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Bakalářská práce

Vztah hrdinů k přírodě v románech Johna
Steinbecka
Heroes Against Nature in John Steinbeck's
Novels

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Poděkování

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Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se bude věnovat tématice spojitosti lidské existence s přírodním prostředím v duchu tradice amerického naturalismu. Práce v úvodu nejprve stručně charakterizuje literární tradici amerického naturalismu od počátků až po 30. léta 20. století a poté na základě teoretických předpokladů začlení do tohoto literárního kontextu dílo Johna Steinbecka. Jádrem práce bude literární analýza kratších autorových próz (*To a God Unknown*, *The Pastures of Heaven*, *Of Mice and Men*). Práce se v závěru pokusí o postižení autorovy symboliky prostředí ve vztahu k hrdinům jeho prózy.

Abstract

This bachelor thesis focuses on the connection between human existence and natural environment according to the tradition of American naturalism. In the beginning, the thesis briefly characterizes literary tradition of American naturalism from its beginnings to the 1930s and then it will integrate John Steinbeck's work into this context. The main focus of this bachelor thesis will be a literary analysis of author's shorter prose (*To a God Unknown*, *The Pastures of Heaven*, *Of Mice and Men*). In the end the thesis will try to explain Steinbeck's symbolism of nature in relationship with the heroes of his prose.

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Introduction

John Steinbeck belongs to one of the most significant writers of American naturalism. Although he was often criticized and misunderstood his works belong to one of the most unforgettable ones. He shows simple characters in connection with nature which plays the dominant role in his works. He usually used places he knew and places that were important to him as settings for his writings. His native landscape, California, plays the dominant role in his writings.

This bachelor thesis focuses on analysis of Steinbeck's three pieces of shorter prose: *The Pastures of Heaven*, *To a God Unknown* and *Of Mice and Men*. John Steinbeck's biography is introduced in the first chapter of the thesis. The second chapter shortly deals with John Steinbeck's style. The third chapter of the thesis focuses on the tradition of American naturalism from its beginnings to the 1930s and the following chapter introduces the writers of American naturalism. The second part of the thesis focuses on the analysis of John Steinbeck's works *The Pastures of Heaven*, *To a God Unknown* and *Of Mice and Men*.

1. John Steinbeck's Biography

John Ernst Steinbeck was born on February 27, 1902 in Salinas, California. He was the only son of John Ernst Steinbeck and Olive Hamilton Steinbeck. He had three sisters, Elizabeth, Esther and Mary. Steinbeck's father served as treasurer for Monterey County. Steinbeck's mother, Olive Hamilton Steinbeck, was an educator in several one-room schoolhouses. She introduced John Steinbeck to the myths and legends of Western literature.¹ Amongst his favourite books were *Crime and Punishment*, *Paradise Lost* and *Le Morte d' Arthur*. He also loved to read the King James version of the Bible.²

When Steinbeck was a boy, he fell in love with the Monterey Peninsula. He was also charmed by Corral de Tierra which lies just of Salinas, midway between coast and valley. He found the material for his dozen volumes of California fiction in the Salinas and neighbouring valleys, along the shores of Monterey Bay, in the Corral de Tierra and on the Big Sur.³ As a child, Steinbeck spent summers by the sea in Pacific Grove and on uncle Tom Hamilton's ranch near King City. He enjoyed roaming in fields and learned to love gardening.⁴

In 1919, Steinbeck matriculated at Stanford University but in 1925 he abandoned his efforts to earn a college degree and moved to New York City, where he hoped to make serious headway in his writing career. During the six school years, he worked as store clerk, cotton picker or ranch hand.⁵

¹ SCHULTZ, Jeffrey D a Luchen LI. *Critical Companion to John Steinbeck: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Facts On File, c2005. ISBN 0816043000., p. 4

² GOODMAN, Michael. *John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men*. Woodbury, N.Y.: Barron's, c1984. ISBN 0812034317.

³ WESTERN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION (U.S.). *A Literary History of the American West*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, c1987. ISBN 087565021X.

⁴STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and Stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1-883011-01-9.

⁵ SCHULTZ, Jeffrey D a Luchen LI., p. 4-5

*“From these work experiences, Steinbeck developed a deep appreciation and sympathy for the common labourer, which would prove seminal to his great works of the 1930s.”*⁶
His first novel, *Cup of Gold*, was published in 1929 but it was not very successful.

The year 1930 was a turning point for Steinbeck. In January he married Carol Henning and he also met Edward Ricketts, with whom he developed a deep and abiding friendship. Edward Ricketts was a marine biologist in Monterey, California and also stimulated Steinbeck’s interest in biology and science.

In the midst of the Great Depression, Steinbeck had minor success with his writing. He published *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932) and *To a God Unknown* (1933) but the books did not achieve commercial success. “Steinbeck’s first popular success came with *Tortilla Flat*, his collection of stories about the paisanos of Old Monterey, the structure of which springs from Steinbeck’s affection for Malory’s Arthurian cycle. This is the first novel in which Steinbeck employed the Monterey Peninsula as setting and backdrop.”⁷

His second novel, *To a God Unknown*, is a novel which chronicles the life of Joseph Wayne. “*To a God Unknown* is one of Steinbeck’s only novels in which the protagonist looks inward, and that looking is surely more mystical than it is psychological. The novel’s importance lies in Steinbeck’s presentation of his developing holistic world view and his belief in man’s almost mystical ability to break through to an understanding of that wholeness.”⁸

“The Pastures of Heaven is a book about clerks who try but fail to break through into heroism. The novel consists of a group of loosely related stories about the residents of the Corral de Tierra. These are simple people in retreat from complex urban environments which limit human freedom. But because they are shrouded in personal

⁶ SCHULTZ, Jeffrey D a Luchen LI. *Critical Companion to John Steinbeck: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Facts On File, c2005. ISBN 0816043000., p.5

⁷WESTERN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION (U.S.). *A Literary History of the American West*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, c1987. ISBN 087565021X., p. 429

⁸*A Literary History of the American West.*, p. 429

illusions and self-deceptions, they are unable to adjust to the simple patterns of valley life. They are dreamers whose fantasies are destroyed by the hard facts of reality.”⁹

Steinbeck wrote most of the fiction for which he will be remembered during the 1930s. His acknowledged masterpiece, *The Grapes of Wrath*, was published during the last year of that decade. It is a story about a group of farmers who pursue a dream of prosperity in the lush fruit orchards of California. John Steinbeck wanted Americans to understand what the collapse of rural America really meant to those who suffered the most during the Great Depression. Although *The Grapes of Wrath* are considered to be his masterpiece, John Steinbeck himself considered *East of Eden* to be his best work. In 1936 *In Dubious Battle* was published and a year later, in 1937, *Of Mice and Men* was released.¹⁰ In 1942, *The Moon is Down*, a work about the invasion of a small Scandinavian village, was published. In 1945 *Cannery Row* was published.

In 1939 his marriage with Carol had begun to disintegrate. He also met a girl, Gwyndolyn Conger, who ended his marriage to Carol and became his second wife. In 1941 John Steinbeck moved to New York together with Gwyn and promised to marry her as soon as the divorce was final. He married Gwyn in 1943. In August, 1944 their son, Thomas Steinbeck, was born. In October, they travelled back to California and purchased a house in Monterey. In 1946, their second son, John Steinbeck, was born. In 1948 they divorced and in that same year, his best friend, Ed Ricketts died, which was devastating news for Steinbeck. In 1949 he had fallen in love Elaine Anderson Scott. They were married in December, 1950.¹¹

In 1949, John Steinbeck began to work on *Burning Bright*. It is an allegorical play-novelette which became one of the least successful of all of his works. During 1950, Steinbeck was more productive than he had been in years. He was writing his memoir

⁹WESTERN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION (U.S.). *A Literary History of the American West*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, c1987. ISBN 087565021X., p. 430

¹⁰*A Literary History of the American West.*, p. 430

¹¹SCHULTZ, Jeffrey D a Luchen LI. *Critical Companion to John Steinbeck: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Facts On File, c2005. ISBN 0816043000., p. 13

of Ed Ricketts and renewed his work on "Salinas Valley," which would be renamed *East of Eden*. In 1962 he was awarded The Nobel Prize for literature.

In October 1959, Steinbeck was treated for a severe kidney infection, and then in December, he suffered a minor stroke. "On December 20, 1968, with Elaine lying beside him on a hospital bed in their apartment in New York, John Steinbeck died. His remains were cremated, then buried in the Hamilton family plot in Salinas, California."¹²

¹² SCHULTZ, Jeffrey D a Luchen LI. *Critical Companion to John Steinbeck: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Facts On File, c2005. ISBN 0816043000., p. 16

2. John Steinbeck's style

In writing, Steinbeck wanted to engage his readers. "By selecting the proper plot, emotion, character, and tempo, he enabled readers to become part of the story. He once wrote, "*I want the participation of my reader. I want him to be so involved that it will be his story.*"¹³

He believed that literature could unite people and help them overcome their fears and troubles. John Steinbeck occupied quite a controversial position. His works have been widely read and have achieved wide popularity. On the other hand they have received heavy criticism. He was one of the most misunderstood American writers.

Some of Steinbeck's dominant themes were celebration of countryside and nature, which often bordered on cult and adoration, and the irony of fate. He was also interested in social issues, motivations and responsibility.¹⁴

Steinbeck's sensitivity towards nature can be found in his writings, particularly *The Red Pony*, *The Pastures of Heaven*, and *Of Mice and Men*. His natural settings are places of both life and death, places that allow human beings to enter them but refuse to be dominated by human beings.¹⁵

¹³ SCHULTZ, Jeffrey D a Luchen LI. *Critical Companion to John Steinbeck: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Facts On File, c2005. ISBN 0816043000., p. 7

¹⁴ PROCHÁZKA, Martin. *Lectures on American Literature*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, nakladatelství Karolinum, 2002. ISBN 8024603586.

¹⁵ GOODMAN, Michael. *John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men*. Woodbury, N.Y.: Barron's, c1984. ISBN 0812034317.

3. American naturalism

Literary naturalism is a movement that developed in the late nineteenth century. It derives mainly from a biological model. It was influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, which is based on his theory of natural selection. Darwin also put emphasis upon theories of heredity and environment.¹⁶ Darwin's theory was also based on the doctrine of the "survival of the fittest". The naturalists used scientific methods of writing based on observation and experiment.

"Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) was a culmination in the field of biology of the naturalistic temper of the period, presenting a hypothesis towards which many streams of thought and investigation had been converging."¹⁷

Before Darwin's ideas were available in literary form, they were transformed by Emile Zola in his *Le Roman experimental* (1880). Emile Zola is a source of naturalistic theory. He was also a model for many novelists and he was a source of critical method in the interpretation of fiction.

According to Donald Pizer (1982), naturalism is a continuation of realism. The difference is the philosophical orientation of the naturalists. He also claimed, that naturalism is above all social realism laced with the idea of determinism. He claimed that we live in a biologically and socially conditioned world and that it is up to the novelist to demonstrate this truth. Realism and naturalism flourished earlier in the European countries and American writers were stimulated by British and French models.

The roots of naturalism can be found in the idea of scientific determinism, which came in the late nineteenth century, which was connected with rapid social changes, such as industrialization and urbanization, and the rise of new scientific and philosophical ideas that threw traditional religious beliefs into question.

¹⁶PIZER, Donald (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism: Howells to London*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Cambridge Companions to Literature. ISBN 0521438764.

¹⁷ WALCUTT, Charles Child. *American Literary Naturalism, a Divided Stream*. 3rd. University of Minnesota, 1956. ISBN 0816658854., p. 7

The naturalists were convinced that individuals' lives and characters are governed and determined by natural laws and forces, such as social conditions, the environment, and heredity.¹⁸

"In the nineteenth century man believed in a divine plan that was to be found in nature. Nature was the physical expression of divine reason, and in its laws revealed the forms and purposes of God."¹⁹

According to Walcutt (1956), literary naturalism moves among three patterns of ideas: the religion of reason-nature, revealed in an enraptured contemplation of Process; the attack on the dualist values of the past; the recognition and slowly growing fear of natural forces that man might study but apparently could not control.

"The major themes and motifs are determinism, survival, violence, and taboo. The theme of determinism, which is of course basic, carries the idea that natural law and socioeconomic influences are more powerful than the human will. The theme of survival grows out of the application of determinism to biological competition; the notion that survival is the supreme motive in animal life provides a point of view from which all emotion, motivation, and conflict may be approached; it fastens man to his physical roots. The theme of violence grows with the transfer of emphasis from tradition (ultimately supernatural tradition) to survival. Animal survival is a matter of violence, of force against force; and with this theme there emerge various motifs having to do with the expression of force and violence and with the exploration of man's capacities for such violence."²⁰

According to Walcutt (1956), naturalistic novel can be optimistic or pessimistic. Some critics think that the essence of naturalism is "pessimistic determinism", which express resignation or despair at the spectacle of man's impotence in a mechanistic universe. They claim that naturalistic novels reveal a "pessimistic determinism" and

¹⁸ John Steinbeck, Frank Norris and Literary Naturalism. PANESAR, Gurdip. *Critical Insights* [online]. s. 59-60 [cit. 2016-03-08]. Dostupné z: http://salempress.com/store/pdfs/steinbeck_critical_insights.pdf

¹⁹ WALCUTT, Charles Child. *American Literary Naturalism, a Divided Stream*. 3rd. University of Minnessota, 1956. ISBN 0816658854., p. 12

²⁰ WALCUTT, Charles Child., p. 20

concludes that the materialism of science must be a philosophy of gloom and despair and that no novel can express any social purpose. The more helpless the character, the stronger the proof of determinism. The others claim that the naturalistic novel is informed with a bright and cheerful affirmation of progress – of man’s ability through science to control his environment and achieve Utopia. They claim that science is essentially optimistic and concludes that the naturalistic novel must express an optimistic social purpose.

“The forms which the naturalistic novel assumes *are clinical, panoramic, slice-of-life, stream of consciousness, and chronicle of despair.*” ²¹

The naturalists were attracted to Herbert Spencer’s evolutionary synthesis, which encouraged a melodramatic perception of the world. Spencer’s paradigm tends to polarize the subjects of inquiry – into the Knowable and the Unknowable, stability and instability, homogeneity and heterogeneity, evolution and dissolution, the rich and the poor, supply and demand, science and faith, progress and poverty. The naturalists adopted melodramatic plots and narrative strategies to affect their reader’s emotions the better to convey the drama of the impingement of science upon human activity.

Frank Norris recognized in “The Novel with a Purpose” that the naturalistic novel is not a novel that shows us something; it is a novel that “proves something, draws conclusions from a whole congeries of forces, social tendencies, race impulses, devotes itself not to a study of men but of man.”²² As a literature with a purpose, to adapt Norris’s phrase, naturalism often employs the dichotomies and dramatic techniques of melodrama to articulate its thesis.

“Reading the works of the American Naturalists we often find a great degree of emotional involvement in the lives and passions of their characters, as for instance in

²¹WALCUTT, Charles Child. *American Literary Naturalism, a Divided Stream*. 3rd. University of Minnesota, 1956. ISBN 0816658854., p. 21

²² NEWLIN, Keith. *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, c2011. ISBN 9780195368932., p. 10

the hero of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* we discover chance and chaos instead of determinism, and we can even find apologies for *romance* as an imaginative method of writing which does not have to be based on the laws of objectivity and probability (as for instance in Frank Norris's critical essays)."²³

²³PROCHÁZKA, Martin. *Lectures on American Literature*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, nakladatelství Karolinum, 2002. ISBN 8024603586., p. 126

4. American naturalists

To the principal authors of American naturalism belong Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser and Jack London. These are the naturalists of the turn of 19th and 20th century.

All American Naturalists began their careers as journalists and they were used to keeping an eye on the details of social life. Some, like Stephen Crane, noticed violent or taboo aspects of low life, and they had difficulties with censorship. Others, like Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser and Jack London were close to the efforts of contemporary radical journalism.

Frank Norris started to write popular romances set in San Francisco. But he also dealt with serious individual and social problems of the booming capitalist society. In *McTeague* (1899) Norris describes the individual tragedy of a middle-class marriage caused by atavism and the desire for gold and riches. In *The Octopus*, which is the first part of the unfinished "Wheat Trilogy", he managed to grasp the functioning of the inhuman and impersonal social mechanism. In this well-researched novel he deals with the vain fight of the prosperous wheat farmers in San Joaquín Valley against the railroad company. He focuses on the collective resistance against the impersonal, chaotic forces of social development.

According to Norris, people are never entirely in control of the social powers of finance, industry and technology. Frank Norris wrote in 1896, that terrible things must happen to the characters of the naturalistic tale, and so it has been ever since.

Other American naturalist was Stephen Crane. He was attracted by the aspects of violence in the life of individuals, and by their fight for survival in the inhuman society and nature. His most important work is *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), which was the first modern war novel. It was written without any authentic war experience. Crane deals with the most important moral problem of the modern war, which is the absence of traditional heroism and its substitution with anxiety and fear. To his other works belong for example *The Open Boat* or *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*.

Contrary to Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser focuses on the failure of the individual to come to terms with the impersonal power of the chaotic social, as well as biological, machine. This is true of his novel *An American tragedy*, where the hero, a poor boy from Kansas City, tries to evade his responsibility for the death of a child in an automobile accident. Dreiser's best work is his first novel, *Sister Carrie*, written in 1900. *Sister Carrie* was important at least in two respects. First, for its concentration on the desires, dreams and fears of average Americans, and second, for its becoming the cause of Dreiser's long-lasting fight with censorship. The book was suppressed because of its "immorality" and the novel could appear only after seven years.

Other American naturalist was Jack London. His works show at least two ways out of the universal chaos of the naturalists. Sometimes he searches for a utopian golden age modeled after his desires and sometimes he projects a return to nature. To his works belong *The Sea-Wolf*, *The Iron Heel* or *The Valley of the Moon*. London's most important work is his animal tale, the novel entitled *The Call of the Wild* written in 1903. This work puts at stake the values of civilization and humanity. In this animal story the notion of a chaotic mechanical universe is discarded and a new set of values, based on the otherness of the animal world is discovered.²⁴

To the naturalists of the 20th century belong for example William Styron, known for his novel *Lie Down in Darkness* (1951) or Norman Mailer with his novel *The Naked and the Dead* (1948). Amongst the others, Sherwood Anderson, John Dos Passos, James T. Farrell or William Faulkner could be mentioned.

²⁴ PROCHÁZKA, Martin. *Lectures on American literature*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, nakladatelství Karolinum, 2002. ISBN 8024603586.

5. The Pastures of Heaven

The Pastures of Heaven is Steinbeck's first mature work. It is a collection of interrelated stories which was published in 1932.

The book consists of the prologue, which deals with the origin of the name of The Pastures of Heaven and initiates the central themes of the volume. In the prologue, John Steinbeck also wants to remind the readers that the lands once owned by Native Americans were taken over by other people. The prologue is followed by ten interconnected stories which are followed by epilogue, which provides the conclusion for the ten stories.

5.1. Prologue

Around 1776, a Spanish corporal was sent to the Carmel Valley, to bring back a group of converted Indians, who abandoned religion during the night and left their huts, when the Carmelo Mission of Alta California was being built. In the late afternoon of a second day, the Spanish corporal followed a small deer. *"In a few minutes he arrived at the top of the ridge, and there he stopped, stricken with wonder at what he saw – a long valley floored with green pasturage on which a herd of deer browsed. Perfect live oaks grew in the meadow of the lovely place, and the hills hugged it jealously against the fog and the wind."*²⁵ The Spanish corporal was shocked by such a beauty and said: *"Here are the green pastures of Heaven to which our Lord leadeth us."* This explains the title of the book. The name he gave to the valley in the hills remains there. It is known as *Las Pasturas del Cielo*. There is also a biblical reference as the beautiful valley might represent the garden of Eden.

²⁵ STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and Stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1883011019., p. 5

The Spanish corporal always wanted to go back, but he died of pox and never had the chance to return to the Pastures of Heaven. He was not able to fulfil his dream.

This sets up the pattern of unfulfilled dreams and hopes, which connects all the residents of the Pastures of Heaven. In the beginning all inhabitants are happy but in the end they all end up unhappy and desperate because of events that they cannot control and they are not strong enough to face the reality.

John Steinbeck wrote in the prologue that the families of the valley lived there prosperously and at peace, which is not completely true, because the inhabitants are not able to fulfil their dreams although they live in such a beautiful valley. There is a theme of the American Dream which was one of the main topics for John Steinbeck as he was influenced by world's economic crisis.

John Steinbeck might have wanted to suggest, that there is a curse on the valley as the punishment for the treatment of the Native Americans, which now influences the lives of its inhabitants. There is a contrast between pagan belief and Christianity which was also typical theme for John Steinbeck.

5.2. Ten individual stories

The first story is connected with the Battle farm. Although it was a good land, no one wanted to live there. To the people of the Pastures of Heaven the Battle farm was cursed and haunted. Two generations of Battles had lived on the farm. The first owner of the farm was George Battle, who founded the farm in 1863. His wife, Miss Myrtle Cameron gave him a son, John Battle, and he became the second owner of the farm. But John Battle focused more on a struggle with devils and he did not care about the farm. One day, he was killed by a snake and no one wanted to live there ever since. After a few years, Mustrovics came to the Battle farm. They were quite mysterious and they did not talk to anyone. One day, they simply disappeared and no one has ever seen them again. The Battle farm was uninhabited again. The last owner of the farm was Bert Munroe. He completely reconstructed the house and moved in with wife and three children. Bert Munroe has been in many businesses, but every one turned out bad. He believed he was

cursed, because he always had such a bad luck. When he came to the Pastures of Heaven, he knew that the curse is gone.

He became an enthusiastic farmer and soon became a part of the valley. Bert told T.B. Allen: *“Well, I just happened to think, maybe my curse and the farm’s curse got to fighting and killed each other off.”*²⁶

The Munroes are central family in the Pastures. Bert Munroe is the most important character in The Pastures of Heaven. He appears in a variety of stories and always influences the action by his presence. The other members of Munroe family also have an impact on the residents of the valley. With the Munroes always comes a disaster, which is not always caused by them because people’s lives are predestined by forces they cannot influence and control.

The main character of the second story is Edward Wicks. He lived in the Pastures of Heaven with his wife and beautiful daughter. Everyone in the valley thought that Edward was tricky and rich. He liked to pretend that he was laying money in securities. The people of the valley called him “Shark” Wicks because of that. The truth is, that Shark Wicks was not rich at all. When Edward’s daughter Alice was born, she was extraordinarily beautiful. Edward Wicks considered her as a treasure that he needs to protect. Although Alice was very beautiful, she was not very clever and that made her father even more protective. Edward’s obsession was his daughter’s virginity. As she grew older, he was worried, that she could get involved with someone. For Edward Wicks it would mean that his daughter is no longer precious to him. When Munroes moved to the valley, Edward was very suspicious of their son Jimmie. He forbade his daughter to ever talk to him or meet him. One day, when he was away on a trip to a family funeral, his wife took Alice to a dance at the schoolhouse, where she met Jimmie Munroe. Jimmie asked her to dance with him and later they kissed. Edward Wicks found out this information from T.B. Allen as soon as he arrived back home. He immediately went to find Jimmie. Unfortunately he took a gun although he did not want to kill or hurt

²⁶ STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and Stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1883011019., p. 16

him and was caught by the deputy sheriff who thought he came to shoot Jimmie. He could not jail him, but he put him under bond to keep the peace.

He had to pay ten thousand dollar bond and everyone found out, that he lied, that he is poor and did not have any money. Edward decided to sell his ranch and leave the valley. It was again the role of coincidence and unfortunate events that destroyed Edward's happiness.

Another story deals with Tularecito. Tularecito was found as a baby in the sage bush by Pancho, a Mexican Indian who worked for Franklin Gomez. He decided to take him home and take care of him, although his origin was very strange. His name, Tularecito, which means "little frog", was given to him despite his unusual appearance. Pancho always believed, that Tularecito is not a human being. Tularecito was mentally retarded, but he was very strong and could do all the work on the farm. He also had a gift. He could carve animals from sandstone. If anyone broke one of his creations he became furious and violent. When he started to go to school, Miss Martin, the teacher, discovered his talent and told him to draw animals around the blackboard. When his drawings were removed from the blackboard he became furious. Miss Martin left her teaching position at the end of the school year. A new teacher, Miss Morgan, read the pupils interesting stories every afternoon. When she started to read fairy tales about gnomes, Tularecito believed he is one of those mythical creatures and decided to find them. He desired to return to his own people. He dug a hole in Bert Munroe's orchard to find the gnomes, but Bert filled up the hole and Tularecito attacked him savagely. After that, Tularecito is sent to the asylum for the criminal insane and is no longer allowed to live in the community. Tularecito has lost his freedom and Franklin Gomez has lost his son.

Tularecito is one of the examples of mentally retarded and deformed characters. Mentally retarded people are often a topic in naturalism, especially in the works of John Steinbeck (*Of Mice and Men*). Other mentally ill characters who appear in *The Pastures of Heaven* are Manfred Munroe and Hilda van Deventer.

The fifth story deals with a widow named Helen van Deventer and her daughter Hilda. As John Steinbeck wrote, Helen van Deventer is a woman who “*hungered for tragedy and life had lavishly heaped it upon her.*”²⁷ Six months after her husband’s death, she gave birth to her daughter Hilda. Hilda had a violent temper and was not completely well in her mind, but Helen did not want to take her to the psychiatrist and insisted on taking care of her by herself. As Hilda grew older, her condition was getting worse. She started to lie, claimed she saw things which were not real and even tried to run away. Helen decided to move to the Pastures of Heaven and peacefully take care of her daughter. Bert Munroe wanted to welcome the newest inhabitants of the Pastures. On his way to their house, he heard a scream and saw Hilda behind the barred window. She tried to tell him some lies and wanted Bert to rescue her but he realised the seriousness of the situation. One day, Hilda escaped to find her groom and marry him. Helen took a shotgun and went out to find her daughter. The other day, Hilda was found dead, with “*her head in the stream and the gun beside her.*”²⁸ No one suspected Helen for Hilda’s murder due to Hilda’s mental issues.

Although Helen van Deventer came to the Pastures of Heaven to live there with her daughter in peace, she realised she could never find peace as long as her daughter lived with her. She was not able to face the reality and kill her own daughter. Killing someone out of mercy or out of jealousy is a parallel motif which can be found also in *Of Mice and Men*.

Another individual story is about Junius Maltby and his son Robbie. Junius worked in San Francisco when his doctor recommended him to move to a warm and dry climate because of his health problems. Junius decided to move to the Pastures of Heaven in order to recover. He went to live on the farm of the widow Quaker, whom he later married. After his wife and her two sons died of influenza he had to raise his new born son Robbie all by himself. Robbie was a bright child, but he was not like other children despite the fact that Junius never treated him like a little boy.

²⁷ STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and Stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1883011019., p. 47

²⁸STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.), p. 61

Junius and Robbie lived almost like animals or savages. They did not wear any shoes or proper clothes but they were happy this way. Junius did not even send Robbie to school, but in the end he was forced to go. Although Robbie was different than his classmates, they accepted him very well. They enjoyed playing games with him and even started to imitate him. One day, the school board decided to help Robbie. Miss Munroe bought him some new clothes he could wear to school. Miss Molly Morgan, the teacher, warned them not to give him anything but they did not listen. She knew it could embarrass him. When Robbie was presented with the new clothes, he ran away. He realised he was poor for the first time. Junius realised that the boy should not be brought up in poverty and cannot live like an animal anymore. He decided to leave the Pastures of Heaven and move back to San Francisco. This story also shows a parallel between human and animal life, which is a typical feature of naturalism.

“The events in the life of Junius Maltby also relate to the story of Tularecito in the themes of the child undone by compulsory attendance at school and the destruction of the individual by demands for social conformity.”²⁹ Again, happiness of the Maltbys is ruined by a member of the Munroe family.

Another story is about the Lopez sisters. After their father’s death, Rosa and Maria Lopez had to decide what to do for a living. They did not have a good soil and practically nothing would grow there. One day, Rosa came with an idea to make tortillas and enchiladas and sell them to the people of the Pastures of Heaven. They prepared everything for their business and were convinced that it would work. Unfortunately, their business was not very successful. One day, Rosa gave herself to one customer, to encourage him in buying enchiladas. After that, she asked for forgiveness of the Mother Virgin and Santa Rosa. Maria supported her sister as she always did and decided to encourage their customers as well. From then on, they sold enough tortillas and enchiladas to keep food in the kitchen and buy some new clothes. Even though they were encouraging the customers with sexual favours, they remained religious.

²⁹ STEINBECK, John a James NAGEL. *The Pastures of Heaven*. New York.: Penguin Books, 1995. ISBN 0140187480., p. xxiv

Soon, the people of the Pastures started to spread rumours about the Lopez sisters being bad women. One day, when Maria was on her way to buy some supplies in Monterey, she gave a ride to Allen Hueneker and was seen by Mr. and Mrs. Munroe. After that, the sheriff came to Rosa and informed her about a complaint that he received. They were accused of being prostitutes and had to close their business. Maria and Rosa decided to leave the valley, move to San Francisco and make living as prostitutes. The Lopez sisters were happy but again, it was the intervention of the Munroes what destroyed their happiness and stopped them from fulfilling their dream in the valley.

Naturalistic themes and motifs which can be found in this story are survival and heredity. Rosa and Maria had to do something to survive and to have something to eat and wear and decided to cook tortillas as their mother did. They continued in their mother's legacy. The topic of prostitution was typical for the naturalists. It was caused by social crisis and poor living conditions.

Another story is about a young schoolteacher Molly Morgan. She was introduced in two previous stories about Tularecito and Robbie Maltby. The character of Miss Molly Morgan could be based on John Steinbeck's mother, who was also a schoolteacher. Miss Molly Morgan came to the Pastures of Heaven to become a new schoolteacher. After her arrival, she came to the house of John Whiteside for an interview and when she was accepted as a new teacher she started to live in their house. During the interview Molly talked about her past. Her father worked as a traveling salesman and did not spent much time with the family. Every time he returned home, Molly and her two brothers were excited to see him. When Molly was twelve years old, her father left for a business trip and never returned home again. Their mother said that he must have been dead but Molly and her brothers refused to believe it. They believed he was having some great adventure and had a good reason for not coming back. After high school, Molly entered Teachers' College in San Jose to get a degree and after getting her diploma she was sent to the Pastures. Molly became very popular and respectable person in the valley and she even attended schoolboard meetings.

One day on a meeting of the schoolboard, Bert Munroe was telling the others about his new farm hand. It was an old, dirty, drunk man who wanted a job. As Bert Munroe talked about him, Molly recognized her father. She decided to leave the valley immediately because she did not want to meet him.

The main theme in this story is disillusionment. Molly wanted to remember her father as a great man who lived beautifully somewhere in the world. Bert Munroe destroyed her illusions and idea of her father and Molly was not able to deal with the idea of facing him. She could not handle the reality.

Another individual story deals with the character of Raymond Banks, who lived on the most admired farm in the valley. Raymond had a lot of chickens and ducks and knew how to kill them quickly so that no animal would suffer. The boys from the valley liked to visit Raymond's farm and watched him killing the chickens. He explained them, how to kill them properly, but never let them try it. For the boys it was a form of an excitement. Raymond Banks had an old friend from high school, who later became the warden at San Quentin prison. Few times a year, Raymond was invited to be a witness at an execution. The execution represented an excitement for Raymond, the same as the execution of chickens represented an excitement for the boys in the valley. *"Raymond didn't think of the condemned any more than he thought of the chicken when he pressed the blade into its brain."*³⁰ One day, Bert Munroe asked Raymond if he could take him to watch the execution. Raymond got permission to take Bert with him, but in the end Bert changed his mind and backed away. He was worried that he could not stop thinking about the execution after seeing it. He tried to explain his decision to Raymond but he got angry. He was thinking about what Bert told him and in the end he rejected Ed's invitation to another execution.

If Bert Munroe had not said anything about the execution, Raymond would never have thought of it as about anything wrong. It was again Munroe's fault that destroyed

³⁰ STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and Stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1883011019., p. 114

something that was important for Raymond. Execution of the condemned and execution of chickens represents the parallel between death of a human and animal's death.³¹

Last but one individual story is about Pat Humbert. Pat lived with his parents who were old and often dissatisfied with everything. They dictated Pat what to do and were mean to him. Despite their complaints about life they lived a long time. After they passed away, Pat was haunted by their death and could not get rid of the memories of them. They still had power over him. Pat did not feel comfortable in their house and decided to lock the door into a sitting room, where his parents used to spend most of their time. Although he locked the door he did not feel better and could not get the image of the room out of his head. He tried to keep himself busy by working on the farm but it was not enough. For ten years, Pat was constantly seeking for a company of other people in order not to stay alone in the house. *"In spite of his craving for company, Pat never became a part of any group he joined."*³² One day, Mae Munroe admired a rose growing by Pat's house. Pat heard her saying that she would like to see the inside of the house when the outside is so beautiful. After that, Pat became obsessed with the idea of a beautiful house and decided to start a reconstruction to impress Mae. After years, Pat overcame his fear. He opened the locked parlour, destroyed everything that was in there and begun redecorating the room. He worked always in the night so that no one would know. After he finished his work, Pat wanted to ask Mae to come but was too shy to do it. One day, he finally found courage to invite her and went to the Munroe's house, where everyone was celebrating. Bert Munroe explained him that Mae and Bill Whiteside would get married. Pat was disappointed and did not want to return to his house again because of the ghosts of his parents. Even though Pat destroyed everything in the sitting room and it looked completely different, Pat was still haunted by the memories and by his past. Pat did not leave the Pastures as most of the other inhabitants. He is determined to stay there and live alone.

³¹ The parallel between animal death and human death is the same as in Sherwood Anderson's short story *The Egg*.

³² STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and Stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1883011019., p. 132

The last story of the cycle is about Richard Whiteside and his family. Richard Whiteside came to the Pastures of Heaven to build a house where all future generations of Whitesides would live. He felt strong responsibility towards his descendants. Once he said to one of his neighbours: *"I've come to stay. My children and their children and theirs will live on this house. There will be a great many Whitesides born here, and a great many will die here."*³³ Unfortunately, Richard's wife Alicia gave him only one son and could not have any more children. Richard's son, John Whiteside, felt the same responsibility to keep the family bloodline as his father did. Richard read to him works of great authors and taught him everything he knew. To John, the house was a symbol of the family and after his father's death it was his responsibility to keep the legacy of the Whitesides. Same as Richard Whiteside, John and his wife Willa had only one son. His name was William but was called Bill. John tried to read him but Bill did not pay attention. He was different than his father and grandfather. He did not feel such a responsibility towards his descendants and did not consider their house as the symbol of family and as a place where he needs to stay. One day, he announced that he is going to marry Mae Munroe and that they do not want to stay in the valley but want to live in Monterey. They did not want to farm the land and continue the dynasty in the Whiteside house. Although John Whiteside did not like it, he hoped Bill would come back one day.

In the end, Richard's and John's dream is ruined as their house burned down when John and Bert Munroe wanted to burn the brush. John knew that his dream will never be fulfilled and did not even try to stop the fire and save his house. In the end he decided to leave the Pastures and live with his son and his wife in Monterey.

Dominant themes in this story are heredity and ancestry. All men of the Whiteside family wanted to establish a place for future generations but were not able to do that. It represents the collapse of the American dream. They are connected with some family curse as all of them were the only children and did not have more children than one. The history repeats itself when the house built by Richard Whiteside burns down because the house built by his father burned too.

³³ STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1883011019., p. 143

5.3. Epilogue

In a short epilogue, there are people on a sight-seeing tour. The driver of the bus stopped on the same ridge where the Spanish corporal stopped centuries ago. The people from the bus were looking down into the Pastures of Heaven and were thinking how beautiful it could be to live there. They saw the valley as a peaceful place which is good for farming and promises a good life. They did not know anything about its history and about the curse that lies upon the valley and that affected all its previous settlers.

The prologue shows the distance of the narrator from the past, which no longer limits the future inhabitants. However, heredity may still lie on the local people.

6. To a God Unknown

To a God Unknown is Steinbeck's second novel which was published in 1933. This novel focuses on man's relationship to nature as well as on a conflict of religious belief. Many biblical references, myths and symbols can be found in the novel. In *To a God Unknown* dominates a sense of primeval magic, as the main character converts to pagan nature worship.³⁴ With *To a God Unknown*, Steinbeck expressed his belief that only gods, kings, and heroes are worth writing about.³⁵

The main character of the novel is Joseph Wayne who could be described as god-like stature. Joseph, who lived with his father and three brothers wanted to leave his homestead and start his own living in a valley called Nuestra Señora in central California. He had a hunger for his own land. Before he left his home in Vermont, his father gave him a blessing and told him:

*"You're not the oldest, Joseph, but I've always thought of you as the one to have the blessing. Thomas and Burton are good men, good sons, but I've always intended the blessing for you, so you could take my place. I don't know why. There's something more strong in you than in your brothers, Joseph; more sure and inward."*³⁶

This passage shows that Joseph was a chosen one although he was not the first born son. He has the strongest connection with his father. After he left, he somehow felt that something wrong has happened with his father and a few days later his brother sent him a letter announcing that their father passed away. Eventually, all three brothers, Thomas, Burton and Benjy and their wives joined Joseph in Nuestra Señora. Thomas feels a strong, almost mystical connection with animals.

³⁴STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and Stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1883011019

³⁵SCHULTZ, Jeffrey D a Luchen LI. *Critical Companion to John Steinbeck: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Facts On File, c2005. ISBN 0816043000.

³⁶STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). ,p. 176

He had more understanding for animals than he had for humans. Burton is a very religious man and the youngest, Benjy, loves alcohol and women. Benjy was also predestined to die. Joseph predicted that he would get into trouble and get killed. He told his older brother: *"Tom, that boy'll be getting into trouble. Some things the people here will not stand. Some day we'll be finding Benjy with a knife in his neck. I tell you, Tom, he'll get a knife."*³⁷ His prophecy was fulfilled when Benjy was stabbed in the back by Juanito.

When Joseph came to Nuestra Señora he was charmed by its countryside. He was overwhelmed by the forests and thought: *"The endless green halls and aisles and alcoves seemed to have meanings as obscure and promising as the symbols of an ancient religion."*³⁸ He felt that the land is his, his child and that it is his responsibility to take care of it. He had a strong bond with nature and felt *"that his nature and the nature of the land were the same."*³⁹

Local people told Joseph about the dry years between 1880s and 1890s, and about how people were dancing in the mud when the rain came and how father Angelo was mad because he believed that the people let the devil in. Joseph believed that the dry years will never come again. Because of the blessing his father gave him, Joseph is the lord of the clan and source of fertility as his father was in Vermont. His wife, a schoolteacher, Elizabeth McGreggor sometimes refers to her husband as Christ. Also Rama, Thomas' wife, sees Joseph as a God. She worships him in some kind of way. It can be seen in one part, when she talked about Joseph with Elizabeth:

"I do not know whether there are men born outside humanity, or whether some men are so human as to make others seem unreal. Perhaps a godling lives on earth now and then. Joseph has strength beyond vision of shattering, he has the calm of mountains, and his emotion is as wild and fierce and sharp as the lightning and just as reasonless as far as I

³⁷STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and Stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1883011019., p. 203

³⁸STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.), p. 179

³⁹STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.), p. 253

*can see or know. ... His figure will grow huge ... He is eternal. ... this man is not a man, unless he is all men. He is a symbol of the earth's soul."*⁴⁰

Joseph worships the great oak tree on his property. He believes that the spirit of his dead father lives in that tree. The oak tree gives him a feeling that he still has a father. Joseph told Juanito: *"My father is in that tree. My father is that tree! It is silly, but I want to believe it."*⁴¹ Juanito explained him that the land is full of ghosts and that the dead never go away. Joseph even brings sacrifices to the tree and pours it with blood and believes that thanks to that the dry years will not come again. He talks to the tree as if it was his father. He even promised him to put his son into his arms. His brother Burton did not like this pagan worshipping of the tree. He sees the pagan growth in Joseph and thinks that Joseph is denying God. He wants Joseph to cut down the tree and pray so that Christ could receive him back. As Joseph refused, Burton decided to leave to Pacific Grove. Before he left he killed the great oak tree. Joseph felt that something is wrong, he knew that his tree is dead and was afraid that the dry years will come. Concerning other features of paganism, when there was a fiesta on New Year's Eve and father Angelo came to build his altar, Burton refused to join the others in celebrating because he did not approve of it. When the other people were dancing in the mud like savages he called it a devil-worship.

Local Indian, Juanito, took Joseph and Thomas to a mysterious place. It was an open glade with a green mossy rock in the centre. There was a stream which flowed silently from the cave. There was something mystical about that place that no one could express. Joseph described the place as:

*"This is holy – and this is old. This is ancient – and holy. ... There's something strong and sweet and good in there. There's something like food in there, and like cool water... maybe sometime when we have need, we'll go back again – and be fed."*⁴²

⁴⁰STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and Stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1883011019., p. 246-247

⁴¹STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.), p. 193

⁴²STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.), p. 207-208

Joseph's connection to this place can be seen in this line. Elizabeth went to visit that place when she was pregnant and also felt something that she was not able to describe. She felt that she loved the rock more than she loved her baby. She wanted to come back to be sure that the evil she felt about that place was caused only by her condition. When Joseph took her there, she climbed the mossy rock, slipped, broke her neck and died.

The dry years came as the local people predicted. Everyone in the valley wanted to leave except Joseph. Joseph felt that he is failing in protecting the land and that the duty of keeping life in his land is beyond his power. When Thomas and Joseph went to get a look at some water they met an old man. He is the last man to see the sun set. Every day he sacrificed an animal to the sun. Joseph felt deep understanding for this mysterious man. When Joseph was the only one left at the ranch, he tried to keep the stream in that open glade still alive. He flooded the mossy rock every day. Joseph felt that the country is not dead while the stream is still running. It was *"like a vein still pumping blood"*.⁴³ Joseph considered the rock a heart of the land and it was still beating. Juanito knew that the spring will dry up eventually and suggested Joseph to go to the priest to pray for the rain. Father Angelo refused to pray for the land but wanted to pray for Joseph's soul. Father Angelo also compared Joseph to Christ, which can be seen in this line: *"Thank Gog this man has no message. Thank God he has no will to be remembered, to be believed in. ... else there might be a new Christ here in the West."*⁴⁴

When the stream was gone, Joseph tried to sacrifice calf's blood as the old man did but it did not work. Then he climbed on the rock and he hurt his wrist which was covered in blood. Suddenly, Joseph realised how to save the land. He cut his wrist and sacrificed himself "to a God unknown" to save his land. It started to rain immediately. As Joseph was lying there in the rain he thought: *"I should have known. ... I am the rain. ... I am the land,... and I am the rain. The grass will grow out of me in a little while."*⁴⁵

⁴³STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and Stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1883011019., p. 312

⁴⁴STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.), p. 359

⁴⁵STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.), p. 366

This shows almost mystical and magical connection between man and nature. Joseph thought that it is beyond his power to save the land but in the end it was only him who could save it. He was the sacrifice he had to make to a god unknown. It also shows that Joseph was the one to have the blessing. He was the chosen one like Jesus Christ was. There is a contrast between Christianity and paganism throughout the whole novella. Burton and the priest represent the forces of Christianity and see Joseph's nature worship as heretical. Although Joseph is the character which represents paganism because of his nature worship, he is the one who feels the responsibility to not only save the land but to save the whole mankind by sacrificing himself. Biblical reference could be seen in this. However, it is not sure what exactly brought the rain. If it was Joseph's sacrifice or father's Angelo prayers or if it was simply the cycle of nature.

In the end of the novella, the people in the valley were dancing in the mud like animals as they always did when the rain came after the dry years. Father Angelo considered this a paganism as Burton did and prayed for the people.

The naturalistic features that can be found in *To a God Unknown* are a strong connection between man and nature and man's inability to control all the natural forces. Other naturalistic feature can be seen in a longing for the land where a dynasty should continue. This dream is not fulfilled due to the power of nature.

7. Of Mice and Men

Of Mice and Men is a novella which was published in 1937. John Steinbeck wrote the book midway through the 1930s, which was the most creative decade of his career. During this time he was becoming increasingly concerned about current social and economic problems in California. In this book he sat out to work within a narrow framework, concentrating on a small number of characters in carefully detailed settings, telling his story as economically and dramatically as possible.⁴⁶

It is based on Steinbeck's own personal experiences. During the winter of 1934, Steinbeck heard about two labor organizers who were hiding in an attic in a house near Monterey. He visited them, and as a result of a series of long conversations with them, he acquired much of the material that went into his most ambitious and important fiction.⁴⁷ With *Of Mice and Men*, which is now recognized as a masterpiece of concentrated emotional power, Steinbeck secured his status as one of the most influential American writers.

Although *Of Mice and Men* has been often criticized for its offensive language it appeared on the American Library Association's list of the *Most Challenged Books of 21st Century*.

7.1. Influence of the Great Depression

On October 29, 1929 American stock market crashed. Prices plummeted with no hope of recovery, and the masses rushed to sell their stocks. This day is known as Black Tuesday. The Great Depression was an immense tragedy that placed millions of Americans out of work. Those fortunate ones that still had their jobs had their wages cut drastically. For many people, the Great Depression challenged their faith in the American Dream and created a sense of helplessness that affected them deeply.

⁴⁶BENSON, Jackson J. *The Short Novels of John Steinbeck: Critical Essays with a Checklist to Steinbeck Criticism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990. ISBN 0822309947., p. 39

⁴⁷*A Literary History of the American West*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, c1987. ISBN 087565021X., p. 432

It provided John Steinbeck with plenty of material to write about, from rural labor and economic problems, to social problems in general.⁴⁸

7.2. Definition of the American Dream

During the Great Depression many people dreamt about something of their own. James Truslow Adams wrote a definition of the American Dream in his book *The Epic of America* (1931).

*"...that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement... It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position."*⁴⁹

This definition shows some similar features which can be found in *Of Mice and Men*, especially the dream of owning a land and having a better and richer life.

7.3. The Dust Bowl

During the Great Depression, the Great Plains were hit especially hard with draught and dust storms. The soil began to simply blow away. Strong winds and dust destroyed acres and acres of land, forcing the farmers who lived there to give up their homes.⁵⁰ Many people tried to escape the severe Dust Bowl effects of Oklahoma and migrated to Salinas/Soledad, which are major towns in *Of Mice and Men*, for opportunities and relief. Soledad and Salinas were not affected as harshly as other areas and the farm life still continued there.

⁴⁸ SARMIENTO, Matthew. *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck, and The Great Depression. In: *Www.prezi.com*[online]. 2013 [cit. 2016-03-17]. Dostupné z: <https://prezi.com/kosseiz8jhcd/of-mice-and-men-john-steinbeck-and-the-great-depression/>

⁴⁹ ADAMS, James Truslow. *James Truslow Adams quotes* [online]. In: . [cit. 2016-03-18]. Dostupné z: https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/580393.James_Truslow_Adams

⁵⁰ BLOOM, Harold. *John Steinbeck*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, c2003. ISBN 0791071154.,p.4

7.4. Title of the book

The title of the book is inspired by a poem by the 18th century Scottish poet Robert Burns. It is about a mouse which builds a winter nest in a wheat field, only to be destroyed by a ploughman.

*“But Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best-laid schemes o mice and men
Gang aft agley,
An lea’e us nought but grief and pain,
For promis’d joy!”⁵¹*

There is a parallel between the poem and *Of Mice and Men*. The mouse in the poem had a dream of a safe, warm winter but her dream was destroyed and the mouse had to face the cruel reality of loneliness and possible death.

Of Mice and Men is a story about two itinerant farmhands, George and Lennie, who travel from job to job and who share an elusive dream of owning their own land. Although no real date is written in the book, the story takes place during the Great Depression, when many people migrated to California to find a job. The story is set in Soledad which is a city in Monterey Country, California and is not far from Salinas, where John Steinbeck was born. In *Of Mice and Men* John Steinbeck employs few major themes, concerning the American Dream, loneliness, friendship, racism or social injustice. The author portraits lives of lower class people which was typical for him and for naturalism.

The main protagonists of the book, George Milton and Lennie Small are two farmhands who travel together and search for a job together. They look after each other which was not typical in that time. Slim, who worked at the same farm as George and

⁵¹ BURNS, Robert, EDITED AND INTRODUCED BY GERARD CARRUTHERS. (ed.). *Burns Poems*. Unabridged. Alfred A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 2007. ISBN 0307823571., p. 26

Lennie said: *"Maybe ever'body in the whole damn world is scared of each other."*⁵² This reflects the hard times of the Great Depression Era, which was full of uncertainties and people did not trust anybody. When George and Lennie came to the farm everyone was surprised that they go around together but George explained them that it is much nicer and better to go around with someone you know. Although Lennie is not clever and George is always angry with him because he causes trouble all the time, he likes him and he is used to having him around. George complains a lot about Lennie and talks about everything he could do if Lennie was not with him.

*"...if I was alone I could live so easy. I could go get a job an' work, an' no trouble. No mess at all, and when the end of the month come I could take my fifty bucks and go into town and get whatever I want."*⁵³

He claims he would be better off without him but he knows that it is not true. He knows he would feel lonely without him. Once, when George got angry with Lennie and Lennie suggested that he could leave him and live somewhere in a cave, George admitted that he wants Lennie to stay with him. He knows Lennie would not be able to take care of himself. He feels responsible and protective of him. This portraits one of the major themes of the book – loneliness. George once said:

*"Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place. They come to a ranch an' work up a stake and then they go into town and blow their stake, and the first thing you know they're poundin' their tail on some other ranch. They ain't got nothing to look ahead to."*⁵⁴

This shows the picture of migrant workers during the Great Depression. People are determined to go from one place to another and wander alone. George and Lennie are not the same. Because George has got Lennie to look after him and Lennie has got George to look after him in return. In hard times like these they were able to find a

⁵²STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and Stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1883011019., p. 822

⁵³STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.), p. 804

⁵⁴STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.), p. 806

friend. Although they are different they cannot imagine their lives without each other. Friendship is also important topic in *Of Mice and Men*.

*“With us it ain’t like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us. We don’t have to sit in no bar room blowin’ in our jack jus’ because we got no place else to go. If them other guys gets in jail they can rot for all anybody gives a damn. But not us.”*⁵⁵

Another character who feels lonely is Crooks, the black man. He is isolated from the rest of the community and has no friends and no one to talk to because he is black and is discriminated because of it. When Lennie comes to his place he does not understand why he should treat him any different than the others. He just wanted to talk to him. But when Crooks says that something might happen to George, Lennie gets angry. He is devoted to George and does not want to lose him. Crooks said to Lennie:

*“S’pose you didn’t have nobody...How’d you like that?... A guy needs somebody – to be near him... A guy goes nuts if he ain’t got nobody. Don’t make no difference who the guy is, long’s he’s with you.”*⁵⁶ This line shows how important it is to have someone to belong to. It also shows how low the black people are on a social scale. They are even lower than mentally handicapped.

Also Curley’s wife feels lonely as she is the only woman on the ranch. She has no one to talk to. No man on the ranch wants to talk to her because they are all scared of Curley. She also had dreams of being an actress and wearing nice clothes but she is another example of someone who will never be able to achieve it.

George and Lennie share a dream – their American Dream. They have a dream of owning their own place one day, where they would not have to work for anyone else

⁵⁵STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.). *Novels and stories, 1932-1937*. 4th print. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1994. Library of America, 72. ISBN 1883011019., p. 806

⁵⁶STEINBECK, John, DEMOTT, Robert (ed.), p. 850-851

but themselves. They are dreaming of a place where they would belong. Lennie loves when George tells him about their common dream.

Although he knows the story by heart he wants George to talk about it. Lennie is mentally disabled⁵⁷ and usually forgets everything but he never forgets about their dream. George tells him about a little house they are going to have together and a couple of acres and a cow and some pigs. They also plan to plant all kinds of fruit and vegetable. The part which Lennie loves the most is the one when George talks about the rabbits. Lennie wants to have millions of rabbits of all different colours because he loves to pet soft things and animals. He usually found a mouse but he always killed it unintentionally, because he is extremely strong. He also knows that he cannot get himself into any trouble or George will not let him to tend the rabbits. Lennie is often talked about in connection with animals (he is strong as a bull or he walks heavily as a bear) which shows a parallel between human and animal world.

At the beginning of the book, the night before they went to the ranch, they spent a night in a nature by the river. The place was nice and calm. It is the place where George was telling Lennie about their dream. In that moment they were both happy and believed that their dream is possible and that they are able to realize it. George wanted Lennie to remember this place and hide there in the brush in case Lennie would get himself into any trouble. It is the same place where George shoots Lennie at the end of the story. At the beginning the place was filled with hope for a better future but in the end it represents Lennie's death and loss of their dream. It is also a place where George lost his friend and where he was left alone in the world with no hope for a better future. He knew that his dream was lost together with Lennie and that he cannot realize it on his own. Lennie escaped to that place when he accidentally killed Curley's wife in the barn when he wanted to touch her smooth hair and unintentionally broke her neck. Lennie got himself in that kind of trouble when they were working in Weed but luckily

⁵⁷ Mentally disabled characters often appeared in the works of John Steinbeck and other naturalists.

he did not kill the girl whose dress he wanted to touch. In that moment when Lennie killed Curley's wife he also killed the chance for their dream.

At one moment, their dream seemed more real than ever before. It was when Candy offered them his money and wanted to share the dream with them. They were all excited and truly believed that their dream is coming true. Candy was an old man who lived on the ranch with his old dog. He had only one hand and did not do much work but he promised to help George and Lennie to help them as much as he could. He also wanted to belong somewhere and to someone and work on a place that was his own. Candy's dog was very old so Slim and Carlson suggested him to kill him for his own good. Candy was not strong enough to do that by himself because he was used to having him around. When Carlson offered him to kill him instead of him, Candy agreed but later he regretted his decision. He knew that he should have killed him by himself. There is a parallel between Candy's dog and Lennie's death. Both, Candy's dog and Lennie were shot out of mercy. George knew it is better for Lennie to be shot by him than to be lynched and tortured by other men. George did it when Lennie was happy, thinking about their beautiful future together.

One of the features of naturalism in *Of Mice and Men* is that the author portrays lives of common people who have to face the hard reality. Another ones are a parallel between animal's and human life or showing the life of mentally disabled character, which was typical for the naturalistic writers. Also the collapse of the American dream is significant in the novella.

Conclusion

The main task of this bachelor thesis was to characterize the tradition of American naturalism and define the relationship between man and natural forces. Connection between man and nature was analysed in John Steinbeck's shorter prose. The first was *The Pastures of Heaven*, the second was *To a God Unknown* and the last book to analyse was *Of Mice and Men*.

The first chapter of the thesis dealt with John Steinbeck's biography and the second introduced John Steinbeck's style. The third chapter characterized the tradition of American naturalism and the fourth chapter introduced the most important naturalists. Chapter five analysed the first book which was *The Pastures of Heaven*. Chapter six dealt with *To a God Unknown* and chapter seven analysed *Of Mice and Men*.

Naturalistic features were found in all of the analysed works. *The Pastures of Heaven* is a collection of interrelated stories which deals with inner lives of families living in a valley called the Pastures of Heaven. Although the valley seems as the perfect place for peaceful life and promising future, no one in the valley is able to fulfil his dreams due to the inability to face the harsh reality. The inhabitants of the valley are predestined to fail in fulfilling their dreams as they are connected with the curse from the past which lies on the valley.

To a God Unknown is a novel in which John Steinbeck shows a deep relationship between man and nature. The main hero feels almost mystical connection to the land and feels strong responsibility in protecting it which leads to sacrificing of the main hero for the land. This novel also shows a contrast between Christian beliefs and paganism as the main protagonist worships the oak tree and prays to a god unknown.

Of Mice and Men is a story of friendship and unfulfilled dreams. It captures lives of two migrant workers during the hard times of the Great Depression who share a dream of owning their own piece of land one day, but due to the unfortunate events are not able to fulfil this dream. The topic of the American dream can be seen throughout the whole novel.

In all three works which were analysed in the thesis some general features of naturalism could be found. The characters are usually lower class people who try to build a life for themselves and dream of a better future. The most usual dream is to own a

land and continue a dynasty. This dream is usually not fulfilled because of the hard reality which the heroes are not able to face. Other naturalistic theme which can be found in the analysed works is a parallel between animals and humans, usually between animals' and human death which can be seen in *The Pastures of Heaven* as well as in *Of Mice and Men*. Concerning other naturalistic features, heredity, mentally disabled characters, determinism or survival should be mentioned. In all three works, the characters are connected with the land and with natural forces but these natural forces are beyond man's power and cannot be controlled. However, the strongest connection between man and nature can be seen in *To a God Unknown*.

Moreover John Steinbeck's autobiographical features can be found in the analysed works concerning the settings and some characters. John Steinbeck used the places which were close to him as a settings (Salinas, Soledad, Corral de Tierra in Monterey or Nuestra Señora). Concerning the characters, Miss Molly Morgan from *The Pastures of Heaven* could be based on John Steinbeck's mother, who was also a schoolteacher.

Naturalistic features were found in all of the analysed works and the connection between the heroes and natural forces seems to be the main theme of John Steinbeck's shorter prose.

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