



REVUE LES TISONS

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PRÉSENTATION ET POLITIQUE ÉDITORIALE

Sous l'impulsion de M. Fatié OUATTARA, Professeur titulaire de philosophie à l'Université Joseph KI-ZERBO, et avec la collaboration d'Enseignants-Chercheurs et Chercheurs qui sont, soit membres du Centre d'Études sur les Philosophies, les Sociétés et les Savoirs (CEPHISS), soit membres du Laboratoire de philosophie (LAPHI), une nouvelle revue vient d'être fondée à Ouagadougou, au Burkina Faso, sous le nom de « Revue LES TISONS ».

Revue internationale des Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société, la Revue LES TISONS vise à contribuer à la diffusion de théories, de connaissances et de pratiques professionnelles inspirées par des travaux de recherche scientifique. En effet, comme le signifie le Larousse, un tison est un « morceau de bois brûlé en partie et encore en ignition ».

De façon symbolique, la Revue LES TISONS est créée pour mettre ensemble des tisons, pour rassembler les chercheurs, les auteurs et les idées innovantes, pour contribuer au progrès de la recherche scientifique, pour continuer à entretenir la flamme de la connaissance, afin que sa lumière illumine davantage les consciences, éclaire les ténèbres, chasse l'ignorance et combatte l'obscurantisme à travers le monde.

Dans les sociétés traditionnelles, au clair de lune et pendant les périodes de froid, les gens du village se rassemblaient autour du feu nourri des tisons : ils se voient, ils se reconnaissent à l'occasion ; ils échangent pour résoudre des problèmes ; ils discutent pour voir ensemble plus loin, pour sonder l'avenir et pour prospecter un meilleur avenir des sociétés. Chacun doit, pour ce faire, apporter des tisons pour entretenir le feu commun, qui ne doit pas s'éteindre.

La Revue LES TISONS est en cela pluridisciplinaire, l'objectif fondamental étant de contribuer à la fabrique des concepts, au renouvellement des savoirs, en d'autres mots, à la construction des connaissances dans différentes disciplines et divers domaines de la science. Elle fait alors la promotion de l'interdisciplinarité, c'est-à-dire de l'inclusion dans la diversité à travers diverses approches méthodologiques des problèmes des sociétés.

Semestrielle (juin, décembre), thématique au besoin pour les numéros spécifiques, la Revue LES TISONS publie en français et en

anglais des articles inédits, originaux, des résultats de travaux pratiques ou empiriques, ainsi que des mélanges et des comptes rendus d'ouvrages dans le domaine des Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société : **Anthropologie, Communication, Droit, Économie, Environnement, Géographie, Histoire, Lettres modernes, Linguistique, Philosophie, Psychologie, Sociologie, Sciences de l'environnement, Sciences politiques, Sciences de gestion, Sciences de la population, etc.**

Peuvent publier dans la Revue LES TISONS, les Chercheurs, les Enseignants-Chercheurs et les doctorants dont les travaux de recherche s'inscrivent dans ses objectifs, thématiques et axes.

La Revue LES TISONS comprend une Direction de publication, un Secrétariat de rédaction, un Comité scientifique et un Comité de lecture qui assurent l'évaluation en double aveugle et la validation des textes qui lui sont soumis en version électronique pour être publiés (en ligne et papier).

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La soumission des articles se fait à travers le mail suivant : lestisons@revuelestisons.bf.

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Les contenus des articles soumis et publiés (en ligne et en papier) par la Revue LES TISONS n'engagent que leurs auteurs qui cèdent leurs droits d'auteur à la revue.

NORMES ÉDITORIALES

Les textes soumis à la Revue LES TISONS doivent avoir été écrits selon les NORMES CAMES/LSH adoptées par le CTS/LSH, le 17 juillet 2016 à Bamako, lors de la 38^e session des CCI.

Pour un article qui est une contribution théorique et fondamentale : Titre, Prénom et Nom de l'auteur, Institution d'attache, adresse électronique, Résumé en Français, Mots clés, Abstract, Key words, Introduction (justification du thème, problématique, hypothèses/objectifs scientifiques, approche), Développement articulé, Conclusion, Bibliographie.

Pour un article qui résulte d'une recherche de terrain : Titre, Prénom et Nom de l'auteur, Institution d'attache, adresse électronique, Résumé en Français, Mots clés, Abstract, Key words, Introduction, Méthodologie, Résultats et Discussion, Conclusion, Bibliographie.

Les articulations d'un article, à l'exception de l'introduction, de la conclusion, de la bibliographie, doivent être titrées, et numérotées par des chiffres (ex : 1. ; 1.1.; 1.2; 2.; 2.2.; 2.2.1; 2.2.2.; 3.; etc.).

Les passages cités sont présentés en romain et entre guillemets. Lorsque la phrase citant et la citation dépassent trois lignes, il faut aller à la ligne, pour présenter la citation (interligne 1) en romain et en retrait, en diminuant la taille de police d'un point.

Les références de citation sont intégrées au texte citant, selon les cas, de la façon suivante :

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Exemples :

En effet, le but poursuivi par M. Ascher (1998, p. 223), est « d'élargir l'histoire des mathématiques de telle sorte qu'elle acquière une perspective multiculturelle et globale (...), d'accroître le domaine des mathématiques : alors qu'elle s'est pour l'essentiel occupé du

groupe professionnel occidental que l'on appelle les mathématiciens (...) ».

Pour dire plus amplement ce qu'est cette capacité de la société civile, qui dans son déploiement effectif, atteste qu'elle peut porter le développement et l'histoire, S. B. Diagne (1991, p. 2) écrit :

Qu'on ne s'y trompe pas : de toute manière, les populations ont toujours su opposer à la philosophie de l'encadrement et à son volontarisme leurs propres stratégies de contournements. Celles là, par exemple, sont lisibles dans le dynamisme, ou à tout le moins, dans la créativité dont sait preuve ce que l'on désigne sous le nom de secteur informel et à qui il faudra donner l'appellation positive d'économie populaire.

Le philosophe ivoirien a raison, dans une certaine mesure, de lire, dans ce choc déstabilisateur, le processus du sous-développement. Ainsi qu'il le dit :

Le processus du sous-développement résultant de ce choc est vécu concrètement par les populations concernées comme une crise globale : crise socio-économique (exploitation brutale, chômage permanent, exode accéléré et douloureux), mais aussi crise socio-culturelle et de civilisation traduisant une impréparation sociohistorique et une inadaptation des cultures et des comportements humains aux formes de vie imposées par les technologies étrangères. (S. Diakité, 1985, p. 105).

Les sources historiques, les références d'informations orales et les notes explicatives sont numérotées en série continue et présentées en bas de page.

Les divers éléments d'une référence bibliographique sont présentés comme suit : NOM et Prénom (s) de l'auteur, Année de publication, Zone titre, Lieu de publication, Zone Editeur, pages (p.) occupées par l'article dans la revue ou l'ouvrage collectif. Dans la zone titre, le titre d'un article est présenté en romain et entre guillemets, celui d'un ouvrage, d'un mémoire ou d'une thèse, d'un rapport, d'une revue ou d'un journal est présenté en italique. Dans la zone Editeur, on indique la Maison d'édition (pour un ouvrage), le Nom et le numéro/volume de la revue (pour un article). Au cas

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BERGER Gaston, 1967, *L'homme moderne et son éducation*, Paris, PUF.

DIAGNE Souleymane Bachir, 2003, « Islam et philosophie. Leçons d'une rencontre », *Diogène*, 202, p. 145-151.

DIAKITE Sidiki, 1985, *Violence technologique et développement. La question africaine du développement*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

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Le(s) Prénom(s) sont écrits en lettres minuscules et le(s) Nom(s) en lettres majuscules suivis du mail de l'auteur ou de chaque auteur (le tout en taille 12 pts, non en gras).

Le résumé (250 mots maximales, taille 12 pts) de l'article et les mots clés (05) doivent être écrits et traduits en français/anglais. La taille de l'article varie entre 15 et 25 pages maximales.

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**A Comparative Assessment of Capitalism Failing
the Masses in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great
Gatsby* and John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men***

*Une évaluation comparative du capitalisme qui fait
défaut aux masses dans *The Great Gatsby* de Francis
Scott Fitzgerald et *Of Mice and Men* de John
Steinbeck*

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Abstract: Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* are two novels which are different in terms of period of publication, but relate to each other so far as the issue of capitalism failing the masses in America is concerned. The aesthetic elements utilized by each of these American writers contribute to the success of their writings. The time frame or era in which each novel is written should be noted so as to enable us to make a convincing portrayal and a graphic description of both novels. Through a Marxist approach, this article focuses on the literary ingredients mobilized by these writers not only to debunk capitalism in the American society, but also to underscore the real sense of friendship within and among social groups. It also highlights Fitzgerald and Steinbeck's appeal for breeding life into human beings no matter their social backgrounds as well as preserving the nature in its various components.

Keywords: Capitalist discourse, Masses, Social class, Debunking, Friendship.

Résumé : *Les œuvres The Great Gatsby de Francis Scott Fitzgerald et Of Mice and Men de John Steinbeck diffèrent en termes de période de publication, mais sont liées l'une à l'autre en ce qui concerne la question du capitalisme qui fait échouer les masses dans la société américaine. Les éléments esthétiques utilisés par chacun de ces écrivains américains contribuent au succès de leurs écrits. La période ou l'époque à laquelle chaque roman est écrit doit être mise en exergue afin de nous permettre de dresser un portrait convaincant et une description graphique des deux romans. À travers une approche marxiste, cet article se concentre sur les ingrédients littéraires mobilisés par les deux écrivains non seulement pour démystifier le capitalisme dans la société américaine, mais aussi pour souligner le véritable sentiment d'amitié au sein et entre les groupes sociaux. Il met également en évidence l'appel de Fitzgerald et Steinbeck pour insuffler la vie chez les êtres humains, quelles que soient leurs origines sociales, ainsi que pour préserver la nature dans ses différentes composantes.*

Mots-clés : *Discours capitaliste, Masses, Classe sociale, Démystification, Amitié.*

Introduction

In the face of the ongoing sociopolitical, economic and cultural turmoil in the decades after World War I (1914-1918), characterized by the corrupting influence of wealth and materialism, the poor masses' struggles for the American Dream and its elusive nature, and undoubtedly the harsh realities of the working class and the exploitation of labor, creative writers have not remained silent. Through their various literary productions, they have reflected on

the above-mentioned issues scourging their society at the time in order to address them and thus, offering a sign of hope in a foreseeable future particularly for the less fortunate of the social strata.

Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* permeate various instances whereby the majority of the poor masses within the American society, struggling to make daily ends meet, are compelled by the capitalist forces erected on their paths, to lay down lives. The capitalist discourse as reflected in *The Great Gatsby* and in *Of Mice and Men*, highlights vividly the endless struggle between the capitalist oppressors and their counterparts which unfortunately often results in the tragic failure of the oppressed masses.

The selected authors seem to underscore that the American working men's lives are entrapped in capitalist forces where any attempts to a hopeful exit proves ultimately futile. The tragic failure of Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* to climb the American social ladder and the shattered dreams of the poor migrant workers of ever owning a land of their own are highly illustrative in this respect. From a Marxist perspective, this article focuses on the various literary ingredients mobilized by Fitzgerald and Steinbeck, not only to debunk capitalism in the American society, but also to underscore the real sense of friendship within and among social groups. It also seeks to highlight these writers' advocacy for breeding life into human beings no matter their socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds as well as preserving the nature in its various components.

1. Debunking Capitalism in the American Society from Fitzgerald's and Steinbeck's Perspectives

Francis Scott Fitzgerald and John Steinbeck are both eminent writers in the American literary history. Although they are not born in the same year and in the same immediate environment, they are from the same generation. Through their literary writings, Fitzgerald and Steinbeck have succeeded in depicting the plight of the marginalized working poor in a capitalist American society. The cruel treatment of the lower social class members in the hands of the

capitalist oppressors that prevailed in their time and many decades afterwards has greatly influenced their literary productions. A clear and deep understanding and interpretation of Fitzgerald and Steinbeck's *chefs-d'oeuvre*, namely *The Great Gatsby* and *Of Mice and Men* compel to have a look back at their respective biographies.

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald (1896-1940) was born in St. Paul, Minnesota (Midwest of the United States of America) to a salesman, Edward, and a housewife, Mollie. He developed early the desire to become a famous writer. *The Great Gatsby* stands as his masterpiece. The novel really assured the author's place among writers of major stature. When in 1934, Fitzgerald reread *The Great Gatsby*, he did not feel "guilty of any discrepancy from the truth... truth or rather the equivalent of the truth, the attempt at honesty of imagination" (1934, p. x). The author, like the character Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*, is restless as he is perpetually willing to improve upon things. Likewise, Fitzgerald, fascinated by love, fame and money, experienced poverty and failure in his life. Though he actually failed to produce another masterpiece after *The Great Gatsby*, he at least made his position clear as a committed writer.

John Steinbeck (1902-1968) was born in the farming town of Salinas, California (West of the United States of America). His father, John Ernst Steinbeck, was not a terribly successful man. His mother, the strong-willed Olive Hamilton Steinbeck, was a former teacher. John Steinbeck (1975, p. 15) writes in the opening chapter of *East of Eden* in the following terms: "I remember my childhood names for grasses and secret flowers; I remember where a toad may live and what time the birds awaken in the summer – and what trees and seasons smelled like; had no other interests or talents that I could make out." He was a writer, but he was that and nothing else. Why they should ever have been understood as being separate I do not know. I grew to depend on his knowledge and on his patience in research.

Steinbeck remains one of America's most significant twentieth-century writers, whose popularity spans the world, whose range is impressive, whose output is prodigious which therefore makes of his literary works worth revisiting throughout time and space. He wrote with empathy, clarity, perspicuity, so "in every bit of honest writing in the world, there is a base theme. Try to understand men, if you

understand each other, you will be kind to each other. Knowing a man well never leads to hate and nearly always leads to love” (J. Steinbeck, 1975, p. 75). Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962 “for his realistic as well as imaginative writings, distinguished by a sympathetic humor and a keen social perception” (Ibid., p. 75). Much of his writings focuses on social issues such as labor strikes, workers and their conditions, and the discourse that all people are bonded to the environment which they inhabit.

From Fitzgerald’s and Steinbeck’s biographies, one can note that they are both twentieth century’s American writers. They have more similarities than dissimilarities, at least in terms of their literary careers and personal life. But insofar, they have been influenced in their writings by the historical events under which they have achieved their most influential literary acclaim as writers of major stature, particularly during two consecutive great historical periods in America: the Roaring 20’s with the great economic boom after the World War I (1914-1918) for Fitzgerald and the Great Depression period with the greatest collapse of US economy for John Steinbeck.

The type of literature they have produced targets at debunking capitalism in America and elsewhere. They appear as the spokesmen of the downtrodden masses whose lives are doomed to failure because of the capitalist malpractices placed on their paths. Furthermore, the similarities and dissimilarities observed in the biographies of Fitzgerald and Steinbeck also permeate their literary works, for the capitalist discourse from Fitzgerald’s and Steinbeck’s times until the present day has continued to attract the attention of many literary critics and not the least of the greatest philosophers around the world.

Through their literary works, Fitzgerald and Steinbeck seem to underscore that there are too many deaths and too many prison houses erected in the American society because of capitalists’ constant desire to amass more wealth off the back of the poor workers. In this sense, Lois Tyson (1999, p. 50) writes:

For Marxism, literature doesn’t exist in some timeless, aesthetic realm as an object to be passively contemplated. Rather like all cultural manifestations, it is a product of the social economic and hence ideological conditions of the time and place in which it was written, whether or not the author intended it.

From Tyson's perspective, it goes without saying that literature doesn't exist in vacuum. Rather, it emanates from the socio - cultural and political background, and reflects real material or historical conditions or the time in which it is produced. His quotation infers that one of the principles of Marxist theory is that the work of art is seriously influenced by the social-political and economic situation conditioning its production. Therefore, Tyson believes that for Marxists, realism is the best form for Marxist purposes, because it accurately represents the real world with all social and economic inequities and ideological contradictions.

As a matter of fact, the deaths of Gatsby, Tom's mistress and her husband, Wilson, from the lower social class in *The Great Gatsby*, could be seen as a way for Fitzgerald to criticize the influence that social class and status have on a society. By allowing Tom and Daisy, as representatives of the upper-class survive without any consequences for their involvement in the deaths of Gatsby and Wilsons, Fitzgerald exposes a deeply unequal American society. Nick Carraway, Fitzgerald's representative in the narrative *The Great Gatsby*, says:

Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come, and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true, he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. A new world, material without being real, where poor ghost, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about [...] like that ashen, fantastic figure gliding him through the amorphous trees [...] The gardener saw Wilson's body, a little way off in the grass, and the holocaust was complete. (F. S. K. Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 168-169)²⁰

After these multiple deaths, particularly the death of Jay Gatsby, Nick remarks: "I called up Daisy half an hour after we found him, called her instinctively and without hesitation. But she and Tom had gone away early that afternoon, and taken baggage with them," (N. Carraway, p. 171) and left no address of their whereabouts. For this total irresponsibility and carelessness of the members of the upper social class, Nick asserts that:

²⁰ Subsequent quotes are from this edition with page number parenthetically included in the essay and preceded by TGG.

I couldn't forgive him [Tom] or like him, but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made [...] I shook hands with him; it seemed silly not to, for I felt suddenly as though I were talking to a child. (N. Carraway, p. 186).

Jay Gatsby goes to his grave as “the poor son-of-a-bitch,” (N. Carraway, p. 182) just like Tom's mistress Myrtle and her husband, Wilson. The Roaring 20's was a historical period during which America saw its highest economic boom, when each individual, regardless of social background, thought they could achieve success and thus climb the American social ladder. Instead, Fitzgerald however, underscores that the prevailing norms established in a capitalist America could not favor various poor minority people's socio-economic upward mobility. They have to pay a high price for their endeavors to get ahead. Their endeavors, not only prove fruitless for themselves, but also fill the coffers of those capitalists of the upper social class epitomized by Tom, Daisy and their like.

Similarly, through *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck points out that it is high time America's rich and poor, weak and strong became more responsible vis-à-vis the actions that they pose each and every day. Actually, the capitalist society has made people enemies instead of friends, because of the competition for labor and limited assets. The Great Depression period has come to worsen migrant workers' living as well as the working conditions.

The capitalist bosses, as depicted in *Of Mice and Men*, made more profits than ever before off the back of the working poor. Exploitation and eventual killing have become normalized. Weak and disabled members of the society are either put into quarantine or simply killed. Slim's killing his dog's four pups out of nine to enable the rest to survive, demonstrates fully the direction capitalism and its proponents are leading humanity to. Slim confesses: “Nine of 'em. I drowned four of 'em right off. She couldn't feed that many.” (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 39). This implies that in a capitalist environment, only the strongest economically and politically can

survive. Most importantly, killing has become the norm. Since killing has become part of the capitalist mode of production that makes sense why Candy's old dog is deadly shot by Carlson who says:

That dog of Candy's is so god damn old he can't hardly walk. Stinks like hell, too. Ever' time he comes into the bunk house I can smell him for two, three days. Why'n't you get Candy to shoot his old dog and give him one of the pups to raise up? I can smell that dog a mile away. Got no teeth, damn near blind, can't eat. Candy feeds him milk. He can't chew nothing else. (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 39).

John Steinbeck has succeeded in depicting vividly man's destructive forces on his immediate environment. Anything that is not of use is simply destroyed and discarded because of the then economic crisis which has come to foster capitalists' constant desire to make as much profit as possible. The gun that is used to shoot old Candy's dog at the back of its head is the same gun that will later on be used to shoot poor and innocent Lennie which foreshadows the tragic fate of all these poor migrant workers. George kills his long time and unique friend Lennie despite himself. The established social forces conditioned George to that extreme.

George raised the gun and steadied it, and he brought the muzzle of it close to the back of Lennie's head. The hand shook violently, but his face set and his hand steadied. He pulled the trigger. The crash of the shot rolled up the hills and rolled down again. Lennie jarred, and then settled slowly forward to the sand, and he lay without quivering. George shivered and looked at the gun, and then he threw it from him, back up on the bank, near the pile of old ashes. (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 116-117).

As we can see it, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* are novels from different historical backgrounds, but the authors of these literary productions have successfully depicted the tragic fate of the downtrodden people in America.

Their commitment focuses on the liberation of the disenfranchised from all these prison houses erected by the greedy capitalists and hence giving them voice to exteriorize their personality and identity. In the same vein, Peter Barry (2009, p. 150-151) sees Marxism as a philosophy which seeks to understand and

interpret the world and hence change it, because people so far have interpreted the world, the point now is to change it. He says that the aim of

Marxism is to build a classless society, based on the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. Marxism is a materialist philosophy that is, it tries to explain things without assuming the existence of a world of forces beyond the natural world around us, and the society we live in. Marxism sees progress as coming about through the struggle for power between different social classes.

The works of Marxist literary critics are shaped by historical factors, and according to Georg Lukacs (1971, p. vii), “the most valuable way of discussing Marxist criticism, then, would be a historical survey of it from, Marx to Engels to the present day charting the ways in which that criticism changes as the history in which it is rooted changes.” It should be noted that history is extremely important in Marxist analysis. Pointedly, Wendell Harris (1992, p. 207) defines Marxist literary criticism as “Any criticism of literature based on the major principles of Karl Marx’s analysis of history and social structure.”

Accordingly, the period in which the text is produced and the history of the people the text is about are important elements to consider in literary criticism. In other words, to understand literature, we have to understand the total social process of which it is a part, because it is part of social relations into which men enter at a particular time and place. As Terry Eagleton (2002, p. 3) puts it:

Marxist criticism is merely a “sociology of literature”, concerned with how novels get published and whether they mention the working class. Its aim is to explain the literary work more fully; and this means a sensitive attention to its forms, styles and meanings. But it also means grasping those forms, styles, and meanings as a production of a particular history.

The numerous and repetitive deaths in *The Great Gatsby* and in *Of Mice and Men* represent the total destruction of humanity which needs change. It is in quest for such a change that Fitzgerald and Steinbeck make such a vivid portrayal of their society from different historical

backgrounds. The different forms and styles mobilized to craft their *chefs-d'oeuvres* aim at debunking capitalism in the American society and thereby all around the world. Both Fitzgerald and Steinbeck do not seek to close the gap between the rich and the poor, nor condemn one and praise the other. Rather, they want the gap ceased to widen. They want more responsible upper-and lower-class members, and most importantly bridges for people to cross the border, because the society needs reasons for making progress.

Fitzgerald and Steinbeck would be of the view that the State should interfere with the capital owners so that fairer treatments could be set for poor workers. As clothes do not make man, the audience does not make a talk. John Steinbeck (1975, p. 10) aptly explains: “In every bit of honest writing in the world, there is base theme. Try to understand men, if you understand each other, you will be kind to each other. Knowing a man well never leads to hate and nearly always leads to love.” Friendship within and among social groups both in America and elsewhere, seems to be the roadmap that Fitzgerald and Steinbeck advocate for any member of their society.

2. Sense of Friendship in *TGG* and in *OMM*

In this second part of our article, we shall highlight the sense of friendship in the studied novels as Fitzgerald and Steinbeck chronicle the human value of sincerity amidst friendship. We shall enlighten the reason why Nick and Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* as well as George and Lennie of the same social class in *Of Mice and Men* have learnt to know each other well, and how they tamed their long, sincere and inseparable friendship.

2.1. Jay Gatsby's relationship with Nick Carraway in *TGG*

Fitzgerald's choice of the setting (time and place) in *The Great Gatsby* has shaped the life of characters within his narrative. Mostly, any story's credibility greatly depends on the consistency of each of the characters. For this, the nature and the use of characters in *The Great Gatsby* are determined by the purpose of the writer. Actually, the role performed by a character in relation with other characters within his/her immediate environment determines his/her type. In order to have a clear understanding and interpretation of Jay

Gatsby's relationship with Nick Carraway in the life of the novel, it is important to have a close look at their characterization.

Jay Gatsby: Originally, James "Jimmy" Gatz is a young self-made man and ex-army officer. He was born to an impoverished farmer in North Dakota. He had his name legally changed to Jay Gatsby at the age of seventeen. Though he did attend St. Olaf's, a small college in Minnesota, he dropped out after two weeks, as he could not work as a janitor to pay his tuition.

An instinct toward his future glory had led him, some month before, to the small Lutheran College of St. Olaf's in Southern Minnesota. He stayed there two weeks, dismayed at its ferocious indifference to the drums of his destiny, the destiny itself, and despising the janitor's work with which he was to pay his way through (F. S. K., Fitzgerald, p. 106). As a child, Gatsby makes a list of "general resolves: study electricity, baseball, practice elocution and how to attain it" (F. S. K., Fitzgerald, p. 180).

Gatsby's own father testifies: "Jimmy was bound to get ahead. He always had some resolves like this or something. Do you notice what he's got about improving his mind? He was always great for that" (F. S. K., Fitzgerald, p. 180). Gatsby's dreams of self-improvement were intensified by his relationship with Dan Cody, a man whom he met while working as a fisherman on Lake Superior, "for over a year he had been beating his way along the south shore of Lake Superior as a clam-digger and a salmon-fisher or in any other capacity that brought food and bed" (F. S. K., Fitzgerald, p. 105).

Nick Carraway: A twenty-nine-year-old (thirty by the end of the novel) bond salesman from the Midwest. He is a veteran, a Yale graduate and resident of Long Island (West Egg). Nick is truly an observer; the novel is in some sense, his memoir, and thus a collection of his observations. Indeed, he best epitomizes than any other character Fitzgerald within the narrative. Actually, Nick's kinship to Gatsby is established in the prologue, where his own version of "infinite hope" the capacity to reserve judgment is implicitly contrasted with Gatsby's "extraordinary gift for hope". He maintains that:

In younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since "whenever you feel like criticising anyone, he told me just

remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you have had. [...] In consequence, a habit that opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores. Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth" (F. S. K., Fitzgerald, p. 7).

Despite his poverty and his low social status, Gatsby was able to meet up with success in the end. Nick argues furthermore that "Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men" (F. S. K., Fitzgerald, p. 8).

These positive qualities made of Gatsby not only a well-known but also a respectable and respectful man. Gatsby stands as a potential role model within his society. He is less talkative but does great things; and this accounts for the medals he was awarded after the Great War which gave him the opportunity to attend Oxford: As the narrator corroborates: "He did extraordinarily well in the war. He was a captain before he went to the front. After the armistice he was sent to Oxford instead" (F. S. K., Fitzgerald, p. 156).

Nevertheless, Nick's relationship with Gatsby is intrinsically unique and rare as Nick himself asserts "we were close friends" (F. S. K., Fitzgerald, p. 175). Fitzgerald envisions an American society more stable where unalterable friendship should prevail to enable the weak to exist with the help of the strong. In this sense, Nick Carraway, the narrator gives the novel's final appraisal of Gatsby when he asserts that "they (aristocrats)'re a rotten crowd," and Gatsby is "worth the whole damn bunch put together" (*TGG*, p. 160). Assuredly, Nick cannot help but, admire Gatsby for his essential nobility in his society as reflected in Fitzgerald's fictional world.

2.2. *George and Lennie's Friendship in OMM*

Yearning for companionship is another outstanding discourse in John Steinbeck's story given the fact that the chief motive of capitalism and a capitalist society is to constantly divide and rule over the poor masses. It is a fact that each and every character in *Of Mice*

and Men, at least those from the working class, suffers from ostracism and solitude.

People like Lennie, George, Crooks and many other poor ranchmen are in the quest for a companion with whom to communicate so as to exteriorize their real identity. Communication and companionship are crucial for an individual's survival. That is exactly the reason why for the capitalists to maintain their hegemony and power over the working poor, they seek by all means to keep them as far from one another as possible. Steinbeck portrays Crooks as the looniest person on the ranch. He is not permitted to play cards with the white hands simply because he is a black man. He is therefore put into quarantine and he shuts himself in his harness room because the white says he stinks. He only finds solace when he becomes proud and aloof, "kept his distance and demanded that other people keep theirs" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 74).

Yet inwardly, he is yearning for companionship, for someone to talk to. So, when Lennie once happens to rush into his harness room for his puppy when all the other ranchmen have gone down town, he feels so happy to talk to Lennie about his family history, although the latter can't understand him at all. Crooks describes his loneliness to Lennie in the following terms:

Maybe you can see now. You got George. You know he's going to come back. S' pose you don't have nobody. S' pose you couldn't go into the bank house and play rummy' cause you was black. How'd you like that? S' pose you had to sit out here an' read books. Sure you could play horseshoes till it go dark, but then you got to read books. Books ain't good. A guy need somebody to be near him. He whinned, A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is long's he's with you. I tell ya, he cried, I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick!" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 73-80).

Loneliness almost drives Crooks mad. He goes through a kind of traumatism because of having been severed from the contact with the outside world. He is totally alien to that society which praises individualism. Through the imprisoned life of Crooks who suffers from loneliness and solitude, Steinbeck intends to enhance the sense and the importance of friendship in people's lives. For fear of his

eventual destruction into loneliness, Crooks mourns his fate in front of Lennie who always has George to rely upon.

Throughout the novel, Steinbeck portrays individual characters, who, in one way or the other way are in the quest for companionship. Most characters are in search for belonging to one another or at most to a social group. The real importance and celebration of friendship in *Of Mice and Men* can be read through the friendship of George and Lennie.

In fact, George and Lennie, as portrayed in the novel, are like a man and his shadow, even more than a dog and its master. Though they are very different from each other, they never separate from each other up to the end of the novel. As Steinbeck portrays, one is small and wise, whereas the other is big and mentally retarded: “the first man [George] was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Behind him walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders” (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 2).

George is fully aware of his friend’s mental deficiency. He does complain about it, but it is impossible for him to separate from his long-time friend Lennie; “God, you’re a lot of trouble,” said George. “I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn’t have you on my tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl” (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 7).

Besides, Lennie who is intellectually slow does not take any time to think twice before posing any acts. Lennie, having George at his side, is totally unaware of their current situation as poor migrant workers. George takes pity over his friend’s mental deficiency to be able to care for himself alone as he tells him soothingly, “No – look! I was jus’ foolin’, Lennie. ‘Cause I want you to stay with me. Your Aunt Clara wouldn’t like you running off by yourself, even if she is dead” (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 14).

Lennie and George, though intellectually and physically different from each other, never separate. The reason is simple: they need each other. Just as George says, migrant people are the loneliest people in the world, because they have to move from place to place for job opportunities. As soon as they get familiar with the environment, they start to move again. They have no friends, not even neighbors. George remarks in this sense that “Guys like us that work on ranches are the loveliest guys in the world. They come to a

ranch an' work up a stake and then they go into town and blow their stake" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 15).

Lennie feels delighted as George goes on saying, "with us it ain't like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us. If them other guys gets in jail they can rot for all anybody gives a damn. But not us" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 15). He adds: "I seen the guys that go around on the ranches alone. That ain't no good. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean. They get wantin' to fight all time" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 45).

Lennie breaks in delightedly "But not us! And why? Because... because I got you to look after me, and that's why" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 15). Contrary to the other poor migrant workers like old Candy and Crooks who suffer from ostracism and loneliness, George and Lennie feel that they are different from others just because they have each other to look after. Crooks, who is the loneliest person on the ranch, envies George's good fortune at being able to share his life with Lennie, even though the latter is half-wit.

As Steinbeck said, he did not care so much about his books. But in *Of Mice and Men*, he seems to convey a strong moral lesson. It is very important to note that one essential message from *Of Mice and Men*, is the importance of having a friend and belonging to a group. Friendship and communal life are celebrated through the union of George and Lennie. George, knowing well his friend's intellectual limitation, makes sure Lennie doesn't say anything bad which will jeopardize their chances of getting a job on their new ranch. He inquires: "what you gonna say tomorrow when the boss asks you questions?" Lennie concentrates and says "... I ain't gonna ... say word" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 16).

Then George, as a coach, congratulates his trainee: "Good boy! That's fine, Lennie! Maybe you're gettin' better. You can remember this place, can't you? The ranch is about a quarter mile up that way. Just fellow river" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 16). Very happy, Lennie replies encouragingly: "I can remember this. Di'n't I remember about not gonna say a word?" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 17). George in his role of a trainer gives out the instructions to his trainee, Lennie, "Course you did. Well, look. Lennie-if you jus' happen to get in trouble like you always done before, I want you to come right here

an' hide in the brush... Hide in the brush till I come for you. Can you remember that?" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 17).

From the above quotes, one is brought to realize that George and Lennie's togetherness is rare and seems to be even more than a relationship between a dog and its master. Lennie behaving animal like, during a punishment he gets from their oppressor's son Curley, "conversed his face with his huge paws and bleated with terror. He cried, 'Make' um stop, George.' "Then Curley attacked his stomach and cut off his wind"" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 69). On seeing the disaster, Slim, another poor migrant worker who doesn't stand injustice, jumps to his feet and cries for justice to be brought back "the dirty little rat, "I'll get' um myself"" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 69).

But George quickly prevents Slim from intervening and then gives instructions to his friend Lennie who is actually just like a dog: "He cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled, 'Get'im, Lennie!" Lennie obeys to his master and responds quickly: "leggo of him, Lennie. Let go.' Blood ran down Lennie's face, one of his eyes was cut and closed. George slapped him in the face again and still Lennie held on to the closest fist." (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 69-70).

At least at this point in time, poor migrant workers behave together and unanimously, and beyond that, showed their sympathy to their oppressor's son Curley. This comes about because of the unwavering friendship that is rooted between George and Lennie. This fully underscores Steinbeck's desire for his society. As Karl Marx (2000, p. 34) states, "the working class has nothing to lose: let the ruling classes tremble at a communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working Men of All Countries, Unite!" Furthermore, the portrayal of Crooks as a poor black man can be seen as a social critique of racism. Talking about racism, Tim Wise (in B. Singley, ed., p. 234) puts it that: "I was seeing how racism actually ripped apart my close friendships and distorted my connections to other human beings that led me to realize that racism and white supremacy carry a cost: mostly for the victims, of course, but also for the perpetrators and collaborators."

Clearly enough, human beings would gain a lot if they build bridges to put close each other.

One can equally argue that the most important role Crooks plays in the novel is as in a contrast to George and Lennie. What George and Lennie have got through their relationship becomes cherished when we consider Crooks who has no one to share his feelings and emotions with. In a much wider scope, this situation tells us something really universal in the sense that we all need people around us and that very few people can stand loneliness in life. Pointedly, Crooks laments once to Lennie: “You got George. You know he’s goin’ to come back. S’pose you didn’t have nobody. S’pose you couldn’t go into the bunk house and play rummy ‘cause you was black. How’d you like that? I tell ya a guy gets lonely an’ he gets sick” (*J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 79-80*).

From the aforementioned quote, it is worth noticing that, without a real friend in life, we are no one in society. Once in contact with others, we become someone. Truly, one reveals his/her real identity when he/ she is in close contact with other human beings.

In the final pages of Steinbeck’s novel, George is fully aware of what Lennie has done and the immediate consequence of Lennie’s action, but he has self-control as he retains himself from being mad at Lennie. Since George knows inwardly what he has to do, that is kill his best and unique reliable friend in the name of their oneness, it becomes impossible for him to be mad at him. George equally knows that the act of killing his friend, whether he does it or not, will lead to the same end result. He becomes lonely like many other migrant workers. Due to the harshest forms of the American capitalism and being cast into a capitalist society, George, like many other migrant workers is inevitably doomed to loneliness and ultimately to destruction. George is compelled to cut down the branch while he is still sitting on it because of the socioeconomic forces he is entrapped in.

This enhances the idea that migrant workers never thrive in a setting where their lives both emotionally and physically are controlled by their capitalist oppressors. George, who somewhat stands as a torch bearer from whom other migrant workers could collect sufficient awareness for a possible exit from the existing prison houses put in place by their capitalist oppressors, is utterly disillusioned. Of course, he kills his friend Lennie to prevent the latter from being lynched by the brutal Curley. This act stands not

only as a seal of his relationship with Lennie, but also foreshadows George's own downfall. Lennie represents a kind of dream world that George could retreat into just to give meaning to his brief passing in this capitalist cruel world:

George raised the gun and steadied it, and he brought the muzzle of it close to the back of Lennie's head. The hand shook violently, but his face set and his hand steadied. He pulled the trigger. The crash of the shot rolled down again. Lennie jarred, and then settled slowly forward to the sand, and he lay without quivering. George shivered and looked at the gun, and then he threw it from him, back up on the bank, near the pile of old ashes (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 116-117).

George's loss of Lennie is in one way a loss of something of himself. The gun that was used to kill Candy's old dog is the same gun that serves to eliminate Lennie, which underscores the cruel fate of the frail and innocent in America. Admittedly, it is worth noting that the ranchmen don't comprehend the kind of friendship that exists between George and Lennie, and the fact that it is one who kills the other. This can be explained by the fact that these ranchmen are used to being lonely for too long and have never been exposed to any form of relationship whatsoever, because "Curley and Carlson looked after them. And Carlson said. 'Now what the hell ya suppose is eatin' them two guys?'" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 118).

At the end of the book, Slim is the only one who fully understands what it meant to George losing Lennie. This explains why he takes care of George while the others stand still wondering why George is down. Slim came directly to George and sat down beside him, sat very close to him. "'Never you mind,' said Slim. 'A guy got to sometimes.' Slim twitched George's elbow. 'Come on, George. Me an' you'll go in an' get a drink. He led George into the entrance of the trail and up toward the highway'" (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 117-118).

Migrant workers' life in *Of Mice and Men* can be compared to a boat against the currents and borne back ceaselessly into the past. Any attempt to move forward is ultimately futile. George and Lennie's life as well as that of the other migrant workers are doomed to destruction. George's life is reduced to a lonely life as he becomes

indulged in the alcohol the boss sells. The prophecy envisioned by Crooks when Candy, George and Lennie plan of owning a piece of land has been materialized in the end, “I see hunderds of men come by on the road an’ that same damn thing in their head. They come, an’ the quit an’ every damn one of ‘em’s got a little piece of land in his head. An’ never a God damn one get. It’s just in their head” (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 81). Later on, he adds brutally: “you guys is just kiddin’ yourself. You’ll talk about it a hell of a lot, but you won’t get no hand. Seems like ever’ guy got land in his head. ‘I never seen a guy really do it,’ he says” (J. Steinbeck, 1937, p. 83-84).

Conclusion

The study of Francis Scott Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby* and John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* has shown that these committed writers wanted to convey the message of friendship through their characters, namely Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway, Lennie Small and George Milton’s bond in a highly capitalist society whose main characteristic is individualism.

The above-mentioned less fortunate characters mostly from the lower social class, have never been able to achieve their individual dreams because of the harsh realities of the capitalist system in which they unfortunately found themselves. Helplessness and despair have taken hold on the individual characters’ lives in a terrain of systemic endless fight between the oppressed and the oppressors.

It is a truism that Gatsby, the Wilsons and their like, Lennie and George just like many other migrant workers, failed to achieve their dream, however they have been able to prove to the whole world what true friendship is. We argue in this sense that Fitzgerald and Steinbeck in their novels seem to revive this natural aspect of life inborn in human beings. We also reckon that beyond the message of friendship, the authors seem to underscore the dire need for the highly capitalist societies to conciliate both natural as well as cultural components that might contribute in breeding life in people be it in America or elsewhere round the world.

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