


STEINBECK'S *THE GRADES OF WRATH* AS THE
REFLECTION OF SOCIAL CONDITION OF THE OKIES
MIGRANT WORKERS IN CALIFORNIA IN THE THIRTIES



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MOTTO:

**THE ONLY FEAR YOU HAVE TO FEAR IS
FEAR ITSELF
(FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT)**

**ALL INDIVIDUAL MEN WERE CREATED
EQUAL IN ONE MUTUAL RIGHT TO
FREEDOM
(WILLIAM FAULKNER)**

This Thesis is Dedicated to:

- ❖ **The greatest parents I always have, Sri Cahyani Yuliati and Sarwono**
- ❖ ***My beloved sisters and brother, Octavia Yuliana, Retno Endayani and Nofian***
- ❖ ***Bank Liga Family***
- ❖ ***LPMS UJ and SDI***
- ❖ ***My Alma Mater***

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Jember, March 9 2001

Eri Andriani

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

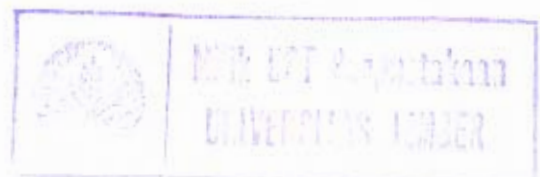
1.1 Rationale

It is a fascinating experience when someone feels that reading can give him knowledge as well as pleasure. He will be fully tempted to have more and more knowledge throughout such activity. In reading literature, understanding the text fully is the main importance to find the pleasure and knowledge.

Literature is anything spoken or written (Roberts, 1983:3). It certainly has two important aims. It presents information dealing with (1) facts, explanations, and history; (2) thoughts and feelings. Next, the term literature used is in the form of the written material that deals with imaginations, thoughts, and feelings as Ignas Kleden (in Semi, 1989:59) says, "Literature is an individual work based on the freedom to create and it is developed through imagination".

Novel is one of the literary forms that reveals a large complex of social condition involving many relations of the characters that are fictitious, but it often represents the real problems of the world. Social reality is also found in literary works especially in a novel because literature has the function as the reflection of the society (Faruk, 1999:4).

One of the tremendous genius American novelists is John Steinbeck. It can be seen from President Lyndon B. Johnson's speech on December 21 1968 when Steinbeck died at the age of 66, "He was a uniquely American writer. He wrote for all Americans about all Americans. His humor, his compassion, and above all, his humanity enriched the nation and the world. The country he loved so well will surely miss him" (Bode, 1973:1). The quotation shows that Steinbeck is well-appreciated by Americans for writing literature in American's perspective. In fact, not only Americans but also other nationalities admire his works and his dedication on literature.



His most writings took place in California and dealt with the subjects which he thoroughly understood. In preparation for writing his novels, he would often live, work and be with the people about whom he was to write, including in writing his most famous novel *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The Grapes of Wrath is a novel which concerns the plight of the migrant workers in California. Here, he depicts the dispossession of the Okies migrants from their lands in Oklahoma and their experiences on their way to California, and how they survive in such condition as the Great Depression. He portrays the Okies condition by focusing the novel's central family; the Joad family.

In writing this novel, Steinbeck inserts chapters which speak the general picture of the society by involving the Joads. By understanding the text fully and using the historical-biographical approach, it is necessary to explore the social condition of the Okies Migrants workers in California during the age of American depression that reveals in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

1.2 The Problem to Discuss

Novel as one of the literary forms is often considered to be the reflection of the society since it has a close relation to the life itself. The development of the stories usually deal with the contemporary's problem. Relating to this tendency, Hudson (1963:10) states:

Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about these aspects of it which has the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is thus fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language

This thesis discusses the social condition of the Okies migrants workers in California in the American economic depression as it appears in the novel. Therefore it is important

to discuss the following problems. First, the background of the thirties as the historical event that inspires Steinbeck in writing the novel. Second, the life of Steinbeck that influences his works specially *The Grapes of Wrath*. Third, the comparison between the social condition of the Okies migrant workers in California in the thirties.

1.3 The Scope of The Study

The discussion is focused on the social condition of the Okies migrant workers in California in the thirties, whether it is documented in the social history of America during that era or as it appears in the novel. Thus, the main discussion is to compare the social condition of the novel and of the Okies migrant workers in California in the thirties.

1.4 The Goals of The Study

Writing this thesis is a medium to enlarge and apply the knowledge in studying literature as well as to appreciate it. The purposes of writing this thesis are, first, to give a clear understanding of the social condition of the Okies migrant in the thirties through the social condition which appears in the novel. The second is to arouse the motivation in reading literary works specially Steinbeck's novels, particularly *The Grapes of Wrath*.

1.5 The Approach to Use

In order to get clear description, detailed explanation and understanding of the problems as well as to gain effectiveness in the discussion of the topic, the approach used in this thesis is historical-biographical approach. According to Guerin (1970:25), "This approach sees a literary work chiefly if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author's life and times of the characters in the work".

At that era most of literary works talk about the reality and picture the real events. Thus, literature can also be a social document. Therefore, it is essential to use this approach in reflecting the historical background of the great depression in the thirties. In addition, Semi (1993:64) states, "Literary work is the fact of history since it is one of man's products, which brings the spirit of the age". By using this approach, it is prominent to give a clear description that the conditions and the occurrences of the thirties is similar to the novel. It also shows that there is a coherence between the author's life and his works.

1.6 The Method of Analysis

This thesis is done by using a literary research. The data are collected from reading some relevant books and references, and constructed to make clear description and explanation about this thesis.

To analyze the data, the deductive method is applied to set out a general idea to a particular one to make this thesis clear and easier to understand. In the beginning of the discussion, the general views of the social condition would be explained to the particular one. At the end, the discussion explains the relationship and the comparison between the data of the novel and of the social facts of the thirties.

1.7 The Organization of The Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first is the introduction of the thesis. The second explains the biography of John Steinbeck and the synopsis of *The Grapes of Wrath*. The next tells about the background of the society and of the author's life that influence the novel. The fourth is the analysis of *The Grapes of Wrath* as the reflection of the Okies migrant workers in California in the thirties, how the condition in the novel is quite similar to the United States' history. The last chapter is the conclusion of all discussions.

CHAPTER II
THE BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN STEINBECK AND
THE SYNOPSIS OF THE GRAPES OF WRATH

2.1 The Biography of John Steinbeck

John Ernst Steinbeck Jr. was born at February 27 1902 in Salinas Valley of California. He was the third child of John Steinbeck Sr., a treasurer of Monterey County who operated a flour-mill, and Olive Hamilton who was a school teacher. This family had a particular character since they were a mixture of the two different cultures, a German strict-ruled father and an Irish mother who always inspires and motivates the children to love reading especially in reading literary works.

Steinbeck grew up in a house full of books. From his mother, he derived that intensity of literary feeling which made what he read more real to him than experience. His favorite books included Mallory's *Le Morte d'Athur*, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *The King James version of The Bible*.

As a president of senior class at Salinas high school, he frequently wrote articles for his school newspaper, and sometimes short stories. He was graduated in 1919. The following year, he entered Stanford University in sporadic attendance. During his studies, he wrote satirical poems and stories for the journal of university.

Like many young post-war I writers dissatisfied with the genteel tradition in America, Steinbeck found the Academic not to his taste. He was in irregular attendance as a student of English at Stanford University from 1920 to 1925, but departed without receiving any degree.

In 1925, he traveled by freighter from Los Angeles to the unrural canyons of New York city in order to be a writer. He worked as a reporter for the *New York American* and as a brick layer in building the New Madison Square Garden. Finding

that he failed in publishing his writing, in 1926 he returned to California and took a job as a caretaker on Lake Tahoe's Emerald Bay in The Sierra Mountains. Here, he began to write his first novel as well as meeting his future wife, Carol Henning. After false starts and after destroying at least one completed manuscript of another novel, he published *Cup of Gold* in 1929. The following year he married Henning as the depression was beginning.

Steinbeck mythopoeic temper grew more fruitful as he composed *To a God Unknown* (1933). He received a favorable critical and attention when he wrote and published *Tortilla Flat* (1935), a novel as a sentimental portrait of the indestructibility of the California paisanos.

He was twenty-seven years old when the great depression began. *In Dubious Battle* (1936) shows the bitterness of the strife between striking migrant fruit pickers and the vigilantes who opposes them. *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) makes vivid the plight of the family which is driven from Oklahoma by the great dust storms of the thirties and makes a long trip to California only to become tragically involved in the troubles of the migrant workers of the state. This work also reveals that the interest is not alone in the social problems, but quite as much in the daily heroism of common people as depicted through the characters of Ma Joad and Tom.

Before the success of *The Grapes of Wrath*, he also wrote a novella *Of Mice and Men* (1937) that won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for the stage version. In the same year he wrote *The Red Pony*, a story of a boy Jody who must have been much like him. The following year he published *The Long Valley and Their Blood is strong*, a series of articles he wrote for the *San Francisco News*.

In March 1940, he joined Ed Ricketts on a marine expedition in the Gulf of California and published *Sea of Cortez* in 1942. The other novel that is influenced by his friendship with Ricketts is *Cannery Row* (1945), a story of Doc's life, a collector of marine life and proprietor of Western Biological Laboratories.

During the World War II he became a war correspondent in Africa and Italy for the New York *Herald-Tribune*. He wrote several volumes of nonfiction like *Bombs Away: The Story of A Bomber Team* (1942) and the strong drama called *The Moon is Down* (1942). Even as a war correspondent he still focused on the human-interest story that later collected in *Once There Was A War* (1958). In 1942, Henning divorced him and his divorce may emerge in the future. In any case, he was busy as the opened chronology attests and his life was taking new directions.

Soon after the divorce, he married Gwendolyn Conger, on March 29, 1943, and moved to New York. Of his new life as a New Yorker, Steinbeck's phase as a regional writer was becoming to an end. From this marriage Steinbeck became the father of two sons, Thom (born in 1944) and John (born in 1946). This marriage finally ended in divorce five years later (1948).

In February 1947, Steinbeck published his new novel *The Wayward Bus*, a story of dynamic people who are struggling against events and circumstances. In the same year, he published *The Pearl*, a short novel of Kino, a simple Mexican fisherman who finds a magnificent pearl which brings his misfortune. The novel is written in a simple language and in style that is easy to read.

In 1948 he was elected to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Letters, but also was grieved by the death of Ricketts who was killed in an automobile accident. After vacuum for a year, he wrote a film script *Viva Zapata*, a biographical documentary film of Mexican revolutionary hero.

On December 29 1950, he married Elaine Scott. In this marriage, he solidified his sense of himself as a family man. In the same year he presented *Burning Bright* on Broadway and soon published it as a novelette. This philosophical value of this work is man's fundamental responsibility is not his own blood but to all of humanity.

His most ambitious work was published in 1952 entitled *East of Eden*. Another novel he published was *Sweet Thursday* (1954), a sequel to *Cannery Row*. The

following novel was *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961). Here he attained the same standard which he set in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Again he holds his position as an independent expounder of the truth with unbiased instinct of what genuinely American, be it good or bad.

In 1962, He won the Nobel Prize for literature. The Swedish Academy stated his works as realistic as well as imaginative writing, distinguished by a sympathetic humor and a keen social perception. The same year he published *Travels with Charley*, an account of his experience in a three month tour in United States with his French-poodle, Charley.

The last book he wrote was *America and American* (1966). The publisher called it a stirring journey into the heart of a nation. It is a combination of a superb text, an unforgettable portrait of America - the tremendous variety and vitality of its people. This book reveals his views on America and how's the people customs and problems in form of texts and pictures.

He was awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 for his significant contribution to the quality of American life. After two surgical operations in May 1968, his health began to fail and on December 21, 1968, he died of a heart attack at the age of 66

2.2 The Synopsis of The Grapes of Wrath

The Grapes of Wrath is a novel of the homeless by which Steinbeck introduces the Joad family and steadily tracks them mile by mile, from the barren fields of Oklahoma. The Catastrophe damages Oklahoma district with the long drought. The corn leaves turn to yellow and covers by dust. Most people are idle. Dust storms are everywhere tearing farm families from their holdings to the 'promised land' of California. Their misery goes unrelieved because of the greed and chicanery of unseen

land barons. The beginning presents the essential background situation which will cause the great migration toward California.

Tom Joad is hitchhiking home after being released from the state prison on parole. He catches a ride to the road which leads to his family's farm. As he is walking the rest of the way, he meets Jim Casy, an itinerant preacher who has been away for trying to figure out something and has decided that since all things are holy he need not be a preacher anymore. When they arrive, they find that the place is deserted. Soon, they see Muley Graves who tells them that Tom's family at his Uncle John's house. They have been chopping cotton to get enough money to buy a car and have decided to head out for California. Muley's family and his brother in law have already left too. Tom is definitely surprise since he hears nothing from his family during his time in the prison.

Tom and Casy walk quickly along the road. After five miles away they find the house with all people. When they arrive, they find that the Joads are making preparations for a journey. The Joad are Oklahoma farmers whose land has been taken away from them by a mortgage company since they had not been able to meet their payments. Pa shows him a truck which his sixteen year old brother, Al, has helped them to buy. He, then, asks about Ruthie and Winfield, his twelve and ten years old brother and sister. The other daughter of the family is Rose of Sharon who has been married to Connie and already conceive.

Tom tells the family about California which he knew from his friend. He says that the fruit picker had hardly been able to get enough salary to eat since the money that they had got was too low while their place is a dirty camp. Ma promises that they will be fine in California. She also dreams of having nice house since Pa has got a handbill promising a job. In a dilapidated automobile, they set out for California which they believe to be a land of plenty. They tell him that the banks and large companies had closed out all the small farmers and now most of them are heading to California.

Before they are leaving, Grampa Joad does not want to leave. They have to dope him in order to get him away.

On the first night of the journey west, Grampa has a stroke and dies immediately. The Joads borrow a quilt from the Wilson and bury Grampa. They, then, fit the Wilson's broken-down car and they begin the journey together. Just as they reach California, Mrs. Wilson becomes so sick that she cannot go on any further. The Joads leave them after giving some money and food to survive since the Wilsons have nothing to keep their living in the city.

During the entire trip, Grandma Joad has been getting sicker and sicker. As they begin the trip across the great desert at night, Ma Joad realizes that Grandma is dying. She dies early in the night, but Ma does not tell the family until the following day. After telling that grandma is dead, they have to leave her to be buried a pauper because they do not have enough money for a descent funeral.

They arrive in a place where many other migrants are camping. Eventhough it is filthy and disorderly, they stop. The first step they do are looking for a job, still, the men are unable to find work for a living. Tom meets Floyd who knows the situation. He explains the differences of Government's camp called Weedpatch which is protected from the sheriff and has many equipment to use by the migrants and their camps that considered to be the wild-humble camps called Hooverville camp. After a while, a contractor comes through looking for workers, and when Floyd asks what they are paying, the friend is accused of being an agitating trouble and arrested. A fight ensues and the sheriff tells the people that the whole camp will be burned that night. The Joads pack up and leave. They find a vacancy in a government's camp which is protected from the sheriff. Eventhough there are law and order, still, The Joads are unable to find job. Soon, they are out of money and food and must go on in searching for the work for living.

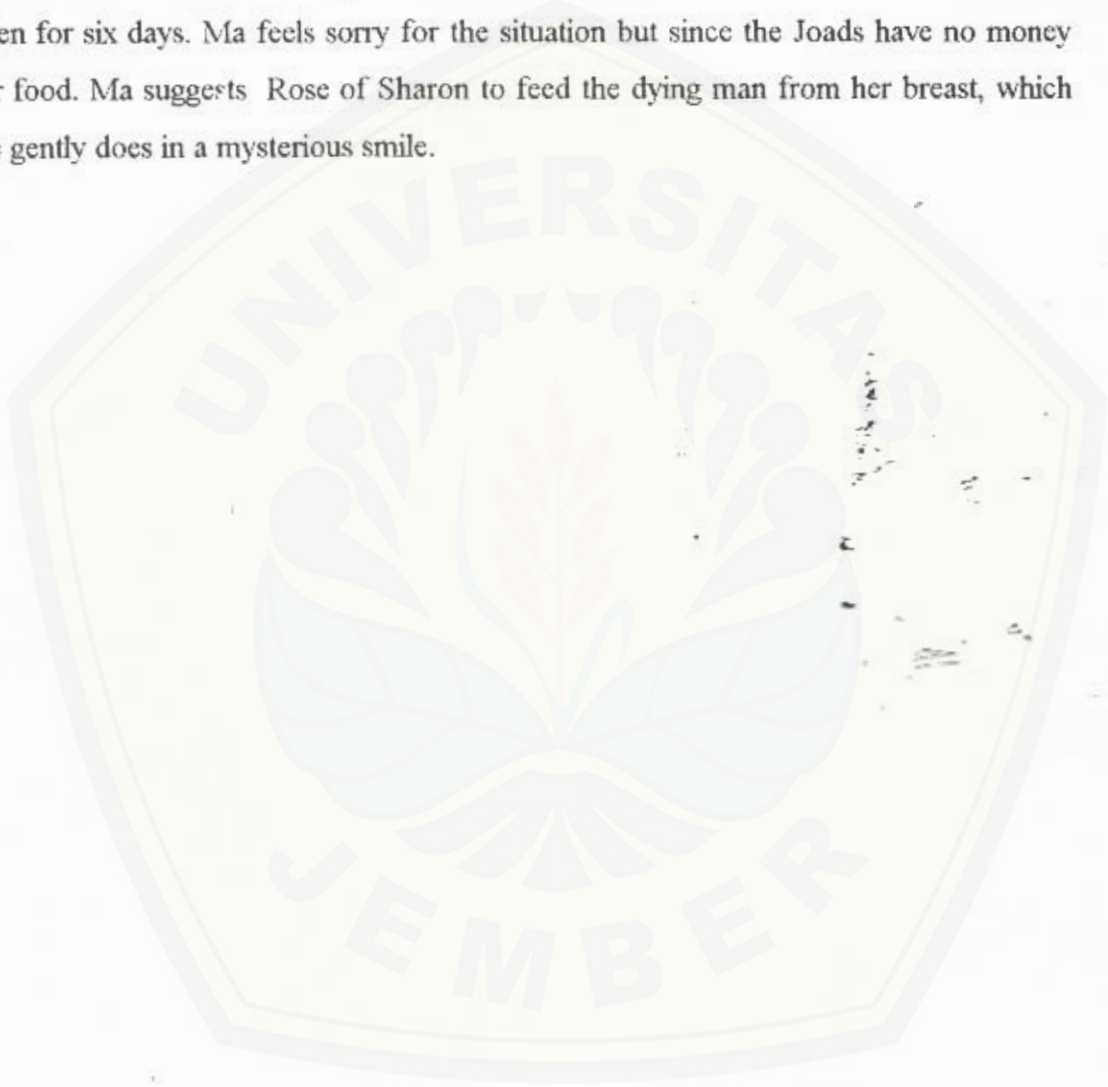
They hear of work in peach orchard. When they arrive, they are escorted into the camp by some policemen. There are many men standing outside the camp some yelling and waving. The Joads begin picking peaches immediately to have something to eat that night. Eventhough all the family work to pick up peaches, still the family cannot fulfill their basic need, specially the food for Rose of Sharon who is preparing for the baby.

Later, Tom slips outside to investigate the situation and finds Jim Casy who tells him that they are striking against the owners of the orchard who cut the wages in ~~half~~. And then some men come looking for Casy and advance on him and immediately kill him. Tom becomes infuriated and kills one of them. He flees and gets back to the camp. Still he has to hide anyway. After having the cutting wages the next morning, the Joads leave and find a place where they can pick cotton and a hiding place for Tom.

Unfortunately, the safe condition does not last long, since Ruthie, one of the Joad children, gets into a fight and threatens to call her brother, Tom, and telling that he has killed a man. Ma hears about the treat and goes to Tom and tells him that he must leave. At first he refuses to go but Ma tells him that it is important to keep him safe to continue the struggle in being a survivor. Tom is going to carry on what Casy was doing. He takes a little money from Ma and leaves the family (the Joads) to join his larger families deal with humanity and carry on their demands to get the better jobs and proper salaries for the better life.

The rains set in, as soon as the cotton picking is over. Just as the Joads are thinking about leaving, Rose of Sharon, the only daughter, goes into labor pains. Pa and some other men try to build an embankment to keep out the rising water, but the embankment collapses. The baby is born, but it is dead. The water keeps rising and comes into the boxcar where they are living. Pa Joad builds a platform inside the boxcar where they can stay for two days.

When the rains slacken a little, Ma Joad says that the family must find a dried-new place than they have. Carrying the children on their backs, they wade through the water until the highway. Down the road they find a barn with some dry hay. There, they discover a dying-starving man and his son, who tells them that his father has not eaten for six days. Ma feels sorry for the situation but since the Joads have no money nor food. Ma suggests Rose of Sharon to feed the dying man from her breast, which she gently does in a mysterious smile.



CHAPTER III

THE BACKGROUNDS OF THE SOCIETY AND OF THE AUTHOR

Writing a historical analysis sometimes brings a biased interpretation. The thirties as the age of a Great Depression was a miserable life. The effect was widespread to all aspects of life. Thus, understanding the historical background of the society including of the author's life during that age is quite important since *The Grapes of Wrath* reflects the condition of the thirties. Therefore, the items that determine the similarities should be explained clearly and well understood by viewing the problems from the historical aspect.

3.1 The Historical view on The Thirties

There was an evidence, chiefly by the end of the 1920s and during the 1930, that is wellknown as the Depression. The condition was terrible. It influenced many activities and made the leaders and citizens suffered from the Depression. The causes of the Depression mainly because:

(1) many economists believed that a major cause was the fact that the public lacked the ability to purchase the goods; (2) a worker should produce automobiles but salary was too low to buy one; (3) the fact that the economic boom was based on durable goods, such as cars, radios, household appliances, etc.; (4) the poorly doing of the farmers, the stagnated-textile industry, and the difficulties of the coal industry while those sectors of the economy were expanding; (5) the recovery in the Former boom industry was quite slow (Sobel, 1963:51).

Those causes dealt with economic problems since the preceding years in fact did not give a positive effect while the market did not have any afford to buy the expanding products. It was like a poorly living in the midst of plenty. The condition became worst since important business enterprises were being concentrated in fewer hands. The

industry was centralized in metropolis as the center of regional web. It made the frontier, the farm, the village and middle town become less important by the rise of the city. Eventhough the condition of the city was not quite well if it was compared to other regions in the countryside (Boardman, 1967:30).

The cause of depression actually not only nationally but also internationally. The global condition of the international economic indeed influenced the growth of internal condition. The interference of investors also influenced the making of the policy that made the problems worst. The other tendency was the World War I. Not because of the suffering but the effect of disaster in Europe in fact influenced United States' trades and investments. Rosenberg (1982:163) states the condition of the traders and the investors as follows:

By 1932 American traders and investors began to discover a radically changed international environment; higher tariffs; special trading agreements; import quotas; regulations on prices; exchange rates; and profit remittances; and in some places pressure to cooperate with national government-sponsored cartels

The condition of the market of course did not help the worst situation. It made the society in small states poor because the excess of the market also influenced the policy making. Jobless increased in the countryside since most people did not have capitals to run their business while the capitals concentrated in the metropolis. The condition of metropolis, actually, was quite the same. The owners of business enterprises tighten the operational costs by reducing the workers and changed them by machines. The greatest of economical reverses gave millions of citizens experienced the downward step in the depression when expecting an upward one.

Unemployment went up another 3,000,000 or 4,000,000 in 1932 since this year was the most disastrous year. In New York city 1,000,000 people went out of jobs. In some cities 80 per cent of the workers were unemployed (Boardman, 1967:46). The number of jobless increased every year and became worst since these



people were unable to obtain enough nutrition as well as clothing and shelter for himself and the family. It made the burden of the whole family increased if only depending on the person who finally had to join these 'jobless club'.

Most of the poor families had to live in garages or sheds or shacks built out of boards and sheets of rusty tin salvaged from a city dump. Jobless men and their wives and children hiding in whatever homes they had whether it was in the store shelters too. Mostly they were ashamed and cutting themselves off from friends and society to avoid any humiliation (Caughey & May, 1964:525).

The worst condition turned better when Franklin Delano Roosevelt elected president. He alleged that the condition will be fine since he filled the vacuum leadership of the President Hoover. He promised the New Deal to bring America the better condition. The idealism of the New Deal, yet brought a new spirit to the American. By bringing the believe that "The only fear you have to fear is fear itself", he gained his power to develop the country that already on crash. The citizens who had lost their confidence to the politicians, started to rely the problems to the government's policies and supported Roosevelt's New Deal.

This New Deal brought an economical recovery eventhough only one step at the time, but the season from March to June, the so-called Hundred Days, became the very important entry point to rebuild the economic condition. Not forgetting the negative impacts, the New Deal brought a new alternative in reducing many problems (Tindall, 1084:1066-1067).

The condition of America became better and much better after the launching of the New Deal. The new policies brought several changes in all aspects. The social condition became stable since unemployment reduced in many numbers and it made the social problems decreased. The economic condition became stable in early 1940s since the World War II brought recovery to the United States by making Europe a serious market for war equipment.

3.2 The Dust Bowl in Oklahoma

The Great Depression brought sufferings for the farmers in the countryside, but it became worst in Great Plains since the 'Dust Bowl' attacked the area and destroyed the crops that were ready to harvest. The Dust Bowl is a name applied to a region of prevailing dust storms in the semiarid Great Plains (a grassland plateau of central North America) of the United States.

Beginning in the late fall of 1933 enormous dust storms began to blow from west to east,... The dry soil drifted like snow; automobile had to use their headlights at noon; families stuffed door and window cracks to keep from being cocked; livestock died of thirst; and the dust blown farther east and fell into the Atlantic Ocean. Millions of acres of farm land lost their topsoil and thousand families fled their home(Boardman, 1967:98).

Most people in the Great Plains worked their land for farming. In Oklahoma the land collapsed since the farm was destroyed by the 'Dust Bowl' or the 'Black Blizzard'. There were less rains for the plants and the crops failed because of vast quantities of topsoil that was transformed by drought into dust were moved great distances, by highwinds.

The failure of the crops made the farmers unable to do the harvesting and it made them collapse since they could not pay the mortgages. Therefore, the Bank took over the lands by using tractors and made them leave the idle land. Late in 1933 a prolonged drought struck the states of the trans- Mississippi Great Plains. Rainless weeks were followed by furious, whining winds, while the sun was darkened by millions of tons of powdery topsoil torn from once fertile areas (Kennedy and Barley, 1986:413). Steinbeck describes the dust bowl in *The Grapes of Wrath* as a terrible thing since men become idle and cannot do any activity by the coming of dust bowl.

Little by little the sky was darkened by the mixing dust, and the wind felt over the earth, loosened the dust and carried it away. The wind grew stronger. The

rain crust broke and the dust lifted up out of the fields and drove gray plumes into the air like sluggish smoke.... The dawn came but no day,... the dusk slipped back toward darkness, and the wind cried and whimpered over the fallen corn....Men stood by their fences and looked at the ruined corn, drying fast now, only little green showing through the film of dust....The men sat still-thinking-figuring (TGoW,1939:4-7).

In that decade, most people wore protective masks on their faces to reduce the dirty air caused by the dust. The victims of Dust Bowl specially the farmers, who lost their land since it could not produce any crops, moved to other state. Mostly Arkansas and Oklahomans, called Arkies and Okies, traveled to Southern of California using automobiles through the dessert. They, who did not have automobiles, had to hitchhike to get to the city they headed. Many young boys and girls separated from their family to get their own life since the family could not afford their life. Mostly they searched a new-better life in California where there will be no dust bowl at all (Norton & Katzman 1984:378).

3.3 The Okies Migrant Society and Their Existence in California

Since the condition of the farmers in Oklahoma was poor, they left the land and headed to the West. Most of them headed to California. They were called the Okies that means the person from Oklahoma.

In 1932 The California Unemployment Commission reported that homeless people had trooped like an army into the states and moved constantly from place to place, forced by their town condition and then move on to other towns (Norton & Katzman, 1984:378).

In *The Grapes of Wrath* Steinbeck describes the situation of the migrant that are so poor without any shelter and live homelessly with the family as follow: "The man put up his own tent as near as he could get; or if he had no tent, he went to the

city dump and brought back cartons and built a house of corrugated paper. And when the rains came the house melted and washed away" (TGoW, 1939:320).

The homeless people try to survive by moving on to find the work in the pachard. Many works in the government's pachard for picking oranges and cottons. Unfortunately this condition does not last long since the end of harvest means the end of their job. This condition becomes worst since the urban from other countryside increase every day and make the works hard to find.

Unfortunately these urban people were rejected by the natives since they thought that these people brought new problems and made the burden of depression harder. It is because they knew that many people were looking for the same thing, the proper job. This condition was poor for the migrant people since the situation was not on their side. At first, they had to leave the land for its idleness. The second, they had to go west in searching a better life but did not get any support from the natives. The third, they had to adapt the situation where most labors organized themselves in communist tactics and made the strike as the effective plan of action.

During the Depression, most of the migrant people lived in camps, whether it was a humble camp or a proper camp that government made for them. The condition of the camp was so crowded since the number of the migrant increased each day. By June 1940, The Agency (Farm Security Administration) also had established fifty-three camps. The camps were established in California, Florida, and Texas for Okies and other migrant rural workers. These were violently opposed by nearby residents because they attracted 'undesirable' citizens who put an additional burden on local Relief Agencies (Syrett & Wishy, 1967:629).

This condition last a long time until many workers went back to villages and countryside once they left after knowing that there was not any job left to support their living as well as the family. In a poor condition they hoped to get the land that one could grow enough plants to eat. Eventhough the conditions of the villages were worst,

they stayed anyway in earning the life in a pauper way since machines already replaced man in doing farming. After a while the number of people moving to the city from the farm began declined after all.

3.4 The Influence of Steinbeck's Life Background toward His Novel

Physically, John Steinbeck was over six feet tall, very blond with blue eyes and a deep slow quite voice-speaking unwillingly when forced to make a speech, imaginatively in telling stories with friends and indignantly when justice was at stake (Bode, 1973:33). His strong physic, indeed, supported his activity from viewing the social problem from his boyhood. He was a strong figure as a bricklayer, a newspaper reporter, a laborer, a caretaker, a migratory fruit picker, a seaman and other works that supported his views on migrant workers and labor since he once experienced the same life during his works.

The year of 1930s was the age when most American's writers expressed their interest in social reform dealing with the worst condition of economic and its impact to the social milieu. Literature that Steinbeck involves with is a kind of literature that deals with social problems. He depicts the social phenomenon and brings it in words and writes it in a form of novel.

Steinbeck, a simple writer from Salinas Valley of California. A place that becomes the meeting's place of two tendencies of corporate agriculture and migrant laborers. The phenomena of the migrant workers have attracted him and made him join *Life* magazine that had asked him to report this migrant condition. Together with Horace Bristoll, the photographer, he started to live with the people from Oklahoma on their journey west and its hard life.

In portraying the migrant people, he saw that the dreams of the people were not only an individual dream but already became a collective dream. He mentions how the

farmers' dreams going west by focusing on the Joad's dream. Here, he believes that mostly the dream can be fulfilled in the West.

Steinbeck was not only continuing in an American tradition, enacting again and old American dream. He also suggested that the dream itself was moved west and had settled in California (Brook, et.al, 1974:2453). By bringing his believe, most of his writings show the bitterness of life as well as its struggle to hold happiness in California by portraying the details of the life itself. The pictures, which he focuses thoroughly, brings the transcendental values as Emerson did.

His transcendental principles can be seen from three tendencies that often appear in his writing. The three tendencies are (1) writing allegorically; (2) his preoccupation with non-teleological thinking; (3) a theology that accords remarkably with nineteenth-century America transcendentalist, a concern with the primacy of human dignity (Bode,1973:34).

His transcendental values are brought through his novel *The Grapes of Wrath* by his strong character as Tom Joad and Jim Casy who believe that "All that lives is Holly, since there is no sin and there ain't no Virtue" (TGoW, 1939:32). He brings his ideas in semiotic writing that easily gives the readers a simple style of understanding.

His concern to the migrant people vividly revealed in his letter to his agent and his advisor, in writing his report for the magazine and preparing to write the novel, Elizabeth Otiose on march 7, 1938. He wrote,

...The suffering is too great for me to cash on it. I hope this doesn't sound either quixotic or martyrish to you....

It is the most heartbreaking thing in the world. If Life does use this stuff there will be lots of pictures and swell ones...

The argument that one person's effort can't really do anything doesn't seem to apply when you come on a bunch of starving children and you have little money. I can't rationalize it for myself anyway...

I want to put a tag of shame on greedy bastards who are responsible for this but I can best do it through newspaper...

There's another difficulty too. I'm trying to write history while it is happening and I don't want to be wrong (Steinbeck & Wallsten (Ed), 1975:161-162)

In writing his novel *The Grapes of Wrath* he tries to write everything in details. How the farmers lose their life, how they try to reach a better life by moving west and how they catch in the trap called the Depression. He involves his empathy in writing the history in form of literary writing. He once experienced that trying to live on is a hard thing. He failed in being a good writer, and this failure tempted him to gain all his power to improve and develop his writing skill by viewing all the problem in the natives point of view.

Being a writer is his dream and he finally fulfills it. Yet he is a simple individual who has gave his life only in writing, literary or journalistic. He announces that a writer should be a watch-dog of the society so he can be in a neutral position between the tendencies that appear in each phenomenon. Giving the truth to all people by bringing the aesthetic value eventhough it became the unhappy historical novels. He also announces:

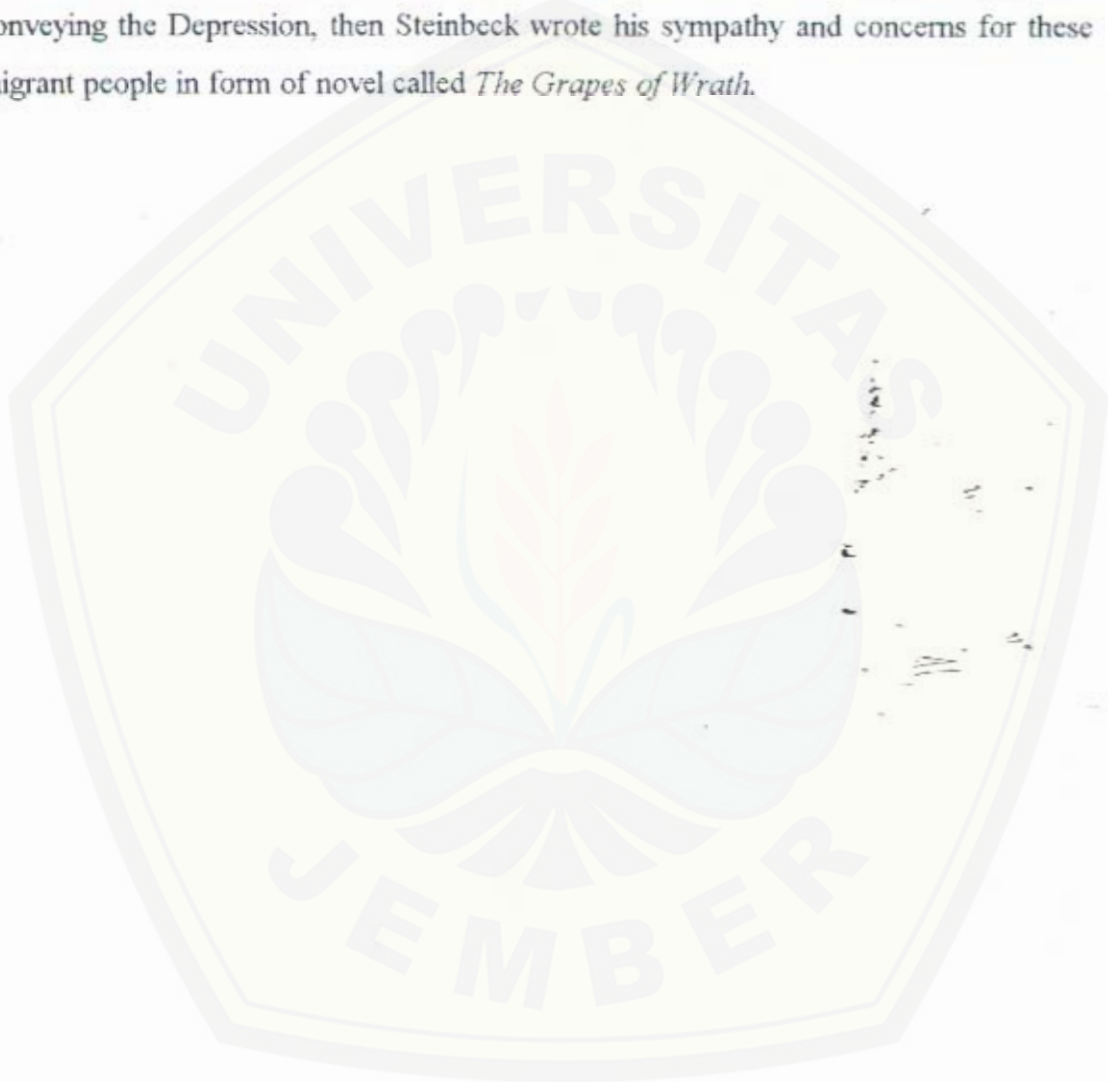
And this I believe, that the free exploring mind of the individual human is the most valuable thing in the world. And this I would fight for; the freedom of the minds to take any direction it wishes, undirected. And this I must fight against; an idea, religion or government which limits or destroys the individual (Brook,et.al, 1974:2455).

He has achieved his life in writing all about America, the country he loves so much. About his understanding of the problems arouses in the country. Eventhough many people curse him from being leftist, he still believes that the truth should be revealed in any form. No matter of what people have said about him, he assures that the individual as well as social problem should be revealed to find the truth of the life itself.

Accordingly, he was never gave his sympathy in communism as people already labeled on him. Owen wrote of Steinbeck concern as follow:

Steinbeck was never sympathetic to communism, the author's sympathies would from this time forward lie more and more with the oppressed migrant laborer, and his lifelong loathing of middle-class materialism would evolve into a powerful resentment of corporate agriculture in California (1989:3)

If Horace Bristoll showed the bitterness of these people in form of photographs in conveying the Depression, then Steinbeck wrote his sympathy and concerns for these migrant people in form of novel called *The Grapes of Wrath*.



CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

In general, literary works are usually related to imagination, thoughts and feeling. Of course, the development of those aspects is sometimes influenced by external aspects. History or factual evidence is part of these external aspects that often inspires an author, including novelist, playwright, or poet to create their works. Nevertheless, the history is only a reference for the literary works because the author will not write the pure history. He only writes history based on his interpretation and understanding since he is not a historian.

Related to historical novel, Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* is also a historical novel that is written during the Great Depression. It is based on the historical facts that are happened during the era. Without forgetting the imaginative aspects, Steinbeck builds up the plot and the characters to support the novel. The Depression mainly brings many troubles dealing with the citizens and government. It is a novel that depicts the impact of the Great Depression from the migrant's point of view.

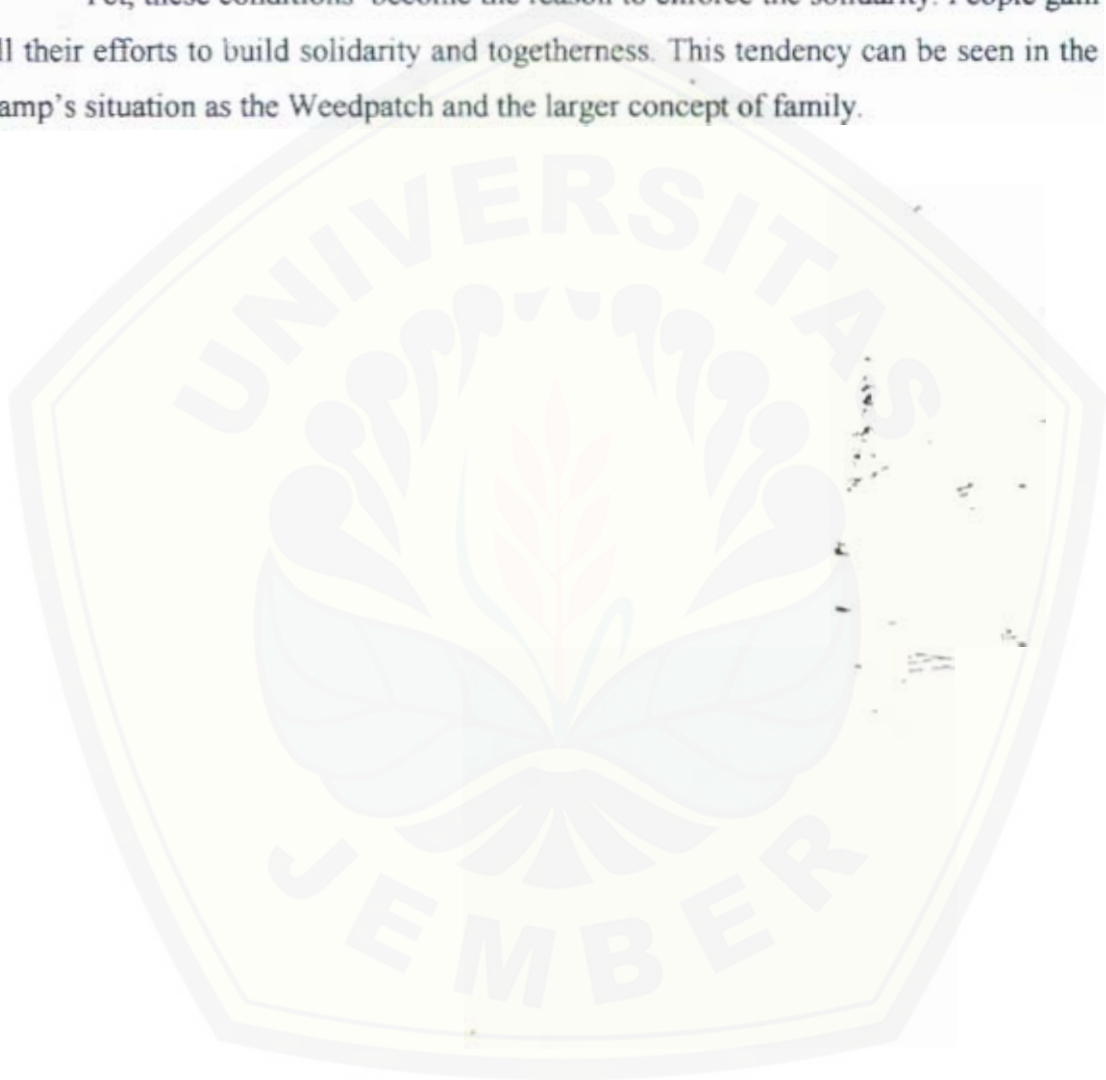
Steinbeck writes the Okies' problems and shows how hard their life in California is. After analysing the novel, it can be concluded that there are similarities about the Okies in the novel and their real conditions during the Great Depression. By seeing the similarities, the reflection of the society through the novel is found by focusing on the historical view.

First about the general view on the Okies, it is so obvious that the American's dream is having land to work on, including the Oklahoman. It is similar to the condition of the Okies that they have to own land. Therefore, when they lose their lands, they leave for California to find another land, another life.

Next, about the condition of the Okies in California. Of course, the life in California is not as simple as they have thought. They have to face many problems in the new country. Mainly the problems deal with poverty and segregation since the

problems are not only their problems but also all citizens'. It is because the job, the land, the better life is very hard to find. The Okies have to fight against the inhabitants. The conditions are very much alike as the real condition of the thirties inspite of Steinbeck's imagination.

Yet, these conditions becorae the reason to enforce the solidarity. People gain all their efforts to build solidarity and togetherness. This tendency can be seen in the camp's situation as the Weedpatch and the larger concept of family.



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