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ARCHETYPAL MANIFESTATION OF MATRIARCHY IN THE POST- DEPRESSION ERA IN STEINBECK'S THE GRAPES OF WRATH

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to analyze the archetypal manifestation of matriarchy and new gender roles in the family in John Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*. Through the close reading of the text from the perspectives of Radical feminism, with references Kate Millet, Simon de Beauvoir, and the like, the paper focuses on how the protagonist of the novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, Ma Joad breaks patriarchal rules and becomes the new leader of her family, and plays a greater role, different from the traditional submissive character to maintain the family's unity during the historical context of the 'Great Migration'. The female characters of the novel display a vital spirit in establishing the community of fraternity ignoring the exploitations imposed on them by the men in their patriarchal society earlier. The finding is that in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, the more distant the Joads are from their homeland, the more obstacles they face along the journey, and the more unfit Pa Joad becomes for the family's responsibilities, the stronger and more decisive Ma Joad becomes. The new social roles in society allow women the power of thinking and standing up for their position and place in society.

INTRODUCTION

The patriarchal trend began with Aristotle who assumed women as passive beings and with Freud who regarded women suffering castration complex (Sultana, 2011). Women are categorized as the second sex, subordinate to men, and dependent on men (Beauvoir, 1974; Millet, 1977). John Steinbeck is determined to defy such patriarchal values and reconstitute matriarchy in her novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*. Most of the critical works on Steinbeck seem to talk about social class struggles, migration, human conditions, and the identification of rural people and nature. John Steinbeck "won the National

Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for *The Grapes of Wrath*, and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962” (Schleeter, 2014, para.1) and became one of the best-selling artists of his time. This research shares the idea that the study of the transformation of gender roles in Steinbeck’s work, *The Grapes of Wrath*, published in 1939, is still relevant. *The Grapes of Wrath* is taken as the artistic and authentic record of the plagues during 1930s. The novel replicates the depression that was permeated in the Western societies. Most of his novels are realistic, imaginative, sympathetic, and humorous and focus on keen social perception. John Steinbeck “provides a particularly compelling vision of human nature as it relates to philosophical and environmental themes” (Steinbrecher, 2016, p.7). Steinbeck explores females as different from traditional females to change their social roles and construct a new identity of females in society.

Steinbeck belonged to the post-Depression era in American literary history (DeMott & Railsback, 2007). *The Grapes of Wrath* is in a sense a kind of journey of the Joads family and other migrants from Oklahoma to westward during the 1930s. The important factor raised in the novel is changing role of females and their identity in an unknown environment. Steinbeck, in reporting the story of the Joads, grabs the plight of a period of the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl in American history (Schleeter, 2014). Many families had to leave the south-central plain in the United States to escape from drought and extreme poverty and arrived to California in the 1930s because of the economic conditions of the dust bowl. The process of changing and learning in a new environment can be seen in different characters. Joads are the fictional characters who represent many American families who had to leave the Southern part of the United States to escape poverty and drought. The novelist has exposed the need to adapt the migrant laborers who arrived in California in the 1930s in their flight from adverse climatic and economic conditions of the Dust Bowl. As the narrative in the novel proceeds, one can see that the family environment is deeply affected by the new conditions in which they find themselves.

Carpenter (1941) marked the transition from the importance of the “I” to the importance of the “we” in *The Grapes of Wrath* where the Joads became aware of the need for social changes, and Ma Joad becomes a brave woman. Hinton (1998) shows how Ma Joad and Rose of Sharon adapt to this new social organization embracing the cause of the helpless families that find themselves in the same conditions that they are. Even though she seems to have the seeds of transformation within her, she is not able to overcome the traditional family boundaries at the beginning of the journey. When Pa Joad loses control over his family, Ma Joad begins to stand out as a family leader. It is found that the structural changes in the family and the acquisition of the idea of unity among the migrants have always caught the attention of readers of the novel. Wyatt (1990) affirms that the novel marks the end of Steinbeck’s conception of home and place.

The rationale of the paper lies in making an inquiry on matriarchy and the significance of the changing gender roles. This research, therefore, work deals with Ma Joad’s transformation of gender roles in society, and her determination to adopt new values in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Grapes of Wrath has been analyzed from diverse critical perspectives since its publication. A group of critics has analyzed its subject matter, theme, and narrative techniques. Some critics have judged the fiction from the perspective of the historical event. John Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* is a novel about transformation and a new social system (Wyatt, 1990). According to Mullins (2002), "The Grapes of Wrath was a social document that outraged management groups such as the Associated Farmers of California, while it suggested, at least at one point, that the Okies' wrath could spill over into revolution" (p. 1167). *The Grapes of Wrath* evokes the obstacles of the Great Depression which arouse sympathy for the struggles of migrant workers (Bauer, n. d.). In this way, many critics find the characters of the novel struggling against the plague in the 1930s.

Accordingly, there are some judgments on the characterization of the novel. Fonseca (2005) reviews that the novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* gives decisive roles to the female characters, while the male characters are presented as confused and submissive caused by the great depression. The main character Ma Joad performs the role of the leader during the times of migration. Marshall (2009) observes Steinbeck portraying the impacts of rapid industrialization within the American society of the 1930s the landscapes in *The Grapes of Wrath*. According to Bamarani (2015), *The Grapes of Wrath*, one of John Steinbeck's great experiments, explodes upon the American conscience in 1939, picturing the intimate reality of the Joads' suffering and the plight of the dust bowl, Oklahoma Migrants" (p. 340). John Steinbeck tries to show the female fictional character as models for all women who struggled to be equals in society and cultures. Throughout the novel, an archetypal manifestation of the feminist erupts in the form of the Great Mother. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the Great mother appears in both her elementary and transformative characters.

The critical responses to *The Grapes of Wrath* have employed a variety of different approaches, but most of the critical writing on the novel has turned into a study of the social transformations portrayed in the novel. The issue of the establishment of matriarchy and its dominant role in fiction has not been addressed yet. Hence, this research work deals with Ma Joad's transformation of gender roles in society, and her determination to adopt new values in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

METHODOLOGY

For the justification of the proposed hypothesis, the study makes the close reading of the primary resource, that is, the text, *The Grapes of Wrath* from the radical feminist perspective. It applies a qualitative approach to research. Besides this, secondary sources such as the reviews on the text written on journals, websites, and other resources commentaries are studied to find the research gap. The systematic sampling method is used to test the working hypothesis.

This research is developed through a theoretical framework based on Marxist and Psychological feminist principles. It primarily focuses on the impacts of Ma Joad's revolutionary actions against her social norms while assessing John

Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*. Radical Feminism is which arose in the late 1970s. It is a specific kind of political discourse a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against economic exploitation by the patriarchal societies (Moi, 1988; Susan, 1995). Radical feminism argues against the economic, social exploitation of females by the capitalists while Socialist feminism seeks to get equal social status for women (Millet, 1977; Armstrong, 2020). Fricker (2007) reminds us that in addition to social and political injustices, women suffer from are epistemic injustices. Radical feminists challenge the biological essentialities view of gender (Beauvoir, 1974).

Psychoanalytical feminist critics, also categorized as radical feminists, raise their voices against emotional and psychic torture imposed on women. Kriesteva (1980) opines that women ought to revolt against their marginalization. Showalter (1992) theorizes 'Gynocriticism' to establish a woman as a genius and intellectual one, challenging the anti-feminist belief that women cannot equate to men in intellect and creativity. Wollstonecraft (1792) proved creativity to be an independent entity, a natural gift that belongs to neither male nor female. Woolf (1992) proposed women have their own room and money if they wanted to write. This movement strives to protect women from rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence (Echols, 1989). Eco-feminists, whose voice has an affinity with the Marxist and Psychoanalytical feminist critics, see men's control of land as responsible for the oppression of women and destruction of the natural environment (Beihl, 1991).

The feminist approaches mentioned above are useful tools to examine how Ma Joad, the protagonist, of John Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* struggles to establish her matriarchy and her own identity by challenging the deep-rooted patriarchal norms and values that tried to interiorize her. Its delimitation primarily lies in studying the text, *The Grapes of Wrath* from the feminist approach.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* focuses on the shift from archetypal patriarchy to a predominantly matriarchal one. Lerner (1989) notes women struggling against patriarchy for equality in the modern age. The specific gender expectations may vary substantially among cultures, while other characteristics may be common throughout a range of cultures. The ontological constructions of gender get turned in in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Matriarchy is oriented to fight against prejudices against women (Goettner-Abendroth, 2018). The novel is predominantly characterized the environmental, economic, cultural crises observed in the period of 'Great Depression' in the United States in the 1930s. According to Lemann (1991), the Great Migration was one of the most influential internal movements in history, perhaps caused by the threat of execution or starvation, the intention to find a better job. During the 1930s, the term 'Okie' became popular to refer not only to the migrants but also to the intolerance of local people (Pryor, 2012).

Psychoanalytical feminists emphasize the social construction of gender and advocate for the nature of discursive nature of reality (Butler, 1999). This is traced in the novel from its very beginning. When the Joads finally reach

California, they feel that their dream of living a better life would be shattered. They mark people living in miserable conditions. However, Ma Joad, keeps on aspiring for a better living. She does not look like a weak woman. Sometimes Ma Joad fights with a desire to cry, but she is the provider of courage, dignity, and the idea of home. Ma Joad's actions represent the actions of a post-modern feminist. Ma Joad's incredible strength enables her to undergo pain and hardship without flinching, while at the same time providing her family with renewed strength. After a period of humiliation along the journey, the Joads reach the government camp in California. There they feel like human beings again because they are treated with some dignity in one of the camps. The Joads do not stay only in the organized camp, but they move from camp to camp in order to find work, and the situation gets worse day by day. There is only starvation and slave work. The bad condition of migrant families became alarming when they began suffering from fever. Pneumonia, meningitis, and tuberculosis were some of the most common illnesses among these people, especially the migrant children (Meltzer, 2000). In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Winfield, the youngest male of the Joads, gets sick from hunger, while Rose of Sharon's baby is ill-born. When the male family members seem to be discouraged in solving the problems of the family, Ma Joad's communicates with the family strongly:

We're a-goin' to Marysville. I don't care what the pay is...Pa sniffed. 'Seems like times is changed,' he said sarcastically. 'Time was when a man said what we'd do. Seems like women is tellin' now. Seems like it's purty near time to get out a stick...Ma put the clean dripping tin dish out on a box. She smiled down at her work. '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. But you ain't a-doin' your job, either a-thinkin' or a-workin'. If you was, why, could use your stick, an' women folks'd sniffle their nose an' creep-mouse aroun'. But you jus' get you a stick now an' you ain'tlickin' no woman, you're a-fightin', 'cause I got a stick all laid out too.' (pp. 480-81)

Ma Joad's seems to make a satire that the males are not always supposed to be powerful. Millet (1977) argues against way patriarchy is taken as natural. Ma Joad's character and actions do not adhere to the so-called natural, patriarchal tradition. But whenever he identifies with the perspective of weakness and does not show his characteristics of the male, that is, his strength, and decisive nature, he acquires characteristics of femininity. Ma Joad reminds her husband that both husband and wife have equal status. Ma Joad refutes the idea of the patriarchal system where the females are inferior to the males. Kriesteva (1980) opines that women ought to revolt against their marginalization. Ma Joad deconstructs the capitalist notion of patriarchy that every man should be a winner, and succeed over the female. Ma Joad's voice is the voice for equality for all women. She asserts that women may appear submissive as long as men manage provision for the family, but in times of difficulty, female strength is required. This justifies the equal status of both sexes. Ma Joad is adored and respected in the family because of her responsible nature. It is the woman's action that is favored by the group. Owing to the period of the great depression, the patriarchal norms were shattered, and men and women stood in the same positions. Old Tom Joad can't tolerate noticing the weakening role of women, but he is obliged to pursue Ma Joad for the betterment of the group:

Pa grumped with embarrassment.

'Now it ain't good to have the little Fellas hear you talking like that,' he said... 'You get some bacon Inside the little fellas 'fore you come tellin' what else is good for 'em', said Ma. (p.481)

The father figure loses its power to the family at the moment Old Tom Joad succumbs to the female power. His power, land, and property are lost. He has to stay under the tents with dirty and poor migrants in the camps. They have neither food nor jobs. Moreover, he has lost his position of leader and master. He has to sacrifice his control over the family to his wife. He abdicates his position of master and protector for the good of the group. Feminists have the power to keep the family-integrated (Millet, 1977). The role of matriarchy is heightened in the novel by showing Ma Joad's power to keep the family-integrated and optimistic. Ma Joad stands for the Great Mother. The 'Great Mother' signifies an archetypal woman who has greater love, more compassion, and more understanding for others (Jung, 1959). Patriarchal norms are replaced by matriarchal norms in the novel. Ma Joad's power is not because of her accomplishments. She does not conquer the position of leader, however little by little she occupies the empty place of the leader. When Tom thinks of leaving the house, Ma Joad stimulates him to stay with the family:

Tom sighed, 'I'm gettin' tired Ma. How 'bout makin' me mad?' 'You got more sense, Tom. ..I got to lean on you. The mothers they're kinda strangers, all but you. You won't give up, Tom.'" The job fell on him. 'I don't like it,' he said. 'I wanta go out like Al. An' I wanta get mad like Pa, an' I wanta get drunk like Uncle John...'. 'You can't, Tom. They's some folks that's just theirselves an' nothin' more...Ever'thing you do is more'n you...' 'Now, Ma-cut it out. It ain't true. It's all in your head.' (p. 482)

Ma Joad is portrayed as the mother-goddess who inspires and protects her hero-son. She perceives that Tom has a mission of helping people before he dies. But Tom often feels pessimistic about his mission. The male members of the family have a very adverse condition. Al, the youngest son, wants to leave the family, his father is mad, and his uncle drinks. The only shelter for the weak male characters is their family. Tom is forced to leave his family because he has murdered two people, the first one in Oklahoma acting in self-defense, and the second one in reaction to his friend Casy's death. Tom decides to go away from his house because he does not want to keep his family at risk. At this decision he says to his mother:

... I'll be aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'whe-wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. If Casy knowed, why, I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad an'- I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build-why, I'll be there. (p. 572)

Tom's words reveal a message against buccaneering capitalism that imposes suffering on his people. The significance of the free will to act wisely at the

right time is suggested through his words. Free will is the mental potentiality to display power (Leiter, 2002). Tom leaves in order to escape from prison; however, the true prison in the novel is the world outside the prison walls, where he could get neither a decent job nor good life conditions for his family. Though the loss of Tom was a great blow for Ma Joad, she realizes that the community and the life of the group are more significant than the life of the son. His position was even more important than his father's. In one of the family gatherings, he complains about the new situation where a woman is the leader of the family because it is hard for a man to lose his position of leading his wife in the patriarchal society. Patriarchy is probably the oldest form of exploitation of one part of the population by another (Ruth, 1990). But patriarchy can't dominate here. Her wisdom reflects the change not only in herself but in the whole society that was in a process of recognizing women's capacity to replace men in several aspects. Ma Joad is a powerful woman who sees two deaths in a short period—the death of Grandpa and Granma. Her son Noah abandons the family; young Tom Joad runs away because of his murders; her son, Al, wants to leave the family and live on his life. Ma Joad's pregnant daughter, Rose of Sharon, is left by Connie. Despite the severe blows, Ma Joad keeps on struggling to protect her family.

Steinbeck makes a positive characterization of Ma Joad as a woman. Her role signifies the important role of matriarchy and motherhood. She never displays the submissive character that a traditional woman was assumed to display. Beauvoir (1974) does not like the way the woman is treated as the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential, absolute man. Ma Joad does not want to take herself as inessential. Thus, she achieves a leading position in the family; she never escapes from her mother and wife roles.

Changing Roles in Female Characters

Steinbeck reinforces the changing and leading roles of women in *The Grapes of Wrath* through the characterization of Rose of Sharon, Ma Joad's elder daughter. She is also introduced as a caring, superior, and bold woman: "Her hair, braided around her head, made an ash-blonde crown" (p. 129). Even in her pregnancy, Rose of Sharon does not display any kind of emotional affection for her baby. For some time, she seems to have internalized the traditional role of a woman who just reproduces. She represents modern women who bear children without bestowing much affection. If she had more sex appeal to her husband before her marriage, this is not noticed in her after marriage. The narrator stresses a change in their relationship by saying "Her round soft face which had been voluptuous and inviting a few months ago, had already put on barriers of pregnancy" (p. 129). Her husband, Connie, misses the way their sexual life was before her pregnancy. For her husband, she loses the sexual appeal and acquires the image of the Virgin Mary. Virgin Mary stands for a refugee, a source of remedies, a sanctuary (Preson, 1978). Rose of Sharon does not wish to accept the passive role attributed to the women of her time. Rose of Sharon is portrayed both as a provocative woman and a dignified mother. She does not allow her husband to use her as a commodity.

Ma Joad and Rose of Sharon adjust to the new social organization embracing the helpless families that find themselves in miserable conditions (Hinton, 1998). The bond between Rose of Sharon and Ma Joad is identical to the role of teacher and disciple. Here, Ma Joad guides a child, and a daughter learns how to be a responsible mother from Ma Joad, and how to carry on her heredity. But Ma Joad appears to be concerned centered on the family, Rose of Sharon is self-concerned. Steinbeck's heroine, Ma Joad has the potentiality of leading the family in an age where the bias against women was prevalent (Foneca, 2005). Ma Joad breaks the roles of submissive women and acts against the trend of taking women as the reproductive machine. Because of her baby, Rose of Sharon confronts many problems in California. She can't tolerate the difficult time she confronts. However, if she displays compassion for her baby, it is an obsession for herself.

Gender hierarchy is refuted in modern societies owing to the equal potential of both sexes (Millet, 1977). At the beginning of the narrative of *The Grapes of Wrath*, women like Rose of Sharon were regarded as inferior, but later on, they obtain respected as mothers. When the Joad family decided to go to California,

"...Uncle John had preferred not to sit in the honored place beside the driver. He would have liked Rose to sit there. This was impossible because she was young and a woman" (p.130). Gender hierarchy is discarded by Steinbeck. He seems to project a message that both males and females have equal roles in solving family problems. Rose of Sharon dreams of getting better treatment despite going through a difficult situation:

Connie gonna get a job in a store or maybe a fact'ry. An' he's gonna study at home, maybe radio, so he can git to be an expert an' maybe later have his own store. An' we'll got to pitchers whenever. An' Connie says I'm gonna have a doctor when the baby's born; an' he says we'll see how times is, an' maybe I'll go to a hospiddle...I'm gonna have a 'lectric iron, an' the baby'll have all new stuff. (p.224)

The name, Rose of Sharon is associated with a flower to connote fragility, to symbolize femininity. She is treated as submissive and docile. Rose of Sharon was accustomed to expecting from her husband, Connie. Connie makes his plans for her better lifestyle, but he never thinks about what she expects in the future. He underestimates the importance of women. Feminists are committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism (Susan, 1995). That is why Ma Joad acts as a feminist and teaches her daughter, Rose of Sharon to perform acts, duties without anybody's help:

When you're young, Rosasharn, ever'thing that happens is a thing all by itself. It's a lonely thing. I know, I 'member, Rosasharn." Her mouth loved the name of her daughter. 'You're gonna have a baby, Rosasharn, and that's somepin to you lonely and away. That's gonna hurt you, an' the hurt'll be lonely hurt, an' this here tent is alone in the worl', Rosasharn...They's time of change, an' when that comes, dyin' is a piece of all dyin', and bearin' is a piece of all bearin'. (pp. 285-86)

Ma Joad also teaches Rose of Sharon that terror, pain, joy, and loneliness are parts of life. She prepares Rose of Sharon to be a grown-up woman, a generous mother who serves all the people in trouble. Beauvoir (1980) had spoken against the trend of treating man as a connection between the woman and her role in the world. But Connie does not attempt to credit this link to Rose. He is expected to be the provider for Rose. But Connie leaves her failing to build up the ideal home for Rose. After he leaves, Rose of Sharon "...got up and went into the tent. She lay down on the mattress and rolled over on her stomach and buried her head in her crossed arms" (p. 372).

In this way, the men of both Ma Joad and Rose of Sharon are losers. When Rose of Sharon remains lonely, her mother uses a strategy to comfort her daughter. She offers her earrings to Rose of Sharon in a ritual although her daughter is not pierced. The earrings are a symbol of Ma Joad's role that someday will be performed by Rose of Sharon. Wollstonecraft (1792) advocated that creativity is a natural entity that belongs to neither male only nor female only. Rose of Sharon also begins to show her creativity. She gradually decides to work in the field to help the family though she is very much worried about having a baby in that miserable condition. Very soon her brother, Al wants to leave the family. Rose suffers so much that she gives birth to a dead baby. Uncle John keeps the baby inside a box and floats it in a stream. This is a symbolic act of revolting against their helpless position in the world:

Go down an' tell 'em. Go down in the street an' rot an' tell 'em that way. That's the way you can talk. Don't even know if you was a boy or a girl. Ain't gonna find out. Go on down now, an' lay in the street. Maybe they'll know then'. (p. 608)

Uncle John suggests that the dead body of the baby will relate to the people the cause of its death and what really caused it. Everywhere the world of losers is portrayed in the novel. There is a fifty-year-old man with his son in a barn. Though the boy's father is starving to death, he assists Rose of Sharon who has just lost her son by sharing a blanket with her. However, sharing and value of universal family are stressed in these words:

Then slowly she lay beside him. He shook his head slowly from side to side. Rose of Sharon loosened one side of the blanket and bared her breast. 'You got to,' she said. She squirmed closer and pulled his head close. 'There!' She said. 'There.' Her hand moved behind his head and supported it. Her fingers moved gently in his hair. She looked up and across the barn, and her lips came together and smiled mysteriously. (p. 619)

This scene stands as a symbol of survival, and of the maternal love suggested by Steinbeck. The scene is an indicator that Rose of Sharon finally is ready to establish her matriarchal values like her mother. Rose of Sharon and Ma Joad "...and the two women looked deep into each other" (p. 618).

Thus, Steinbeck has used two women as symbols of hope. They care and nourish when men are upset by the economic downfall. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck establishes optimism for people trapped in economic chaos (French,

1994). Steinbeck's perspective is quite modern, for he takes two illiterate women as symbols of renewal and strength in critical conditions. Steinbeck gives a message that despite the loss of their husbands and children, women can tackle the hazards of life better than men. The novelist breaks the prevailing practices of misogyny that always tried to exploit women. Against society's wishes, the women pull together and maintain a stable family.

CONCLUSION

Thus, one of the most prominent changes in *The Grapes of Wrath* is the shift, transformation from patriarchy to matriarchy. Pa Joad loses his position of authority to Ma Joad. The migration journey, challenges of female characters in Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* contribute to the establishment of the new role of females and a new identity in the patriarchal society. During the migration period, the migrant family left old social rules and accepted the new social rules and values. Ma Joad breaks the patriarchal rules, and emerges as the new head leader of the family, as a responsible member of the Joads family. In the beginning, Ma Joad only observes the men's authoritative decisions. But as the narrative proceeds, the gender role reverses. Thus, the matriarchal values are strongly established by Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Though the women lose the love from their husbands and children and experience severe problems, they adapt to the changing scenario boldly in the novel, *Grapes of Wrath*. A feminist reader can grasp the novelist's message that women can change better than men. They ought not to be taken lightly as they confront the hazards of life strongly.

The women in *Grapes of Wrath* no longer depend on men for the bread. Instead, they decide to make their own living. Ma Joad attempts to continue the existence of the family by acting courageously in times of crisis. It was assumed to be the men's responsibility to look after the family's food, shelter states, and other necessary goods. But men in *Grapes of Wrath* run away rather than making such provisions. The men in the novel forget women as well when they suffer from unemployment and poverty. It is ridiculous that the male members of the family escape from their duties. For instance, the eldest son of Joads, Noah goes to live by the river. He is not needed in the family anymore. He is incompetent during the time of economic pressure on the family. *The Grapes of Wrath* is can't be categorized as a pessimistic novel because it is written from the perspective of matriarchy. In addition to addressing the issues of recapitulating the economic conditions of the migrants during the period of the great migration, the novel is equally linked to improving the conditions of humanbeings in general and the economic, psychic liberation of women in particular. Steinbeck takes the illiterate female characters to give them the potentiality of reviving their community members.

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