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**A Counter-discourse against the Failure of Strikes in
Strike Novels**

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Declaration

I, Ms. Farida BOUADDA, declare that the substance of this thesis is entirely the result of my investigation and the extent to which I am indebted to other sources is indicated as in the text and the bibliography.

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of workers' exploitation and the possibility of the effectiveness of strikes to reduce labor exploitation. The work stoppage in Peter Abrahams' *Mine Boy* (1946) is used as a counter-discourse against the failure and ineffectiveness of strikes in Emile Zola's *Germinal* (1885) and John Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle* (1936). My aim is to use *Mine Boy* to scrutinize the way labor strikes can lower the exploitation of labor unlike what Zola and Steinbeck promote in their novels. Zola points out the shortcomings of the Marxists and anarchists and condemns labor strikes arguing that this social movement would spiral out of control. Instead, he calls for the role of the republican government to go for reform to preserve the rights of the workers. Steinbeck, as well, highly criticizes the communists. He argues against the strike that they instigate by emphasizing that it is a specter that must be crushed. He calls the liberal government to interfere to preserve the reputation of the US as a nation of justice. Both writers portray the radicals as hypocrites who care for their personal interests, and the strikers as an uncontrollable force that cannot be guided. For both novelists, reform within the capitalist system is the only right solution as the strike is a destructive and fearful social movement that leads to plight and affliction. Against this judgment, Abrahams exposes the way the South African government, which has a capitalist leaning, uses the system of segregation in order to take the non-whites and the poor whites as a cheap labor-force. In *Mine Boy*, he exposes the hypocrisy of the liberals and questions the legitimacy of the idea of the superiority of the white race arguing that it is fabricated in order to control the labor-power. Unlike Zola and Steinbeck who use their literature to solidify the capitalist narratives that help to exploit the labor-force, Abrahams bring them to light in order to dismantle them. Instead of relying on the role of the liberals, he shows the way labor strikes are the only method to fight against labor exploitation and work for equality. In order for this thesis to have a methodological base, the following theories are to be used: the Marxism of

Georg Lukács and Antonio Gramsci, Emile Zola's theory of naturalism, John Steinbeck's argument of phalanx, and Noam Chomsky's concept of Anarchism. These theories are relevant for this thesis because they all study the struggle between labor and capital and they all hold the context of the crowd and the rise of the mob against labor exploitation, the focal points that the three novelists build their novels upon.

Key Words: Labor strikes, The capitalist system, Labor-power, Marxism, Capitalist narratives, Anarchism, Naturalism, Argument of Phalanx.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my precious **Parents** without whom none of my success would be possible. I am grateful to my parents and siblings, Djamila, Mohammed, and Samir who supported me and never doubted in my ability. I also thank my friends, Imen Djedai, Khadidja Mesrati, and Kelthoum Bendjabellah, for their constant support.

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Introduction

The focal point of this thesis is the effectiveness of labor strikes as a movement for social change and as a path to reduce labor exploitation in Peter Abrahams' *Mine Boy* in relation to the destructive image of strikes in Emile Zola's *Germinal* and John Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle*. The strike in *Mine Boy* is taken as a counter-discourse against the failure of the strike in *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle*. This thesis deals also with the way commodity production and the capitalist narratives secure the consent of the working class and prevent them from reaching a true revolutionary class consciousness. Indeed, the three novelists wrote their novels during critical periods known by economic, social, and political turmoil that presaged chains of labor strikes. Zola belongs to the literary movement of naturalism and Steinbeck and Abrahams are modernist writers. Even though Steinbeck and Abrahams belong to a literary movement that differs from that of Zola, they all sought ways of writing to give the reader a work of art that projects the turbulence of their era.

With the industrial revolution and the dominance of the capital, there arose the revolutionary theory of Marxism that views the world as "a history of class struggles." (Marx and Engels 14) This theory, along with others like anarchism, sought to instigate the working class to revolt against their status quo. With these theories that see the unification of the workers as a positive phenomenon, there lies a counterclaim; it is the theories of the crowd which view the group as a threat to stability. Comparing the strikes in the three studied novels, one can notice that unlike Abrahams who considers the unification of workers and labor unions as a movement to be hailed, Zola and Steinbeck take it as a destructive social force.

Zola is highly influenced by the theories of the crowd. In the 19th century, the crowd started to be engaged in class war through strikes and protests. It showed itself as a remarkable power capable of altering the course of history. This pushed the authorities and

theorists to deal with this rising force. Gustave Le Bon noted that the crowd, which started to be articulated with the French Revolution (1789-99), played a preponderant political role. After Le Bon's theory of the crowd, crowd psychology became a popular subject of study in the 1890s, and it was widely articulated in the French context. Just like Le Bon, other intellectuals of the 19th century, like Hippolyte Taine, saw the crowd as a violent and barbaric force. (Borch 24-28) In his novel, Zola seems to share this view. In *Germinal*, he uses his theory of naturalism to scientifically study the phenomenon of group behavior. The strike that he presents is a documentation of the way the crowd constituted terror for monarchs, governments, and bourgeois capitalists. When it comes to Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle*, it also deals with the issue of group behavior. Even though he belongs to a literary movement that differs from that of Zola, still he shares the same opinion in regard to mob behavior. Steinbeck's argument of phalanx (1936) is a theory where he studies the behavior of men in a group. During the thirties in the US, the issue of the rise of the mob became a prominent subject. With the depression of the 1930s in the US, Steinbeck and other American novelists like William Faulkner shifted their attention to deal with the oppressed group. In his book, *Crowd Violence in American Modernist Fiction: Lynchings, Riots and the Individual under Assault*, De Benjamin S. West argues: "Steinbeck's fiction implies that mobs can be used for positive social change, but Steinbeck also argues that any mob, even a mob being used to create positive social change, is capable of losing control and committing senseless acts of violence." (130) Ergo, with the chains of strikes that took place in the time Zola and Steinbeck wrote their novels, the crowd or the mob constituted a threat. This threat is related to Marxism and anarchism. As Zola and Steinbeck address the problems related to the struggle between capital and labor, several reviewers relate their works to proletarian literature that is influenced by Karl Marx. However, Marxism is a theory that opposes the idea of the crowd as a destructive force. For the Marxists, the group is a positive force capable of

sweeping away injustice and exploitation. In *Mine Boy*, Abrahams embraces this view. *Mine Boy* is set during the era of racial segregation in South Africa. It sheds light upon the laws and rules set by the capitalist government in order to tame the non-whites from rising to demand equality. In this thesis, I relate the racial segregation in South Africa to capitalism. With the coming of the whites in South Africa, they used the non-whites as a cheap labor-force in order to double their wealth. To accomplish this, they used race as a pretext. *Mine Boy* shows that even the white workers are exploited in the mines next to the non-whites. They have privileges over the non-white; but still, they are exploited in hard labor and in a dangerous place to benefit the capitalists. My aim in this thesis is to use *Mine Boy* to scrutinize the way labor strikes can lead to equality and reduce exploitation unlike what Zola and Steinbeck promote in *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle*. In order to accomplish this research, the following questions are to be answered.

Where does the success of the strike in *Mine Boy* reside?

What are the reasons that lead Zola and Steinbeck to portray labor strikes as an ineffective social movement for social change?

What are the factors that tame the revolutionary class consciousness and what can awake it in *Germinal*, *In Dubious Battle*, and *Mine Boy*?

In my thesis, I provide the following hypotheses. In *Germinal*, the middle class uses heredity as a pretext to justify the miserable situation of the miners and so does Zola. At the same time, Zola is critical of the greedy capitalists who exploit the workers. For him, this will give the opportunity to the Marxists and anarchists to use the workers to spread labor strikes in France. Zola, like his contemporaries, believes that workers in a strike will lose their rationality and engage in violence. The strike organizers will not be able to control them. Steinbeck shares this view as well. Both novelists promote the role of the government to go for a reform. In *In Dubious Battle*, Steinbeck argues that the fascists in California, meaning

the extreme version of the capitalists, exploit the migrant workers in the fields. These farmers are unable to find jobs other than their work in corporate farming. The depression and the Dust Bowl that hit the US in the 1930s obliged the farmers to leave their communities and migrate to California where an exploitative work was waiting for them. In that period, there took place chains of labor strikes, instigated by the communists, in the agricultural fields. Steinbeck was diametrically against any social uprising. For him, strikes are a threat to stability which is why he promotes the role of the government. He also promotes individual hard work to ameliorate one's situation instead of strikes. Abrahams; however, takes the opposite vision. For him, the government will not listen unless the workers give their outcry. In *Mine Boy*, Abrahams achieves his apotheosis when he uses a strike to indicate signs of the abolishment of the ugliest systems of exploitation in the history of humanity, apartheid. Through portraying blacks and colored men joining the strike alongside a white man following a mine accident that takes the life of a white and a black worker, Abrahams anticipates the method that leads to the reducing of exploitation in South Africa. Strikes are taken as a symbol for the militancy of workers. It is a struggle that leads to democracy, and social and political equality. Abrahams shows that unlike what Zola and Steinbeck promote, strikes can lead to social change and the workers during the strike will not lose their rationality and engage in violence. In fact, it is during the strike that they realize that they are brainwashed by the pretext of skin color which is used to generate more wealth for the capitalists. This way, Abrahams, instead of following the spontaneous path of history, embraces the Marxist doctrine of social struggle and chooses the strike as a solution to achieve social change and equality. In fact, as my main subject is the effectiveness of labor strikes, this thesis will discuss the reasons that lead Zola and Steinbeck to portray a failed strike and the strikers as beasts. David Baguley mentions how the strike in Anzin, the one which Zola is said to model his strike upon, is not as violent as the one in *Germinal*. (142) In

their analysis of Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle*, Benson and Loftis openly state the way Steinbeck deviates from the actual events of the strikes in California with much exaggeration. (216-217) This hides an ideology behind. In fact, both Zola and Steinbeck build their novels upon capitalist narratives as their aim is to stop the spread of Marxism and communism and preserve the status of capitalism. This is the reason why they give a negative portrayal to labor strikes and the strike organizers. Zola relates his theory of naturalism to social Darwinism, a theory described by the principle of natural selection and the survival of the fittest. This theory is agreed by several critics to be immoral and manipulative meant to serve one social class at the expense of the other. Steinbeck does not differ from Zola where he builds his argument of phalanx upon individualism, a notion that is linked to the American Dream. The latter is linked to capitalism where the working class is left to blame themselves for their lack of skills in case the country is hit by economic depressions. Besides, both novelists use capitalist narratives to argue that men during the strike will lose their rationality. These narratives, as we will see in the last chapter, are built upon myths and manipulation. This way, in my thesis, the idea that the workers will lose their rationality in the group is to be questioned. Georg Lukács, in his book *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (1963), explains how literary modernism contributes to the reification of consciousness. In several of his writings, he also criticizes Zola's naturalism. This way, both novelists instead of exposing the hegemonic narratives, they hide them and solidify their status in the subconscious mind. In their novels, there is no point of view of the totality. The significance of phenomena and events are not fathomed in relation to the sum total of processes that forms the capitalist system. Exploitation and all kinds of suffering that the workers face are not linked to capitalism and all is transmitted in fragment.

Abrahams does the contrary. Instead of being an accomplice with the manipulative and exploitative ideologies, he exposes them to light and he links all the suffering to the

exploitative system set by the white capitalists. In his fictional strike and in his novel as a whole, Abrahams projects the way skin color and the Darwinist idea that states that the non-whites are uncivilized are merely socially constructed ideas meant to cast power and domination and secure the consent of the working class. Abrahams brings them to light and questions their legitimacy. *Mine Boy* is an assertion that for change to take place, the working class of all races must unite and engage in a constant labor struggle.

What motivate us to conduct this research are the chains of strikes and protests that are taken place in the 21st century. It is this longing for struggle to change the world. What motivates us; even more, is to clarify the reason why Marxism is an ideology that cannot wane. Marxism is a theory that calls for freedom and justice. These qualities are going to always be the fight of men. Even if the aim of the achievement of a communist country is a utopian call, still Marxism is the appropriate ideology to embrace as it instigates people to fight to ameliorate their lives. The benefit of this research is to show that when the workers face any system of exploitation, their situation may change if they raise their voice as one. It is a fight against all what subjugate and enslave men.

Reviewing literature, I have found that *Germinal*, *In Dubious Battle*, and *Mine Boy* have not been studied together even though they share common themes related to strikes and the struggle between capital and labor. The success or the failure of the strike is not fully studied, which is why in this thesis the focus is on this matter. Besides, searching literature shows that previous studies about *Mine Boy* do not focus on white workers even though Abrahams mentions that the whites as well work next to the non-whites in the mines. In this thesis, this matter is important for the development of the topic as it shows that apartheid is strongly related to capitalism.

In her doctoral thesis entitled, *Crowd Theory in Some Modern Fiction: Dickens, Zola and Canetti, 1841-1960*, Rousiley Celi Moreira Maia focuses on the development of crowd

theory from 1841-1960. She examines the psychology of collective behavior and its political experience in some novels; *Germinal* is one of them. Her attempt is to study and evaluate the novelists' attitude towards the crowd. (ii) For Sara B. Pritchard, Zola, in *Germinal*, describes the brutal dimensions of capitalist industrialization on the laborers in France. (732) In his book, Daniel Schwarz states that the purpose of *Germinal* is to expose the exploitation and the abuses that the miners face due to the system of capitalism. (253) Brian Nelson argues that the strength of *Germinal* culminates in its projection of the ways in which working class alienation and bourgeois mystification complement each other in the reinforcement of capitalism. He argues further, that *Germinal* gives a political voice to the working class. Characters are liberated from the intimidation of bourgeois society. (12) However, in this thesis, we will see the way Zola works his *Germinal* in a way that reinforces the dominant ideology, and the way the working class is entrapped more deeply in the exploitative system. When it comes to Steinbeck, we see how Alexander Saxton, in his article about *In Dubious Battle*, studies the way Steinbeck is influenced by the idea of the transition of the working class from poverty to a respectful life through peaceful means. He argues how Steinbeck takes these ideas from the writings of the 1880s stating that he is mostly influenced by Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. Writing in the 1880s, Bellamy and others of his contemporaries, like Mark Twain and Jack London, were affected by Karl Marx's criticism of class society. Thus, they highly expressed their denunciation of the rich who exploit the low social rank. The prevalent idea during that time is that the Industrial Revolution with all its productive power made class struggle and class exploitation redundant, unnecessary, and morally unjustifiable. This way, they articulated the idea that common wealth is to be achieved through peaceful and benevolent means. This progressive vision of a painless and peaceful transition to a better future is inherited as well by Steinbeck. (253-254-255) John J. Han studies the way Steinbeck incorporates in *In Dubious Battle*, and other of his novels, the

utilitarian philosophy. This philosophy holds the idea that moral rightness is to be determined by that which will bring about the benefit for all members. This can be done by all means as long as the consequence benefits the majority. Han states how Steinbeck projects the way the communist Mac uses violent means for the sake of building an equal society which he presumes would benefit the majority. For Han, Steinbeck is influenced by the utilitarian philosophy. (21-22-24) In this thesis, I argue that Steinbeck is totally against the idea that the means do not matter as long as it would achieve the benefit of the majority and he is not influenced by Karl Marx. In fact, he wants to stop the spread of the Marxist thought of revolution in the US. In his doctoral thesis, *Deconstructing America Rereading Steinbeck*, Manish Singh exposes the way America is a land of thievery and hypocrisy unlike what it has always been promoted throughout its history. Singh uses a selection from Steinbeck's novels, where *In Dubious Battle* is among them, in an attempt to emphasize class division in the US. His aim is to deconstruct the image of America as a land of justice and equality and to show how Steinbeck is not fooled by the Ideological and Repressive State Apparatus. (1-2-3) In this thesis, another reading is provided where I argue that Steinbeck helps to solidify the ideologies that serve the capitalists.

Reviewing literature, *Mine Boy* is mostly studied in relation to the question of race and not exploitation and profit, and if they do, they only gloss over it. The argument that is commonly used is that the government exploits the blacks because of their skin color, but they do not emphasize the idea that apartheid is a system that stands for capitalism. Thus, a cheap labor-force is so much favored to double the wealth, and race is just a pretext to justify the imbalance of power. Besides, they ignore the white workers who work next to the non-whites in the mines. In her article, Sally-Anne Jackson argues that Peter Abrahams recreates the history of South Africa fictionally. There, she extracts the psychosomatic diseases that Abrahams projects in *Mine Boy*. In her analysis, she does this in a way which highlights the

racism of the colonizer in South Africa. Jackson argues that the diseases are the consequence of the uneven social structures set by the racist colonizers. (153) In his thesis, A. C. Tsabedze relates racism to the economy of South Africa and he argues that Abrahams views apartheid in *Wild Conquest* and *Mine Boy* as a system that is unassociated with the economy of South Africa. For him, Abrahams relates it to the superiority complex. Tsabedze argues that for Abrahams, racism disturbs relationships between humans and this for Tsabedze leads to false conclusions as removing racism will not lead to equality for all races. And here, racial integration as Abrahams suggests cannot assure equality if there is no change in the economic system. Accordingly, in his thesis, he argues that Abrahams fails to provide a solution to the problem that his people face. (V-VI) However, my thesis emphasizes how Abrahams shows in *Mine Boy* the way unification between all races in labor movements is the only solution that pushes the government to change its policy. This leads to the abolishment of the system of segregation. Apartheid cannot be destroyed unless all races unite for a common goal, and this is what Abrahams connotes in *Mine Boy*. Unification of all races shows the meaninglessness of the system and how it is set to benefit a small group of people. Promoting this, would push all races to work for the same goal.

In her article, Cynthea Hamilton studies the way the workers in *Mine Boy* are controlled due to the fragmentation of actions and activities of the everyday life. She shows the methods used by the employers to make the workers tolerate all conditions of work. Hamilton adds that Abrahams allows us to see the process of consciousness evolving in his character Xuma. She argues that ideology has nothing to do with the political consciousness of the workers; for her, consciousness comes only from the experience of their life under the system set. (147-151-161) In this thesis, the role of the radicals is not to be ignored in the instigating of the working class to revolt.

My methodology will be based on the following theories. The Marxism of Georg Lukács, formulated in his *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), is to be used in order to study labor exploitation and the way capitalism makes the working class live in false consciousness and undergo a process of reification. We will see as well how the drastic life under this system awakes the revolutionary class consciousness of people in addition to socialism that instigates people to go on strike against exploitation. The theory of naturalism is going to be used in order to study *Germinal*, and the argument of phalanx is going to be used to study *In Dubious battle*. The aim is to look at the way Zola and Steinbeck use their theories in order to deal with the behavior of men in strikes. The theory of Antonio Gramsci's cultural hegemony is to be used in order to see the way Zola and Steinbeck use their novels to secure the consent of the working class and support capitalism against the radical ideologies that push the workers to go on strike. We will see how their theories are supportive of the capitalist system. We will see as well the way *Mine Boy* holds a counter-hegemonic discourse using Gramsci's concept of organic intellectuals. Another concept that is going to be used in this thesis is Noam Chomsky understanding of Anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism. Unlike the popular understanding of anarchism as an ideology of destruction and riot, for Chomsky, an anarchist is a one who questions the legitimacy of any authority. In this thesis, it will be used in order to study the way Abrahams questions the legitimacy of the capitalists' dominance and their use of skin color as an argument to exploit the workers. At the end, Lukács' emphasize on the actuality of the revolution and the role of the socialists and Gramsci's focus on the way revolutionary consciousness is linked to the spontaneous movement of the revolutionary masses and socialist organizations are to be emphasized. The point is to demonstrate the way constant struggle and labor strikes as Abrahams suggests in his novel, is the only way left for the working class to let their voice be heard.

This research comprises four chapters; each chapter is divided into three sections. The first chapter, entitled “The Historical Context in which Strikes Emerge: an Inspiration for Zola, Steinbeck, and Abrahams,” deals with the attempt of the working class to rise to power and how these attempts jolted the capitalists in France, the US, and South Africa. These ideas are related and discussed in relation to the novels used. The first section shows how the realism of Zola manifests in his portrayal of the terror that the crowd represents to the bourgeois capitalists in France and how the chains of strikes and the economic, political, and social upheavals that have their root starting from the French Revolution inspired Zola to write his *Germinal*. When it comes to Steinbeck, the second section examines the way the economic depression of the thirties along with labor exploitation by the fascists in corporate farming inspired Steinbeck to write his novel. The US witnessed series of labor strikes instigated by the communists but these strikes were suppressed by the government. The section denotes that Steinbeck used these events as a standpoint to build his *In Dubious Battle*. It examines how his hatred of the communists and fascists pushed him to fight these ideologies in his novels as well as outside his nation. The last section demonstrates how democracy is achieved and how labor exploitation in South Africa was reduced due to the great role that labor strikes played during apartheid. The section also shows how Abrahams took this as an inspiration to write *Mine Boy*. Abrahams’ novel was written in 1946, yet his novel is a prediction that foresees the end of apartheid through labor strikes.

The second chapter, entitled “The Drastic Life under Systems of Exploitation: a Double Edge,” is about labor exploitation and the way this exploitation leads to strikes as portrayed in the three novels. Relying on Georg Lukács’ Marxism, I will study the way the capitalists dehumanize the workers and take them as a commodity to generate profit, and how the workers are obliged to sell their labor-power to the capitalists to survive. In the second section, the study concerns the way life under capitalism makes the workers live in false class

consciousness and undergo a process of reification, and how false perceptions cover all the spheres of life even the capitalists themselves. The last section studies how the experience of the working class under exploitative systems leads to revolutionary class consciousness and how revolts are as well instigated even more by the socialists.

The third chapter, entitled “In Defense of Strikes and Strike Leaders,” covers the three novelists’ view about labor strikes. The first and second sections study the way Zola and Steinbeck use their theories, naturalism and the argument of phalanx, to argue that men in a group will lose their rationality and engage in violence. Therefore, the strike will spiral out of control. This chapter is meant to be a defense of the power of strikes to lower exploitation. In the third section, we will see how the strikers in *Mine Boy* will not lose their rationality and be involved in violence; contrary, I will extract where the success of the strike resides. This section will demonstrate how Zola and Steinbeck give an exaggerated image of the strike as a social movement that leads to plight and affliction.

The fourth chapter, entitled “The Strike: Crippled by Cultural Hegemony and Revived by Counter-hegemony,” examines the way Zola and Steinbeck relate their theories to capitalist’ narratives in order to secure the consent of the working class. Zola relates his theory of naturalism to Darwinian evolution, a theory that is related to capitalism. Steinbeck’s argument of phalanx supports individualism and condemns the group. This notion is related to the American Dream which, in part, has a relation with capitalism. This chapter exposes the hypocrisy and manipulation behind these ideologies and how they serve one class at the expense of the other. I discuss this while emphasizing the idea that Zola and Steinbeck promote these narratives even though they are exploitative in order to prevent strikes. We will see how Zola and Steinbeck, instead of strikes, promote hard work and the role of the government to assure reform. At the same time, this thesis will show how governments are corrupted and controlled by the capitalists. As a counter-discourse against this, the last

section, studies how Abrahams instead of solidifying the hegemonic philosophies, he exposes them and questions their legitimacy. The section examines how *Mine Boy* criticizes and dismantles the hegemonic power of the capitalists. Strikes are considered as an emblem of the working class's attempt to gain some power; it is a movement meant for achieving social change by the workers for centuries. For this, this section shows the way Abrahams let go of his reliance on liberalism and embraces Marxism. He promotes solidarity between workers and labor strikes as a way to reach a true revolutionary class consciousness connoting that this would lower exploitation.

Chapter One: The Historical Context in which Strikes Emerge: an Inspiration for Zola, Steinbeck, and Abrahams

Novelists are most likely affected by the events taken place in their time; Zola, Steinbeck, and Abrahams are no exceptions. *Germinal*, *In Dubious Battle*, and *Mine Boy* were written in times where the struggle between labor and capital was acute. Accordingly, it was known by chains of strikes. Ergo, the first chapter starts by tracing the economic, political, and social instability of the time the novels were written. This chapter is divided into three sections.

The first section studies the way Zola uses his narrative to study the turmoil that took place in the second half of the 19th century. As a naturalist novelist, we will see how he takes the actual economic, social, and political instability that took place in France starting from the French Revolution (1789-99) up to the Third Republic (1870-1940) as a base to write his *Germinal*. This section sheds light upon the suffering of the low social rank during the Industrial Revolution in France and how the radical ideologies, Marxism and anarchism, pushed the workers to go on strike, a social movement that was associated with violence. Some of the strikes that inspired Zola are to be mentioned. This section projects as well how the capitalists and the government were jolted by these uprisings arguing that the chief realism of *Germinal* is its projection of the strikes' association with instability.

The second section deals with the historical events which construct Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle*. It shows how the US, after the Civil War (1860-65), had known numerous labor strikes against the capitalists and how these strikes were associated with violence. These strikes, led by socialists, disturbed the foundation of the liberal government; however, the US succeeded to crush them down. The section, then, takes us to the Great Depression (1929-39), the setting of Steinbeck's novel, where it shows how after the First World War (1914-18), the specter of strikes came back due to the fascist corporate landlords and the communists. It

shows communism as an ideology that presaged the rise of the phalanx in the US during the 1930s. I also shed light upon the strikes which its events inspired Steinbeck to build his novel. The section also discusses the US fight against communism and fascism even outside the nation.

Abrahams' *Mine Boy* deals with the exploitation of the non-whites as a cheap labor-force and how the white capitalists set iniquitous laws to assure the full dominance and exploitation of the workers. It is a novel written and set during the era of segregation in South Africa. Hence, the last section deals with the segregation of the blacks, colored, and Indians in South Africa during the time of apartheid. It shows how the government exploited the non-whites and how they took them as a cheap labor-force to double their wealth. The exploitation of the poor whites is to be discussed as well. This part sheds light upon the fear that haunted the government which is the non-whites' seize of power and the way the government worked its best to restrict the non-whites' freedom and power through enacting oppressive laws. This section projects as well the way liberalism was ineffective to liberate the non-whites and how the working class played a great role in the destruction of apartheid through labor strikes denoting that this is the basic idea that Abrahams bases his novel upon.

The aim of the chapter is to show the way Zola, Steinbeck, and Abrahams reflect the social and political turbulence that took place in their countries. It also aims at indicating the way governments and the dominant classes were jolted by the specter of strikes and the working class' rise to power.

1.1. The Fear of the Rise of the Crowd in France: an Inspiration for Zola

The Rougon-Macquart, subtitled *Natural and social history of a family under the Second Empire*, is Emile Zola's collective title given to a cycle of twenty novels. The cycle was published between 1871 and 1893. *Germinal*, the thirteenth novel within the series, is a narrative about a coal miners' strike in northern France during the 1860s. The novel exposes

the plight and the inhuman living condition of the miners in France during the industrial revolution. It follows a young worker, Etienne Lantier, who enters a mining community and later on leads a strike due to pay cuts. As Zola is a naturalistic writer, the events documented in *Germinal* offer profound insights about the economic, social, and political turbulence in France under the Second French Empire. It was the time of the Industrial Revolution. The distribution of wealth and power was not equal. This led to cycles of strikes led by the Marxists and anarchists. Turbulence in France did not start with the formation of the Third Republic, but it dated back to the French Revolution. This turbulence highly jolted the bourgeois, monarchs, and governments, and constituted a threat to their power. Zola took this turmoil and the fear that shook the powerful class as a base for his novel.

1.1.1. Economic, political, and social instability during the Industrial Revolution

Because most of Zola's narratives are profoundly historical and ideological, the key to understand and appreciate them lies in their contexts. Therefore, in order to study *Germinal*, one would examine the economic, social, and political realities of France that have an influence on Zola's literary endeavor. The novel is set in the time of the Industrial Revolution. It is a period of economic crises during which the life of the working class was a total despair while the capitalists controlled everything and doubled their wealth.

The French Industrial Revolution began approximately in 1820; it reached its peak around 1840. (Fortescue 37) Perhaps there is no other thing that really changed the life of Europeans like the industrial revolution. People left their rural life and went to the city to work in mines, mills, and factories. The supply of workers exceeded the demand and wages were very low. (Wilson and Herman 59) The Steam engine was very important for transportation and industry; thus, coal production was indispensable. Coal did not only provide mechanical energy but also was used for gas lightening, heating, and steelmaking. As coal had become a main source of energy, France used to produce tons of it every day and big

mining companies were established in the mid-18th century; the Anzin Mining Company was one of them. This Company is similar to the mines of Montsau in Zola's novel. Zola portrays how coal extraction is the main source of profit. (Beltran) Even though in the period between 1838 and 1845 France witnessed a great economic prosperity and different industries transformed France completely, after 1845, it endured severe series of economic crises. Unemployment rate was very high. Factories required work for about twelve hours. Coal industry was very reliant on manual labor. Harsh and biased rules were imposed on workers. Working class people were impoverished and deprived; their life was a total despair. Industrial accident rates were very prominent and women and children were employed as cheap labor-force. (Fortescue 37)

Many miners could not imagine their children working anywhere other than the pit, if only for financial reasons. While limits were placed on women and children working in the second half of the 19th century, the regulations were not always followed. (Beltran)

Zola emphasizes from the beginning of his narrative that the miners suffer a great deal in the pits. They start work at a very young age. Bonnemort, for example, starts working when he was eight; when the novel starts, he is 58 years old. As a naturalist novel, Zola portrays with many details the way the working class suffered from poverty and the hazardous working condition in the mines.

During the 19th century, wealthy businessmen were so powerful; they had the overall dominance over the economy. In France, it was the time of the Industrial Revolution. Everything was controlled by industrialists whose concern was to make profit regardless of the suffering of the workers. With the emergence of the Industrial Revolution, workers were not allowed to form cooperative organizations. Any worker who took an action against his employer was directly replaced by another as there were a lot of unemployed people. (Wilson

and Herman 59) Mining company owners did not only dominate the economy but also had an influence in the political sphere. For example, Jean Casimir-Périer, the principal shareholder of the Anzin Mining Company, served as President of the French Republic from 1894 to 1895. (Beltran) In the novel, M. Grégoire in his conversation with Négrel says: “There are shareholders who abuse their position. For instance, I have been told that ministers have received shares in Montsou for services rendered to the Company.” (135) This shows Zola’s projection of the influence the bourgeois had in the political sphere.

In addition to the huge gap between the working class and the wealthy industrialists, the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) was a disaster to the economy of France. When the war ended, France was badly affected economically and it was obliged to pay Germany as it lost the war. France found no way but to take debts from private bankers. (Platt 17-18) Destroyed by this war and heavily indebted, the economy of France served the interest of the powerful capitalists only.

During the Industrial Revolution, the low social rank in France had no power, and Zola faithfully reflects the way the capitalists cast their dominance over the economy and politics. The suffering and exploitation that the working class underwent paved the way for movements that called the deprived to unite, revolt, and write the end of the bourgeois reign. Inspired by the French Revolution, the downtrodden in France marked a sequence of uprisings. However, France was not a welcoming place for such kind of movements. All this, is carefully referred to in *Germinal*.

1.1.2. Radical ideas: an inspiration for the rise of the crowd

Starting from the second half of the 19th century, France was struggling with movements that called for the rise of the crowd. These movements, particularly Marxism and anarchism, call for a radical social and political change. The government and the capitalists

were so alerted by these radical movements. As these movements had a strong impact in France, Zola strongly emphasized their influence in his novel.

In the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution set the stage for socialist and anarchist movements to find resonance among the low rank in France. (Borch 26) Starting from 1848, communism was haunting Europe due to the publication of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*. The proletariat became a serious threat with the formation of the International Working Men's Association in 1864. It was a federation of workers' groups; its influence and power lie in its efforts to unify the workers in Europe. European governments in that period were afraid of universal working class uprisings. Thus, any move against the status quo would be considered as an act of revolution. (Petrey 55) The advocates of these political and social movements wanted the rise of the crowd and revolution to forcibly spread in France. For example, the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) and the Italian anarchist Carlo Cafiero (1846-92) worked their best to spread the anarchist social theory in France and all of Europe. (Aubery 40) In his *Words of a Rebel* (1885), Kropotkin calls the artists to write about revolutions:

Narrate for us in your vivid style or fervent pictures the titanic struggles of the masses against their oppressors; inflame young hearts with the beautiful breath of revolution that inspired our ancestors....Show the people the ugliness of contemporary life and make us see the cause of this ugliness. Tell us what a rational life would have been if it had not been blocked at each step by the ineptitude and ignominies of the present social order. (qtd. in Aubery 41)

Accordingly, all riots or strikes were associated with these movements. The working class was highly influenced by the radical philosophy. In her analysis, Annemarie Springer mentions that commentators associated directly the attacks that took place during the final decades of the 19th century to anarchism.

The final decade of the 19th century witnessed a considerable degree of political turmoil in France. The immediate cause of this unrest was the anarchist movement. There were violent murders, bombings, and secret plots. Paris railroad stations and cafes, the Stock Exchange, and the Chamber of Deputies became the targets of terrorist attacks. (261)

Zola projects all these movements and associates them with destruction. The themes of anarchy and Marxism are very prominent throughout *Germinal*. Zola gives reference to Karl Marx. He also mentions the father of anarchism, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-65), and the Russian revolutionary anarchist, Mikhail Bakunin (1814-76). In the third chapter, we will see how the character Souvarine represents the fear of anarchism that France was living in. In his analysis, Hemmings mentions that Zola's inclusion of Russian anarchism under the Second French Empire is something of anachronism. The reason behind this is that during that period, the Russian émigrés who were associated with anarchism took congregation in Switzerland and London but not in France. It was until the fall of the empire that they installed in Paris. (27) This points out the terror that the anarchists displayed during the Third Republic. In his book, Richard H. Zakarian mentions how Zola was afraid of the spread of socialism. Starting from 1879, various socialist parties started to display great influence in the political arena. With the return of Jules Guesde from his exile in 1877, the socialist faction reorganized itself under his leadership after its defeat in the Paris Commune in 1871. Under the leadership of the Marxist Guesde, the socialist party became known as "Fédération du Parti des Travailleurs Socialistes de France." For three years, before the coming of Guesde, the party was led by moderate factions or Possibilists who sought for legislative reform and not a revolution. Unsatisfied with the compromise and moderation of the Possibilists, they organized "Parti Ouvrier Français." This way, two wings of socialist party were formed in 1882. Their aim was the overthrow of the political system. This view is represented in *Germinal* by Etienne. The

possibilists are represented by Rasseneur. In his book, *Le Socialisme Contemporain* (1883), E.V.L. de Laveleye explains the way socialism represented fear in the French society by calling it “Le spectre rouge.” (15) In his novel, Zola argues against all forms of socialism. For him, they are all ineffective.

Zola’s reference to these movements indicates the fear of strikes and revolutions that took place during his time. He refers to this through using the period of the Second Empire as a setting. This fear jolted the government and the bourgeois especially with the short success of the Paris Commune in 1871.

1.1.3. The Paris Commune as a warning

To France, the Commune is one of the greatest events in the history of working class movements. At that time, for the workers, it represented hope and inspiration. For the government and the capitalists, it symbolized fear and threat. *Germinal* was written a few years after the Commune, yet Zola gave it space due to its effects.

During the Franco-Prussian War, Napoleon III was captured in 1870 and some French moderate deputies proclaimed the Third Republic. During the war, Parisians protested in the streets to get their rights and to call for a new beginning; and here, insurrection broke out in Paris. The National Guard, consisting of men from the working class, defended Paris from the Prussian troops who kept Paris under siege. Meanwhile, tension between the National Government and the National Guard had intensified. Parisians revolted, and on March 26, 1871, they elected the self-governing socialist leaning, the Commune. Even though the National Government had withdrawn to Versailles, it sent its troops to suppress the revolution and recapture Paris. The revolting crowd had been crushed by the government, and the fight resulted in the so-called “bloody week” that took place from May 21 to May 7, 1871. Thousands of people were killed. The Paris Commune, from March 28 to May 28, 1871, is considered as the first attempt of workers reaching power where they seized the city of Paris.

Its veritable destruction and massacre do not equal that of the previous insurrections. For the dominant class, this rise of the crowd symbolized a constant threat to stability. (Borch 28-29)

It is as François Furet puts it in his book, *Revolutionary France 1770-1880* (1992):

The last uprising in the French revolutionary tradition was also the one which created the most fear and shed the most blood, as if it formed the ultimate exorcism of a violence which had been an inseparable part of French public life since the end of the eighteenth century. In this Paris in flames, the French Revolution bade farewell to history. The bourgeoisie, however, took the opposite view: it was proof of the terrifying threat which increasingly hung over their destiny, and over the future of civilization. (qtd. in Borch 29)

For bourgeois intellectuals like Hippolyte Taine (1828-93), the Commune is one of the barbaric and animalistic examples of the crowd which displayed fear to the bourgeoisie in the late-nineteenth century. Taine was among the most prominent propagators of the fear of the crowd. The crowd was related to violence and destruction. Thus, for Taine, social movements are viruses that must be cut down. This is the reason which pushed Taine to review France's revolutionary past and the context that gives *Germinal* its sense of picturing the strike as a disastrous social movement. (Borch 28-29) The end of *Germinal* shows how the strike is suppressed, but at the same time; it also shows Etienne's heading to Paris for a political job. It is as if Zola is indicating that the revolution is not yet tamed. The setting of the novel is in the 1860s, just some years before the Commune.

As the the Commune brought no positive outcomes and hundreds of people were perished, Zola reflects its incident in his novel. The strike organized by the Marxists and the sabotage of the mine that comes from anarchists in *Germinal* reflect what might result from the radicals. The strike of Montsau projects the threat that the government along with the

capitalists were living in. Zola was also inspired by the French Revolution. His reference to it proves that the rise of the crowd is to be traced from the French Revolution.

1.1.4. The French Revolution: the seed of the revolutionary crowd

The Gathering Storm is a title Zola decided to give to his novel, but due to the fact that turbulence in France was acute starting from the French Revolution, he changed it to *Germinal*. Germinal is one of the months adopted during the French Revolution. (Priestland 109) In this month, several remarkable events took place. This motivated Zola to take it as a title to denote that turmoil in France is not something new, but its roots go back to the revolution of 1789.

The French Revolution sowed the seed of the political turmoil throughout the 19th century. Radicalized revolutions, like the July Revolution of 1830, the insurrections in 1848, and the 1871 upheaval, prove the political instability in France. It is a century marked by a constant change of the political regimes from the First Republic (1792-1804) to the First Empire (1804-14), and another empire and republics. Depravation, which was propelled by industry, functioned as an unceasing propagator of social and political turbulence. This turmoil projects the constant aspiration for revolution running through the 19th century. Zola, in his *Germinal*, shows this link between instability and aspirations for a revolution that dominated France for more than a century by incorporating several scenes from the French Revolution and the events of the strikes that took place throughout the 19th century. This way, Zola does not only base his novel on the strikes that took place in 1869 and 1884, the years of the setting of the novel, but he introduces the aspects and incidents of conflicts of 1789 onwards. This explains the reason why he is known as “the epic poet of crowds.” (Borch 24-25-26) Zola shows this link even more through naming his novel *Germinal*.

The title of the narrative “*Germinal*” denotes that instability covered the late 18th century right up to the late 19th century, and not only the 1860s, the years of the setting of the

novel. During the French Revolution, France created a calendar called The French Republican Calendar or as it is commonly known, the French Revolutionary Calendar. It was used by the French government from 1793 to 1805. The word “Germinal” is the seventh month (March 21 to April 29) in this calendar. (Borch 26) Remarkable dramatic things happened during the month of Germinal. In the month of Germinal, Year II the Hébertists and Dantonists, two revolutionary factions were executed using the guillotine. In Zola’s *Germinal*, when the strike breaks out, the deprived in the streets start to sing the anthem of the French Revolution, the “Marseillaise,” which was banned under the French Second Empire. Abruptly, in front of their eyes, a gigantic guillotine appears against the sky. The guillotine, in a hideous symbolism, shows how the Second Empire represents terror. It also proves a fragile and tenuous attempt to tame a society already shattered into pieces. (Scurr) On April 1, 1795, meaning on 12 Germinal, Year III, crowds of some 10,000 Parisians stormed the National Convention to protest against famine. (Borch 26) In *Germinal*, no one has enough to eat; people cry “Bread, bread, we want bread!”, an excellent parallel with the outcry of the French people in 1789, the starting of the French Revolution. In the novel, the scene where the gendarmes arrive parallels with what happened with the National Guard on the Champs de Mars in 1791 during the French Revolution. The gendarmes were unwilling to open fire on the crowd, but in the end, they did. In *Germinal* as well, the sergeant gives the order to fire when the miners start attacking the gendarmes. (Scurr) Therefore, for the French, this month has a revolutionary connotation. The reason that leads Zola to name his novel *Germinal*, literally as the month of Germinal, denotes that this month has a preponderant significance in the French society. It is a month known by its fierce revolutions.

Napoleon I, in the third year of his reign in 1806, decided the abolishment of the Republican Calendar and he reverted to the previous traditional temporal order. (Barash 100) However, the Paris Commune, heedful of its heritage and sacrifices during the French

Revolution, restored the old revolutionary calendar for 18 days. It became Year LXXIX, 8th Germinal. (Scurr) Borch argues:

These revolutionary undertones of Zola's novel were easily recognized by its French audience. His point of recalling the Germinal risings in a novel whose action was located at the end of the Second Empire was to establish an uninterrupted path of revolutionary aspirations running from the early years of the French Revolution right up to 1885 when *Germinal* was published. (26)

Accordingly, Zola's novel does not only reflect the period in which its events unfold, but it can be taken as a documentation of a century saturated with revolutionary craves. In order to form his fictional strike, Zola witnessed several strikes in France. He even talked to the strike organizers in an attempt to make his strike more real.

1.1.5. Strikes in France as an inspiration for Zola

Germinal is a narrative about strikes. As Zola was trying to portray reality as his theory of naturalism denotes, he applied its principles and went down to the mines of France in order to do considerable researches about the condition of the mines and miners in northern France. He even witnessed the strikes that took place there in order to reflect them as they are in his literature.

When Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly analyzed the strikes in France from 1830 to 1930, they stated that the period had known hundreds of strikes. In 1893 for example, they noted 634 strikes. (Borch 25) Zola summarized approximately all these strikes in his novel. He stated that he wrote *Germinal* after his visit to northern French mining towns in 1884 and witnessed the series of strikes that took place there. (Zakarian 168) Zola got acquainted with radical movements after his talk to radicals themselves. Denain for example, was a focal and central point of all union and proletarian activities. Denain was an industrial slum with new rail lines. Strikes there dated back to 1820s, but events were more violent in the 1880s and the

1890s. The city was under martial law for multiple times. Zola went there in early 1884 and met with activists in order to plan his novel. Denain was a cradle for socialism and mining syndicalism. When Zola visited the coal mines of Denain, he did it in disguise as a secretary of the socialist deputy Alfred Giard. There, he got acquainted with numerous socialist activists; this is instrumental in the development of the characters and the uprising in his novel *Germinal*. (Waage 19)

In 1884, Zola visited the Anzin Mining Company as a huge strike broke there. The strike that broke there on February 18, 1884 lasted nearly two months. It had been preceded by series of turbulent strikes. Zola took this strike as an opportunity to observe social riots with his own eyes. He even went down into the deep pit to better understand the situation of the underground miners. There he met a miner fired by the company. Zola was so inspired by this uprising so that he wrote reports about the incidents of the strike. The strike in *Germinal* is modeled around this strike in Anzin. This uprising gave him a chance to observe the workers, their living and working conditions, and the socialist movement that broke there with his own eyes. It provided him with the necessary details along with the political implications. (Beltran) The immediate cause of this strike was the attempt to reduce the number of workers in the Anzin mining company. This means a lot of workers will find themselves without revenue. At that time, France was suffering from a frightening economic crisis, so it set new rules for the working condition. For example, firing some workers would double the work for the remaining workers. (Zakarian 168) In *Germinal*, what leads to the outbreak of the strike is also the new set rules where the mine owners decide to pay the miners separately for coal digging and for the timbering work. As the miners suspect that this is a trick to reduce the paycheck; they go on strike.

The strikes that took place in France inspired Zola to portray revolutionary thoughts and actions in his novel. Zola intended his fictional strike to be a clear resume of the actual strikes

which had frightened and affected the French middle class. The Montsau strike documents the fear that comes when workers organize themselves into a group under the leadership of the radicals.

Throughout the 19th century, strikes had a negative connotation as they were associated with violence and crowd behavior. The cycles of strikes were related to the Marxists and anarchists. The government and the bourgeois middle class worked desperately to stop the spread of the radical ideologies that instigate the working class to struggle. Zola's chief realism manifests not only in his description of the mines and his representation of the economic and social condition in France but also in his projection of the prevalent fear of labor strikes. The novel was written and published under the Third Republic. His reference to the French Revolution and the strikes that took place during the 19th century show a century marked by severe turmoil. The novel demonstrates how the poor miners in the fictional setting "Montsau," are exploited by the bourgeois middle class and how they are instigated by the Marxist Etienne Lantier to go on strike. Etienne awakes the miners to the exploitation they are facing. However, unlike what is expected, the strike turns out to be a true passive resistance crowned by crowd violence.

1.2. The Specter of the Rise of Phalanx in the US: an Inspiration for Steinbeck

The end of the American Revolution in 1783 did not mark the end of the American struggle as the nation had known serious crises. After the Civil War, there took place cycles of strikes. The strikes that arose during the Gilded Age (from the 1870s to about 1900) and later on during the Great Depression are marked as a serious threat of the rise of the mob. The strikes that took place during the Depression of the 1930s were led by the communists. This disturbed the capitalists and the government; accordingly, they did all what it take to tame the strikes. The US did not only fight communism and fascism inside the US, but it sought to end their threat even outside the nation. Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle* is built upon the turbulence

that took place during the Great Depression of the 1930s. In his novel, he deals with the threat of the fascists and communists and how their presence instigates the rise of the working class and constitutes a disturbance to the liberal government.

1.2.1. The Great Depression: an omen of uprisings

With the depression, the lower class, especially the migrant workers, were exploited by the fascist landlords. This pushed them to go on strike. The strikes were led by the communists. Labor strikes in the US dated back to the Gilded Age. These strikes were all suppressed by the government. With the depression of the 1930s, the government knew how to deal with all kinds of uprisings. Steinbeck takes his inspiration from labor strikes that took place during the Great Depression. In his novel, he reflects the suffering of the migrant workers in the agricultural fields and how they are exploited by the fascists and communists.

The Great Depression which started in 1929 caused a catastrophic damage to the economy. The Industry and the agriculture sector were hit by a rising tide of bankruptcy. This economic downfall caused huge social dissensions. A lot of people found themselves without work. The depression is worsened by the Dust Bowl in 1934 and 1935 and the long lasting drought which forced thousands of families from Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas, and Colorado, to migrate to California in a hope to find a job. (Brogan 538) Large industries could not support the huge overflowing amount of workers; consequently, farming was the only solution for the workers to support their needs. The unprecedented shift of hundreds of migrant workers toward rural areas was another reason which caused destabilization. (Maples 788) The large farms were owned by bankers and big operators in California. They employed great numbers of migrant workers. These workers were physically and psychologically exploited in the fields. Due to corporate farming, they were placed at the bottom of the class hierarchy. (Matuz 216) One of the farm worker activists told the *Sacramento Bee*:

It's almost as if farm workers aren't human. They're just doing farm work and they're just picking the crops, so that's all they deserve. And you have these tractors, and plows, and farm workers, and rakes, and shovels, and tanks of pesticides. Farm workers are just one more tool. (qtd. in Ross 29)

These workers in the agricultural fields did not gain enough money to support their needs and that of their families. As wages were so low to live on, the workers could no longer support that life of misery; consequently, they protested out in the streets. Most riots and troubles took place in the fields and packing sheds. The periods between 1930 and 1932, marked about forty agricultural strikes which were crushed by law enforcement authorities that were serving the need of the employers. Farmers, before and after the depression period, did not receive much support from labor organizations. Besides, leaders of these organizations were inexperienced, so these strikes were all a fiasco. (Benson and Loftis 198) Actually, it is not the first time where America witnesses an economic depression and strikes. When the Civil War ended, the US experienced cycles of depressions and strikes. These strikes, which were related to the spread of communism, jolted the government at that time.

The underlying fear that urban crowds threatened the Republic's democratic foundation gained support from a series of uprisings in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. In combination with continuous urban poverty the rapid industrialization that followed after the Civil War gave way to a series of violent workers' strikes and demonstrations. In 1877, for example, a wave of violent strikes swept the country. With the French Commune of 1871 fresh in mind, these strikes were quickly associated by many observers with the fear of an immediate communist threat to the democratic Republic. (Borch 128)

After the Civil War, industrial capitalism advanced dramatically in the US. The US economy marked a change from a dependence on agriculture to industry known by steel production.

(Grenberg 65-66) This period, labeled as the Gilded Age, is characterized by rapid industrialization and social upheavals. Various industries, like oil, steel, sugar, and cotton, were steered by a few large companies. (Neate) The laissez-faire policy, inspired by Social Darwinism, was the dominant system. What helped the rich to gain even more power is the legal profession which took a strong tie in the business world. The Supreme Court used its power to serve the powerful capitalists by including laws that favor the laissez-faire policy. The court dedicated its efforts to overturn state legislature. The state did not show any inclination to interfere and regulate the business. Due to economic instability, workers started to witness pay cuts and laying off of workers. Consequently, unions started to form, albeit illegal. The American ruling class and the US state machinery were ruffled by the efforts of the working class to unionize. Alerted by this, they immediately organized themselves to deal with labor uprisings. All the organs of the state, from the legislature, judiciary, police, and the army, were combined to crush the movements. For example, the police tamed the national strike for an eight-hour workday that took place in Chicago in 1867. They massacred the unionists and suppressed the strike-organizing committee. They closed the union's presses and they arrested and humiliated the leaders of the strike while in jail...etc. The Rail-Road Strike in 1877, sometimes referred to as the Great Upheaval, was called in response to wage cuts in Virginia. The state mobilized 60,000 militias deployed in 10 states. In a very short period of time, approximately one hundred strikers perished and hundreds were injured. The Pullman Strike in 1894 is a railroad strike which was faced by furious attack from the federal government. The strike was huge as it covered 24 states and it included almost 150,000 strikers. Their goal was the increase of paychecks and union recognition. The strike was decisively suppressed by the government. (Grenberg 69-71-72) During that time, the threat of socialism was so prevalent. The conflict between the socialists and liberals was acute until the elections of 1896 where the conflict is settled to the benefit of the liberals. (Borch 128) The

government and the American ruling class were jolted by these strikes; they were always alerted to the possibility of workers' revolt. Hence, with the Great Depression, they were ready to deal with working class movements.

When it comes to creative writing, considering the economic, political, social, and cultural change brought by World War One and the Great Depression, Modernist writers changed their ideology and shifted their literature from dealing with the tormented individual of Thomas Jefferson and Ralph Waldo Emerson to focusing on groups and collective bodies. The ideology of the thirties is no longer the tormented individual oppressed by the mob, but the groups oppressed by brutal and powerful individuals. Steinbeck reflects in his literature all these social, economic, and cultural change. In several novels, he focuses on group movements and dynamics, especially in *In Dubious Battle* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. (West 128-129) Steinbeck takes the responsibility of addressing the suffering of the low-class workers. In *In Dubious Battle*, he focuses on the migrant workers in California during the drastic years following the depression of 1929 and the Dust Bowl years. He is an eye witness to the families who were obliged to leave their family farms due to drought and migrate to California, his home state, to look for a job. With the depression, jobs were rare and working in corporate farms was the only place left for them. In *In Dubious Battle*, the novelist portrays the life of the migrant farmers in California and how they found themselves exploited by the landlords. Steinbeck demonstrates how the American society was divided during the Depression. Money was distributed unequally; farmers were exploited by the barons of land. The imbalance of wealth engendered an unstable society. Corporate farming is a practice that exploits the poor and grants wealth for the wealthy capitalists. Corporate landowners have the stronghold of everything. For Steinbeck, these small groups of people are fascists. Their treatment of the workers keeps the door open for the infiltration of the communists. In his article, William Ray contends: "The Red Peril paranoia that became federal policy following

World War I eventually led Salinas to experiment with what Steinbeck called fascism.” Accordingly, it is the fascists who control the region and manipulate the economic activities and communism is seen as an ideology of destruction.

In his book, *The True Adventures of John Steinbeck*, Jackson Benson declares: “What bothered Steinbeck most about our society was that in a land of plenty—a plenty so visible in California—large numbers of people could still go hungry.” (44) California upgraded into the mythical real when it was taken as the land of plenty in the early settlement. At that time, people dreamt of owning lands and making fortune. Ironically, California became, as novelist Robert Luis Stevenson said, a “land of thieves.” There, the farmers and their land were exploited by powerful groups like the eastern financial markets. In that period, hope quickly transformed into despair for settlers and migrants. (Astro 434) For the novelist, the powerful groups are fascists who give opportunity to the communists to push the workers to go on strike in order to destabilize his country.

The Depression that hit the US in the thirties inspired Steinbeck to write about the suffering of the working class and the labor strikes which were instigated by the communists. In order to collect data about the event of the strikes and the mannerism of the radicals, he went personally to the site of the strikes. In California, he was particularly inspired by two labor strikes, the Peach Strike and the Cotton Strike, both took place in 1933.

1.2.2. California’s agricultural strikes: a raw material for *In Dubious Battle*

In Dubious Battle treats a pivotal struggle between California’s landowners and migrant agricultural workers. This struggle is manifested in the series of strikes that took place during the depression years. These strikes provide the main historical tether for *In Dubious Battle*. They supply Steinbeck with the raw materials for the clash between the capital and the labor.

California’s agricultural strikes of 1933 were series of strikes by agricultural workers against the growers. Hundreds of workers were involved in more than 30 strikes. Almost all

of these strikes were led by The Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU). The CAWIU was an association formed by the Communist Party in 1931. It was a trade association which had a significant role in the struggle at the Tagus Ranch and in the cotton fields in California. (Benson and Loftis 198) Steinbeck knew several people who provided support for the CAWIU; one of them was Francis Whitaker, a leader in the John Reed Club. This club was meant to organize the radicals; it supported work for labor struggle in the period between 1928 and 1935. (Denning 208) It was due to Whitaker that Steinbeck met several people who were associated with leftist politics like James Hakin. It was these personalities who provided the novelist with different details about strike leaders and their speeches. (Benson and Loftis 199) Steinbeck narrates his fictional Apple Strike at the Torgas Valley by incorporating some facts from the Peach Strike at the Tagus Ranch in August 1933, and the Cotton Strike in the town of Pixley that spread throughout the San Joaquin Valley in October 1933. (Farsarella Dawson 130)

The Peach Strike at the Tagus Ranch took place due to the low wage. Migrant farmers demanded a raise in their pay in the summer of 1933. However, the ranch manager rejected a negotiation with the union. Pat Chambers, the leader of the Peach Strike, threatened to organize a strike throughout the San Joaquin Valley. The landowners, alerted by this disturbance, gave the workers a rise in their pay rates. (Benson and Loftis 203) When the prices of cotton fluctuated, it was decided to lower the wages of the workers on October 4, 1933. This led the CAWIU to vote to strike. In *In Dubious Battle*, Steinbeck alludes to the Peach and Cotton Strikes. Mac states that as the Growers Association announced a pay cut in the Togas Valley, he will work for a ruckus that would spread over the cotton fields. (Farsarella Dawson 132-133)

During the Cotton Strike in California, the cotton growers evicted the strikers from company housing. Consequently, 2,500 people settled on a farm owned by a small farmer and

a sympathizer named Morgan. Morgan let the strikers camp in his property, in exchange, they decided to pick his cotton. Morgan's actions made him live in a constant fear of reprisal. This is exactly what happened; the growers did take an action. Press accounts announced that Morgan's camp is a health threat for the community as it lacked sanitation. Therefore, he evicted the strikers from his land. Just like their counter part, the workers in the novel, also camp in Anderson's property, in exchange, they pick his apple for free. Anderson agrees as he knows that having his apples picked for free will permit him to pay his debts without submitting to the decrees of the Growers Association. Just as his counterpart Morgan, Anderson realizes that the workers are a huge threat, so he demands their eviction. In the novel, when the apple pickers refuse the demand of the growers to stop the strike, the president of the Growers Association, Bolter, along with the other growers decide to protect their property by authoritative means. They decide that the roads are to be closed and parades or gathering are forbidding on the roads. Bolter's threat correlates with the incidents of October 1933, where meetings were not allowed to be held on public roads. (Farsarella Dawson 133-135-137) This way, these events supplies Steinbeck with the ideas to deal with the clash between the capital and the labor.

When Steinbeck released his novel in 1936, Fred T. Marsh in a review in the *New York Book Review* says: "it seems to me one of the most courageous and desperately honest books that have appeared in a long time. It is both dramatically and realistically, the best labor and strike novel to come out of our contemporary economic and social unrest." (qtd. in Loftis 61) Indeed, *In Dubious Battle* is considered one of his best struggle novels that reflects the upheavals of the period of the thirties. The novelist takes the events of the strikes that took place in California in the agricultural fields as inspiration to provide his readers with ideas about group dynamics and social inequalities that lead people to suffer. He shows that it is the fascist landowners who control the region, and how the suffering of the migrant workers is

extended due to the communists. Steinbeck projects the destruction that might come from labor strikes and attributes the full responsibility of riots and instability to the fascists and communists.

1.2.3. Fighting the horror of the rise of the mob

Steinbeck and other American writers highly condemned fascism and communism as ideologies that instigated the working class to protest. They fought against them inside and outside the US. Their aim was to stop the spread of these ideologies. Steinbeck's fierce struggle against these ideologies is especially shown in his literature of the 1930s, influenced by the Great Depression.

With the Great Depression, Russian economists and political theorists interpreted the depression from a Marxist standpoint arguing that it is a sign for the collapse of capitalism in the United States. In the US, there was a fear of revolution. Addressing the American branch of the Communist Party in 1929, Stalin foretold that a revolution was looming. He urged the Communists in America to be primed to proclaim leadership in the imminent struggle for power. (Tuttleton 79) Meanwhile, the United States was so keen to fight communism and fascism as it considered both to be the motive behind riots and the rise of the mob. The Americans considered communism and fascism as anti-democratic and anti-liberal ideologies. The United States did not only fight against fascism and communism inside the United States but also faraway in other nations and so did Steinbeck through his literature and newspaper articles when he was a war correspondent during World War II and the Cold War.

Steinbeck loathed fascism and communism and he strongly stated this in his writings. In the collection of letters, *Writers Takes Sides Letters about The War in Spain from 418 American Authors* (1938), Steinbeck expressed his anti-fascist position by supporting republican Spain against Francisco Franco during the civil war in Spain (1936-39). His letter

is a notable statement where he acknowledges that the United States has its own fascist group.

(Newman)

Just returned from a little tour in the agricultural fields of California. We have our own fascist groups out here. They haven't bombed open towns yet but in Salinas last year tear gas was thrown in a Union Hall and through the windows of workingmen's houses. That's rather close isn't it? Your question as to whether I am for Franco is rather insulting. Have you seen anyone not actuated by greed who was for Franco? No, I'm not for Franco and his Moors and Italians and Germans. But some Americans are. Some Americans were for the Hessians England sent against our own revolutionary army. They were for the Hessians because they were selling things to them. The descendants of some of these Americans are still very rich and still touchy concerning the American Way, and our 'ancient liberties.'... (qtd. in Newman)

The party of Francoist regime in Spain is called "Traditionalist Spanish Phalanx and the Councils of the National Syndicalist Offensive". The name holds the word Phalanx just like Steinbeck's argument of phalanx which associates the group with irrational behaviors. This theory, as we will see in the third chapter, is illustrated in *In Dubious Battle*.

Other American writers like Ernest Hemingway and Martha Gellhorn also protested against Francoist regime as it is associated with fascism. The White House gave its highest support for their anti-fascist campaign. It also supported *The Spanish Earth*, a propaganda film made during the Spanish Civil War. It was written by Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos in support of the democratically elected Republicans. (Newman) This shows how the American government left no opportunity to crush down fascism even outside the country.

When America entered the two great wars, it promised its people to save them from fascism. Steinbeck had a patriotic response. He supported America's intervention in World

War II (1939-45) and in the Cold War years. He had also a direct relation with President Franklin Roosevelt. It was the idea of Steinbeck to layout an office of propaganda and he had communicated this plan personally to FDR himself. In order to support World War II, he wrote two books in 1942, *The Moon is Down* and *Bombs Away: The Story of a Bomber Team* at the behest of FDR. (Gladstein and Meredith 39-42) Steinbeck understood the power of resistance and the perils that comes from it. *The Moon is Down* is a play concerning anti-fascist defiance and resistance by the citizens of Norway, a country in northern Europe occupied by the Nazis. Steinbeck's work motivated people's resistance in the territories occupied by the Nazis from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The play instructs the residents what to do when alien soldiers, meaning the Nazis, invade their town. Hitler in turn, tried so hard to suppress the play from the Nazi-occupied lands. In Italy, Mussolini punished by death all the ones who possessed the book. Nevertheless, contraband copies were able to circulate and maintained anti-fascist resistance until 1946, the end of the Nazi occupation. The decisive impact of *The Moon is Down* was shown when, in 1946, the King of Norway Haakon VII honored Steinbeck with a medal, the Freedom Cross, that nation's highest civilian honor for his notable contribution to the war effort in Norway. Steinbeck explained that the reason behind writing the book is to celebrate democracy. (Cooper) This indicates that for Steinbeck, fascism and Nazism are anti-democracy.

Gladstein and Meredith note: "although Steinbeck was primarily a writer of fiction, he believed in being actively engaged in the service of his country and democracy." (42) As communism was spreading, Steinbeck supported American intervention in the Vietnam War (1955-75). For him, communism manipulates and prevents independence in Vietnam. (Willis 111) Steinbeck went to Vietnam as a war correspondent for the American newspaper "Newsday." Not only Steinbeck but also his two sons Thomas and Steinbeck IV participated in the war, especially Steinbeck IV, who was drafted in the United States Army in 1965 and

served in the war. He and his father wrote their experience about the war. (Gladstone and Meredith 40-42) Llyod Willis contends that Steinbeck abhorred communism; he hated its existence in the Soviet Union and China let alone its specter in the United States. For him, communism restricts the right of individuals. (111)

Steinbeck was also keenly aware that there was a difference between the Communism that existed as a global geopolitical force and the communism that existed as a force in American politics. Steinbeck understood that Communism functioned in American politics as a tool of fear and manipulation, and he loathed it in this guise as heartily as he loathed the force that threatened independence in Vietnam. (Willis 112)

Communism and fascism are ideologies that were seen by the Americans as tools to form the mob. The government dedicated its power to stop their spread. Hence, Steinbeck in his *In Dubious Battle*, projects this fear. Precisely, he demonstrates how the fascists give motives to the workers to follow the lead of the communists arguing that this would cause instability.

The United State was so alerted by the fascists and communists. It attributed the cycles of strikes that took place during the thirties to these ideologies. The government along with its intellectuals worked their way to stop the spread of these ideologies that push the mob to rise. Steinbeck, as a supporter of liberal governments, used the strikes that took place due to the communists and fascists to reflect the fear that haunted the US for centuries and to contribute to the fight against these ideologies.

1.3. Equality through Labor Strikes in South Africa: an Inspiration for Abrahams

In order for the capitalists to expand their wealth and power, they invaded most of Africa. In the case of South Africa, it was first occupied by the Dutch and then by the British Empire. As a white race, they took the non-whites as slaves meant to generate wealth and as their concern is profit, they exploited even the poor whites. In order to cast their full

dominance, the government set segregating laws in the first half of the 20th century. These laws were enforced by the coming of the National Party which set a system known as apartheid in 1948. They worked to restrict the power of the blacks, colored, and Indians in order to take them as a cheap labor-force to accumulate wealth. In the end, it is the labor-force that would take the lion's share in the destruction of apartheid and achievement of democracy. Taking his inspiration from the exploitative system, Abrahams writes his novel to celebrate and promote labor resistance.

1.3.1. Inequitable laws to maintain dominance and suppress power

With the formation of the Union of South Africa (1910), the government knew that its power and wealth depended on taking the non-whites as a cheap labor-force. For this, they set laws and rules to keep them submissive. In South Africa, not only the blacks who were exploited but also the white working class. The latter, succeeded to form unions and get some of its rights, yet after a long struggle; and when this was done, it was achieved at the expense of the non-white workers. Due to the capitalist exploitation of the non-whites, there was resistance like the strike of 1946 which inspired Abrahams to portray labor strikes as a strong form of protest.

In South Africa, black labor exploitation started in the 17th century where they were used by the Dutch as slaves. Starting from the 1800s, the British extended their empire by taking hold of South Africa; thus, sharing the land with the Dutch and enslaving the Black Africans. (Clark and Worger 3) There arose several conflicts and fights between the Dutch descendants known as Boers or Afrikaners, the British, and the native inhabitants (the Zulu), over who would rule South Africa. In 1899, the British won the fight. (Oldiges 3) After this struggle, there was the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The economy of the country relied on gold and diamond. In the early 1930s, about 400.000 non-Europeans worked as cheap laborers in the mines. In order to assure the black labor hand, rules and laws were

imposed. They started first by the official taking of the land, leaving only 10% of infertile land to the non-whites. Few Africans were obliged to work in farms which belonged to the whites and the majority went to the big cities to work in the mines. (Nesbitt 5) In the farms, the Africans were paid lower wages than working in the mines or manufacturing industries. The landowners precluded the Africans from leaving to the city through the help of local authorities where they refuse to give passes (Document of Identification) to the Africans to go and work in towns. The workers, who broke the contract, were whipped and placed in debt. The passes are used in order to prevent the Africans from living in town except those who work for the whites. If an African wants to work in the city, he had to report to the authorities to give him a permit, valid for six days only, to seek work in town. The permit is to be given only if the African shows his pass, if not, he will be arrested by the police. (Thompson 165-166) This followed strategy means that the non-white cannot ameliorate his situation whether working in the farm or in the mine. In *Mine Boy*, Abrahams makes his leading character Xuma obliged to seek employment in Johannesburg as there is no work in the countryside. Through his journey, we see how he and the other non-whites are unable to ameliorate their life. All of them have passes to stay in the city as long as they are working in the mines. Thus, Xuma is a stereotype for hundreds of thousands of Africans who were obliged to live by the discriminating laws.

In the early 20th century, skilled work positions were reserved for the people of British origin. Most Afrikaners were impoverished. Due to the quarrel between the South African English-speaking, who were allegiant to the British Empire, and the Afrikaners, Hertzog founded the National party in 1914. Its aim was to protect the interest of the Afrikaners from the dominance of the British. (Thompson 155-158) The National party worked its way to defend the right of the Afrikaner working class, but at the expense of the non-whites' interest.

In the mines of South Africa, there was wide-open discrimination. The Mine Workers' Union (1902), which consisted of white only, secured the interest of the white workers over the non-whites. Under the Mines and Works Act (1911), the government placed the white workers in skilled operations and it prohibited the African mineworkers from going on strike. In times of financial crises; however, the white workers found themselves at risk to be replaced by the cheap black labor-force. For example, in 1907, 1913, and 1914, the white miners went on a series of strikes concerning the working conditions and black competition. The mine owners were obliged to reserve some semiskilled work positions for the Whites. Just after World War I, the industry faced a severe financial crisis. This opened the discussion of the cost of white labor. The paychecks of white workers were fifteen times those of African workers. This made the Chamber of Mines obliged to replace a number of the highly paid white workers with black workers. This led to a strike known as the Rand Rebellion in 1922. The white miners formed armed protests. The Smut government went on the side of the owners and dedicated the law enforcement agencies to crush the strike. In this strike, 153 were killed and 687 were injured. (Thompson 167-159-160) In 1924, the Smuts government set the Industrial Conciliation Act (IC act). It states that white employers could form trade unions in any industry except farming and they can form an Industrial Council. This council was meant to deal with the disputes and assures conciliations before taking the strike as a solution. The legislations of 1924 were set due to the 1922 general strike. It was a move to prevent strikes by means other than force. When it comes to the Africans, they were not allowed to join white unions or form their own union. The government knew that if industrial legislations were not set, the blacks will learn from the unions and the strikes of the white workers. The IC act was even amended in order to allow the minister of the Industrial Council to decide the rates of pay and conditions of work without consulting African laborers. (Histon 30-33) The general strike of 1920 had a political coast for the South African Party. The

Nationalist party, led by Hertzog, arranged an electoral pact with the white Labor party (SALP). In 1924, they defeated the South African party and won the general election. In his term, between 1924 and 1933, Hertzog passed remarkable legislations in favor of the Afrikaners. He protected white industrial workers from the competition of the blacks. (Thompson 160) The National party set The Wage Act in 1925. It discusses the wages and conditions of work of semi-skilled and unskilled white workers in all industries and trade. The prime minister would request the board to meet. A trade union or an employer's association is to participate, if there is none of these, the request is to be made by a representative number of employers or employees. The board could only suggest that employees be paid a wage that allows them to enjoy their civilized habits of life, and it dealt only with the wages of the white workers. (Hirson 32) Poverty among the white working class was highly reduced but at the expense of the non-whites. The government gave the white workers sheltered employment at uncompetitive paychecks in state enterprises like the railroads and other public works. In manufacturing and in mining, the gap between skilled and unskilled wages was so high and the white work-force monopolized the skilled positions. (Thompson 169) This way, in South Africa, the black workers could see little difference between white workers and bosses. In fact, both were addressed as "boss." (Hirson 31) This wide gap is reflected in Abrahams' novel where the word "boss" is used for the whites and "boy" is related to the blacks as an indication of status.

Working in the gold mines was very exhausting, dangerous, and arduous. In 1931, 1,370 African miners were documented by the Miners' Phthisis Medical Bureau to have suffered from lung diseases. From 1933 to 1966, 19,000 laborers died in mining accidents. The living condition was miserable. Down to World War II and beyond, only 1% of African miners were legally allowed for family housing, the others lived in compounds. Companies obliged their laborers to live in huge compounds which were stringently guarded by

policemen. The living condition is extremely hard. The compounds hold between 3,000 and 6,000 miners. The workers were not allowed to bring their families, and shifts of miners to and from the compounds were closely guarded. (Thompson 168) The condition of workers highly inspired Abrahams. In *Mine Boy*, his protagonist, Xuma, explains how their work in the mine is unproductive and back-breaking. At the end of the day, the miners live in compounds. Abrahams projects all the danger that comes from working underground. Xuma's journey as a miner reveals a lot about the daily suffering and the danger that faced the black South Africans in the mines.

Due to these discriminations and exploitation, the non-whites engaged in several attempts to distract the rules set by the government. The mechanization of farms and the need to work pushed the non-whites to break the pass laws and settle in the city; the government failed to stop them. The number of Africans surpassed the whites in towns. Starting from 1945; approximately, 90,000 black South Africans resided in shanty towns and squatter camps, outside Johannesburg and other major cities. (Loy 271) The government provided sheltered employment for Whites. It also paid the unskilled white laborers higher wages than that of the unskilled African laborers. As a response, the Africans formed trade unions and organized numerous strikes even though they were not allowed to. (Thompson 181) Starting from 1940s, the Black Trade Union made little advancements in the political sphere. But still, this advancement was remarkable as their formation was illegal in the beginning. The Atlantic Charter of 1941 which emphasized the need to preserve human rights gave the Black South African nationalists a chance to claim their rights in South Africa and pushed the South African white leaders to listen to their concerns. (Beck 122) In 1943, 20,000 workers in the northeastern part of Johannesburg boycotted several times the buses that take them to work due to the raise of bus fares. Between 1939 and 1948, the police marked over a hundred gold and coal mine riots. The Council of Non-European Trade Unions (1941), held 158,000

members in 119 unions. (Thompson 181) The CNETU along with the African Mine Workers' Union (AMWU) were important organizations that addressed the rights of workers. The AMWU was led by Gaur Radebe, a member of the Communist Party. (Loy 271) Leaders of The African National Congress (1912), Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Oliver Tambo founded a Youth League in 1943. Its goal was democracy and non-racial society. To attain these, they used militant tactics like mass action campaigns. The establishment of the United Nations in 1945 and the rise of the Pan-African movement opened the path for South African organizations to fight racial discrimination and claim their right. (Beck 122) In 1944 for example, there arose an anti-pass campaign in Johannesburg. They tried to get millions of signatures to take down the pass laws, but the attempt was a failure. (Loy 273) By 1944, the CNETU and AMWU asked the government to investigate the conditions of the mineworkers. There were some concessions made for the black miners, but it did not really improve the rights or the standards of living of the blacks. For example, in 1946 the wages of the non-white workers were still so low below the poverty line, and when it comes to education, the government did not spend much on black people. (Beck 122) Thus, in 1946, the year in which Abrahams' *Mine Boy* was written, the AMWU demanded a rise in wage, paid leave, family housing, and the right to strike for the non-whites. For these demands to be achieved, 73000 miners went on strike. They shut down the production in ten mines for four days. The police intervened; they killed 12 miners and injured more than 1,200. Their intervention ended the strike. (Loy 271)

During the time of racial segregation, the only political organization which used to recruit all races is the Communist Party. It was founded by white intellectuals in 1921. Even though it was weak, by 1939, it attracted numerous members of the African National Congress (ANC), the African Political Organization (APO) which is a colored organization, and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), an Indian organization. The problem with

these three organizations is that each looked for the interest of its race. They didn't even succeed to mobilize the black masses. Meanwhile, the ANC, the party which will rule South Africa after the fall of apartheid, relied on the white liberals. (Thompson 177-175-176) However, the liberals failed to help the non-whites.

In South Africa, early militant attempts to change the status quo were weak. The black Africans, colored, and Indians were all together oppressed, yet they failed to raise their voice as one to achieve common emancipation as each one worked for the benefit of his race. The ANC then, relied on the white liberals. But time proved the hypocrisy that lies behind their promises.

1.3.2. The failure of liberalism

In addition to the weakness found in the organizations of the first half of the 20th century that were supposed to work for equality, is the failure of liberalism. The non-whites who were lucky enough to pursue their education studied the principles of liberalism. However, when they finished their studies and engage in work, they realized that liberalism is a mere illusion that exists only in schools.

In the reserves, peasants relied on the African National Congress, the African Political Organization, and the South African Indian Congress to regain their rights of having their own lands and power in local political sectors. The leaders of these organizations were non-whites western-oriented middle class. They were students of missionary schools with a liberal outlook. Their goal was to gain full equality with the whites, and later on, they would work to benefit the masses of their color. They used rational arguments to make pressure on the white electorate to eliminate discriminatory laws. The ANC worked to secure the educational, economic, social, and political elevation of the non-whites. Down to 1939, under the control of lawyers, clergy, and journalists, the organization sought to elevate the status of the Africans by constitutional means. They worked to get the support of the white liberal sympathizers like

journalists, missionaries, and politicians. Just like the ANC, the colored and Indian organizations looked for the interest of their race. In the 1920s and 1930s, the three organizations worked with white liberals. One of them is Edgar Brookes, a senator who represented Africans under the legislation of 1936. Starting from 1921 forward, liberals established joint councils consists of groups of whites, Africans, coloreds, and Asians. Their goal was to discuss racial matters. In 1929, they founded the South African Institute of Race Relations, a liberal institution. This organization held approximately 150,000 Africans, 15,000 coloreds, and 250 whites. Its role is to trace out the aspects of racial segregation and its effects and publish them. (Thompson 174-175-176) Some politicians, like W.G. Ballinger warned against liberal assistance as he argued would awake the consciousness of the black and colored workers to ask for their rights, and the trade unions could reach power. (Histon 35) In parliament, there was serious discussion about the condition of workers by the liberals. They suggested that reform is needed to better their condition. However, their true intention was to prevent the rise of the working class. (Thompson 180) When the Wage Act was amended in 1937, the board claimed to reconsider the wages of the colored workers in Cape Town, yet the wages remained so miserable. Revd S.W. Lavis asserted that the claim that the colored workers are protected by the wage board and the industrial council is nonsense. (Hirson 32) Besides, few white South Africans were susceptible to this matter as most of them sought to keep their power and privileges. Accordingly, the three organizations, the ANC, APO, SAIC, did not achieve substantial and tangible victories from the liberals. (Thompson 176)

...for more than half of the twentieth century, the cultural hegemony of white liberal values and white bourgeois lifestyles made it difficult for several generations of African nationalists to radically oppose a system to which they owed many loyalties and allegiances. (Fatton 2)

In his analysis of Peter Abrahams' literature, Jean-Philippe Wade states that Abrahams projects the inability of western liberalism to achieve democracy. For example, in *Song of the City* (1945), he shows the ineffectiveness of white liberalism in addressing the problems of the black proletariat. The novel shows how the voice of the black radical Ndaba is shut when it is indirectly expressed through the white liberal Roger Jones. In this story, he also shows how in a white dominant society, the traditional African culture is denied. This indicates how Abrahams found it difficult to trust the liberals. (90-92) In *Mine Boy*, he ignores their presence.

Liberalism in South Africa during the system of segregation was of no use for the non-whites. When it comes to the organizations which fought for the non-whites, the ANC, APO, and SAIC, instead of achieving success, they enflamed the government who won the election of 1948 more to rearrange itself against the non-whites attempts to reach power. Yet, the more the government is brutal, the more there is a thirst for resistance.

1.3.3. Labor resistance: the lion's share in the realization of democracy in South Africa

After the Second World War, things were like hell for the non-whites. The government that succeeded the United Party in 1948, the National Party, set the apartheid system that reinforced the dominance of the Afrikaners and the white race as a whole at the expense of the non-whites. All matters were related to profit. Just like the previous government, the new one was fully aware that its profit depends on setting the path for keeping the non-whites as a cheap labor-force. This let the deprived to revolt to change their situation. In South Africa, it was the working class who changed the history of the country, from dictatorship to democracy.

Apartheid was enacted in 1948 by the National party government—a party consists of Afrikaners—and it remained an official practice until Nelson Mandela took power in 1994. For the Nationalist party, the non-whites, who constituted the majority, were a threat, which is

why apartheid Laws were set. For the party, this would restrict their power. (Clark and Worger 3-4) Lester R. Kurtz asserts further: “The Afrikaners developed an explicit theology and philosophy of white racial superiority and a legal and economic system enforced by a modern military and police force that deliberately excluded nonwhites from economic and political power.” These measures were applied as the government realized that profit and power relied on the maintenance of apartheid.

When the National government took office, it worked to close the economic gap between the Afrikaaners and the English speaking whites. The government helped the white Afrikaner farmers to mechanize their farms. It also helped them to keep a low wage for the black laborers. All Afrikaners from small workers to businessmen benefited from the new government. The average Afrikaner's income increased remarkably in relation to the English speaking white. In 1976, it reached 71% and it continued to rise thereafter. (Thompson 188-189) Ignoring the presence of the other races, the new government legally reserved skilled labor positions and higher salaries for the whites. Apartheid also gave the unskilled white workers privileges over the blacks and colored people. (Seekings 81) The non-whites were discriminated not only as workers but in all aspects of life. The Population Registration Act (1950) classified people into categories according to their race. This act destroyed several families who were formed of different races. Under the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), the non-whites were banned from marrying the other race. Public facilities were separated for white and black use. The National party eliminated the voting rights of African and colored people. Education was also divided. Mandatory education for the non-whites ends at a young age. The aim was to direct the blacks into manual labor from a young age. The National party reinforced the pass laws and gave the police the total power to prevent anyone who breaks these laws. For example, if an African stays in urban areas for more than seventy-two hours, he has to have a permit by an authorizing official. Again, if he does not show the

required documents, he will be arrested immediately. (Thompson 187-190-193) The history of apartheid is well-known by the violence and brutality of the police. While the police were present in the white communities in order to protect them from crimes, in the black communities they were there in order to control them and prevent all kinds of opposition. Arrests and sending to detentions were done by force, brutality, and violence. (Clarke 199) The implementing of pass laws and placing iniquitous policemen assure that no matter what, the Africans are always to be taken as second class citizens used to double the profit for the capitalists. In South Africa, the blacks, colored, and Indians were totally deprived and unrepresented and liberalism was shown to be words in the air. These made the non-whites realize that their freedom will not be achieved until the deprived races unify and engage in resistance and working class movements. Through strikes and protests, the injustices that were taken place in South Africa were outspoken.

The Africans who were taken as the black middle class became leaders of organizations that worked to resist apartheid. Inspired by the brutality of the regime and by the revolutionary movements that took place in other countries, black leaders transcended their ethnic, regional, and class divisions and worked as a one body to mobilize the masses and confront the regime. Starting from the 1950s, the ANC became led by a new generation influenced by the miners' strike of 1946. Nelson Mandela was one of its members. (Thompson 207) In fact, this is the strike that influenced Abrahams to write *Mine Boy*. At the end of the novel, a mine strike marks the rise of black consciousness indicating that freedom is to be achieved by labor resistance.

The resistance campaign that was launched in 1952 by the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress attracted wide support. The non-whites started to defy the discriminatory laws; a large number of them were arrested. Due to the rioting that broke out in several towns, the Parliament had enacted penalties. The ANC called off that campaign

in the following year. In 1955, the ANC formed a coalition that represents the South African society inside and outside South Africa. This coalition holds the South African Indian Congress, the South African Colored People's Organization (SACPO) formed in 1953, the Congress of Democrats, made of white members, and the multiracial South African Congress of Trade Unions (1955). On June 26, 1955, 3,000 delegates from these organizations, Africans, Indians, colored and whites, met in an open space near Johannesburg to adopt a Freedom Charter, a one that states the policies of the ANC. This meeting was broken up by the police. The Freedom Charter asserts that the government has to treat all people equally in all the spheres of life. As a reaction to this charter, the government enacted further repressive legislation. In 1956, it arrested 156 people and charged them with treason stating that their plan is to overthrow the state and replace it by a communist one. In 1957, African men and women in some cities started to boycott the bus company that took them to work as it raised the fares. Meanwhile, Mandela and Luthuli and their colleagues pursued in their mission to reconcile between all races in the country. As the government did not want to respond to the call of the Africans, this caused divisions of opinion and perspective among the politically conscious non-whites. Some contended that the ANC's alliance with the Congress of Democrats had impeded its goals. They wanted a totally purely African movement. In 1959, Some Africanists broke away from the ANC and formed the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). Their first move was in 1960 where they launched a campaign to end the pass laws. The Africans responded to the campaign and assembled at police stations in Sharpeville near Johannesburg without passes. The police responded by killing 67 and wounding 186. Following this incident, there were chains of labor strikes and rioting in several parts of the country. The government declared a state of emergency. It mobilized the army and announced that the ANC and the PAC are outlawed organizations. The police beat and arrested the

protesters; some of them were white protesters. The government obliged the workers to go back to work. These measures called off the campaign. (Thompson 208-209-210)

Due to these incidents and resistance, there was a development of class consciousness among black workers. With the rapid growth of industrialization along with the increasing number of black workers and the development of class consciousness, there was the creation of the black trade union movement. This led to series of labor strikes which demanded higher wages and the improvement of the working conditions. (Thompson 212) In the 1970s, labor militancy and the strike in Durban in 1973 revealed the shaky foundation of the regime. The strike which involved 30,000 workers in Durban can be taken as a successful action. The regime was fully dependent on black labor for the economy to stand. The strikes are signs of widespread discontent as they disrupt the work that kept the power of the government. The Durban labor uprising had a significant role in inspiring all the non-whites citizens in South Africa. In 1976, the Soweto's uprising by the black pupils and students were faced by fierce police brutality. More than sixty protesters were killed. Since the Soweto uprising, South Africa has changed. The culture of protest was very prevalent among the non-whites and the power of the whites starts to gradually decrease. (Kurtz) In 1977, the second International Labor Organization (ILO) held a conference in Geneva against apartheid. P. Ramamurti, an Indian politician and a member of the Communist Party, pledged the Indian working class to support the black workers in South Africa in their fight against the apartheid fascist regime. (Krishnan 102) He came to the conclusion that: "Today's epoch is an epoch of Vietnam, epoch of Angola, epoch of liberation movements. This epoch will succeed in South Africa too. Whatever may be the difficulties, the movement will face them. We take a pledge in this conference that we, through the trade unions of various countries and through their solidarity actions, rally people against apartheid..." (qtd. in Krishnan 103) By 1979, there were twenty-

seven African trade unions, yet illegal. These trade unions were led by some African working class and they had a remarkable support from white activists. (Thompson 224)

The most important social force in this struggle is organized Black workers. Today close to half a million Black workers are organized into the various democratic trade unions. By the end of 1985 most of those unions will have joined together in a new federation - the largest concentration of organized, militant workers in South African history. This historic development makes even more pressing the question of the role of Black workers in the struggle against apartheid, and the different question of the role of democratic trade unions in that struggle. All South African progressives agree at least on the rhetoric that "the workers must lead the struggle." (O'Meara 412-413)

In the 1980s, riots and rebellions were everywhere in South Africa. In 1983 and 1984, workers boycotted the buses that took them to work and miners' strikes were widespread. There took place 390 labor strikes involving 240,000 workers. In an attempt to control the African workers, the government legalized black Trade Unions and gave them the right to strike. In 1986, the government eliminated some laws. For example, some jobs which were reserved by law for the whites only, became opened for other races. Business centers were opened for black traders. Legalizing the trade unions, which in fact was meant to control them, had backfired. By 1986, the CUSA-AZACTU (the National Council of Trade Unions) and the COSATU were politically militant. This gave power to the Africans. The CUSA-AZACTU was saturated with the black consciousness philosophy. The demand of these two national confederations of wage rise had a considerable success. Starting from 1984, the parliament started to hold colored and Indians. Yet, the whites were still dominant as they can outvote the colored and Indians on important matters. (Thompson 225-227-229)

The Botha government refused to let the non-whites gain more power. In 1986, it banned more than thirty organizations, COSATU, the most militant and largest black trade union federation was among them. The media were prohibited to cover the measures taken to the overthrow of apartheid. Regardless of the oppression, the black workers kept their resistance. In 1987, the government marked 1,148 strikes; the most serious one was a strike led by the National Union of Mineworkers. It held 500,000 miners and it lasted three weeks. In this strike, 9 workers were killed and 300 were injured. Notwithstanding they failed to achieve wage increase, the government gave holiday benefits. (Thompson 236-239)

The government pursued its policy of keeping the pass laws effective to prevent the Africans from coming to towns except as migrant laborers on temporary contracts. The Africans broke the rules. In 1984, 238,894 Africans were arrested for pass law offenses. In reality, it was impossible to stop the overflow of the blacks to the cities as they needed to work. It is as what one of the workers said: "The countryside is pushing you into the cities to survive; the cities are pushing you in the countryside to die." (qtd. in Thompson 226)

During the 1980s, South Africa was living in a civil war. All negotiations with Mandela failed until the coming of Botha's successor, Frederik Willem de Klerk. When he took office in 1990, he lifted the ban from the ANC, the PAC, and the SACP. De Klerk also removed restrictions on thirty-three organizations like the United Democratic Front and the Congress of South African Trade Unions. Non-violent political prisoners were freed; Mandela, who had spent twenty-seven years in jail, was one of them. Mandela's negotiation with de Klerk was delayed and sometimes tensed due to several issues. The Conservative party along with some organizations refused any negotiations with the blacks. Some Africans did not trust the negotiations with the white government. During this time, protests were everywhere and the government responded by violence. Mandela, who was influenced by Marxism and some communists, became convinced that the government will not stop its violence. In 1992, the

ANC organized series of strikes and protests. The biggest strike was in August when Mandela led approximately a million of workers to the government buildings. At that time, the country was on anarchy. Mandela and de Klerk realized that a negotiation has to go back on track. (Thompson 246-247-251-254) Starting from 1980, apartheid became one of the most important issues in the world that no one can ignore. With international sanctions and wide spread rebellions and strikes, the National party government renounced apartheid and declared that all the inhabitants of South Africa are allowed to participate in the elections of 1994. Accordingly, Mandela was democratically elected and became South Africa's first black president. (Clark and Worger 5-6)

With the coming of the National party, the white capitalist government reinforced its exploitation of the black laborers. Yet, the more brutal is the system, the more the will of freedom comes to the surface. The strike of 1946, the one which inspired Abrahams, was a motor that awoke the revolutionary class consciousness of the oppressed. Fed up from the long decades of exploitation, the non-white workers achieved democracy through protests and the chains of strikes. This is what Abrahams, as we will see, promotes in his novel.

Conclusion

This chapter presents how the 19th and 20th centuries were decades saturated by economic, political, and social turmoil where the working class saw labor strikes as a social movement that achieves social change while the capitalists and governments took it as a specter that it must be suppressed. Zola, Steinbeck, and Abrahams' novels are built upon the economic, political, and social instability of their time. They all project the way the upper class was terrified from the attempt of the working class to rise to power through strikes.

Chapter Two: The Drastic Life under Systems of Exploitation: a Double Edge

Throughout history, workers are exploited under the feudal system; and then, under capitalism. In South Africa, the workers suffered due to apartheid, a system that stands for capitalism. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the issues that face the working class are thoroughly addressed by theorists and novelists. *Germinal*, *In Dubious Battle*, and *Mine Boy* deal with exploitation and the way the capitalists cast their domination over the working class. In this chapter, the Marxism of Georg Lukács is used to argue that life and men's experience under systems of exploitation, reify the social relations, secure the working class's consent, and make them subjects to false perceptions. At the same time, that same experience creates resistance. I argue as well that the socialists have a role in pushing the working class to resist the exploitative forces.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first one explores the capitalists' exploitation of workers in *Germinal*, *In Dubious Battle*, and *Mine Boy*. This part, projects the way the workers are dehumanized and taken as a commodity meant to generate profit. The second section deals with the false consciousness of both, the proletariat and the capitalists under systems of exploitation. It explores the way both classes are affected by the system. It demonstrates how life and experience under capitalism and apartheid, reifies the social relations and procure the consent of the mass. The second section shows also the affliction that the workers face due to the rules set by the capitalists. The third section studies the way that same experience under systems of exploitation in addition to radical ideologies, awake the workers' revolutionary class consciousness. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the way commodity production degrades the humans' critical faculties but at the same time, it is this experience under systems of exploitation that pushes the workers to go on strike.

2.1. Profit out of Systems of Exploitation

Whenever the term “exploitation” is mentioned, it often conjures up an image of poor workers laboring for long hours for the whole day for just a small paycheck. These workers are under the supervision of a wealthy owner. In the three studied novels, the novelists pit two social classes into struggle. In *Germinal*, the poor in France are put to work in the mines owned by the bourgeois capitalists. In *In Dubious Battle*, the migrant laborers in the US work in the farms owned by corporate landlords, and the non-white and poor white South Africans in *Mine Boy* are haired as slaves in the pits owned by the white capitalists. The novels show the way the capitalists are careless about the condition of the workers. The deprived class is dehumanized and put to work for long hours to survive the month while the owners of mines and lands double their wealth.

Social relations between people are related to the way they produce their everyday material. In the Marxist thought, the modes of production in the modern bourgeois society are based on a set of social relation between two main classes, the capitalists who own the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and the proletariat whose “labour power” is bought by the capitalists for profit. The proletariat class, as it does not possess the means to produce and the right to sell commodities, it is forced to sell its “labour power” or its capacity to work for the one who pays more. It is the only way left for the deprived to get money to cuter their needs. The owners consider the workers’ labour power a cheap commodity to purchase. The most important relationship in a capitalist society is that between the workers and the owners. This relation assures production, and thus, survival. However, this relationship is exploitative. This kind of mode of production is characterized by unequal class arrangements. It is arranged in a way that workers do the labor of production while the rich or the owners of the lands and the means of production take all the benefits and accumulate wealth. This means that the workers do not own anything; they have to work for the bourgeoisie to survive and the

bourgeois increase their wealth at their expense. It is due to this capitalist mode of production that “brutal exploitation” emerges. “Wage-labour” does not create any property for the worker; it creates instead capital which means a kind of property that exploits “wage-labour.” (Marx and Engels 14-16-22) In the case with apartheid, it is a system that is related to capitalism. It is characterized by exploitation just like capitalism. Socialist writer and activist Gary Lapon states: “exploitation is not unique to capitalism. It has been a feature of all class societies, which are divided into two main classes, an exploited class that produces the wealth and an exploiter class that expropriates it.” According to Ronaldo Munck, apartheid is a system that stands for capitalism. For the radicals, the nature of apartheid helps in the development of capitalism in South Africa. Munck argues further “Apartheid is thus determined by capitalist development in South Africa. Increasingly, the interests of individual capitalists, the capitalist system, and the apartheid state, were viewed as identical, thus foreclosing any possibility of conflict within apartheid capitalism.” (28) Nicoli Natrass states: “The determinants of racial policies were seen as ultimately rooted in the requirements of the economy. If a system could be shown to be functional to capitalism, then it was assumed that it must have arisen for those purposes.” (qtd. in Munck 28) This way, the workers in *Mine Boy* regardless of their race are exploited in the same way as the ones in *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle*.

2.1.1. The low social rank: a commodity to purchase and exploit

In capitalist societies, the wealthy cast their domination in all the spheres of life. Therefore, the proletariat finds no path but to follow what is traced by the dominant class. As they are deprived of everything, they find themselves forced to sell their labor-power to the one who offers more. The workers in the three studied novels are taken as a commodity to purchase for a low wage to accumulate wealth. Except their ability to work, they own nothing.

The poor social rank in Montsau work in the mine for the bourgeois middle class as this is the only path to survive. The grandfather Bonnemort and his family have to sell their physical ability to work as the system provides no other alternative. Notwithstanding exploitation and the hazardous working conditions, the family works there for more than a century. The mine becomes their sole dwelling inherited to their children. As the laborers do not own the mines and the means of production; the owners purchase them like a commodity.

In *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), building his ideas upon Marx's studies, Lukács argues that capitalism renders everything into a commodity or a product meant for generating profit for capitalists, even man's ability to work. "...the objectification of their labour-power into something opposed to their total personality (a process already accomplished with the sale of that labour-power as a commodity) is now made into the permanent ineluctable reality of their daily life. Here, too, the personality can do no more than look on helplessly while its own existence is reduced to an isolated particle and fed into an alien system." (90) Lukács states as well the way commodification is the central aspect of bourgeois society.

...the problem of commodities must not be considered in isolation or even regarded as the central problem in economics, but as the central, structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects. Only in this case can the structure of commodity-relations be made to yield a model of all the objective forms of bourgeois society together with all the subjective forms corresponding to them.

(83)

Etienne comes to Montsau to look for a job as he is fired for insubordination when he was in Lille. Again, he stumbles into a milieu characterize by danger and exploitation. When Etienne reaches Montsau, he knew the kind of work he is apt to as he has experienced the exhausting

work from childhood. His conversation with Bonnemort in page 10 and 11 denotes that the mine owners will continue to beat the tar out of the workers until there is nothing left of them. The workers prefer to work even more until there is nothing to give just for the sake of a considerable pension. In his conversation with Etienne, Bonnemort admits that he should stop work considering his age, but then, he states: "I'm not going to; I'm not such a fool. I can get on for two years longer, to my sixtieth, so as to get the pension of one hundred and eighty francs." (11) Zola shows how the suffering and the humiliating life of the working class gain momentum in every passage. The majority of the miners are illiterate. They are inmates of the mines. People start working at the age of eight and they keep working until they are no longer able to do so. Zola portrays how exploitation is intensified by employing women and children. In *Germinal*, the wage given to the head of the family is so low. Accordingly, it is required more than one hand. The Maheu and his children collaborate in order to make ends meet. Catherine who is only 15 years old starts working at an early age. She works as a tram-pucher at the bottom of the mine. Children have no education. Other than working in the mine, they have no prospect or expectation. Exploitation is a salient feature in their life. Zola, in his *Germinal*, criticizes the living and working conditions and documents the exploitation and wretchedness of the deprived through generations.

When it comes to *In Dubious Battle*, it provides us with the circumstances that the US was living in during the 1930s. Steinbeck portrays the suffering of the migrant farmers in California and how they are exploited in the agricultural sector by the fascist landlords. These migrant farmers lost their land and come to California to seek a job in corporate farms.

Writings that emerged with that of Steinbeck, like William Faulkner's *Snopes Trilogy*, are mostly political where the point of focus is the economically oppressed crowds. (West 130) In *In Dubious Battle*, Steinbeck shows the way the fascist landlords dominate the entire region and how they exploit the poor groups in California. Just like Etienne, old Dan is a

migrant worker seeking work. As jobs are hard to find, Dan compares the farmers with “hogs” saying that they “move about the country like a bunch of hogs.” (63) He and the other farmers migrate to California and sell their labor-power to the landowners in order to survive. Their position in class does not allow them to have their own land. They came to the Torgas Valley seeking a decent life; however, they found themselves exploited by the landlords. Corporate companies have the overall control and the land belongs to them. The apple pickers have limited means; they cannot practice another job other than their work in the apple fields. In a passage, Mac states who control everything by saying: “Here’s the layout. Torgas is a little valley, and it’s mostly apple orchards. Most of it’s owned by a few men. Of course there’s some little places, but there’s not very many of them.” (43) For Steinbeck, these small groups of individuals are fascists. In his letters, collected later on under the title *A life in Letters* and published in (1975), Steinbeck openly clarifies who are these men who control everything.

I must go over into the interior valleys. There are five thousand families starving to death over there, not just hungry, but actually starving. The government is trying to feed them and get medical attention to them, with the fascist group of utilities and banks and huge growers sabotaging the thing all along the line and yelling for a balanced budget. (131)

Therefore, the fascists, meaning the extreme version of the capitalists, exploit the migrant workers in the Torgas Valley. The ranchers do not even give the workers any means to address their grievances. These workers are used, sold, or abandoned according to the command of the boss. As the farmers are taken as private property, they are treated like a commodity bereft of their full humanity. Jim for example, informs us that when his father was working he “reduced his movements to a machine-like perfection.” (65)

In Steinbeck’s novel, not only the migrant farmers but also small growers are under the threat and sometimes the mercy of the big growers. This is illustrated by Anderson whose

mortgage is hold by the Torgas Finance Company. In the Torgas Valley, it is the Growers Association, owned by the Torgas Finance Company, which stipulates the rates of the wages; Anderson pays according to their rate. When Mac asked him permission to let the protesters camp in his land and the farmers will pick his apples for free, Anderson was hesitant. Even though this would allow him to pay off his debts without submitting to the decrees of the Association, he was so hesitant. Anderson knows who holds the overall power in the area. This shows that it is the big companies that control the financial system. Consequently, they have the upper hand upon the small growers who go against their will. In case Anderson accepts, the Growers Association can foreclose his land. (Farsarella Dawson 133) Steinbeck openly criticizes the agricultural system in California. For him, the fascists contribute a great deal to the distortion of America as a land of equal opportunities. With the depression, the focus of the modernists is the social and economic maladies. The idea of progress and America as a land of prosperity is profoundly questioned.

When it comes to Abrahams, his novel *Mine Boy* portrays the way the autochthonous inhabitants suffer under the system of segregation which is characterized by exploitation and brutality. Reading the novel, one could cognize that life in the mines of Johannesburg is a forlorn. The capitalists put an iron hand over everything letting the non-whites deprived. In fact, the mines hold as well white workers. They have privileges over the non-whites; but still, they are also exploited in a dangerous working place.

Abrahams portrays how the land in South Africa belongs to the capitalists. What is left for the non-whites is the underground which becomes their sole abode as their life revolves there. It is there where they perform a very exhausting labor. Carefully surveyed by a merciless overseer, the workers conjure up an authentic image of hopeless miserable people laboring in perilous places while the absentee owners comfortably generate wealth. The capitalists impose apartheid in order to keep the blacks and colored people in South Africa

under their control; thus, under their exploitation. In his book, *Peter Abrahams*, Michael Wade mentions: “Once in the towns the blacks are [believed to be] feckless, lazy, irresponsible, and unable to improve their miserable material conditions; this situation is largely because of their innate disabilities...” (qtd. in Loy 276) However, this is a strategy followed in order to take the blacks as a cheap labor-force. The blacks are not able to improve their situation not because of their innate disabilities but because everything is taken by a small group of individuals. Xuma comes to the city to work in the mines. Even though working in the mine is difficult and dangerous, still he decides to engage there as the system gives no other choice. Abrahams is projecting the effect of taken off fertile lands from the blacks. In his first day at work, Xuma is harshly treated. He and the other miners work for the whole day. The manager uses the whistles to indicate when the miners start or finish work. The miners are taken as machines meant only for hard work and profit. In this system of exploitation, Xuma feels trapped, weary, and inanimate; he is able to see this in the face of the other miners.

And over all those was the bitter eyes and hardness of the white man who had told him to push the truck when he did not know how. But these were not the worst. These were confusing and frightening. It was the strangeness of it all that terrified him. And the look in the eyes of the other men who worked with him. He had seen, that look before when he was at home on the farms. He had seen it when he herded his cattle and when a dog came among the sheep and barked. The eyes of these men were like the eyes of the sheep that did not know where to run when the dog barked. It was this that frightened him. (41)

When Georg Lukács was once asked about whether there is a profound bond between the worker and the factory owner, he replied by saying: “Yes quite decidedly. The same as that between the spider and the fly in its web.” (qtd. in Nineham 11) The workers are like flies

trapped in a spider web unable to escape. Pass Laws are required in order to be able to go from place to place and to ensure that the miners are the property of the owners. In the novel, one of the miners gets lung disease. As he is dying, he wants to get a pass that allows him to go home. The pass is required “to show that he was not escaping from the mines.” (154) This situation shows that apartheid holds strong aspects of exploitation found in capitalism. In his article, Jean-Philippe Wade mentions how Michael Wade, in his book *Peter Abrahams* (1972), insists on the fact that this situation denotes capitalism in colonial context. The blacks labor under hazardous conditions and they are treated like slaves. This does not reflect the free workers of liberal capitalist governments. The pass system is a total violation of the rights of individuals. (96) When the mine manager first saw Xuma, he directly accepted him for work as he is physically “strong,” not because it is his right to have a job in a supposedly democratic state. The capitalists see Xuma and all the non-whites who have the capacity to work as a valuable commodity to purchase. The miners are forced to live in compounds. This way, when they start working, they sell themselves completely. Xuma notices that the march of the miners from the compound to the mine and their return to the compound are guarded by the mine police-men. When Xuma asks Johannes about this, he replies: “It is the law.” Michael Wade states that depersonalization is a state of mind that the black workers suffer from in urban life under the dominance of the whites. Xuma’s description of his kind of work is an analysis of the psychological consequences of working under such a system. Xuma compares the eyes of the workers with that of a sheep. This reduction of humans into the level of animals makes men realize that his work is pointless. All kinds of experiences in the mine have an effect in terms of neurotic behavior. Due to this work, Xuma grows to be an anxious person who suffers from psychic unrest. (101-102) Leah informs Xuma about how he has to fight and be tough if he wants to live in the city.

Abrahams has one of his characters describe social relations in Johannesburg, relations built around material possessions rather than feelings and emotions which are thought only to make one vulnerable....The life-styles of the city were based on individualism and materialism... (Hamilton 151-152)

Abrahams shows as well that the mine holds white workers. This indicates that the white capitalists are careless about the low social rank whatsoever their race. Nevertheless, they have privileges over the black workers. The white miners are paid higher wages compared to the blacks. They eat and rest in the shack not like the non-whites who take their lunch outside. Besides, the whites do not live in the compounds. Xuma was astonished to see how the house of Paddy is beautiful. Yet, this does not exclude the fact that their work in the mine is a total exploitation where the capitalists exploit the fact that these workers do not have another way but their work in the mine. Down the pits, all races "work together." (63) In fact, "It was the duty of the white man and the boss boy to find out whether it was safe to work. It was their duty to see if everything was in order." (105) Xuma "gave the orders and he knew the Red One would not contradict him for the Red One knew the wisdom of his orders." (106)

"They worked shoulder to shoulder. Two strong men. A white man and a black. And the conveyer belt sang and the picks fell and the spades grated and the drills hummed. And everywhere men worked. Their bodies streaming with sweat..." (106)

When the white miners see how Xuma works hard, this encourages them to give all what they can. Xuma is seen by the whites to give orders to do this and that. "And, perhaps, he would look up and catch Paddy's eyes, and the Red One would be smiling through his teeth while between them they broke the wall of rock." (107) This way, in the underground all give their ability to work to the capitalists who take the profit. These capitalists are absentee owners; all what they see is the gold extracted. Other than that, nothing seems to matter.

The workers in Zola's *Germinal*, Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle*, and Abrahams' *Mine Boy*, are exploited by the powerful class. As the wealthy cast their domination over the economy and politics, the deprived find themselves forced to follow the orders set by the capitalists. The latter is ready to take more, using all means, until there is nothing left.

2.1.2. Surplus profit to double the wealth

In the three studied novels, one can extract the way the surplus profit is reserved for the dominant class to double its wealth. Exploitation is at the core of capitalism and apartheid. The workers spend their life in the place of work and they are dehumanized and taken as a commodity. In order to maximize the profit, rules and strategies are set.

The middle class in *Germinal* work to double their wealth through different means. The measures taken dehumanize the working class. The company where the Maheu family works is so huge; it surveys several mines. It holds ten thousand employees. Workers are portrayed by Zola as slaves and he uses a lot of details to portray and describe this operation. Work there does not have an end; it operates approximately twenty-four hours a day. "The mine never rested; day and night human insects were digging out the rock six hundred meters below the beetroot fields." (47) Coal is so valuable. It is Aladdin lamp for the mine owners to increase their wealth. The workers go through a whole process of work and the extracted coal all go to the capitalists. The workers according to Marx are alienated from the product produced. In the introduction of *Capital I* (1867), Ernest Mandel says that for Marx:

...the needs of the worker as a producer and a citizen – his need to develop a full personality, to become a rich and creative human being, etc.; these needs are brutally crushed by the tyranny of meaningless, mechanical, parcellized work, alienation of productive capacities and alienation of real human wealth. (72)

At the end of the month, a wage is given that does not equal their type of work. The process of exploitation is concealed in an immediate world of selling and buying. In his Book *Capital*

I, Marx explains how the capitalists take the maximum profit from the working class. The poor work for the capitalists in exchange for a wage. The owners assure that the wage given is so low compared to the time of labor and the value or service produced. This difference between the output value and the wage, which Marx calls “surplus profit,” assures profit for the capitalists. In a capitalist society, exploitation is covered by the wage system. The capitalists made it seem like a fair exchange is made, but in fact, the opposite takes place. (Lapon)

In his analysis of *Germinal*, André Maurois states: “the workers produce a surplus value, and this surplus value is confiscated under the name of profits by the capitalists.” (56) When coal is sold it brings a huge amount of money while the miners, who have spent a lot of time in the pits, take a low wage as they are paid only for their capacity to work. Therefore, the surplus profit is all reserved for the rich capitalists and the miners are given a wage that does not cover the bare necessities of life. If the miners want to gain extra pennies, they have to spend more time in the mine. As the capital does not belong to the miners, the more they work the more profit the capitalists accumulate. Purchases of the miners are done from the company store and most of the time it is done on credit. This way, the middle class take the profit from all angles.

In *History and Society* (1922), Max Weber explains that under a capitalist economy, labor and all human actions are reduced into mechanical and measurable processes. (Lukács 209) In *Germinal*, Paul Négrel warns Maheu to be careful not to get into an accident as the company has to pay him a pension. Négrel’s concern is purely economical. He tells Maheu:

Go along! when your heads are smashed, is it you who will have to bear the consequences? Not at all! it will be the Company which will have to pay you pensions, you or your wives. I tell you again that we know you; in order to get two extra trains by evening you would sell your skins. (39)

Paul Négrel is not concerned with the safety of Maheu from a humanitarian standpoint; he is just worried that he would have to pay small pensions in case of injury. This proves how the miners are taken as a commodity to produce value and to assure surplus profit not as humans to sympathize with. Social relations are built upon profit only. The workers are valued only because they produce value.

Germinal was not just an extended strike report. It had many other literary qualities. The powerful imagery conveyed Zola's sense of the dehumanising force of capitalist society. Men and women were denied freedom and human wholeness, subordinated to an alien logic in which the production of commodities was more important than human beings. Thus the mine--named Le Voreux (with echoes of devouring)--was depicted as a living monster. (Birchall)

The workers in *Germinal* as dehumanized and meant to maximize the wealth. The novelist highly criticizes the methods used to extract more profit. This way, as an intellectual, he gives a strong warning to the mine owners.

Just like in *Germinal*, in *In Dubious Battle*, the landowners use all what it takes to exploit the apple pickers and in order to keep their dominance over the region. Steinbeck depicts how the barons of lands use different methods to extract all what they can from the laborers. The fascist landowners take the huge portions of lands. This way, families find no opportunities but to work for the big companies. The big growers exploit the helpless workers through hard tasks and they oblige them to work for long hours in the apple fields in exchange for low wages. The landowners make use of all what comes to their hand to double their wealth. Just like Bonnemort in *Germinal*, Dan is old now, but he is still working from morning to dawn and climbing trees using a rickety ladder. The owners do not even bother to spend some money on safe equipment. Notwithstanding Dan has worked for the whole of his life, he is not able to live a prosperous life. The reason behind this is the low wage and lack of

opportunities as corporate farming prevents him from having his own land. The Growers take all the surplus profit and the workers are to be exploited from a young age until there is nothing left out of them. In the fields, the workers are treated as slaves and they are forced to obey the orders of the checkers. When the checker tells Jim that he is “going to owe us money if you don’t get off your dime” (65), Jim goes back to work realizing that nothing can be done if he protests alone. Steinbeck portrays how food and clothes are sold on credit. The company store charges exploitative prices. Dan, for example, pays for the can of beans more than its real price. This proves that this kind of system grants the capitalists a chance to maximize their wealth. The landowners’ concern is the making of profit; the workers are taken as an object to generate wealth. Just like Weber, Lukács as well, in his *History and Class Consciousness*, explains how in the economic process under the capitalist system, social relations and actions between humans appear like a relation or action among objects or things. These relation and action are described and calculated in purely mathematical and scientific terms. (167-168) Steinbeck criticizes the agricultural system in California. His novel is a documentation of people who are exploited and used for personal gains.

Abrahams shows the methods that the capitalists employ to double the profit. The mine owners rely on nonwhites’ labor. The capitalists increase their profit through employing the maximum number of non-whites in the mines as they are a cheap labor-force unlike the white laborers. Johannes tells Xuma that some of the miners “are from the land of the Portuguese and others are from Rhodesia.” (34) This way, the capitalists assure that the underground is full of the non-whites. In the mine, each white man is given ten black boys to work. This way, profit is assured. As the whites are paid higher wages in comparison to the non-whites, the inferiority of the black race is imposed to justify the low wage given. This way, apartheid can be taken as a strategy to maximize the wealth of the capitalists. Laws concerning labor are all discriminating meant to control the laborers and extract the maximum profit. The profit

depends on keeping the wages very low with a long day of work. The black workers stay in the compounds far from their families. This way, the capitalists assure their submissiveness. The workers' aim is to work in order to feed their families regardless of the kind of work or the wage. In her article, Cynthia Hamilton studies how the white bosses work to detach the workers from all what is familiar to them; one of this is the family, the most prominent cultural institution to suppress. This way, the workers give their full attention to work. The weekends are left for drinking, a thing that destructs attention from what is missing in their life. This kind of environment serves the South African industry. It renders men like machines. Men give all their energy to work while living with memories of their life in the country side next to their families. Living with the hope to rejoin their families, the workers find all conditions of work tolerable. (151) The miners are not safe in their place of work. The mine owners spend little on protective measures; but still, the workers of all races accept to work there. The managers do not even tell the black workers that if they get sickness of the chest, money would be paid to them. This is what happened to one of Xuma's crew. He is ill and he does not want to tell as he is indebted. He prefers to continue his work to pay his debt and save his family from losing his farm. When Paddy learns about this, he was astonished to know that the black miners are not told about the money paid. This strategy is meant to assure maximum profit. The rights of the black miners are totally ignored.

At the end of the month, the non-whites think that a fair deal is made as they are made to believe that they are destined to serve the interest of the white men. The workers see gold only in the mine and outside nothing but poverty and confusion. In his analysis of *Mine Boy*, Jean-Philippe Wade points out that the miners are experiencing what Marx calls alienation. In South African capitalism, the right definition of work is distorted. Work, instead of being an activity that satisfies humans' needs, it transforms into a means of alienating the black laborers from the products that they make. This grants the maximum profit for the dominate

people. Thus, instead of being free in controlling what they produce, these workers become purposeless and careless. (95-96) In *Mine Boy*, while work is Xuma's new source of identity that makes him assert his manhood, it is at the same time the aspect that destroys him, physically and psychologically. In the rural work place, the workers could touch the concrete results of their efforts contrary to their work in the industrialized city where they are separated from the products they produce. This shows how this system leads to alienation. (Hamilton 155-157) If we trace the development of labor, from handcraft to manufacture to machine industry, one can notice the way the process of work is rationalized and the workers lose contact with the product they produce. The workers undergo a mechanical repetition of a set of actions and all is mechanized and calculated. This condition affects the worker's soul. (Lukács 88) These strategies assure the capitalists that the workers will always stay submissive to take the maximum profit.

In the three studied novels, the powerful group cast their domination over the low social rank. The laborers are taken as a commodity meant for profit. In the place of work, they give all their life to the owners whom they cannot even see. This way, the poor are fully dehumanized. The mine owners in *Germinal* and *Mine Boy* and the landlords in *In Dubious Battle* are careless to what might happen to their employees. For them, they are born to increase the wealth of the bourgeois. This way, they can hire or fire them. Their wellbeing is a far matter to consider. Regardless of this exploitation, the workers follow the rules of the dominant class like machines with no souls.

2.2. False Consciousness

In *Germinal*, *In Dubious Battle*, and *Mine Boy* nothing seems to work in favor of the working class who continue their life under an exploitative system not daring to question its legitimacy. The workers in the novels choose to work in poor conditions for long hours a day without questioning their condition. As the workers have no choice, they consider work for

the rich as a blessing and a chance that no one would vacate. At the end of the day, work, according to the capitalists' plan is done. Commodity production precludes the workers from questioning the rules set as if they are programmed robots. The capitalists, on the other hand, are unaware that their system is irrational. They embrace the whole society with their ideas and all their practices are normalized.

2.2.1. Submissive laborers

In the three novels, the workers are prisoners of their false perceptions. They are unable to assess things critically. They nurture the idea that their survival depends on the company owners. The nature of commodity production makes the workers acquiescent to the rules set by their employers. Hopeless about their condition, the workers always look for ways to escape their reality.

The workers in *Germinal* are fully submissive to the condition of work set by the mine owners. Even though work there is perilous, the workers are thankful that they are granted work. Etienne, as a member of the proletariat's rank, is beholden to find work in the Voreux. He tells Bonnemort: "As long as one has bread to eat one can live." (12) Even though the huge gap between the wealthy and the poor is so much noticeable, Etienne shuns it. Zola attributes the misery and affliction of the working class to the forces of heredity. When Maheude punished her son, she remembered "her own hard youth, of the hereditary misery which made of each little one in the brood a bread-winner later on." (121) However, in the Marxist thought, submissiveness and deprivation are attributed to the nature of the capitalist system. The capitalists have normalized the living condition to the degree where the workers do not question the contradiction. In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács argues that the ruling class ideas and the "natural laws" of capitalist production encompass the whole society. The system is powerful because the whole society is determined by these unified laws. In other words, it is the dominant system and the two classes depend on it. Capitalism is unique

as it had created a unified structure of consciousness. (91-92) In this system of exploitation, everything is turned into a commodity even the workers are considered a commodity. These ideas are taken from Marx's *Capital*. Commodity production shapes how people think and experience the world. The fundamental relations of capitalist society are hidden by the fact that everything is bought and sold. In the place of work, the worker sells his ability to work thinking that it is a natural phenomenon. This process covers all public sectors. This is why Lukács states that commodity production gives relations between people the character of "reifying them." All is turned into things. Reification of social relations has dramatic effects on the consciousness of man. Due to commodification, human relationships acquire "phantom objectivity," "an autonomy that seems strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature." Capitalist society is not seen in its totality. (Lukács 83) Due to the reification of consciousness, the production process and the world appear to the workers as incoherent, separated, and fragmented. It is a unified structure of consciousness. The fragmented experience of immediate reality creates powerless workers and his existence is reduced to an isolated particle in strange system. Reification or this "phantom objectivity" makes men unable to see and grasp the totality of social relations. The workers cannot relate all their source of suffering to the system. This way, they become passive as things appear to be fundamentally unfathomable and that the world cannot be changed. The laborers experience the reality of capitalism as lived and as given, an unchanging reality; they illusion that they do not have influence over events.

The divorce of the phenomena of reification from their economic bases and from the vantage point from which alone they can be understood, is facilitated by the fact that the [capitalist] process of transformation must embrace every manifestation of the life of society if the preconditions for the complete self-realisation of capitalist production are to be fulfilled. (Lukács 95)

For Lukács, there is a separation between individuals and the historical process. “The bourgeoisie had concealed the true situation, the state of the class struggle.” (224) This way, the workers think that capitalism is the only existing system, and no other system can emerge through struggle. Their ignorance makes them submissive to their bosses. Through experience and habit, both capitalists and workers perceive their social and economic relations as a natural law and the wage-labor is seen as a natural aspect of human labor. The Maheu Family “had worked for the Montsou Mining Company since it started, and that was long ago, a hundred and six years already.” (11) The miners are carefully surveyed by the foremen to assure that they come to work at time and see whether the job is done. Even though the working condition there is hard to witness, the work is done at the end of each shift and the workers are used to the type of their work. In *Germinal*, the poor characters learn how to behave in order to survive in their harsh environment. Catherine, the daughter of the Maheudes, in spite of her young age, performs her tasks without questioning the working condition. She displays traits that manifest her overall compliance to the bourgeois system. Etienne is fired from his first job because he struck his chief. When Catherine asked him the reason why he was fired, his reply astounds her. Catherine “remained stupefied, overwhelmed, with her hereditary ideas of subordination and passive obedience.” (34) Catherine is used to the fact that her survival depends on her acquiescence to the rules set by the capitalists. For her, the powerful bourgeois should not be questioned or challenged. She believes that her submissiveness is the safest solution that prevents hunger. Not only Catherine but also the other miners share the same perception. It is the need for sustenance which keeps them ready whenever the boss orders something. When Meheu confronts M. Hennebeau with the start of the strike, M. Hennebeau tells him: "What! you, a good workman who have always been so sensible, one of the old Montsou people whose family has worked in the mine since the first stroke of the axe! Ah! (140) This denotes that for Zola submission

is a heredity factor for the miners. However, I argue that unlike what Zola suggests about forces of heredity, this situation shows the power of the capitalists' influence exerted upon the mind of the working class. Just like Catherine, all the miners think that this is their fate and this is the only system that can exist. The mine owners favor Maheu because of his submissiveness and hard work. His sons Catherine, Zacharie, and Jeanlin also work next to him in the mine. Maheu before the strike is unaware that he is exploited; he thinks that capitalism is the only existing system and the world is unchangeable.

As death surrounds the miners in every corner and hunger and diseases are a reality, people try to find refuge in sexual relationships and alcohol. In *Germinal*, there is overindulgence in sex without thinking of the consequences just like animals. Even children are not safe from this; they learn everything at a young age. As parents have no education and as they have a dozen of children, they do not watch out after their children. Men take mistresses and women become prostitutes. The majority of families have too many children. Food is easily traded for sex by the grocer Maigrat. Due to alcohol, people are dragged into violence. Men beat their wives and mistresses, and parents beat their children. Some commit crimes; even children are not safe from violence.

As people are alienated and thought of as a commodity that produces goods, the workers lose their sense of recognition. Everything is fragmented and separated. They are unable to relate their suffering to the existing system. The overall purpose is to earn what to eat for the day. The workers think that this is the only existing system. Therefore, they believe that this is the natural law and that this is their fate.

In *In Dubious battle*, the apple pickers continue their life of misfortune and poverty not daring to question the system of their masters. In each morning, they start their work in the orchard. The Checker surveys them and marks everything in his little book. He gives remarks when work is not done properly and the workers obey with a total subordination. At the end

of the day, the checker uses his whistle to inform the workers about the end of the work for that day. Mac and Jim come to the Torgas Valley thinking that the apple pickers are already filled with rebellious enthusiasm. However, they are confounded to find that nothing is happening there. People do their work in the agricultural sector with total submissiveness as if nothing is wrong with their working situation. The rules seem to appeal to everyone; no one has noticed that they are under exploitation. The apple pickers nurture the feeling that the dominant class should not be questioned or challenged as their survival depends on it. This shows the effect of the capitalists' influence and how the legitimacy of their system is engraved within the mind and the daily life of the workers.

Dan has worked from childhood; he is an old man now; but still, he owns nothing. The same situation is for the other workers. Even though Dan works an exhausting work in the orchards for the whole of his life, ironically, he has no grudge for his bosses or the system in general. Dan has achieved nothing in his life and he is apathetic about that. This shows how Dan is totally brainwashed and lives in false consciousness. He is diametrically unconscious of him being exploited. Jim tries to discuss with him the fact that they are exploited and all the profit is taken, and about the fact that he is too old for such a kind of work. Dan; however, does not take the discussion seriously. He goes further and prides himself for his commitment to give more if necessary. He tells Jim: "Lots of young punks think I'm too old. I can out-work you any day in the week, and don't you forget it, neither." He put an artificial springiness in his knees as he spoke." (63) Dan thinks that what he is doing is something to be proud of; he believes that even his observer and the owner cannot do what he is doing. When Jim asks Dan the reason why he does not go to a charity racket considering his age, he replies that he is a top-faller and that only a few top-faller ever got to be his age. "I've had punks like you damn near die of heart failure just watching' me work; and here I'm climbin' a lousy apple tree. Me take charity! By Christ, I'd jump out of an apple tree and break my neck

before I'd take charity. I'm a top-faller." (63) Dan feels that the young generation is just lazy arguing that they are clueless and good for nothing. He warns Jim that his ideas would lead to nothing, and maybe these ideas would bring him trouble. Dan blames the workers for their inability to reach prosperity; he thinks that the new generation is too lazy to better their condition. However, Dan is unable to relate things. He fails to see that the worker's suffering emanates from the nature of the system which grants wealth for the wealthy and condemns the poor to be poor for the rest of their life. As his life is fragmented, he contradicts himself without even realizing that. He himself has worked so hard for the whole of his life, yet he did not achieve anything. In another passage, Dan shows his helplessness toward his situation. Jim asks him what is to be done in his opinion. Dan replies that when he was young, he once thought that something could be done, but he is old now and he got no hope. He tells Jim maybe the young get hope. Uncertain about everything, Dan and the other workers believe that this is their destiny and that they are fated to live it as it is.

In *Mine Boy*, the novelist shows the effect of the system set by the white capitalists upon the psyche of the non-whites. It makes the dark skinned people frustrated and alienated unaware of how to deal with their situation. This way, they continue to be slaves for the capitalists. Abrahams shows even the way the black middle class and the white workers are affected by the system.

The workers in *Mine Boy* do the work in a very submissive manner. Notwithstanding work there is dangerous, hard, and back-breaking, still they accept to work there and they consider it to be "a man's work." (5) Abrahams describes the march of the workers from the mine to the compounds as machines without souls. "And round its left bend a stream of men marched. Morning had not quite broken and it was hard to make them out as anything but a body of marching men." (34) In their faces, "there was little expression on any." (34) To describe their submissiveness and demonstrate the effect of the system upon the

consciousness of men, Abrahams calls them “the marching feet.” (35) The fact that their kind of work is a mere exploitation is not questioned or even thought of. After getting used to work in the mine, Xuma goes further and illusions that freedom resides underground. It is there where he feels equal to the white men.

The only place where he was completely free was underground in the mines. There he was a master and knew his way. There he did not even fear his white man, for his white man depended on him. He was the boss boy. He gave the orders to the other mine boys. They would do for him what they would not do for his white man or any other white man. He new that, he had found it out. And underground his white men respected him and asked him for his opinion before they did anything. It was so and he was at home and at ease underground. (63)

As race is used as an argument for the exploitation of the blacks, Xuma underground thinks that he is equal to the white men as he is taken as a boss-boy. All the misery and humiliation that he and his fellow men receive on the surface is all forgotten. As Xuma and Johannes are “boss-boys”; they do not live in the compounds. Instead of questioning this, they consider it a privilege. But in reality, the hard work that they perform everyday from morning to dawn and their lack of authority, make them unconsciously throw all their feelings of freedom into the realm of illusion and false perception. In fact, *Mine Boy* shows how the whites attach the word “boss” with “boy” and reserve the word “man” to the white in order to avoid confusion. For them adding the word “boy” shows that the person is black and not white. The word “boss-boy” is simply used to mislead the miners into thinking that they have some level of authority. Abrahams, through this word, shows the degree to how society is repressive and how the constructed idea destroys the critical thinking of the workers. Walking in Eloff Street, the heart of the city, Xuma ponders about his life underground and takes much pride as the white man respects him there. He also ponders about how his white man tries to befriend him.

Xuma comes to the conclusion that the blacks work side to side with the whites but they can never be friends. Xuma does not even “want the things of the white man.” (63) In fact, this kind of thinking is set in order to exploit even the white workers. As the ones who work underground are called “white boss” and “man,” they think they are master when in fact, they, as well, are exploited. Working in the mine is not safe and the owners do not even bother to take care of safety measures. The white workers in *Mine Boy* do not question this. They only think that they have privileges over the blacks. Abrahams shows that the policemen are also affected by the system. The white policemen are like robots following the orders of the government without thinking, even if the order giving involves killing a human being.

Xuma thinks that he is lucky and honored because the whites underground depends on him, but his joy wanes when he remembered the woman he loves. Eliza is a black teacher who belongs to the middle class. She is alienated from her people as she wants the luxury of the white man. She tells Xuma: “... But inside me there is something wrong. And it is because I want the things of the white people. I want to be like the white people and go where they go and do the things they do and I am black. I cannot help it. Inside I am not black and I do not want to be a black person.” (60) Eliza is so affected by the system that she does not articulate the fact that it is the policy of the capitalists which makes her people poor like slaves. The ideas that Eliza holds disturb her relation with Xuma and make her life fragmented and uncertain. That is the reason why Xuma “resented the white man.” (63) Eliza and her relation with Xuma project how the system of the white capitalists affects the psyche of the non-whites. In the beginning of the novel, Xuma is shown not to trust the white men even those who are kind to him. When Paddy holds out his hand to shake it with Xuma, Xuma accepts after hesitation. Paddy and his women Di invite Xuma to their home. Xuma has never seen a house like this. Paddy’s woman “was very good to look at but he didn’t want to look at her.” (64) This shows the effect of the system upon Xuma. All what belongs to the whites he

prefers not to look at it, or even think about it. In Paddy's house, Xuma finds all what the Africans want, warmth, nice furniture, and "To drink wine and keep the bottle on the table without fear of the police, how could a black person do it. And how could Eliza be like this white woman of the Red One." (65) At that moment, "Xuma thought: now I understand what Eliza wants. But these things are only for white people. It is foolish to think we can get them." (65) Xuma is experiencing exactly what Anton Lembede, the first president of the Congress Youth League (CYL) and the father of Africanism, said about these sentiments:

Moral and spiritual degeneration manifests itself in such abnormal and pathological phenomena as loss of self confidence, inferiority complex, a feeling of frustration, the worship and idolisation of white man, foreign leaders and ideologies. All these are symptoms of a pathological state of mind. (qtd. in Fatton 5)

Di knows perfectly what is turning in Xuma's head. For this, she tries to convince him that the blacks are equal to the whites, but Xuma does not grasp this. And here, Di concludes that he is just like the other Africans who accept what the whites tell them.

In *Mine Boy*, the system builds this idea that it cannot be challenged. When Xuma beats a policeman, the colored man who helped him to escape calls him "a good fool". (17) This shows that the colored man is so brainwashed that he finds Xuma's challenge to the police a foolery. This proves that the system is imposed by all means so that it becomes a natural fact in their daily life. Gradually, Xuma adapts to life in the city and its rules. He shows his pass before even the policeman opens his mouth.

In *Mine Boy*, the blacks and colored live in poverty and they are totally careless. Walking in the streets, Xuma notices that there are people "who passed him who did not even have shoes. And many without coats..." (62) People do not seem to care about their situation. All of them, even though deprived, take a partner, discuss, and laugh, and life goes on. Just

like in *Germinal*, people turn to alcohol to escape their reality. For the white men alcohol prevents the blacks from performing their job properly. Consequently, they banned its selling to the non-whites. Leah; for example, is arrested because she sells it secretly. This shows how the freedom of the non-whites is highly restricted. This makes their life frustrated with no meaning. In discussing this matter, Nesbit contends:

Unemployment or, for those who found jobs, less than subsistence wages led to a real sense of frustration and finally to a feeling of total hopelessness. As a result many resorted to violence and prostitution. To combat what they had brought into being the government introduced quite astoundingly brutal mobile patrols to control any "threatened" uprisings. (6)

Ergo, the system set by the capitalists covers all society. People live inside this system and take it as a natural law. Living under such conditions renders the non-whites careless about their condition. For this, no one seems to revolt or question the situation even the white miners.

The workers in the studied novels are reduced into a commodity that generates wealth. The laborers are unaware that they are exploited due to the nature of the system. Capitalists' ideas cover the whole of society and people's consent is secured. In the immediate world of selling and buying, not only the proletariat but also the capitalists themselves are totally convinced that their ideas and actions stem from the natural law.

2.2.2. The foxy capitalists

The capitalists in the three studied novels are so blinded that they fail to see the impact of their system upon the proletariat. Regardless of all the suffering that the working class faces, the effect of their system is ignored to the extent that the capitalists themselves do not relate poverty to their system. Just like the workers, the capitalists as well have an incoherent view of the system but this serves their interests unlike the proletariat.

As stated in the *Communist Manifesto*, all what the capitalists care for is to compete in the market to generate more wealth. The nature of their system blinds them to the extent that they do not see the effect of their ideology. The social impact takes place “unbeknown to them, and, as it were, against their will and behind their backs.” (qtd. in Lukács 63) The outcome of this is the bourgeois’ fragmented view of the world. For Lukács, both classes have an incoherent view of the world, but at least the bourgeois can live with this contradiction and this incoherent view as it fits his class interests, unlike the working class. The bourgeois do not work to comprehend the ideological phenomenon of reification. (Lukács 94) This way, both classes share the reification of every aspect of their lives. Marx as well observes that both classes are alienated. “But the former feels at home in this self-alienation and feels itself confirmed by it; it recognizes alienation as its own instrument and in it, it possesses the semblance of a human existence. The latter feels itself destroyed by this alienation and sees in it its own impotence and the reality of an inhuman existence.” (qtd. in Lukács 149) This way, capitalism is a system that is built on contradiction. This system claims that it nourishes the economy but at the same time it denies the economic crises that come from it. It grants wealth for one class over the other. The life of the wealthy characters in *Germinal* is so much different from that of the family of Bonnemort. Contrary to the workers who consider the mine to be a monster that devours their joy, M. Gregoire considers it a God to be worshipped. It is the source of treasure that assures comfort to his household.

God himself was not so solid. Then with this religious faith was mixed profound gratitude towards an investment, which for a century had supported the family in doing nothing. It was like a divinity of their own, whom their egotism surrounded with a kind of worship, the benefactor of the hearth, lulling them in their great bed of idleness, fattening them at their gluttonous table. (54)

The capitalists think that it is fated that they are rich. M. Grégoire is provoked when Paul accused him of being a capitalist exploiter. He angrily eludes this to his genealogy: "'Stolen money, my fortune! Did not my great-grandfather gain, and hardly, too, the sum originally invested?'" (qtd. in Duffy xi) The company gives a small amount of coal to the workers. Madame Hennebeau thinks that the workers receive from the bourgeois more than they deserve. "'We give them more coal than they can burn," went on Madame Hennebeau. "A doctor visits them twice a week; and when they are old they receive pensions, although nothing is held back from their wages.'" (73) Madame Hennebeau is "indignant at the ingratitude of the people." She thinks that the miners are "fortunate" as they are "lodged and warmed and cared for at the expense of the Company!" (134) However, the reality is diametrically different. Looking at the workers living and working conditions, one can contend that in the capitalist mode of production, the wage, the coal provided, and the pension do not equal the hard work the miners perform. What the miners give is so huge and what the bosses render back is so little. The working class is totally marginalized and ignored by the middle class. The wealthy are unaware of the suffering of the workers. In *Germinal*, the population is so desperate in their life. There come days when families do not find what to eat leading them to ponder what to be done, but no solution is to be found. Regardless of all this, the mine owners work themselves to ignore the effect of their system. Just from the beginning of the novel, Zola gives us hints that the miners' life is a total despair. When Etienne first meets Bonnemort, he notices that "the old man's hand had, as it were, filled it with great miseries, which the young man unconsciously felt at this moment around him everywhere in the limitless tract." (9) Bonnemort's life does not differ from that of the other miners. Catherine, who works inside the house and in the mine, always starts her day "with a look of painful distress and weariness which seemed to spread over the whole of her." (14) As they are frustrated due to the exhausting and hazardous working conditions, they throw themselves

in danger, not caring about the consequences. All this goes behind the backs of the upper class. Thus, the miners in *Germinal* are ordinary people seeking their living, but alas, crushed by poverty. When they cannot provide a decent living for their families, they turn to alcohol and sex. The wealthy class has a negative image of the working class. They think that money given to the workers is spent on alcohol instead of necessities. However, they are unaware that the paycheck is so small that it does not cater all their needs. In fact, and as explained before, the miners do spend their money on alcohol, but the reason is not their sense of irresponsibility, but because it is a way to escape their gruesome reality. In his analysis of the miners in *Germinal*, Hemmings argues: “The miner is not flattered, and certainly he is no hero. He is the product, quite simply, of a degrading environment which smothers in him all except the most elementary social instincts.” (23) The wealthy are totally ignorant of the suffering of the miners and they shun the fact that there is something utterly wrong with their system. This ignorance serves their needs contrary to the deprived class.

In *In Dubious Battle*, the landowners are unaware of the suffering of the farmers as they are not in direct contact with them. Their life or perish, safety or danger is of no concern to them. As such, the workers, just like in *Germinal*, do not seem to care about their life. When Jim tells Dan that the owners can give up on him when he is unable to work, Dan responds by saying: “I don’t give a damn if they did—I just don’t give a damn.” (67) For the landlords, the farmers are machines in the fields. Working there is exhausting and sometimes dangerous. The fall of Dan from a broken ladder proves that the owners are unaware of the hardships and the danger that the workers face. To describe the misery of the workers, Dan is described with veins that “stood out heavy and blue on his hands. His legs seemed as thin and straight as sticks, too thin for the big feet with great heavy-soled shoes.” (63) The capitalists are too far to notice this. The owners provide accommodation in the orchard bunkhouses but the living condition there is not safe. Lisa for example delivered her child in an unsafe condition. The

landowners show no concern for the migrant laborers; their safety or wellbeing is a least matter to consider.

Saxton argues that Steinbeck is influenced by Edward Bellamy, a novelist who believes in benevolent methods to achieve progress. His novel *Looking Backward 2000-1887* expresses a vehement denunciation of class-divided society. The image of the “prodigious coach” is the central metaphor where human society according to Bellamy resembles “a prodigious coach which the masses of humanity were harnessed to and dragged toilsomely along a very hilly and sandy road...Despite the difficulty of drawing the coach the top was loaded with passengers who never got down. . . . Well up out of the dust . . . [they] could enjoy the scenery at their leisure, or critically discuss the merits of the straining team. Naturally such places were in great demand . . . everyone seeking as the first end in life a secure seat . . . and to leave it to his child after him.” (qtd. in Saxton 251) In this novel, Bellamy’s inquiry is the feeling of these lucky ones. The writer is expressing his astonishment as these few people have no empathy for people of the low social rank.

Oh, yes; commiseration was frequently expressed . . . the passengers would call down encouragingly to the toilers of the rope, exhorting them to patience, and holding out hopes of possible compensation in another world for the hardness of their lot; while others contributed to buy salves and liniments for the crippled and injured. . . . [By those on top it was firmly believed] that there was no other way in which Society could get along, except the many pulled at the rope and the few rode. It was a pity, but . . . could not be helped, and philosophy forbade wasting compassion on what was beyond remedy. (qtd. in Saxton 251)

Bellamy further comes to the conclusion that these people contrive for themselves a self-serving delusion. (Saxton 251) His metaphor of “Prodigious coach” is an accusation and reproach. Bellamy declares that these people think themselves “not exactly like their brothers

and sisters who pulled at the rope, but of finer clay, in some way belonging to a higher order of beings who might justly expect to be drawn. The effect of such a delusion in moderating fellow feeling for the sufferings of the mass of [human-kind]...is obvious.” (qtd. in Saxton, 252) Jim mentions that he has read Bellamy; most likely Steinbeck has read him as well. According to Saxton, Bellamy has a strong effect on Steinbeck’s literature of the depression years. (251) Just like Bellamy, Steinbeck criticizes the upper class who do not come in touch with the migrant farmers. Thus, they do not feel empathy for their suffering. The fascist landlords are influenced by their system so that they believe that they are saving the migrant workers from hunger where in fact they are slowly killing them.

In *Mine Boy*, the mine owners are totally absent. All what we know about them is that the gold extracted goes to them. While sitting in their comfortable dwelling, they embrace the whole country with their system ignoring the effect it produces. Abrahams connotes the way the system is strongly rooted so that the capitalists do not reconsider the irrationality of their system.

Due to the greed of the capitalists, they fail to see the suffering that comes from their system. They embrace the whole society with their rules and laws so that it becomes a natural phenomenon. Even though the capitalists are the promoters of apartheid, they ignore the fact that inside the mine, there are white workers as well. The white workers in the mine think they are the bosses when in fact they are workers for the absentee owners. The ones whom the capitalists cannot assure their consent, they use oppression to tame them. The brutality of the police is used by the capitalists to always remind the non-whites who the master is. The government constructs the idea that the non-whites are unable to decide between what is right and what is wrong. This idea is widespread so that it embraces people of all races.

While Abrahams recognizes that there are some whites who truly believe in equality, as shown by Paddy’s character, the vast majority even those who

considered themselves “progressives” were more inclined to believe that they knew what was best for the natives. (Cesnik 9)

These progressive people, help, even unintentionally, the foxy capitalists. In South Africa, the working condition and the way the workers live in the compounds shows the contradiction of the system. In the mine for example, the miners are treated like slaves; they cannot even defend their honor. In his first day at work, Xuma is ordered by the white man to push a loaded truck. One of the miners says that “it is a work of two men.” When Xuma tries to push it, “he felt the skin of his leg cracking and hot blood running down to his ankle.” (39-40) Regardless of all this, the white man shows no empathy for Xuma even though he himself works with him inside the pits. All this happens out of sight of the white capitalists. The capitalists do not reconsider their system. Exploitation is their least concern; contrary, they illusion that their presence in South Africa is a blessing for them and the blacks should be beholden to them. They are indifferent as long as the profit is assured. This way, they continue to take the poor as a commodity and they work their way to achieve that by different means so that their influence embraces all the spheres notwithstanding the contradictions.

Germinal, *In Dubious Battle*, and *Mine Boy* draw a profound picture of the suffering of people under systems of exploitation. The workers are dehumanized and objectified by the dominant class to serve their own ends. Both classes take for granted the fact that capitalism is a natural order. This philosophy serves only one class. Accordingly, people’s experience under systems of exploitation and with the help of the radicals, push the workers to think critically about their condition.

2.3. Seeds of Revolutionary Class Consciousness

Germinal and *In Dubious Battle* are about the growing tension between the capital and the labor. The miners in *Germinal* and the farmers in *In Dubious Battle* face socioeconomic problems. Their life revolves around living the day and tomorrow is to be left for tomorrow.

In *Mine Boy*, the life of the non-white workers is dehumanized through iniquitous laws. The system of segregation is imposed to benefit the capitalists. Even the white miners are exploited. However, people can no longer live under such circumstances. In the three novels, it is commodity production, meaning the nature of the system which dehumanizes and impoverishes the workers which motivates them to challenge the dominance of their employers. The workers are also pushed by ideologies that call the mass to revolt. It calls their revolutionary class consciousness for a better life.

2.3.1. Commodification: an instigator for strikes

Reading the three novels, one can notice that the destitute are suffering in the fields, mines, and outside their workplace, under systems of exploitation. The working and living conditions swallow humans whole and take away their joy and health, slowly leading to their doom. However, the experience of deprivation, exploitation, the danger that the workers face each day in their place of work, and the whole system that renders everything into a commodity, instigate the workers to protest.

In *Germinal*, the nature of the system make the miners live in misery and weariness. Distress is part of their lives as food and the other necessities of life are hard to provide. This leads them to think of revolutionary thoughts. Zola shows openly that the wage does not equal the sweat of the workers. It does not even cover the needs of the month. Zola, in the following passage, pictures the hopeless state of Bonnemort's family.

Maheu had again sunk down on the edge of the table. Lénore and Henri, astonished that they had nothing to eat, began to moan; while old Bonnemort, in silence, philosophically rolled his tongue in his mouth to deceive his hunger. No one spoke anymore....The grandfather, coughing and spitting out the black phlegm, taken again by rheumatism which was turning to dropsy; the father asthmatic, and with knees swollen with water; the mother and the little ones

scarred by scrofula and hereditary anaemia. No doubt their work made this inevitable. They only complained when the lack of food killed them off; and already they were falling like flies in the settlement. (167)

Even though the workers produce coal with their own hands, due to poverty, they realize that they do not benefit from it. The narrator's observation makes one feel like someday the poor will rise against what they think a natural state. The narrator proceeds by saying: "But something must be found for supper. My God! where was it to be found, what was to be done?" (167) This shows that their utter state of misery is the seed for rebellion. As the passage denotes, working for so long in the mines, not only does not cater the miners' need but also has a terrifying effect on health. Most workers will certainly develop some kind of chest or lung disease as their lungs are clogged with harmful substances.

Bonnemort takes his name from him being pulled out several times of near death situation underground. The life of the miners is in constant change. Safety measures are not provided. The mine of Montsou keeps devouring the health and life of the miners. Zola uses an expressive visual synecdoche in order to describe the mine. The mine is called the Voreux which literally means "voracious." This is an apt title as the mine is imagined as a gigantic monster which devours the miners. (Schwarz 258-260) The narrator says that the Voreux "at the bottom of its hole, with its posture as of an evil beast, continued to crunch, breathing with a heavier and slower respiration, troubled by its painful digestion of human flesh." (13) This undoubtedly presages the rise of the crowd. The narrator comments: "But the miner was no longer an ignorant brute, crushed within the bowels of the earth. An army was springing up from the depths of the pits, a harvest of citizens whose seed would germinate and burst through the earth some sunny day." (186) Schwarz remarks that "In Part Three, Etienne moves in with the Maheu–Maheude family and becomes increasingly radicalized by what he observes in the mine and the Settlement." (256) "Etienne's political awakening is in response

to conditions he sees and experiences.” (Schwarz 267) In *Germinal*, it is the long years of hunger and danger and them being dehumanized and reduced into a commodity which awake the revolutionary class consciousness of the miners. When the company takes the new measurement concerning their wage, the miners knew that it is a trick to reduce their paycheck. This way, they decided to face their employers. In *History and Class Consciousness* it is argued that even though the powerful effect of the ruling class propaganda and the effect of commodification which degrades the critical faculties of people, it is through the experience of deprivation that the working class reaches revolutionary class consciousness. The dehumanizing system produces active human liberation. It is commodification which would automatically breed rebellion. “Labour-power” is a special commodity as it has a brain. This allows it to become self-conscious of the way it is being treated. The proletariat class, unlike the bourgeoisie, is able to understand “society as a historical totality” because through its class consciousness, it holds a minimal understanding of its alienation and reification.

...when the worker knows himself as a commodity his knowledge is practical. That is to say, this knowledge brings about an objective structural change in the object of knowledge. In this consciousness and through it the special objective character of labour as a commodity, its 'use-value' (i.e. its ability to yield surplus produce) which like every use-value is submerged without a trace in the quantitative exchange categories of capitalism, now awakens and becomes social reality. The special nature of labour as a commodity which in the absence of this consciousness acts as an unacknowledged driving wheel in the economic process now objectifies itself by means of this consciousness. The specific nature of this kind of commodity had consisted in the fact that beneath the cloak of the thing lay a relation between men, that beneath the quantifying crust there was a qualitative,

living core; Now that this core is revealed it becomes possible to recognise the fetish character of every commodity based on the commodity character of labour power: in every case we find its core, the relation between men, entering into the evolution of society. (Lukács 169)

This way, it is exploitation and objectification of the workers which allow the workers to think of protesting and seek for freedom. What pushes the miners to give their final word for a strike is the pay cut. They realize that they are used only for profit in all instances, even in periods of crises; it is them who pay the hard price.

In *In Dubious Battle*, poverty is an inescapable fact with each morning, and working in the fields like machines for the whole day is so exhausting and dangerous. The misery of farmers extends even outside of their work place. It is this situation that awakes the workers to the fact that they are exploited to the point where they should claim their right. Even though in the fields the workers do as the checkers tell them, they are not enjoying their presence. Jim complains when the checker warns him to be careful not to bruise the apples and he shows his dissatisfaction with his condition. When the checker addressed him, he frowned. This shows that the workers will one day protest against the system. Even though Dan illusions that his life is not as miserable as Jim had told him; but still, there is tension. When the checker gives him a remark, Dan shows his anger.

The voice of the checker called, "Careful of those trees, over there." The old man grinned maliciously, showing two upper and two lower yellow teeth, long and sloped outward, like a gopher's teeth. "Busy bastard, ain't he," he remarked to Jim.

(64)

In the fields, there is always tension. The atmosphere shows that one day, the farmers will inevitably challenge the landowners. What push Jim to rebel against the system are the injustices that he has experienced. For instance, when he was going home, he saw a crowd in

Lincoln Square. When he stopped to see, he suddenly heard the sirens of the riot squad. The cop took him and he was charged for vagrancy. From that moment, he decided who his enemy is. Besides, Jim mentions that he does not want to live poor like the people he knows. For this, he decides to join the communist party and fight for a better life. In *In Dubious Battle*, it is the fall of Dan from a broken ladder that instigates the migrant laborers to come together and challenge the dominance of the landlords through a strike.

In *Mine Boy*, the life of the non-white workers is despair. All the privileges are reserved for the capitalists and the workers are dehumanized and taken as tools to benefit a small group of individuals. This denotes that the deprived class would someday revolt. The blacks and colored live in poverty. Walking in the streets, Xuma notices that there are people who are with no shoes and others with no coats. The working condition is hazardous. The miners of all races always face danger inside the mine. When it comes to the white workers, even though they are paid higher wages compared with the non-whites, still the possibility that they might die in a mine collapse because safe equipment is not provided and measures are not assured make them angry from their employers. The miners cannot escape from the dangerous aspects of their work place. Danger and discrimination are mentioned at the start of the novel. Leah warns Xuma not to work there by arguing: "The mines are no good, Xuma, later on you cough and then you spit blood and you become weak and die. I have seen it many times. Today you are young and you are strong, and tomorrow you are thin and ready to die." (5) The colored man who helped Xuma when a policeman beat him "was small and thin and there were many lines on his face though he was not old. And his eyes were red and he kept coughing. A dry hard cough that destroyed the lungs." (17) This shows the consequences which Leah warns Xuma from in the beginning of the novel.

All the encroachment and misdeeds done by the capitalists is supported by the police and courts. They take the side of the top ranking-class. Courts and police forces are puppets to

ensure the continuity of the system. In such a society, one feels like the prevailing law is that of the jungle. The capitalists of South Africa hold the snobbishness of the bourgeois in *Germinal* and the cynical authoritarianism of the fascists in *In Dubious Battle*. In *Mine Boy*, even before the strike, we see how the non-whites defy the rules. Leah for example, engages in an illegal job. She sells liquor even though this job is reserved for the white workers only. The kind of life that the capitalists set pushes the workers to break the rules for a better future. Gradually, Xuma's work makes him realize that his rights as a citizen and as a human being have been stolen. The accident of the mine that kills two miners, a white and a black worker, and the misery and exploitation push him to seriously and openly challenge the system.

The capitalist system has normalized the exploitation of people. However, human nature reaches a point where enslavement must have an end. In addition to the experience of deprivation, ideologies that call for freedom motivate, even more, the exploited people to be agents to change their reality. In the three novels, the Marxists and communists call people to go on strike.

2.3.2. The role of the radicals to inflame the working class

Zola, Steinbeck, and Abrahams give much space to the protagonists to learn and articulate the ideologies that awake the revolutionary class consciousness against exploitation. Gradually, they learn about freedom and equality. These ideas are spread among the working class, and this way, strikes take place.

The socialists have a big role in making struggle conscious through exposing more the link between what the workers face every day and its total relation with the system. They do this in theory and practice. "Only when the immediate interests are integrated into a total view and related to the final goal of the process do they become revolutionary, pointing concretely and consciously beyond the confines of capitalist society." (Lukács 71) In *Germinal*, the socialists have a great role in awakening the revolutionary class consciousness of the miners. In

her analysis of *Germinal*, Petrey emphasizes that the strength of revolt “is increased by the fact that the Montsou strike is directed by members of continental revolutionary organizations whose activities had long terrified the bourgeoisie. *Germinal* presents in microcosm both the principal ideologies working for the overthrow of European society and the vast human might...” (56) Zola introduces four characters who represent different socialist visions. Etienne is a Marxist, collectivist, authoritarian, and Jacobin. Souvarine is an anarchist. Rasseneur is a moderate socialist, a “Possibilist.” The priest Abbé Rnavier is a Christian socialist. (Priestland 109) In her analysis, Annette M. Magid argues: “Etienne's fight with his foreman, the apostolic fervor of his devotion to justice, his organizational skill and his leadership make him a typical communist.” (57-58) In the beginning of the novel, the miners are obliged to accept the mine as their God whom they have to sacrifice their own flesh. By this, they are placed hand in hand with Nietzsche’s “the good God was dead.” But soon, a new religion is going to take place, the “religion of socialism.” (Goldberg 496) When the proletariat heard of socialism, they gradually stopped considering the mine as their God.

Zola mentions that the International Working Men’s Association is founded in London. It spreads the idea that the downtrodden would one day unite and destroy capitalism; justice and equality would finally triumph. For Etienne, it is a great organization as it “represents the commune” and unites workers. (94) Etienne seems to be brainwashed by the system; but as the novel progresses, Zola shows his revolutionary awakening. It is Pluchart’s letters, a propagandist for the International, which encourage him to read. When he starts reading about radical ideas, he becomes so enthusiastic for revolt which throws him “into the struggle of labour against capital.” (94) Initially, Etienne starts reading socialist papers and pamphlets and he starts to raise questions based on his life experience under the capitalist system. He does a binary opposition between the life of the miners and that of the mine owners and starts questioning the reason why some are rich and others are poor. In several passages, we see the

arduous life of the poor compared with the wealthy people's lavish life leaving no doubt that something is wrong with the economic system. Etienne reads anarchist pamphlets, treatises, and newspapers about political economy. "Souvarine also lent him books, and the work on Co-operative Societies had made him dream for a month of a universal exchange association abolishing money and basing the whole social life on work." (108) Etienne reads the works of the anarchist thinker Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the socialist Ferdinand Lassalle, and he takes Karl Marx at the summit of his thinking. After his readings, Etienne concludes that the "capital was the result of spoliation" and that he must interfere for if he does not, injustice will not have an end and the bourgeois would keep sucking the blood of the poor. (154) Starting from this, Etienne starts to talk about the equality of all people and the fair distribution of wealth.

...he (Etienne) is the first to develop class consciousness, an understanding that the current situation, informed essentially by the relationship between labour and capital, is not in the natural order of things but socially constructed, and can thus be changed. (Duffy xi)

Etienne marks his transition from false consciousness to class consciousness. He is now aware that he and the other miners are being exploited by all means and their suffering is not a natural law. It is in the inns where the radicals hold union meetings and it is there where socialism is spreading among the workers. Gradually, the miners turn to socialism and they start to speak of justice, equality, and the improvement of the working condition. Etienne starts to deliver speeches that inflame the miners.

"The wage system is a new form of slavery," he began again, in a more sonorous voice. "The mine ought to belong to the miner, as the sea belongs to the fisherman, and the earth to the peasant. Do you see? The mine belongs to you, to all of you who, for a century, have paid for it with so much blood and misery!"...

Then, when the people had obtained possession of the government, reforms would begin: return to the primitive commune, substitution of an equal and free family for the moral and oppressive family; absolute equality, civil, political, and economic; individual independence guaranteed, thanks to the possession of the integral product of the instruments of work; finally, free vocational education, paid for by the collectivity..."Our turn is come," he broke out for the last time.

"Now it is for us to have power and wealth!" (183)

The miners become so fervent for rebellion. The Maheude for example, "what made her enthusiastic and brought her into agreement with the young man was the idea of justice." (111) Etienne's socialist faith is the "immense cathedral of the future world...Never had a young religion counted so many disciples." (160) Deprived for so many years, the miners are awakened by socialism. Etienne's miraculous solution is the strike. Souvarine; however, has another method.

Etienne represents the revolutionary labour perspective, rooted in the Jacobinist tradition of the French Revolution. Revolutionary cadre are necessary to lead the workers, via strike action, to a position where the true value of their labour is recompensed, and where the capitalist order is replaced by socialist one. Such collectivism has no place in the contemporary millenarian vision of Souvarine.

(Duffy xi)

Souvarine, the exiled Russian revolutionary, represents the theme of anarchy. He totally disagrees with Etienne's methods. He considers the work of Karl Marx a "Foolery." (94) Souvarine does not believe that the strike can bring change. Instead, he promotes violent methods. His method is to "Set fire to the four corners of the town, mow down the people, level everything, and when there is nothing more of this rotten world left standing, perhaps a better one will grow up in its place." (94)

The moderate Rasseneur argues against the strike and all forms of violence. He warns Etienne that the crowd is ungrateful and the strike can turn into a violent movement with no positive outcomes. Rasseneur, who is expelled from the mine due to a previous strike, rather stands for negotiation and reform rather than confrontation. Zola introduces another form of socialism; it is Christian socialism. It is presented by the priest Ranvier. Ranvier preaches the miners about his prophecies on how the miners will rise and bring back God to earth for social change. Accordingly, socialism starts to articulate everywhere and by everybody. After Etienne's disagreements with Souvarine and Rasseneur, it is decided to follow Etienne's method, the strike.

In *Germinal*, the strike takes place when the company asks the miners to board the tunnels up with woods and it is decided to pay the miners for only coal extraction. Accordingly, the miners object and ask their employers to pay them for timbering as well. The company refuses to do so. It is a time of industrial crises; paying for timbering and mining would not benefit the mine owners. Thus, the miners decide to collect funds, join the socialists, and organize a strike. Etienne and the other miners decide to go on strike not only because of the amount of wage but also due to the hazardous working conditions and the long years of misery. The human nature plays its role and calls for change. They believe that change can be achieved by workers' unification. On Sunday, the mine owners wake up and found that no single man had gone down to the pits. The managers and the owners are all overwhelmed as the strike took place abruptly. For them, it is a "declaration of war, made with a tactical unity which seemed to indicate energetic leadership." (128) At first, they hoped the strike is limited to the Voreux; however, in the coming hours, they discovered that work in all the pits has stopped. For the miners, the strike is an emblem of man's hope for a better future; it gives the deprived a voice to address their misery and affliction. When Etienne confronts M. Hennebeau, he tells him that the workers want nothing but to get their due and

the profit that the company takes. They don't want the owners to play the part of providence. It is known that whenever a crisis takes place, the shareholders let the workers die with hunger to save the company. Etienne emphasizes the fact that the new rule is set to disguise the reduction of wages. These are the reasons that push the miners to go on strike. When Maheu's collective consciousness develops, he transforms into a voice of protest and breaks free from the submissiveness that he lived under for long years. M. Hennebeau displays his astonishment and anger at Maheu's new path of disobedience to the rules set by the ruling class, but Maheu is not moved by his statements. His experience under the system prevents him from refraining from protesting. He pursues his fight for what he believes until the last breath. Accordingly, in *Germinal*, the radical philosophies contribute a great deal in the rise of the crowd. Through the description of the strike, Zola evokes the awakening of the miners' political consciousness. The miners realize that their suffering is not a natural phenomenon. When the miners united, they felt an unbelievable strength.

In *In Dubious Battle*, it is the communists who push the workers to go on strike. Communism is manifested by Jim and Mac. The protagonist Jim reads books that make him think of justice and freedom. After that, he comes to the conclusion that the only path that leads to justice is the communist party. Heading to the Torgas Valley where the farmers are exploited, Jim and Mac work their way to preach the laborers the philosophy of revolt.

At the beginning of the story, Steinbeck informs us that Jim and Mac are conscious of class exploitation. Other characters like Joy and Dick are members of the communist party. As Jim is suffering from poverty and he was jailed on trumped-up charges, he decides to join the communist party. When Harry Nilson asks him the reason why he wants to join the party, he replies by saying: "Well – I could give you lot of little reasons, mainly it's this: my whole family has been ruined by this system." (27) Just like Etienne, Jim marks his intellectual awakening by stating that he read several books: "...Plato's Republic, and the Utopia, and

Bellamy... Spinoza and Hegel and Kant and Nietzsche...Das Kapital.” (29-30) When Jim becomes a party member, Mac becomes his mentor. They both go to the Torgas Valley in an attempt to organize a strike. The Growers Association announces a pay cut to the farmers. Accordingly, Mac wants a rebellion in the apple fields so that riots would spread throughout the cotton fields. When they found that the men are willing to accept the low wages, they start to awake their sense of revolt through awakening them of the way they are exploited. When he reached the Torgas Valley, Jim’s first conversation with the farmers starts with old Dan. Jim tries his best to convince him that he is under exploitation. Dan does not bite the fact that he is exploited and tells Jim that he is talking nonsense. Jim replies that he will achieve something by his ideas if the workers are unified. (68) Jim tells Dan that the growers “took all the profits from your work,...They got rich, an’ when you couldn’t go up any more, they kicked you out.” (67) In the beginning, Dan does not take him seriously as he thinks that the new generation is lazy. Ironically, when Dan falls from a tree because of a broken ladder and breaks his hip, he becomes the catalyst for the strike. The fall of Dan from a broken ladder inflames the workers to rebel. The incident of Dan proves to the apple pickers that they are mere objects in the hands of the landlords, unworthy of safe equipment. What drives the matter to its limits and simmer the social unrest is the reduction of wages. The growers association cuts the picketers’ wages to fifteen cents. The workers are totally fed up from their situation. Mac tells Anderson: “We never had a chance to own anything...we’d like to own something and plant trees.” (241) The workers, discontent about their situation, decide to go under the lead of the communists. Before the start of the strike, the organizers Mac and Jim prepare everything. They store food, plan where to camp, and they look for a doctor. Mac asks the small grower, Anderson, to let the protesters camp in his property. Mac and Jim elect London, Dakin, and Burk to be squads’ leaders. Meanwhile, the growers start to prepare their

means to tame the strike. This way, Steinbeck in his novel, projects the role of the communists. They are the ones who plan all things to push the workers to go on strike.

In *Mine Boy*, Xuma displays the Marxist doctrine. When he comes to the city, he seems totally convinced by the binary distinction set by the government. However, throughout the novel, we see how he gradually learns about justice and revolt. Xuma learns about the Marxist philosophy of revolt from the white communist Paddy, and at the end, they awake the other workers to the injustices they are facing when the accident of the mine takes the life of two miners.

Xuma is portrayed as a person who has an innate sense of revolt. In a scene, Eliza reads for him about the Zulu Wars. She informs him how “the impis were ready to charge the white man who steel their lands. And many died, but many more came forward to fight. But in the end they were beaten and the land taken from them for the white man was stronger. And the sorrow in Xuma’s heart was great because they had lost the fight and it showed in his eyes.” (86) Abrahams reflects all the sorrow that the South African went through when their land has been stolen. In their land, instead of being free and masters, they are made to be slaves for the colonizer. When the capitalists took over the country, they transformed all the structures of the area to suit their interests. Xuma is a protagonist who experiences all the hardships that stem from the white dominance. His inability to identify with the code of the city ignites in him a sense of revolt. Xuma’s behavior shows that the rules of the city are something imposed and not meant to be. This cannot be changed unless they protest and ask for their right as free citizens. Xuma goes through a long journey of political instruction before he was finally able to accept that exploitation is not a natural order.

In Abrahams’ novel, communism and unionism represent a possibility for social change. For the white communist Paddy, discrimination is unacceptable. For him, all workers are equal regardless of skin color. This character believes that a better society, where all are

equal, could be built through the union of black and white workers. (Rocha 85) Paddy is Xuma's political mentor. Paddy exposes the power that the white government exercises upon the blacks. He instructs him that color is just a white men's constructed idea. Besides, the whites as well work with them in the mines. Regardless of this, Xuma, at first, does not seem to be fully convinced.

Xuma remembered his talk with the Red One. He remembered the beautiful dream with which he had gone to bed. Man without colour and laughter everywhere. It had all been so beautiful and good. But could it be? No. it could not be. How could it be done? But to that there was no answer. The white man will not let it be.

So there was no answer. (176)

Xuma ponders about the idea that his life is not equal to that of the whites. He starts reflecting on the privileges the whites have. And here, he felt hatred. In the eating house, Xuma "while he ate he compared the place where white people went. White people did not have to crowd into the place and sit on top of each other. They had bigger rooms. Not just one little room. They have nice eating houses in almost every street of the city." (177) In parallel to this, "he thought about the beautiful world where man would be without colour." (177) In his analysis, Jean-Philippe Wade argues:

Here for the first time Xuma sees a nascent humanity amongst the oppressed, in contrast to the despairing perceptions he had had earlier in the novel. From being someone who had largely accepted the racist structures imposed by whites, he now recognizes a common humanity shared by all South Africans, an ideological development that will enable him to challenge the oppression of the black working-class. (97)

Xuma's new ideas go beyond racial consideration and can be taken as a Marxist statement. Christianity is absent as considered irrelevant; instead, the emphasis is on solidarity between

the non-white workers. (Fuchs 296) Xuma wants to share his ideas with all people. In *Mine Boy*, when Xuma goes to the mine, he finds that there is a mine collapse. He and Paddy go underground and pull out the corps of Johannes and Chris. When the engineers go to check, they found that “the beams were soaked through and rotten at one place” and the result is “nothing serious.” (180) The manager and the engineer argue that the two miners lost their life through panic and declares that the miners can go back to work. The manager ignores the fact that Chris and Johannes sacrifice their lives in order to save the other workers. Suddenly, Paddy gives a blow to the manager who is indifferent toward the life of workers whether black or white. He protests that they have already warned him that the mine might collapse. At this moment, Xuma and Paddy start their rebellion by refusing to work. They ask the manager to fix the mine first. Xuma and Paddy enflame the miners and ask them to stand with them in the protest. At that moment, the non-whites acquire class consciousness. Xuma and the other miners are finally empowered to fight against social and economic oppression especially that Paddy, the white boss, joins them in their fight.

The workers in *Germinal*, *In Dubious Battle*, and *Mine boy* are in a constant struggle to survive. The three novels show the way the experience of deprivations and the long years of misery along with the revolutionary philosophies are the motor behind the revolutionary class consciousness of the working class. As the strikes break in the three novels, the powerful seek the help of the law enforcement agencies.

Conclusion

This chapter deals with the exploitation that the deprived face under exploitative systems. It explores how Zola, Steinbeck, and Abrahams reflect the life of the laborers inside and outside their work place. The three novelists give us a true account of the dehumanization and affliction that the workers face due to people who control the economy and politics. They also project the way the workers are submissive to the system set by the powerful and how the

latter refuse to acknowledge the shaky foundation and the contradictions found in their system. At the end, it is the experience of misery that stems from the unjust systems, along with radical ideologies which awake the revolutionary class consciousness of people. In the coming chapter, I demonstrate the way Zola and Steinbeck come against the radicals and their strike. For them, the strike organizers are hypocrites and the strike is going to spiral out of control. Abrahams; on the other hand, champions the strike as an effective social movement to attain change. For Zola and Steinbeck, the strike brings plight and affliction and the strikers will lose their rationality. Abrahams; however, gives another vision. In the forth chapter, we will see how, unlike Abrahams, Zola and Steinbeck attribute exploitation and the suffering of the working class to other natural forces and not only to the capitalists and how this is condemned by the Marxists arguing that both novelists suppress the point of view of the totality and transmit the political and social situations in mere fragments.

Chapter Three: In Defense of Strikes and Strike Leaders

Zola, Steinbeck, and Abrahams highly condemn the exploitation that the workers face in their place of work. When it comes to the main concern of this thesis, the effectiveness of strikes as a means for social change, the argument is that unlike Zola and Steinbeck, Abrahams shows the way strikes are the right path to achieve equality. For him, the strike is a movement that reduces exploitation. Zola and Steinbeck; however, promote the idea that strike leaders are dissemblers who use the plight of the workers to achieve a political agenda and the workers in a strike will lose their rationality and engage in violence. The strike leaders will not be able to control them. The main purpose of this thesis is to offer a counter-discourse against this assumption. The novel of Abrahams shows that the strike organizers can be trusted to lead the deprived to social and political equality; the strike is the only effective movement for social change. Zola and Steinbeck are shown to exaggerate their portrayal of the strike organizers as hypocrites and the strike as a violent social movement.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the way Zola in *Germinal* portrays the socialists in an unflattering image. It shows Zola's opinion about the strike organizers and the strike as a movement for social change. The second section deals with Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle*. It shows the way Steinbeck portrays the communists as people who exploit the working class to spread their ideology and how their method, the strike, will turn into a fierce mob. The third section deals with Abrahams' *Mine Boy*. It shows Abrahams' leaning toward the radicals and how he promotes labor strikes as a solution for social change. This chapter aims at demonstrating the way strikes can be a path to social change as what *Mine Boy* denotes. It also aims at showing the way Zola and Steinbeck distort the image of labor strikes and strike leaders through their exaggeration of the portrayal of the strike as a destructive and terrifying social movement that brings no progress to the workers.

This leaves the path open for the last chapter to question the reason that lies behind this leaning.

3.1. The Image of the Strike and Strike Leaders in *Germinal*

Before writing about the suffering of the workers, Zola visited the downtrodden and saw the affliction and distress that the workers face. For this, in *Germinal*, he projects the forces that make people suffer. However, Zola focuses mostly on the hypocrisy of the radicals. He attributes the ordeal of the miners to the Marxists and anarchists who, for him, fantasize to challenge the dominance of the capital. The articulators of radical movements preach the doctrine of equality and their so-called benevolent mission to lead the proletariat to freedom and social justice. For Zola, despite the fact that the quest seems noble on the surface, the radicals are hypocrites. They are people who transform into a voice of authority once reached to power. The workers are taken as a tool for ideological and self-interest gains and the strike will turn into a riot. The strike leaders will not be able to control it. This way, the strike brings no success for the miners.

3.1.1. The threat of the Marxists and anarchists

Throughout the preparation for the strike and at the beginning of the protest, the Marxists are shown to be the savers who would bring justice with their ideas and tactics. But as the novel progresses, we discover that they are unlike what the workers expect. Zola portrays the socialists as people who use the workers to spread their doctrine regardless of the safety of the miners. He even criticizes the miners in some instances. Zola argues against all types of socialism denouncing them as ineffective. He projects as well the quarrel between the Marxists and anarchists and condemns both as destructive. Zola focuses more on the Marxist Etienne who promotes the strike as a solution for social change. He also focuses on the anarchist Souvarine who prefers terrorist methods. At last, the workers embrace the strike.

Etienne, the one who represents the Marxist thought is portrayed in an unfavorable manner. Etienne is manipulative and egocentric. He is someone who once reaches power, becomes authoritative. Etienne is constructed as an uneducated person who has a difficulty in understanding books, newspapers, and pamphlets about the politics of the left. He reads about Marxism and the socialist and anarchist theorists. He reads as well about cooperative societies and collectivism, “but this remained vague; he knew not how to realize this new dream...He simply said that it was a question of getting possession of the government first of all. Afterwards they would see.” (154) Unsure of how to reach a socialist society, he starts preaching his new religion, Marxism. In the midst of his mission, he realizes the influence that he exerts upon the miners. Accordingly, arrogance and self-love start to take hold in his inner self.

The whole settlement grouped round him. The satisfaction of his self-love was delicious; he became intoxicated with this first enjoyment of popularity; to be at the head of others, to command, he who was so young, and but the day before had been a mere labourer, this filled him with pride, and enlarged his dream of an approaching revolution in which he was to play a part. His face changed: he became serious and put on airs, while his growing ambition inflamed his theories and pushed him to ideas of violence. (112)

Etienne’s dream is corrupted by self-interest. The pride of leadership blinds him and takes hold of his sense of community. The strike that he calls for is meant to install him as a leader. Uncertain about how to organize the strike and how to control the crowd, he engages in this mission to fulfill his egocentrism. Uneducated about crowd behavior, Etienne manipulates the strikers into thinking that victory can be achieved through a strike.

Etienne’s political evolution manifests in his realization of the power that his ideas, even though contradictory and chaotic, exert upon the uneducated workers. Etienne holds a

talent for demagogic oratory. Accordingly, he gains a wide audience. The wage cut angers the miners, but it is his speeches which inflame them to go on strike. Gradually, the respect that he gains from the colliers swells his vanity and inflames his ambition. During the strike, deprivation does not weaken the will of protest nor does it curtail the popularity of Etienne. His self-confidence increases and his consciousness of the power he has gained, continually, feed his pride. (Hemmings 25) In his analysis, David Priestland mentions that Etienne is “shown to be egotistical and ambitious.” (109) Schwarz notes that what alleviates Etienne's political speeches is the narrator's irony in regard to self-inflating behavior and harboring to reductive solutions. He mocks Etienne's naivety and narcissism in several scenes. For example, he mocks the way Etienne as “the unquestioned leader...gave forth oracles...He was climbing a ladder, he was entering this execrated middle class.” (qtd. in Schwarz 269) Sometimes, Etienne feels the threat of losing his leadership; thus, power. His actions indicate that he is exploiting the miners for personal power. Even the warning of Rasseneur that the strike would turn into violence and hurt the strikers does not shake him.

Etienne's culminating triumph manifests in his success to defeat the moderate Rasseneur who voted against the strike. When all hailed his idea to embrace the strike as a means for social change, he marks his first time hold of a crowd under his command. But in the course of the novel, Zola starts to give us hints of what will strip Etienne off the right to guide his class. It is his loss of sympathy toward the miners and the taste of power. His sympathy is swallowed by the joy of leadership and success. The narrator notes that Etienne, through instinctive love of comfort and his narcissism and gratification of the self, starts to climb higher to enter the abhorred bourgeois world. (Hemmings 25) In addition to this, what strips Etienne of his right to be the right leader is his condescending attitude toward the miners. Their ignorance disgusts him. The narrator states: “Vague ideas were working within him for the first time: a feeling of superiority, which placed him apart from his mates.” (249)

Besides, Etienne sometimes fears that his ideas may lead people to starvation. He even “had a sudden vision of disaster; of dying children and sobbing mothers.” (105) But still, he is taken by the pride of his popularity and he does all what it takes to preserve it. Etienne’s actions show that he is concerned about protecting his popularity more than his concern for protecting the interest of the miners who have placed their destiny in his hands. Etienne seems to be corrupted. Even though the strike seems to go the opposite of what is expected, still he continues with his speeches to keep his influence. His discourse is full of words denoting the realization of the dream that the proletariat is still hoping for, the rise of the workers and the demise of the bourgeois. This makes him lose sight and the true motive has lost by his pride of leadership. At the end of the novel, Rasseneur's predictions start to take place, yet too late to turn back. Etienne loses the trust of the miners who throw bricks at him. The march finishes with the rich dining in their lavish house and the miners going back to work. According to Kristof Haavik, names have a significant meaning in understanding *Germinal*. “Etienne, the preacher of a new gospel of socialism, is ultimately stoned by those he sought to teach, like Saint Etienne, or Stephen, of the bible.Rasseneur, the possibiliste voice of reason against Etienne..., is *raisonneur* who use careful analysis rather than emotional rhetoric, and proves to be more reasonable than his adversary.” (1-2) Zola, through Souvarine, makes a parallel between Etienne and the International in terms of their career and history. He tells Etienne that his “story is just like that of your International.” (263) Etienne’s rise to power and his subsequent transformation into an egoistic leader correspond that of the International. The later arose to power; it was so popular among the working class, and then debilitated due to factional quarrels. (Magid 58)

Zola introduces as well the threat of anarchism and he represents the quarrel between anarchism and Marxism condemning both as destructive. After the collapse of the Paris Commune, the French left split into socialists and anarchists. Zola had discussed with the

Russian novelist Turgenev the anarchist challenges to the ideas of Marx. The conversation and the ideas that took place in this meeting find their echo in *Germinal*. (Scurr) Indeed, Zola points out the disagreement between Etienne, the Marxist-Socialist and communist who favors the strike as a means for social change, and the anarchist Souvarine who prefers terrorist tactics. According to Souvarine, the activities of the trade unions are futile and anarchy is the only hope where “the earth washed in blood and purified by fire! Then we shall see!” (95) In the course of the novel, Souvarine agrees with Etienne that the miners should enroll in the First International but he openly states that he is against Marxism and against the strike as a method to achieve social change. Souvarine supports Bukunin and he calls his name in a “religious fervor,” and takes him as “the master, Bakunin the destroyer.” He states:

"He alone can give the knock-out blow," he went on, "while your learned men, with their evolution, are mere cowards. Before three years are past, the International, under his orders, will crush the old world...Etienne was burning...to understand this worship of destruction. (156)

Souvarine believes in frightful methods that terrorize the rulers and inflame the mass. In his discussion of this character, Hemmings comments that “Souvarine emerges as a bugbear.” (29) He is powerfully destructive. He is a vision of “post-apocalyptic utopia.” (Waage 20) Indeed, this can be seen in all the passages that contain his reasoning. ““Do you understand?” he said again, gazing at them with his habitual calmness; "we must destroy everything, or hunger will reappear. Yes, anarchy and nothing more...” (95) Souvarine believes that Bakunin is capable of making the International an effective tool for this policy. He tells Etienne that the ideas of Marx are fooleries. Souvarine “affirmed that freedom could only be obtained by the destruction of the State.” (183) Etienne disagrees with Souvarine and argues against his methods of fire and murder. However, as I have argued, for Zola, Etienne’s method is as destructive as that of Souvarine.

The father of anarchism, Proudhon, describes “anarchism as the theory that Authority is evil; thus anything that weakens its power, in order to promote more liberty, is good. While authoritarian socialists, followers of Marx, see the root of social ills in the principle of private ownership of the means of production, libertarian socialists or anarchists find it in the principle of authority itself.” (Aubery 40) Souvarine rejects tradition and concepts of authority. Ironically, he becomes authoritative when he takes alone the decision to sabotage the mine. His action of sabotaging the mine-shaft leads to all of Etienne, Catherine, and Chaval to be trapped underground, to finally the death of Catherine and Chaval. In his analysis, Kristof Haavik relates the name of Souvarine to the French word “souverain” which means the one who has the supreme power or authority. It is the one who has the right to give the final decision, and this seems to be applicable to Souvarine. Souvarine is so devoted to his cause and, more than the others, a one who is more willing to employ violence. He exercises the supreme power when he decides alone to destroy the mine. This action means that he has chosen a decision that offers no chance for the others to interfere. Souvarine’s socio-political beliefs call for egalitarianism, yet his deed indicates the opposite. Just like an absolute monarch he states his rules, consulting no one and crediting no one. (2-3) Souvarine works for his cause regardless of the disastrous consequences. His ideology calls for collective ownership and agreement, yet he remains isolated and unable to cooperate with the others throughout the novel. The solitude that Etienne finds in Souvarine from the starting of the novel continues until the end. In fact, Souvarine has witnessed the hanging of his lover after she helped him in his attempt to blow up a railway line in Moscow. As what Ruth Scurr comments in her review in *The Guardian* that Souvarine “stood in the crowd and watched her execution, living on afterwards as a political animal unfettered by human ties.” Zola relates the anarchist Souvarine to fanaticism and terrorism. Souvarine for Zola is a stereotype of the anarchists who believe that change can be achieved by violence and revolutionary tactics. For

the novelist, these are the people who terrify society and spread unrest throughout the continent.

Zola indicates as well that Christian socialism is ineffective. The priest Ranvier preaches about revolution and justice in vague and ambiguous terms and metaphors. For Zola, these men are not the right people to trust as they use the misery of the deprived to achieve power. In his analysis, David Priestland describes him as “ineffectual.” (109) Richard H. Zakarian states in his book that the church turned to socialism just to regain its sovereignty. Its power had been taken by the atheist middle class. Thus, it turned toward the proletariat against the upper class. This led Zola to create L’abbé Ranvier. When Ranvier reaches Montsau, he starts preaching Christian socialism. The church realizes that in order to regain its power, it has to preach about injustices and stand with the mass of the proletariat. (130-132) The American author William Pfaff states that starting from the enlightenment, the church lost its central position in society especially among intellectuals and in the political sphere in Europe. Instead, scientific progress, seen in the technological and material accomplishment, took its place. (Schwarz 256) During the strike, Ranvier states his prophecies on how the miners will rise and bring God back to earth. He explains this in vague religious words. For Zola, Ranvier’s ideas are just like Etienne, idealistic. His prayers are ineffective and utopian. Studying to write *Germinal* has a strong effect on the political development of Zola. The novelist says: “Every time I write a study now I come up against socialism.” (qtd. in Birchall) Accordingly, in *Germinal*, all types of socialism are condemned by Zola.

Zola does not only criticize the socialists but also the miners. In some passages, he shows that the miners are not morally so much different from the bourgeois. When Etienne gives his speeches, instead of dreaming to eliminate inequality, the miners dream of being masters themselves. In some cases, they are seen to be jealous from the lavish life of the

bourgeois so that they wish to be in their place. Even Souvarine comments that the miners and the holders of the Marxist doctrine are dissemblers who care only for their interest; they do not differ from the bourgeois. In her article, Ruth Scurr states that Souvarine's speech indicates that the oppressed engage into revolutions as it allows them to be oppressors. At that point, approximately all of them will place the deprived behind their backs and they would dedicate their energy to chase for more money and power. This change would render the new wealthy feel insecure; a sense of paranoia that the ones left behind are to come and bring them back to their old life. Therefore, more money means more security. This way, for Zola, the workers do not differ from some greedy mine owners.

Accordingly, for Zola, the socialists are hypocrites who transform into a voice of authority to fulfill their narcissism and self-interest. For the novelist, these people are a threat to society. Zola takes the radicals as people who draw plans while the safety of the workers is a far matter to consider. He extends his criticism and blames the workers for their desire to be members of the bourgeois class. At the end of their discussion, they all agree to follow Etienne's solution, the strike. And regardless of everything, they all have this idea that "one way or another it would have to come to an end, either quietly by laws, by an understanding in good fellowship, or like savages by burning everything and devouring one another." (95)

3.1.2. The strike as a lethal social movement

As stated in chapter one, due to social and political upheavals, the problem and theories of the crowd constituted a key concern in the late 19th century. There was a prominent belief that the crowd pushes people to display irrational behavior; thus, it would disturb the foundations of society. (Borch i) Influenced by this, Zola studies the behavior of men in a group. For him, strikes are a path to instability and the Marxists and anarchists lead to destruction. He believes that individuals in a group will lose their rationality and engage in destructive behavior. The strike organizers think they can control the crowd; however,

Etienne's strike proves that the crowd is doomed to spiral out of control. In order to scientifically study group behavior in *Germinal*, Zola follows his theory of naturalism as explained in his essay *The Experimental novel* (1893).

Etienne thinks he can lead the strikers to be masters. Rasseneur warns Etienne that the crowd is not easy to control and the strike might turn into a disaster. Etienne ignores this warning. At this point, uneducated about group behavior, he is filled with pride as it is the first time he becomes a leader. "He held power, as it were, materialized in these three thousand beasts, whose hearts he could move with a word." (184) When Etienne gives his speeches, the strikers start to have mystic dreams. The miners believe all what Etienne tells them as if he is telling words of religion. Etienne makes their world a religious one where miracles are to happen. The miners agree with what Etienne tells them even though most of the time his explanation of terms is unclear to them. "Many obscure phrases had escaped them; they could not properly understand this technical and abstract reasoning." (148) Yet, the strikers dedicate themselves to the cause religiously to the point of fanaticism. In his book, Daniel Schwarz states that the narrator mocks the submissiveness of the miners who blindly hails Etienne's words. He goes further and compares them to the hypnotized religious believers who fantasize about heaven. "There was an absolute confidence in spite of everything, a religious faith, the blind gift of a population of believers.... They saw again over there, when their eyes were dimmed by weakness, the ideal city of their dream, but now growing near and seeming to be real, with its population of brothers, its golden age of labour and meals in common." (qtd. in Schwarz 269) This submissiveness of the miners motivates Etienne to pursue in his plan even though he is uneducated about the way strikes are led. Schwarz argues: "The reader understands that Etienne has vague utopian impulses without a full understanding of the means or difficulties of realizing his hopes." (267) Souvarine as well holds a mystic dream thinking he can lead the miners to a different future. His dedication to

the cause makes him reach the point of fanaticism. This motivates him to do things that are socially unacceptable. “Souvarine, with a vague gaze, feeling about with his nervous hands, did not appear to hear. His fair girlish face... seemed to be growing savage in some mystic dream full of bloody visions. And he began to dream aloud,...” (264) Souvarine’s deeds are linked to destruction, and Etienne takes pride in being a leader and instructs the miners without the full understanding of the situation and the mechanism of the crowd. In his *Experimental Novel*, Zola states that he is influenced by the studies of Claude Bernard and Darwin’s theories. In this essay, he argues that inter-organic conditions are important if one wants to find the determinism of phenomena in humans. “...the question of heredity has a great influence in the intellectual and passionate manifestations of man.” (19) Zola also thinks that when studying a group of living beings, the surrounding or the social condition also plays a great role. Social condition modifies the phenomena; meaning, it modifies how the person feels, how he thinks, how he loves...etc. Taking his ideas from Claude Bernard, Zola concludes that determinism covers the living beings and dominates human phenomena. This way, with the naturalist novelists, there is no free will as men’s actions are influenced by heredity and surroundings. (18-20-30) Etienne is unaware of the forces that control men and turns them into unthinking creature. Thus, he pushes the strikers to go further thinking that it is easy to lead the crowd. Unlike Etienne’s expectations, during the strike, the crowd is shown to hold destructive features as it responds involuntarily to natural stimuli. The miners are shown to be controlled by heredity and surroundings. When the fund is all spent, the miners become more desperate. As they refuse to end the strike, the company brings Belgian workers to replace them. And here, the miners lose their rationality and engage in destruction. They degenerate into fierce animals and destroy the machines of the mine. For Zola, the bad environment and the long misery that the workers inherited from their parents before them, deprive them of their humanity and degenerate them into beasts. “And in this growing

ferocity, in this old need of revenge which was turning every head with madness, the choked cries went on, death to traitors, hatred against ill-paid work, the roaring of bellies after bread.”

(222) Catherine during the strike, “was observed with her fists in the air also brandishing half-bricks and throwing them with all the force of her little arms. She could not have said why, she was suffocating, she was dying of the desire to kill everybody. (283)

And in fact anger, hunger, these two months of suffering and this enraged helter-skelter through the pits had lengthened the placid faces of the Montsou colliers into the muzzles of wild beasts. ... The road seemed to be full of blood; men and women continued to rush by, bloody as butchers in the midst of slaughter. (232)

Bonnemort, “drunk from hunger, stupefied by his long misery... under the influence of no one knew what malicious impulse,” loses his mind and savagely kills Cécil. (241) This denotes that, for Zola, humans devolve backward under certain conditions. When Etienne, Catherine, and Chaval are trapped underground, Etienne kills Chaval. The narrator indicates that it is his heredity of alcohol which pushes him to actions of violence.

The need to kill seized him irresistibly, a physical need, like the irritation of mucus which causes a violent spasm of coughing. It rose and broke out beyond his will, beneath the pressure of the hereditary disease. ... All his struggles came back to his memory confusedly, that useless fight against the poison which slept in his muscles, the slowly accumulated alcohol of his race. He was, however, only intoxicated by hunger; the remote intoxication of his parents had been enough. (328)

According to Zola, it is Alcohol, transmitted through his genes, which pushes him to commit his murder in addition to hunger which intoxicated his parents before him. Zola’s aim is to show that humans are controlled by an internal force. Thus, the strike organizers would fail to lead them as they themselves lack the free will.

In *Germinal*, Zola recalls the way the revolutionary crowd constitutes a nightmare for the bourgeois. In a passage, Négrel and Madame Hennebeau are startled when they saw the unrecognized faces of the mob. Their faces are fearful and vengeful. The enraged women appeared holding “their little ones in their arms, raising them and shaking them like banners of mourning and vengeance... while frightful old women were yelling so loudly that the cords of their fleshless necks seemed to be breaking. And then... two thousand madmen... all effaced in the same earthy uniformity. Their eyes were burning, and one only distinguished the holes of black mouths singing the Marseillaise; the stanzas were lost in a confused roar...” (232) The reaction of the bourgeois when they hear the flood of the angered and hungered people approaching their so-called safe dwelling is so expressive. Their reaction is so dramatic so that it makes the readers experience the fear that haunted the bourgeois. Zola’s *Germinal* presents the strike as a destructive movement that leaves no one safe. In her analysis of group behavior in *Germinal*, Susanna Barrows contends that Zola portrays how the crowd is so submissive to the power of instincts rather than following rational guidance. She adds that group behavior is contagious. When men put themselves into groups, they act as a single body. (Borch 27) Consequently, Etienne is unable to control them. The miners are not the same as the ones at the beginning of the strike.

Ultimately, Zola believes that none of the socialists can control the masses – a violent, almost animalistic force of nature. Zola terrifies his readers with his accounts of the uncontrollably violent strikes and demonstrations. His bourgeois characters saw a scarlet vision of the revolution that would inevitably carry them all away, on some blood-soaked fin de siècle evening... these same rags and the same thunder of clogs, the same terrifying pack of animals with dirty skins and foul breath, would sweep away the old world, as their barbarian hordes overflowed and surged through the land. (Priestland 109)

The way the crowd demands its rights is so violent. This idea is deeply rooted in the western philosophy and can be traced to Plato as Alfred North Whitehead had noticed that all western philosophies are “series of footnotes to Plato.” In *Republic*, Plato compared the political mass of citizens, to an animal which disdains knowledge. It is a mass that works itself to be heard instead through a “voice of anger and of appetites, that is to say, of all that is not rational.” (qtd. in Borch 23) The fear that Zola projects in the eye of the bourgeois describes the violence that stems from the crowd.

In *Germinal*, Zola projects as well the consequences of the interference of the anarchists in the direction of the strike. Thus, just like the Marxists, for Zola, the anarchists are a threat to stability. In his analysis, Hemmings informs us that Zola discussed with the novelist Turgenev the terrorist attacks in Russia and attributed them to the anarchists. Turgenev names this anarchists’ sense of destruction “Nihilism” and he portrays it in several of his novels. This understanding of anarchism is adopted by Zola in *Germinal*. (27-28) In the novel, it is mentioned that Souvarine is a crushing scorn man who is ready to give his life without the glory of being a martyr. In the modern era, these types of men are suicide bombers. (Birchall) Souvarine’s name, which comes from “soverain,” stands for someone who is authoritative and demolisher. Therefore, his name warns the readers that such a man can never be anything but a force of destruction and terror. (Haavik 3) The sabotage of the mine is a mark that he wants to leave in order to show the company that anarchism would end the system. Souvarine “had left his mark; the frightened world would know that the beast had not died a natural death.” (299) When Souvarine watched the destruction he has caused, the narrator comments:

He threw down his last cigarette; he went away.... He was going tranquilly to extermination, wherever there might be dynamite to blow up towns and men. He will be there, without doubt, when the middle class in agony shall hear the pavement of the streets bursting up beneath their feet. (311-312)

It is until the defeat of the strike that Souvarine looks for another alternative form of action which is the sabotage of the mine. This way, Zola shows terrorism as a sign of weakness and desperation of a declining movement. It also demonstrates a lack of confidence and uncertainty in collective action. It is as Trotsky put it, “it belittles the role of the masses in their own consciousness.” (qtd in. Birchall) Ergo, anarchism for Zola is just like Marxism, ideologies that stand for plight, destruction, and affliction. Following the radicals would take the workers to suffer even more. It does not only extend their poverty, but it will also make them out of the law.

Gradually, near the end of the novel, Etienne realizes that it is impossible to control the crowd. It is a mysterious power out of reach that he cannot identify with. Etienne’s hamartia is his ignorance of group behavior. After the mine disaster, Etienne’s dream is shut down and his illusion about the rise to power is shattered when he finds himself face to face with an army of strikers who slip out of his control and engage in vengeance and destructive actions, acts which he did not intend or envisioned. When Etienne discovers that the crowd is an uncontrollable beast, the pride of his authority wanes. What remains is antipathy for workers whom he believed he could guide to triumph. Zola projects how strikes are ineffective for social change and the socialists are not the right people to trust or be under their leadership. Etienne, who first saw the strength of the miners in their numbers and works his way to use them as a tool to gain political power, comes to realize how cyclonic, unmanageable, and untamable such a force can be.

In Zola’s ‘socialist’ novel, the socialists power to be largely ineffective, for as Etienne comes to acknowledge, events had been and would be determined by a force greater than the individual’s ideas, an anonymous force, ... (Baguley 142)

Etienne fails in spite of the high hopes that Zola gives him in the beginning. His reflections after the miners throw stones at him prove the bankruptcy of the demagogue and show his

ineffectiveness. Etienne comes to realize that he was never their commander. It is rather the hidden pressure of the crowd which guided him throughout the strike. When the reality of the crowd is revealed, Etienne realizes the huge distance that separates him from his comrades. He becomes afraid of them. The miners now are pictured as a force of nature sweeping all what comes in their way and defeating all the rules. Through a gradual climb of his individuality to a higher social level, he feels superior and alienated from them. (Hemmings 26) In several passages, Zola indicates Etienne's poor understanding of matters related to his struggle. It is until he experiences leadership, that he discovers that the starvelings are uncontrollable beasts.

For the novelist, Etienne's strike brings no positive outcomes. The law enforcement agencies are able to tame the strike. Several miners are killed; even the bourgeois are not left untouched by the strike. During the strike the miners starved and they are left to cold with no coal. At the end, they go back to work with much regret for their trust of Etienne. In his analysis, Daniel Schwarz argues that Zola dramatizes the Law of Unintended Consequences through the incidents of the strike. No one expected the death of Cécil, the Maheu and thee of his children. La Maheud's children bagged the streets, a thing that she worked very hard in order not to happen. (268) This shows that for Zola, the strike does not lead to social change and trusting the Marxists would lead to nothing but death and despair.

Zola does not exclude the fact that a revolution can take place in the future. This is confirmed by the ending of the novel where Etienne leaves the village not because he abandons the idea of revolt but because the organizer of the First International, Plauchart, invites him to join the party in Paris. This is confirmed even more by the setting of the novel where Zola sets it in 1867, the years leading to the Paris Commune 1871. (Birchall) In a passage, Etienne ponders about social Darwinism. He asks whether Darwin is right and the world is a mere battlefield where the strong devour the weak for nothing but the sake of

continuity of race and beauty. This issue troubled him, but he finally finds an answer that satisfied him. He states:

If any class must be devoured, would not the people, still new and full of life, devour the middle class, exhausted by enjoyment? The new society would arise from new blood. And in this expectation of an invasion of barbarians, regenerating the old decayed nations, reappeared his absolute faith in an approaching revolution, the real one--that of the workers--the fire of which would inflame this century's end with that purple of the rising sun which he saw like blood on the sky. (341)

Etienne's words leave no doubt that the revolution is still prevalent. In her analysis of *Germinal*, Magid states that Zola calls *Germinal* "roman socialiste" because a socialist revolution was so prevalent in France. Zola says that the idea for the novel crystallized when he understood the meaning of socialism. The last chapter shows that the victory of the bourgeois is still not yet certain as the strike of Montsau is only the beginning. The International which Etienne is heading to join at the end of the novel is a real organization that attempted to raze society. (58) The ending of the novel denotes that the crowd will rise again and the fear is constant. In chapter one, I have explained how the Paris Commune represents the brief realization of the fear that haunted the bourgeois.

Zola demonstrates the Marxists and anarchists' shortcomings. For him, these strike and protest instigators are unable to lead or control unlike what they promote. They are impetuous to the extent where they organize strikes when they are clueless about crowd behavior. For Zola, men in a group will lose their rationality and engage in destruction; for this, change cannot be achieved through strikes. Accordingly, *Germinal* is a medium that makes the readers experience the disasters and plight that can happen when the workers follow the

leadership of the Marxists and go on strike. The novel also makes the readers witness the frightful consequences of the intrusion of the anarchists in the direction of the strike.

3.2. The Image of the Strike and Strike Leaders in *In Dubious Battle*

Just like Zola, Steinbeck as well visited the migrant laborers in California and was a witness to the misery that they faced in their work. In his novel; however, Steinbeck focuses more on the hypocrisy of the communists. He attributes the plight of the migrant workers to the communists who influence the workers with their long speeches about unions and equality through labor strikes. The strike organizers spread the idea that their goal is social justice; but for Steinbeck, they are hypocrites who use the ordeal of the workers for their self-interests. In *In Dubious Battle*, Steinbeck projects the way the migrant farmers are taken as an object used to spread communism and how the strike is doomed to turn into a riot as individuals in a group would lose their rationality and engage in destruction.

3.2.1. The threat of the communists

For Steinbeck, the communists are a threat as they are determined to achieve an ideological agenda regardless of the safety of workers. They use all methods to reach their goal. The workers in *In Dubious battle* are exploited and engaged in a destructive end. For Steinbeck, the communists are hypocrites who use the farmers as tools to achieve power and spread unrest throughout the country. For this, he portrays them in an unfavorable manner.

Steinbeck, at the beginning of his novel, gives us hints that the communists are people to trust and admire for their sense of justice. They are portrayed in a way that makes us think that they care for the workers' interests. When Jim meets some party men in the prison, he thinks that his life is a mess with no goal, unlike the party men. For Jim, he is with no use unless he works with them. Jim states: "Everything's been a mess, all my life. Their lives weren't messes. They were working toward something. I want to work toward something. I feel dead. I thought I might get alive again." (29) Jim takes the radicals as heroes to be

respected for their dedication toward a cause; but as the novel progresses, Steinbeck provides us with information that indicates that the radicals are a threat. Dan tells Jim that the party men are not the right people to trust. He informs Jim that he joined the Wobblies and tasted the misery that comes from this union. There used to be no place to bath and “the meat used to spoil.” Most of time, the president of the union would sell the strikers to the superintendent and it is them who suffer the consequences. (63) Dan considers the party men as “dogs” who betray for their own self-interest. Contrary to what they promote, they do not hold a sense of community. (67)

The novelist in his *Life in Letters*, states that his “information for this book came mostly from Irish and Italian communists whose training was in the field not in the drawing-room. They don’t believe in ideologies and ideal tactics. They do what they can under the circumstances.” (97) Accordingly, Steinbeck is not smitten by their way of dealing with the problems facing the workers. For him, the communists are reckless and amateur strike organizers who are clueless about effective tactics. Apparently, Steinbeck was only an observer when attending their meetings. This encounter gave him ideas to construct his narrative. In the novel, the communists are unprofessional people who act randomly with no plans. Mac and Jim act according to their needs and according to circumstances; and the workers are not put at the top front. For Steinbeck, the communists dehumanize the workers into mere tools meant for exploitation to achieve a goal. This is shown in the statements and actions of Mac. In order to gain the trust of the farmers, Mac pretends to have medical training and assists the daughter-in-law of London to deliver her child. Mac lies not caring about the consequences. He makes use of the situation with no regard for decency or honesty. Mac uses all means to encourage the conflict. He wants the strike to get more violent in order for the movement to grow. He tells Jim that if they succeed to raise a riot in the apple fields, “maybe it will just naturally spread over into the cotton.” (43) Regardless of the safety of the

workers, he does all what he can for this to happen. In describing the party men in *In Dubious Battle*, Lincoln R. Gibbs states:

The leaders are steadfast almost to the point of fanaticism, but they are no heroes of romance, complete with every imaginable strength and grace. They lie; they foment strife for the sake of their cause; they take advantage of every atrocity committed by their opponents, in order to inflame the hearts of their followers.

(178-179)

In several passages, Mac explains to Jim that the most important thing is to win the struggle so that their ideology would spread throughout the country. Thus, the workers are vehicles to spread an ideology. Surely they want the workers to better their condition, but the cause first. When Jim asks Mac about the possibility of wage raise, Mac replies by stating that they “got to take the long view. A strike that's settled too quickly won't teach the men how to organize, how to work together. A tough strike is good. We want the men to find out how strong they are when they work together.” (43) He pursues by stating that “Every time a guardsman jabs a fruit tramp with a bayonet a thousand men all over the country come on our side.” (43) Mac seems to forget that the laborers are already exploited. He does not care about the safety of the workers; contrary, their injury or death is an advantage to score. Joy is beaten several times by the police and when the strike starts, he is killed with cold blood. Mac utilizes Joy's corpse to unify the disheartened strikers to support the already doomed strike. In his speech, he tells the strikers not to “feel sorry for Joy. If he could know what he did, he'd be cocky. Joy always wanted to lead people, and now he's going to do it, even if he's in a box.” (131) Gradually, Jim learns from the violence of Mac and becomes more violent than him. When Mac beats a high-school student who has a loaded rifle, Jim coldly tells him not to worry arguing that “Sympathy is as bad as fear.” He argues further that he did the right thing as the action of the student “was a danger to the cause. It had to be done, and you did it right. No hate, no feeling,

just a job.” (203) In fact, Jim’s miserable life has an effect on him. His dedication to the cause affects his perception and makes him devalue the life of others and their suffering. Just like Souvarine, Jim is a nihilist revolutionary; he is characterized by murderous violence. Like the case with Souvarine, Jim is represented at the beginning of the novel as a lost soul because he has lost his mother while Souvarine has lost his lover. For Steinbeck, these types of men are lazy with no sense of meaning in life. Following their leadership, would lead to dead ends. Smitten by the communists; Jim decides to join the party. When Harry Nilson first meets him, he noticed that he is like a sleep walker with a lost soul. Jim tells Nilson:

All the time at home we were fighting, fighting something—hunger mostly. My old man was fighting the bosses. I was fighting at school. But we always lost. And after a long time I guess it got to be part of our mind-stuff that we always would lose...Can you see the hopelessness in that? I grew up in that hopelessness. (37)

For Steinbeck, these kinds of men are associated with a sense of loss and meaningless which is why they are ready to use all means to achieve their aim not caring for their life or death, let alone the lives of others. Just like the party men he met in prison, he does not mind being used by the communists for the sake of achieving a political agenda. Jim tells Mac that he does not want to live poor like his family or like the poor he knows. That is why he decided to join the communist party. In the end, Jim is killed, and again, instead of questioning his methods Mac uses the corpse to rekindle the workers’ sense of revolt to push the strike further. He places the corpse of Jim, and gives his speech by emphasizing that Jim “didn’t want anything for himself.” (249) Steinbeck is definitely questioning the methods of the communists. Mac’s actions are scary and awful; he is unscrupulous and far from being honest. Not only Mac but also the other party man is portrayed in an unfavorable manner. Dick Halsing, for example, is described as “decoy,” (33) as he uses his good looks to seduce women to get funds for the party.

In his analysis, Richard H. Pells observes that the communists in *In Dubious Battle* are far from caring about the feelings of men. They do not even waste time to like people. Relationships are made just for political needs, no wonder the radicals, most of the time, become fanatics and inhuman. (226) John Timmerman extends this idea by declaring that “one wonders what difference there is between Mac and the growers themselves. Both have their own, separate ends, but the means differ hardly at all.” (87)

For Steinbeck, the strikers represent a danger to humanity; this shakes his sympathy towards them. Just like the strike organizers, the strikers as well are not portrayed in a favorable image. Joy is a zealot and London is prone to barbaric anger. Mac helps him to be a squad leader just because he is physically big. The strikers follow his lead due to his physical appearance. In his analysis of the strikers, Gibbs states: “Most of them are coarse; a few are cowards and turncoats; some are shortsighted and self-indulgent. In the mass they are subject to inconstant gusts of emotion - now ferociously valiant, now whimpering with discomfort and fear.” (178)

Ironically, when *In Dubious Battle* was written, it was reviewed as a novel that prizes the radicals. Claude Jones states that when Steinbeck wrote *In Dubious Battle* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, some considered him a Marxist novelist who leads the propaganda for the communist ideology. The communists claimed him on their sides. (445) Based on his sociological reading of *In Dubious Battle*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *The Grapes of Wrath*, Freeman Champney concluded that Steinbeck is a pro-communist. (Han 21) In the *Saturday Review*, William Rose states that “the author’s attempt has been to bring out heroic motive in action in those whom the newspapers denounce as “reds.” (Williams 119) However, in his *Life in Letters*, Steinbeck openly declares his despise of the communists by stating: “I don't like communists either I mean I dislike them as people. I rather imagine the apostle had the same waspish qualities and the New Testament is proof that they had equally bad manners.”

(107) "...the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property." (Marx and Engels 22) Marxists thinkers call for people's agency; for them, the aim of Marxism is to push the workers to revolt. Steinbeck does not stand in this category as he does not call for protests. In his novel, he shows the violent side of the strike and what might come when workers follow the lead of the communists. This does not mean that he is not sympathetic with the workers, but his unflattering image of the strike leaders and his portrayal of a failed and disastrous strike, call our critical thinking to ponder about his fundamental purpose.

Steinbeck presents the strike leaders with unflattering traits. Just like Zola, he portrays the strike leaders as manipulators and hypocrites who use the workers to promote a political ideology. They promise the workers for a happy future through strikes and riots ignoring the consequences that might engender. Once they gain the trust of the workers, they become corrupters and manipulative. All what they care for is the cause; the safety of the workers is a secondary matter to consider. For the novelist, the radicals are reckless and ignorant of group behavior. Once individuals organize themselves into a group, they lose their rationality and engage in desolation. The strike will not bring any positive results.

3.2.2. The destructive puissance of the phalanx

For Steinbeck, strikes are not the right solution to ameliorate ones' social and financial status. For him, even though the strike instigators know that the workers are controlled by biological needs, still they illusion that they can lead the strikers, or as he calls them, the phalanx. Through *In Dubious Battle*, he projects the way the phalanx is an uncontrollable beast and how the communists refuse to end the strike even though it is clear that it is a mere losing battle. In order to scientifically study the behavior of men in a group, Steinbeck formulates his theory of phalanx in 1933.

In his exploration of marine biology, Steinbeck applied his knowledge of biology on humans. He notices that humans are another species of animals. Through the comparison, Steinbeck developed his phalanx theory. He explains the way individual humans in a group act like cells in an organism. He notices that each cell is an individual which have a purpose, but the total of all cells have a unique and individual purpose. This way, an individual human may have individual purposes, but once in a group, a new purpose emerges. It is that of the group or the phalanx. In his essay *Argument of Phalanx*, Steinbeck writes:

We have thought of mankind always in terms of individual men. We have tried to study men and movements of men by minute investigation of individual men units. We might as reasonably try to understand the nature of a man by investigating the cells of his body. Perhaps if we observe the phalanx, knowing it is a new individual, not to be confined within the units which comprise it, if we look back at the things it has done in an attempt to correlate and analyze its habits under various stimuli, we may in time come to know something of the phalanx, of its nature, of its drive and its ends, we may even be able to direct its movements where now we have only great numbers of meaningless, unrelated and destructive phenomena. (qtd. in Rumsby)

In his letter to George Albee, Steinbeck talks about his phalanx theory. He says that the mob is a phalanx. The nature of the mob is to be studied in one unit. For him, the phalanx is “a creature” whose nature and emotions are hard to know. His desires, urges, drives, hunger...etc differ from that of the individual. (39) In *In Dubious Battle*, when individuals organize themselves into a group, they become a single unit, and they start to act like animals as they lose their rationality. The phalanx is controlled by biological factors and anti-social traits. The strike organizers think they can use the mob to achieve their mission, but as Steinbeck demonstrates in his novel, the phalanx is an uncontrollable power.

In *In Dubious Battle*, Steinbeck demonstrates the true lack of full knowledge of group behavior. Mac goes with Jim to the Torgas Valley holding one aim, forming a mob, and then controls it in order to spread unrest. Mac thinks that he can guide the farmers to spread his ideology. In order to study group behavior, Steinbeck displays two opposing views, that of Mac, the strike organizer, and Dr. Burton, a sympathizer. Mac works his best to unify the workers to revolt against the landlords. For him, the strike is the only solution for a prosperous life. Dr. Burton offers his help to the strikers; however, he is diametrically against the methods of the communists. For him, violence leads to more violence and the mob is not easy to control. For Dr. Burton, group psychology would wipe out the individual even if the group attains its goals. The doctor gives an illustration of what he thinks about strikes by stating that:

“I want to see,” ... “When you cut your finger, and streptococci get in the wound, there’s a swelling and a soreness. That swelling is the fight your body puts up, the pain is the battle. You can’t tell which one is going to win, but the wound is the first battleground. If the cells lose the first fight the streptococci invade, and the fight goes on up the arm. Mac, these little strikes are like the infection. Something has got into the men; a little fever had started and the lymphatic glands are shooting in reinforcements. I want to see, so I go to the seat of the wound.” (115)

Dr. Burton wants to observe the behavior of the group man during strikes and this observation leads him to dreariness and despair. For him, the strike is a wound, and the individual changes when he gets into unions. Burton uses his medical knowledge to fathom how mob mentality functions. He likens the strikers to cells that instantly react to infections in the body. For him, group-men always get some kind of infection. These group-men are not like single men. It is a new individual. He pursues by saying:

A man in a group isn't himself at all; he's a cell in an organism that isn't like him any more than the cells in your body are like you. ... People have said, 'mobs are crazy, you can't tell what they'll do.' Why don't people look at mobs not as men, but as mobs? A mob nearly always seems to act reasonably, for a mob. (115)

Ignoring Burton's analysis and unaware that the group can easily slip out of control, Mac considers that the group can overcome obstacles and achieve the goal aimed for. For him, the workers will lose their way and put into violence only if they are left without guidance. Mac tells London and Sam that "these guys'll go nuts if we don't take charge." (87) Accordingly, Mac starts to instruct Jim and London on how to organize the work stoppage and how to manipulate the apple pickers. For Mac, "Revolution and communism will cure social injustices." (115) Before and during the strike, he uses all what it takes to manipulate the mob. Steinbeck demonstrates how the farmers in a group are like robots with no brain and can be transformed into a fierce mob controlled by instincts just like animals. Mac uses this point of weakness to achieve his goals thinking that it is easy to manipulate the phalanx.

During the strike, the strikers display anti-social traits which are shown in their mystic state of mind. Steinbeck demonstrates how the strikers follow the lead of the party men without questioning the methods. Mac's words are like words of religion. Mac uses this as a bonus to manipulate the farmers. Mac observes: "we made the men work for themselves, in their own defense, as a group. That's what we're out here for anyway, to teach them to fight in a bunch. Raising wages isn't all we're after." (61)

The workers themselves are described throughout the novel as "apathetic" and "listless," able to respond only to the "voice of authority". Hence the communists provide the required direction, leadership, and discipline without which the proletariat would presumably remain "bedraggled" and inert." (Pells 226)

The strikers do not agree or disagree or question; they just follow Mac's commands. Group behavior is contagious. They all function alike. Mac wants the strikers to fight together. He uses the corpse of Joy in order "to step our guys up, ... This'll stick 'em together, this'll make 'em fight." (129) Mac thinks that he can cast his control over the strikers. He makes use of the misery of the farmers and manipulates the farmers to achieve his goal. Mac asks Dan to deliver a speech. At first, Dan was not convinced by the strike and by the radical movement as a whole; but then, he changed his philosophy. He declares: "I'll lead 'em, ... 'All those hundred o' years that's what the working stiffs needed, a leader. I'll lead 'em through to the light. All they got to do is just what I say." (165) Dan takes the burden of leadership with an open heart. He is illiterate, but he thinks himself a leader by just delivering few words. Being in a group makes him lose his rationality.

Mac knows that the strikers can be stimulated by blood and violence. His aim is to manipulate the inanimate strikers. At the beginning of the strike, he hopes that something happens to anger the mob before the enthusiasm of revolt withers. When vigilantes shoot Joy, the sight of blood makes the strikers unthinking creatures able to challenge other men with heavy arms. (Williams 125)

A strange, heavy movement started among the men. London moved forward woodenly, and the men moved forward. They were stiff. The guards aimed with their guns, but the line moved on, unheeding, unseeing....The guards were frightened; riots they could stop, fighting they could stop; but this slow, silent movement of men with the wide eyes of sleep-walkers terrified them. (qtd. in Williams 125)

While the cops are afraid of the strikers, Mac asks Dakin, another strike leader, to take Joy's corpse to the camp. His aim is to use the corpse to manipulate the strikers. (Williams 125) When the landowners cut the supply of food, the strikers start to question London's

leadership. London revives their spirit by smashing the jaw of the striker who has wrongly accused him of hiding canned food. Blood and violence inspire and rouse the crowd. “The eyes of the men and women were entranced. The bodies weaved slowly, in unison. No more lone cries came from lone men. They moved together, looked alike. The roar was one voice, coming from many throats.” Mac confides to Jim, “Didn’t I tell you? They need blood. That works. That’s what I told you.” (qtd. in Williams 126)

Yet once the masses are mobilized, their behavior is as frightening ... Through the figure of Doc, an impartial observer and moralist with considerable skepticism for all "causes," Steinbeck pondered the new phenomenon of “group-men” — their irrationality, their immunity to abstractions and ideals, their resemblance to “sleep-walkers” marching silently and mechanically toward unseen and unknown goals, their similarity to “animals” aroused not by ideological conviction but by the “smell of blood”. (Pells 226)

The results of these sources of stimulus are irrational moves. Whenever Mac senses that the strikers are losing their motivation for struggle, he finds a way to ignite their sense of fight. Mac’s methods degenerate the strikers into a savage mob. His aim is to push the strike further for the sake of achieving his goal. During the strike, Mac notices that hunger turns men into animals capable of challenging heavy artillery. He edifies London that hunger makes men do anything. This source of stimulus is a decisive agent that makes it impossible for the apple pickers to back off. Mac states: “There aren’t any rules a hungry man has to follow.” (209)

The laborers are depicted as men pushed to collective action by animal impulses. The phalanx reduces them into animal level and makes them unable to think of to control themselves. It takes away their freedom and rationality. Notwithstanding their situation gets worse each day, food is running out and the fear of hunger and death haunt them, they refuse to end the strike. Some of them are even killed brutally.

Jim looked without emotion at the ten moaning men on the ground, their faces kicked shapeless. Here a lip was torn away, exposing bloody teeth and gums; one man cried like a child because his arm was bent sharply backward, broken at the elbow. Now that the fury was past, the strikers were sick, poisoned by the flow from their own anger glands. (141)

The craziness that Burton notices displays itself in the behavior of the strikers. For Dr. Burton, the strikers are not themselves at all. Steinbeck gives them animal traits. Al, for example, is described as a “ruminating cow.” (51) London’s eyes are like that of a “gorilla.” (57) Dan reveals to Jim that when the workers get mad “They’ll be bitin’ out throat with their teeth, and clawin’ off lips. It is anger, that’s what it is.” He swayed on his limb, and tightened his arms to steady himself. “I feel it in my skin.” (65) Notwithstanding Jim proves himself to be courageous and strong among the strike leaders and the farmers, he seems to lose his humanity, a sense that would make him a true leader. Mac notices the change that Jim is going through and he fears he is transforming into a monster.

"You're getting beyond me, Jim. I'm getting scared of you. I've seen men like you before. I'm scared of 'em. Jesus, Jim, I can see you changing every day. I know you're right. Cold thought to fight madness, I know all that. God Almighty, Jim, it's not human. I'm scared of you." (203)

Just like Etienne who is scared of Souvarine’s destructive methods, Mac as well expresses his fear of Jim’s fanaticism. For Jim, the cause is holy which is why he is ready to give his life for. Doc Burton describes this fanatic dedication to the cause a religious zeal. Mac, who admires Jim when he first meets him, no longer knows who the new Jim is. Mac is appalled by Jim. Burton observes the shocking transformation of Jim and tells him that “you can only build a violent thing with violence.” (189) Jim seems not to favor peaceful means and argues that “all great things have violent beginnings.” (189) According to Beetz’s analysis, the ideas

of Jim, the communist neophyte, are linked to spirituality, and he is related to the strike at a metaphysical level. He is ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of the cause. In the end, he dies in Christ-like sacrifice because he was faithful to the cause. (3141) It is this attempt to work heavily for the cause and by all means and at all costs which destroys him. For Steinbeck, these men are a source of terror as they are ready to commit all kinds of terrorist attacks just to achieve their aim.

The novelist uses his literature to warn his readers not to be fooled by the radicals as their method, the strike, would lead to riots and plight with no positive outcomes. When the strikers start sensing that they are losing the strike, for the first time they act out of the influence of the party men. The idea of calling off the strike is prevalent, but Mac wants to push the strike even further and the death of Jim comes at the right moment. Using the corpse of Jim, Mac gives the same speech given on the day of Joy's funeral. Steinbeck is emphasizing the hypocrisy of the strike organizers who refuse to end the strike even though they know that they lost their control and influence. In the beginning, Mac knows that men in a group can be stirred by biological factors and he trusts that he can direct the strikers the way he traces; however, the strike proves the opposite. Unlike Etienne who is unaware of the animalistic side of the strikers, Mac does know and he uses this point of weakness. Regardless of this, he loses control over the strike which turns out to be a complete fiasco, yet he refuses to acknowledge his loss and he seems unwilling to stop his struggle. Steinbeck shows how the strike leaders are unable to control the phalanx and he projects the fanaticism of the communists and their determination to use the workers until the end.

The party men and the apple pickers did not gain any positive outcome; contrary, the strike leads them to suffer even more. The food they ate is inedible. Local authorities consider Anderson's camp a threat to people's health. Thus, the strikers are cut off from the aid of sympathizers and medical aid is not provided. The apple pickers starved during the strike;

they become unsecured. Some were brutally killed. At the end, discords and disputes grow in the camp, and most of them regret their decision to strike. The strike spirals out of control and seems to be crushing toward defeat. Steinbeck connotes that the group will not be able to control anything. He demonstrates the recklessness of the strike organizers who form strikes when they are clueless about the destructive potential of group behavior. Dr. Burton reinforces Steinbeck's idea that the strike leads to violence by arguing that "the end is never very different in its nature from the means...you can only build a violent thing with violence." (189) Joy dies with the start of the strike demonstrating that the end is no different from the beginning. Steinbeck promotes this idea that strikes cannot succeed in the USA; contrary, it would bring devastation and the communists cannot control or lead the mob unlike what they promote.

However reluctantly, Steinbeck appeared to suggest in *In Dubious Battle* that the collective dream might bring neither social change nor an end to loneliness; instead, it threatened to reduce every man to a mindless beast tearing at the bones and tissues of civilization in a burst of hysterical rage. (Pells 226)

For Steinbeck, the phalanx is destructive. In his letter to George Albee, Steinbeck states: "the phalanx has emotions of which the unit man is incapable. Emotions of destruction, of war, of migration, of hatred, of fear. These things have been touched on often." (39) The outcomes of the strike prove that Steinbeck does not favor the group. Steinbeck favors the individual. For him, not relying on individual's brain and creativity and putting men into groups would lead to calamity. In his letter to Carlton A. Sheffield, he writes: "As individual humans we are far superior to in our functions to anything the world has born---in our groups we are not only not superior but in fact are remarkably like those most perfect groups, the ants and bees." (75) Steinbeck's concern with the phenomenon of group behavior is not new to American literature. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Mark Twain describes the mob as

such: “The pitifulest thing out is a mob . . . they don't fight with courage that's born in them, but with courage that's borrowed from their mass.” (Jenkins Cook 83) The novel is written in the 19th century. This denotes that the criticism of the mob is present for long decades in the USA.

Steinbeck shows the ineffectiveness of the strike. Within a group, men will act in a non-rational way. For him, the communists are not able to control or lead as they lack the true knowledge of group behavior. Besides, any uprising would be crushed by the repressive state apparatus. The result is an unfortunate end. Instead of the group, Steinbeck celebrates the role of the individual to function out of any influence.

3.3. Labor Strikes under True Leaders: a Path to Social Change in *Mine Boy*

Unlike Zola and Steinbeck, Abrahams provides an image of the way labor strikes can be a solution to lower exploitation. Zola and Steinbeck's strikes achieve nothing as the leaders are portrayed as dissemblers and as the strikers would eventually turn into animals destroying everything. However, these claims appear to be exaggerated. Abrahams' novel gives another reading against this claim where he shows how strike organizers and labor strikes can lead to change.

3.3.1. The image of true strike leaders

Contrary to Zola and Steinbeck, for Abrahams, the agitators can be men to trust. His novel projects the role that strike leaders play to lower exploitation and ameliorate the life of the workers. The novelist presents two strike leaders, Xuma, a black miner and Paddy O'Shea, a white miner. Both are portrayed as honest men with a high sense of justice. Both Xuma and Paddy embrace the Marxist ideology of protest for social change. They are the types of leaders who can lead the group for social and political changes. Zola and Steinbeck; however, seem to give an exaggerated and distorted image to the strike leaders.

Abrahams asserts that the ones who embrace class struggle are seen as honest and defiant, and not driven by self-interest. In Malay Camp, the slum area of Johannesburg populated by the blacks, Indians, and others of mixed race, Xuma lives the injustices that the government cast upon the non-whites. Reading this novel is a journey to the life of Xuma and how he discovers that he and his people are exploited. Xuma gradually learns about the physical discrimination and moral frustration that he and the other non-whites are facing. All these injustices are meant to exploit them as cheap laborers. When Paddy starts to instruct Xuma that all people are the same and race is just a constructed matter, he starts thinking about the situation of the blacks and the exploitation performed by the dominant class. At that moment, Xuma starts to dream of a new life. Xuma “thought about the beautiful world where man would be without colour.” (177) Xuma wants to share these ideas with all his people. He is portrayed as an unselfish man as his purpose is to change his situation and that of the other workers. He wants to talk to “somebody about the things that were going on in his brain.” (178) Abrahams portrays Xuma as a courageous man. Even though there is segregation in the city, Xuma considers himself “a man” from the beginning. The idea that the whites are superior does not fully influence him as he has a minimal awareness of his condition. When a policeman beats him, he gets astonished and startled as he did not do anything. When Leah asks him why he did not run from the police, he replies: “I’m afraid of no man, ‘e declared with a note of boastfulness in his voice.” (23) Xuma does not understand why he has to run when he did not do anything. The novelists’ aim is to show how Xuma is valorous. This way, he is the one who could lead his people to change their status quo. Xuma is a sample of true leaders to be under his leadership. He proves that the black people, unlike what the whites promote, have a sense of pride and freedom. These are the traits that Xuma wants his people to learn during the strike. In his analysis, Michael Wade describes Xuma as a “hero and leader of the new class.” (96) Xuma is shown to have a great affection for his people. When he left

Leah's dwelling, he misses the people there. Xuma "longed for the warmth of Leah's place and for the drunken nonsense of Daddy and the wise, watching eyes of old Ma Plank, who saw everything and said nothing. ... He longed for them all and his heart felt heavy..." (61) In Zola and Steinbeck's novels, the strike leaders, in several occasions, feel disgusted with the behavior and the way of thinking of the workers. They even sometimes take a condescending attitude toward the workers forgetting that they are part of their class. Xuma differs from them; he holds a great respect for his people. Unlike Etienne, Xuma does not change and he is not blinded by self-love and ego-centrism, and unlike Mac, he is honest from the beginning. When he gains the trust and solidarity of the miners, he does not betray their trust. When Paddy is arrested, Xuma turns himself in even though he is capable to escape jail. Xuma remains honest and true to his cause as he is driven to struggle due to his true intention to challenge his exploiters. Xuma is a source of hope. He is the kind of leaders who leads his people to democracy where all are equal. Accordingly, Abrahams shows that strike leaders can be rational and unselfish.

Xuma's mentor, Paddy, is also portrayed with good traits. Even though he is white, he is totally against the exploitation of the blacks and the hazardous working condition that surrounds the miners of all races. Xuma acknowledges that he is fair. In his first day at work, a white manager was so obnoxious to Xuma unlike Paddy who smiles at him and offers his friendship not caring about Xuma's racial rank. For Paddy, all the workers are the same and he always helps the non-whites and shows them their rights. Paddy believes that the blacks and the whites are all humans with same rights. His actions and conversations are political instructions to Xuma. When Paddy decides to join Xuma in his strike, he turns to the blacks asking them to join to change the condition of the mine. Before the strike, Paddy predicts that Xuma would make a true leader who would challenge the social injustices in South Africa and

Abrahams shows that both are true leaders who can defend the right and honor of the working class.

Unlike Etienne and Mac, Xuma and Paddy do not make use of the plight of others to achieve their own needs. Men under their leadership are more rational and this would allow them to reach their goal. In fact, Steinbeck seems to exaggerate and dramatize his portrayal of the radicals as hypocrites. In their analysis of *In Dubious Battle*, Benson and Loftis argue that Steinbeck gives a distorted image to the strike organizers. Pat Chambers and Caroline Decker, the organizers of the strike in California during the 1930s, were very concerned about the safety of the strikers unlike Steinbeck's fictional characters. Chambers states:

...as human beings go, I don't think you'll find many better than farm workers. . . .

The overriding purpose was [to improve] conditions; wages were a part . . . To achieve that, you had to create unity. After that, if any organization came, that was a bonus. Your first consideration was the needs of working people. You ask nothing from them. You don't try to build an organization at their expense. (qtd in Benson and Loftis 208)

In the real strike that took place in California, the organizers Pat Chambers and Caroline Decker put themselves several times in danger; both of them were seen as heroes. Both were not cynical so that they would put the life of the strikers in danger. In the end, they were arrested for criminal syndicalism under the anti-union law of California. When Chambers was asked to write a review about *In Dubious Battle*, he refused by saying that it is "a bunch of trash." He stated that, unlike what is portrayed in the novel, their concerns during the strike are "unity, brotherhood, support for each other." Decker, as well, expressed her dissatisfaction with the novel. It is true that Steinbeck gives a realistic portrayal of the speeches and mannerism of the strike organizers, but for Benson and Loftis, he fails to do so in his representation of the actual feelings and motives. Steinbeck was not true to the spirit. (209-

221) When it comes to Zola, David Baguley mentions the role that the socialists played in France starting from 1878. It was a time of acute mining industry crises which caused chains of strikes like that in Anzin in 1878 and Montceau-les-Mines in 1882. Baguley states: “Miners’ groups and socialist deputies were vigorously lobbying the government to improve the working conditions of miners.” (139) When it comes to Abrahams, looking at the history of apartheid, we see how labor movement leaders were arrested and persecuted due to their faith to liberate South Africa from exploitation. Writing in *The New York Times* during the time of apartheid, James Brooke mentions how the leader of the largest labor federation in South Africa had been taken into custody. In fact, there is estimation that 900 union activists were detained. Amnesty International confirmed that Elijah Barayi, president of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, and anti-apartheid leaders were all arrested.

Unlike Zola and Steinbeck, Abrahams gives a positive portrayal of strike leaders. His characters Xuma and Paddy are a bridge that takes the readers to embrace the strike as a movement for social change. He emphasizes this through asserting that strike leaders are men to trust to save the deprived from exploitation.

3.3.2. The effectiveness of labor strikes

Zola and Steinbeck use their theories to argue that when individuals get into groups they lose their rationality and engage in destructive behavior. In a strike, the group is doomed to spiral out of control. *Mine Boy* challenges this philosophy. In Abrahams’ novel, men in a group will not lose their rationality or go out of control. The rationality and actions of Xuma and Paddy awake that of the other miners. And as the section shows, Zola and Steinbeck give an exaggerated image to the strikes that took place in their countries.

In *Mine Boy*, it is during the strike that the workers realize that skin color is just a pretext used to exploit the workers of all races. The mine accident takes the life of the white worker Chris and the black miner Johannes. In this moment, Xuma and his white boss Paddy

call for the strike. It is in the moment when Xuma declares that he is on strike and when Paddy states to the miners their rights that the non-whites start, for the first time, to gain class consciousness and reason according to rationality. The strike marks a shift, from false consciousness to class consciousness. When Xuma declares that he is on strike, his white boss Paddy steps and supports him by saying: "I am with you!" (182) Paddy turns to the miners and informs them that they are being exploited and that skin color is used to take them as a cheap workforce. The death of Chris shows that even the whites are exploited by the absentee owners. Xuma's strike combines all races and breaks the myth that social status is to be constructed according to race. Paddy makes the miners realize that the propaganda of the superiority of the white is just a pretext to cast domination and exploitation. At that moment, the miners decide to join Xuma and Paddy and revolt against oppression. This way, it is due to the strike that the workers reach the point of view of the totality and understand that the source of their suffering is the system set. Abrahams, through the unification of the whites and non-whites, shows that strikes can lead to the destruction of the system of segregation, a strategy that stands for capitalism and divides people into social classes to extract more profit.

It is from struggle that the self-consciousness of workers can arise and the totality of society is to be understood. When the worker realizes that he is a commodity, he would be able to see the fetish character of every commodity. And here, the working class is going to be part of the evolution of society. (Lukács 169) During the strike, "Xuma felt good suddenly. Strong and free. A man. 'We are men!' he shouted. 'It does not matter if our skins are black! We are not cattle to throw away our lives! We are men!'" (181) All the non-white workers realize that they are "man" just like the white skinned people and color is just a pretext meant for exploitation. In his analysis, Matthew Philip Cesnik points the way the dichotomy between being a "man" and being a "boy" affects the masculinity of the blacks and disturbs the relation between the whites and the blacks. It is during the strike when Xuma states that he is

a “man,” that he asserts his masculinity. This opens the way for the Africans to overcome their inferiority complex and allows validating the opinion of white sympathizers like Paddy. Paddy declares that Xuma “is a man first.” This is the sentiment that Abrahams wants every non-white to embrace as it places the oppressed in a shared class struggle. Cesnik pursues by saying that Abrahams is a communist, but he also follows the Africanist ideals of other thinkers like Anton Lembede who believes that the natives South Africans have to take the first step toward freedom. Xuma proves his masculinity through his defiance and challenge of his exploiters. Abrahams is giving a sample of a new African man who leaves behind what Lembede calls the “pathological phenomena,” a feeling that Lembede believes prevents the rebellion of the non-whites. This way, Abrahams links between the decline of masculinity and the continued African enslavement; he proves Lembede’s argument of the source of black oppression. (10) In the last chapter of the novel, Xuma stands up against all the injustices that the miners are facing. He asks the manager to mend the condition in the mine insisting that he along with the miners will not start working until the mine is safe. Notwithstanding the threat of the manager, the miners refuse to back off. Xuma gets a strange feeling. After years of submissiveness, now the blacks, for the first time, are in the middle of struggle to restore their dignity and achieve equality. The manager warns Xuma that he will be sent to jail and he calls the police, but Xuma is not that easy to tame especially that the mine boys are supporting him in addition to a white man, Paddy. Later on, the Indunas are assisted by the police to stop the work stoppage. One of the policemen hits Paddy and arrests him. This way, the strike also exposes how the law enforcement agencies work in favor for the capitalists. After the struggle with the police, Xuma manages to flee. As Paddy is arrested, Xuma could not let him take the entire blow and he turns himself in, promising Maisy to pursue his struggle.

On the surface, the strike seems a failed social movement; however, Abrahams seems to connote that the strike is a powerful method of triumph over the dominance of the capitalists.

The strike does not only help the workers to see the source of exploitation but also it helps the workers to overcome their racial differences. The strength of Xuma comes from the solidarity of his white boss and from the unification of the other non-white miners who, finally during the strike, gain a class consciousness and decide to go under his leadership. The strike helps the workers to see the meaningless of racial differences. They realize that social Darwinism which holds the idea of the superiority and inferiority of races is just a philosophy meant to generate more profit especially with the death of the white miner Chris which shows that the capitalists in South Africa care only about profit. As the strike combines all races, this shows the method that leads to the end of apartheid. The Marxist leaning Xuma, realizes that he can lead the miners to make an end to this exploitation. The strike now is an emblem of hope for a better life. It demonstrates that change can be achieved by the unification of all races and solidarity among workers of all races. It is a movement for a common goal even for the white working class.

Instead of promoting a solution that is limited to African solidarity, though, he instead advocates a non-racialist approach to national liberation that focuses on transcending racial divides and focusing on the commonalities of the struggles facing working class whites and blacks. In doing so, he appeals to his readers' consciousness of the fact that ultimately, as summed up in Paddy's declaration at the end of the novel, "is not the blood of a black man red like that of a white man?

Does not black man feel too? Does not a black man love life too?" (Cesnik 10)

In his analysis of Abrahams' literature, Kolawole Ogunbesan emphasizes this idea by stating that Abrahams seeks a solution through transcending the issue of color. After leaving South Africa, he realized that the meaning of life transcends race and color, a matter that he cannot see in his mother land. (34) Abrahams' novel is meant to address the misfortune of all the working class in South Africa, even the whites as he understands that skin color is used only

to accumulate more profit. This explains the reason why the accident of the mine takes the life of a black and white man. Abrahams' novel refers to all people as his aim is equality for all classes and races.

Peter Abrahams also proposed the union of blacks and whites for a new South Africa. He also points out that this union could start with the working class organizing themselves for better working conditions, instead of whites and blacks, whether South African natives or African immigrants, white South Africans and European immigrants competing for better salaries and jobs. (Rocha 83)

Abrahams works his novel in a way that brings humanitarian sense to readers of all races. In other sense, all workers of the world can identify with *Mine Boy*. For Michael Wade:

The reader is made to understand that a working man's working life is harsh and dull and unpleasant, that his home circumstances aggravate rather than alleviate the overall effect of depression this has, and that the results in terms of feeling, of emotion, of psychological state, are recognisable to the reader because he has, for whatever reasons, experienced them himself, if not to the same degree. (110)

In *Mine Boy*, it is the rationality of the speech given to the miners which assures the success of the strike. Even though the leaders are arrested, Abrahams still shows that the strike is raised by a black and a white man. This is a sign of the destruction of the system of segregation and a new era of democracy. In that moment, color was not important; Abrahams covers all races with no discrimination. This contradicts with Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle* where he ignores the migrant Mexicans. Even though three-quarters of the workers in the Peach and Cotton Strikes were Mexicans, the novelist does not tackle the issue of race in his novel. His characters are all from the US. (Owens 82-83)

In comparison with the strikers in *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle* who are portrayed as workers pushed to strike due to their dream to be masters themselves, the ones in *Mine Boy*

are pushed to strike due to the rational idea that skin color is a pretext aimed to gain profit. In *Mine Boy*, the strikers are not motivated by blood or violence. Their strike from the beginning is built on rationality. It brings the black miners from the irrationality of the system to rationality. Abrahams indicates that the strike is not an irrational decision as what Zola and Steinbeck promote in their literature. In his analysis of *Germinal*, David Baguley states that the events that Zola witnessed in Anzin were calm and not violent unlike the strike in his novel which is characterized by a violent and uncontrollable crowd. (142) Even though Zola portrays the suffering of the workers, for him, all the strikers are criminals. When he witnessed the turbulence in his country, he stated in his draft: “the workers on the loose go as far as criminal acts: the bourgeois reader must feel a shudder of terror...abominable savagery.” (qtd. in Baguley 142) As a naturalist writer, Zola is supposed to portray reality as it is. When it comes to Steinbeck, he states in his *Life in Letters* that he “wanted to be merely a recording consciousness judging nothing, simply putting down the thing.” (89) In the *Saturday Review*, William Rose states that Steinbeck’s intention in *In Dubious Battle* is “to state events as they would naturally happen as logically and fairly as possible....Here are no puppets of propaganda,...here are real men of flesh and blood.” (qtd. in Williams 119) However, Steinbeck’s biographers, Benson and Loftis, discuss the way Steinbeck distorts reality in his portrayal of the strike as a movement that renders the working class like animals. Even though Steinbeck makes use of several aspects of the real events, still he invents several others in order to be able to construct his theory of group behavior. His strike organizers, Mac and Jim, wish for violence in order to push the apple pickers to prolong the strike. He also depicts the strikers like creatures being stimulated by blood and turn into a mob. For Benson and Loftis, this is a serious deviation from the actual strike. In truth, there is no indication in the reports that strikers as a phalanx faced down the police during the Peach and Cotton strikes. When the lawmen found themselves obliged to use violence, they only fired gas

bombs at the protesters. Benson and Loftis add that Steinbeck uses another stimulus which is food. He shows the way the strikers turn into animals when they are hungry. In the actual strike, the strikers did not lack food as several local grocery men gave them credit. The Federal Emergency Relief Association also provided food for the strikers during the Cotton Strike. (216-217) This distortion and exaggeration push us to question Zola and Steinbeck's intention from deviating from what they take as real events. Besides, in the last chapter, we will see how the idea that men will turn into violent creatures in the group is built upon capitalists narratives rejected by several critics and biologists.

Abrahams proves that through strikes change can be achieved. He demonstrates that individuals in a group will not descent into a fierce mob. Contrary, it is this unification between black and white workers that shows the meaningless of the system of segregation. Unlike the strike in *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle*, it does end with hope and solidarity among the workers. The idea that the crowd is doomed to be irrational and the strike would definitely spiral out of control is shown by Abrahams as an exaggerated view.

Conclusion

According to Zola and Steinbeck, the strike, instead of achieving social change, it reduces the strikers into a savage mob. The strike organizers will not be able to lead the strike. Abrahams; on the contrary, shows that this idea is transmitted with much exaggeration. For him, the group will not lose its rationality. It is during the strike that the workers acquire class consciousness. Notwithstanding the strike organizers are arrested, the capitalists fail to kill the spirit of the strike. The miners of all races realize that they are exploited for profit and that the system can be challenged. The essence of the strike in *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle* is diametrically crushed by asserting that men in a group is an uncontrollable force and by arguing that the strike is to be quelled by the powerful class. Thus, Zola and Steinbeck denote that strikes can never succeed. *Mine Boy* refutes this claim and asserts that the strike is a

powerful social movement. Xuma and Paddy's strike is the key that makes the workers realize that the system can be challenged through unification. As I will discuss in the last chapter, unlike Zola and Steinbeck who try to solidify the capitalist narratives which are used to exploit the working class, Abrahams exposes them and questions their legitimacy. For Zola and Steinbeck, men in the group will lose their rationality as they are controlled by natural forces. This idea has its roots in the capitalist narratives that both novelists promote. These narratives are proven by several critics to serve the interest of the dominant class. This way, the idea that the strikers are doomed to lose their rationality during the strike is to be questioned.

Chapter Four: The Strike: Crippled by Cultural Hegemony and Revived by Counter-hegemony

Germinal and *In Dubious Battle* connote that the workers during strikes would turn into a fierce mob and the radicals are a menace. Therefore, they should to be repressed. The reason behind this is to hinder the spread of the revolutionary thought and radical movements, and preserve the capitalist system. Both writers make people experience what it feels like to witness a failed and disastrous strike under the leadership of the revolutionary radicals. In order to solidify their position, they promote the capitalist narratives to secure the consent of the mass. In this chapter, I analyze through the Marxist perspective, using Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, the way Zola and Steinbeck spread the capitalist narratives to indirectly control the working class. As the behavior of men during the strike in *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle* is built upon capitalist narratives, the portrayal of the strike as a destructive movement is questioned in this chapter. In this study, I expose the way exploitation is not only related capitalism but also to other forces in *Germinal* and *In Dubiosu Battle*. Accordingly, from the Marxist perspective, Zola and Steinbeck's literature is used to fulfill a capitalist agenda through transmitting mere fragments about the political situation. This chapter demonstrates the hypocrisy that lies behind the capitalist narratives used by Zola and Steinbeck and how these narratives avail the need of one class. Both novelists call for peaceful means as a safe path to preserve democracy and equality among citizens. For Zola and Steinbeck, it is the task of the government to ensure democracy and equality. Zola advocates the role of the republicans and Steinbeck that of the liberals. However, this is an ideology that both novelists try to promote. In fact, the governments that both novelists promote were corrupted which work to serve the need of the capitalists.

Unlike *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle*, Abrahams' *Mine Boy* holds a counter-hegemonic discourse that exposes the way the capitalist narratives are used as a pretext to

exploit the workers. *Mine Boy* projects how skin color is a hegemonic narrative that helps to extend the exploitation of the working class. Abrahams, unlike Zola and Steinbeck, exposes the hypocrisy of politicians who look for their interest rather than that of the downtrodden. Abrahams, as an intellectual who emerges from the working class, exposes the hypocrisy of liberal governments and promotes labor strikes and solidarity between workers of all races as a solution for social change.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first and second sections deal with the way Zola and Steinbeck use narratives that indirectly support capitalism. They also show how these narratives are used to control the working force. The sections show also how both novelists promote the role government in order to prevent labor strikes and the radicals from having any influence in France and the US. But as the sections demonstrate, governments are controlled by the capitalists. Regardless of this, Zola and Steinbeck call for their interference. The third section is a counter-discourse that exposes the way the capitalists use cultural hegemony to keep their exploitation of the working-force. It shows how Abrahams questions the legitimacy of the superiority of the white race and how he provides another reading as an intellectual emerging from the deprived class. It also sheds light upon the corruption of liberalism condemning it as ineffective. This last section shows as well how the role of the socialists and constant labor struggle is the way that awakes the true revolutionary class consciousness of the working class. The aim of this chapter is to expose the reason why Zola and Steinbeck portray the strike as a disastrous social movement. It also demonstrates the way the socially constructed narratives are used to manipulate the mass and how exposing them leads to liberation.

4.1. Hegemony through Culture: a Method to Preclude Strikes in *Germinal*

Zola gives a negative report to labor strikes. To solidify his position, he makes use of the capitalist narrative of social Darwinism. In *Germinal*, the workers are seen to lose their

rationality and engage in violence as they are controlled by internal and external forces and due to natural selection and the survival of the fittest. However, this philosophy is known to be manipulated to serve the interest of the bourgeois. Besides, instead of labor strikes and following the lead of the radicals, he promotes the role of the republican government to go for a reform. However, as this section shows, the government is controlled by the capitalists. In my thesis, I argue that Zola seeks to prevent the spread of the radical revolutionary thought. That is why he gives a negative report to labor strikes. As the philosophies that he built his novel upon are criticized by several critics and biologists, his portrayal of the strike as a destructive social movement can be questioned. And in my thesis, I relate it to his class position. His political leaning makes him give an unflattering image to labor strikes.

4.1.1. Promoting the Darwinian evolution to prevent strikes

The reason that leads Zola to give an unflattering image to strike and strike organizers is his political leaning and class position. The novelist is against radicalism. In his article, Ian Birchall mentions that in a letter, Zola stated: “Every time I write a study now I come up against socialism.” Zola wants to prevent the spread of the radical revolutionary thought and preserve the status of capitalism. In order to solidify his position, he makes use of the capitalist narrative of social Darwinism. His theory of naturalism is built upon social Darwinism. In his novel, he relates the suffering of the working class to the capitalists, and at the same time, he relates it to heredity and the surroundings, and to natural selection and the survival of the fittest. This way, in the Marxist perspective, Zola’s naturalist novel, *Germinal*, hides the totality of social relations to secure the endorsement of people. Exploitation is not only related to capitalism but also, and strongly, to other forces.

Due to the revolutions and the chains of labor strikes in the 19th century, the narratives that support the capitalist system were normalized. The low social rank is, indirectly, manipulated into living and believing in these ideologies when in reality they do not serve their interest. The most

notable ideology is that which is derived from Charles Darwin's work, the natural selection. In 1859 England, Darwin published his *The Origin of Species*. There he talks about the theory of natural selection. This theory, along with the principle of the "survival of the fittest" by Herbert Spencer, claim that only the strong members of society who can survive and the weaker ones are to be left to their fate. (Lyle 305) Zola relates his theory of naturalism with the capitalist narrative of social Darwinism and he illustrates it in *Germinal*. Natural selection and the survival of the fittest are fully rooted in *Germinal*. From the Marxist perspective, Zola rigs the opinion of the mass into making people believe that it is forces of nature which leaves the working class poor and the wealthy wealthier. This way, Zola does not only relate the suffering of the working class to the capitalists or the system, but also to other forces.

The novelist transmits this idea that only the strong one who can win and this is what happened during the strike. After the strike, the outlook of Etienne changes. In the beginning, he embraces revolt, but then, the novelist shows that his protagonist has doubts about his orientation and begins to accept the notion of the survival of the fittest when he asks: "Was Darwin right, then, and the world only a battlefield, where the strong ate the weak for the sake of the beauty and continuance of the race?" (341)

His viewpoint shifts alarmingly from an advocacy of violent revolution to an indulgence in utopian visions, from a vigorous promotion of the class struggle to an acceptance of the revolutionary forces of history. Only in the most general of terms can be said to represent the Marxist position,... (Baguley 142)

From the Marxists' perspective, Etienne's conclusion helps Zola to manipulate the opinion of the mass. Just like Etienne, the readers are indirectly made to believe that only the dominant class which can win and impose its rules. The others are to be left to their fate.

Zola portrays the ignorance of the middle class to generations of comfort and wealth, and the poor to "generations of starving people." (50) Zola gives us a parallel between the life

of comfort of Cécil Grégoire and Catherine Maheu who starts her day with weariness and spends her days inside the mine thinking that it is her fate. Zola relates this to heredity, a force beyond the reach of the miners denoting that they cannot escape their fate. This thinking is fully transmitted with the end of the strike where Zola seems to connote the idea that the workers would reach their goal through strikes is just a myth.

The myth in *Germinal* —if we agree, however hesitantly, to call it a myth— is one that may have some parallels in earlier cultures, but it takes its formative energies from the French Revolution. It is the myth of the people and more particularly, of the proletariat. They who had merely suffered and at times erupted into blind rebellion; they who had been prey to but not part of society; they who had found no voice in the cultures of the past — they now emerge from the sleep of history and began the task of collective self-formation.

(Howe 389)

For the Marxists, relating exploitation to forces of heredity and social Darwinism and at the same criticizing the capitalists is just a manipulation to hide the real source of suffering. This secures the consent of the working class and hinders the spread of labor strikes.

In his analysis of *Germinal*, Ian Birchall states that when it comes to determinism, for Zola, it connotes that if we cognize that a cause has a particular effect; then, we can reach the desired consequences by taking a given action. This way, man can control his environment. Birchall follows by saying:

The notion that knowledge precedes action belongs to the ideology of a minority class, such as the pre-1789 bourgeoisie. The working class, because of its position in production, cannot first acquire enlightenment and then make the revolution; it can only acquire enlightenment in the process of making the revolution.

Accordingly, condemning the strike as a movement that leads people to suffer and arguing that the strikers will devolve backward prevent the workers from reaching a true class consciousness. True enlightenment is acquired in the process of constant struggle. At the end of Etienne's strike, the miners are left thinking that revolt would lead to more misery. Zola also transmits the idea that even if the strike instigators succeed to raise a strike, this social movement is going to be crushed by the law enforcement agencies.

According to Henri Mitterand, Zola holds a conservative ideological position. *Germinal* is constructed in a way that makes class distinctions a natural and perennial phenomenon and not a cultural and transitory one. (Brady 63) Zola's literature is not revolutionary and there is no dialectical leap that manifest in this proposition. It is worth mentioning that for Lukács naturalism does not achieve the totality. (Birchall) From the Marxist perspective, *Germinal* conceals the point of the view of the totality. In the end, the miners are left thinking that their misery does not fully stems from the system and that there is no other system but capitalism that can exist. When the strike is tamed, the miners are left with the idea that it is a natural phenomenon that they are born as part of the proletariat's rank and that the capitalist system is a natural fact. This prolongs their false consciousness and serves the interest of the wealthy class. For the Marxists, this is a fatalistic idea.

Zola shows the emergence of a new historical force and openly projects the conflict between labor and capital, but the "outcome remains uncertain, shadowy, ambiguous." (Howe 392). When the strike ends, the miners go back to work for the same masters. This kind of strategy, only a defender of the capitalist system can adhere to. With the chains of strikes that took place in France, Zola's novel helps to secure the consent of people by making them believe that it is their fate to be members of the proletariat and that capitalism is the only system that can prevail. It makes them believe that only the strong members in society who can win. Zola's literature gives its highest support to the position of the powerful class in

society and denies any progress that can be achieved by the Marxists. For Zola, change cannot be acquired through strikes and he relates strikes to violence. Alexander Saxton mentions that naturalist and modernist writers believe that the Industrial Revolution made class struggle and class exploitation unnecessary and morally unjustifiable. They argue as well that common wealth can only be achieved through peaceful and benevolent means. (253) This idea was so profound during the second half of the 19th century. However, the modernist age shows the failure of this idea.

Accordingly, the way Zola portrays the strike can be criticized. The behavior of the workers during the strike is built upon social Darwinism. This philosophy is proven by critics and biologists as manipulated and misunderstood to serve the interest of the capitalists and Zola's naturalism has no solid base. This way, Zola's portrayal of the workers as a fierce crowd in the strike can be questioned.

4.1.2. Exposing the way Darwinism is manipulated

During the 19th century in Europe, capitalist narratives were highly promoted. Darwinism was among them. Darwinian evolution or social Darwinism, natural selection, and the survival of the fittest were widespread concepts. However, several critics prove the hypocrisy and manipulation behind them. Not only this but also it is proven that Darwinism itself is manipulated or at least it is misunderstood, to serve the need of one class over the other. Besides, Darwinian evolutionary theory is discarded by contemporary biologists. In *Germinal*, Zola makes use of it and builds his naturalism upon it.

Antonio Gramsci states that the capitalists create with their emergence “the organizers of a new culture.” (5) For Lukács, Zola is not honest in his portrayal of the strike as he is a member of the middle class, so he is preserving the interest of his class. (Hemmings 22) Hemmings, trying to defend Zola from this accusation, argues that *Germinal* is for Zola a work of compassion and not of revolution. He continues by arguing:

...because to admit the feasibility of progress through revolution would have meant repudiating his faith in the evolutionary interpretation of social growth borrowed from Darwinism. He preferred, as he would continue all his life to prefer, 'a "scientific" method in which society is conceived as a harmonious entity and the criticism applied to society formulated as a struggle against the diseases attacking its organic unity, a struggle against the "undesirable features" of capitalism.' (22)

However, even if denying "the feasibility of progress through revolution" just because he wants to protect "his faith in the evolutionary interpretation of social growth" does not mean that he is not defending the middle class. In fact, social Darwinism is proven to be immoral and just a misunderstanding of the work of Darwin if not a manipulation. This is what several critics have concluded.

Social Darwinism displays a widespread controversy. Several French historians considered that Darwin's ideas about natural selection are scientifically and morally unacceptable and they were very hostile towards him. Herbert Spencer's theory of the "survival of the fittest" is no exception. (Lyle 305) In his analysis, Schwarz states that Zola, like his contemporaries, misunderstood Darwin. Schwarz follows by supporting this idea by the studies of the American biologist, David Quammen. He states that for Quammen, the idea of natural selection seems to be materialistic, gloomy, and disheartening. The error of Zola is his focus on the idea that humans, under certain conditions, devolve backwards. For Quammen, what Zola fails to comprehend is that mutation and recombination of genes are accidental processes, and variation, caused by this mutation and recombination of genes, is undirected by need or purpose. Therefore, natural selection is a mindless process, and heredity does not necessarily lead men to devolve backward as what Zola implies. Accordingly, the way Zola regards the idea of evolution and natural selection has no solid base. As an example, the

narrator informs us that Etienne has inherited the propensity to alcoholism. However, this inheritance does not imply that his tendency to be violent stems from alcohol and that this violence is to be transmitted from generation to generation. In the scene where Etienne kills Chaval, alcohol surely has nothing to do with this crime. Arguing the opposite, like what Zola seems to suggest, is nothing but a deterministic claptrap disguised under the theory of naturalism. In fact, it is his sexual drives toward Catherine and hunger that push him to commit the murder. Jeanlin's moral mediocrity are not necessarily genetically determined as Zola connotes since the different conditions of environment, like hunger and breathing the polluted air of the mine, play an important role. And here, the evolutionary theory of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck which states that environment shapes heredity is marked. (Schwarz 257-258) Neo Darwinist Ernst Mayr, supported Lamarck's theory of evolution arguing that he offered a softer theory of the mechanisms of evolution unlike Darwin. His hypothesis about the mechanisms of evolution conforms to the understanding of modern cell biologists of how immune systems adapt to their environment. His theory suggests that evolution is based on a cooperative interaction among organisms and their environment. This interaction enables life forms to survive and evolve. The American biologist Bruce Lipton refutes Darwin's study of genetic determinism arguing that genes are simply molecular blueprints that construct the cells, and the life of a cell is not controlled by its genes but by the physical and energetic environment. It is the cells awareness of the environment, not its genes, which sets into motion the mechanisms of life. Genes are not self-emergent; something in the environment has to trigger their activity. For Lipton, if cells are controlled by their awareness of the environment so too are we human beings. Just like a single cell, the character of our lives is determined by our responses to the environmental signals and not by our genes. In his study of cell community, Lipton uses it as a role model and concludes that man is not a victim of his genes but a master of his fate. For Lipton, due to the Darwinist idea of evolution that is based

on randomness, war of nature, violence, and the inevitable struggle as a principle force for existence, we forget about the necessity of cooperation for evolution. (Lipton xii-xiv-xxiv-10-11) In his analysis of Zola's theory of naturalism, John Orr states: "Today Zola's pseudo-rationalist theory of heredity seems utterly absurd. The whole intellectual tradition of modern psychology stands ranged against it and no one takes it seriously." (87) He continues by stating:

For what is the use of fiction if it merely illustrates a determinism in human life which a science of heredity can already reveal to us? Human action, as action, seems in Zola's terms to be almost meaningless. Its maximal purpose seems to be a primitive need satisfaction. Writing before Freud, Zola lacked the necessary word in his ear that a theory of human instincts is compatible with the device of sublimation. ...Zola's dogmatic determinism creates an arbitrary plot which in turn destroys any pretension to realism. (88)

Ergo, Zola's theory of naturalism is proved to be build upon a misunderstanding and false analysis. For Ian Birchall, progress can be achieved through the focus on improving powers of environment and not in believing and following the force of heredity. He supports his claim by stating that Marx, in his *Theses on Feuerbach* (1888) argues: "The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating."

In order for Zola to prevent strikes and preserve the status of capitalism, he makes use of the philosophies that support the capitalists and this is a tool of hegemony. But as argued before, these philosophies are full of misunderstanding and manipulations which make us question their legitimacy. As an alternative to prevent strikes and keep the strong hold of capitalism, Zola promotes the role of the government to work for reform and calls the

capitalists to ameliorate the working conditions. However, politicians are known to serve the needs of the capitalists.

4.1.3. A call of warning: reform to prevent strikes

Germinal was written under a Republican government, yet Zola chooses the period of the end of the Second French Empire as a setting. He also refers, in several instances, to aspects that took place during the French Revolution. He chooses these periods as they are known by violent uprisings. His fear of the destructive crowd pushes him to give a call of warning to the capitalists and politicians. Instead of strikes, he promotes reform within the capitalist system. Zola calls the capitalists to change their treatment of the workers and he gives his supports to the Republican government asking for reform in order to prevent future labor strikes. He does this even though the capitalists and politicians are known by their hypocrisy and manipulation.

In order to prevent the influence of Marxism, Zola calls the capitalists to change their treatment of the working class and he calls the government for reform. In his novel, he criticizes the capitalists but not the capitalist system. Hemmings argues in his analysis that when Zola gave his warning to the capitalists, he was careful not to be taken as an intellectual who calls for the overthrow of capitalism. He says:

...he was equally anxious not to seem to side with socialists of any description who proposed to substitute a new economic order which would be immune from the abuses of the old. His method was to remove the whole problem from the realm of economic argument and treat it in its human aspect alone. (22)

According to Zola, it is some capitalists who are responsible for the suffering of the working class and not the capitalist system. Therefore, they must change their treatment of their employees. The novel is; thus, a warning to the capitalists that their methods provoke the low social rank. For him, the capitalists have to take care of the condition of the workers. This is

shown through the character Deneulin. Even though Deneulin is a capitalist, he is unlike the other blood-sucking capitalists presented in the novel. Contrary to the other capitalists, he is prudent and hard-working. This way, the novelist criticizes the ones who want to succeed with no efforts. Influenced by the Darwinian theories, for Zola, Deneulin is strong and self-reliant; for this, he enjoys a successful life. This shows that society offers rewards to its strongest members and it is harsh and unforgiving toward the weak. This way, Zola gives excuses to the system. Deneulin is respected by his employees as he is a good manager. He takes care of his employees by better equipment of his mine unlike the other mine owners in Montsou. Zola wants the other capitalists to take Deneulin as a model in order to prevent strikes. In his analysis of *Germinal*, Hemmings argues: “He could not dream of disguising the need for social reform: *Germinal* was an urgent warning to *laissez-faire* economists who blinked this need.” (22) In a letter, Zola calls the capitalists and the government to look for the needs of the workers. He states:

Germinal is a work of pity and not of revolution...What I wanted to do was to cry out to the fortunate of this world, to those who are the masters: 'Beware, look below ground, see those wretches who are working and suffering. Perhaps there is still time to avoid the final catastrophes. But hasten to be just, for otherwise here is the danger: the earth will open up and the nations will be swallowed in one of the most terrible upheavals of history. (qtd. in Birchall)

These words only a middle class reformer can deliver and definitely not a revolutionary. Zola is highly supportive of the Republican government. (Birchall) For him, the government must intervene and take care of the need of the working class for if they don't, the specter of revolution will not have an end. In 1868, in the preliminary notes of his cycle, he states: “It will be open to legislators ... to take my work, to draw conclusions from it and to see that the wounds I shall lay bare are dressed.” (qtd. in Hemmings 35) However, as an intellectual, Zola

is aware that governments are known to be manipulated by the capitalists. For example, instead of ameliorating the economy in the Third Republic, the government after the fall of the Second Empire found itself indebted to the private bankers due to the Franco-Prussian War. (Platt 17-18) In fact, most of time, politicians are themselves people of the middle class who hold great portion of wealth. As an intellectual, Zola knows the stronghold that the capitalists cast upon the government. Yet, he calls the government for change in a time when it was itself indebted and fully controlled by a small group of individuals. The way the capitalists cast their domination prevents the lower class from achieving progress. As argued in the second chapter, the wealthy are so influenced by their ideology so that they fail to see that the problem lies in their system. The workers for them are taken as a commodity to generate wealth and providing safe equipment would reduce their profit. This is the reason that leads writers like Abrahams to call for strikes as he knows that the capitalists will not listen unless the proletariats revolt. In *Germinal*, we see the terrific picture that Zola gives in order to warn against strikes. In his analysis, Hemmings mentions that one of the reviewers in *Le Figaro*, accused Zola of having insulted the lower class in *Germinal*. (35) Even though Zola defended himself from this accusation, still his unflattering portrayal of the miners during the strikes cannot but raise critical points.

According to Zola, in order to prevent strikes, the government has to follow a policy of reform and issue laws that protect the workers. This would prevent labor strikes. He warns the capitalists that their treatment of the workers would stimulate the workers to revolt. If they do not ameliorate their treatment of the working class, the crowd would rise to defend its rights; no pole is going to be safe. Zola's *Germinal* is a warning that things are not going how it should be. If matters are not properly settled, social instability will continue to take deep roots in France like what happened during the Paris Commune in 1871. From a Marxist perspective, as Zola is a defender of capitalism, he tries to hide the view that the capitalists are

so greedy to look at the interest of the working class and that the way the government is controlled by the capitalists makes it unable to take a serious look at the problems facing the working class unless the workers engage in work stoppages.

Germinal is a novel that has a capitalist leaning. In order to prevent the Marxists' influence and labor strikes, Zola introduces capitalist philosophies as a tool of manipulation. He does this even though these philosophies are known to be immoral. Instead of labor strikes and following the lead of the radicals, he calls the government and the capitalists for a reform. Yet, as argued, these two will not seek the interest of the downtrodden.

4.2. Hegemony through Culture: a Method to Hinder Strikes in *In Dubious Battle*

Steinbeck argues against labor strikes. To emphasize his position, he makes use of the capitalist narrative of the American Dream. In *In Dubious Battle*, the workers are seen to display antisocial traits as they are controlled by internal and external forces. These ideas of the group as a degenerative phenomenon and the individual as a creative being found in his argument of the phalanx are related to the philosophy of the American Dream. However, this philosophy is known to be corrupted to serve the interest of the capitalists. Besides, instead of strikes and following the lead of the communists, Steinbeck promotes the role of the liberal government to go for a reform. However, in this section, I expose the way the capitalists have a strong influence in the government. In my thesis, I argue that Steinbeck seeks to hinder radicalism from spreading in the US. That is why he gives an unflattering portrayal of labor strikes. As the philosophy that he built his novel upon is criticized by several critics, his portrayal of the strikers as men who lose their rationality in the group can be questioned. In this research, I related it to his political preference. His political leaning pushes him to argue against labor strikes.

4.2.1. Promoting the American Dream to prevent strikes

Steinbeck condemns labor strikes and the strike organizers. This is due to his political leaning. In his letters, he stated several times how he is against the communists and how they work to spread riot in the US. Steinbeck wants to hinder the spread of the radical revolutionary thought and solidify the status of capitalism. In order to emphasize his position, he makes use of the capitalist narrative of the American Dream. His *Argument of Phalanx* is built upon the idea of individualism as a notion against the group. This notion plays a preponderant role in the life of the Americans as it has a relation with the American Dream—a philosophy which has a strong link with the capitalist system. In his novel, he relates the exploitation of the workers to the fascist capitalists, and at the same time, he relates it to laziness, a quality against the idea of hard work found in the American Dream. This way, in the Marxist perspective, Steinbeck's modernist novel, *In Dubious Battle*, hides the totality of social relations and transmits mere fragments about the political situation to secure the consent of people. Exploitation is not only related to the capitalists but also to laziness. This way, Steinbeck promotes individual hard work instead of unions and strikes if one wants to achieve success; and here, from the Marxist standpoint, Steinbeck secures the consent of the working class. He hides the totality by making the workers believe that their misery is not directly related to capitalism but it is related to laziness. He also seeks to make people believe that capitalism is the only system that can exist in the US.

When *In Dubious Battle* was written, some reviewers considered it free of propaganda. It is a novel that states events as they truly happen without the inclusion of the political leaning of the author. Benet Fred T. Marsh writes in the *New York Times Book Review*: “Steinbeck keeps himself out of the book. There is no editorializing or direct propaganda. His purpose is to describe accurately and dramatize powerfully a small strike of migratory workers, guided by a veteran Communist organizer, in a California fruit valley.” (qtd. in

Williams 119) Even Steinbeck in one of his letters to Georg Albee connotes that he was apolitical when he wrote his novel. (89) However, the novel shows the opposite. His harsh criticism of the strike and his promotion of individualism prove a belief in an ideology behind. Gueorgui Plekhanov, the Russian revolutionary and Marxist theoretician, contends that all art cannot be devoid of ideological content. Literature, therefore, emerges from an ideological conception of the world. (Eagleton 15) Accordingly, *In Dubious Battle* is held within an ideology. It is true that he does not favor the methods in corporate farming; but still, he does not condemn the capitalist system and he abhors communism. In his analysis of the novel, Gibbs argues that notwithstanding Steinbeck sometimes criticizes the American economic system; he does not attribute capitalism to the suffering of the apple pickers in *In Dubious Battle*. For him, it is due to the mechanization of agriculture. (178) Accordingly, as *In Dubious Battle* is held within the capitalist ideology; it is not a “judging nothing” (89) as what the novelist says in his letter. Steinbeck’s aim is to protect capitalism and stop the spread of communism. He makes use of American culture to achieve his goal.

Hypnotized by the ideology of the American Dream, the US is believed to be the land of opportunities and prosperity where individuals have the ability to make fortune and possess power. America is a country where wealth and position are open to any individual who has a talent and works hard. As the American Dream holds ideas like individualism, hard work, and self-love, if one fails, like in the case during the economic depression of the 1930s, people blame themselves for their misfortune, not the system. Therefore, ideas concerning workers’ unification and strikes do not have a significant place in the American mindset. In his *In Dubious Battle*, Steinbeck promotes these ideas. There, he privileges hard work and self-reliance, qualities strongly articulated in the literature of the Americans. The workers have to alter their socio-economic conditions. For Steinbeck, America is the land of opportunities where every individual, who works hard, can achieve success and be a master of his own. In

case of failure, one has to blame himself. In the novel, when Dan delivers a speech on the behalf of Joy's death, he starts to see himself as a leader who whips the unwise lazy young generation to work hard to change their situation. This scene, indirectly, promotes capitalism and precludes strikes. Dan's action and his beliefs on this matter are not understood in relation to the total processes that forms the capitalist system. Steinbeck, through Dan's beliefs, does not relate the suffering of the workers to capitalism.

Steinbeck proposes the idea of walking sleepers. Sleepers are the ones who want success without providing any effort to improve their life. They do not revere hard work. The novel starts with the sleepwalking Jim joining the Communist party. In his essay *Civil Disobedience* (1849), Henry David Thoreau used the same metaphor. (Magill 316) The idea of hard work has a relation with the American Dream; American novelists have celebrated it in their novels and essays. For Steinbeck, Jim and the others put all the blame on the system forgetting the fact that they have to work hard and let go of fanaticism and the promises of the communists. For him, these people steal the freedom of people. The American sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset asserts that the notion of individualism, especially men's freedom of thought and action, always resound in the American discourse. (Grabb, Baer, and Curtis 513) This is what Steinbeck promotes in his novel. For him, following the lead of the communists would lead to annihilation and it would kill people's individuality and creativity. This way, Steinbeck denotes that there is no system that can succeed in the US but capitalism. However, the novelist seems to forget the fact that the fascists possess all the fertile lands and control everything. Those owners are exploiters who oblige the farmers to work for long hours in an exchange for low wages. This way, Steinbeck's modernist novel consolidates the status of the capitalists. In his book, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, Lukács argues that modernist works are products of a reified consciousness unable to see its own disintegration. The historical totality is described by the modernist in fragments. Man is "unable to establish

relationships with things of persons outside himself. It is also impossible for him to determine theoretically the origin and goal of human existence.” There is a “negation of history...The hero is strictly confined within the limits of his own existence. There is not for him — and apparently not for his creator — any pre-existent reality beyond his ownself, acting upon him or being acted.” (21) Lukács associates modernism with “schizophrenia.” (46) This way, Steinbeck preserves the capitalist system and the role of the liberal government, and prevents the workers from seeing the source of their suffering. As an American, he is fully aware of the strong influence that the notions related to the American Dream have upon the mind of people. Therefore, he uses it to procure the consent of people to prevent strikes in the US. The idea that strikes are doomed to fail and that people in a group would turn into a fierce mob is just a manipulative idea to prevent unions and strikes. Steinbeck, therefore, is using a hegemonic tool to prevent the rise of the communists to power and preserve the capitalist system and the liberal government. This leads us to what Rideout thinks of art as a “form of politics; it was a weapon in the class war.” (170)

In their book, Vanneman and Webber Cannon, assert how the American Dream is used as a hegemonic tool against class consciousness. In their analysis, they state that America became dominated by upward mobility due to the rise of industrialization in the late 19th century. In that period, there was the emergence of massive industrial proletariat and America convinced itself and the other nations that it is a classless country. And here, the American Dream appeared to be the best immunization against class consciousness. This vision is shared by all Americans regardless of their class position. As America seems to be an open country, class struggle would not be necessary. The American Dream made people believe that if they are not pleased by their class position they would have to ameliorate their lives but within the current system. In any case, class struggle is most likely to be crippled by an individualistic pursuit of wealth. In case they fail, they take the full responsibility. The

dominant idea that America is the land of prosperity and promises is an indelible fact in the American national heritage. What prevents the American workers to reach the state of class consciousness is the struggle of individuals to gain prosperity; besides, America is a country that misses a true radical working class consciousness. This means that the ideology of the American Dream solidifies the class system and prevents the spread of radical ideas. The American Dream functions as a solid argument for the failure of class consciousness in America. For the Americans, individual opportunity is a belief; this cancels the idea or even the formulation of radical movements in the US. (257-258) Steinbeck, as an American citizen before being a writer, is well aware of this. His argument of phalanx combined with the celebration of individualism and condemnation of workers' unification is well thought of to prevent strikes. The novelist is aware that culture in the US works as a drug. Therefore, his novel won't be an effective tool to prevent strikes unless combined with a strong rooted culture. This way, Steinbeck contributes to the prevention of the communists' rise to power and preserve the status of the government.

Just like in *Germinal*, the way Steinbeck portrays labor strikes can be criticized. The behavior of the workers during the strike is built upon the American Dream where the individual is cherished and the group is condemned. The latter has always been hailed as an ideology of wealth, power, and prosperity, but history proves the opposite. The American Dream is proved to be an ideology full of manipulation and hypocrisy. Yet, Steinbeck makes use of it in his novel due to his political leaning.

4.2.2. The corruption of the American Dream

The history of the American Dream and the exceptionality of America play a preponderant role in the American culture. However, several studies expose the mythic and corruption of this dream. Mottoes about the exceptionality of America are used to manipulate

and serve the needs of one class at the expense of the other. Yet, novelists, like Steinbeck, employ it to fulfill a political agenda.

Expressions like “America First,” “America First and Always,” “Manifest your Destiny,” to name but a few, are one of the powerful populist demagoguery long articulated in the American history. These expressions are used by the founding fathers and by all the presidents who rule America. Even though these terms denote the exceptionality of America and they are said to be employed to achieve prosperity and benevolent goals, they hide behind terrible tales. They are related to the brutality of the country. The dark history of America is marked by the question of black slavery and white nationalism, and that of immigration, nativism, and xenophobia. The slogans, used to hide the brutality, are kept alive with fascist movements. (Churchwell)

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the American Dream and the frontier acquired the state of metaphysical concepts. The longing to possess vast lands, especially in the west, was an obsession to all people. Due to this, the Indians were persecuted and sidelined. During that time, there was a growth in the agricultural domains. Because the number of labor hand and machines was low, the landowners faced difficulties which made them turn to the slave system. Even though it is inhuman to possess slaves, society and the government did not seem to condemn it. They even used religion in order to legitimize this. It stated that the black slaves are meant to serve the white masters. (Rae) In his the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci states that members of the clergy or “ecclesiastics,” “can be considered the category of intellectuals organically bound to the landed aristocracy.” Ecclesiastics, for a long time, “held a monopoly of a number of important services: religious ideology, that is the philosophy and science of the age, together with schools, education, morality, justice, charity, good works, etc.” (7) This way, people, unconsciously, accepted the question of slaves. In her review in the New York Times, Nikole Hannah-Jones states: “The Mississippi of my dad’s youth was an apartheid

state that subjugated its near-majority black population through breathtaking acts of violence.” She continues by stating: “I had been taught, in school, through cultural osmosis, that the flag wasn’t really ours, that our history as a people began with enslavement and that we had contributed little to this great nation.” In the case with the Indians and the blacks, it was those who longed to possess lands who brainwashed the other white population into believing that expansion and slavery are ethically right and necessary for the development of the economy of the country. All this took place in a country where its people are said to take the burden and sacrifice themselves, with the help of God, to ensure the well being of the rest of the world. This idea is commonly articulated and highly believed in by the Americans.

The shift from agrarian to an industrial culture and economy, starting from last decades of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, had a huge impact on the American character. The emergence of corporate America marked a shift in the concentration of wealth to fewer individuals. In 1892, approximately 200,000 people possessed 70% of the wealth of the country. With this shift came the lowering of wages for the masses. This way, with the Great Depression, nearly 60% of Americans lived below the poverty line. (Tammara 126) All the mass media, including newspapers, books, and magazines were dedicated to serve and consolidate the capitalist companies. The new ruling class secured itself in a well-elaborated manner. This newly formed power needed a common national philosophy and goal that would be believed by everyone but serve only the ruling class and here comes the role of the American Dream. It promotes individualism and makes it seem like a common aspiration.

In order to grow its economy and protect the interest of the capitalists, the government opened new markets in other nations. It took part in fierce wars and it always explained its intervention by expressions related to the exceptionality of America and its benevolent mission to spread peace throughout the world. This gave the US a higher station in foreign policies and decision making.

In order to explain its policy of isolation and then intervention in the First World War, the US used the same expressions related to the exceptionality of America. In April 1915, the expression, “Prosper America First” was used by President Woodrow Wilson in his speech to defend the neutrality of America during World War One: “Our whole duty for the present, at any rate, is summed up in the motto: ‘America First.’” Even though it claimed that it is in a state of isolation and neutrality, still it marked its presence with claims of pacifism, nationalism, anti-colonialism, and exceptionalism. Therefore, the US always tries to give itself prestige even in its state of isolation. When it took part in the war in 1917, the concept of “America first” was manipulated and transformed into a different context, from a motto of isolation to a jingoistic one. After the war, the expression went back to its context of isolationism. (Churchwell) American intellectuals always use this idea that America is an exceptional country and that it has the responsibility to spread peace to the rest of the world, yet one can extract several instances that prove the manipulation and hypocrisy that lies behind the myths. The Vietnam War is another example. The war is a complete failure. In their article, Gladstone and Meredith state that the US spent more than 100 billion dollars in the Vietnam War at a time when its annual federal budgets were approximately 350 billion. (39) America, to achieve its own interest, convinced its people and the world of its legitimacy to enter the war in Vietnam, but if we look at the number of murders, the idea of America as a country which spreads peace would crush down in shame.

In 2003, the US declared War on Terror which concerned the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. The real reason is not to eliminate terrorism but to protect its interest of oil. (Gardner 91) History has shown that the creation of more wars and the loss of humans’ life are of no concern for any leader of the US. Therefore, the idea that the US is a nation that spreads peace beyond its nation is nothing but a pretext to gain more wealth and domination. The US, for long centuries, has mastered the art of performing hegemony and ideological

control over the mind of people. They use all means to do so, culture, the education system, mass media, religion, and others. Even their two political parties do not much differ from each other concerning internal and foreign policies. All US presidents work their speeches to celebrate the US as the land of democracy and opportunities. It is this hegemonic strategy that helps to keep the power of the ruling class. This strategy is so effective that it crushed down all the uprisings of the 19th and 20th centuries. This way, politicians, along with the intellectuals, help to keep the dominance of capitalism. The Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci, who concerned himself with the study of the effect of culture upon the consciousness of people in his *Prison Notebooks*, finds that a ruling class or a state which maintain their power and domination through ideological and cultural strategies are difficult to overthrow. In these countries, people there are unlikely to challenge or question the authority and existing social order. For Gramsci, people are not only ruled through coercive means but more powerfully through creating consent. This way, the control is not just physically but also culturally and ideologically.

The apparatus of state coercive power which "legally" enforces discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed. (12)

For Gramsci, this kind of "civil society" is characterized by "a very complex structure." (235)

Gramsci emphasizes that people do not control ideas but rather ideas control people.

Ideas and opinions are not spontaneously "born" in each individual brain: they have had a centre of formation, or irradiation, of dissemination, of persuasion-a group of men, or a single individual even, which has developed them and presented them in the political form of current reality. (192-193)

Steinbeck's hatred of communism pushes him to direct his literature in a direction where he legitimizes the power and authority of the government by blending his beliefs of the origin of oppression and exploitation with myths. His fear of strikes and the spread of the radical thought, lead him to reinforce the cultural hegemony through his modernist novel. This allows the capitalists to keep their dominance. As stated before, Lukács in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* highly criticizes modernism arguing that it presents mere fragments of the contradiction and disintegrating found in bourgeois society. Men cannot establish relations with things. For Lukács, this does not give a true political view. Instead of giving critical knowledge, it generates meaninglessness, nihilism, and solitude. (21) Accordingly, Regardless of all the destruction that the American Dream brought, Steinbeck, in his modernist novel, promotes it as a pure American culture that leads to prosperity and development. This way, Steinbeck contributes to the extension of the false consciousness of the working class.

In his novel, Steinbeck follows a hegemonic method. As he despises the communists and fascists, he promotes the role of the government to secure reform. He does this, even though he knows the hypocrisy of the government who is fully under the control of the capitalists.

4.2.3. Promoting the role of the liberal government

For Steinbeck, America is the land of prosperity and opportunities and the fascists are leaving the path open for the communists to spread strikes. This leads him to call the government to interfere. Steinbeck promotes the role of the government even though governments are known to be corrupted and liberalism is full of disillusionment.

For Steinbeck, exposing the realities in California is not to show that the American Dream is a myth, but to remind the government that it has the task to help the migrant workers as the US is a land of wealth and goodness. For Steinbeck, *In Dubious Battle* is as Steve

Newman says in his analysis, “a warning to those in power that things were not as they should be in a democracy that had become rather inward looking and unaware of its own history. It was also, as *Grapes* would be, a wake-up call to literary America, and a Europe in the midst of political turmoil.” Steinbeck portrays the way the fascists control everything. During the strike, Mac states: “Got this valley organized. God, how they’ve got it organized. It’s not so hard to do when three men control everything, land, courts, banks. They can cut off loans, and they can railroad a man to jail, and they can always bribe plenty.” (131) When the strike breaks, the fascist landlords bring other farmers not caring about the consequences. Steinbeck shows the way the repressive state apparatus are controlled by the fascists. The vigilantes kill and injure several strikers. The growers try to tame the strike; they use the legal system to do so. The manager of the Tagus Ranch secures an injunction against protests and he orders the eviction of all the workers who refuse to labor from company-own housing. They decide that: “From now on the roads are closed. An ordinance will go through tonight forbidding any parading on the country roads, or any gathering. The sheriff will deputize a thousand men, if he needs them.” (187) This way, with each example, Steinbeck denotes the shortcomings of the communists and argues against the influence that the fascists hold. For this, he gives his call to the government. In his analysis, Glicksberg mentions that “Steinbeck is a reformer, not a radical in his outlook.” (119)

Steinbeck’s attack on what he defined as the “Fascist” elements of American agrarian capitalism, inspired ferocious reactions on the part of his contemporaries who assumed he was himself a Socialist when in fact his novel was in sync with Roosevelt’s attempts to rescue the United States from Revolution. (Seelye 172)

Steinbeck’s *The Harvest Gypsies* is a series of articles written in October 1936. They were later published as a pamphlet entitled *Their Blood is Strong* in 1938. The articles are about the problems that face the Okies who are itinerant laborers. Horrified by the exploitation and the

bad living conditions of these laborers, Steinbeck emphasizes that their problems can be solved by the state only and since it is a Californian problem, it must be solved by the Californians themselves. In his novel, *The Grapes of the Wrath*, he portrays the way the migrant workers are saved by the government because they did not choose the strike as a path for social change. They are people who face their social problems with indomitable courage. At the end, Steinbeck shows signs of revitalization, hope after long days of suffering. He shows that these people must be helped. They must improve their living conditions and give them a chance to settle down as blessed citizens of a state to which God has granted everything. Steinbeck's purpose is to show that it is the state and the citizens who have to face this problem. The Okies live inside the capitalistic system and these people have to be helped by love and humanitarian missions. The communists are a threat no more; nothing is insured. Therefore, the problem within a community must be solved by its inhabitants. (Jones 454-455-456) Accordingly, regardless of the corruption that covers the government, still Steinbeck promotes its role. He wants the interference of the government to limit the power of the fascists as their methods leave the path open for the communists to gain power in the US. In a letter, published in *Life in Letters*, Steinbeck told his friend Georg Albee: "I'm not interested in the strike as means of raising men's wages." (89) This takes us to the third chapter where he portrayed the strike as a means of violence and not a solution for progress. Walter Ralston opines in *New Masses*: "Although the strategy of class struggle and strike organization is the chief topic of conversation in *In Dubious Battle*, the novel at no time becomes a disembodied course in the principles of Communism; the strike is not staged on a blackboard. (qtd. in Benson and Loftis 222) His despise of the communists pushes him to portray a failed strike and promote the role of the government even though governments are known to be controlled by the capitalists. In his article, the Russian economist Mikhail Khazin exposes how even the Federal Reserve System is controlled by the capitalists.

I'm going to immediately respond to all the critics that the FRS is allegedly a state structure as it's Chairman is appointed by the USA President (on the Congress approval). In reality the FRS top management consists not only of pre-approved members, but also of rotated chairmen of reserve banks' boards (12 in total), who make more than half of FRS Management Board. And reserve banks are privately owned, thus, the state is not a majority stockholder.

He continues by stating how the Bretton Woods conference (1944) was held just to suit the needs of the few wealthy individuals in the US. It is there where the dollar was imposed as a world currency in substitute for all the other currencies in reserves and circulation. (Khazin) During the 1930s, Steinbeck was so close to President Roosevelt. (Gladstein and Meredith (42) This makes him fully aware of the strong hold that the capitalists have in the US. Still, his literature promotes change through the government. This shows the contradiction in Steinbeck's literature where mere fragmentation about the political situation in the US is transmitted. This is done in order to indirectly prevent the rise of the working class and the preserve the status of capitalism against communism. In the novel, Steinbeck projects how the fascists are shown to have a strong hold of the media. The paper headlines when Mac hold the newspaper is "Supervisors vote to feed strikers." (147) In another editorial, it is mentioned that action must take place as the strikers are using violence. They mention how the strikers burned Anderson's barn. The paper reports them as "fruit tramps, led and inspired by paid foreign agitators," meaning the communists, a term associated with violence and unrest in the US from Red Russia. The newspaper mentions that "these strikers do not belong here. They flout the laws, and destroy life and property. They are living on the fat of the land, supplied by secret sympathizers." It takes them as "paid trouble-makers," "Malcontents," and "murderers." (215) In his writings and actions, Steinbeck as an American writer, seems to agree with this, notwithstanding he is against the fascists. For Steinbeck, the communists and

their methods of protest are not welcomed in the US. In his analysis of *In Dubious Battle*, Lloyd Willis mentions how during the thirties, the setting of the novel, socialism and communism are openly related to particular regimes and political philosophies. These ideologies constitute a collective uneasiness upon the American consciousness. For Steinbeck, communism and socialism are terms which have no validation in the American discourse; they are symbols of “un-Americanness” and “otherness,” and they indicate a general foreboding. (112-113)

In order to prevent the communists from spreading their influence, Steinbeck calls the government to interfere. He wants to ameliorate the condition of the migrant workers but within the capitalist system. However, Steinbeck is fully aware that the government is controlled by the fascist capitalists. As he loathes the communists, he tries to conceal any positive aspect that comes from strikes.

In his novel, Steinbeck closes all the doors for the strike to be a powerful social movement for the workers to use. In addition to his portrayal of the strikers as a beast which spirals out of control, he reinforces his position through ideological and cultural hegemony. Even though the government of the US and the reliance on the philosophy of the American Dream are proven to be corrupted, Steinbeck promotes their role to ensure equality and justice. In the Marxist thought, Steinbeck contributes to the maintenance of the false consciousness of working class. His aim is to preserve capitalism and stop the spread of communism and fascism. In this thesis, we have seen how the philosophies and arguments set by Steinbeck are built on myths, manipulations, and fragmentations. This calls us to question his opinion about the effectiveness of strikes.

4.3. Exposing the Source of Power is a Path to Erode it

Zola and Steinbeck use their writing to consolidate the power of the capitalists. Even though the philosophies that they promote are proven by critics and thinkers to be corrupted

meant to cast dominance, still they make use of them in order to preserve the capitalist system and stop the spread of the revolutionary thought. That is why; they promote the strike as a violent social movement. Abrahams projects the opposite. Instead of consolidating the ideology of the capitalists, he exposes it and relates all the suffering of the working class to the whole policy of the dominant class. In this section, we will see how Abrahams, as an intellectual who springs from his class, exposes the way the capitalists are able to cast their power by using skin color as a pretext. As a kind of an intellectual whom Chomsky's concept of anarchism can be applied to his writings, Abrahams dismantles the arguments set by the capitalists arguing that their legitimacy cannot be justified. We will see as well the way the novelist exposes the hypocrisy of liberalism denoting that class struggle and embracing strikes as a movement for social change is the best choice that the workers can take.

4.3.1. A black in skin a human in person

The capitalists in South Africa set racial and discriminative laws to double their wealth through the black workers. They also worked to spread false assumptions and narratives in order to keep exploiting the non-whites as a cheap labor-force, and here comes the role of Abrahams. *Mine Boy*, instead of helping to solidify the false assumptions spread by the whites, it exposes the cultural hegemony that people lived under for centuries. Abrahams prepares his people for a political change through exposing the way the capitalists cast their influence and domination through capitalist philosophies condemning them as socially constructed. In his novel, he focuses on the idea that the white race is naturally more developed than the dark race.

Europeans use social Darwinism of the "survival of the fittest" to justify their use of force to take hold of the resources of the weaker people. They also derive from it the idea that darker races are backward and uncivilized. (Milne 130) In order to program in the subconscious mind of the non-whites that the dark race is inferior, they use different methods.

The non-whites are separated from the whites in all aspects of life. They are even divided into three categories, blacks, colored, and Indians. In his article in *The Guardian*, Olayinka Sule mentions how the blacks are referred to by several names: “In the US, they are called “nigger”, in Brazil they are termed macaco; in South Africa, they are nicknamed kaffir; in India, bandar; in China hakgwai.” He pursues by saying: “in white-dominant societies, blackness has come to be a synonym for crime, laziness, poverty and low intelligence.” This ideology effects even the whites. In her book, Robin DiAngelo states: “I believe that in the white mind, black people are the ultimate racial “other.” (111) Their superiority complex and their hostility toward the non-whites make them live in constant unease and trap them in false perceptions.

The South African Whites are supposedly free, yet they are morally enslaved by their fear of the non-Whites. Because this fear is unavowed and conflicts with humaneness in the more sensitive among them, it breeds a spiritual disease and creates a dilemma which is only resolved at the cost of personal integrity.

(Goossens 108)

Paddy tells Xuma that the whites discriminate and exploit the non-whites because they think like a white man. For Abrahams, this ideology is oppressive and manipulative. As a colored man who lived under such an oppressive system, he exposes where the power of the government resides. His novel shows that the non-whites are brainwashed by the narratives spread by the government and it demonstrates that his people will not be set free unless these narratives are exposed to the mass.

For Gramsci, gaining intellectual dominance is the first step to take before seizing power in government. For him, any social class which seeks to gain governmental power has to display and gain moral and intellectual leadership. It is crucial to have organic intellectuals of the rising class to formulate the ideas that will gain mass support and achieve leadership.

This presupposes the presence of institutions or arenas in order to be able to articulate and develop new ideas. This is what Gramsci calls war of position. He emphasizes that just like the bourgeoisie, the working class is able to develop from its rank its own intellectuals and a political party. The party guides the activity of these organic intellectuals and seeks to provide a link between the class and some sections of the traditional intelligentsia. The intellectuals that stems from the working class are defined by their role in production, the organization of work, and in their political role in relation to the party. This is what leads the working class to set free from the hegemonic power set by the capitalists. (4)

Abrahams became a Marxist when he was studying in an elite school for the blacks. In 1939, he worked as an editor at a socialist magazine. He later on found a way to go London where he was hired as a dispatch clerk at a socialist bookstore. He, also, worked as an editor for *The Daily Worker*, a newspaper of a Communist party leaning. Abrahams was one of the members who organized the Fifth Pan Africanist Congress which was held in England. In this organization, he was fully influenced by the cause of his country. (Grimes) In his novel, he shows how the non-whites are men with much pride unlike what the whites promote. In the beginning of the novel, the characters echo Fanon's idea of the black inferiority complex. Eliza, for example, wants the comfort of the whites and she wishes she was a white woman. Abrahams shows how this destroys her and makes her alienated from her people. Xuma displays the fragmented experience as the white man wants him to be. His conversation with Paddy and Di denotes how he is totally convinced that races are not the same. Di concludes that Xuma is just the same as the other mine boys as he accepts the binary opposition of black-white. For Di, "A man's a man to the extent that he asserts himself." (68). Paddy disagrees arguing that Xuma "has dignity and pride." (68) Throughout the end of the novel, the position of Paddy is proven. Xuma in the beginning articulates the idea that the whites are separated from the blacks and colored just because it is meant to be so, yet, unconsciously, he

knows that something is wrong. Xuma's actions show that he has a minimal understanding of class struggle and that he is not fully brainwashed by the system. For example, when a policeman beat Xuma and he responded, the policeman was stupefied. He did not expect that Xuma would react. Xuma calls the policeman "a dog" and struck him in the face. "A look of storage surprise crept into the policeman's eyes. Xuma trembles with anger. He bunched his great fist and struck again hard." (16) Abrahams shows that the blacks have an innate sense of pride. Xuma does not bite the fact that the policeman is allowed to beat him when he did not do any harm. *Mine Boy* asserts that contrary to what the whites promote, the blacks are people who revolt for their pride and dignity.

Bickford Smith states: "All South African perspectives on city life were informed by the transformational circulation of ideas about cities. White perspectives influenced Black ones and, noticeably so from the 1940s onward, the opposite was also true." (250) This way, in *Mine Boy*, the whites think that as the blacks are lazy and the city is not meant for them. Abrahams challenges this assumption through Xuma who manages to adapt to city life. Xuma remains a man of pride and dignity. The area where he lives is known for crimes and illegal deeds, yet Xuma is not tempted. Living in the city makes Xuma strong and more ready for challenge. He, unconsciously, acts like a man with full rights. Xuma at first was skeptical and uncertain thinking that comfort and luxury are naturally meant for the whites. But when he encountered Dr. Mini, a black middle class, he realized that the blacks can have the life and position of the white man. Dr. Mini, even though he is a black man, this does not preclude him from belonging to the middle class and possess comfort and higher positions just like the whites. Xuma's conversation with Dr. Mini assures Xuma that he is living like how a man should be and not like a white man. Michael Wade states that Abrahams refuses to accept the image of the black man as a victim. For him, true strength is to be found in the city. He is aware that his people have to pay the price to regain their integrity in a world controlled by

the bourgeois. This consciousness is important to reverse exploitation by a new person who deserves a better life. Wade follows by stating:

Mine Boy remains an important novel, even in some ways a powerful one. Its power is derived from the imaginativeness of the undertaking and the originality and scope of the underlying idea, which turns the literary stereotype of the inevitable corruption of the innocent black man by the white city on its head.

(113)

Xuma is even able to befriend a white man. Therefore, the idea that the non-whites are uncivilized who need the whites to think for them, or the assumption that they are lazy with no intelligence and no self-esteem is just an idea used to cast dominance. Abrahams, through his protagonist, proves that the white narratives are false that can easily be deconstructed. In her book, Elaine Rocha states that Abrahams denounces and rejects even the paternalism of the well-intentioned white people with their progressive idea that they know what is best for the non-whites. (85)

Abrahams's vision is, as he puts it in *Mine Boy* (1945), “man without colour”, a world in which every man will be judged as an individual and where colour would be irrelevant. This is why in his earlier novels he set the freedom of the mind over and above political independence. True freedom is of the spirit and is more difficult to achieve than political freedom. “Only the liberation of the heart and mind from fear are real”, he wrote in *A Wreath*. (Ogungbesan 33)

Abrahams seeks to make his novel a wakeup call not only to the blacks and colored, but also to the white men. In *Mine Boy*, we see a couple made of a colored man and a very pale woman. On this matter, Ogungbesan argues: “Interracial love humanizes the couple and enables them to burst the shackles of oppression put on them by the colour bar; it is a symbol of man's attempt to move forward beyond the chains that bind him.” (34) Accordingly, the

non-whites have to challenge all the discriminating assumptions. While the government does all what it takes to stop the non-whites from thinking, Xuma, walking in the streets of Johannesburg, starts to question his situation. Xuma is shown to be a leading figure in the struggle for freedom. Notwithstanding the system wants him to be acquiescent to the philosophies of the white capitalists, he takes the opposite direction. Abrahams shows that the non-whites will not be liberated until they let go of their inferiority complex and recognize themselves as equal to the whites so that the whites will accept that. This explains the reason why Paddy wants Xuma to accept the fact that he is a man first. Through Xuma's journey, we see how he is liberated gradually from the ideas engraved in his mind. Even Paddy is addressed to according to his skin color, the Red One, denoting that skin color is just a socially constructed matter that has nothing to do with the mind and capacities of humans. This is the idea that Abrahams wants his people to see and feel. In the concluding paragraphs of *The Coyaba Chronicles* (2000), Abrahams writes: "Race and colour, in themselves, are not worth the pain and suffering they have called down on humanity in our time. [...] To the young of all colours and of all lands [...] I urge respectful recognition of your common humanity. You are all of one blood." (qtd. in Willemsse 255) This is reflected by the discourse stated by Paddy during the strike when he states: They pay you a little! They don't care if you risk your lives! Why is it so? Is it not the blood of a black man red like that of a white man? Does not a black man feel too? Does not a black man love life too? (181-182) Exposing this to light is of vital importance in the struggle toward national liberation.

Abrahams seems to follow Noam Chomsky's understanding of anarchism. For Chomsky, an anarchist is one who seeks to detect the structures of authority, domination, and hierarchy and challenge them and emphasize that they have to justify their legitimacy. (40:50-41:29) "Power is always illegitimate, unless it proves itself to be legitimate. So the burden of proof is always on those who claim that some authoritarian hierarchic relation is legitimate. If

they can't prove it, then it should be dismantled." (Chomsky 79) That is what Abrahams is doing with the exploitation of workers in his novel. The government gives the pretext of skin color and white superiority as arguments and this is not a justification. When Abrahams asks for the legitimacy of the white's treatment of the blacks he finds that it cannot be justified only in terms of profit. Abrahams works to dismantle the narratives of the whites in order to move towards freedom, justice, equal opportunity, individual creativity, and cooperative activity.

In order to maximize the profit, the capitalists make use of unjustified exploitative narratives. As an intellectual who seeks freedom, justice, and equality, Abrahams works his novel in a way that exposes the source of power of the oppressors. He produces protest literature, a one that stands up against a society that is destroyed by the notion of superiority and inferiority complex. Therefore, *Mine Boy* is among the novels of fight and struggle to regain a lost right and freedom and asserts that all are equal, and what is left is nothing but a cultural hegemony that must be exposed so that it erodes.

4.3.2. Toward a Marxist outlook

Zola stands for a republican government and Steinbeck favors a liberal one. Abrahams; however, is not enthusiastic when it comes to the government. For him, change can be achieved through strikes and protests. Abrahams turns toward strikes as he is aware that the liberal government is corrupted as it looks for the interests of the capitalists, and it will not lift a finger for a social change unless the downtrodden react.

Zola and Steinbeck highly believe in liberal humanism to achieve social change. According to Saxton, Steinbeck belongs to the tradition of human and humanist radicalism which is deeply rooted in American culture and heritage. This humanist radicalism was so popular among writers of the 1880s. Writers who embrace radical humanism believe in peaceful and benevolent means to achieve justice and equality. (250-253) Zola and Steinbeck

want the workers to wait for a peaceful interference of the government to save them from exploitation. Yet, as argued in the previous sections, Zola and Steinbeck's aim is to prevent strikes and the spread of the revolutionary thought among the workers. Surely they want to help the downtrodden but not through strikes. Abrahams refutes this possibility and exposes the hypocrisy of the liberals and the government connoting that change cannot be achieved until the workers' rise their voice as one through strikes. Instead of liberalism, Abrahams adopts the Marxist perspective. He mentions in his autobiography *Tell Freedom Memories of Africa* (1954) how Marxism influenced him by stating:

Marxism had the impact of miraculous revelation. I had explored this new creed with delicate care. I had measured its adherents by their creed. A profound revolution had taken place in my heart and mind. And I had tested the new creed called Marxism against the reality of my experience and the darkness of my land. And only by the Marxian theories of economics and imperialism had the racialism of the land made sense. Marxism had supplied an intelligent and reasonable explanation for the things that happened. Had it also the key to the solving of these problems? (297)

In his analysis of *Mine Boy*, Michael Wade calls this novel a proletarian novel arguing that its plot is built upon the Marxist perspective. Wade adds that *Mine Boy* was written in a time when Abrahams was a member of the communist party in England and when his harsh experience in South Africa was still fresh in mind. (96) According to Jean-Philippe Wade, Abrahams turned to the Marxist ideology due to his disillusionment with the liberal humanist ideology. In the colleges he had attended, they taught him about the non-racial democratic ideas. Yet, none of these ideas are applied outside the classroom. Abrahams' liberal educational apparatus planted in him the desire for a better future, but looking at the politics of the liberals and how they did not work to prevent the racial laws in South Africa pushed

him to defect to the Marxist doctrine. (89) Therefore, for Abrahams, there is no progress from the liberals. Jean-Philippe Wade gives an example of the ineffectiveness of white liberalism by looking at Alan Paton's hostility toward the black trade unionism in his novel *Cry the Beloved Country* (1948). From Paton's novel, he notes that the limits of liberalism are seen in the hostility toward the African culture and its constant attempt to drag black liberation into the mold of capitalism. (93) These are the reasons that lead Abrahams to embrace the strike as a movement to achieve democracy and this is what the history of South Africa has shown. It is like what Christopher Heywood says in his book, *Abrahams in Mine Boy*, and other of his novels, "anticipated the conception of South Africa as the home of all South Africans that was later defined in the Freedom Charter (1955)." (126) The Freedom Charter states that just like the whites, the non-whites have to be granted the right for:

...equality before the law; freedom of movement, assembly, religion, speech, and the press; the right to vote and to work, with equal pay for equal work, a forty-hour work week, a minimum wage, annual leave, and unemployment benefits; free medical care and free, compulsory, and equal education. The Freedom Charter also included some socialist ideas: "The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole," and "Restriction of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it." (Thompson 208-209)

For Abrahams, this can be achieved through strikes. He changes his perspective as the non-whites are treated like slaves and not as humans with full rights like what a liberal government and liberal humanism claim. For Abrahams, the so-called liberal government helps to assure the dominance of the capitalists instead of seeking democracy. The infertile rural areas are reserved for the blacks and the fertile lands and the city is for the white

capitalists. In *Mine Boy*, he shows how all the state apparatus work in favor of the white capitalists. Abrahams addresses vociferously these issues by attacking the political structure of the country.

For the novelist, the government must reconsider its policy in order for democracy to take place. He shows that there will never be harmony and stability in the South African society as long as the capitalists oppress the workers. However, the liberal government refuses to listen. Therefore, for him, there must be a radical change to the government. This change can be achieved by strikes. Unlike what some writers promote, the strike can be a path for social equality. Accordingly, in parallel with the image of the crowd as a degenerative phenomenon, there lies a counterclaim. In the Marxist perspective, the crowd is taken as a creative movement. Therefore, what is seen as destructive is seen for others as a hope for a better future. In the case of Abrahams, he takes the unification of workers as a rational response to social injustices, and according to the incidents that take place at the end of the strike in *Mine Boy*, he connotes that liberation is to be achieved through unification and constant struggle.

4.3.3. A true revolutionary class consciousness

Mine Boy is a novel that exposes the hypocrisy of the government and shows the power of strikes denoting that the government will not listen to the deprived until their voice is heard through work stoppages. Abrahams denotes that a true revolutionary class consciousness is to be achieved, gradually, through constant struggle and solidarity between workers of all races, and through labor strikes. His novel connotes also that the truly consciousness is to be achieved during the strike and not before the strike as Zola and Steinbeck promote. As a holder of the Marxist ideology, Abrahams does not ignore the role of the socialists.

Mine Boy shows that change can take place through solidarity between all workers and through constant protests. Conflict in South Africa is not only with the white race, but also

between the blacks and colored. Yet, Abrahams shows that no matter what the problem is, the colored and blacks have a sense of unification as they face the same enemy. When policemen attempt to arrest Xuma in the beginning of the novel, he runs away with the help of a colored man. Another colored man hit the policeman, waves to Xuma, and runs away. While escaping the police, Xuma finds that all the doors of the houses of the colored people are open for them as an act of solidarity. "They run into a house and went through a window and over a wall. And into another house and over another wall. And the coloured people did not seem to mind." (16) The colored man takes Xuma to his home; there, he discovered that his wife is black, and Xuma is surprised about that. Xuma mentions that he hates the colored, but then, it is the colored who helped him. Abrahams demonstrates that all the non-whites have the same enemy and it is just by solidarity between each other and constant struggle that they can make an end to the exploitative system. Solidarity is not only between the non-white races but also between the whites as they work all together in the mine. This way, the poor whites are also exploited. The accident of the mine takes the life of a black and a white man. This proves that the question is not a matter of race for the capitalists but it is a matter of profit. Abrahams, through Paddy and Chris, proves that the blacks and whites can live together in harmony. In the mine, Paddy and Chris treat the blacks are fellow workers not as slaves. Abrahams projects the brutality of the police in several instances. Yet, in another passage, he shows how one of the policemen was kind to Xuma. Paddy is not only Xuma's friend but also his political mentor, and at the end, he is the one who stands with the blacks in the strike. These instances of workers' solidarity connote the way apartheid can end. The constant struggle that Abrahams projects shows that the working class has a minimal understanding of their class and that change can be achieved through solidarity and labor strikes.

The workers in Zola and Steinbeck's novels become aware of their situation before the strike unlike the workers in *Mine Boy*. During the strike, instead of understanding their

situation even more, the strike solidifies their false perceptions. At the end, they are left to think that strikes are destined to slip out of control with no tangible results and that the dominance of the capital is the only reality that the workers have to live by. As I have explained in the previous sections, this is a manipulation. In *Mine Boy*, the strike makes the working class or the “subaltern class,” as Gramsci calls it, realize that they are exploited and manipulated. The idea that they are meant to serve the white race is exposed to be meant to exploit the workers. This is the true class consciousness that Abrahams wants his people to reach.

Xuma and Paddy are arrested, yet the spirit of the strike is there connoting that it is the constant struggle and strikes which will lead to change and this is hinted in several occasions in the novel. Abrahams is being realistic that change cannot be achieved by just a single strike. In the Marxist thought, the result of the strike is not important compared to the nature of protest. In fact, it is through strikes that the workers are able to gain moral and political triumph. For Lukács, in the process of commodification, the employer works his way to always take from the workers to increase the quantity. He does this by following techniques like keeping salaries low and shortens the holidays. Laborers will naturally resist this, and it is this resistance which will limit the commodification in the workers’ consciousness. When workers fight for better working conditions, shorter hours, and better wages, the basic enmity between bosses and employers become lucid.

The problem of labour-time has already been mentioned but only from the standpoint of the worker, where it was seen as the moment at which his consciousness emerges as the consciousness of the commodity (i.e. of the substantive core of bourgeois society). The instant that this consciousness arises and goes beyond what is immediately given we find in concentrated form the basic issue of class struggle: the problem of force. For it is at this point where the

‘eternal laws’ of capitalist economics fail and become dialectical and are thus compelled to yield up the decisions regarding the fate of history to the conscious actions of men. (178)

Accordingly, the strike in *Mine Boy* is a catalyst that opens the way for other strikes and protests to reverse exploitation to justice. The small strike shows that institutions serve the capitalists only. What tame Xuma’s strike are the police. However, his strike raises other big questions that lead to other resistances. His strike shows the sign of the end of division between workers; for example, overcoming racism in the workplace in order to be stronger.

Abrahams does not ignore the role of the socialists. For him, there is a need to form unions. In his autobiography, *Tell Freedom*, Abrahams quotes the words of the Trotskyite trade-union leader, Max Gordon, about the preponderant role of black unions.

One day, a vigorous and strong native trade-union movement will grow up. None of the government's prohibitions and restrictions and arrests will count for anything then. And that movement is going to play a key part in the political emancipation of all non-whites. So, for the present, I ask for a three penny rise, for a recognized and proper lunch hour, and for decent and safe conditions of work. It's a small beginning, but it's a beginning. That's what was wrong with earlier efforts. They didn't know how to start. (309)

Accordingly, along with the constant struggle, for Abrahams, the role of the socialists is important. During periods of crises, the workers start to notice that the media supports the bosses. In *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle*, the newspapers openly come against the strikers. Amidst all the exploitation and struggle, the workers start to be convinced even more that all the hard and soft power are in the hands of the bosses and that being passive is of no good for them. During the periods of crises, strikes and mass movements are uneven and sectional. There will be unevenness of experience. For example, some workers are in better condition

than other workers. In *Mine Boy*, even though the white workers work next to the black workers, still their salaries are much better than the non-whites. In these cases, there develop unevenness and discussions about how to go forward. In his collections of essays, *Capitalism and Class Consciousness, The Ideas of Georg Lukács* (2010), activist Chris Nineham states that during times of strikes, the media works its way to exploit the division and confuse people. Social Democrats reinforce the idea that politics are separated from the economy. Lukács argues: “In the absence of a real understanding of the interaction between politics and economics a war against the whole economic system, to say nothing of its reorganization, is quite out of question.” (qtd. in Nineham 28) Politicians, the Social Democrats and reformist leaders, try to calm down the strikers by promising to work for the realization of their demands, but as time goes by, nothing happens and here strikes are contained. Regardless of this, the idea that the situation needs to be change will never die. The workers realize that there is a need to come together and form an organization to have an argument on how to revolt and on how society should be. (Nineham 28) In his article, *Georg Lukács and the Actuality of Revolution* (2017), Chris Nineham explains the ideas of Lukács concerning the actuality of revolution and revolutionary organization. Nineham states that Lukács in his book, *Lenin and the Unity of his Thought* (1924), attempts to theories Lenin’s method by explaining how Lenin shifts the question of revolution, from knowledge to belief. The workers have to feel and be confident that a revolution is going to take place in the future; this would help to turn it into reality. For Lukács, even in the times when there is no immediate revolution, socialists have to work to connect the present to a future revolution. The notion of the actuality of revolution in practice is so vital. Connecting the present with the idea of a potential revolutionary future opens the way for present right decisions and grants strategic perspective. It also helps the socialists to avoid falling in the mercy of reification and accommodation in present reality. Just like Marx, Lenin sees that socialist revolution can be

nothing but a consciously organized challenge to the present order. For Lukács and Lenin, the role of the revolutionaries is to prepare the working class intellectually and materially, and more importantly, to help create the conditions for revolution themselves. It is the party which has to prepare the revolution and work for accelerating the growth of the revolutionary tendencies by its actions. For Lukács, the radical left needs to fight against fatalism, organize, be active, and connect with the proletariat to convince them with their potential for change. Socialists need to prove in practice that mass action is the key to make a difference in the present. (Nineham) In another article entitled *Antonio Gramsci – Book Review* (2010), Chris Nineham states that for Gramsci, there is a need to develop clear, revolutionary consciousness among the population. It is the precondition for real change to take place. For Gramsci, revolutionary consciousness is the product of the interaction between class struggle or a spontaneous movement of the revolutionary masses and socialist organizations.

Several critics say that Marxism is a utopian philosophy. In this thesis, I argue that as it is a theory that works to achieve equality, justice, and freedom, it will never wane. Capitalism is proven to have an ability to survive no matter the circumstances and the working class is still exploited even though the thousands of strikes that took place for centuries. Still, this cannot preclude men's longing for a better life. Marxism is a theory that cannot wither as it works to reach freedom, a quality that men will always work for. In a conference, Noam Chomsky states that when the structures of oppression are identified and brought to people's attention, people take it for granted and there would be a constant resistance. This way, all sorts of injustice and oppression would disappear gradually. He adds: "It's a general truth that power prefers darkness, if it's exposed to the light it erodes, if people can see it, it erodes, and this happens all through history." (40:00-43:50) This way, the ideas found in the Marxist theory lead to the true revolutionary class consciousness. This theory exposes the source of power of the bosses. It helps the workers to see the source of their oppression. Working by it

may not lead to the establishment of a true communist society; but still, it helps the oppressed to gradually ameliorate their life and lower exploitation.

Mine Boy is a novel that holds a Marxist outlook as it awakes the true revolutionary class consciousness. It is a novel where Abrahams shows that the white capitalists spread false narratives in order to gain a cheap work-force. It is through Xuma's constant struggle that leads him to understand more and more the policy of the capitalists. This awakening helps him to fathom the fact that change is not an unattainable goal and a better life can be achieved through constant struggle and labor strikes.

Conclusion

Zola and Steinbeck work their novels to legitimize the position of the system of capitalism and prevent the spread of the radical revolutionary thought. Their portrayal of the strike as a destructive social movement can be criticized as the behavior of men during the strike is build upon capitalist philosophies. Instead of exposing the hypocrisy of these narratives, they indirectly promote them along with the role of politicians even though the capitalists are known to have an influence in the political sphere. Abrahams does the contrary. Instead of consolidating the power of the capitalists, he exposes their source of power and questions its legitimacy. His aim is to make his people realize that they are under exploitation because they accept the narratives set by the capitalists. The solution that he suggests for social change is labor strikes and the unification of all races as the white workers are also exploited by the capitalists. His novel connotes that change is to come gradually through constant struggle and he gives importance to the role of the socialists. Through his character Xuma, he shows how strikes and confrontation with the policy of the whole system, develop the true revolutionary class consciousness in the head of the oppressed. He demonstrates how the working class has a minimal understanding of their class position and is not fully brainwashed by the policy of the government. The novelist shows the disillusionment found

in liberal governments and embraces instead the Marxist doctrine of protest as a path for social change and democracy.

General Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored the ways in which the strike in Abrahams' *Mine Boy* is an effective social movement to change the status quo of the working class, or even change the course of history, unlike the destructive image of the strike presented by Zola and Steinbeck in their novels, *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle*. I studied this through using the Marxist theory. In the three novels, we have two social classes, a wealthy class who owns the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and a deprived class whose labor-power is sold to the one who pays more. These two classes are in constant struggle. Based on the findings of this research method, I was able to extract the reasons why the strike in *Mine Boy* is considered a successful social movement, the reasons why the strikes of Zola and Steinbeck in *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle* are a complete failure, and the strategies that tame the revolutionary class consciousness and what can awake it.

The strike in Abrahams' *Mine Boy* is considered a success. Unlike in *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle* where the working class acquires class consciousness before the strike, the miners in *Mine Boy* reach class consciousness and recognize the source of their suffering during the strike; this is the true revolutionary class consciousness. Making the strikers reach class consciousness before the strike and then making them experience a failed and catastrophic strike is a manipulation to preclude their rise to power. As what *Mine Boy* indicates, race is used as a pretext to cast domination and gain a cheap labor-force to double the profit. This way, Apartheid is a system that stands upon capitalism. In the mines, the whites as well work next to the blacks. At the end of the novel, after the mine accident that takes the life of a white and a black worker, we see how the strike combines all races even the white race, a sign that Abrahams gives to hint the method that leads to the end of apartheid. The strike helps the workers to overcome their racial differences. It also helps the workers to see how the repressive state apparatus work in favor for the capitalists. The strike is quelled

by the law enforcement, yet its essence is there. It leaves its impact as the only solution to end the misery of the downtrodden unlike the strike in *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle*. This move shows that Abrahams is suggesting labor strikes as the right movement to reduce exploitation. For him, the government will not listen unless the workers give their outcry. In fact, Abrahams is fully aware that a single strike cannot achieve an immediate change. For this, reading the novel gives a sense that the strike opens the path for other protests. Xuma and Paddy's strike calls for unionization and the role of the socialists to instigate further strikes to ameliorate the state of the workers. Abrahams emphasizes on constant struggle even before the strike. This is shown in the innate rebelliousness and defiance of the characters who challenge the rules set. Even the white worker Paddy works his way to instruct Xuma about exploitation and equality. When Xuma comes to the city, he along with the colored and whites show their constant struggle. This struggle is highly manifested by the strike at the end of the novel. In *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle*, the idea of the crowd as a degenerative phenomenon is to be questioned as the behavior of men during the strike in *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle* is linked to capitalist narratives. As the last chapter shows, these narratives are built upon myths and manipulations. This way, the idea that the workers during the strike will lose their rationality and the idea that the strike is an ineffective movement can be questioned.

The reason that leads Zola and Steinbeck to give an unflattering image to the strikers and labor strike is their class position and political leaning. Both novelists stated their abhorrence of the radical ideologies. Zola is a member of the middle class and Steinbeck wrote his novel during the great struggle between two powerful ideologies, capitalism and communism. At that time, the communists were seen as a threat that instigates the working class to revolt. Using their own medium, they attempt to suppress the revolutionary thought and prevent the spread of Marxism, communism, and anarchism. For this, they make their readers experience what it feels like to follow the lead of the radicals, go on strike, and

challenge the dominance of the capital. Both novelists want the amelioration of the condition of the working class, but through the interference of the government and within the capitalist system. However, as my thesis demonstrates, governments are known to be controlled by the capitalists. For them, capitalism is not the real source of the suffering of the working class but it is due to other forces. At a first glance, one thinks that Zola and Steinbeck fully relate exploitation to capitalism, but in fact, they strongly relate it to internal and external forces. This way, according to Lukács Marxism, both novelists suppress the point of view of the totality and transmit mere fragments about the social and political situation of the workers. In the end, readers are left thinking that exploitation is not related to the system but to some greedy capitalists and at the same time to natural forces. And here, class struggle is suppressed out of history. The aim of Zola and Steinbeck is to prevent labor strikes.

What tames the revolutionary class consciousness is the experience under the exploitative systems. Commodification under capitalism makes people powerless unable to challenge their bosses. In addition, the capitalist narratives secure the consent of the workers. In case the capitalists sense any kind of protest, they make use of the repressive state apparatus. In the three novels, we see how commodification shapes the aspects of the working class' life and degrades their critical faculties. In addition, the ideological state apparatus and the cultural hegemony that the powerful make people experience and live under, extend the compliance of the workers. The novels also show the way the capitalists seek the help of the law enforcement agencies in case of disobedience.

In *Germinal* and *In Dubious Battle*, the novelists show how the system commodifies the workers by rendering them as objects meant to generate profit. This reified relation affects the consciousness of people. However, it is this commodity capitalism that pushes them to revolt. The experience of people under exploitation leaves no way but to instigate people to revolt. The workers will not be able to support the dehumanization and depravation that they go

through. This way, commodification is the key to both, subservience and revolt. The danger that the workers face in their place of work and the misery that they experience due to their work are used by the socialists as arguments to lead the deprived in chains of strikes in an attempt to reduce exploitation. However, as Zola and Steinbeck want to suppress the revolutionary thought, they use their literature to manipulate the mass. They project this double edge of commodity capitalism but at the same time, they do this through suppressing the totality notion and promoting the notions that indirectly support capitalism. Zola and Steinbeck do not link all the aspects of suffering to the system. All this is fragmentally transmitted. Zola relates the suffering of the workers to forces of heredity and to the surrounding, and Steinbeck to the laziness of people to reach wealth. Zola bases his naturalism upon social Darwinism, a theory that is condemned to be linked to the system of capitalism, and Steinbeck's argument of phalanx expresses vehement protest against the group and cherishes the individual. Individualism is a notion strongly linked to the American Dream and capitalism. Both novelists expose the way commodification breeds revolution but at the same time, they manipulate people into thinking that social movements will lead to more misery. Their aim is to make the readers experience what it is like to witness a violent strike and at the same time to warn the capitalists that their treatment of the working class provokes their rise. If not properly dealt with, they will have to deal with the chains of labor strikes.

As a Marxist, Abrahams uses his novel to give a wakeup call to the workers. *Mine Boy* can be considered a counter-hegemonic discourse against the narratives spread by the powerful class. Abrahams as an intellectual who emerges from his class, instead of solidifying the exploitative ideologies like Zola and Steinbeck, he exposes them to light. He seeks to create a working class culture, and shows the way skin color is used as an argument and as a hegemonic idea to cast domination and gain a cheap labor-force. He deconstructs the

capitalist narrative that the white race is superior to the black one, and shows how this idea affects the psyche of the non-whites and prevents them from fighting for their rights to live as true citizens in their homeland. He also shows how social Darwinism effects even the white workers by making them tolerate all conditions of work as they are paid higher wages compared to the blacks and as they are given the title of “boss.” Abrahams calls for another education of the subaltern in order to be intellectuals themselves. His task is mainly to make his people critical of their situation. *Mine Boy* shows how the decisive difference between Marxism and bourgeois thought is the point of view of the totality. Ergo, unlike the promoters of capitalism, he links all the suffering of the workers to the exploitative system in South Africa. He does not link matters to different sources of suffering or transmits his message in mere fragmentation. All is linked to apartheid, an exploitative system that stands for capitalism.

With the results stated above, I believe future researchers should be able to treat and use Marxism as a theory of praxis that can lower workers’ exploitation or even change the course of history, and not a mere utopian or mere ideas meant to criticize the exploiters just in papers. The non-whites in South Africa were able to end apartheid, a strategy followed that exploited them for centuries. Their struggle gives a better sense of why labor strikes can be an effective movement for social change. Marxism is a theory that calls for freedom and equality, and it always works to find strategies to end the misery of the deprived. The qualities that Marxism fights for are the ones which men will never cease to fight for. However, talking about capitalism itself, in spite of all the miseries and afflictions that it creates, it always succeeds to survive. This way, my findings indicates that there are other different roots of research left for researchers to investigate.

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Résumé

Cette thèse est une étude sur le pourvoir et l'efficacité de la grève à améliorer les conditions de travail des travailleurs et réduire l'exploitation. L'arrêt du travail dans le roman *Mine Boy* (1946) de Peter Abraham est utilisé comme contre-discours à l'échec et l'inefficacité des grèves dans le roman *Germinal* d'Emile Zola (1885) et *In Dubious Battle* (1936) de John Steinbeck. Mon objectif est d'utiliser *Mine Boy* pour examiner la manière dont les grèves des travailleurs peuvent réduire l'exploitation du travail contrairement à ce que Zola et Steinbeck promeuvent dans leurs romans. Zola souligne les lacunes des Marxistes et des Anarchistes et condamne les grèves ouvrières en arguant que ce mouvement social échapperait à tout contrôle. Au lieu de cela, il appelle au rôle du gouvernement républicain d'aller vers une réforme pour préserver les droits des travailleurs. Egalement, Steinbeck critique vivement les communistes. Il plaide contre la grève qu'ils provoquent en soulignant que c'est un spectre qu'il faut écraser. Il appelle le gouvernement libéral à intervenir pour préserver la réputation des États-Unis en tant que nation de justice. Les deux auteurs décrivent les radicaux comme des hypocrites qui se soucient de leurs intérêts personnels, et les grévistes comme une force incontrôlable qui ne peut être guidée. Pour les deux romanciers, la réforme au sein du système capitaliste est la seule bonne solution car la grève est un mouvement social destructif et effrayant qui mène à la détresse et à l'affliction. Contre ce jugement, Abrahams expose la façon dont le gouvernement sud-africain, qui a une tendance capitaliste, utilise le système de ségrégation pour prendre les noirs et les blancs pauvres comme une main-d'œuvre bon marché. Dans *Mine Boy*, il expose l'hypocrisie des libéraux et remet en question la légitimité de l'idéologie de la supériorité de la race blanche en arguant qu'elle est fabriquée pour contrôler la main-d'œuvre noire. Contrairement à Zola et Steinbeck qui utilisent leur littérature pour solidifier les récits capitalistes qui aident à exploiter la force de travail, Abrahams les mettent en lumière afin de les démanteler. Au lieu de s'appuyer sur le rôle des

libéraux, il montre à quel point les grèves ouvrières sont le seul moyen de lutter contre l'exploitation du travail et d'assurer la démocratie. Pour que cette thèse ait une base méthodologique, les théories suivantes doivent être utilisées: le marxisme de Georg Lukács et d'Antonio Gramsci, la théorie du naturalisme d'Emile Zola, l'argument de la phalange de John Steinbeck, et le concept d'anarchisme de Noam Chomsky. Ces théories sont pertinentes pour cette thèse car elles étudient la lutte entre le travail et le capital, et elles tiennent le contexte de la foule contre l'exploitation sociale, les points focaux sur lesquels les trois romanciers construisent leurs romans.

Mots clés: Grèves ouvrières, Capitalisme, Main-d'œuvre, Marxisme, Les récits capitalistes, Anarchisme, Naturalisme, Argument de la Phalange.

المخلص

تعتبر هذه المذكرة دراسة حول إستغلال العمال من طرف الرأسماليين وإمكانية نجاح الإضرابات العمالية في محاربة الاستغلال. لدراسة هذا، أستعمل رواية *فتى المناجم* لبيتر ابراهامز كخطاب مضاد ضد فشل و عدم فعالية الإضرابات في رواية *جبر مينال* لإميل زولا و رواية *في معركة مشبوهة* لجون ستين باك. أرمي من خلال هذه الدراسة إلى إستعمال رواية *فتى المناجم* للبحث حول الطريقة التي يمكن فيها لإضرابات العمال أن تؤدي إلى العدالة و تقليص درجة إستغلال العمال عكس مايروج له زولا وستين باك في روايتهما. يشير زولا إلى عيوب الماركسيين و الاناركيين و يدين الإضرابات العمالية بحجة أن هذه الحركة الاجتماعية ستخرج عن نطاق السيطرة، وبدلا من ذلك، يدعو الحكومة الجمهورية لإقرار الإصلاح لضمان حقوق العمال. ينتقد ستين باك الراديكاليين مشيرا إلى أن الإضرابات التي يدعوا إليها الشيوعيون خطر يجب القضاء عليه و يدعو الحكومة الليبرالية للتدخل للحفاظ على سمعة الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية كبدا ديمقراطي مبني على مبدأ العدالة. يصور زولا و ستين باك الراديكاليين على أنهم مناقفون يسعون لمصالح شخصية و يصورون أيضا العمال المضربون على أنهم قوة لا يمكن السيطرة عليها أو قيادتها، لهذا يدعوا كلا الكاتبين لإصلاحات اجتماعية لكن في إطار النظام الرأسمالي مروجين لفكرة أن الإضرابات هي حركة اجتماعية تؤدي لأعمال التخريب. يناقض ابراهامز في روايته هذه الأحكام حيث يكشف في *فتى المناجم* كيف أن الحكومة الليبرالية في جنوب إفريقيا، التي تتبع النظام الرأسمالي، تستعمل نظام الفصل العنصري المعروف بالأبارتايد كحجة للسيطرة و اتخاذ السود و البيض الفقراء كقوة عاملة رخيصة. يكشف ابراهامز في روايته نفاق الليبراليين و يتساءل حول شرعية فكرة سيادة البيض على كل البشر من الأعراق الأخرى عارضا إياها على أنها صناعة أيديولوجية للسيطرة على اليد العاملة الرخيصة. يقوم ابراهامز بتسليط الضوء على الروايات الرأسمالية المستعملة للسيطرة على العمال لتفكيكها عكس زولا و ستين باك الذين يستخدمون أدبهم لترسيخها في الأذهان، وبدلا من الإعتماد على الليبراليين، يظهر ابراهامز كيف أن الإضرابات العمالية هي الطريقة الوحيدة لمحاربة استغلال العمال و ضمان العدالة.

كقاعدة منهجية لهذا البحث، أوظف النظريات التالية: ماركسية جورج لوكاش وأنطونيو غرامشي و المذهب الطبيعي لإميل زولا ونظرية ستين باك حول سيكولوجية الحشد ومفهوم الأناركية لنجوم تشومسكي. هذه النظريات لها صلة وثيقة بموضوع الأطروحة لأنها تدرس الصراع القائم بين الرأسماليين و الطبقة العاملة كما أن جميع هذه النظريات تحمل سياق ثورة العمال ضد إستغلالهم من طرف الرأسماليين و التي هي النقاط المحورية التي بنى الكتاب الثلاث رواياتهم عليها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإضرابات العمالية، النظام الرأسمالي، اليد العاملة، الماركسية، الروايات الرأسمالية، الأناركية، المذهب الطبيعي، سيكولوجية الحشد.