

DEMOCRATIC AND POPULAR REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY ABDELHAMID IBN BADIS –MOSTAGANEM-  
FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



MASTER  
LITERATURE AND CIVILIZATION ANGLO -SAXON

## The Representation of Gender Roles in John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men

**Presented by:**

Ait Abdelkader Messaouda

**Board of Examiners**

**Supervisor: Pr. Bahous Abbas**

**University of Mostaganem**

**Chair: Mrs. Benmaati Fatima Zohra**

**University of Mostaganem**

**Examiner: Mrs. Abdelhadi Nadia**

**University of Mostaganem**

**Academic year: 2016/2017**

## Table of contents

Acknowledgements.....	I
Abstract.....	II
<b>General Introduction.....</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>Chapter One: Gender studies</b>	
<b>I.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>03</b>
<b>I.2 .Gender Studies.....</b>	<b>03</b>
<b>I.3 .Gendered.....</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>I.4 .Patriarchy.....</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>I.4.1. Characteristics of patriarchal system.....</b>	<b>07</b>
<b>I.5.The Other.....</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>I.6 .Gender.....</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>I.6.1.The distinction between Sex and Gender .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>I.6.2. Gender Performativity.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>I.7.Gender Role Conformity.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>I.8.Masculinity.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>I.9 .Conclusion.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Gender Roles in Of Mice and MEN</b>	
<b>II.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>II.2.Men and Masculinity.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>II.2.1Manhood Trouble .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>II.3.Characterization of Male Characters.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>II.4 .Homophobia and Manhood.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>II.5.The Gender –Role Strain and Psychology of Men.....</b>	<b>25</b>

<b>II.6.</b>	The Gender Identity in United States.....	26
<b>II.7.</b>	Tradional Masculinity Ideology.....	27
<b>II.8.</b>	The Decline of Masculinity and Eugenics.....	29
<b>II.9.</b>	Communities of Men during 1930’s.....	31
<b>II.10.</b>	Conclusion.....	33
 <b>Chapter Three: Feminism seen by Steinbeck</b>		
<b>III.1.</b>	Introduction.....	34
<b>III.2.</b>	The Gendered Other and a Female Representation.....	34
<b>III.2.1.</b>	Women in the Patriarchal society.....	36
<b>III.3.</b>	Feminist Perspective.....	38
<b>III.3.1.</b>	Feminism and women studies.....	38
<b>III.3.2.</b>	Steinbeck and the question of women.....	41
<b>III.3.</b>	Steinbeck and Misogyny.....	42
<b>III.4.</b>	Conclusion.....	43
<b>General Conclusion.....</b>		<b>45</b>
 Selected bibliography		

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my whole family who supported and helped me with their kindness and their encouragements. Especially my parents and my sister Katia. I dedicate the work to my nieces Amira, Malek and Lydia.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor Professor Abess Bahous. I am extremely grateful and indebted to him for his expert, sincere and valuable guidance.

I would like to thank my friends and my classmates especially Ahmed, Fayza and Mohamed for their moral support.

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to study the issue of the gender roles in John Steinbeck's novella *Of Mice and Men* (1937). It first defines some concepts in gender studies as an interdisciplinary study basing in on its Judith Butler's Gender Performativity. Throughout this dissertation Steinbeck refers to some issues like the representation of men and women during the Great Depression. The aftermath of the First World War, this has changed the gendered life of the American society. The selection of this novella of *Of Mice and Men* (1937) was very significant and crucial for the analysis. The work demonstrates the construction of masculinity and femininity, how men face struggle, fear and anxieties during the Great Depression. The work focuses on the marginalization of women and how they suffered from the oppression of patriarchal society. Steinbeck's novella illustrates how male power and privilege over women operated historically. The representation of manhood trouble, and how male characters face their fear and homophobia in terms of traditional masculinity that can be attributed to their internal battles in American society.

# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

## **Introduction:**

During the second half of the twentieth century, the birth of the gender studies attempted to increase the public visibility for both of man's studies and women's studies as an academic disciplines which worked together in order to change everyone's ideas as well as the general discourse about gender roles and identities in society. Therefore, there were many changes in social and intellectual field which influenced critical interpretation in literature.

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the representation of gender roles in post-war America according to the literary fiction of John Steinbeck's (1902-1968) *Of Mice and Men* (1937). The representation of American masculinity and femininity during the Great Depression. This dissertation attempts to demonstrate some issues about gender and sex differences, patriarchal society as well as the subject of women.

Indeed, the aftermath of the First World War witnessed several upheavals in terms of politics, economy, and society. In addition to many changes concerning gender issues, morality and social behavior in American society. John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937) coincided with the Great Depression where there was an economic crisis just after the First World War; workers and farmers suffered from the Dust Bowl as well as the unemployment which created the social unrest. Therefore, Steinbeck reflected these issues and captured the reality of the post-war era.

*Of Mice and Men* (1937) depicts the tragic story of two migrants workers George Milton and Lennie Small who attempted to fulfill their dream. The conditions of the 1930's urged people to leave their home because of the Great Depression and The Dust Bowl which complicated the practice of agriculture. As a result, these issues gave birth to proletarian concern in American Literature. Steinbeck as a proletarian writer gave a kind of sympathy towards the working class and he highlighted the damaging effects of the American capitalism. The material that I have selected to study and to analyze the idea of gender roles in literary fiction of John Steinbeck *Of Mice and Men* (1937). As for methodology, I will refer to the theory of Gender Performativity by the American philosopher Judith Butler (1990).

This dissertation aims to study how are the classifications of the gender identity of male and female characters of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* are socially constructed. The work aims to study the way American masculinity and femininity are shaped during the Great Depression. Based on previous research indicate that Gender stereotypes which can alter the

process of gender socialization, it was hypothesized that men would be more likely identify as feminine figure. Based on the impact of the traditional masculinity in determination of men's behavior, it was hypothesized that the social and the historical context which plays an important role to alter the gender construction of men during the Depression. Another hypothesis is that how American Women were regarded as the gendered "Other" who were living under the oppression of the patriarchal society.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter demonstrates the growth of gender studies and it deals with definitions of some basic concepts in the field of gender during the late of the twentieth century. The second chapter deals with the gender roles in the literary fiction of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937). The chapter three examines the representation of the female character as the gendered "OTHER" and feminism's response. The general conclusion contains ideas that will be developed throughout this dissertation.

**I.1 Introduction:**

This chapter examines some basic concepts of gender studies .It shows the academic work on women and the meaning of gender in the twenty-first century .the chapter explores the development of this area of study which was emerged from the second-wave of feminism. This chapter also explores the distinction between sex and gender which was considered as a big debate. The demonstration of women's studies which makes the study of women visible. The study of the human gender of both women and men and their interaction in society.

**I.2 GENDER STUDIES:**

In fact, the academic study of gender has a short history. It was emerged during the late 1960's. Its development triggered by the second wave feminism, this movement which began to draw attention in the world in order to discuss the gender inequalities. Indeed, before the 1970's, the social sciences in general and sociology in particular ignored gender; there was only a focus on men topics such as paid work and politics.

Moreover, women were almost invisible before the 1970's. It was an idea of gender-blind sociology. In the sense that, the differences and inequalities between men and women at that time were not recognized as a kind of issue of sociological concern, they were not seen a problem to be addressed. However, the emergence of the second wave feminism began to increase attention to gender.

Therefore, Sociology discussed about the differences and the inequalities between men and women during the 1970's: especially by women sociologists who took this issues into a consideration. There was a focus to fill the gaps about the knowledge of women, these gaps which are left by the prior male bias. There was a great attention which moved to focus on particular aspects which were significant to women like paid work, house work, motherhood and male violence.

Furthermore, in the 1960's and early 1970's, there were a number of women who concentrated in the humanities. The existence of these women was a result of the gendered logic of the work place. Therefore, during this stage, the Women's Studies were regarded as an academic interest which began to develop in both of the United Kingdom and the United States and it was spread all over the world.

Gradually, there was an urgent need for the emergence of "Men's Studies" in the 1990's which was recognized as a specialist area of academic focus. Therefore, both of the Women's Studies and Men's Studies become important issues in the field of gender studies.

Furthermore, in the postmodernist and post-structuralists approaches, the idea of men and women as discrete categories are challenged. In post-structuralists analysis; women and men are regarded as or a kind of representations, achieved through discourse, performance and repetition rather being real entities. These theoretical approaches have had a great impact on feminism, Men's studies and Women's Studies. Therefore, it was considered as a key driver for the recognition of diversity and differences between genders based on class, sexuality, ethnicity and citizenship.

In addition, Gender studies attempts to study the relation between male and female in the twenty first century from the sociological point of view. However, there are many other contributors in the field of gender studies with different background like the psychoanalyses Jacques Lacan and feminist like the American philosopher Judith Butler.

On the whole, the study of gender studies remains multi-and inter-disciplinary field. It has the most profound impact on contemporary theory and attitudes to the production of knowledge. In addition to the rise of feminism which was considered as the central perspective for the study of gender relations because it was the reason for its emergence.

### **I.3 Gendered:**

The term gendered means when something is gendered, when its character is either masculine or feminine. It is a kind of differences by gender. Indeed, Pink and blue are gendered colors, the former regarded as "feminine and the latter is masculine".

According to Davis (1996) Gendered is always used as a verb and therefore gives expression to action or the doing of gender. It is the shift to use gender as a verb "to gender", "gendered" , "gendering", " engender", which was a kind of reflection of the changed understandings of gender as an active ongoing process, rather than something that is ready made and fixed. In the sense that, something that is gendered engaged in social life that produce distinctions between women and men. Furthermore, "Gendering" and "Gendered" are regarded as concepts which signify results that are socially constructed.

### **I.4 Patriarchy:**

Literary speaking, Patriarchy means rule by the male head of a social unit like a family or a tribe. The patriarch is typically a societal elder who has a legitimate power over others in the social unit including men, women and children. However, since the early twentieth century, feminist writers have used the concept to refer to social system of masculine domination over women. Indeed, Patriarchy is regarded as an important concept in gender studies, leading to the development of a number of theories that aim to identify the bases of women's subordination to men.

Indeed, there are three important theories in which patriarchy is regarded as a central concept are those commonly labeled as "Radical Feminist", "Marxist Feminist" and "Dual System Theory ". In Radical Feminist Analyses, the concept of patriarchy is regarded as the primary social division in society. In some Radical Feminist Analyses, the institution of the family is identified as the key means through which men's domination is achieved (Millet 1977).

In other radical feminist account of patriarchy, the control of men over women's bodies is very important. The idea is that the inequalities between women and men are based on biology with the different reproductive capacities of women and men being especially important. In addition, in other radical feminist analyses, Patriarchy is a masculine control over women's bodies through sexuality or male violence in the form of rape that is regarded as important issue for women (Rich 1980).

The second grouping of feminist analyses, often called "Marxist Feminism". Patriarchy is argued to arise from the workings of the capitalist economic system. In the sense that, It benefits from women's unpaid labor during the work. Therefore, the subordination of women to men in society is regarded as a product of capital's subordination of labor. In other words, there is a class inequality which is the central feature of society and seems to determine gender inequality (Barret1988).

The third grouping from the feminist perspective gives priority to two systems; Capitalism and Patriarchy in the explanation of the concept of patriarchy. It is often referred to as a "Dual Systems Theory", this perspective represents the gender relations between Marxist and Radical Feminist account. Indeed, the Dual System focuses on capitalism, patriarchy and biology and the system of oppression (Hartmann1979).

The American sociologist in gender studies Michael Scott Kimmel defines Patriarchy as a domination of male in society. A male-centered social system organized around an obsession with control that is gendered masculine. Patriarchies are men dominated, which means power is held by men more than by women. In other words, the higher up in hierarchy, the more people think about men rather than women. This idea does not mean that all men are powerful and all women are powerless. It simply means where there is a concentration of power; men are the most likely ones to have it.

In addition, Patriarchy is also organized around an obsession with control, which is highly regarded as the mark of superior human being, because of this women and girls are routinely devalued because they lack control as over their emotions, intellects and their bodies. At the same time, men and boys are elevated to be in control of themselves, other people especially women, machines, ideas, conversations, organizations and territory.

#### **4.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM:**

One of the characteristic of patriarchal system is male identification. In the sense that men and their experiences are taken as the standard for human beings in general. For instance, the using of the term "mankind" to refer Homo sapiens or "guys" to refer to group of women.

Patriarchal values are based on maleness over femaleness. Whatever men do tend to be more highly than women do. For instance, Occupations performed by men tend to be more highly paid and receive higher status than those performed by women.

There is another characteristic of patriarchy; all what is most valued in a culture will be gendered masculine. For instance, "God" and "Brotherhood" are enormously important in concepts in human experience that are gendered masculine. However, in the same time whatever is devalued tends to be gendered feminine for instance "bitch", "slut", "old wives".

The last characteristic of patriarchy is male centeredness, which refers to the fact that the world is male dominated and identified as male centeredness. In the sense that, it is appropriate and expected for men to be at the center of attention, while the proper place for women is at the margins.

On the whole, Patriarchy is considered as a social system organized in a ways that put women and men fundamentally different. As with all systems of privilege, the main point of organizing social life in this way is to legitimate, promote, and enforce male privilege and supremacy (Kimmel2004, p589).

**I.5 THE OTHER:**

The concept of "The Other" is used by the French writer Simone De Beauvoir. Her ideas on women as "The other" were set out in *The Second Sex* (1949), the concept describes the status of women in patriarchal culture and society. While men are regarded as "The One" in other words being defined to themselves. Women are considered as "The other", which means that they are defined only in relation to men. A woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her. She is the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, the absolute and she is "The Other".

Indeed, De Beauvoir offers many reasons for women's status as "The other", including the identification of women as a subordinate in the eyes of men. Men define themselves as "The One", position women as "The Other". In other words, women do not regain the status of being "The One", according to Simone De Beauvoir, because they largely accept this state and they are well pleased with their role as "The Other".

**I.6 GENDER:**

The concept of gender came to be known throughout the early 1970's and the 1980's within the Anglo-American context. The term was used to make a distinction between biological sex differences and the way these are used to inform behaviors which are assigned as either "masculine" or "feminine"

Indeed, according to Ann Oakley (1972), the purpose of the distinction between sex and gender was very crucial. In the sense that, in post-industrial societies, there were physiological sex differences which was very exaggerated because it gave power to patriarchal system which means that there was a masculine domination over women at that time.

In addition, women were better suited to domestic roles as housewives and mothers and this belief could diminish their happiness because of the oppression of the male society in western cultures.

Besides, it was not the first time that this distinction had been made. In fact this distinction was made by the French philosopher and feminist Simone De Beauvoir who explored the distinction in her book *"The Second Sex"* (1949). She was well-known for her statement that

*"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"* (De Beauvoir 1972, p 295)

Throughout the statement above, De Beauvoir makes a discussion in which how gender differences are set in hierarchical opposition. In the sense that, the masculine principle is always the favored norm and the feminine ones becomes positioned as "Other" as if the world is masculine and women are marginalized. Beauvoir presented the mistreatment of women because they were regarded as a second class position. She explores how and why women were regarded as the other to the masculine norm.

In fact, The French philosopher Simone De Beauvoir used the concept of "The Other" in order to describe the women's status in patriarchal cultures. While men were regarded as "The One". In other words, women were defined in relation to men who mean that a woman is differentiated with reference to man and not the man with reference to her.

In addition to that when the French philosopher Simone De Beauvoir wrote the *"Second Sex"* in 1949 to investigate the popular term and definitions of femininity which used to suppress women for ages. According to her, Femininity is not inherent but it is socially and culturally constructed.

In the sense that, Femininity has been learned through socialization to keep men dominant because women used to be treated as inferior and secondary to men at that time. De Beauvoir believes that the society which teaches women to serve the male's needs and women sought validation for their work because those women used to have less public influence. Therefore, Beauvoir compares the status of women to the submissive dolls. Therefore, she argues that in order to achieve liberation, women should determine their destiny (Pilcher, whelehan 2004, p56, 61)

### 6.1 The distinction between sex and gender:

Indeed, Gender was considered as a dominant term during the 1970's and the 1980's. Gender is completely different from the word sex. Simone De Beauvoir did not use the term gender in her work "*The Second Sex*" 1942 rather she used the term sex. In addition, the distinction between sex and gender was examined and was taken into consideration by feminist philosophers. Hence, it was a significant means to reject the idea of biological determinism. In the sense that, according to Donna Haraway Gender as a concept is the best way to contest the naturalization of sexual differences.

According to Ann Oakley (1972), Sex is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female. It is assumed to be unchanging and constant in terms of biological fact, it is natural. However, Gender is a matter of culture which refers to the social classification into masculine and feminine. Gender is considered as conceived of as neither constant nor natural.

In fact, Gender differences between men and women vary both over time and across cultures. Thus, they are socially conditioned. The process of socialization which converted individuals either masculine or feminine. (Moya Lloyd 2007).

The issue of the distinction between sex and gender was mainly discussed by feminist who wanted to challenge the common views on sex and gender. They were against the patriarchal society where women suffered from the social oppression. Therefore, this abuse was considered as unnatural and not justifiable.

In this respect, Feminist believes that masculinity and femininity are not viewed as natural aspects in the human being. While these aspects are learnt through society and sets of behavior. In addition to that, there were many perspectives on the issue about the social construction of gender. There were some feminists who gave importance to biological differences between women and men, while there were others who view that gender differences is based on the social construction through individuals and hence there was an agreement for gender performance.

Indeed, Feminist scholars had many debates about the two concepts Sex and Gender and as a result, there were many theories which were developed at that time and the issue was a stepping stone for the rise of gender performativity theory during the postmodern feminism.

In addition, Post modern feminist view that the dichotomy of sex and gender is related to nature and culture but there is a kind of exception including the American Feminist philosopher Judith Butler who argues that both sex and gender are regarded as a social constructed and hence she has developed her theory of Gender Performativity.

## **6.2 Gender Performativity:**

Judith butler is an American philosopher, feminist and gender theorist. She plays an influential role in shaping modern feminism. She is well-known for her book "*Gender Trouble*" (1990); which illustrates her theory on Gender Performativity. Judith Butler wanted to develop her critique about sex and gender relations. She did not limit herself only with analysis of the French feminism which was the primary focus on psychological of Freud but also she dealt with a work of Foucault on "*sex and sexuality*" as well as the structuralist anthropology of Gayle Rubin. She also draws considerable inspiration from the French philosopher Simone De Beauvoir's ideas in the "*Second Sex*" (1942).

Gender Performativity is considered as the theory which was made by the American philosopher Judith Butler. The term "Performative" originates from the work of the British philosopher J.L Austin through his distinction between "Constative" and "Perforamtive" utterances.

According to the gender theorist Judith Butler, Gender is performative rather than being a part of nature of each individual. In other words, Butler believes that the definition of masculinity and femininity are socially constructed and not natural , rather than inherent with people. Indeed, there is an assumption that if the new baby born is a girl; she will be a lady

and feminine in the future. However, this idea was rejected by Butler who argues that the baby girl or a boy can be feminine through time and through social construction.

According to Butler (1990) "Gender is repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance".

Throughout the quotation above, Butler argues that gender is a kind of repetition of acts and behaviors which are not natural and inevitable. These acts are changeable and not fixed. It depends on the context in which they are performed. In addition to the performance and behavior which are repeated in the social context.

Butler believes that society and culture as well as the stereotypes which oblige individual to lead that gender performance. Therefore, Gender is performative, it is not only a matter of acting in a performance but rather actively constructing it as the individual act it.

The idea is that gender reality is performative which means that it whenever it is performed, it is real. Besides, Gender is the only part that reinforces stereotypes and expectations of what is meant by "male", "masculine" or "female", "feminine".

Butler argues that "words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance...such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed are performative" (Gender Trouble 1990, p 185). In the sense that, these words, acts and all these performances shape the gender identity of the individual whether being a male or female.

**I.7. Gender -Role Conformity:**

According to David G, Meyers (1996) When we speak about Gender-role Conformity, we refer to gender role norms which means that the social rules and standards about how to be masculine or feminine in the social life .In addition to conformity which is defined to perceive pressure from others in order to show individual how they could act.

In this respect, when a male and a female began the process of gender -role socialization; For instance when a young boy falls down and starts crying, his father or mother advice him to not cry and they will tell him "Big boys don't cry". In this case, when the boy stops crying in response to pressures, the boy is conforming to gender -role norm. In the sense that, he was emotionally controlled by acting differently from how he would act.

In addition, Males and females experience constant gender socialization, individuals adopt society rules and standards about gender. As a result, when boys and girls become a "man and a woman" internalize their respective gender roles norms. So, they are likely to act the same in private and in public life .For instance , When the boys grow up and experience disappointment that would lead to tears but do not cry about them even when they are alone, boys may be conforming to a gender -role norms that has been internalized.

Moreover, these rules and standards are believed to be taught to males and females by social agents such as parents, peers, teachers and the media about how they suppose to act, feel and think (Bem 1981).

However, According to the American sociologist in gender studies Michael Scott Kimmel (1996), Gender -role norms vary as a function of culture, class race, sexual orientation, economic system and time as well as history. In other words, the behaviors, thoughts and feelings that reflected gender role conformity also vary as a function of these socio-cultural aspects.

**I.8. Masculinities:**

Masculinities refer to the social roles, behaviors and meaning the prescribe for men in any given society and any time. As such, the term emphasis gender, not biological sex but the diversity of identities among different groups of men. Masculinities are produced within the institutions of society and through the daily interactions of men (Kimmel2000).

Indeed, the use of the plural masculinities recognizes the dramatic variations in how different groups define masculinity even in the same society and in the same time, as well as individual differences. Although social forces operate to create systematic differences between men and women, these differences are not great.

In addition, the meaning of masculinity varies over four different dimensions; thus four different disciplines are involved in understanding gender.

First, masculinity varies across cultures Anthropologists documented the ways that gender varies cross-culturally. In the sense that, some cultures encourage men to be stoic and to prove masculinity especially by sexual conquest. Other cultures prescribe a moral relax definition of masculinity, which is based on emotional responsiveness for the community needs.

Second, definition of masculinity changes from one country to another. Historians have explored how these definitions have shifted, because of many changes and upheavals in the level of the industrialization and urbanization, and economic context.

Third, definition of masculinity changes over the course of a person's life. Development of psychologists have examined how a set developmental milestones lead to difference of gender identity, in other words, both chronological age and life-stage require different enactment of gender.

In the west, the issues confronted a man about improving himself and feeling successful with the regard with age and social constitution, therefore; a young single man defines masculinity differently from the middle-aged father and an elderly grandfather.

Finally, the meanings of masculinity vary considerably within any given society at any time and moment. There are several meanings of masculinities which coexist. Sociologists have explored the ways in which class, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and region all shape gender identity.

### **I.9. Conclusion:**

On the whole, Gender studies are regarded as a trans-disciplinary area of study which refers to gender norms, gender relations and gender identities. The distinction between sex and gender was very crucial and debatable. The value of the distinction between them was challenged and recently can be seen to be socially constructed. In other words, the representation of the gender identity of both of masculinity and femininity with a regard to social construction. Indeed, Gender is an important consideration in life. It is the way of how looking at how the social norms impact the lives of different groups of men and women. The growth of gender studies saw a great shift in the studies of masculinity and femininity. The attempt to demonstrate the dynamics of gender as applied to men and women.

## **II.1 Introduction:**

This chapter examines the gender roles in a selected literary work of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937) in general, it shows the idea of masculinities and manhood trouble in particular. George Milton and Lennie Small and other male characters as well as Curley's wife who represent the classification of gender during the 1930's or the Great Depression.

Indeed, all the male characters in *Of Mice and Men* suffered from the fear and anxiety. The result was about the gendered roles because of the economic system; their partnership was based on fraternity and brotherhood. There was a dream to find a job and to make enough money in order to have a farm and to have their own place to live.

## **II.2 Men and Masculinity:**

### **II.2.1 Manhood Trouble:**

*Of Mice and Men* (1937) is regarded as the most successful literary work of John Steinbeck. It dealt with many challenges that faced American agricultural worker in California. By the 1930s and during the Great Depression, many farmers were looking for a job. There was a need for a human labor in order to increase the production of the crops in the farms.

Steinbeck like many writers used his own experience as a farm hand in order to expose the realities of the life of workers during the 1930's. Steinbeck concentrates with small numbers of characters George Milton, Lennie Small, Curley, Crooks, Candy, Carlson and Slim. Steinbeck focuses on male characters while there is just one female character Curley's wife.

Indeed, *Of Mice and Men* (1937) did not only deal with people who suffered from the American Depression but also it deals with the union of the male fraternity who wanted to eliminate women and femininity. According to literary critic Nina Bayn, *Of Mice and Men* (1937) depicts the rescue of men from women. In the sense that, women or female characters were regarded as a trouble for those male characters in the novella. Therefore, this idea illustrated the injustice in the American society during the 1930's.

Throughout the novel, Steinbeck shows the gender roles stereotypes. In the sense that, each character has particular feature that identify him or her. According to literary critic Jean Emery who views that George and Lennie who represents the duality of masculinity and femininity. Therefore, their partnership was a kind of marriage. George and Lennie as couple depict the stereotypical attributes of a husband and a wife .

Lennie is a wife of George because he is stereotypically feminine, submissive, and dependent and he used to obey George as a good woman. Lennie says "I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you "(14). This quotation shows how the couple takes care of each other in a strong relationship. George replies that he had had a future together the fact that they will have a little house and a couple of acres "(15)

In addition, the link which was made by the couple was about the dream of a house and a couple of acres where they can live. Therefore, George was described as a masculine character that used to give orders while Lennie was described as a feminine because he has some female features.

As a result, this idea can lead to gender roles of masculinity and femininity in American society during the Roaring Twenties and the Depression. The gender identity of both George and Lennie is socially constructed and this brings the idea of gender performativity (01).

In addition, from the perspective of the American philosopher Judith Butler on the construction of gender through performativity. Lennie was associated with female features. His actions and his words reflected that behavior. Biologically speaking he is a male while socially speaking he is a female.

From the gender studies perspective, George as a male and the patriarch who was the male head over Lennie. He has a masculine domination; George used to decide where they will work and live, dictates the conditions of the relationship George used to regulate when Lennie speak and when he cannot speak.

George says "why he'd do any damn thing I tol' him. If I tol' him to walk over a cliff, over he'd go.....He never got mad about it "(40). Which means that Lennie is very submissive to George.

However, George wants power in the male community without the burden of responsibility" God, you're a lot of trouble "he says more than once to Lennie "I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail" (7). Which means that if George was alone without Lennie, he could have an opportunity without troubles of Lennie.

In fact, the dream of George as a male character was something different to Lennie. "If I was alone I could live so easy. I could get a job an work, an no trouble. No mess at all"(11) this means that the partnership between him and Lennie was not stable and it was in trouble. In other words, life would be better without the complications of a relationship of a dependent the "other"; which is a term used by the French writer Simone De Beauvoir. In other words, the "Other" refers to Lennie a woman who was dominated by the patriarch George and can be described and categorized as "The One".

In addition, relationship between male characters based on the issue of power; who will have and who will have not. George is obsessed with his ability to control the behavior of Lennie just as Curley is driven to regulate his wife.

Therefore, this power towards Lennie frightens George. "Made me seen god damn smart alongside him" George tells Slim "If I tol' him to walk over a cliff, over he'd go"(40). George was so scared because of such a kind of obedience .

According to gender studies in general and to Judith Butler in particular, Lennie's gender identity is not innate and not natural, in the sense that, his female features like obedience, submissiveness and weakness even though he is strong physically, this shows that he has an impression of being a female and his gender is constructed and performed.

According to literary critic Peter Lisca who views that George considers Lennie as a reason for his failure. In other words, his struggle to assure himself of his own masculinity and he used to reject the disturbing influence of such feminine traits as gentleness, compassion, submissiveness and weakness. There is another idea which is the size and the strength of Lennie which represents as threat towards George because of his physical weakness and thus can lose confidence towards his masculinity.

In addition, the idea of masculinity is demonstrated everywhere in the novella. The ranch which was the place where all male workers were living, there was a physical effort, there was no place for women in the ranch. Even the idea of maleness was depicted in the bunkhouse which was not decorated except for "Those Western magazines ranch men love to read and scoff at and secretly believe" (17). This exemplifies the heroic male who struggles to control nature, other men and inevitably women.

According to the American sociologist in gender studies Michael Kimmel, Masculinity refers to social roles, behavior and meaning prescribed for men in any given society. Therefore, Masculinity is produced within the institutions of society and through daily interactions. (Kimmel 2000)

In this respect, the gender identity of both George and Lennie and other characters are socially constructed, gender takes a shape only within specific social and cultural contexts. In addition, there is an idea of female masculinity which is well illustrated in Lennie as a man who has a feminine side. Kimmel argues that the idea of female masculinity was common in American culture during the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression where men lost their jobs and their confidence while women took position at that time. (Kimmel 2000, P 295).

### II.3.Characterization of Male characters:

#### Charecterization of Lennie:

Lennie Smalls is a gentle giant whose mental powers are very minimal. He is a child in a very large man's body. He cannot control his urges, particularly he used to touch and pet soft, pretty things, but he means no harm to anyone. He reverses and used to follow George, and enamored with the dream of one day to have a shelter to live and being able to tend the rabbits.

In fact, the relationship between George and Lennie was regarded as an essential conflict in the story. They wanted their world without any contact with women. Lennie was stereotypically feminine, he used to live in the male sphere .Therefore, he became intolerable with every character in the story. Lennie was described as a feminine figure despite his strength and big size. Lennie obeys George like a good woman. He loves soft, sensual objects like mice, puppies and silky curls.

George disgusts the topic of women. He barely keeps his promises to Aunt Clara to take care for Lennie. In addition to that all male characters attempted to rescue themselves from the grip of women. Men felt anxious from the fear of the existence of women and their female sexuality and this idea can be illustrated trough the assessment of Freud:

*"The man is afraid of being weakened by the woman, infected with her*

*Femininity and of then showing himself incapable". Sigmund Freud(1961)*

Freud promoted the significance of the separation of the boy from his mother in order to achieve his sense of masculinity. Therefore, this can lead to the idea that male characters can keep their own masculinity away from the grip of women in *OF Mice and Men*.

Indeed, The cultural centers of male ritual and values ensure the male solidarity and the segregation of the sexes within the tribal group in the ranch. "You ain't wanted here"(79) this

was told by Candy to Curley's wife when she invades Crook's room. In other words, Curley's wife was not welcomed by men.

### **The characterization of Crooks and Candy:**

Steinbeck presents Crooks and Candy as minor male characters in *Of Mice and Men*. Each one differs from the others; there was a big difference in the norms either throughout their strength or their weakness, in the sense that, those characters were mistreated by society because of their differences in addition to the abuse by other ones in the novella.

Crooks is a black stable hand, exiled to his own room in the barn. Though his back permanently injured, he is very good at playing horseshoes. The game is the only time in which he interacts with the other workers.

Candy is an old swamper, too aged and feeble to do much else. He befriends George and Lennie after hearing of their hopes for little place. He has cash saved to buy into the venture, and fears he will soon be let go, dismissed as easily as his own dog was taken out and shot by Carlson. George and Lennie's dream becomes his as well.

Crooks was disturbed because of his race. He felt that he did not share the norms of the tribal group. The case of Candy was more complicated because he lost his strength. The emotional state of Candy was very soft and sensational. However, it means that Candy was regarded as a less of man. In other words, he failed to have the standards of desired male behavior. Male power demands a code of behavior that asserts control over property and possessions. There is no place for sentiment and attachment for man's feelings.

### **The characterization of George:**

George Milton is small, sharp and shrewd, narrow-waisted and wary, he travels with Lennie and he used to watch him out. George attempts to keep Lennie from trouble, but Lennie can control neither his impulses nor his strength, and so the men flee from most towns

to find labor somewhere else, to work toward a stake and live, as George promises Lennie many times, off the "Fat'a the land".

Literary critic Jean Emery notes that George's killing of Lennie was regarded as a kind of initiation into the male cycle throughout his action, George chooses virility over compassion, masculinity over femininity. He was very calm and emotionless. His behavior was not like Candy who did not dare to kill a dog and he could not perform his manly duty while the job was very easy for Carlson whose was very rational, cold-hearted, and eminently practical. Carlson's actions depict the antithesis of femininity; he takes on the job himself while this manly behavior shows the expulsion of Candy from the male community.

Indeed, George's killing Lennie enhances the idea that he shows his male stature and his capacity to fight and to kill the giant by giving him a shot to the back of the neck. Slim congratulates George and he gives him a proposal for going into town and has a drink and this idea validates George's membership in the clubhouse. "Ya hadda, George. I swear you hadda"(107).

Jean Emery illustrates that George was regarded as a winner because he was wrestling the giant Lennie and he succeeded as if they had no partnership who shared best of their moments all the time. By murdering Lennie, he attempted to travel and take a partnership with other men and therefore his virility is questioned and in trouble in the same time.

In addition, it is said that partnership is based on trust and on mutual caring and respect. However, according to literary critic Louis Owens who views that there was a need for Lennie to make a contact with other men while the male characters deny him and this brings about his own destruction. Thus, George of course is regarded as the instrument for his destruction and loneliness and this show the decline of the male partnership in the ranch.

In this respect, both of George and Lennie are described as different traits; George as a masculine traits and Lennie as a feminine ones. They were described as a husband and a wife. Ironically speaking, while the masculine world despises female dependence and submissiveness. In fact, Membership in the community rejects the possibility of true independence and autonomy.

### **Characterization of Slim and Carlson:**

Slim is the skinner, the unspoken leader of the bunkhouse men. His quiet, faintly menacing, self-assured, and confiding manner-matched with his presence and what is described as his ability to work, and this makes him an important working authority figure.

In addition to Carlson who appears in the novella as a thick man whose brutish and direct manner, in contrast to George who used to calculate things before the action, Carlson is also different from Slim in terms of calm, care and confidence.

Indeed, Steinbeck represents Slim as a wise man, kind, perceptive and compassionate. Slim is described in feminine terms. Even his hands are lean, delicate and as graceful as a temple dancer. "His ear heard more than was said to him and his slow speech had overtones of thought, but of understanding beyond thought"(34). Yet his feminine traits are coupled with images of virility. There is another idea which shows his strength through the following quotation "His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love"(33). Steinbeck added that "He is the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leader "(33). This idea shows that Steinbeck praises Slim for being physically strong, powerful and in control. Slim combines the male and the female traits

According to literary critic Warren French Carlson and Slim illustrate the conflict between domination and compassion. In other words, Carlson has no sentiments in comparison to Slim. He was regarded as a destructive man. Carlson is intensive and brutal while Slim is perceptive and kindly. Curley's wife and Lennie were like Candy's dog; they were considered as useless, intrusive and annoying. Carlson was a man of action because he does not let emotional weakness keep him from doing what a man can do.

#### II.4. Homophobia and Manhood:

When John Steinbeck wrote the discussion between Curley's wife, and other male characters in *Of Mice and Men*. "Funny things" Curley's wife said, also she added " If I catch any one man ,and he's alone, I got alone fine with him, but just let two of the guys get together an 'you won't talk ", and she added again "You're all scared of each other. That's what. Ever'one of you's scared the rest is going to get something on you" (77).

Throughout the quotation above, Steinbeck wanted to depict how a female character can control, give orders and threaten all other male characters. Curley's wife confesses that every one of them is afraid from the other. In other words, there was a fear which was around them. This fear which can destruct their own gender identity and can make their masculinity in trouble.

According to the American sociologist in gender studies Michael Scott Kimmel. Masculinity is constructed through the relationship with the world. He views that Manhood is neither static nor timeless rather it is historical. Manhood is a socially constructed. Manhood is not related to biology but it is created in culture. Therefore, manhood is a sociological phenomenon.

According to the perspective of Michael Scott Kimmel, the condition of the American manhood was in trouble. There was an emergence of homophobia in the American Masculinity at that time. In other words, it was not only about the fear of homosexual impulses but also it was a fear from the other men. It was a fear which pushed men to dominate and control (Kimmel 2004).

In addition, Homophobia keeps men isolated from one another. This can be illustrated throughout the loneliness of all characters in *Of Mice and Men* who suffered from the fear of the other men. They were dominated by one female character who is the wife of Curley who is the son of the boss in the ranch. Their homophobic fears are regarded as a kind of emasculating aspect which are buried in the hearts of men.

Moreover, Kimmel views that Masculinity in the field of gender was visible throughout women's studies. The issue of power and powerlessness of men were taken into a consideration. Therefore, Kimmel argues that women's studies made visible and it was considered as a source of strength.

In addition to that in 1917 New York City writer Floyd Dell wrote an essay entitled "*Feminism for Men*" in which Dell acknowledges gender inequality which improved the life of men. According to him Feminism is going to be the only way to make men visible and free in the future. In addition to the emergence of women studies which give an opportunity for men to be noticed.

### **II.5.The Gender -Role Strain and Psychology of Men:**

Indeed, the new psychology of men views that gender roles not from the biological aspect or even social but rather gender roles is psychologically and socially constructed. Therefore, this perspective acknowledges the biological differences between men and women. However, it is clear that it is not biological differences of sex that make for masculinity and femininity. This idea was well illustrated throughout the American philosopher Judith Butler in her theory of gender performativity.

According to Roland F.Levant the American psychologist of Men and Masculinity. The notions of masculinity and femininity are socially constructed from bits and pieces of biological, psychological and social experience in order to serve particular purpose. In other words, the gender role of male and female is related to social and psychological aspects.

Indeed, the concept of Gender-Role Strain was coined by Joseph pleck in the "*Myth Of Masculinity*" (1981). He is regarded as the leader in the new psychology of men of social constructionism. He is concerned with a modern critical thinking about masculinity.

In addition, there was a purpose to understand the strain, the pressure and the tension of men experience when they are not able to preserve their male role in society. Indeed, this

idea was shown in the literary fiction of Steinbeck *Of Mice and Men*. Steinbeck demonstrated the dominated masculinity during the American Depression in the 1930s. He gave some ideas about the patriarchal society and the stereotypes gender roles at that time. Steinbeck reflected that throughout his male characters George Milton, Curley, Crooks, Candy Carlson and Slim.

Indeed, the violating of gender roles has negative impacts for males rather than females such as male aggression are dysfunctional. While, the appropriate gender roles are determined by stereotypes and norms which are imposing by the environment. Therefore, the notions of masculinity and femininity are socially constructed and can be changed.

## **II.6. The Gender identity of Men in the USA:**

According to Ronald F. Levant, the American psychologist of men and masculinity. The traditional gender role identity assumed that psychology plays an important role to shape the gender identity of men. In other words, each male character has a psychological need to be masculine. This idea was reflected throughout discourse and performance of each character. George Milton who used to keep Lennie from trouble. He used to control his impulses and his strength and he used to give orders. All these masculine traits have failed because of the historical conditions and the economic crises of the United States. All male characters; Curley's wife, Crooks, Candy, Carlson and Slim have suffered from loneliness and other forces such as unemployment.

Therefore, from such a perspective, the gender role identity of the male characters is regarded as a failure. In the sense that, there was no real meaning of friendship which was illustrated through the end of partnership between George and Lennie. There was no trust which was illustrated through the death of Lennie who was murdered by his friend as if to say. Therefore, this failure was a result of many reasons; there was an idea of homosexuality in the ranch. Male characters were homosexual in addition to their negative attitudes towards women, and this idea was clearly illustrated throughout the misogynistic discourse and bad prejudices of George towards Curley's wife who used to despise her in *Of Mice and Men*.

Moreover, the hyper masculinity was regarded as an idea which led to the failure of their masculine identity. This was reflected throughout the male character Carlson who was so brute and confident. His action of killing the dog showed him as a strong man; he took the dog of Candy out of the yard and shot it. This shows a kind of manhood.

According to Ronald F. Levant, there is no standard of masculinity ideology. Indeed, Masculinity is a social construct. In the sense that, ideals of manhood may differ from men to another through different social classes, races, ethnics, groups, sexual orientations, lifestyles and historical periods.

As a result, despite the diversity of masculinity in the United States, it was very common to refer to traditional masculinity ideology because it was the dominant view before the deconstruction of gender that took place in the beginning of the 1970s.

### **II.7. Traditional Masculinity Ideology:**

According to Brannon (1976), he identified many elements of traditional masculinity ideology in the United States. First, men should not be feminine and have no "sissy stuff", and this idea was reflected to the men in the ranch in *Of Mice and Men*. There was a void of decoration except for man magazine in the bunk house.

Steinbeck describes the bunk house "And these shelves were loaded with little articles, soap and talcum powder, razors and those Western magazines ranch men love to read and scoff at and secretly believe"(17). This means that there is nothing related to women in the bunk house.

While Lennie was immature; he was acting like a child. He used to like soft things, this idea shows the struggle of the masculine identity.

In addition, men should strive to be respected for a successful achievement. In other words, male should seek adventure and risk, they should never show weakness. According to Brannon (1976) these norms which identified the traditional ideology of masculinity.

From the perspective of Brannon, there are some elements which illustrate the traditional norms of masculinity in the literary fiction of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937). For instance the idea is well represented throughout the male characters who wanted to avoid all feminine things in the case of Lennie 's attitudes and behavior which is always rejected by the norms of masculine aspects.

There is another idea which shows the toughness and aggression of the male characters in the story. The case of Candy as old swamper, too old and feeble to do many jobs. Candy was not strong to kill his dog and to make a venture. He suffered from his fears and he dismissed his dog easily. However, Carlson was so tough and aggressive to kill the dog. Carlson said "if u wants me to, i'll put the old devil out of misery right now, and get it over with. Ain't nothing left for him" (47) and Candy replied hopefully "you ain't got no gun" (47). In other words, Carlson seems to be very strong to take the action of killing the dog while Candy felt sorry and weak about killing the dog, he was hesitated to take the decision. Candy said "maybe tomorra , le's wait till tomorra " (47).

"He has a brutish and direct manner which contrast with George and Slim's care and confidence. Candy was regarded as a sel-reliant character and this idea is one of the criteria of the traditional norms of masculinity in American society.

In addition, there is another idea which shows the dimension of traditional ideology of masculinity in the fiction of Steinbeck *Of Mice and Men*. All male characters suffered from the fear and anxiety from the homosexuality. There was a hatred attitudes towards women and this case was clear through the hatred feeling towards Curley's wife. All male characters were objectifying attitudes toward sexuality because they were afraid to lose their manhood.

Indeed, there was the idea of Eugenics which was a doctrine that presumed certain people who were unfit and those who are fit in society. Eugene tics believe that qualities such as intelligence and morality were inherited. Therefore, Society needs to take steps to produce an acceptable offspring. Moreover, it was originated by Frances Galton in 1865 in Britain

published his own theory which dealt about the ability and intelligence of each individual is related to inherited ability.

During the beginning of the Twentieth century, the idea of Eugenics became a common issue in American society. There was a popular belief which reached its climax in the emergence of the American Eugenics society during the 1920s.

In addition, The Great Depression witnessed a great Eugenics movement in the history of America; it was also a time of that American masculinity was most in crisis. In other words, Men were losing work and they were losing their status as a bread winner.

Moreover, there was a crisis of over the traditional notion of masculinity in America. During the First World War and the economic upheaval of 1929, men suffered because they could not prove their manhood during the 1930s.

As a result, there were thousands of men who were regarded as unfit because of poverty as well as unemployment. In other words, there was a big question about the assumption of masculinity in general.

### **II.8.The Decline of Masculinity and Eugenics:**

Throughout the fiction of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937). The idea of the decline of masculinity is so common. Let's take the example of Lennie Small, Lennie who is a gentle giant whose mental powers are limited; he used to act like a child. George says "Blubebering like a baby "(9) and he added "a big guy like you", which means that the attitudes of Lennie was abnormal; he was behaving like a child not like a real man.

There is another idea when Slim said "Jesus ", he added "He's jes' like 'a kid", ain't he "and he added again"sure he's jes'like a kid"(43). Throughout the quotation, Steinbeck shows the idea of mental problem through Lennie. Despite his big size and strength, he is mentally sick.

According to the social norms of eugenics, Lennie was regarded as a feeble minded man who does not fit society's definition of manliness. Goerge says "he's my cousin. I told his old lady i'd take care of him. He got kicked in the head by a horse when he was a kid" (22).

Indeed, Steinbeck used to write about people who used to suffer from mental problems, he used to write about people who suffered from poverty during the Great Depression.

Therefore, Lennie as a big guy with a childish mind does not fit with the social norms of masculinity. Steinbeck related his partnership with George; both of them are totally different. George as a strong man and intelligent who does fit the society. In other words, George felt more mainly because he is a friend of Lennie who is a weak person.

In addition, there is an idea which shows that George felt strong and mainly. When George admits to Slim when he was talking about a travel with Lennie .He says" I had fun. Made me seen god damnd smart alongside of him "(40). Which means that George looks like an intelligent and manly in comparison to Lennie .

In the end of the story, George is the one who kills Lennie because Lennie was regarded as the reason for the death of Curley's wife, the killing of Lennie serves as a symbolic gesture about the power of traditional masculinity. George seems to be very proud of doing that as well as Slim who supported the idea. Slim as a male character who used to emphasize the traditional quality of men, such as physical strength and avoid emotions.

Slim tells George it was okay to kill Lennie because strong men have to take control. Slim came directly to George and says:

*"Never you mind " , "Aguy got to sometimes " (107).and he added again*

*"You hadda , George ,I swear you hadda .Come on with me " (107).*

And he added again *"Come on , George , me an'you'll go in an 'get a drink "(107).*

In addition, Steinbeck chooses to stabilize classic masculinity by differentiating it from the unfit masculinity that was misrepresented the reputation of men during the 1930's.

According to Michael S. Kimmel, Steinbeck uses Lennie as a kind of depiction of men in American culture who attempted to let George feel more manly. In other words, George represents strength and manhood in comparison to Lennie who represents weakness.

### **II.9. Communities of Men during the 1930s:**

During the 1930s, there was a powerful ideological effect of the Great Depression; the result was about the gendered economic roles in American communities. When manufacturing industries release workers during the 1930s, the white male working class lost much of the ground that it had gained during the prosperity of the 1920s. Therefore, men were affected by the depression and they lost their job while women held jobs in domestic and service sectors, even though they were paid a little.

In addition, there was a racial discrimination and a low farm prices of the 1920s which meant that most minorities and agricultural workers experienced the reduced living standard. The result was that many workers suffered from poverty and from the injustice of the economic system. Therefore, the responsibility of the breadwinner shifted from the male wage earner to the female ones during the Great Depression.

In other words, it is clear that many male workers experienced a decline of self-reliance which threatened their manhood and their gender identity. In this context, Steinbeck depicts the unemployment of the late 1930s. He shows the national culture of the American society and he illustrates the stereotype of the lonely men who support one another in an aggressive, uncomfortable social world. Historically speaking, it was evident in Roosevelt's famous speech "*Forgotten Men*". This idea shows that poor workers had terrible and shameful situation during the 1930s.

Furthermore, Steinbeck illustrates through *Of Mice and Men* the working and the living conditions as well as the social alienation of the farm workers in California during the

Depression, Steinbeck wanted to show the unhappy fraternity. According to literary critics Charlotte Hadella, the unhappy fraternity describes the brotherhood of George, Lennie and Candy as they plan to escape from the ranch to the dream of the farm. Therefore, as a result of the Great Depression Steinbeck wanted to show the powerlessness and social marginality throughout the characters of the novel.

Thus, Steinbeck demonstrates the anxiety of the male world who were facing the harshness and the aggressiveness of the economic system. *Of Mice and Men* clearly shows the repressive ideology of gender; Steinbeck showed two worlds; the Curley's wife's world and the male world. Furthermore, he limited the roles of female character in the novel in the sense that, he sympathizes with men's world while he marginalizes women's one.

Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* depicts the ideology of gender, it is clearly illustrated the world in which women are dangerous. In the sense that, women like in the case of Curley's wife endanger social relation, because they force men into competitive desire

Steinbeck demonstrates the relationship between men, as an ideal one –though this relationship is regarded as strained, conflicted and represses one. Therefore, this idea represents the political and economical change which gave impact on American Masculinity during the 1930's.

The focus of attention in the novella *of Mice and Men*, centers the relationship between the male couple. George with his physically small but caring, and intelligent companion. Lennie a physically large and mentally small innocent, from this description Steinbeck reinforces the idea interdependence of these two different characters, their relationship which was based on emotional and psychological aspects as well as solidarity create a kind of trouble for another guy.

**II.11. Conclusion:**

To sum up, one can interpret that the fiction of Steinbeck was centered on male characters and identities the work deals with the vision of masculinity from the perspective of gender studies. Steinbeck created different personalities in *Of Mice and Men* (1937) in order to show how male power and privilege over women were expressed in American culture during the depression.

Throughout the analysis of sociologist in gender studies, Steinbeck depicted the trouble of men who had faced struggles and anxieties. His male characters suffered from the battle of masculine behavior. Therefore, the historical and the social context attempted to change the gender construction in America during The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression.

On the whole, Steinbeck treated gender relations throughout his work; there was an idea of the social construction of masculinities which was a significant explanation of Steinbeck's marginalization of women.

**III.1. Introduction:**

This chapter examines the female representation in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937). Curley's wife was a representation of the American women during The Depression. Indeed, the aftermath of the WWI undertakes many changes; women took their controversial independence because of the rise of the first wave feminism. Therefore, this chapter is going to highlight the place of women in American society during the post-war era throughout the fiction of Steinbeck in addition to the idea of misogyny as well as the question of women which was discussed by feminist perspective towards the literary work of Steinbeck.

**III.2. The Gendered Other and a Female Representation:**

Indeed, Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937) portrays the conditions of people who were suffering from the desperation and despair during the Depression Steinbeck presents people of different ages, races, abilities and classes. All of them suffer from isolation. The story focuses on small number of male characters George Milton, Lennie Small, Curley, Crooks and others but there is only one female character who is the wife of Curley.

Curley's wife is described variously as a siren, a tramp, "jail bait", and worse. Her physical presence is cultivated and titillating, and she enjoys visiting the bunkhouse and talking to the men when her husband is not around. In early every description of her, something is mentioned to be red.

Although loneliness is inevitable in Soledad, as the name of the town suggests, Curley's wife especially suffers from alienation because she was regarded as the only woman in the ranch where women are treated as nothing more than sexual objects. Therefore, she develops tactics for surviving loneliness that are markedly different from those used by the men who surround her or other male characters.

From the beginning of the novel, women are categorized as loosely as either nurturing or troubles. Lennie, a mentally retarded individual who has a lot of memories about his Aunt Clara, who used to take care of him and entrusted his welfare to George before her death.

Indeed, Aunt Clara is the only maternal representation of women. Women are regarded as the only reason to misfortune for men.

George and Lennie have been forced to find a job in Soledad because there was a big issue about Lennie who was accused for a rape one of the woman at their former work. In other words, Steinbeck wanted to depict that women were considered as objects of entertainment and forces of destruction, women were portrayed as prostitutes, and distract men from their goals.

Curley's wife is regarded as the only character that remains nameless. All the male characters did not acknowledge about her existence, they used to ignore her all the time. She is married to the son of the boss; she used to ask the male characters about her husband Curley and she always attempt to use her sexuality to get attention.

*"She had full ,rouged lips and wide-spaced eyes ,heavily made up .....her her hung up in littel rolled clusters ,like sausages .....She put her hands behind her back and leaned against the door frame so that her body was thrown forward "(31).*

Throughout the quotation above, Steinbeck wanted to depict the sexual appeal that Curley's wife used to do with her body in order to get attention among the ranch male since she has no friends and no occupation, while her husband used to ignore her.

Steinbeck's depicts Curley's wife as the evil disloyal seductress, she was described as the fallen woman. She flaunts her sexuality which is the only effective weapon in the ranch. Steinbeck describes the way she dresses like the whore; she had a heavy make-up, painter finger nails, and red ostrich feathers on her slippers.

In addition, George considered Curley's wife as a "trouble". He used to warn Lennie that "They's goona be a bad mess about her. She's a jail bait all set on the trigger "(51). In the sense, both male characters try to avoid her otherwise they will lose their job in the ranch.

Curley's wife is sensitive to this kind of rejection when the black ranch handymen, Crooks and his white counterpart Candy gather with Lennie in the barn; she wants their company and tries to flirt with them. The men asked her to leave therefore; she attacks each one of them and threatens Crooks in particular. "I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even fuuny "(81). She starts to invoke her husband's power when she can't seduce them by her charm.

Moreover, all the male characters were suffering from loneliness. Curley's wife also suffered from alienation because she lost her dreams too she wanted to be a Hollywood movie star. While seducing Lennie she confesses about the man who wanted to realize her dream "Says I was natural. Soon's he got back to Hollywood he was gonna write to me about it "(88). As a result, when the man did not fulfill his promise, she married Curley. Ironically speaking, her sexuality was regarded as the reason for her tragic death under the hands of the giant Lennie.

Throughout the analysis above, we can say that Steinbeck reinforces the idea that Curley's wife represents the women who have no access of power; they used to use their sexuality in order to satisfy their desire and needs from men. Curley's wife was like a prostitute who leads men away from their own right path.

### **III.2.1. Women in the Patriarchal Society:**

According to literary critic Jean Emery, the description of woman throughout the fiction of Steinbeck shows that women in general and correspondingly feminine traits are regarded as intruders and as a source of threat. In other words, women are not welcomed in the male's world. They were considered as intruders.

According to another literary critic Nina Baym, women were "entrappers" and "domesticators" .In the sense that, women are temptress who uses their sexuality to attract men in his journey. Curley's wife who is the central female figure represents the whores who use their sexual powers to seduce men. Those women attempt to rob all money's men which were saving during the work in the ranch. Despite of the economic crisis of the men who suffered from financial problems.

In this respect, Steinbeck describes women as a poison; George tells "jailbait on a trigger"(51) that means that she is sexually attractive. However, she was a reason for the failure of both George and Lennie's dream. She was the reason for their destruction and trouble. George asks all the time " been any trouble since she got here ?"( 51). and he added "she got the eye goin'all the time on everybody" .In other words, Curley is a source for trouble .All male characters refuse to talk her in order to avoid problems.

Steinbeck clearly shows Curley's wife as the only woman who appears in the story aside from Aunt Clara. Indeed, she is so antagonistic to the environment. This is why she was so hatred by men and she remained nameless. Steinbeck gave names which are not significant for a woman throughout Curley's wife; she was called "tease", "tramp", "tart", "rat-trap", "bitch", and above all Curley's wife

In addition, George does not trust or even like women," I seen 'em poison before, but I never seen no piece of jail bait worse than her "(32). According to George women are considered as liars and manipulators like the girl in Weed who cries and accuses Lennie for a rape. Therefore, George has a bad prejudice towards women. Curley's wife repeated the same action like the girl in Weed. In other words, she threatens Crooks and Candy when they tried to throw her out of the room of Crooks.

### III.3. Feminist Perspective:

According to Elaine Showalter an American literary critic and feminist who note that feminist criticism focused on showing the misogyny of literary practice. This idea leads to know that how feminist critics began to question the ways in which society and literary works construct gender roles.

Indeed, the fiction of Steinbeck's *Of Mice And Men* (1937) was based on male relationship like George Milton and Lennie Small. Steinbeck wanted to understand men who were his objective throughout his long career. While the role of feminine sensibility is far away from his fiction. Therefore, his consideration of gender was taken into consideration by feminist literary criticism.

In addition, Gender is regarded as an important area of study which adds to the study of literature. A focus on gender may lead to examine the relationship between fiction and life. Therefore there were many literary works especially which are written by men. Those works were evaluated by the feminist literary criticism.

Feminist literary critics have been among the main opponents of the traditional male-dominated or the patriarchal. Historically speaking, women were treated as minority. Therefore, there was an urgent need to call for the dramatic changes under the men's domination.

#### III.3.1. Feminism and Women Studies:

Indeed, Feminist thought had developed since the dramatic changes of the Suffrage Era. They were calling for women's right, the right to vote "Votes For Women" which was a common phrase at that time. The Suffragist is often referred to The First Wave of modern Feminism. The second Wave of Feminism was generally begun in the late of 1960's, when there was a political upheaval in England, Europe and United States. There was a focus on Women's right.

In addition, there was the emergence of the modern movement for "Women's Liberation" which brought many different school of feminism. Indeed, Feminism has always concerned for improving the situation of women's lives.

In the field of literature, Feminist thought was very influential. It has helped to reform the gendering of social life. These issues were concerned in both of Women Studies and Gender Studies. In the sense that, there was a focus in the representation of women and men especially in literary works.

Feminist literary criticism shed the light on women characters .It also give importance of how masculinity are portrayed in literary work. Feminism criticism is originated from Feminism as a social movement. Indeed, feminist critics concerned with images of oppression of female connecting the gender bias to other form of domination.

According to the American literary critic and feminist Elaine Showalter views that Steinbeck as a male writer who illustrated the absence of meaningful discourse about women in his literary work. In the sense that, Steinbeck denounced his female characters. He showed a kind of a misrepresentation of femininity as an abnormal description especially in *Of Mice and Men* (1937).

According to Showalter, Steinbeck gave less sympathy for the female character Curley's wife. The fact she was given no name; this shows that she is not a real character. Besides, her death at Lennie's hand is regarded as a tragic death too.

Curley's wife becomes a representation for all women because she has no name to distinguish her from other women and wives. Therefore, Steinbeck's presentation of Curley's wife can be considered as negativity toward women in general.

In addition, there was no significant physical description of Curley's wife which shows the negative image for women. In general, she was considered as a tart with an evil eye, she

used to wear red clothes. The color is associated with violence passion and disorder. This reinforces the idea that Curley's wife was regarded as the threat to the society of the ranch.

Furthermore, Curley's wife was illustrated as a corrupting force in the novel, she was always searching for her husband in the male territories of the ranch, and her presence was regarded as the threat and danger for all other male characters.

Steinbeck has created the male world and the women who enters this world are not welcomed and they are regarded as intruders . In addition ,T here is an idea that Curley's wife accuses all male characters of ignoring her .There was kind of isolation and loneliness in the ranch this is why Curley's wife need to have a talk with other guys.

In this respect, according to feminist critic Elaine Showaler there will be a focus concerning the way female characters are portrayed by male writers. Those female characters were regarded as a source of fear and anxieties of the male characters. In the case of Curley's wife who was ablie to confess the fear that was threatening other men. " you're all scared of each other, that's what .Ever 'one of you ' scared the rest is goin' to get something on you " (75). This quotation reflects the fear of other guys and the idea is that if the men confess their fear, it will be a kind of violating the norms of the traditional masculinity in American society.

Steinbeck did not feel sympathy even after the tragic death of Curley's wife. "Her facial expression loses its discontent " and he added "ache for attention". This quotation means that Steinbeck contributes to the prejudice against women. In other words, he considered women as "OTHER".

In fact, the reactions of male characters, was very simple towards the death of Curley's wife, she was described like an object. In other words, the sorrow of George was not for the loss of her life but he felt painful because of Lennie's death. In addition to Candy who blames her for messing up the dream of both George and Lennie.

Candy looked helplessly to her death and he felt sorry and in the same time he felt angry about her " You god damn tramp ", he said " you done ot, di'n't you ? I s'pose you're glad. Every 'body know you 'd mess things up .You wasn't no good .You ain't no good now .you lousy tart " (95". Here even in her death, Candy felt disgusting about her as if he is not human, he did not feel sorry about her (Shillinglaw, Hearle 2002 P6).

Moreover, there is another idea where Curley who is regarded as her husband, he reacts as if he is angry for losing a piece of property rather than for losing a wife. Therefore, all the characters did not care about the loss of a human being. However, they considered her death as a nightmare to their dreams and happiness.

### **III.3.2.Steinbeck and the question of women:**

Indeed, many literary critics note that Steinbeck's depiction of women in his fiction remained a big issue. According to Edmonde Magny who notes that male couples or male characters played such a predominant role in the fiction of Steinbeck. This means that there is an exclusion of women from the human community.

According to the author of John Steinbeck Peter Lisca, the representation of women in the fiction of Steinbeck is so limited; in other words they are described as housewives or as a kind of prostitute.

Other literary critic like Benson who provided information that Steinbeck had women in his private life. Benson moved to question the strange disconnect between his private life and fiction. Indeed, Steinbeck and the women issue was discussed and debatable in order to find possible reasons for the inexplicable difference between many women who played key roles in his private life and between limited roles of women in his fiction.

In addition, Steinbeck is considered by many literary critics as a kind of misogynistic writer who dismiss the value characterization of the female character and this idea was clearly illustrated throughout Curley's wife in *Of Mice and Men* (1937). Steinbeck used to depict these sexist and misogynistic attitudes toward female characters.

In the sense that, Curley's wife as the only woman in the ranch, she suffered from the gender discrimination among the male characters, she was depicted as an ambiguous character, her behavior and sexist attitudes were related to the American culture during the 1930's. Therefore, this idea means how Steinbeck portrayed the gendered role of women as the "OTHER" at that time (Don Noble 2011).

Steinbeck seems to give Curley's wife an unsympathetic stereotype and this can be interpreted as a kind of misogynistic hostility toward women. All male characters of the ranch were suspicious of her.

#### **III.4. Steinbeck and Misogyny:**

Indeed, the idea of Misogyny refers to the unreasonable fear or hatred of women that takes a great issue in society. It is the anti female behavior and belief among private citizens. It is a kind of disgust toward women as an undifferentiated social category. Men had some prejudices; misogyny is shared among men in general. Therefore, the idea of Misogyny is a constituent aspect of male psychology and its subsequent cultural representations.

In addition, there is a reason which makes Misogyny. Theories show that men are deeply disturbed by their own feminine side and therefore they must ignore women because of their inner struggle (Kimmel, Aronson 2004 p 551).

According to literary critic Mimi Gladstein, Curley's wife as an unnamed character in *Of Mice and Men* (1937). She illustrates a big discussion of gender issues among the feminist critique. She notes that there is a school of Steinbeck critic who attempts to answer the reason of Steinbeck's limited portrayals of women by explaining that the purpose of Steinbeck in doing so is to critique women less (Don Noble 2011, p 242).

**III.5. Conclusion:**

On the whole, throughout the fiction of Steinbeck *Of Mice and Men* (1937); the portrayal of Curley's wife brings a negative image for women. Therefore, women are associated as the "OTHER". They are linked to many issues like threat, danger and prostitution in the American society. Steinbeck showed the destabilization of gender identity and he represents the transformation of gender classification during the Great Depression.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

The research has allowed to discover that the idea of the representation of the gender roles in Steinbeck's *Of Mice And Men* (1937) was related to the life and times of the post-war era of America. Therefore, this dissertation leads to the following conclusions; gender identity of both males and female characters of Steinbeck's novella are socially constructed. Throughout the research, many literary critics in gender studies and in literature view that gender roles change over time and are not fixed. The American sociologist in Gender Studies Michael Scott Kimmel views that masculinity refers to the social role behavior, in any time and in any given society. Kimmel emphasizes on the crisis of masculinity and the trouble of manhood during the Great Depression.

The condition of the American manhood was not fixed and stable but it was in trouble. There was a fear from a homosexual impulses in addition to the homophobia which kept men isolated. Therefore, their fears are considered as a kind of emasculation aspects. Kimmel found that manhood is not fixed but historical, it is socially constructed and therefore manhood does not born to the male consciousness from the biological aspect but is created in society. Manhood is socially constructed and historically shifting. Masculinity has shifted in response to changes in levels of industrialization, urbanization and economic context. What is meant to be a man in colonial America is quite different from what is meant in 1930's.

There is another conclusion, The American psychologist of men Ronald .F Levant who views that the notions of masculinity and femininity are socially constructed. The result was that the masculinity ideology in the United States refers to traditional masculinity before the deconstruction of gender during the 1970's. The research found that Psychology plays an important role to shape the gender role identity. In the sense that, because of the Great Depression, economic crisis and unemployment have effected men internally and psychologically. Therefore, the gender roles of those male characters which was reflected in *Of Mice and Men*; George, Lennie, Candy, Carlson and Crooks was regarded as a failure.

The analysis concentrated on the American crisis and the idea of Eugenics; there was crisis over traditional notion of masculinity which was shaken during The Depression; Men had no means to prove their manhood. The result was about the issue of Eugenics which complicated matters because there were thousands of men

who appeared" unfit "because of the unemployment. Another conclusion of this dissertation is that the only female character was misrepresented by Steinbeck; she was regarded as the gendered "Other" while the whole fiction was based on the male relationship. Therefore, there was a response from the feminist literary critic Elaine Showalter who found that Curley's wife as the unique female character shows the oppression of women in American culture during the Depression and the misogyny of literary practice of John Steinbeck.

## WORKS CITED PAGE

- Bailey, Alison and Cuomo Chris. *The Feminist Philosophy Reader*. NY, Mc Graw-hill, 2008. Print
- Bloom, Harold. *John Steinbeck's Of Mice And Men*. US, Chelsea, 2006, Print
- Burkhead, Cynthia. *Student Companion to John Steinbeck*. West port, Green press, 2002. Print
- Butler, Judith. "*Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion Of Identity*". London, Routleg, 1990, Print
- Fisher, Jerilyne and Silber, Ellen. S. "*Women in Literature: Reading through The Lens of Gender*". London, Greenwood Press, 2003. Print
- George, Stephen K. *The Moral Philosophy of John Steinbeck*. USA, Scarecrow Press, 2005. Ebook. March, 2017
- Hewitt, Nancy, O'Barr Jean and Rose Baugh Nancy, *Talking Gender*, UP, USA 1996, Googelbook. Web, p 200, April 4th, 2017
- Kimmel, Michael S, Aronson Amy. *Men and Masculinities*. USA, ABC CLIO, 2004, Print
- Meyer, Michael J Railsback Brian. *A John Steinbeck Encyclopedia*. Greenwood Press, London, (2006) Print
- Noble, Don. *Critical Insights John Steinbeck*. Salem Press, NY, 2011 Print
- Piltcher Jane and Whelehan Imelda. *Fifty Key Concepts in Gender Studies*. Sage Publications, London, (2004) Print
- Shillinglaw and Hearl Kevin. "*Beyond Boundries: Rereading John Steinbeck*". UP, 2002, Ebook March 2017
- Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*, NY, Penguin Classics, 1937, Print