Pilon plan to do certain actions and tasks during the first day in their house. Nonetheless, as the afternoon passes, their plans are simply postponed and relegated for tomorrow. "*Tomorrow we will settle down...Tomorrow we will clean scrub*" (42). Thus, for a paisano who does not take into consideration the notion of time, a timepiece is an unnecessary element "*clocks and watches were not used by the paisanos of Tortilla Flat*". The paisano's penchant for wine is also highly emphasized throughout the novel. For instance, Danny is "*a man who knows little restraint in drinking*" (43).

Tortilla Flat as a novel is episodic, linked by a set of common themes. The central and core symbol is the house where the paisanos live. "*It is here that the paisanos are brought*

together, committed to loyalty, to Danny, to helping the poor and oppressed (including themselves) “(44). The novel like folktales is articulated around a group of named functions “*How Danny, home from the wars, found himself an heir, and how he swore to protect the helpless*” and “*How Pillon was ruled by greed of position to forsake Danny’s hospitality*”.

One can argue that John Steinbeck’s character ‘the Pirate’ is represented as an ‘animal’. He has five dogs and considers himself ‘little more’ than an equal to his dogs. The Pirate is conscious of the way people laugh at him, but he prefers the company of the dogs who ‘accept’ him. The Pirate stands as a foil to his society and environment. In real life, the Pirate would not have been tolerated as in *Tortilla Flat*. He is laughed at, ridiculed, and victimized by people (45).

To sum up, these paisanos of *Tortilla Flat* and Crooks in *Of Mice and Men* shared the same racist lot. In a word, these paisanos have “*no commitment to society and no inhibitions worth mentioning. They got drunk, and fight, and afterward their kindles and native innocence make them extremely sorry if they have hurt someone or burned a house or done anything else to be ashamed of.*” (46). The quote tells us that the wickedness of the paisanos is not gratuitous. It is socially conditioned.

On the whole, when we look closely at the two novels by Steinbeck, we realize that he uses a mythic method of narration. The quest of the ethnic other for a dream place to live in finishes with his rejection to the margins, and his exclusion from white stream society. It is with this theme of the quest in the West Pacific gone wrong that Steinbeck formulates his criticism against what might appear as the prejudices that the author has towards ethnic groups like the paisanos and the black population. The same mythic method is used by Dos Passos in the trilogy *U.S.A* when he transforms the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti into a witch trial.

Dos Passos refers to Sacco and Vanzetti in the third sequel of his trilogy '*The Big Money*'. Earlier in this dissertation, we have said that Dos Passos participated in several campaigns which attempted to free Sacco and Vanzetti. The two Italians were accused for the murders of F.A. Parmenter, i.e, a paymaster of a shoe factory, and his guard Alessandro Berardelli. The case became a famous trial and many intellectuals and public figures denounced their condemnation. Sacco and Vanzetti were sentenced to death on April 9, 1927. Their condemnation marked the apex of the 'Red Scare' era.

The two men were anarchists, so they were 'potential' 'Reds' targets. During the 1920s John Dos Passos worked as a journalist for '*New Masses*', i.e, a Communist publication. He wrote numerous articles to support Sacco and Vanzetti. His pamphlet *Facing the Chair* (1927) denounced the injustice, and racial discrimination that Sacco and Vanzetti lived. According to Dos Passos, the death of the two accused was symbolic, i.e, it announced the death and the collapse of the American Dream's notions of racial equality, harmony, and freedom. In this respect, Dos Passos argues that "*the name of Sacco and Vanzetti are fading fast into the cloudland of myth where they are in danger of becoming vague symbols like God, country and Americanism.*" (47).

John Dos Passos's reference to the celebrated case is motivated by his literary 'credo'. For him, the true function of the novelist is to be a sort of 'super historian' of the age he lives in because he is "*able to build reality more clearly out of his factual experience than a plain historian or biographer can*" (48). Dos Passos literary vision is reinforced by his emphasis that the best history comes from one who has participated in the events he writes, "*a sort of actor as well as an observer of events. That's what history ought to be*" (49).

The first reference of Sacco and Vanzetti's case occurs in the Camera Eye (49) of the trilogy. The Camera Eye draws a parallel between the 'first' English immigrants who settled

in Massachusetts and the two Italian immigrants who are jailed from 1920 to 1927. The first ‘generation’ of immigrants is described in the Camera Eye as being “*the kingkillers haters of oppression*” (50), whereas the Italian immigrants question “*why won’t they believe?*” .This means that the two Italians have an alibi,i.e, they were in another place at the time it happened, but the police , the judge, and justice ‘*won’t believe*’. Dos passos supports the ‘alibi’ thesis by writing in his Camera Eye (49) “*when they fired him from the cordage he peddled fish*” (51). Through this ‘historical’ juxtaposition, one can say that Dos Passos is ironic with his reference to the English settlers,i.e, the English settlers evaded from European oppression and the Italian immigrants face the same oppression. According to Dos Passos, Sacco and Vanzetti are victims of the degradation of the ‘sacrosanct’ American ideal of freedom. In the quote that follows he castigates the transformation of the trustees’ inheritors of the dream into ignorant coercive tyrants:

They have clubbed us off the streets...America our nation has been beaten by strangers who have turned our language inside out who have taken the clean words our fathers spoke and made them slimy and foul. Their hired men sit on the judge’s bench they sit back with feet on the tables under the dome of the State House they are ignorant of our beliefs they have the dollars the gun the armed forces the powerplants. (52)

With the betrayal of the American values of liberty, equality, and justice, America is composed of ‘two nations’ as Dos Passos writes “*all right we are two nations*” (53). One ‘nation’ condemns, judges, decides, and holds all the powers, and a ‘second’ nation which is exploited, discriminated against, and spoiled.

The death of Sacco and Vanzetti is announced by the Newsreel LXVI with the title “*SACCO AND VANZETTI MUST DIE*” (54). In the Camera Eye (50), John Dos Passos sustains that despite the tragic execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, there is a new spirit of social

consciousness that should be launched throughout the nation so as to undermine these ‘two nations’. In fact, the case demonstrated an unprecedented solidarity, union, parades, and demonstrations among the proletariat. Thus, a ‘new’ America is possible. In this respect, Dos Passos writes

Do they know that the old words of the immigrants are being renewed in blood and agony tonight do they know that the old American speech of the haters of oppression is new tonight in the mouth of an old woman from Pittsburgh of a husky boilermaker from Frisco who hopped freights clear from the coast to come here in the mouth of a Back Bay socialworker in the mouth of an Italian printer of a hobo from Arkansas the language of the beaten nation is not forgotten in our eyes tonight. The men in the death house made the old words new before they died (55)

The idea of the betrayal of the American values and ideals is also expressed at the end of the Camera Eye (50). Dos Passos concludes this section by arguing that with the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti “*we stand defeated America*” (56). Thus, their death signifies that the Jeffersonian ideals of liberty and equality are destroyed by the ‘superpower’ of the upper-class.

To conclude, Sacco and Vanzetti were convicted and executed because of their ethnic and ‘radical’ origin. They faced a political and racial discrimination, i.e., they were Italian-born and anarchists. One can say that Sacco and Vanzetti in U.S.A and Crooks in Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* (1937) experience the same ‘racist’ experience. Because of their origin they become ‘outcasts’ of their society. Crooks is relegated to sleep in the harness room just like a horse, Sacco and Vanzetti are discriminated with the same ‘practices’ by their society. One can say that these protagonists suffer from racism at a crucial period of the United States, i.e., the post-war era did not accept ‘Non-Wasps’. In this regard, Mickael S. Kimmel (2006) maintains

In an important sense there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant, father, of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports...any male who fails to qualify in any one of these ways is likely to view himself an unworthy, incomplete, and inferior (57).

Conclusion:

Some remarks deserve to be made at the end of this chapter in relation to the treatment of the ethnic other in the two author's works. One, it has to be observed that the two authors expose the racial and ethnic prejudices at the basis of racial discrimination against blacks, Hispanics in Steinbeck's books, and Italian Catholic immigrants in Dos Passos's work. Two, we realize that the two authors undermine these 'othering' prejudices by appealing to the mythos of romance. At the heart of the representation of the ethnic other in the two author's works, we have detected the motif of quest peculiar to romance. This quest related to the idea of America in Dos Passos as refuge or asylum and the West pacific as another historical refuge for the downtrodden as unfulfilled. In both, the quest turns into a misadventure ending with an execution ritual.

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- 3)- *ibid*; p.73
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- 8)- James R. Mc Govern, *And a Time for Hope: Americans in the Great Depression*, Westport:Praeger, 2000,p.11.
- 9)- *Op.Cit*; p.66.
- 10)- White supremacy: It stands for beliefs assumptions, and ideas asserting the natural superiority of the 'white' races over other races. White supremacist organizations relied on violent practices to reach their aims. One of the forerunners of the doctrine was the French writer Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau. The latter in his *Essay on the inequality of human races* (1853) that the Aryans are the 'sum-total of human development.
- See Guido Bolaffi *et al* ,Ed.*Dictionary of Race, ethnicity, and Culture*, London: Sage Publications, 2003.
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- 13)- *ibid*; 70.
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- 15)- Mickael J. Meyer. "One is the Loneliest Number: Steinbeck's Paradoxical Attraction and Repulsion to Isolation/ Solitude" in Mickael J. Meyer,Ed. *The Essential Criticism of John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2009, p.300.
- 16)- *Ibid*; 78.
- 17)-*Ibid*; 81

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- 21)- Ibid
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- 23) - Ibid;72.
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- 32)- John Steinbeck (1935), *Tortilla Flat*, London: Penguin Books , 1971,p.13.
- 33)- Ibid; 175.
- 34)- Ibid; 206.
- 35)- Ibid; 207
- 36)- Ibid; 13
- 37)- Ibid;155
- 38)- Ibid; 203
- 39)- Marilyn F.Johnson, *John Steinbeck's Quest for Brotherhood*, Florida Atlantic University,1989,p.58.

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- 49) - Ibid; 331.
- 50)- John Dos Passos (1938). *U.S.A*, New York: The Library of America, 1996, p.1156.
- 51)- Ibid; 1134.
- 52) - Ibid; 1135.
- 53) - Ibid; 1157.
- 54) – Ibid
- 55) - Ibid; 1156.
- 56)- Ibid; 1158.
- 57) – Ibid

Chapter Three:

The Idea of the Proletariat
Other in John Dos Passos's
U.S.A and John Steinbeck's
The Grapes of Wrath

Introduction:

Our intention in the following chapter is to explore another major thematic characteristic of the era. We will deal with the idea of the proletariat other and the ravaging effects of Capitalism on the working-class. It will also study the capitalist greed and exploitation in *U.S.A* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. We intend to demonstrate that Dos Passos and Steinbeck share the same idea that post-war America was divided into 'two nations', one of them belongs to the **have** and the other to the **have not**.

The idea of the proletariat other in *U.S.A* and *The Grapes of Wrath*:

The trilogy *U.S.A* and *The Grapes of Wrath* belongs to what literature is known as the 'social' protest tradition. The basic function of art according to Dos Passos and Steinbeck is to provide society with a focus in its own social, moral, economic, and political conditions. Though they employ modernist techniques, they can be regarded as realists in their choice of themes. Both writers consider that it is their social and political responsibility to use their literary creativity and skill to inform, reform, raise, and enhance social consciousness. For both "*the hopeless corruption of the modern age was to be met not by love, religion, or social protest, but by art- the highest possible resistance to the swindle of the modern social world.*" (1).

The two authors are hostile to the devastating effects of capitalism. They express sympathy with the outsiders, alienated, the defeated, the oppressed, and the working-class. In *U.S.A* and *The Grapes of Wrath* they seek to denounce the capitalist doctrine that celebrates profit, greed, and materialistic instincts.

The two works, i.e., *The Grapes of Wrath* and *U.S.A* are set in a crucial period of the United States. In the 1930s America witnessed one of the greatest traumas in its history. It is

known as the Great Depression. The great financial crash of 1929 resulted in widespread financial ruin that led to unemployment and homelessness. The economic crisis brought a spirit of social and political revolution all over the country. Americans were deeply disillusioned by Capitalism after the financial collapse.

It is worth emphasizing that Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* stands as a record of the painful experience of the 1930s. By presenting a vivid picture of the social conditions, it is inscribed in what Gorky and Lukacs call 'social realism' (2). It recounts the odyssey of the Joad family from Oklahoma to California, so it can also be referred to as an epic. It is also a novel of escape from the terrifying socio-economic conditions of Oklahoma just after the Dust Bowl. The social message of the novel is reinforced by references to biblical stories of suffering and sacrifice. For instance, the initials of Jim Casey, i.e., the preacher who renounced his calling and traveled to California with the Joads to listen to people and help them, 'J.C' echoes the name of Jesus Christ.

The Joads travel to California to enhance their social status and to live a decent life. This idea is reinforced by Jim Casey's assumptions about the motives of the migrant's flight

Casey said, "I been walkin' aroun' in the country. Ever'body's askin' that. What we comin'to? Seems to me we don't never come to nothin'. Always on the way. Always goin' and goin'. Why don't folks think about that? They's movement now. People moving. We know why, an' we know how. Movin' cause they want somepin better'n what they got. An' that's the on'y way they'all ever git it (3)

The 'social' story of the Joads begins in the summer of the mid-1930s. The novel begins in an era of lethal drought, just after dust storms have ravaged the Great Plains. Throughout their long journey they cross several towns and roads. The most symbolic road in the novel is highway 66 which is known as the 'Migrant Road'. It is referred in the novel as being the "*path of a people in flight*".

In the first part of the novel, John Steinbeck recounts the conditions of the Oklahoma farm owners and sharecroppers during the terrible Dust Bowl. The last part of the fiction describes the conditions faced by migrant workers in California. (4). An instance that illustrates Steinbeck's position towards the agri-business is his reference in the novel to the plan of the banks and corporations that owned the lands. The banks were determined to obtain significant and colossal profits from their investments. They decided to abandon the 'classical' agriculture and to plan one 'money' crop only, i.e., cotton. Moreover, they called for the use of farm machinery instead of the manual labor force. One can argue that Steinbeck wants to denounce the greed of these banks. As John Steinbeck writes "*The Bank- or the company-needs-wants-insists-must have- as though the Bank or the company were a monster, with thought and feeling, which had ensnared them*" (5). The bank, a synecdoche for the whole economic system, becomes an economic monster.

The Chapter fourteen of the novel is significant within the social facet of *The Grapes of Wrath*. It announces that a worldwide 'proletariat' consciousness is in the process of formation. "*The western states are nervous under the beginning change. Need is the stimulus to concept, concept to action. A half million people moving over the country ; a million more restive, ready to move; ten million more feeling the first nervousness*" (6). This all reads as if Steinbeck is addressing a warning to the capitalist system.

The social philosophy of *The Grapes of Wrath* is based on the notion that the so-called "*little people*" are coming together in order to gain power against 'capital-mined owners' (7). The aforementioned philosophy is linked to human survival. The latter is the '*sine qua non*' condition for the proletariat to secure and guarantee their social standing. Therefore, group unity and action is the first step towards survival. Proletariat's solidarity is expressed in the following passage:

I lost my land, a single tractor took my land, I am alone and I am bewildered. This is the zugote. For here "I lost my land" is changed; a cell is split and from its splitting grows the thing you hate- "We lost our land." The danger is here, for two men are not as lonely and perplexed as one. And from this first "We" there grows a still more dangerous thing: "I have a little food" plus "I have none" if from this problem the sum is "We have a little food,"This is the beginning- from "I" to "We" (8).

Steinbeck's social philosophy seems to be close the socialist theories of Lenin and Marx. However, reading this in the context of world history, for example the Bolshevik revolution which dispossesses the big farmers, it reads as a reversal of world history as the Marxists saw it. There is also another theoretical reference to Steinbeck's social philosophy. The latter is the Emersonian concept of the 'Over soul' that is exemplified in the novel by Jim Casey. The latter considers that all person's souls are really just part of one big soul. In addition, the theory of Jeffersonian agrarianism is represented throughout the novel. Indeed, the symbolic contrast between the 'immortal' vitality of the land and the ravaging effects of the machines stands for the identification of humankind with soil as a necessary factor for the continuation and perpetuation of the life cycle. The Marxist philosophy of history as material dialectic is not in contradiction with the Jeffersonian philosophy of agrarianism. This is the appropriation or misappropriation of the Marxist doctrine to make it American

The second segment of the social theme, that is devoted to the conditions of migrant workers in California, occurs in the 'supposed' paradise and 'social Eden' of the area. Fertile land, abundant rain, and the sun allowed farmers to plant and grow different kinds of crops for a subsistence. On the contrary, corporations and banks control large pieces of land in Oklahoma to make the greatest profit possible. Steinbeck compares in chapter nineteen the landholders to slaveholders

Now farming became industry. They imported slaves, although they did not call them slaves, Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Filipines. They live on rice and beans, the business men said they don't need much. They wouldn't

know what to do with good wages. Why look how they live. Why, look what they eat. (9).

Corporate greed turned landholders into ‘modern slaveholders. They dispossessed farmers, hired the cheapest labor, and offered them inhumane living conditions. These practices were ‘dictated’ par capitalist greed. The idea for which the civil war was fought turn to be a sham in the hands of the capitalists.

A ‘new historical’ element is present in chapter nineteen, as we have previously mentioned that New Historicism seeks to restore literature with historical elements, this element concerns Steinbeck’s depiction of the Hoovervilles . They were named for president Hoover. They sprang up on the edge of towns where dispossessed families lived in unhealthy tents.

Interchapter twenty-seven tackles the issue of exploitation. The chapter portrays cotton picking marked by abuses similar to the ones that black slaves experienced in the slavery period. Interchapter twenty-nine deals with the realization that there will be no work for three months because of flooding rain. “*they ain’t gonna be no kinda work for three months*” (10). Since there is no work, deaths from hunger is inevitable, the necessity of thievery is ‘necessary’, and the outburst of a social revolution is ‘indomitable’. In this regard, John Steinbeck writes “*They splashed out through the water, to the water, to the towns, to the country stores, to the relief offices, to beg for food, to cringe and beg for food, to beg for relief, to try to steal, to lie. And under the begging, and under the cringing, a hopeless anger began to smolder.* (11). Exploitation, insecurity of holding a job for a long period, poverty, theft are markers of an unjust system that recall slavery time.

The social consciousness that is raised by John Steinbeck is reinforced by another consciousness. The latter refers to the 'ex-preacher' Casey and the hero of the novel Tom Joad. In fact, Casey 'deserts' gospel-preaching because he is unable to collocate his 'sensual' life with his 'theological' life. Thus, for Casey, the solution is to accept his 'humanitarian' mission among the Joads and the other Okies, because Casey begins to see himself as responsible not only for the Joads but to all people in flight. As far as Tom Joad is concerned, his consciousness is related to his flight to California where he lives as a reborn and new individual after his homicide, i.e., Tom killed a man in self-defense during a brawl and he also killed a California deputy for having brutally slain the 'pacifist' Casey. Tom is a changed man, and throughout the trek to California he is initiated into "*the knowledge of greater possibilities for himself and his people*" (12). The journey to the Pacific coast is therefore seen as a journey to consciousness for all characters.

Steinbeck identifies his social protest with a rhetoric of suffering and sacrifice that is consolidated by certain biblical references. For instance, as in the Biblical story of Jesus, Jim Casey sacrifices himself for the community. He organizes a strike of peach pickers and cried out to the vigilantes who come after him "*They know not what they do*". These words echo Jesus Christ's words. Another reference to Jesus Christ can be found in Matthew 28:20, where Jesus tells his disciples "I am with you always". The same idea is told by Casey to Tom during the first meeting "*yeah, I am goin' with them. An' where folks are on the road; I'm gonna be with them*" (13).

The story of *The Grapes of Wrath* is a story of a community of immigrants. The novel does not focus exclusively on the Joads, but it gives a multi-dimensional' portrait of all the Okies through using the Joads as a vivid instance of the socio-economic tragedy of the 1930s. For this reason, the people at power, especially the large ranch owners, regarded the novel as

a 'mere' piece of propaganda (14), and Steinbeck as one of the most threatening men in America. Steinbeck places his criticism of the American system of capitalism by resorting to American ideas developed by Jefferson and other ideologists of the time. So if we look at the idea of the dispossession of the small farmers by the banks, it is the idea of Jeffersonian democracy and agrarianism that comes first to mind. Marxist ideas are evoked only when they fit in with American ideas. The secular ideas of Jefferson are further supported by the social gospel philosophy.

We observe a similar appropriation and abrogation of Marxist ideas in Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* It is worth mentioning that Steinbeck's interchapters have the same effects as the techniques that Dos Passos injected in his trilogy *U.S.A.* In fact, they are short one to three page chapters organized in two or three long and exhaustive paragraphs with no dialogue among the characters. The narrator stands as a 'stream of consciousness' story teller of the modern insanities. He acts as an 'intensifier' of the reader's focus on the cruel realities of the Joad family. Barry Maine (2000) argues that Steinbeck was deeply influenced by Dos Passos' innovating techniques while writing *The Grapes of Wrath*. Indeed, John Dos Passos presents through his cornerstone trilogy *U.S.A.* a fragmented style with a sense of "disconnectedness" (15) in history to portray characters as disconnected, chaotic, and out of control. Dos Passos wants to recount this fragmented and divided America with the use of these techniques.

The trilogy *U.S.A.* (1938) consists of *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), covering the period from 1900 up to the Great War; *1919* (1932), dealing with the war and the decisive year of the *Treaty of Versailles* ; and *The Big Money* (1936), that recounts the boom of the 1920s and the onset of the Great Depression. The trilogy adopts an experimental technique that includes different narrative modes. Collages of newspaper clippings and popular songs compose the 'Newsreels'. Moreover, the trilogy includes twelve biographies of American public

figures, i.e., from Henry Ford, the inventor Thomas Edison, President Wilson, and the big business 'icon' J.P. Morgan. Besides, some members of that 'other' nation such as the Socialist figure Eugene Victor Debs, the economist Thorstein Veblen, and the union organizer Joe Hill. Furthermore, Dos Passos adds fragments of autobiographical stream of consciousness writing known as 'Camera Eye'

In the prologue of *U.S.A.*, Dos Passos defines the trilogy with a poetic way "*U.S.A is the slice of continent. U.S.A is a group of holding companies, some aggregations of trade unions...U.S.A is the world's greatest river alley fringed with mountains and hills...But mostly is the speech of the people*" (16). According to John Dos Passos, *U.S.A* stands for numerous things, however he emphasizes that *U.S.A* is 'the speech of the people'. For Dos Passos, this speech is directly linked to his ideas of history and literary writings.

It goes without saying that these experimental and fragmented techniques allow Dos Passos to present or personify that 'two-edged' America. With the juxtaposition of two biographies of public figures, he recounts the cruel life of the proletariat and the greed of Capitalism. In this sense, Sidney Finkelstein (1965) maintains that

Dos Passos puts American capitalism into the witness box like a brilliant prosecuting attorney, making it confess to and document the exploitation, avarice, cruelty, deception, hypocrisy, thievery, bribery, murder, "every man for himself" selfishness, waste of talent and lives, that lay behind its accumulation of wealth. He does this as a clear-eyed social historian. But the heat of his furious attack on society generates no warmth toward his characters as human beings. They have no inner life commensurate to the outer world he depicts. If in their appearance, manners and acts they are true types of the time, in their inner life they converge to one type: the quickly disillusioned who find life repellent and loathsome, who die inside long before they die physically. (17).

In the deployment of the discourse of the court, Dos Passos draws attention to the contradiction of American capitalism. The "Newsreels" sections serve as a medium for the denunciation of the materialistic objectives of big business. These sections stand as a kind of

satire on the short news films that were launched during the 1920s. These films were called at that time *'The American Newsreel'*, i.e., a short 10 minutes news film of daily domestic, and worldwide events. These films projected a 'prosperous' image of the American economic system that secures an endless vision of personal happiness, security, and social tranquility without any 'economic' disturbances. However, Dos Passos 'broadcasts' these Newsreels as a warning that they are just a mere promotion and propaganda of 'false' image' of America (18). In *U.S.A.*, the Newsreels sections are located at the introduction of each chapter as a free taste to what follows in the rest of the chapters.

The Newsreels are connected by the sole theme of disintegration and social upheavals. For instance, the following Newsreels are instances of social turmoils and Capitalist greed

Bolshevik abolish postage posts (19) Wall Street closes weak: fears tight money (20) urges strikes be termed felonies (21) Wall Street employers banish Christmas worries as bonuses roll in (22) crash upsets exchange (23) Washington Keeps Eye on Radicals (24).

In this announcement of the new stories to be covered, the author underlines the manipulation of the readers by the press in the hands of the capitalists. The emphasis is on the fears of the capitalist class not the anxieties of the proletariat. In the text that follows the announcement, fleshes out the news stories by focusing on the biographies of industrial leaders such as J.P. Morgan, Henry Ford, Thomas Alva Edison, and Andrew Carnegie. As a foil, Dos Passos deploys the biographies of proletarian leaders like Thorstein Veblen, Robert La Follette, Joe Hill, and Eugene Debs. A poignant passage that embodies the **big business/proletariat** dualism concerns Doe Bingham, i.e., who is a wealthy industrial, who almost 'ridicules' the proletarian Fainy Mc Creary

No culture, none of those finer feelings that distinguish the civilized man from the savage aborigines of the wilds...No enthusiasm for truth, for bringing light into the dark places...do you realize, young man, that is not a job I'm offering you, it is a big opportunity...a splendid opportunity for self-improvement (25)

John Dos Passos offers a 'social' mission for Eugene Debs, Big Bill Haywood, and La Follette. The great role of these union leaders is to raise social and political consciousness among the proletariat. They stand as intellectuals who endeavor to enhance political and social knowledge for the proletariat. These figures are jailed, and tortured because of their social struggle and commitment (26). All these 'social' figures try to instill a revolutionary spirit among the working-class. So, one can say that their mission is to 'enlighten' the proletariat with their social 'luminescence'.

For example, Big Bill Haywood devotes his entire life to denounce and undermine the abuses against the working-class. He "worked with the I.W.W, building a new society in the shell of the old" (27). Nonetheless, as in Debs' case, Dos Passos finishes his biography with defeatism and despair. For Dos Passos, however, the quest for the happiness of the proletariat cannot be achieved by following the Russian model, but by going back to the American sources of the self made man. The revolution is not something to be looked for in the future, but in the American past. So Dos Passos tells that Big Bill Haywood "went to Russia and was in Moscow a couple of years but he wasn't happy there... He died there". This is a criticism of the Russian Revolution, since the ideal of happiness is not realized in Russia. It is realized only in America.

Furthermore, the 'invented' characters of the trilogy such as J.Ward Moorehouse, who launches the first great 'public relations' institution engages himself in hiding the dirty and suspicious operations of big business. The latter was identified as a 'big voice'. Moorehouse first arrives in Paris to take charge of Red Cross publicity. As an eloquent and excellent orator, Moorehouse has an impact on his audience. His 'business' of public relations is designed to gain popular membership to serve the strategic interests of those who own the

means of production. Another 'fictional creation' of Dos Passos stands for Capitalist greed. Indeed, Charley Anderson, a First World War flier with an inventive spirit, becomes influential in the flourishing post-war aircraft industry and activity. He was convinced that 'underhand' financial orchestrations are more 'prolific' and profitable than 'mere' inventive skills.

Charley's Anderson life represents capitalism 'par excellence'. Like an 'industrial' traveler, he moves around America hoping to realize his materialistic dream. After working as mechanic in Vogel's garage, Charley Anderson starts a 'migrant labor' process around the Midwest and the South experiencing a vagabond and bohemian lifestyle. After that, he goes to the Great War as a military pilot, and his considerable experience in aviation gives him a magnificent opportunity and chance to achieve material success as a founder of an aviation company called the 'Askew-Merritt Company'. Having suffered a series of misfortunes, his career ultimately leads to bankruptcy. All along his life, the supreme desire for money was his 'sole' credo. The quest for freedom, the fight for the spiritual ideal of freedom becomes a quest for material.

Another vagabond 'proletariat' character is Even Mac, a young rebel; who leads a vagabond lifestyle. Mac works as a peddler, dishwasher, railroad worker, farmhand, and factory worker. Though he has a decent job as a printer and has a family to support, he moves from Nevada to Mexico. When we see Mac for the last time in the trilogy, he is on the road again. In a word, a proletarian is almost condemned' of having a vagabond lifestyle, because he is under the industrial 'dictatorship' of capitalism. The proletariat other keeps moving with the industrial delocalization so as to find a more decent place or an '*Eldorado*'.

By critically analyzing *1919*, we can notice why the promise of an inevitable revolution by the left in the twenties failed. For instance, the character Joe Williams illustrates the non-formation of a 'solid' identity and entity of the working class. As Chip Rhodes notes

Joe's dreams are modest. He is motivated by a desire for access to the basic amenities of American society. For most of his narrative, Joe is either cold or hungry. Dos Passos is painstakingly thorough in detailing the concrete details of Joe's day-to-day struggles merely to stay alive. Joe has no interest in acting in history (28).

At one point, Joe who was surrounded with several wobblies, i.e., members of the Union International Workers of the World (IWW), was asked by one of these members to “*join the IWW and carry a red card and to be a class conscious worker.*” .

Joe's answer was eloquent “*Joe said that stuff was only for foreigners, but if somebody started a white man's party to fight profiteers and the goddamns bankers he'd be with'em*” (29). So, the issue of identity prevents Joe to join the movement. In other words, Joe Williams “*accepts the fact of economic exploitation in general, but rejects the particular collectivity that the Wobblies represent*” (30). Joe Williams is an emblematic figure of the proletariat category that cannot become a class, because it does not think of itself as a coherent and homogenous one.

Like the collective novels, the trilogy *U.S.A* does not have conventional protagonists except a group of individuals who are at the center of the fictional narratives. The majority of these individuals come from the social category of the have-nots or have been raised in broken families. Like the collective novels, *U.S.A* is an open-ended text that welcomes the reader's participation. So, as a text without limits or boundaries as John Dos Passos affirms “*The narrative [of U.S.A] must carry a very large load. Everything must go in. Songs and slogans, political aspirations and prejudices, ideas, hopes, delusions, frauds, crack-pot notions out of the daily newspapers...The U.S.A narratives were never supposed to end*” (31).

Another characteristic of the collective novel is that it stresses “*direct documentary links with the world of the reader.*” In other words, the collective novels use documentary, and other non-fictional devices with the purpose of giving ‘historical’ veracity to the reader. Besides, these forms which were employed in the trilogy enable people to draw their attention

to social crises such as the great depression. In this regard, Laura Browder labeled the 1930s as ‘an age of documentary’ “*writers and artists had an urgent need to capture, in words or pictures, the emblematic scenes of the crisis, to help audiences understand and interpret the nature of the problems faced by the nation*” (32).

1919, the second novel of the trilogy *U.S.A*, portrays the chaotic status of social and historical backgrounds during the years of 1916-1919. The title 1919 indicates a specific time of history when the Great War had just finished. However, it was a year of disillusion, because the supposed prosperity that politicians had promised did not begin to be effectively realized. What was realized was the misery caused by the system of capitalism. Thus, the year 1919 signifies the post-war economic transition to monopoly capitalism.

Dos Passos as a ‘chronicler’ ‘recites’ all genre of fragments of history in *U.S.A* which include materials such as speech fragments, newspaper headlines, and popular songs. The author believes that all those small fragments are ‘destined’ to receive their full meanings in the end through the course of history. That is why Dos Passos as a chronicler ‘digs up’ all the debris of history in the trilogy, hoping a ‘renaissance’ in which the excesses of capitalism are to be replaced with freedom that is highly symbolized by the ‘Jeffersonian’ dream.

Furthermore, Dos Passos blames industrial capitalism itself for the polarization and fragmentation of modern society in which “*people are not able to get the point of totality beyond the departmentalization and specialization of industrial capitalism*” (33). Unlike the ‘Jeffersonian’ days, when people were able to capture the entire picture of their society, capitalist society prevents its inhabitants from viewing their society as an entire unit and accelerates their alienation.

The trilogy *U.S.A* follows a ‘dialectical’ form in order to present a historical portrait of American capitalism. The trilogy starts with a prologue. Then it progresses to the historical portrait of numerous fragmented aspects of American capitalism presented by the four

narrative types (Camera Eye, Newsreels, biographies, and the fictional narrative). The end of the trilogy deals with the poetic that is named 'Vag'. The epilogue depicts "*a shabby and tired vagabond hitchhiking of the road of somewhere in America.*" The image of 'Vag' is related exclusively to 'totality', a feature that contradicts with American capitalism.

In the prologue, a young man is introduced as a pedestrian who walks aimlessly through the streets of an imaginary urban landscape. He is a lonely walker searching for a job, but he wanders through the 'non-human' crowd of the streets, and his eyes are full of desire and hunger "*The young man walks fast by himself through the crowd that thins into the night streets...mind is a beehive of hopes buzzing and stringing*" (34). Therefore, the young man is basically alienated from his environment. He is the only figure who cannot manage to use modern transportations. However, other individuals in the street move dynamically, using the subway, the bus, and the steamboats. In other words, the young man is deprived of one of the essential needs of a capitalist society: mobility. He has no "*job, no woman, no house...no city*". In other words, he incarnates alienation in the modern world of capitalism:

It was not in the long walks through jostling crowds at night that he was less alone, or in the training camp at Alintown, or in the day on the dock of Seattle, or in the empty reek of Washington City hot boyhood summer nights, or in the meal on Market street, or in the swim off the head rocks at San Diego, or in the bed full of fleas in New Orleans...or in the gray faces trembling in the grind of gears in the street under Michigan Avenue....(35).

In a word, the young man is an alienated and lonely character who is facing the fragmented shape of American capitalism. Except for the young man, almost everybody seems to be highly involved into the capitalist society. Although he is completely detached from the social order of capitalism, he is ready to 'sell' his body so as to serve as a 'labor' component of his society. Indeed, his muscles "*ache for the knowledge of jobs*" (36).

It goes without saying that the young man knows that he should be mobile and active, in a manner of capital circulation, so as to be 'accepted' or validated as an actual member of

the capitalist society. Besides, he succumbs to the appeal of consumerism and high consumption. This desire makes his head “*swimming with wants*”. One can add that his capitalist ‘temptation’ wants to metamorphose his body, for him “*one job is not enough*” and “*one life is not enough*” (37). The young man is influenced by the basic requirements of capitalism.

Almost all characters that are portrayed in the trilogy are vagabond figures which are shaped, formed, and diverted by the “*desiring machines of capitalism*” (38). Such major characters as Charley Anderson, Eleanor Stoddard, Joe Williams, Fainy Mc Creary, and Margo Dowling are simply controlled by capitalist desire of material success. Although there are a few radical activists, such as Mary French, Mac, and Ben Compton, who are trying to resist the vehement politics and commercial impact of American capitalism, their resistance prove to be ineffective. This failure makes the radical characters disappear with skepticism and without any concrete achievement. In this regard, Jun Young Lee sustains that “*most characters of U.S.A are examples of the body without organs moving and drifting through the reified of American capitalism* (39).

The trilogy *U.S.A* chronicles not only the changes America underwent over three decades, but also the evolution of the author’s own social thinking. The first novel of the trilogy *The 42nd Parallel* deals with Dos Passos optimism. In *1919*, the anger and militancy is highlighted. The last part of the trilogy *The Big Money* deals with his great despair.

Conclusion:

To sum up, one can say that both Steinbeck and Dos Passos use their innovative techniques to present a fragmented, class-based, and alienated American society. Both of them experiment with modernist techniques, which are sometimes transferred from the cinema. However, their experimentation with techniques does not lead them to an art for art’s sake. On the contrary, those modernist techniques are put at the service of their themes. One

of these is the proletariat other. On the process of othering the working class is linked to the process of industrial capitalism. In both works that have been under study in this chapter, we realize that the displacement of the Jeffersonian ideal of agrarianism by a democracy of goods in the urban areas and agri-business in the rural ones led to alienation and the disappearance of organic community.

In the last analysis, we can say that in spite of the communist, socialist or Marxist tones in the novels, Dos Passos and Steinbeck remain definitely American by denying the possibility of achieving happiness by following imported models of revolution. Revolution cannot be brought out by the advance of history, but by returning back to past ideals that animated the American Revolution and the Civil War. The tragedy of the joads in Steinbeck's novel and Mac of the *U.S.A* in Dos Passos's tragedy is similar to that of the Atreus in Greek tragedy. It is collective and can be undone or healed only by respecting the laws (economic, political, and social ones) that presided over its birth. Women are the next group to be discriminated against in post-war America. This othering of women will be the main concern in the next chapter.

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Chapter Four:
**The Gendered Other in John
Dos Passos's *U.S.A* and John
Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*
and *The Grapes of Wrath***

Introduction:

This chapter examines the idea of the gendered other and female representation in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and John Dos Passos's trilogy *U.S.A* (1938). History books demonstrate that the post war era metamorphoses American women who "began to assume an unprecedented and controversial independence" (1). Indeed, the aftermath of the First World War undertakes a process of women liberalization in terms of political involvement, social consciousness, and socio-economic emancipation. In order to highlight the place of women in the American society at that period, we will refer to the works of John Steinbeck and John Dos Passos, because the two literary figures are considered as witnesses of their age.

The Portrayal of Women in John Dos Passos's *U.S.A*:

In his trilogy, John Dos Passos spans the years between the turns of the century and the economic crash of 1929. Dos Passos innovated through launching new techniques and literary devices. Among the techniques Dos Passos use to describe America during the first decades of the twentieth century are stream of consciousness based on autobiographical passages, biographies, narratives, and 'Newsreels' which are fragments of newspaper headlines, and popular songs.(2)

Literary critics have interpreted *U.S.A* exclusively as a text that corresponds to the socialist literary sphere, since the trilogy sheds light on the damaging effects produced by the capitalist system. Nevertheless, a closer analysis of the 'Newsreels', biographies, and camera eye devices shows that another important theme exists in the trilogy, namely the role of women in *U.S.A*. Dos Passos's vision of women is somewhat ambivalent this is due to the literary form of the trilogy. In the biographies and 'Newsreels' women are portrayed

negatively, but in the fictional narratives they are presented in “*an alternative discourse in which women become speaking subjects rather than silent objects*” (3)

Therefore, the biographies and the ‘Newsreels’ consider women as lacking influence in history. They are portrayed with an inferior socio-economic status. In comparison, the fictional narratives ‘replace’ women in their legitimate rank in history. They stand as ‘equalizers’ in consolidating the position of women in history. Furthermore, the fictional narratives of *U.S.A* are divided among six men and six women, offering women an equal state that would permit them to intervene on some landmark issues of the post war epoch. One can argue that Dos Passos “*rescues women from their gender-imposed degradation by providing a vehicle through which their history, individual and collective, is heard, empowering them with the dignity of representation that traditional versions of history denied them.*” (4)

As we have mentioned above, the ‘Newsreels’ offer a kind of ‘sombre’ image of the fair sex. The murder of women, physical, and sexual abuse are some keywords that are recurrent in the ‘Newsreels. These are some fragments that are eloquent

Young woman found strangled in Yonkers (5) [...] two women’s bodies in Slayers (6) [...] Broadway beauty beaten [...] According to the police the group spent Saturday evening at Hillside Park, a Belleville amusement resort, and about midnight went to the bungalow. The Bagley girls retired, they told the police, and when the men entered their room one of the girls jumped from a window (7) [...] woman slain mate held (8).

This somber image is reinforced by the multitude of suicides that are committed by women. This aspect denotes that women are not physically ‘destroyed’ by men; they are capable of ‘self-destruction’ or ‘self-inflicted violence: “*kills herself at sea (9)... unhappy wife tries to die (10).*”

Even the popular songs that compose the ‘Newsreels’ reveal a somewhat ‘reductionist’ vision of women. Certain popular songs refer to women as merely instruments for the sexual

satisfaction of men “*Avez vous fiancé, cela ne fait rien/ Voulez vous coucher avec moi ce soir?*” (11). Moreover, the ‘Newsreel’ LIV in *The Big Money* follows the same stereotypical definition of women. A song comes after a headline that announces a female suicide “*the kind of girl that men forget/ just a toy to enjoy for a while*” (12). These popular songs may reveal that the American society views women as ‘sexual’ targets without a concrete socio-economic influence.

Women’s anxieties and are undoubtedly linked to their several experiences with sexuality and gender categorization. Indeed, the ‘fair sex’ is victimized simultaneously at the social and sexual levels. In this perspective, one can refer to Charles Mars’s assumptions:

There are no love relationships in U.S.A. Women are bought, sold, and raped. Frenetic love (and business) affairs are abortive. Successful public men pursue public values during business hours. Their women serve as night deposit boxes- the pun captures the vulgarity, the sordid truth of the devalued impersonal transactions (13).

Mac was the first major male character who was introduced in the trilogy. His development throughout the sections illustrated a kind of indifference towards women. For instance, Mac adolescence highlighted the aforementioned idea. Mac’s uncle teaches him to ‘punish’ women from the collapse and downfall of ‘masculine’ socialism. “*And don’t ever sell out to the sonsofbitches, son; if women’ll make you sell out every time*” (14). Mac met ‘Ike’, a boy of about Mac’s age who believed in two things: socialist ideology, and sex. With Ike ‘companionship’, Mac learns of the ‘sacred’ pleasure to be gained from prostitutes. The two boys considered women as being ‘merely’ a ‘sexual’ attraction’. Ben Evans gave Mac other ‘misogynist’ advices:

for Chris sake, Mac, if a girl wasn’t a goddam whore she wouldn’t let you, would she?...I don’t trust none of ‘em...I know a guy once married a girl like that, carried on and bawled an’ made out he’d knocked her up. He married her all right and she turned out to be a goddam whore and he got the

siph off'n her... You take it from me, boy... love'em and leave'em, that's the only way for stiffies like us." (15)

Mac's story constitutes a concrete indication that women suffer from male indifference and misogyny. In our assumption, Dos Passos presents throughout his trilogy a rather positive vision of women. In this respect, Janet Galligani Casey (1998) sustains that Dos Passos "*historicizes women, to give them voice, place, and legitimacy in his rendering of the national consciousness, place him squarely within a discourse that addresses the function of the feminine in both modernist and socially radical terms*" (16).

In the second sequel of the trilogy entitled *1919*, Dos Passos starts to highlight some socio-political advantages of women, as well as the new vistas that the aftermath of the World War I offers for American women. For instance, the passing of the 19th Amendment that secures the right to vote for millions of American women "*women vote like veteran politician*" (17). However, throughout the novel, Dos Passos shows that women brave no real gain from this political emancipation. They are just like war veterans who come back to the country only to find that the freedom for which they fought was flouted.

The third sequel of the trilogy *The Big Money* (1936) is the most eloquent in terms of women emancipation. Women are shown to have gained increased employment opportunities after the Great War. The 'Newsreel' LI introduces this new aspect

Positions that offer quick, accurate, experienced, well-recommended young girls and young women...good chance for advancement....Canvassers...caretakers...chambermaids....cleaners....file clerks...companions...comptometer operators...collection correspondents... cooks...dictaphone operators...good opportunity for stylish young ladies...intelligent young women (18).

The women as the quote shows leave the private space for public spaces until then occupied only by men. However, the jobs are service jobs deserted by men. It is worth

emphasizing that twenty-seven biographical sketches are launched throughout the trilogy, but only one is of a woman. The unique 'female' biography concerns the life of Isadora Duncan because at that time prominent and influential American women were scarce. Donald Pizer explains Dos Passos's selection of these male biographies in relevance to the main themes of the trilogy: labor disputes, big business, and war (19).

The introduction of a single female biography in the last part of the trilogy '*The Big Money*' (1936) consolidates the growing and impressive spirit of independence that American women started to enjoy after the Great War. This denotes that Dos Passos opens new political, economic, and social perspectives for American women. Moreover, Dos Passos' choice of Isadora is not 'haphazard'. Duncan is considered as a typical 'post-war' American woman, she was "*the symbol of the body's deliverance from mid-Victorian taboos*" (20). Thus, Isadora Duncan stands as the '*New Woman*', 'she was afraid of nothing; she was a great dancer' (21). Duncan is portrayed as being a 'genuine artist'. This echoes Janet Galligani Casey's assumptions "*It is particularly interesting that the only female biographical subject in all of U.S.A is presented as the embodiment of this aesthetic Isadora Duncan is more closely connected than any of the male biographical subjects to the guiding spirit of the trilogy, an artistic, socially responsible ego*" (22).

Another female figure that illustrates this new woman is Mary French. The latter is described in the trilogy as being a leftist radical figure who works for the good of the community. In *The Big Money*, she becomes highly involved in the protest against Sacco and Vanzetti trial. Mary French went to Dedham Jail to talk to Sacco in order to support him. Mary French cries out against the state of Massachusetts by exclaiming "*if the state of Massachusetts can kill those two innocent men in the face of the protest of the whole world it'll mean that there never will be any justice in America ever again*" (23). In a nutshell, Mary

French was very active against the condemnation of the two Italian anarchists through writing articles, talking to ministers, and making speeches in union halls. Like Dos Passos, Mary participated in the organizing protest that was issued after the arrestation of Sacco and Vanzetti. For Mary, the two figures were innocent, “*they shall not die*” (24).

One can add that Dos Passos’s positive representation of women in his fictional narratives serves as a ‘counterpart’ to the reductionist view of women in the ‘Newsreels’, Biographies, and Camera Eyes sections. It is true that women do not figure so prominently in these fictional narratives, but the assignment of a political role to such a feminist figure as Mary French shows that the author does not agree with the confinement of women to inferior roles at home and the work place. The gendered other built on prejudices similar to the ones which energize the othering of the ethnic proletariat are countered with the representation of women as politically responsible citizens. It is this same political responsibility of women that Steinbeck fleshes out through his female heroines in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The Concept of Motherhood in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939):

Steinbeck’s chronicle of the dispossessed Joads sheds light on the cruelty of the American depression era. Ma Joad stands as the ‘mother’ figure in the novel; she endeavors to guide her family towards success and prosperity.

The centrality of women to the action of *The Grapes of Wrath* is emphasized from the beginning of the novel. In all the families in crisis, the children expect answers from women to their immediate survival “*what are we going to do, Ma? Where are we going to go?*”(25). In this sense, Ma Joad represents a ‘citadel’ for the Joads on whom everyone else can depend. In effect, “*in times of grave familiar or community need, a strong, wise woman like Ma Joad*

has the opportunity to assert herself and still maintain her role as selfless nurturer of the group (26).

Without the effective strength and wisdom of Ma Joad, almost nothing of the family would survive. Her 'high' calm and 'citadel' position is established at the beginning of the novel " *Her hazel eyes seemed to have experienced all possible tragedy and to have mounted pain and suffering like steps into a big calm and superhuman understanding. She seemed to know, to accept, to welcome her position, the citadel of the family*" (27)

An important 'episode' of the novel that illustrates the charismatic position of Ma Joad and her immense utility is Tom Joad's return from prison, he finds no homestead, the house pushed off its foundations, and all signs of living are simply 'vanished', his first thought is " *They're gone-or Ma's dead*" (28). Tom knows that under no circumstances, Ma Joad would let the place fall to ruin. This echoes Nancy Chodorow's (1978) assumptions that

in the standard sex-gender system, the image of an 'absent mother' is the eternal source of pain for her children. In the novel, Tom Joad makes a direct link between the physical ruin of his home with a missing 'supra mother', a sign for him that the physical deterioration of his home is synonymous of Ma Joad's death (29).

During the imprisonment of Tom for seven-year sentence for killing a man in self-defense, he had almost no contact with his family. However, both Ma Joad and his grandmother sent him a Christmas card with a 'childish' message in poetry

*Merry Christmas, purtly child,
Jesus meek an' Jesus mild,
Underneath the Christmas tree
There's a gif' for you from me (30)*

When Tom received this 'card message' from his grandmother, he was the 'target' of teasing of cellmates; they nickname Tom as Jesus Meek. Granma's card is not in adequacy with Tom's masculine's standing. Furthermore, there is no explicit mention of the nature of Ma Joad's card; one can argue that it was not a source of embarrassment for Tom. The crucial difference between the two Christmas cards reveals that Ma Joad is the woman of wisdom who masters the 'art' of family protection. Ma Joad knows how to use her talents to comfort Tom in his painful period of imprisonment.

Ma Joad accomplishes her 'housewife's tasks with great talents. The first time that Ma Joad is introduced, she is engaged in the most 'basic' act of mothering; i.e, feeding her family. The second time we come face to face with her, she is washing clothes, and the third time, Ma Joad dresses the 'bad-tempered' grandfather who is incapable of accomplishing his basic needs.

Throughout Joads's trip towards California to reap the harvests of a rich and fruitful land, another 'mothering' aspect of Ma Joad surfaces. She is willing to share the little food she has with her family or whoever else in need. For example, she feeds a group of hungry children in California, even though there is not enough food for her family. This action denotes her humanitarian, largesse, and sympathy towards people in need.

The concept of motherhood stands also for authority. A concrete instance of Ma Joad's authority concerns her direct intervention in order to permit Jim Casey, with no family of his own, to travel with the Joads. Casey is allowed to travel with the Joads because Ma Joad is 'dares' to challenge her husband authority. When her husband argues that it is unreasonable to take an 'extra person', especially an outsider, Pa exclaims: "*Kin we feed an extra mouth?*", then Ma Joad answers "*it ain't Kin we? It' well we? She said firmly. As far as 'Kin', we can't do nothin', not go to California or nothin'; but as far as 'will', why, we'll do what we will*

(31). When the conversation ends, the preacher Casey has been accepted, and with this acceptance Ma Joad gained a new 'extra' home role. She affirms and consolidates her authority; she becomes a 'co' ruler of the Joad family by asserting her leadership.

In this context of Ma Joad's affirmation of her authority, two 'incidents' illustrate Ma Joad's influence and her great role. The first incident occurs when the car breaks down during the trip, then Pa' Joad proposes to split up the family in order to secure the arrival of some members in California. For Pa Joad, separating is the best plan and solution to reach California. But, Ma Joad with her new 'affirmative' authority refuses Pa Joad's alternative, she overtly defies him "*On'y way you gonna get me to go is whup me*" (32). The second incident takes place in California, when, after several weeks of unfortunate search for work and a suitable home, Ma Joad encourages the men to be optimist and erasing this 'despair spirit', she said fiercely "*You ain't got the right to get discouraged.*" (33)

When the Joads are asked to take a crucial decision, the entire family waits for Ma Joad's presence before 'enacting' any decision. The reason is that "*she was powerful in the group*" (34) and "*she had taken control*" (35). In addition, , even Pa Joad seems 'embarrassed' by this new authority of Ma Joad, he questions himself about this growing woman power "*seems like times is changed...Time was when a man said we'd do. Seems like women is tellin' now*" (36).

The 'patriarch' Pa Joad never beats Ma Joad. In effect, Ma Joad sustains that men have the 'possibility' to beat their wives only when they 'successfully' accomplish their 'male' roles "*you get your stick Pa,*" she said. *Times when they's food an' a place to set, then maybe you can use your stick an'keep your skin whole*" (37).

Each time Ma Joad challenges her husband, she returns after that to women's place, i.e, a 'stereotypical' housewife. For instance, after her first clash with Pa Joad over the preacher Casey, she precipitates to check the pot "*of boiling side-meat and beat greens*" (38) to feed her family. Similarly, Ma Joad returns to her initial 'business', i.e, she washes the breakfast dishes, just after saving her family from total despair thanks to her 'encouraging' discourse.

Ma Joad's growing 'power' does not prevent her to come face to face with the 'sacrosanct' gender prerogatives. This occurs when Casey asks Ma Joad "*leave me salt down this meat,*" (39). Casey proposes his help in order to thank her for offering him the opportunity to travel with the Joads and to be accepted as one of the male members of the family. Ma Joad's responds that this task is 'reserved' to women "*it's women's work*" (40). The 'feminist' Jim Casey answers by arguing that "*It's all work...They's too much of it to split it up to men's or women's work- you got stuff to do. Leave me salt the meat.*" (41). One can argue that Casey's answers denotes that he is aware that women suffer from the division of labor based on 'exclusive' female and male tasks. The 'feminist' preacher wants to destroy and undermine this 'sex-gender' established order through his request (42).

Ma Joad as a calm and wise figure intervenes in time of crisis and familiar conflicts, but she eclipses herself just after any painful situation to return to return back to motherhood. This idea echoes Robert Briffault's theory that, in matriarchy, women's interest is to lead the familiar group for the good of the community, when the father figure is incapable of fulfilling this task. The theory implies that "*women do not seek to have authority over men.* (43).

Steinbeck's novel implies that women are the most appropriate to lead in time of great social unrest. In this regard, Ma Joad highlights that women pursue their social struggle in spite of the difficulties. "*Woman, it's all one flow, like a stream, little eddies, little waterfalls,*

but the river, it goes right on. Woman looks at it like that. We ain't gonna die out." (44). Thus, the survival of the family 'rests on' the capacity of the mother to be wise, calm, and strong while facing a crucial social disorder. In contrast, men fail to fulfill this social task, as Ma Joad maintains "*Man, he lives in Jerks-baby born an' a man dies, an' that's a jerk-gets a farm an' loses his farm, an' that's a jerk.*" (45).

The 'odyssey' from Oklahoma to California is full of instances that emphasize Ma Joad's leadership predispositions, her "centeredness' in the family (46), and her calmness. The latter is perceived at the time of the death of the grandmother during the long night in which the Joad family crosses to California. Ma Joad hides this painful mishap from the rest of the group. Ma Joad's 'obsession' is "*the family hadda get acrost*" (47). Her sangfroid is dictated by the crucial importance of the journey for the Joads. Ma Joad decides to hide the truth from the rest of the family as long as their situation is the target of threats. Tom asks "*how's Granma? Ma Joad replies "she's awright-awright. Drive on we got to get acrost.*" (48). When the family arrived safely at the desired destination, she gives the information to the group "*Granma's dead*" (49). The Joad family looks to Ma Joad's powerful 'stamina' with a little terror at her strength. So, Ma Joad hides the truth in order to protect her family and secure the crossing.

Critics note that John Steinbeck does not offer a first name to Ma Joad in order to highlight the decisive 'paradigmatic' role of Ma Joad as a mother. Indeed, Ma Joad stands as the protector for her family, she is a 'citadel' on which all the members depend. Steinbeck sheds light on her great social role inside the family without giving her a first name, in a word, Ma Joad is the typical 'selfless' figure who thinks for the good of the community. Therefore, Ma Joad is the anti-thesis of an egocentric figure. She "*experienced all possible*

tragedy and...mounted pain and suffering like steps into a high calm" she fulfills her highest calling in the realm of wife and motherdom. (50).

The Representation of Curley's Wife in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937):

John Steinbeck's sixth novel *Of Mice and Men* (1937) concentrates on a small number of characters- George Milton, Lennie Small, Curley, Curley's wife, Crooks, and few others. The story concerns George Milton and Lennie Small. George is small but quick, whereas Lennie is 'physically' huge but mentally deficient. The two figures work as farmhands near Soledad. Lennie is always in trouble because he loves to touch soft things; however, because of his 'unusual' strength, he destroys whatever he touches. The two companions dream of making enough money to buy a piece of land to have their 'own' place. The presence of Curley's wife represents the unique female character in the novel.

Steinbeck never named this woman. She is the wife of the ranch' owner's son 'Curley', this implies that Curley' wife is described as being the 'property' of Curley "Curley's wife is circumscribed by her position in relation to the men, 'a wife' to 'curley'" (51). Moreover, she is viewed by the men in the ranch as a danger; she has the "reputation of being a woman with a wandering eye when it comes to ranch hands" (52). She is presented as a woman who needs company because her husband 'Curley' let her alone at home without any company. This situation creates a feeling of frustration for Curley's wife, she reveals her sadness to Lennie, Candy, and Crooks "Think I don't like to talk to somebody-ever'once in a while? (53). The words of Curley's wife remind us of Crooks' loneliness, the two characters experience the same pain. Her aggressive tone is emphasized when she exclaims to Crooks and Candy "Sat'iday night. Every'body out doing som'pin, Evertbody'. An what am I doin?. Standing here talking to a bunch of bindle stiffs-a nigger an'a dum-dum" (54).

Steinbeck's description of Curley's wife as being a *'femme fatale'*: "*her face was heavily made up. Her lips were slightly parted*" (55). This obliges the 'ranch men' to take their necessary precautions to avoid 'infection, as Crooks says "*Maybe you better go along to your own house now: we don't want no trouble*" (56). Besides, she has an artistic dream; she wants to be a Hollywood actress thanks to the advantages of her charm. In this sense, she confesses to Lennie that she met a man that promises to her a Hollywood career. "*I met a guy, a, he was in pitchers. Went out to the Riverside Dance Palace with him. He says he was gonna put me in the movies. Says I was natural*"

When George learns that Curley's wife possesses a 'devastating charm', he immediately feels the danger from this woman and warns Lennie to keep his distance from Curley's wife. George is afraid that Lennie may approach her as he did previously with the previous ranch's girl. Lennie tried to touch a girl's dress, and the girl screamed. The two companions had to run away from the ranch in order to escape from a lynch's mob whose members are convinced that Lennie had 'violently assaulted the girl (57). Thus, to prevent the 'reproduction of such painful incidents, George warns Lennie to stay away from Curley's wife "*I seen 'em poison before, but I never seen no piece of jail bait worse than her*"

Lennie's fate is definitely 'sealed' when Curley's wife comes to the bunkhouse to seek some companionship with Lennie. In the first bunkhouse, she learns that Lennie likes soft things. Then, she encourages him to stroke her hair "*She took Lennie's hand and put it on her head. "Feel right aroun' there an'see how soft is."* Lennie's big fingers fell to stroking her hair" (58). She panics and screams, and in an attempt to quiet her screams, Lennie accidentally breaks her neck and kills her (59). When her dead body is discovered, Candy describes her as being "*damn tramp...you lousy tart*" (60).

It goes without saying that Curley's wife is the cause of Lennie's downfall. The charm and softness of Curley's wife 'trapped' the naïve, deficient, and husky Lennie. This 'trap' destroys George and Lennie's dream of having "*a house an' garden and a place for alfalfa*". (61). After the incident, all the ranch men organized a 'search' party in order to kill Lennie, but George anticipates and puts a gun on Lennie's skull and fires before the others men arrive. This scene is the most poignant and emotive scenes of the novella. The analysis of the women characters in Steinbeck's novels shows that their representation is ambivalent. On the one hand, we have the strong woman character Joad Ma who is given an epic proportion as a mother who takes care of her family in times of crises. On the other hand, we have the representation of women as destroyers as in the case of Curley's wife. It has to be observed that in *Of Mice and Men*, Curley's wife is from the city. The association of city women with corruption is balanced by country women as positive figures. This ambivalent image of women as saviours and women as destroyers expresses the ambivalent view about women during the period of depression.

Conclusion:

. On the whole, Dos Passos and Steinbeck offer us a 'double' portrayal of women. In the biographies, 'Newsreels', and Camera Eye sections, women are associated with violence, sex, and social unrest. In contrast, the fictional narratives bring a positive dimension for the 'fair sex'; women are given voice, they are portrayed as politically committed, and socially triumphant. At the heart of the negative portrayal or othering of women is the corrupting influence of capitalist society. The media project alienates women as creatures of pleasures which may look like affordable goods in the democracy of pleasure. The liberation or emancipation of women in the domain of sexuality leads to the accentuation of violence

against women and their reduction to mere bodies. Only the involvement of women in political decisions can save them from the process of othering.

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General Conclusion

Our research has allowed us to discover that both John Dos Passos and John Steinbeck share the same idea of post-war America. Our analysis concentrated on three major themes of the era: racial discrimination, proletariat vs. big business, and women redefined socio-political position were at the centre of the post-war debate. We noticed throughout our dissertation that othering in Dos Passos and Steinbeck is given three embodiments: the ethnic, the proletariat groups, and women.

This dissertation leads to the following conclusions. One, when a society like that of America in the 1920s and the 1930s is in crisis, it seeks to exorcise its evil demons on the other, generally the weakest sections or groups in the community. We have identified three of these groups in our dissertation. One of them is the other defined by racial or ethnic categories. In the first chapter, we have the historical background to explain the reasons that led to the othering of blacks, the Hispanics, and other ethnic groups like recent immigrants from Southern and Central Europe. The internal migration of the black people to the North to make up for the shortage of white labor, the return of black war veterans from the war, the celebration of the birth of the New Negro, the advent of economic crises after the war, and the political withdrawal of America from world politics are all factors that contributed to social crisis. The other factors are industrialization and the rise of labour class often associated with foreigners.

The social crisis expressed itself in the call for a 'one-hundred Americanism' or nativist policies. Both Dos Passos and Steinbeck rendered this othering of ethnic groups in a border line made of writing, combining modernist techniques and realist themes. The central plot line in their novels is identified as that of romance whose fundamental feature is that of quest. The quest for happiness, for a safe place to live in and to enjoy one's religious, economic, political, and social freedom peculiar to American literature is turned upside to

reveal its degradation through the course that American history has taken. So neither the internal migration of Crooks to the Pacific Coast in *Of Mice and Men* nor that foreign workers like Sacco and Vanzetti in Dos Passos's trilogy closes with the realization of the dream. The dream is transformed into a nightmare because twentieth century inheritors of American democracy hence given up the principles on which the republic was initially founded. One of these is the Jeffersonian ideal of agrarianism that ceded traits to the principle of competition peculiar to industrial America. Though both Dos Passos and Steinbeck call for the revolution. This revolution is not conceived in Marxist terms but in American terms.

Thus, othering happened as a result of socio-politico- economic causes. The other became a scapegoat on which these problems or causes were 'balanced'. The two authors in their own way try to make the other familiar; that is acceptable with the capitalist system. Socialist ideas were integrated, but as they are not perceived as 'threats' to the collapse of the capitalist system.

The third axis of our post-war analysis was devoted to the place of American women during the post-war era. We demonstrated that Dos Passos and Steinbeck represented women within a 'double' dimension. In fact, Dos Passos, presented a stereotypical depiction of women in the biographies and his newsreels. Nonetheless, his fictional narratives and 'invented' characters provided a positive image of the 'fair sex'. These women were politically committed. In the same manner Steinbeck, dealt with women within two distinct views. Indeed, Curley's wife was portrayed in the novella *Of Mice and Men* as a 'poison' for George and Lennie's dream because of her sex appeal. The second view was positive in *The Grapes of Wrath*. It was personified by the great role of Ma Joad who was the citadel of the Joads. A new historical reading of the positive portrayal of women by Steinbeck and Dos

Passos led us to argue that it was the result of the growing social and political standing of women during the post-war era.

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Résumé :

Ce mémoire de magistère axe son étude sur l'idée de l'Amérique post première guerre mondiale en relation avec deux figures littéraires légendaires de la période. En effet, John Dos Passos (1896-1970) et John Steinbeck (1902-1968) s'attelaient à décrire leur propre vision des Etats Unis au lendemain du désastre de la première guerre mondiale. Tout au long de cette dissertation, nous avons analysé le point de vue de ces deux figures vis-à-vis de cette époque. Ainsi donc cette thèse présente un large aperçu des tensions sociales, politiques, économiques, et ethniques au lendemain de la première guerre mondiale. Notre référence et appropriation de la théorie « néo-historiciste » nous a permis d'établir un diagnostic historique et littéraire de certaines œuvres de John Dos Passos et John Steinbeck. Nous avons démontré qu'il y'avait une corrélation entre les deux auteurs dans la description d'une Amérique fragmentée en classes sociales, raciste, et capitaliste. Pour réaliser notre objectif nous avons sélectionné quelques romans qui symbolisaient les idées phares de l'époque. Nous avons optés pour *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Des Souris et des Hommes* (1937), et *Les Raisins de la Colère* (1939) en ce qui concerne John Steinbeck, et la trilogie *U.S.A* (1938) de l'œuvre de John Dos Passos. L'analyse de la trilogie de John Dos Passos et les deux romans de John Steinbeck *Tortilla Flat* et *Des Souris et des Hommes* est articulée autour de la perspective ethnique et de la discrimination raciale. Dans ce registre, les hispaniques de

Tortilla Flat, l'unique personnage de couleur Crooks au sein du roman *Des Souris et des Hommes*, et les deux anarchistes italiens Sacco et Vanzetti ont vécu le même « traitement » et haine raciale et discriminatoire. Cette thèse a aussi projeté deux autres thèmes phares de l'époque post- première guerre mondiale : la « friction » socio-économique entre le prolétariat et les dérives du système capitaliste, et aussi le statut des femmes américaines tout au long de la période. Cet axe « prolétarien » des deux auteurs est largement reflété dans leurs ouvrages suivants : *Les Raisins de la Colère* et *U.S.A.* Notre étude du prolétariat, dans ces deux romans, a démontré que les deux auteurs partageaient la même vision : que les Etats-Unis étaient composés de deux nations et de deux pôles diamétralement opposés : une nation composée de riches, de privilèges et l'autre nation « peuplée » par une masse d'ouvriers, des sans logis, et autres petites-gens.

Nous tenons à souligner que John Dos Passos et John Steinbeck se sont contentés de dénoncer la paupérisation de la société américaine conséquence des dérives du système capitaliste, mais en aucun cas ils n'ont rejeté ce système. .