

**MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC –
METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL****MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC –
METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL**<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**DEPICTION OF FARMERS IN “TOBACCO ROAD” BY
E. CALDWELL****Feruzal Ismailovna Maxmanazarova**

Senior lecturer

Uzbekistan State World Languages University

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

E-mail: Feruzal_24@inbox.ru**ABOUT ARTICLE****Key words:** Great depression, Dust Bowl era, farmers, irony, economic hardship.**Received:** 17.08.24**Accepted:** 19.08.24**Published:** 21.08.24**Abstract:** In E. Caldwell's works particularly novels such as "Tobacco road" and "God's little acre", farmers characters embody the complexities of great depression era and economical hardship themes. It is mentioned the author and his works devoted to the issues of farmers, revealed in literature and problems of farmers in America, which have always been in the centre of writers' attention. We defined and showed these problems of certain periods in several works of some representatives of American literature. Article shows us the observation of similarities in portraying main characters and presenting the hard life of farmers and the reflection of Depression Era in both novels. From this point of view, we focused on scenes which show the real situation of that time.**INTRODUCTION**

In American literature the depiction of farmers is shaped through different unconventional methods, resulting in a various interpretation of the farmers figure. The plight of farmers during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl era has been a profound subject in American literature, providing deep insights into the socio-economic struggles faced by agricultural communities. Among the most significant literary works addressing this issue Erskine Caldwell's "Tobacco Road". Both authors, through their unique narrative styles and perspectives, vividly depict the myriad challenges farmers encountered during this tumultuous period. This article explores the portrayal of farmers' problems in Caldwell's works, emphasizing their thematic similarities and differences, as well as their broader social and political implications. Caldwell's depiction of the farmers in "Tobacco Road" is

characterized by extreme poverty, ignorance, and a sense of hopelessness. The characters struggle to make ends meet, living in abject poverty and facing constant hardships. The farmers are depicted as uneducated, superstitious, and trapped in a cycle of poverty from which they see no escape. The novel also explores themes of exploitation, as the farmers are taken advantage of by wealthier landowners and struggle to assert their own agency and dignity. Caldwell's portrayal of the farmers is unflinching and unsentimental, offering a raw and uncompromising look at the harsh realities of rural life during a difficult period in American history. Caldwell's portrayal of farmers in "Tobacco Road" highlights the cycle of poverty and despair that many rural families faced during the Depression era. The novel serves as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by those living in rural areas, and the harsh realities of life for farmers trying to eke out a living from the land.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Great Depression, beginning in 1929 and lasting through the 1930s, devastated the American economy, causing widespread unemployment and poverty. Concurrently, the Dust Bowl, a series of severe dust storms, wreaked havoc on the agricultural heartland, particularly in the Southern Plains. These events forced thousands of farmers off their land, leading to mass migrations and significant changes in the rural landscape. Caldwell wrote their seminal works during this era, capturing the essence of these hardships through their characters and narratives. Caldwell's depiction goes beyond economic hardship to explore the moral and cultural decay that accompanies prolonged poverty. The Lesters' interactions are often marked by ignorance, superstition, and a lack of ambition. Characters like Jeeter Lester embody a fatalistic acceptance of their circumstances, unable to break free from the cycle of poverty. This portrayal critiques the systemic neglect and cultural isolation that perpetuate such conditions, suggesting a deeper, more entrenched societal failure.

Tobacco Road is set in rural Georgia, several miles outside Augusta, Georgia during the worst years of the Great Depression. It depicts a family of poor white tenant farmers, the Lesters, as one of the many small Southern cotton farmers made redundant by the industrialization of production and the migration into cities. The main character of the novel is Jeeter Lester, an ignorant and sinful man who is redeemed by his love of the land and his faith in the fertility and promise of the soil. As it was mentioned above, it is an oversimplification to assume that Caldwell's goal was social efforts based on Caldwell's descriptions of living conditions. His descriptions look like scenes he has seen when travelling with his father, but these scenes are not unique to Caldwell's living state Georgia. Other writers recorded similar scenes from throughout the South and made them the theme of many 1930's texts that depicted the hard life of poor people and tenant farmers.

However, in his novels Caldwell described such scenes differently than other writers who were pointing out these issues sociologically. For example, Edmund Wilson documented awful conditions when he visited the South during the 1930's.

After some years, most critics agreed that Caldwell's 1932 novel, *Tobacco Road*, would be his first novel that would have "stature".¹ By the mid-1940's, they dismissed him as a serious writer, yet in 1945, he became "the leading bestseller novelist in the world".² By 1948, his books had sales in excess of 9,000,000 Copies, were translated "into different languages and were available in 28 countries". By 1965, there were "61,000,000 copies of all editions in print," and his novels had been "translated into 27 languages".³ During the rest of his career, sales of his novels decreased, but he published amount of writing throughout his life. As it was known from literature, he wrote 29 novels, two children's stories, one impressionistic prose-poem, 150 short stories, and twelve volumes of nonfiction, including pictorial documentaries, newspaper articles, reviews of books, and two autobiographies. His second autobiography, "With All my Might", was published two months before his death on April 11, 1987. As of 1999, his books had been translated into 43 languages with 80 million copies sold

As we know, *Tobacco Road* was adapted in Broadway stage production in 1933. But it was soon punished with obscenity by the New York Society for the Suppression of vice, as was *God's Little Acre*, published in the same year and also prohibited by New England censorship Counterpar, Boston's Watch and word Society.

Even though, after some years, many critics acknowledged that it is truly opened problems of agricultural life such as injustices and rude relationships between landowners and tenant farmers. Although Erskine Caldwell didn't worry about that because, he had known that the sociological reality on which art was based on, no one a book on these themes was definitive or enough to get a place among best-seller books.

The Jeeters' home is said at one point to be located on "the most desirable soil in the entire west-central part of Georgia", but other passages describe it as being close to the Savannah River and Augusta, which are in eastern Georgia. These references would appear to place their home in Richmond County, of which Augusta is the county seat. The county in which the Jeeters live is also said to be adjacent to Burke County, which Richmond County is. However, the county seat of the Jeeters' county is not Augusta but the fictional town of Fuller. The Jeeters are also said to live near the fictional town of McCoy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Another essential feature of the book is based on a rural reality and needed the attention of Depression America. Its true to emphasize, exaggerate, and, to use Caldwell's own word, "distortion" make it part of several literary traditions. According to critics we may distinguish his portraying

¹ Bledsoe, Erik. Erskine Caldwell: His Early Life and Works. Diss. Vanderbilt U, 1995. Ann Arbor: UM I. 1996 56:8, 3122A-23A. A I No. DA9541777.

² Bledsoe, Erik. Erskine Caldwell: His Early Life and Works. Diss. Vanderbilt U, 1995. Ann Arbor: UM I. 1996 56:8, 3122A-23A. A I No. DA9541777.

³ Collins, Carvel. Introduction. Erskine Caldwell's Men and Women: Twenty-Two Stories. New York: Signet-New American Library, 1962. 7-11.

characters into three types. First, its emphasis on raising of its characters, on their animalistic impulses and physical deformities, and on their inability to improve their situation places it in the naturalistic tradition. Second, given the brief information about Southern life but clearly stated position on the lack and greed of the Southern economic system shows a Marxian influence. Third, the use of fantasies, surrealistic situations, grotesque characters, and fragmented images places the novel in the contemporary tradition. Fourth, the use of rustic characters in the American humor for a more educated audience knows that the novel was written by using of humorist tradition. Taken this different styles, the traditional literary influences on the novel not only serve to destroy the reality of Caldwell's point of view but also make his original conception of the story all the more interesting and imaginative.

If we look through the given data using six characters and the writer portrayed the scenes with four other characters. Therefore, the few scenes in Caldwell's writings with this many characters were successfully handled. Carrying a bag of turnips that has taken him most of the day to get and return home with, Lov Bensey visits the Lesters with the hope of gaining insight into the behavior of his twelve-year-old wife Pearl, the Lesters' youngest child, who refuses to talk to him or sleep with him. He would not normally have risked carrying a bag of food into the Lesters' presence because the Lesters are hungry.

In a 1971 interview, Caldwell listed the chief motives of mankind, in order of priority, as the desire to satisfy hunger, and the desire for material fortune.¹ Given Lov's comparatively comfortable existence—he has a good job, a good house, and enough to eat — he has satisfied one of these needs. He takes the risk of losing the turnips to satisfy his hunger. The Lesters' hare lipped daughter, Ellie May, seduces him in the front yard, making it possible for her father to steal the bag of turnips. While a group of three Negroes watch in wonderment from the road, the whole Lester clan aids Jeeter, the family patriarch, in his theft, Elbe holding Lov down while her mother hits him over the head with a stick.

The bulk of the available evidence, then points to the first four chapters, has many complex implications and extraordinary suggestions, and it shows many of the literary specifics that the book contains. The novel is supported with the realistic details about hard time of southern life that distinguish Caldwell's southern works. Jeeter is patching rotten inner-tubes for a car that uses an empty lard can for a radiator. Food is so scarce that one might walk several miles for a sack of turnips. The weather-boarding on the Lesters' house is so old that it is falling off. Dude has to play with a lopsided baseball.

¹Broadwell, Elizabeth Pell, and Ronald Wesley Hoag. "A Writer First" An Interview with Erskine Caldwell." *The Georgia Review* 36.1 (1982):

Marriages occur between adults and children as young as twelve. Jeeter, even as he is starving to death, entertains a religious faith that the Lord will someday share his

bounty with the poor. The characters became such physical deformities and illnesses Caldwell wrote *Tobacco Road* in conflicting ways. On the one hand,

he stressed the events and the people which he had lived among, had been raised

with, and had come to know. According to his father's scientific approach to poverty, he creates characters directly tore al social problems. In a 1982 interview, for example, he offers this analysis of the Lesters: they "belonged to a class of people that had completely lost the ability to survive".

The poor whites simply lacked the necessary elements of nutrition.

They had serious illnesses which came up from habitual laziness. They really could not help themselves. On the other hand, he said that *Tobacco Road* is "a story of imaginary people in a realistic world".¹ In the same interview in which he provides a sociological analysis of his characters, he states that "all fiction is a distortion" and that the author reserves the right to tamper artistically with the materials of real life.

CONCLUSION

Erskine Caldwell's "Tobacco Road" offers compelling and complementary depictions of the problems faced by farmers during the Great Depression. Through his unique literary styles and perspectives, author illuminates the economic, social, and moral dimensions of agricultural hardship. While Caldwell's portrayal is a darker, satirical critique of rural stagnation. Together, this work provides a multifaceted understanding of the era's challenges and underscore the enduring relevance of farmers' struggles in contemporary society. As such, he continues to inspire empathy, reflection, and advocacy for more just and equitable agricultural policies. Caldwell's portrayal of farmers in "Tobacco Road" highlights the cycle of poverty and despair that many rural families faced during the Depression era. The novel serves as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by those living in rural areas, and the harsh realities of life for farmers trying to eke out a living from the land. Caldwell employs a unique blend of dark humor and tragedy to depict the Lesters' situation. This narrative technique serves to engage the reader while simultaneously highlighting the absurdity and sorrow of the characters' lives. The grotesque humor in "Tobacco Road" amplifies the tragedy of the Lesters' existence, creating a complex emotional response that prompts both laughter and reflection. This approach underscores the desperate measures the Lesters resort to, offering a satirical yet poignant critique of their socio-economic conditions.

REFERENCES:

¹ Collins, Carvel. Introduction. Erskine Caldwell's Men and Women: Twenty-Two Stories. New York: Signet-New American Library, 1962. 7-11.

1. Bledsoe, Erik. Erskine Caldwell: His Early Life and Works. Diss. Vanderbilt U, 1995. Ann Arbor: UM I. 1996 56:8, 3122A-23A. A I No. DA9541777.
3. Collins, Carvel. Introduction. Erskine Caldwell's Men and Women: Twenty-Two Stories. New York: Signet-New American Library, 1962. 7-11.
4. Broadwell, Elizabeth Pell, and Ronald Wesley Hoag. "A Writer First" An Interview with Erskine Caldwell." *The Georgia Review* 36.1 (1982):
5. Bandry, Michel. "Erskine Caldwell's Civilization's Freaks." *Pembroke Magazine* 11 (1979): 76-82.
6. Basso, Hamilton. "'Sunny South.'" *MacDonald* 38-39. Beach, Joseph Warren. *American Benedict*, Stewart H. "Gallic Light on Erskine Caldwell." *MacDonald* 255-61.
7. Bloom, Harold, ed. *Introduction Fiction 1920-1940*. New York: Macmillan, 1941.