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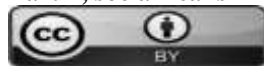
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The Significance of Earth in American and Egyptian Novels: A Comparative Study of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and al-Sharqawi's *Egyptian Earth*

A B S T R A C T

This comparative research examines earth as a symbolic manifestation of survival, identity, resistance, exploitation in both American and Egyptian socio-historical contexts in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) versus al-Sharqawi's *Egyptian Earth* (1954). Using French and American schools of comparative literature, this research shows how both novels, despite their disparate cultural contexts, employ socialist realism to critique systemic oppression. The Dust Bowl in Steinbeck tells the story of Oklahoma tenant farmers uprooted by forces of capitalism, depicting how the ground was turned not just from a foundation that sustains life into an instrument of disenfranchisement. By contrast, al-Sharqawi's villagers in Egypt tackle feudal corruption and collusion with state in seeing that which somehow we can all agree in fighting to defend as inherited territory and a point of collective resistance. Striking analogies emerge: the earth, that (1) provides basic sustenance and perpetuates clan existence; (2) is an integral component of identity—rooted in ancestral attachment; (3) is a class battleground; influenced by exploitative systems (banks and corporations in America; landlords and officials in Egypt); and (4) invokes resistance, individual (exemplified by Muley Graves) in Steinbeck juxtaposed to collective (the village) in al-Sharqawi. The authors argue that each of these transforms the earth from an inert backdrop into an active symbol, one that thus reflects both crises in society and possible responses to their essence, as found in both books. By drawing on shared themes, this analysis deepens comparative literature through linking Western with Arabic realist traditions.

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أهمية الأرض في الروايتان الأمريكية والمصرية: دراسة مقارنة لرواية ستاينبك "عناقيد الغضب"
ورواية الشرقاوي "الأرض".

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الملخص

تُحل هذه الدراسة باستخدام الأدب المقارن دور الأرض في رواية جون ستاينبك "عناقيد الغضب" (١٩٣٩) ورواية الشرقاوي "الأرض" (١٩٥٤)، مع التركيز على كيفية عمل الأرض كرمز معقد للبقاء، والهوية، والمقاومة، والاستغلال في السياقات الاجتماعية والتاريخية الأمريكية والمصرية. تستخدم هذه الدراسة منهجيات من المدارس الفرنسية والأمريكية للأدب المقارن لإظهار أن كلا الروائين، على الرغم من اختلاف سياقاتهما الثقافية، تستخدمان الواقعية الاشتراكية لنقد الاضطهاد المنهجي. توضح رواية ستاينبك عن عاصفة الغبار معاناة المزارعين المستأجرين في أوكلاهوما الذين تم تهجيرهم بسبب الديناميات الرأسمالية، مسلطة الضوء على تحول الأرض من أساس للحياة إلى أداة للحرمان. على النقيض من ذلك، يتناول قرويو الأرياف المصريون في رواية الشرقاوي الفساد الإقطاعي والتواطؤ الحكومي، حيث يرون الأرض كتراث أجدادي ومركز للمقاومة الجماعية. تظهر أوجه تشابه كبيرة: الأرض تعمل ك (١) مصدر للبقاء المادي واستمرارية الأجيال، (٢) جانب أساسي من الهوية مرتبط بالانتماء الأسري، (٣) موقع للصراع الطبقي المتأثر بالأنظمة الاستغلالية (البنوك والشركات في أمريكا؛ الملاك والموظفون في مصر)، و (٤) محفز للمقاومة—الفردية (مثل، مولاي غريغز) في ستاينبك مقابل الجماعي (مثل، تضامن القرية) في الشرقاوي. تخلص الدراسة إلى أن كلا الكاتبين يحولان الأرض من مجرد مكان إلى رمز ديناميكي يعكس الأزمات الاجتماعية وصمود الإنسان. يعزز هذا التحليل الأدب المقارن من خلال ربط التقاليد الواقعية الغربية والعربية عبر عناصر موضوعية مشتركة .

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأرض، دراسة مقارنة، عناقيد الغضب، الأرض المصرية، الواقعية الاجتماعية.

1.1 Background of the study

John Steinbeck, February 27, 1902 – December 20, 1968. American writer known for his stories about World War II. He is considered one of the most prominent writers of the twentieth century. This can be seen in many of his works but especially in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) which covers, among other subjects, significant social and economic issues and draws heavily on his disadvantaged upbringing. *The Grapes of Wrath*, this major work of American literature effectively portrays the trials of migrant labor during the Great Depression. Written in 1939, the questions it raises about economic inequality, social injustice, and the resilience of the human spirit remains relevant today (Nesakumari & Nagalakshmi, 2024, p. 24).

The Grapes of Wrath is Steinbeck's most famous novel; this novel tells about the difficult story of a family in Oklahoma who moved to California during the great economic crisis of the 30s. It depicts the working class as a subject of poverty and marginalisation. The tale represents the oppressive effects of drought and the siren song of the American dream that attracted innumerable souls, both from here at home and abroad. Steinbeck explores the conflict between property owners and tenant farmers. Landowners may notify farmers that they need to leave the high-rent land in order to make more money. Although landowners

and not farmers have the power here, landowners are also caught in long processes controlled by international multinational firms (Bahaa El-Din, Rezk, & Abdel Hafeez, 2024, p. 1206).

John Steinbeck had a focus on realistic and the stories of marginalized people. That quality was missing in so much of the writing of the time. So their life knowledge was limited to a shallow experience of existence as a writer, and they stayed surrounded by their own clear eyed little spiritual bubble. Steinbeck delved into the peasant experience in depth. He had many jobs to get by, during that time, met many poor people and faced different hardships. Thus, he drew inspiration from everyday events, realities of that time and chose to find stories instead of creating them. The literature of John Steinbeck mostly uses the way of "bottom narrative" to reflect the living status of low-level group (Zeting & Yifan, 2025, p. 2).

The family that Joad tells about in the book is the same as a lot of poor, American families that were forced due to the Great Depression to leave Oklahoma and head to California for a better life. A Deeply Critical Lens on America, the writer uses this epic to provide a scathing critique of society in America, pitting the high ideals of justice, freedom, and equal opportunity against the day to day struggle of a family living in poverty just trying to make their way to basic needs — place to live, family unity, and security in work. The novel is an important piece of American realist literature in that Steinbeck wanted to form an artistic structure based on the real socioeconomic and cultural conditions of America by incorporating different elements, characters, symbols, and narrative elements.

In contrast, al-Sharqawi (1920-1987) was born in Shibin al-Kom, Egypt. He was born a peasant. He attributes much of his cultural, political and religious development in childhood to his father. The great Arab writer of the twentieth century al-Sharqawi (Helal, 2010, p. 34). The poet, essayist, critic, novelist, dramatist, and polymath studied law at Cairo University before establishing a journalistic career. At first, he was a poet associated with al shi'r al-hurr (free verse). After that, he moved into fiction and drama.

In the 1950s, he expressed his tiredness with prose in drama and chose to express his dramatic ambition with poetry. His poetry exhibited dramatic characteristics. He evidently demonstrated a flair for the theatrical which, "while undergirded by the freedom which the new poetry had introduced with the abolition of rhyme and of the single-line-unit concept" (Badawi, 1992, p. 360). Al-Sharqawi's advocacy of socialist realism in Egypt in the 1950s was an effort by him and other figures of the movement to portray reality or what they perceived to be the flaws in Egyptian society (Downs, 1995, p. 155).

The continuous story that al-Sharqawi wrote belong to *Egyptian Earth* (1954). Considered one of the most important novels in the history of Arabic literature [citation needed], it greatly helped shape the genre and is frequently cited by critics as a primary example of socialist realism. In this piece al-Sharqawi draws us a portrait of an Egyptian village that is at odds with the tendency to romanticize the village as an ideal paradise. Through examples of the feudalism, occupation, and theft deeply rooted in the economic and social structure of rural life, Schwartz demonstrates how the rural populace suffers and struggles to survive because of these contradictions. *Egyptian Earth* (1954) dealt with the plight for the masses of

the lower classes, portray the struggle between the peasantry class and the feudal class in '30s Egypt, during the nastiness of the global economic crisis.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The most complex literary form of all, the novel evokes a form of reality. Novels are one of the many varieties of writing, and even realistic novels are divided into many categories. According to M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey G. Harpham (2014): "The novel of realism is defined as the work of fiction that does attempt to create the illusion of reality, by presenting complicated characters with ambiguous motives who belong to a social class, exist in a detailed social world, meet many other characters, and go through credible, everyday types of experiences" (p. Even more so, it is respectful of the philosophical and ideological foundations that value literary production above all else. That is a plot driven by description and dialogue and the characters battling against each other. As a life formation, this kind of book is contingent upon events impinging upon characters through action and the background in which the action occurs to yield a social, political, or philosophical solution through resolution. This genre of fiction is considered a vehicle for the author to express his philosophical ideas and perceptions of reality through the voice of his characters.

One has to do with serious issues, which explains why these two were chosen. Steinbeck and al-Sharqawi, though from different languages and cultures, had many literary traits in common. Steinbeck and al-Sharqawi were both novelists. Both Steinbeck, in *The Grapes of Wrath*, and al-Sharqawi, in *Egyptian Earth*, are realist novels with social concerns that could get them aligned as literature of the protest kind. Published in 1939, *The Grapes of Wrath*, takes place in the backdrop of 1930s America someplace in the Great Depression and the disastrous Dust Bowl. On the other hand, Al-Sharqawi's *Egyptian Earth*, published in 1954, takes the reader into the countryside of the 1930s. The concept of earth plays an important role in both these stories.

This paper analyzes theories by prominent Western and Arab scholarship in comparative literature in the West: Wellek and Abood. It depends on the theory of Wellek with the knowledge that his works have been translated widely into Arabic. Among these is Asfoor's *Concepts of Criticism* (1978) The ideas of Jost, Tötösy de Zepetnek, Enani, and Meki that will be included in this thesis. The gap identified leads us to respond through this research; this is the aim of the research by clarifying the representation of land in both novels which are contemporary.

1.3 Significance of Study

This work is important because it explains fundamental concepts, specifically the socio-historical context and the use of socialist realism in American and Egyptian literature, as evident in the writings of Steinbeck and al-Sharqawi. The second section will discuss the evolution of realistic novels in contemporary English and Arabic literature, focusing on prominent writers in this field, specifically Steinbeck and al-Sharqawi. In this section, I will explain why realistic novels are ideal for communicating ideas, and I will discuss how this lens affected Steinbeck and al-Sharqawi in the writing of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Egyptian Earth*. The present study expects similarity across these regions.

1.4 Review of the Related Literature

In Voice of the Marginalized in The Grapes of Wrath (1939) by John Steinbeck, and Hunger (2013) by Mohamed El Basaty. A Comparative Study in the Sociology of Literature, Bahaa El-Din, Rezk, and Abdel Hafeez (2024) consider the points of view of people from marginalised groups (bastards, poor, and women). The objective of this study is to determine the nature of these visions and their relation to reality. The authors explain that Steinbeck highlights the struggles of the disenfranchised just trying to survive through great economic turmoil. He examines the lives of the poor, writing about the lives that are less than what one can expect to have (pp.1200 – 1213).

The Grapes of Wrath as a Naturalistic Novel John Steinbeck in The Grapes of Wrath, Muthanna (2016) believes that John novel shows the basic principle this philosophy by describing human as an animal in the world without God, where material is the only reality and defining value of the human. It depicts man as the product of environmental forces without and of instinct forces within. Portrayal of common man is another important feature of Naturalism in this story. The protagonists of Steinbeck are not paragon figures but everyday country-folk whose ultimate desire is to live in a just world before they take up arms against injustice. He has faith in their ability to change the distant and heartless powers that be, sees the government as an untrustworthy enemy holding human kind back from a better life. COP is crucial for facing the negative forces of nature (p.95).

In Racial Identity in American Literature of the 1930s: Three Examples, Tu (2023) picks apart three central themes in Racial Identity in American Literature of the 1930s: *Three Examples*, exploring how different racial groups are depicted throughout the 30s. *The Grapes of Wrath* a realistic depiction of working-class white folks' lives during the Great Depression (Steinbeck), the acknowledgement and evolution of a new African American culture during the Harlem Renaissance as illustrated in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and the development of a more nuanced understanding of Chinese individuals in Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* (p. 118).

Dhahi (2019) specifies different types of fictional characters in her study *Characters' Models in the Novel Al-Ard by the Writer Abdul Rahman Al-Sharqawi* by an analytical artistic method based on theoretical and field study in this area. Character has been a major narrative feature in realism authors, forming their characters and representing their characteristics in fashion different from previous writers. Al-Sharqawi, an Egyptian writer from the 1960s age identified with the group of authors of realism, is considered one of the most important characters in Arabic literature. *The Egyptian Earth* (Al-Ard in Arabic) is one of the title examples that show the author inherits the character representation techniques of his predecessors and his attempt to outgrow that (p.498).

As Downs (1995) points out, Youssef Chahine's adaptation of Abd al-Rahman al-Sharqawi's al-Ard was first serialised in 1953. This is the story of a villager's battle against the oppression of arbitrary power. In reaction to earlier novels which idealised rural life, the novel was meant to accurately reflect village life from the perspectives of peasants. Youssef Chahine reimagined Al-Sharqawi's tale sixteen years on, transferring the struggle of the village community fighting authority from the outside, to the individual's survival and livelihood on the inside. People and Land: a theme in both the text and film Al-Sharqawi

associates land love strongly with the struggle against the state, reflected in his representation of rural life. (pp.153-157).

Elshamy (2019), for instance, shifts the critical lens of the novel away from its political and social discourses and instead explores how natural contents such as land, water and animals are linked to the Egyptian national symbol of the fallah in Reading Egyptian Environmentalism: The Representation of Rural Life in Abdel Rahman al-Sharqawi's Novel *Al-Ard* (1954). It will help to develop ideas that can help define modern Egyptian environmentalism. The research then poses the question of whether the Egyptian literary enterprise in the 1950s and 1960s and its peculiar rural emphasis on the fallah and his environment can be integrated into the Egyptian nature writing canon (p.368).

1.5 Methodology

This study will draw on the insights of both French and American schools of comparative literature to address its subjects. The two novels converge at certain points while diverging at others. Land is an idea anticipated to be comparable. This concept, while present in both novels, pertains to distinct contexts, cultures, beliefs, and languages. The aim of the comparison is to enhance comprehension of literary texts. Tremaine (1977) asserts that “[a]ny comparison of authors or works which achieves this larger goal on the basis of textual evidence has accomplished its whole purpose” (p. 34). This thesis aims to investigate the significance of land and examine the representation of heroes in American and Egyptian literature, specifically through the portrayals by Steinbeck and al-Sharqawi in their respective novels.

As comparative literature gives way to the post-colonial, the translation of Wellek, Jefferson and Ruby heavily influences the Arab states, —(Wellek, Jefferson, Ruby) and furthering encompassing Western literature. These include Asfoor (1978) for *Concepts of Criticism* and Massoud (1992) for *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*. The bit of disagreement over the historical trend that the French school of comparative literature was herding along vs. the 'new criticism' embodied by someone like Rene Wellek suggests an important change in literary criticism and literary study at the beginning of the 20th century. This movement was a drastic change in the evolution of global critical thought (Jefferson & Ruby, 1992, 10-12). Shifting attention from the outside to the inside, the American school enabled comparisons between literature and art, literature and science, literature and the social science, and literature and ideological fields (Gheelan, 2006: 104–106). But what I wanted to say finally in response to the question I was asking myself, I think, in considering these three helps my understanding of the American school of comparative literature makes clear how understanding what a literary work is all about is in part, all work to be done through comparison.

In *Introduction to Comparative Literature*, Jost (1974) asserted that when literary texts are ideationally or thematically linked, belong to the same movement or genre, exemplify common themes, or exist within the same temporal period, whether of national origin or not, they should be analyzed collectively (p. 13). Today, comparative literature is viewed as an important field of scholarly study, and it is well-established at many institutions of higher

education in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere. These centers have sought to abandon the "systems and methods"-based thinking in conceptualizing intellectual national independence, acknowledging the importance of considering the organic links between individual cultures. The expanding field of comparative literature bodes well for its future place within the field of literary history and criticism (p. 13).

According to Enani (2005), in *Theories of Comparative Literature*, the comparative study appeared as a theoretical discipline in the early 19th century in France. Comparatists in France argue that comparative literature addresses the geographical and historical relations between literary pieces. This institution values the analysis of fact over the analysis of aesthetics. The comparison school from France is called the influence school. The key idea here is intertextuality – the relationships between literary texts, According to Enani (2005), one literary text can affect another in terms of tone, concept, topic, image, literary tradition, or both (p. 15).

Tötösy and Vasvári (2013) state that there are two dimensional definitions of comparative literature in their *The Contextual Study of Literature and Culture, Globalization, and Digital Humanities*. The first definition means "knowledge of more than one national language and literature"(p. 5). The second one pretty much has it all: "comparative literature has an ideology of inclusion of the Other, where Other is whatever is a marginal literature (in its several acceptations of marginality), genre, text type, etc.... (p.5).

1.6 The Significance of Earth in American and Egyptian Novels

In his notable novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), John Steinbeck touches upon the relationship between repressed rural populations and the land, as does al-Sharqawi in *al-Ard* (1954) ("Egyptian Earth"). However, even set in such starkly different historical and cultural contexts, the two novels share an image of the earth as a source of life, identity, and resistance to oppression. The earth as a wellspring of life, individuality, and defiance against exploitation. Steinbeck mirrored the identity crisis that American society experienced during the time of the Great Depression in his novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. The earth changes from a living environment to a dust prison; and it changes from a family legacy to a private property that people cannot enter. By contrast, al-Sharqawi places local authorities in Egypt at the center of the conflict that undergirds the novel *Egyptian Earth*. Earth as a symbol of resistance and a mirror of societal crises is a recurring motif in both books. These correlations are significant and here are the parallels with examples — from the respective works — to infer the key takeaways:

1.6.1 The Earth as a source of life and survival

The Grapes of Wrath opens with detailed imagery of the Oklahoma terrain, the land's primary life-sustaining and nourishment-giving qualities. With the opening lines that "the last rains fell gently, And they did not cut The green earth," it becomes undeniably clear. The plows went and returned across the marks of the rivulets. The last rains had quickly brought the corn up and spreading bands of weed colonies and grass so that the gray country and the dark red country had begun to vanish under a green mantle, with occasional slashes of the unfinished acres along the roadsides. (p.1). The initial image portrays the earth as a generous

mother, through whom the farming family draws sustenance. The repetition of rainfall and greens being part of these people's sources of life, shows a way of living in respect of harmony with the nature.

Natural resources which promise well at first, are soon spoiled by the harsh manifestation of drought and dust storm transforming viable land into an epicenter of deep trouble. In the description, it says "day after day the sun flared down on the growing corn until a line of brown appeared at the edge of each green bayonet"(p.1). That ubiquitous dust, "an emulsion of dust and air" (p.3), that "hung about like dew on the chairs and tables, on the dishes" (p.3), symbolizes the failure of the earth to support, the earth that "gives rise to suffering" (p.3). The men who work the fields watch the skies nervously, as they know the changing time and the horses snort uneasily: they are inescapably tied to the labor of the land, because just like now, it is the only way that the earth can feed people. As the environment around them worsens, families are forced to confront an unkind truth: the land that once fed them has become their enemy.

Egyptian Earth undoubtedly, the earth is used to be a source of life and survival; it provides food, it provides a means of income; a living steady state always on the land as well. in which people "literally 'dig in the mud of the fields for food' (p.5). Since the people are directly reliant on the earth, they are particularly vulnerable to external forces such as policies from the government and natural disasters. The narrative keeps illustrating this eternal, often arduous struggle to draw these basic means of life from the ground. Even residing in the village bears the meaning of an "ex-cruciating battle for food"(p.6).

The struggle over the earth and what it produces is a multi-generational battle that will define the hopes and fears of subsequent generations. Abd El-Hadi links this generational legacy to his own intimate familiarity with the much-documented history of his country, transmitted by his father, and hopes that "his son will preserve it after him." "Abd El-Hadi had chosen to preserve his harvest whatever it costs him... He won't let the corn perish... He will switch on the waterwheel day after tomorrow afternoon to water his harvest in order to fit it through slowly." (p.117). He mistakes providing and looking out for the earth to provide us means that we must work to keep her willing to provide us with a life capable of surviving in. Earth in the context of explaining the continuity of family and society, is not only a contemporary concern, but also a generational legacy.

1.6.2 Earth as a Symbol of Identity and Belonging.

For the tenant farmers in *The Grapes of Wrath*, land is a deep relationship — one that is not a merely abstract realization that manifests itself in a deed, but one that, as in the familial tradition of the soil, manifests itself in the body and recognizes itself through experience as identity. The sentiment is palpable from the tenants: "Sure, yelled the tenants men, but, it's our land! We sized it and unbundled it. It came into life with us, and it killed us, we died on it. It doesn't matter how bad — it's ours. That is what makes it ours; being born on it, working it, dying on it. The "paper with numbers on it" is not ownership -- it is ownership (p.33) Such a shared, perennial identity is of the earth—of the soil, which means that their being is inseparable from the ground that they have farmed, where their forebears toiled and ultimately laid down to rest.

Grampa refusing to leave, ever, saying "This here is my country. My place is here, I am not leaving. "Man, this damn country ain't no good, but it's my country (p.111)" exemplifies this deep rooted attachment suggesting that his identity is intertwined with this particular patch of soil regardless of the state of the soil. A passage in *The Grapes of Wrath* expresses this connection to the land in clear language: "We are the people of the land." This red land is us, the flood years and the dust years and the drought years are us. We can't start again" (p.87). This personification emphasizes the idea that the earth is a part of who they are.

In *Egyptian Earth* the earth is integral to identity and belonging of the characters as it is tied to their history and emotional camping grounds with their ancestral heritage. *Egyptian Earth* shows emphatically the agency of earth and the earth-inhabitant, power for the shaping of self, family memory, and social continuity through time. An example of this is Abd El-Hadi's relationship with the land he is rooted in: His narrative is one he says he "inherited from his father" and he "took the small axe on it as a child". (p.90). His familiarity with its history, from the "driving the peg for the buffalo" age eight years to its regular supply of "corn, clover, and cotton"(p.90) shows how identity bequeaths itself by the ground.

The connection to the land and the spirit invokes a feeling of empowerment, dignity and belonging that is as missing in metropolis or disconnected paradises. The "strength" Abd El-Hadi felt with his "feet planted in his land," something the urban-dweller brother did not know (p.91), represents an important difference. This rootedness includes a strong sense of both physical presence and deep psychological anchoring. This passage shows Diab's displeasure with the city road, "black with asphalt and the burning heat rises from it as if it was a heated oven," in striking contrast to his understanding, and fondness of his village's description of "generous soil." (p.250). It is a telling contrast which illustrates not only the sense of alienation felt when separated from the earth, but also that the essence of identity and the workings of health are predicated on being rooted in the earth, and that with disconnection comes disembodiment.

1.6.3 Class Struggle, Exploitation, and Forced Displacement.

The details of forced displacement are fully fleshed out in Chapter 5 of *The Grapes of Wrath*, where the "owner men" are not presented as monstrous human beings but as the handmaidens of an anonymous system. These are the "caught within something larger than themselves" (p.31)—the faceless "Bank—or the Company" (p.31) that "inhales profits; they consume the interest on money" (p.32). This image highlights the sociopathic nature of class struggle, humans being relegated to mere cogs of a larger, capitalist machine. The destiny of the earth and its farmers is dictated by the system brute relentless quest for profit, a power imbalance that is quite evident.

The intricacies of economic systems of exploitation that entrap migrants are revealed in this novel. In California what the author describes as "wages went down and prices stayed up"(p.283) means that "pretty soon now we will have serfs again"(p.283). Cannery owners—most notably massive landholders—approach canneries and subsequently "drive down the price of fruit below the cost of producing it"(p.283), efficiently squeezing small farmers out of the market and consolidating control of the land. The pamphlets promising jobs are revealed as a double-edged solution to create a fake labour over total in order to decrease wages.

Egyptian Earth meticulously charts a broad, class struggle, showing how farmers are systematically exploited and expropriated of their land at the hands of powerful alliance of landowners, venal local authorities, and state organs. Not a series of isolated incidents, this exploitation is a systemic machine meant to maintain control of and siphon resources from the rural population. This reveals a systematic attempt to steal from the peasantry instead of individual acts of greed. This omnipresent exploitation is represented in the connivance of corrupt local authorities, big landholders and governmental institutions.

Here, the mayor colludes with major players like Mahmoud Bey and the Pasha to rob farmers of their land. In one example, Mohamed Abu Sweilem realises that a petition he signed thinking it was related to irrigation was actually "about an agricultural railway project" to "go through their land, tearing it apart". (p.326). This duplicitous means exposes a level of premeditation by the state to dispossess farmers under false pretenses. The deep anguish of Mohamed Abu Sweilem, "They publicly humiliated us, we accepted it in silence. When they had done this from the guard, we did silence. They shattered our waterwheels and deprived us of water, and we said nothing. Abd El-Hadi, and yet another EEE, we will see a lot and as long we licked in silence" (p.327), reflects this trend of subjection in history and the way the genetic understanding of their slavery becoming more and more apparent.

1.6.4 Resistance and Defiance Against Dispossession.

When the owner men meet the tenant farmers, they tell an understanding of ownership that is deep, and non-legalistic, and, compellingly, this represents what seems a preliminary saying of opposition, savage in word and idea, before physical opposition is met with vengeance. As the authors put it: "it is our land. We measured it and divided it. It's a lot of paper, a lot of numbers, but they wrote it on paper, we were born on it, we got killed, we died on it... that makes ownership, not a paper with numbers on it. (p.33) Despite their surface exhortations to battle "as Pa and Grampa did," the overwhelming danger of state violence on behalf of the sheriff and troops quickly puts an end to any direct confrontation. This early act of defiance emphasizes their deep ties to the land, but also highlights the vast imbalance of power they face.

Full of grappling-style self-assertive pigheadedness and refusal to yield, Muley Graves is the incarnation of some deep stalwart anarchistic stubbornness. Unlike any other migratory families, the muley passionately refused to abandon his land despite the house partially damaged by a tractor. He says to Tom Joad, "I wan't gonna leave, by God" and that "There ain't nobody gonna run a fella name of Graves outa this country." Instead, lingering in the ground as a "graveyard ghost"— "staying on the land" (p.45)— he haunts his own former area, scavenging for food rather than being involved in the westward migration. Muley's refusal derives from a core emotional rejection of being displaced: shooting at a tractor's head-lights and assaulting a constable. These are his isolated actions but they illustrate the depth of his bond with the land and his rage at the wrong.

Throughout *Egyptian Earth*, the characters demonstrate various forms of resistance — not whether they resist to the actions taken against them but how they resist. These acts include both overt, confrontational challenges as well as quiet, symbolic forms of resistance, revealing a deep determination to defend their home and way of life. One of the more visible

forms of resistance is also a direct confrontation with authorities. Abd El-Hadi stands up to irrigation officials attempting to impose limits on his water usage, maintaining that it is his right to irrigate his land as he sees fit: "Why?! You destroy the waterwheels of the bridge? Why? ... we have five irrigation days left, bro... Five days plus their nights, we can irrigate however we want, and our waterwheels will operate however we want, and no one can halt us, ya know... Or do you think five riyals get out of rural people's way? (p.108).

The farmers engage in confrontations of direct physical confrontation to protect their land and crops. With that, Mohamed Abu Sweilem warns them: "Whoever lays his hand, I will break it for him... and whoever was cutting a cotton stalk, I will cut his neck!" Just as the agricultural railway workers are about to ruin his cotton field. (p.711). An indication is backed by the availability of the villagers, including females, who are well-equipped with stones so as to defend their lands. This readiness for violence shows both how serious the risk of land appropriation is perceived to be, and what villagers are prepared to do to defend their means of survival.

1.7 Conclusion

This comparison suggests that earth in *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Egyptian Earth* signifies not only a geographical entity, but also an important socio-political and existential aspect. Steinbeck and al-Sharqawi utilize earth as a key symbol to explore systemic injustices — specifically the capitalist exploitation of lives happening in the Depression-era US and feudal-colonial oppression that Egyptian citizens faced in the 1930s. Each novel, though culturally distinct, uses elements of socialist realism to demonstrate how capitalist access to earth becomes a catalyst for dehumanization. In Steinbeck, we find subjects isolated and fragmented by capitalism; in al-Sharqawi, the resilience of the community against feudal corruption. Their collective emphasis on earth as a reflection of societal crisis highlights overarching themes of dignity, exploitation, and resistance. This particular study is notable in that it is not only illuminate crucial thematic convergences as they pertain to select pairings of American and Arabic literatures, but also substantiates the notion that comparative literature is uniquely capable of elucidating local narratives that manifest universal human struggles.

1.8 References

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