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The Animal and Human World in Cormac

McCarthy and Jack London's Works

Svět zvířat a lidí v dílech Cormaca McCarthyho a

Jacka Londona

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Abstract

The main subjects of this diploma thesis are Jack London's novels *The White Fang* and *The Call of the Wild*, which were written at the beginning of the 20th century. The thesis will also focus on a novel part of the so-called the Border trilogy by Cormac McCarthy, *The Crossing*, written in 1994. The aim of the work is to search for common themes, motifs and possible literary inspiration and life philosophy of both authors. Their works theoretically originated under the influence of American naturalism. Firstly, the thesis will introduce both authors in the context of literary traditions (naturalism, postmodern western, post-apocalyptic novel). The core of this work will be a literary analysis of the novels *White Fang*, *Call of the Wild* and *The Crossing*. The thesis will continue with the comparison of their common themes such as the relationship of man to the animal world, maintaining the harmony and natural balance as well as the cruelty of natural conditions on the North American continent as well.

Anotace

Předmětem zkoumání diplomové práce jsou romány Jacka Londona *The White Fang* (Bílý tesák) a *The Call of the Wild* (Volání divočiny), které vznikly na počátku minulého století, a románová součást tzv. hraničářské trilogie (border trilogy) Cormaca McCarthyho *The Crossing* z roku 1994. Cílem práce je hledání společných témat, motivů a případné literární inspirace a životní filosofie obou autorů, jejichž díla teoreticky vznikla pod vlivem amerického naturalismu. Práce nejprve představí oba autory v kontextu literární tradice (naturalismus, postmoderní western, postapokalyptický román). Jádrem práce bude literárněvědná analýza románů *White Fang*, *Call of the Wild*, *The Crossing*, jejichž společným tématem je vztah člověka ke světu zvířat, zachování harmonie a přírodní rovnováhy a v neposlední řadě krutost přírodních podmínek na severoamerickém kontinentu.

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1. Introduction

Jack London and Cormac McCarthy are considered as well-known and influential authors of American literature. Jack London wrote his most popular stories, which had impacts on other authors and influenced their works, mainly in the very end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Cormac McCarthy is still appreciated as respected author of the 20th century and of the beginning of the 21st century. In addition, Harold Bloom as one of the most distinctive critics of American literature called McCarthy "*the most talented author of prose in contemporary American literature*".¹

Both authors and their works are connected to the literary tradition of Naturalism, Postmodern Western and Postapocalyptic novel. To be more concrete, Jack London is considered as the prominent representative of the literary movement called Naturalism. Stephen Crane, Theodor Dreiser, Henry Adams, Frank Norris, or Ernest Hemingway can be placed among other significant authors of this literary movement too. London is the author of many books and key works in which it is required to look for aspects of Naturalism. Namely, it is possible to mention *The Sea-wolf* (1904), *Martin Eden* (1909) or *The Valley of the Moon* (1913). According to London, he saw the possibility of deepening the individuality in the first two mentioned works. The crucial work of the era of Naturalism is the book entitled *The Call of the Wild* (1903), which is also the main focus of this diploma thesis. This animal tale deals with the value of civilization and humanity.²

"*The aim of life was meat. Life itself was meat. Life lived on life. There were the eater and the eaten. The law was: eat or be eaten.*"³ This famous quote is stated in another Jack London's novel, *White Fang* (1906), which is going to be the subject of my thesis later. Undoubtedly, this work mirrors the characteristics of Naturalism as well as the theme of natural selection.

¹ BLOOM, Harold, *Bloom's Modern Critical Views – Cormac McCarthy*, Chelsea House Publications; 2nd Edition, United States 2009, p. 15

² PROCHÁZKA, Martin et al., *Lectures on American Literature*, University in Prague, Prague 2002, p. 133

³ LONDON, Jack, *White Fang*, Alma Books, the UK 2016, p. 13

Another, even though not so well-known work is called *To Build a Fire*, which was written in 1902. This short tale nicely shows characteristics of naturalism and describes the bond of nature, man and animal in the severe environment in the nature of Yukon.

All of these mentioned works are connected with the literary tradition of Naturalism. Firstly, it is necessary to further explore the aspects and characteristics of this impressive style. Widely known definitions see this nineteenth-century-era as the style where the influence of the natural sciences has the main role. More specifically it is the style influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution with the famous doctrine "*survival of the fittest*". Other crucial aspect of Naturalism is strict determinism, which means that the causalities are influenced by impersonal biological or social forces rather than by actions caused by individuals. What is more, in the works of American Naturalism we can see emotional involvements and passions of characters' lives. (Procházka et al.: 126) To sum it up, determinism, objectivism, pessimism and usually also a surprising twist at the end of the stories are common characteristics of literary naturalism.⁴

Secondly, it is important to mention the development and history of this style. As a literary tradition developer from Naturalism movement took place from 1865 to 1900. It was firstly introduced by Émile Zola, French novelist, critic, political activist but mainly the most important representative and founder of literary naturalism of the late 19th century. Frank Norris, who was an American novelist and journalist brought this term and style to America and called it as a new and harsher realism. American literature naturalists tried to write about objectivity and honesty, they presented characters of lower social and economic classes, who were mostly led by their heredity and environment. (Zhang: 195) Naturalist writers mentioned that in the relationship between determinism and human world, people are often primitive, brutish, and animalistic. In addition, they claimed that forces of economics, desires, natural selection as well as forces of modern world defeated free will of individual, self-initiated actions, and accomplishment of people's goals.⁵

To sum up, the most important characters of naturalism – Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Theodor Dreiser, Jack London, were all specific even though they came from different social

⁴ ZHANG, Xiaofen, *On the Influence of Naturalism on American Literature*, Dezhou University, China 2010, p. 195-196

⁵ BINFORD, Paul, *American Literary Naturalism: A Passage to Modernity*, p. 173

and intellectual background. However, their naturalistic fiction shares similar characteristics, for example settings of urban poverty or unfriendly wilderness. Interest in environment and heredity as well as determinism are also the common features of American naturalism.

Even though Jack London spent one semester at the University of California at Berkeley, he was raised in a poor working-class environment. This fact contributed to his perspective on the struggle against poverty. In addition to the classic Naturalism, we can distinguish three other forms which emerged in the 20th century. The first one is Progressive Era novel of reform, the next one is called the proletarian novel of the Great Depression and the dystopian city novel of the 1960s and later is considered as the last one.⁶

If Jack London is regarded as the most influential figure of American naturalism, Cormac McCarthy and his novels are seen as representatives of movement called American Postmodern Western and Post-apocalyptic novel. First of all, it is crucial to define these two literary movements. The classic Western in its pure form takes place in the environment of the Wild West, which is term associated with the extension of the United States. This happened between 1840 and 1850 when American settlers tried to populate Great Plains. Literary western is characterised by relying on the encounters between white men and indigenous people, or in other words, when civilizing clashes with the savage in order to create borders. Western is a type of fiction of adventure so the reader can face many contrasts while reading this type of literature. Lonely wanderings through the wilderness versus violent battles, a romantic and dreamy landscape meets next to the saloon (it is used to indicate the place where society meet in a typically western environment), ideals, myths and fantastic fiction against obstacles and harsh reality. We can find these all differences in the western literature.⁷

The typical features of this movement are also the classic conflict between good and evil. We can find the classical example of western hero who enters a community, where he faces some problems in Cormac McCarthy's fiction. Nevertheless, McCarthy enriches the classic Postmodern Western literature and goes beyond its borders. He adds many aspects to this

⁶ CAMPBELL, Donna, *American Literary Naturalism: Critical Perspectives*, Article in Literature Compass. Washington State University, 2011, p. 502

⁷ STOUT, James, *The New Frontier: Cormac McCarthy's Postmodern Western Form – Introduction. Chapter 1: Mile on Mile into The Darkness*, 2009

literary tradition, for instance features of existentialism, degradation, myths or features of dreaming and he doesn't forget to add many contrasts as well. (Stout: 1)

Western Literature also documents the changes in environment, ecological changes, and human responses to it. The literature also emphasizes the efforts of populations who have struggled to create sustainable communities and adapt to the environmental transformations. In conclusion it is important to mention authors of Postmodern western tradition. Over the years, a wide range of authors have produced Western fiction including Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Owen Wister, Zane Grey, Ishmael Reed, Tony Hillerman, Robert Conley, and the most important author, not only for this thesis, Cormac McCarthy.⁸

Beside of that, Cormac McCarthy is considered as a leading post-apocalyptic literature inspiration of recent times. His famous book, *The Road* (2006), belongs to this movement, because civilization is leaving heroes due to some apocalypse and the reader can feel hostile environment and gloomy atmosphere. On the contrary, in McCarthy's so-called Border Trilogy, heroes are leaving the civilization and they are looking for other and better places to stay. However, we can find a pessimistic approach to human existence in one of the three parts of Border Trilogy, in *The Crossing* (1994).

„He said that moreover it could not be otherwise that men's ends are dictated at their birth and that they will seek their deaths in the face of every obstacle.“⁹

It is possible to distinguish two approaches of the term apocalyptic. The first one, which is rather traditional, defines the term apocalyptic as it is not only concerned with the end of the world but also the discovery of a new world. The second and popular term sees apocalypse as events, especially destruction and chaos which lead to the end of the world. These two traditional and popular views of apocalypse are pivotal for defining the post-the apocalyptic genre. This term exists, as it is most likely clear from the term, after the end of the world, after the apocalypse. The post-apocalypse is a gap between one ordered existence and the revealing of the next existence. As a result, this post-apocalyptic term is

⁸ KOLLIN, Susan, *Environments in Western American Literature* [online]. C2016, last revision 2016, [cit. 2022-04-07]

<https://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-206?product=orelit>

⁹ McCARTHY, Cormac, *The Crossing*, Great Britain, 1994, p. 238

perceived as a space with temporal, spatial, existential, and ontological concerns and there are also survivors who construct lives and worlds from fragments of the meaningful and pre-apocalyptic world. Then, the post-apocalyptic genre deals with the task of displaying this world through both form and content. The interesting and important fact is that cannibalism is usually a threat in this post-apocalyptic genre, as we can see it in Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy.¹⁰

The uniqueness of McCarthy's works is his ability to connect and mix various literary styles and genres. However, the genres are very specific and different on their own but thanks to McCarthy's effort they clearly accompany each other. In their works, the reader can discover characteristics of western, southern gothic or post-apocalyptic literature. In addition, his novels are popular thanks to the aspect of road trip, because most of their books take place on the road.

The world-known representative of Naturalism, Jack London and his writing have a power and literature excellence which escalate to these days. He shows his philosophy of Naturalism in *The Call of the Wild* (1903), which is the main subject of this thesis. To summarize Jack London's life and works, I can use words of the English critic Stephen Graham:

„Jack London is a living writer. His books will be read when many that are greater works of art will be dust-collecting. ... He wrote for the unfinished and the not finished America.”¹¹

Even though both Jack London and Cormac McCarthy wrote their best books in different eras, they have much in common as well as share different approaches. However, the main themes of my diploma thesis will focus on their comparison, their life in the context of the literary tradition, the core of this work will analyse the novels *White Fang*, *The Call of the Wild* and *The Crossing*. Their leading similar themes, the man and the animal world, the harmony and natural balance and the cruelty of natural conditions in the North American, will be examine in detail.

¹⁰ STIFFLEMIRE, S. Brett, *Visions of after the end: The History and Theory of the Post-apocalyptic Genre in Literature and Film*, A dissertation, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 2017, p. 3-5

¹¹ KERSHAW, Alex, *Jack London: A Life*, HarperCollins Publisher, New York, 1997, p. 21

2. Life and Works of Jack London

1. Jack London and Life of His Parents

Jack London's life was as colourful and adventurous as his books. He lived shortly, but his life was marked by both great struggle as well as great success. When he died at the age of forty, he had written more than fifty books. He died as one of the world's famous writers.

„I would rather be ashes than dust! I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze than it should be stifled by dry rot. I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet. The proper function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them. I shall use my time.“¹² Jack London (1876 - 1916)

London, originally John Griffith Chaney, was born on January 12, 1876, in San Francisco. His mother, Flora Wellman Chaney, was born as the fifth child and fourth daughter in 1843 in Ohio. She was a daughter of Marshall Daniel Wellman, known as “*The Wheat King*” of Massillon. When Flora was three years old, her mother died, and she was raised by her father. She was a daughter of a prosperous businessman, and her life was comfortable until she became ill with typhoid fever. Although she recovered, her life never was the same again. The illness has damaged her mental life as well as her appearance. Later in her life she suffered mood swings. Her emotional disturbances caused that her son, Jack, considered her as a demanding person. When she was 20, Wellman left Ohio and moved to the Pacific Coast. This area was seen as a hope for restless Americans and immigrants. Flora settled in San Francisco and worked as a music teacher.¹³

Professor and astrologer William Chaney is believed to be a father of Jack London, because Flora was living with Chaney in San Francisco when she became pregnant. Whether Wellman and Chaney were legally married, or they lived together as a couple is undiscovered. However, Chaney refers to London's mother as having been ‘his wife’ or Flora called herself as “Florence Wellman Chaney”. When Flora became pregnant, Chaney refused the fact that the child was his. He insisted on an abortion, otherwise he would leave her. This

¹²Good Reads [online]. C2022 last revision 2022, [cit. 2022-02-07]

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/2851-i-would-rather-be-ashes-than-dust-i-would-rather>

¹³ STEFOFF, Rebecca, *Jack London: An American Original*, Oxford University Press, New York 2002, p. 11-14

affair had an unpleasant and scandalous result. Wellman had tried to kill herself because of the uproar in the city, first with a sleeping medicine and then with a pistol. A short time later, before Wellman's son was born, Chaney left San Francisco and disappeared from her life. Fortunately for Flora, she met another man and on September 7, 1876, when Jack London was eight months old, she married him. The man's name was John London and Flora's son would be known as Johnny or Jack London. He grew up with the fact that John London was his biological father. (Steffoff: 15)

Jack London's father was born in 1828 in rural Pennsylvania. By the age of 20, he married and started a family. Jack London and his wife had nine children. As similar as others American families in the middle of the 19th century, the London's family migrated west. They were firstly farming in Illinois and then in Missouri. John London served in the Union Army during the Civil War before settling with his family in Iowa. Unfortunately, his first wife died, and he stayed with nine children alone. It is not clear what happened with most of these children, but he brought only three of them to California, but only two children survived the journey. After some time, Flora married Wellman and together with his two daughters, Eliza and Ida, and with Jack, they created a new family. Jack London's life did not start very well, it was covered by poverty and misery, but he was lucky in the family. His father was a kind and loving parent who always treated Jack well. (Steffoff: 15)

Jack London was born as the illegitimate son in the middle of the economic recession; workers' wages hit new lows. It started in September 1873, due to Jay Cook & Company's bank which did not pay salaries. When thousands of labourers lost their jobs, Jack was one year-old-boy and he had no idea how this unpleasant economic era influenced his life later. Labourers were forced to accept the lower wages so that many unemployed people, also called "*tramps of the seventies*", were homeless in San Francisco. The Londons were affected by this crisis as well. As I mentioned before, Jack's early life was not comfortable and full of difficulties. It can be illustrated in the fact that they have been moving every year to different, and poorer, houses. Jack's social life was influenced by these frequent changes. He had to find new friends very often and he discovered what it meant to have no friends.¹⁴

¹⁴ FONER, S. Philip, *Jack London americký rebel*, Mladá Fronta, Praha 1951, p. 14

The Londons move from San Francisco to Oakland in 1879 when their attempts to have their own grocery shop failed. In Oakland, they lived in many different series of rented places. Jack's father began growing vegetables for sale and Jack always helped him. He had laboured from the age of six. Thanks to the farming, they were able to make a living. (Steffoff: 17) Regrettably, the situation has changed in three years, their efforts were vain. Jack London called this era as the hungriest period of his life. It forced him to steal a piece of meat from his classmate. (Foner: 14) After years, he wrote about these times:

„I was poor. I lived as a poor man. I was hungry. I've never had toys as other children. My first memories are interrupted by misery and poverty. The pressure of poverty became chronic...And only a child with child's fantasy can understand a value of things which have long been denied to him.” (Foner: 14)

For the next thirteen years, the Londons lived in poverty, as Irving Stone aptly described in the book *Sailor on Horseback*, published in 1963:

*"Constant business failures and hasty relocations, the horror of the spiritualistic sessions he suffered, the premonition that they were hiding something from him about his father, all made Jack stunned, scared, and embarrassed. Both the man and the boy, harassed by Florina's hurt and unable to defend themselves against the wrongs, clung to each other with increasing affection. As far as they could, they ran away from home and wandered in the harbour for days."*¹⁵

When Jack London was eight years old his family moved again to Livermore Walley. Jack found the real passion of his life in this place, the passion for books and reading. In can be said that he read whatever came his way and spent every free time reading. However, his father, John London, lost his job again and Jack had to take care about living of his family. He distributed newspapers, worked as an ice-cream man and as a porter as well. He gave everything he earned to his family. When he did not work, he spent his time by the seashore looking for an escape from this miserable life. He liked talking with old sailors or sailing across San Francisco Bay. (Foner: 15) Jack London was a controversial, but enterprising and ingenious boy. Stone sums London's personality in his books *Sailor on Horseback* as follows:

¹⁵ STONE, Irving, *Sailor on Horseback: The Biography of Jack London*, Riverside Press, 1938, p. 25

"And there seems to be a fundamental contradiction in Jack's character: he was fearful and shy, because his extramarital background and the turmoil at home made him feel inferior and insecure, and he trusted and was confident because he inherited a bright brain from Professor Chaney." (Stone: 33)

2. Jack London as a Sailor

Jack London completed his studies at Oakland's secondary school when he was thirteen years old. Despite the fact Jack wanted to continue his studies at the university, the financial situation of London's family was not good. Instead of studying, he worked hard to support financially his family. He found a job in the laundry in the West Oakland and his work shift lasted from 12 to 36 hours. These months were full of exhausting hard work. Fortunately, his mind and his body realized that it was not possible to spend the life like this, like a machine for working. In view of the fact that he liked to spend times by the seashore and by having a conversation with sailors, he knew how much money he could have had as a pirate, so he started with piracy and with hunting oysters. He bought a boat from the saved money, and he sailed as a pirate for more than a year. He enjoyed the adventure and the amount of money which he had. He had never experienced this kind of life before and he was happy. Later, Jack was known as the *"Prince of Oyster Pirates"* and also as the *"Prince of drunkards"*. Despite the fact he earned a large amount of money he was still without money. The reason was whiskey. He was only fifteen years old and was addicted to alcohol. He no longer gave money to his family, but he spent all his money on this bad habit. (Foner: 17)

Jack London was not far from committing suicide when he said that *"drowning will be a great culmination of his short but busy life. He was comfortable in the water, and it was the death of a worthy hero."* Luckily, Jack London awoke, and he did not let his talent waste. Unlike his pirate friends, he did not end up in prison, drowned on the ocean bottom, and could create his successful "dog's" stories such as *The Call of the Wild*, *The Sea-Wolf*, *White Fang*, or the famous novel *The Road*. (Stone: 45)

After this alcohol affair, which fortunately ended well for Jack as well as for the world of literature, young Jack London became a state police assistant for fisheries protection. He found himself on the other side of the law when he had to guard the ocean from pirates. He

worked for the police for a year, and he met a variety of people. By then, seventeen-year-old Jack London was an adamant, courageous young man who was well prepared to travel the world he had only heard or read about.¹⁶

Jack came back to Oakland to help his family. By the time Jack returned in 1893, the economic crisis was unfavourable. The crisis affected the whole industry, and three million people were unemployed. Jobs were scarce and although the typical wage was only ten cents per hour, Jack was not afraid of hard work. It can be said that Jack got back to his exhausting routine. He worked hard for a little money; however, he was able to publish his first story. On November 12, 1893 *San Francisco Call* newspaper reward 17-year-old Jack London for the short story "*Typhoon off the Coast of Japan*".¹⁷ This award meant a lot for Jack, but his other stories have not been so successful. Later, Jack worked in the power station. Despite the fact he worked effectively and hard, his salary was low. When London found out that one of the workers, as well as the father of three children, was dismissed and committed suicide, he immediately left the factory. There was a serious issue with exploitation of workers. (Foner: 19)

As Irving stated in his work, Jack London came to the conclusion that: "*A person can be either a slave or a vagabond, that there seems to be no middle ground. He was young and strong and loved life. He had a desire for a wild adventure in his blood. So, isn't it better to roam the world than to have your pretty young body broken in a round of lucrative crows?*" (Stone: 56)

Here comes another interesting part of Jack London's life.

3. Jack London as a Tramp

Before this new chapter of Jack London's life starts, it is necessary to clarify the term *tramp* and *hobo*. Simply, it can be described as a constantly traveling wanderer. The American tramp class practically consists of men because few women ever enter it. It is a

¹⁶ ROSSMAN, Michal, *Searching for Freedom in Jack London's The Road and Jack Kerouac's on the Road*, [Diploma Thesis]. České Budějovice 2020, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Faculty of Education, Department of English Studies, superior: PhDr. Kamila Vránková, Ph.D, p. 16

¹⁷ *Typhoon off the Coast* is a short story written by Jack London where he describes the adventure he experienced while hunting seals on Soffi Sutherland's ship near the shores of Japan. This story became a part of his psychological adventure novel called *The Sea-Wolf* (1904).

young man's group and more mobile than any tramp class abroad. The American tramp is a travelling man, many of them migrating thousands of miles each year. The greater proportion of the American tramp class are called hobos as well as migrating and seasonal workers. If we have a look for the explanation for the existence of an army consists of more than two million homeless or wandering men, we may conclude that the most significant reasons are to be found with the men themselves. Defective mentalities, inadequate personalities or physical defects are frequent among them. Jack London's personality was adversely influenced by his childhood memories, when he changed home very often, working hard when he was about eleven years old or his passion for alcohol. It can be said that tramps did not respect laws and rules of the society. In addition to tramps, there were also hoboies. Although the terms tramp and hobo are very similar, there are some differences between them. Hobo is usually a homeless worker who travels the country out of necessity and looking for work. On the contrary, the tramp travels for pleasure and avoids work. Although they often travel together, they differ from each other. Common features of tramps and hoboies are traveling by train stowaways and begging for food. They do not have property, often not even a home, and are characterized by a very low position in society. The tramp class spends its leisure in the cities where the most undesirable conditions and influence exists. The interesting fact is that young boy sees a tramp as a kind of attractions where the tramp life to the boy is a promise of all that he wishes. For instance, it promises him change of scenery and variety of experience. Life of tramps was full of changes and impossible situations.¹⁸ This attracted Jack London as well.

After quitting his job shovelling coal at a street-railway power plant, he was at loose ends, as were many working men of the time, another journey awaited him. In these times, during 1894, the economic crisis and unemployment got out of control. Numerous workers were without employment and ready to take up with any movement of discontent that arose. In Massillon, Ohio, which was Jack's mother birthplace, a man named Coxey organized the Workers' Army ¹⁹ to march on Washington to print \$ 5 million worth of money to the

¹⁸ ANDERSON, Nels, *On Hobos and Homelessness*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1998, p. 98-101

¹⁹ ALEXANDER, F. Benjamin, *Coxey's Army: Popular Protest in the Gilded Age*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2015, p. 2

The Workers' Army was a protest march led by unemployed workers in the era when the US was in the second year of a severe economic depression. Paraphs as many as a hundred men had made most or all of the march.

unemployed in exchange for roads and highways construction. So, we can talk about government contracts that support the US economy, as Roosevelt later did in his *New Deal* program during the financial crisis that plagued the United States in the 1930s. Jack London's adventurous character did not hesitate and joined the Workers' Army. (Stone: 56) Jack seemed excited about gathering new experiences. He had already shown interest in becoming a writer and he was convinced that this months-lasting journey to Washington would allow him to gather exciting materials for his further essays.²⁰ In this situation we can clearly see that adventure and desire to experience something new had a higher value than his parents' life.

During this march Jack London met lots of tramps, who taught him how to travel without tickets and how to beg, and hundreds of unemployed who also tried to join the first division of the Workers' Army. However, Jack was enjoying the antisocial activities of his friends who disobeyed orders. (Etulain: 3) This journey to Washington was very complicated and Jack had to face up to many challenges. Nights full of setbacks, hunger, and loneliness awaited Jack London. As mentioned above, Jack London desired to be the best in his field. And so, he longed to become not only the king of pirate oyster hunters, the king of drinkers, but now also the king of tramps. He liked to fight with superiority and was not afraid of anything. (Stone: 60)

Jack London recorded all these experiences on diary of the "track", which was written during or shortly after his journey across the West in the spring of 1894. This tramp diary is recorded in a small address book whose original owner was Frank Davis; he began to tramp with Jack but returned after a few days on the road. However, Davis' name is replaced with John London with a note: *"This was Frank's book before I got it, and I guess you will see a good deal of his handwork, throughout. Jack."* The diary contains sixty-five pages completely filled with London's tramp diary, ten pages are blank and other pages contain other scribbled notes. (Etulain: 30) This diary contains extracts about adventurous life which is full of freedom and unexpected moments. Nevertheless, Jack London mentioned suicide and unfortunate life as well. To imagine the tramp's records better, there is an extract:

This army was created in response to enormous unemployment which had reached the high rate of 20% and that many workers who still had their jobs were seeing their wages cut.

²⁰ ETULAIN, Richard W., *Jack London on the Road – The Tramp Diary and Other Hobo Writings*, Utah State University Press, Utah 1987, p. 29

„Sunday Apr. 8. Woke up at 3:30 A.M. half froze to death. I climbed out & walked about till my circulation was restored when I sought shelter in the Restaurant. The deaf mute & the ladies edifying conversation. Morning ablutions by the banks of the Truckee River. Mourns the loss of the clothes brush & comb with Frank, but still have the towel & soap. Went down the road & watched them loading cattle & pigs. Met a Sweden on the road & went & got the dinner with him. Watched the Indians gambling & listened to the salvation army & unemployed congregated on the corner. They are making up an army & expect to start east tomorrow. All along the line from Oakland on, we have met hundreds chasing the first detachment of the industrial army. A great many lost it by the unexpected departure so early Friday morning. Took a freight in the evening & made Wadsworth but did not find Frank. I slept in an engine car down in the yards & was routed out about 4 in the morning when the wipers took possession.” (Etulain: 31)

One day, on the way through the Rocky Mountains, in the middle of a snowstorm, he was close to the freeze. Due to the happy coincidence his paths finally intersected with the Workers' Army and eighty-five members of the army who were travelling in the carriage.²¹ Some of them really believed that Congress in Washington would give them a job, while others were just tramps in Jack's age longing for adventure. On their way to Washington, people treated them indiscriminately, in others they welcomed them with open arms. However, these tramps were also grateful for warm food. On the other hand, they were forced to sleep outside several times in the winter, and more than once Jack London was near death and after several failures the Army was forced to walk. Jack experienced torture during his dream journey, but he was aware of the adventure as well. (Stone: 63-64)

This excruciating trip to Washington inspired Jack London to write his most crucial works as *The Call of the Wild* or *White Fang*. They are mainly about survival in the bad conditions and about hunting and Jack London became a hunter thanks to this journey. His friends and he were a few steps closer than the army and they chose the best of the supplies provided, especially tobacco, milk, sugar, and canned food. Stone in his book mentions London's

²¹ His actions during April confirm the report of one officer, George Speed, who served as leader of a contingent of men from Sacramento. Several years later he argued that London “travelled with the Army but never actually joined the army.” He was not an integral part of it. (Etulain: 3)

feelings to the military that "they did not behave well in this regard, they were individualists with the spirit of initiative and enterprising, so they were convinced that the first person to seize it had the right to food." (Stone: 66) However, short supplies of food for the large Army, the delays in the trip and difficulties with morale of Kelly's contingent made Jack and several of his fellows tired and decided to abandon the Army. They later discovered that just a few people of the Oakland Army eventually arrived in Washington to find out that Coxe had been arrested. (Etulain: 3)

Jack London was a loner in his hidden soul, so he left his fellows and went by train to Chicago. After picking up his money from his foster sister Eliza and visiting some interesting places of Chicago, he rented a room and stayed there for two months. When he enjoyed the comfort of his first bed enough, he crossed Lake Michigan and visited his aunt, his mother's sister, Mary Everhard who lived in Michigan with her sons. She loved his hobo yarns, she read his tramp's diary and, what is more, she encouraged him in becoming a writer. Nevertheless, her sons reacted otherwise; they considered Jack as a lazy man from the West.²² (Etulain: 3)

In the summer of 1894, after spending several weeks full of eating and relaxing in Michigan he decided to catch a train for New York. Firstly, Jack was intrigued by the rush and variety of urban life. On the other hand, he was depressed by the poverty, alienation, and depression in the metropolis. In later years, he avoided New York because, according to him, it brought out the worst in him. (Etulain: 4) He did not enjoy the bustle of the big city and was already on his way to Niagara Falls. He was amazed by this sight at Niagara Falls, however, the most important event on his road trip took place on this location. 18-year-old Jack was arrested, charged with vagrancy for sleeping on the streets and sentenced to a month in jail and hard work. (Stone: 67) This experience is briefly mentioned in the books of the Erie County Penitentiary of Buffalo:

²² Jack London used the name of one of his cousins, Ernest Everhard, and some of the scenes near the Everhard home and wrote a political novel in the form of science fiction called *The Iron Heel*. The story begins with the Avis Everhard, a daughter of a physicist and future wife of socialist Ernest Everhard. She does not agree with Ernest's statement that the whole social system is based on exploitation of labour. Set in the future, this work describes a world in which division between classes has deepened, creating a powerful Oligarchy retains control through terror.

LONDON, Jack, *The Iron Heel*, Penguin Publishing Group, the USA, 2011

„On June 29, 1894, one John London, age 18: Single: Father & Mother Living, Occupation – Sailor; Religion – Atheist; - was received at the Erie County Penitentiary, for a term of 30 Days, charge of Tramp, sentenced by Police Justice Charles Piper – Niagara Falls, New York; and was released on July 29, 1894.”²³

Imprisonment was a turning point in Jack’s life. The prisoners were fed only with water and bread, they received “meat” once a week. However, Jack London had a strong personality and was able to meet people even in the prison. Jack became a corridor, he exchanged tobacco for meat with prisoners sentenced to a long period of time. He witnessed guards whipping prisoners, torturing them, and sometimes beating them to death. (Stone: 68) This scene was burned into London’s memory, and he recorded it in his book *The Road*. (Etulain: 4) He met a lot of people and heard countless stories that could be another inspiration for him to pursue a career in writing. After thirty days, Jack London and his friend were released from prison and they could embark on a journey, which they had planned as prisoners. Firstly, they wanted to beg for the money for this adventure. However, they spent these money on beer. Jack London and his unusual personality desire to travel immediately, so he disappeared through the pub exit towards the station and caught the first train going west. (Stone: 68) Jack London has repeatedly preferred to travel on his own. As a young boy he must rely only on himself, and it was better and natural for him to be alone.

His adventurous journey started in Washington, D.C., where he stayed for two weeks. He liked its historic spots and surroundings. London was on his way farther north. He left his traces in Baltimore, Boston, Massachusetts, Montreal as well as in Canada. After remaining a few days in Vancouver, he returned home late in September or October, having been on the road for six months. (Etualin: 5)

His life era as a tramp was rich in experiences and memories. During his long journey, Jack London was at the age when his personality was formed, and his attitudes had changed. In the comparison to his peers, he had a much more diverse life. He went through starvation, imprisonment, and he was nearly frozen and dead several times. However, his life also had the bright sides. He spent many days at sea, which were full of freedom, happiness, and

²³ WALKER, Franklin, *Jack London and the Klondike*, Bodely Head, the USA 1966, p. 29

money. Jack London was an observant man when he noticed that he spent a month in a factory making one dollar in ten hours and later he was being able to make more than a hundred dollars a night oyster hunting. This hard work in a factory made him realize that something was wrong with the society and the world. In this part of his life, he gained particular experience of being part of the working class. (Rossman: 20)

4. Jack London as a student

Jack London was a clever young man who met many different people on his adventurous travels and heard many gripping stories. He realized where this "*bottom of human society*", the working class, came from. These people are like him; people without education, tramps, or wild bachelors who will grow old over time and will not be able to enter the labour market. Although they may have been physically and mentally fit before, this hard work for little money deprived them of all their energy, illusions, and zest for life. Jack London did not want to end up like them and still young Jack London decided to devote himself to his education. (Stone: 74)

In 1895, Jack was convinced that he needed more formal education because he did not want to become a part of "*bottom of human society*". He enrolled in Oakland High School and as a student he wrote several stories for school paper called *The High School Aegis*. Two of the stories, *Frisco Kid's Story* and *And Frisco Kid Came back*, are based on his life as a teenage tramp. Both centre on the Kid's conversation with a man gathering information about a road kid named Charlie and both draw on his road experiences recorded in his unpublished diary and events.²⁴ He completed his high school education and later enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley. He also published the socialist article *Optimism, Pessimism and Patriotism*. He accused the capitalists of long working hours, exploitation, and constant wage cuts. (Stone: 74) Jack had close to social criticism and anticapitalistic ideas, which was reflected later in his life.

Jack London was an incredible public speaker. During his studies at Berkley, he was chosen as one of the debaters at a Christmas party at school. He used the opportunity and

²⁴ In fact, Jack London first titled the book *Frisco Kid*, but the character is a sailor and not a child. James E. Sisson, who did research on Jack London, pointed out that in these schemes the *Frisco Kid* foreshadows the remarkable figure of the *Malemute Kid*, who appears in London's early Klondike stories. (Etulain: 61)

the attention of the audience and changed the subject of his speech to accuse those present of social injustice and to call for a revolution. Jack's classmate, Georgia Bamford, was afraid that he would attack the well-dressed audience. This daring speech caused that Jack London had to leave school. One of his classmates and American author James Hopper described Jack London as a "*special combination of a Scandinavian sailor and a Greek god*". (Foner: 35)

Jack London enjoyed his studies at the University of California, Berkeley as much as possible. He got along well with his classmates this time and was finally happy. However, he fought and struggled with his fate. Lack of money forced him to drop out after only one semester at the University of California at Berkeley. His family needed financial help again, because John London was very ill to take care of his family. If it weren't for that, Jack London would probably graduate from university successfully. In 1897 he quit his studies and decided to break through as a writer. He was good at writing, he loved books, and desperately wanted to escape the hard work of his poor childhood. He wrote both socialist articles, serious reflections, and short stories and poems. When the first part of his work was rejected, he decided to sell his books and clothes so that he could continue writing. Here you can see London's determination and perseverance that he can do something. In this time, the social reality was cruel, Jack London was forced to stop writing and get a job in the laundry. The working hours were very exhausting, and the salary was thirty dollars a month, which he sent to Flora. He was stuck in a dead end again. He only made a living, but he did not have the energy for his hobbies. He realized that he was a human machine again, and he was looking for a way out of this impasse. (Foner: 37) Jack asked himself how to find a way to a dream life. The answer was gold.

5. California Gold Rush

In 1896, gold was discovered around the Yukon and Klondike rivers, in Canada. The Klondike Gold Rush began in July 1897 when two ships docked in San Francisco and Seattle carrying miners returning from the Yukon with bags of gold. It was an opportunity for twenty-one-year-old Jack. He headed north to strike it rich in Klondike and he was among the forty thousand people.²⁵ They left their depressing and boring lives all over the world in

²⁵ People, who were on their way to the gold fields, were called Stampeders.

order to make a dangerous but thrilling journey into the Yukon Territory. However, a mere four thousand gold seekers would actually strike gold.²⁶

Jack and his sister's husband, James Shepard, caught the gold fever. Jack's sister Eliza supported him and gave them money for facilities they needed. In March 1897, Jack and Shepard began this exciting journey to wealth on the ship called *Umatilla*. Following fight with nature and enormous competition with other stampeders inspired Jack in writing his most famous works. Jack's previous tough life made him skilful; he had experiences with sailing boats, so he was able to steer boats across the rapids of the river. He received many offers to transport ships of other gold diggers, earning over three thousand dollars. (Stone: 89)

It was this journey to Klondike that made Jack contented. He met many interesting people and they debated about even more fascinating topics. To his pleasure, they most talked about Darwin's theory, socialism, gold fever as well as political or economic issues. Jack wrote down all the interesting knowledge so that he could use it later in his work. Jack did not mine any gold during his one-year stay in the Klondike. However, he learned so much by listening to the stories of others who mined gold and by observing the life around him through his own experience that he would make a fortune from this experience in later years. (Foner: 39)

Later, Jack fell ill with scurvy and it hastened homecoming. When he recovered, he set out on a nineteen-hundred-mile journey along the Yukon River to the Bering Sea, which he managed to travel in a respectable nineteen days. Despite the fact he returned home even poorer than before, the journey to gold provided him with inspiration and experience. But nothing good awaited him at home. His loving father John died, and Jack had to take care about his family. It was as if his life was repeated over and over again. Jack tried to find new job again, but it seemed impossible, even though he tried his best. He took every opportunity that could arise. He applied for a postman job and in the meantime, he wrote many short stories about his Alaska's adventure for *Examiner* and *Youth's Companion* magazines and hoped some would be published. None of this happened. He was forced to sell his bicycle, which he received from Eliza, a watch donated by the late John London and

²⁶ LOURIE, Peter, *Jack London and the Klondike Gold Rush*, Henry Holt and Company, Virginia 2017, p. 2

later a coat to support his family. He had suicidal thoughts again. He was kept alive only by his desire to become a writer, his love for his family and for Mabel Applegarth, whom he had known for many years from his studies. One day London finally received an offer from *The Black Cat* magazine. (Foner: 39-41)

3. Jack London in the Context of the Literary Tradition

Every success is always followed by failure. This was Jack's case. After receiving an offer from the magazine, he received also other letters of refusal. Despite this fact he refused a job offer to become a postman with the huge salary and, in addition, he would provide food and housing for himself and his family and could save on marrying Mabel. His mother also contributed to the decision. His mother "*...who gave birth to him as an illegitimate child, who deceived him as a child for love and maternal tenderness, which caused him to suffer from poverty, bitterness and divided domestic conditions in his teenage years, now she told him with determination. that he must keep writing his short stories, that he will eventually succeed, and that she will help him, no matter how long it takes.*" (Stone: 109)

Jack London concluded that four things are necessary to become a respected writer: good health, diligence, life philosophy and honesty. He was an original thinker as well as a reader who absorbed the views of the philosophers and political science. He was aware of areas in which he needed to improve. He had an energy and good health, however he had to come up with his own philosophy of life that would allow him to look at the world. Jack London was a young man whose miraculous writing energy was unbelievable. He knew that a person who longed for knowledge must be honest, courageous, straightforward, and deeply loving the truth. And that is exactly what Jack London was like. He compensated for his unfinished education with these very qualities. They had a huge impact on Jack's way of thinking, behaviour, and classification of his thoughts. (Rossman: 24) Jack London wrote in one of his letters on September 7, 1915:

"As a boy, the first heroes that I put into my Pantheon were Napoleon and Alexander the Great. Later on, I destroyed this Pantheon and built a new Pantheon in which I began

inscribing names such as David Starr Jordan, as Herbert Spencer, as Huxley, as Darwin, as Tyndall."²⁷

In this brief excerpt, Jack London mentioned most of the men who influenced his complex and contradictory philosophy as well as his attitudes to his life. Major figures not mentioned in this particular letter are Karl Marx, Ernst Haeckel, and Friedrich Nietzsche. However, Jack London was influenced by these works too: Adam Smith and his *Wealth of Nations*, J. S. Mill's *Income Distribution* or Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*. Thanks to these great men, Jack was able to create his life philosophy. (Sciambra: 1)

The most important and influential person for Jack was Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, who made impact on London also emotionally, because their life experiences were quite similar. His work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, published in 1883, and his philosophy of the "Übermensch" or "superman" was crucial for Jack because London imagined himself as a "superman". This "superman" was both intellectually and physically superior to others, he was much stronger and smarter. The "superman" had no obligation to others. The idea of the "superman" or perhaps the "superdog" is apparent and dominant in London's *Call of the Wild*. (Sciambra: 1) Even though Friedrich Nietzsche condemned socialism, because, as he said, it means dominance of weak and incapable people, Jack London still believed in socialism and in this "superman" at the same time; even though these terms are mutually exclusive. For the rest of his life, he stayed individualist as well as socialist – individualist because he saw himself as superman, who brought the world under control and socialism was important for weak people who needed protection. (Stone: 114) This is a clear example of disunity of Jack's life philosophy and his ambiguity in his life.

Jack London's life was colourful and sometimes unexpected. He also joined the Socialist Labour Party in 1896 after reading Marx and Engels's work *The Communist Manifesto*. Due to this step Jack achieved notoriety as the "Boy Socialist" of Oakland.²⁸

Considering Jack London as a representative of naturalism in the first place, he was influenced not only by famous philosophers, but also by several naturalists as David Starr Jordan, Thomas Henry Huxley, John Tyndall, and Ernst Haeckel. However, among the many

²⁷ SCIAMBRA, Joseph, *The Philosophy of Jack London*, Sonoma State University, 1996

²⁸ NUERNBERG, M. Susan, *The Critical Response to Jack London*, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995

intellectual naturalists and influences on Jack London, none is so central as that of Darwin and Herbert Spencer. (Sciambra: 1) It is not a surprise, because Darwin's theories dominated the scientific world during the time Jack London was developing as a writer. In high school, London read Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and Herbert Spencer's Darwin-influenced *First Principles*.²⁹ London appreciated their theories and utilized many of them in his famous writings. In the novels *White Fang* and *The Call of the Wild*, which are crucial for this thesis, there is an occurrence of Darwin's theories such as evolution, survival of the fittest and more. The dominant theme is survival of the fittest in the story *The Call of the Wild*, in the sense that an ordinary dog is taken from its civilized Southland and is placed in the primitive North. The dog must learn to cope with all sorts of primitive conditions and learn how to survive. In the novel *White Fang*, the animal of the same name is the only survivor because he was the strongest. This is the main point of Darwin's survival of the fittest theory. This novel is also an evident example of Darwin's theory of natural selection:

"He saw, once for all, that he stood no chance against a man with a club. He had learned the lesson, and in all his afterlife he never forgot it. That club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the reign of primitive law...The facts of life took on a fiercer aspect; and while he faced that aspect uncowed, he faced it with all the latent cunning of his nature aroused."
(London, *White Fang*: 13)

This brief excerpt clearly shows the theory of naturalism, where humans have created themselves to be more superior over animals with the aid of determinism acquired through natural selection. In other works, written by London the idea of a struggle for survival among hostile or unknown forces and where a person needs to adapt to new and different surroundings is one of the most dominant concepts found throughout his works.

Jack London's main goal to achieve his right life philosophy was accompanied by making a living. He spent many hours in Oakland's library reading ordinary magazines for inspiration and to find out, why these stories were published in contrast to his own. He was surprised how some authors wrote about a perfect life without troubles. Unlike most other authors of the time, who were, according to Jack, afraid of the real life and to get to the heart of matter, London tried to write his works vividly and truthfully, just to point out all the

²⁹ BERKOVE, Lawrence, I., *Jack London, and Evolution: From Spencer to Huxley*, University of Illinois Press, 2004

cruelties of life. He condemned the fear of others to describe things as they really are. He was inspired by the works of Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, or Stephen Crane. He considers Rudyard Kipling and Robert Louis Stevenson to be his literary fathers and Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche to be his philosophy fathers. In one of his letters, he mentioned this short excerpt about Kipling:

“Kipling can penetrate the soul of things. There are endless possibilities, just endless possibilities. He opened new boundless spaces to the human spirit and literature.”

He believed in the connection of determinism and his formulations to create sagacious, vivid, and real writings. (Stone: 115)

Hard work, lack of sleep, strong will and determination contributed to the publication of Jack’s work *The Paths Men Take* in *Overland Monthly* magazine in July. Even though London was still a poor young man, people started believing that he could be a successful young writer and he got into people’s subconscious. In the following months other magazines offer him to publish his stories. Jack became a member of a Ruskin’s club³⁰ and a member of a socialist club as well. These people considered Jack as a successful author of interesting pieces. Jack met Anna Strunsky, an avid socialist and a student at Stanford University. Intense friendships developed between them, filled with disputes over economic, and feminist issues. (Stone: 118) They were talking about socialism as well since socialism was a phenomenon of that century. People perceive it as a product of social evolution. We had slavery, feudalism, capitalism – and socialism as the obvious step.³¹ Jack London identifies himself as an advocate of socialism and spokesman for the “brotherhood of man”. He believed in socialism, and it gave him power, determination, and courage.³²

³⁰ Ruskin’s club was found by John Ruskin, who is well known as an art critic. We cannot say with certainty that Ruskin’s writings influenced London. However, London found beliefs and philosophies in Ruskin. John Ruskin and Jack London – these are two names you would never expect to see in the same sentence. However, the two shared many of the same views and concerns about social reform. (Stone: 117)

YouTube, *Out of the Abyss: John Ruskin, Jack London, and Social Reform* by Sara S. Sue Hodson [online]. C2022 last revision 2022, [cit. 2022-02-24]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKrAiTdHLY4>

³¹ LONDON, Jack, RASKIN, Jonah, *The Radical Jack London: Writings on War and Revolution*, University of California Press, London, England 2008, p. 87

³² CAIN, E. William, *Socialism, Power, and the Fate of Style: Jack London in His Letters*, American Literary History, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 1

Jack London was finally enjoying life fully. The range of magazines that published his short stories was slowly expanding. The Boston magazine *Atlantic Monthly* offered him one hundred and twenty dollars to publish *The Odyssey of the North*, which was not only another mystery of the North, but also the sudden change in the attitude of socialists towards its author. It was a great news for Jack because this monthly magazine was way more special, they did not publish everyone's stories. In December 1899, the same monthly magazine offered him a book of *The Odyssey of the North* and other short stories from Alaska. It was a milestone – by signing the treaty, the newsroom revolutionized American literature by printing stories from the wild border of California and Alaska. For Jack London the treaty was literally a rebirth, he felt great satisfaction. This happened in the incoming of the new century. (Stone: 125)

Jack London struggled as a writer and thinker to understand the world and he was determined to change it. American literature forbade to write about certain topics as atheism, socialism, and intercourse. American history was influenced by the history of the westward movement of European people; American culture and literature was limited by European morality. Furthermore, it was hard to write original works because writers could write only about pleasant aspects of life and they could not write about the real, hard, and gloomy things. Authors were forced to produce their works as Emerson did. (Stone: 129) A transcendentalist and representative of naturalism Ralph Waldo Emerson was considered as the intellectual in the very centre of the American tradition. He changed Americans' sense of their spatial and temporal location to the flow of the mainstream of their thoughts. Emerson also taught a new relation to nature when soul and matter were not separated at all. The language of the man and his attribute was a vocabulary that was taught by nature. Emerson says this in his famous work *Nature*, published in 1836:

*„The spirit that is present behind nature does not act upon us from without us but acts within us. The world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man.“*³³

Jack wanted to make a radical change in literature as same as Lev N. Tolstoy and other realists, Guy de Maupassant, Flaubert Zola, Henrik Ibsen or German writers Herman Sudermann and prose writer Gerhart Hauptmann did. London's work *The Odyssey of the*

³³ EMERSON, Ralph Waldo, *Selected Essays*, Penguin Classic, USA 21982, p.

North had to bring back the truth, determination, and straightforwardness to literary production. He demanded Americans were enjoying life in the new century. Not only Americans but Jack London wanted to be happy in new year. He decided to marry his loving girlfriend Mabel Applegarth, the model for Ruth Morse in *Martin Eden*, but her mother did not want him as a son-in-law. However, Jack desired to become a father, he wanted children and dignity, so he proposed marriage to the teacher Elizabeth “Bess” Maddern, who was a phlegmatic but strong woman. They sympathized with each other and, what is more, she always believed Jack would be a world well-known writer. (Foner: 50)

Despite the fact Jack did not have much money for his family and his new wife Bessie, he was quite successful in writing stories and novels. McClure, an Irish-American publisher and journalist, was sending Jack some money to let him write his amazing stories. New book called *The Son of the Wolf* was published in spring 1900. This work was appreciated and meant a breakthrough in Jack’s writing career, because it was an example of a modern American story. Jack’s aim was to write his first novel. *The Daughter of the Snows*, the name of this novel, did not meet a great success, which could be caused by complications in Jack’s personal life. Flora, Jack’s mother, was jealous of his new wife and they argued a lot. During these times Jack corresponded with Anna Strunsky and they had a curious relationship. Stone commented on their relationship as follows (Stone: 150):

“With Bessie they explored to a certain depth, lived in a sociable friendship, and formed a life together, and for all this, Jack loved her. But he and Anna explored other depths, the depths of the spiritual realms, and for that he loved Anna.” (Stone: 150)

However, Joan London, Jack’s first daughter, was born on the 15th of January in 1901. Jack and Anna’s remarkable relationship can be demonstrated on the fact they decided to write a diary of their intellectual and mental experiences. *The Kampton-Wace Letters* was composed as letters between two men, Herbert Wace, and Dane Kempton. They led discussion about the philosophy of love and sex. Thanks to this work they were able to experience mental pleasure and at the same time did not hurt anyone. The work was published anonymously.³⁴

³⁴ LONDON, Jack and STRUNSKY, Anna, *The Kempton-Wace Letters*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017

Publishing of *The Daughter of the Snows* in 1902 can be perceived as a milestone and the end of the first era in Jack's London career. In the same year, Bess London, the second daughter, was born. Jack was very disappointed by this information, and it took him some time to deal with it. At that time, the idea for one of his most successful works was born in his mind – *The Call of the Wild*. He finished this novel in 30 days and *Saturday Evening Post* paid him two thousand dollars for this work. People with the increasing interest in nature and growing liking for realism in literature really appreciated this kind of novel. This publication changed London's life; he had more money, he met many interesting people and he celebrated his success at many parties. He could also afford to buy a sailing boat called *Spray*, which became a place for writing his second great work *The Sea Wolf*. *The Sea Wolf* was a nautical novel, which was not a common topic of novels at this era, so Jack as well as *Macmillan publisher* expected great success. (Foner: 65)

During summer 1903 Jack's wife Elizabeth with their daughters decided to leave for Glen Ellen, a countryside in California, nowadays famous for Jack London State Historic Park. Jack was in the middle of his great work, so he decided to stay in Piedmont. Because of his injury which was caused by a traffic accident, he encountered nurse Charmian Kittredge. She was also the woman for who Jack London left his family in July 1903 in Glen Ellen. (Stone: 182) Charmian Kittredge was, according to Jack, an emotionally intense and sexually expressive woman who was interested in literature and worked beside Jack for their entire life together. On the contrary, Elizabeth was a family type who was not so interested in Jack's life passion for literature. Due to this personal event, London's fiction depicts central goals of the marriage reformers.³⁵

On November 18, 1905, Jack London made a decision and divorced Bessie, moved away from Piedmont and started new life next day with a marriage with Charmian. (Stone: 183) Charmian Kittredge was a sophisticated woman, but her marriage to Jack caused that people judged her for the scandal and moral indignation. However, she worked hard to prove her

³⁵ WILLIAMS, Jay and WILLIAMS James, W., *The Oxford Handbook of Jack London*, Oxford University Press, New York 2017, p. 60

love to Jack, and Jack's daughter Joan later admitted that Charmian was the best wife for him.³⁶

In 1904, at the age of twenty-seven, Jack London was enjoying worldwide fame as an author of *The Call of the Wild*. He also quickly finished the novel *The Sea-Wolf*, because he accepted an offer from the Hearst newspaper syndicate to cover Russo-Japanese War. This armed conflict escalated nearly a decade of growing tensions between two nations. Jack London as a socialist was against every war, but he was also a journalist and enthusiastic about writing, that's why he wanted to be an observer in this war. On January 7, 1904, he went from Yokohama to Tokyo to cover the topic of this appalling conflict. Before his leaving he arranged sending cheque to Elizabeth from the *Macmillan publishing house*. (Stone: 194) This time, the Nietzsche's theory about a superman who did not have to look at the others did not win out at London.

The adventures that met London once he arrived in Japan to cover the topic of war did not turn well for him. He was arrested, tortured, and interrogated by Japanese government, because they did not want these war reporters operating on their territory. However, his war articles were provocative reportages which highlighted the power of his literary skills. In his article pieces he used literary elements like vivid sensory description, detailed pictures of scenes and actors and remarkable imagery (Williams: 134)

„From Antung, down the river, came the occasional boom of a distant gun. Seven o'clock, eight o'clock, nine o'clock, and nothing happened ... Arms were stacked, knapsacks discarded, and the men were lying on the reverse slope, sheltered against shell fire, mostly asleep, stretched out in long windrows, their dark blue uniforms blotted against the pale brown of last year's dried grass.” (Williams: 134)

Due to many Japanese severe restrictions and another arrest Jack was forced to go back to San Francisco. London was frustrated by leaving but he wrote several great war articles and took war pictures that after his return he received public admiration and fame. (Stone: 199)

³⁶ NUERNBERG, Susan, DUNKLE, I. Jamahl, *The Origins of Charmian Kittredge, Jack London's Mate-Woman*, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, Napa, 2017, p. 1

Since Jack London was perceived as a famous author of amazing articles and books, his divorce with Bessie was discussed in the news a lot. After returning from Japan, Jack experienced very cruel times. First thing that made him dissatisfied was a loss of contact with his two daughters because of the divorce. Secondly, he blamed himself for hurting Bessie and furthermore he had no support in Charmian because she was hiding from journalists. Speaking about his professional life, thanks to his successful novel *The Sea-Wolf* and *The Call of the Wild*, which made him the first millionaire American author, he received many requests for giving lectures, for example in Los Angeles or at the University of California.³⁷ This was a great honour for London, as he could now present his socialist and pro-revolutionary ideas. (Foner: 81) His statements were daring and mostly against capitalism. Jack's thoughts were controversial, and the society started to perceived socialism and London's work. London based his ideas on a charge that capitalism had failed to create sufficient wealth to feed, clothe, house, and educate all the people correspondingly. Capitalism had also accepted no responsibility to reduce the poverty and starvation which made the condition of the working class miserable.³⁸ He supported his ideas even more in *The War of the Classes*, which was a work full of revolutionary and anticapitalistic thoughts and prosocial ideas, and he also became a candidate, even though unsuccessful candidate, of a mayor of Oaklands. (Foner: 83)

After his lecturers at academic grounds and after elections, he came back to a ranch in Glen Ellen, California. In 1906 he published another work called *White Fang*. *The Call of the Wild* tells the story of a dog who becomes wild and leads a wolf pack, while this new release book *White Fang* is the life story of a wolf who comes, after many miseries with both man and nature, to live a dog's life with a loving master. Both novels are set in the land of the Yukon Territory, as Jack's called simply "The North", to which he travelled as a gold prospector several years ago. These two masterpieces were an immediate commercial

³⁷ In 1905, he started a lecture tour across the country – Kansas City, Mattoon, Illinois, Mt. Vernon, Iowa, Columbia, Missouri, Indianapolis, Indiana, North-western University, Toledo, Ohio, Madison, Wisconsin, Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, Orange, New Jersey, Oxford, Ohio, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. LOU, Leal, *The Life of Jack London: Unsettled childhood, finding identity, dealing with success, hardships, and dreams*, Park Historian, 2017, p. 8

³⁸ GLANCY, R. Donald, *Socialist with a Valet: Jack London's „First, Last, and Only“ Lecture Tour*, Quarterly Journal of Speech, 2009, p. 1

success and continues to be famous many years, if not centuries, after its first publication. They dealt with nature's harshness, humankind's capacity for both shocking brutality and unconditional love as well as the struggle for survival of the fittest.³⁹

After publishing *White Fang* in 1906, Jack continued with his lectures which brought him another audience and his books went on sale even more. In 1906 Jack London was a name which meant something big not only in literature. He delivered a lecture at the University of Yale and his revolutionary statements were said in front of three thousand students. After another series of lectures, he fell ill and went back to Glen Ellen. (Stone: 219)

Famous author and public speaker London decided to build a ship with which he would travel around the world. The ship was called *Snark* and it cost all Jack's money. During these times he wrote a book called *Before Adam*, which is quite different from *White Fang* or *The Call of the Wild*. In this work London tried to make Darwin's evolution theory more understandable for younger readers. It is not the masterpiece; however, it is a catchy and informative book. (Stone: 223)

July 1906 was in the sign of destructive earthquakes and conflagration which affected many people and their lives, and Jack's planned journey around the world too. The earthquakes destroyed not only many factories and homes, but also Jack's ship. Jack needed extra money for its repair, and he wrote the best Alaska stories, for instance *The Story of Keesh* or *Love of Life*. After fixing the ship, Jack as a revolutionary socialist wrote a significant work called *The Iron Heel*. It was a very important socialist work, which criticizes capitalism, oligarchy and describes the class struggle. Nowadays, it represents the genre of dystopian fiction. Because Jack had the gift of seeing what most people did not, he also had the knowledge to anticipate time. In this work, London predicted the arrival of fascism. London needed courage and bravery for publishing this controversial book. Fortunately, he had stubbornness, courage, and tenaciousness in his character. On the other hand, *The Iron Heel* did not meet with the great success, nobody knew that the novel was published and if they did, people claimed that the author should be in prison. (Stone: 225)

³⁹ Cengage Learning Gale, *A Study Guide for Jack London's „White Fang“*, Permissions Department, Gale, the USA 2017

Thanks to these personality traits, in summer 1907, he set out for the journey around the world and made his dream come true. In spite of many difficulties, hardships and sufferings, this voyage was an inspiration for his next works. He was on the road for two years and he wrote several books. Among the most popular ones belong the novel *Martin Eden*, whose mission was overlooked by critics, and the autobiographical novel *The Road*, describes the lives of tramps. Although this ship idea was considered as a slip, it clearly corresponds with Jack's personality. Firstly, he was very excited about everything, but he could not see the consequences of his decisions. On July 23, 1909, he ended his journey in Sydney, Australia and after the auction of *Snark* he came back to California. He was struggling financially, and he was seriously ill, but still happy internally that he accomplished his dream. (Stone: 251)

The years between 1909-1916 can be considered as Jack's most literary productive years. He published the already mentioned *Martin Eden*; he wrote also *Burning Daylight*, which is a novel situated in Klondike and San Francisco, *The Valley of the Moon*, *John Barleycorn* or *The Star Rover*, which are as significant as his previous works and thanks to them, Jack belonged to the most paid authors at these times. (Stone: 255)

His professional life was successful, but this cannot be said about his personal life. Jack and Charmian were expected a baby and Jack wished for a boy. On June 19, 1910, Charmian gave a birth to a baby girl who died after three days. Furthermore, he was building an enormous house in his ranch Glen Ellen which was called *The Wolf House*. He was very proud of this building, and he hosted many guests there. Unfortunately, Jack London had many enemies and his big house burnt down on August 22, 1913. (Foner: 128) As Irving summed up aptly: "... he never started rebuilding Wolf's house. Something burned in his heart that night, leaving only an arid desert." (Stone 294)

In addition, London suffered from a variety of diseases. He suffered from dysentery and mental depression. He was experiencing great torment. Exhausted from all life difficulties Jack London returned to the passion he loved when he was a boy – alcohol. He spent most of his time at public houses, drunken and mad at the world. Jack London, as well as his readers and critics, were tired of his writing and he had to write a certain number of words a day to keep contracts with publishers. After fifteen years of loyal membership, he left the socialist party. According to him, the party was not revolutionary enough. (Stone: 316)

On November 22, 1916, in Glen Ellen, Jack London was found dead. Doctors found out that Jack had overdosed on morphine. He committed suicide, which he talked about several times in his short but incredible life. The next day, news of Jack London's death spread around the world. This report has deeply affected not only America but also Europe. The magazine *The Masses* put down: „*Jack London brought true science and the pulse of the revolution to English literature for the first time.*” (Foner: 144)

Jack London died in his 40 years of age. However, during his sixteen years long writing career he published nineteen novels, eighteen short stories and articles and eight autobiographical and sociological books. The name of Jack London is well-known all around the world and he should stay an inspiration for every human being because he identified with the living problems of his age. London was a naturalist, a romantic, and a visionary who is indeed one of the greatest representatives of American literature.

“No man ever became great who did not achieve the impossible. It is the secret of greatness ... But not only must he do the impossible, he must continue to do it ... Browns are not laurelled for the asking, nor is the earth a heritage to any save to the sons of toil.”
(Jack London, from “The Question of a Name” (1900)

4. Life and Works of Cormac McCarthy

Cormac McCarthy is unquestionably one of the most well-known American writers of the twentieth and twenty-first century. As the author of ten novels, two plays and three screenplays, he was awarded the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Pulitzer Prize, and the McArthur “Genius Grant”. His works are inspiration for film and music adaptations and his writing style is used as an imitation and parody in many literary works. Cormac McCarthy is celebrated across the wide cultural spectrum from Hollywood to Harold Bloom.⁴⁰ Now, eighty-eight years old, he is believed to be most important contemporary author and one of the most accomplished fiction writers of the American literature.

⁴⁰ DORSON, Jason, GREVE, Julius, WIERSCHEN, Markus, *Introduction: Cormac McCarthy Between Worlds*, European journal of American studies, Open Edition Journals, 2017, p. 1

Three significant eras in McCarthy's life specify his progress as an American writer. The first era starts when he was born, in the year of 1933, and continues to 1965, which is the year of publishing his first novel called *The Orchard Keeper*. The second era covers the period from 1965 to 1976, ten-year period which he spent in Knoxville, the city in the U.S. state of Tennessee. The third and the last part of his life depicts the period from 1976, which is the year he left Knoxville, to the present.⁴¹ These three principal periods of his life will be examined more deeply in this diploma thesis.

6. The First Period: 1933-1965

Cormac McCarthy was born as Charles Jr. in Providence, Rhode Island, on July 20, 1933, and he was the oldest of six children of Gladys Christina McGrail and Charles Joseph McCarthy. His family were Irish Catholics. When he was four years-old, his father moved the McCarthy family from Cormac's birthplace to Tennessee. Cormac's father had taken a job as a lawyer for the Tennessee Valley Authority. Despite the fact his father, Charles Joseph McCarthy, had a prominent position in social standing as a wealthy lawyer, Cormac lived a life of relative poverty for most of his adult life. This moving from Rhode Island to Tennessee is considered as a determining part in shaping Cormac McCarthy's perspective as a writer. In his new hometown he met many people who became an inspiration for his first novels and influenced his life as a writer. Living country life in Tennessee captivated him and therefore many of his novels are set in the region of Knoxville. (Greenwood: 2)

His childhood was comfortable; he was a clever and intellectual young boy, although he was not a passionate reader. We do not know many details about his childhood and his early years. However, an article from 2005, which was written by Richard B. Woodward and published in *Vanity Fair*, offered a few pictures of McCarthy as a child. The pictures show a pleasant childhood which seems idyllic and innocent; a boy in a canoe, family pictures and a boy in a cowboy suit which suggests a post-war youth. In 1992, he gave his first interview to Richard B. Woodward in *The New York Times Magazine* and the article was entitled "Cormac

⁴¹ GREENWOOD, P. Willard, *Reading Cormac McCarthy*, Libraries Unlimited, Greenwood Press, 2009, p. 2

McCarthy's Venomous Fiction".⁴² In this interview he thought back on his childhood and schooling. He spoke briefly about his pre-high school days and shared some stories:

*„I remember in grammar school the teacher asked if anyone had any hobbies. I was the only one with any hobbies, and I had every hobby there was. There was no hobby I didn't have, name anything, no matter how esoteric, I had found it and dabbled in it. I could have given everyone a hobby and still had 40 or 50 to take home."*⁴³

This excerpt claims that young Cormac McCarthy was interested in so many subjects and he struggled to decide what to bring. His wide range of interests was commented by film director Richard Pearce: *"He has more intellectual interests than anyone I've ever met."* Nevertheless, writing and reading seem to be the only interests that McCarthy never considered. His active reading life started when he was 23 years old. In these times he was in Alaska during a tour of duty with the U.S. Air Force. He was bored so he started reading in the barracks. He began reading in fiction and philosophy. McCarthy's curiosity that emerged in youth is reflected in his novels, where it is mirrored in characters whose experiences are well balanced and sensible in specific historical moments. History and historical changes are the main themes of his masterpieces, but his characters engage these moments only in the context of the philosophical or religious questions. (Frye: 4)

This first period of McCarthy's life is characterized by recovering of the country from the Great Depression. However, the McCarthy family had comfortable life. They had big house with maids and the comparison with the life of their neighbours is different, because the neighbours lived in poverty. The head of the McCarthy family Charles had the top social class standing as a graduate of law school at Yale, both Charles and Gladys, McCarthy's mother, had high expectations for young Charles.⁴⁴ McCarthy was raised Roman Catholic and in the 1940s he was sent to Catholic school in Knoxville where he met and befriended other students. According to the article from 2001 written by Mike Gibson and published in the Knoxville newspaper *Metro Pulse*, Cormac McCarthy was exploring the surroundings of

⁴² FRYE, Steven, *The Cambridge Companion to Cormac McCarthy*, California State University, Bakersfield, 2013, p. 4

⁴³The New York Times Magazine, *Cormac McCarthy's Venomous Fiction* [online]. C2015, last revision 2015, [cit. 2022-05-07]

<https://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/19/magazine/cormac-mccarthy-s-venomous-fiction.html>

⁴⁴ McCarthy's family kept the Irish-Gaelic sense of identity. His nickname, Cormac, is the Gaelic version of Charles. (Greenwood: 2)

Knoxville and enjoying the wilderness of the mountains with these classmates. They also spent the nights out in the open countryside and as he grew older, his passion for the outdoor activities became a deliberate commitment to the wild nature. (Greenwood: 3) On the basis of this article four of his eight novels are either based or are inspiration for the vivid flora, fauna, and countryfolk that comprises East Tennessee.⁴⁵ It is well known that if someone grows up in the South, he witnesses violence and elements of morbidity. McCarthy also claimed this as a Southern writer in the phrase's every sense. Although he did not provide examples of the brutality which he witnessed as a child. (Greenwood: 3)

His first period of life continues in 1951, when he graduated from Knoxville's Catholic High School. After graduation he enrolled at the University of Tennessee, where he spent only one year and then dropped out, so he joined the U.S. Air Force Army in 1953. He served for four years, spending two of them stationed in Alaska where he ran a radio show. After discharged from the service he was 24 years old and returned to Knoxville, where he enrolled again at the University of Tennessee as a student of physics and engineering. While in school he enrolled in Robert Daniel's course in fiction writing. An English professor paid him to edit his book consisting of English essays. McCarthy claimed that due to this job he came to the realization that punctuation and semicolons are not necessary for proper writing. Afterwards he applied this philosophy to all his novels and nowadays he is famous for this stylistic attitude. (Greenwood: 4) In this period we can notice his first writing success. Based on work produced in Daniel's course, he was awarded by the English department for the Ingram-Merrill Award for creative writing in 1959 and 1960. Furthermore, the student journal called *The Phoenix* published two of his first short stories *Wake for Susan* (1959) and *A Drowning Incident* (1960). It is possible that these achievements caused that Cormac McCarthy abandoned his course of study in physics and engineering and he left the university without taking a degree in 1959. By this time, he began what would become an itinerant lifestyle for the next two decades⁴⁶; he also began to work on his first and fourth novels, *The Orchard Keeper* and *Suttree*. (Frye: 17)

⁴⁵ Monkey Fire, He Felt at Home Here [online]. C2011, last revision 2011, [cit. 2022-02-22] https://monkeyfire.com/mpol/dir_zine/dir_2001/1109/t_cover.html

⁴⁶Cormac McCarthy and Jack London are similar in this peripatetic life. Besides Knoxville and its surroundings, he has lived in New Orleans, Chicago, and Kentucky. He visited England, France, lived in Ibiza. (Frye)

If not a degree, then the school at least brought him his new girlfriend, and later his wife, Lee Holleman. They married in 1961 and one year after marriage their son was born. He was given the name Cullen. Soon afterwards McCarthy moved his family to Chicago, Illinois where he worked part time in an auto-parts warehouse, while working on *The Orchard Keeper*. These years are famous for his writing career; however, his personal life was not that thriving. His first marriage was short-lived and in 1963 he divorced and separated from Lee Hollman and their son Cullen. He has decided to roam the South, including parts of North Carolina and the city of New Orleans. By the mid-1960s he had returned to Knoxville, where he collected colourful inspirations which are recorded in *Suttree*. However, *Suttree* would not be published for the next sixteen years. His first book, *The Orchard Keeper*, was published in 1965 by *Random House*. It was the only publisher he had known at that time. Albert Erskine, William Faulkner's former editor, edited this novel, and he became McCarthy's editor; William served in this position for the next 20 years. (Frye: 18)

7. The Second Period: 1965-1976

It was hard for McCarthy to make a living with his writing, and he had to struggle with financial difficulties. Soon after he began to write he stated in one of his interviews for *New York Times* magazine: "*I never had any doubts about my abilities. I knew I could write. I just had to figure out how to eat while doing this.*"⁴⁷ We can see similarity to Jack London who made persistent attempts to become a famous writer. Nonetheless, after the publication of his first novel *The Orchard Keeper* in 1965 he slowly started to be a popular writer, but he would not receive widespread recognition for almost thirty years after publishing. Cormac McCarthy is a very persistent man; he wrote many novels during these not very famous years. However, he is not a sociable person so did not grant interviews and did not enjoy public side of writing and in fact he still does not like associating with contemporary writers and audience. (Greenwood: 5)

The publication of McCarthy's first novel was awarded the Faulkner Foundation Award in 1966. After this success he has decided to make a tour around Europe, and he also travelled to Ireland in August. On a ship sailing to England, he met Anne DeLisle, who was a British

⁴⁷ The New York Times Magazine, Cormac McCarthy's Venomous Fiction, published online in 2015
<https://www.nytimes.com/books/98/05/17/specials/rnccarthy-venorn.html>

former United Service Organizations (USO) performer, she was a singer and a ballet dancer. They married in 1966 in England and spent time together across all beautiful places across Europe. On one of these amazing places, on Ibiza, Cormac McCarthy joined a writer's colony and wrote *Outer Dark*, which was his second published novel. This book, a gloomy parable about guilt and faith with usage of irony and grotesque, established the author as a representative of the Southern gothic literary tradition. Cormac describes the violence and rural poverty in this work; however, he and Anne were leading a comfortable life. Two years later, in 1968, *Outer Dark* was published by *Random House*. (Greenwood: 6) The main character of this book is Lester Ballard, and he is a murderer and necrophiliac. He is one of the most controversial protagonists of McCarthy's and the book did not achieve a great success at the time of its publishing, because many critics did not understand these types of topics.

In the late 1960s DeLisle and McCarthy returned to Knoxville and Cormac started drinking alcohol heavily. It could be caused by lack of money and poverty he suffered while developing his writing career. Theme of alcoholism and privation can be seen in his works from this era because they became the crucial elements of his existence. Since McCarthy has never been interested in a steady job, his wife Anne saved the couple by running a diner in Knoxville called Annie's. (Greenwood: 6) DeLisle, now the restaurateur in Florida, recorded this time in Knoxville in an interview with Richard B. Woodward for *New York Times* magazine:

„We lived in total poverty. For nearly eight years we lived in a dairy barn outside Knoxville. We were bathing in the lake. Someone would call up and offer him \$2,000 to come speak at a university about his books. And he would tell them that everything he had to say was there on the page. So, we would eat beans for another week.“ (New York Times 2015, online)

A private donor, and an admirer of McCarthy's works, saved their life in Knoxville when sending him a check for 20 000 dollars. (Greenwood: 6)

In the decade follow, McCarthy completed another novel called *Child of God*, one of his most grim books inspired by murders in Tennessee, and he also continued to write and

rewrite *Suttree*, which is considered by scholars as his most autobiographical and funny book. (Greenwood: 7) It tells a story of a fisherman, Cornelius Suttree, on the Tennessee River and the lost characters he encounters here. This character can be well-compared to McCarthy and his traits, as a passion for alcohol. Despite the fact, we do not know so much about his early years, *Suttree* can provide the reader a bit of insight to his life.

In the summer 1971 he met Bill Kidwell, who is known for watercolour landscape painting in Tennessee, and he collaborated with him on the creation of two large stone mosaics in Maryville, Tennessee. (Frye: 3) This experience created the theme for his play, *The Stonemason*, published in 1994. Thanks to the photograph taken by Mark Morrow, which is included in a collection of essays called *Images of the Southern Writer*, we can see Cormac McCarthy in an old railroad station in Knoxville. This locality was characterized by homeless and garbage. Mark Morrow found McCarthy living in a very small hotel room. It is a proper example of not having money for better living. In 1973 his second novel *Child of God* was published by *Random House*. This book was shocking and controversial, and it was inspired by actual events.⁴⁸ He also started to write his masterpiece *Blood Meridian*. Sometime around this time McCarthy left Knoxville and separated from Anne DeLisle. They officially divorced in 1981. During these times, in 1978, Cormac moved to El Paso, Texas, where he lived with a girlfriend and drunk a lot. El Paso became his home for much of the 1980s and 1990s and from the man of Tennessee he became a man of Texas. (Greenwood: 7-8)

8. The Third Period: 1976 to Present

The author of three novels found a passion in hard drinking and he struggled with poverty as well. He was in his forties, he had been writing for twenty years but he had published only three novels: *The Orchard Keeper*, *Outer Dark* and *Child of God*. He had been drinking for half of his life, his two marriages were unsuccessful, and he had abandoned Tennessee and had moved to Texas. He moved from the South to the Southwest and this relocation is a symbol of his interest in the mythology of the American West. Just as Cormac is known for being compared to Faulkner, so he is known for his love for the American West. By the time in El Paso, he finished five novels which characterize his perspective of this area.

⁴⁸ ARNOLD, T. Edwin, *Perspectives on Cormac McCarthy*, University Press of Mississippi, 1999, p. 4

The novels are called *Suttree* (1979), *Blood Meridian* (1985), which was published in post-Vietnam era, and the Border Trilogy *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), *The Crossing* (1994) and *The Cities of the Plain* (1998). (Greenwood: 8) The first two books of the trilogy were both very well-received, especially *All the Pretty Horses* which was adapted into a movie. However, all these books depict a violent world where men fight and kill each other to survive.

The years from 1992 to 2006 seem to be most productive of McCarthy's writing career. Thanks to his co-worker Saul Bellow he was recommended for a MacArthur Fellowship, the so-called genius award, which is a foundation supporting creative people. This contribution provided McCarthy the means which were required to write *Blood Meridian*. This work is considered as a masterpiece of the American literature, because 1 500 copies were sold quickly. In addition, *Blood Meridian* made him a famous author. As a well-known author he decided to acquire a literary agent, Amanda Urban, who is still his agent today. Cormac McCarthy refused interviews, meetings, he did not do blurbs, book tours or promotions until then. Amanda convinced him to make a promotion for his respected novels before a publication of the first part of the Border Trilogy *All the Pretty Horses*. Thanks to this publicity McCarthy won the National Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1992. (Greenwood: 9)

The start of his fifth decade of life is characterized by his more permissive stance to the growing public attention. (Greenwood: 9) In the beginning of the twenty-first century, in 2005, McCarthy published a neo-western titled *No Country for Old Men*. This work portrays a drug world and the consequences it has on the lives of three men. Before its publishing he sat down for an interview with Woodward again. The article was published in *Vanity Fair* magazine and McCarthy's literary agent, Amanda, calls this novel "a substantial deal". The novel allows McCarthy to write about violence and unpopular issues, as death and drugs. He claimed that he is not sure what attracts him to write about these themes, although he regarded writers as "not serious" when they do not speak about the topic of death. (Greenwood: 10)

„Most people don't ever see anyone die. It used to be if you grew up in a family you saw everybody die. They died in their bed at home with everyone gathered around. Death is the

major issue in the world. For you, for me, for all of us. It just is. To not be able to talk about it is very odd."⁴⁹

The critical reception was positive, on the other hand it was not nearly as favourable as with some of McCarthy's earlier works. It was, however, adapted into an Oscar-awarded movie by the Coen brothers in 2007 and it won four nominations. Thanks to this success of the film, McCarthy was at the top as an American writer. (Greenwood: 10)

In 2006 McCarthy finally published his tenth novel, *The Road*, and he received the Pulitzer Prize for this book and the United Kingdom's James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction. This year McCarthy participated in a television interview with Oprah Winfrey, an American media icon. The talk show was carried out at the Santa Fe Institute (SFI) and the author is still a permanent fellow and the institute's only writer. (Greenwood: 9) The newly published book, *The Road*, tells the story about the relationship between a small boy and his father who are travelling across a desolate landscape after some apocalyptic events destroy almost all life on earth. McCarthy says that he believes that humans will cause their own extinction. (Greenwood: 11)

Speaking about his hiding from public he said that he needed a necessary protection to be creative while he believed in the power of the unconscious, especially as it relates to the writing. In addition, several aspects of his life are not familiar for the public. In 1997 he married Jennifer Winkley and they have a son, John Francis McCarthy, and they relocated to Santa Fe, New Mexico. They got divorce in 2006. (Greenwood: 11)

In 2013, a second screenplay called *The Counselor* was produced. It is a crime thriller film directed by Ridley Scott and written by Cormac McCarthy.

Cormac is now eighty-eight years old man, and he seems to be as settled as he has never been. In his famous works, McCarthy talks about violence, basic taboos things in our culture, such as cannibalism and incest. As a representative of the Southern Gothic, Western and post-apocalyptic genres he claims that human beings have been continuously committing violence against each other, but in contemporary Western society the violence is no longer

⁴⁹ Vanity Fair Magazine, Cormac Country [online]. C2015, last revision 2015, [cit. 2022-05-22] <https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2005/08/cormac-mccarthy-interview>

visible to the public. He is currently working on a new novel entitled *The Passengers*. The expected date of publication is on October 25, 2022. Like *Suttree* and *Blood Meridian*, Cormac needs a long interruption between publishing the next novel. Fortunately, his literary career does not appear to be done yet.

5. Cormac McCarthy in the Context of the Literary Tradition

Cormac McCarthy is one of the greatest writers in American Literature. He does not advertise himself, which is quite rare in this kind of great publicity. The author is also known for long breaks between his novels; sometimes the pause lasted several years. He was not so popular when publishing his first novels. It should be caused by the fact that many scholars or critics were not sure, and they did not agree about how his work should be read and interpreted. His fiction is often seen as mysterious due to the wide range of possibilities of interpretations. There are many questions that are still unsolved, for example if he is a modernist, a postmodernist, or a post-postmodern writer; if his works are rather political or apolitical, revisionist or traditionalist and if he is a philosopher, theologian, materialist, humanist, anti-humanist, or pastoral. (Dorson et al.: 1) Some critics claimed that McCarthy's novels such *Blood Meridian*, *All the Pretty Horses*, *The Crossing* and *Cities of the Plain* are all postmodern westerns. This sounds like a cliché that everything that is *contemporary* is automatically *postmodern*. It can be said that McCarthy is doing what he wants according to his own mind, mixing various styles and literary sources while shocking and terrifying the reader.⁵⁰

McCarthy's novels and works of fiction consist of contrasting styles and literary movements. He is a master in combining the national innocence and preserving violence. (Owens: 13) His literature is famous for myths and legends as well as natural history and documented historical events, which often cause philosophical, theological, and scientific traditions and ideas. (Dorson et al.: 2) Cormac McCarthy is influenced by James Joyce, William Faulkner, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Flannery O' Connor, William Shakespeare and he also admires Emily Dickinson and her poems. However, he is mostly connected with William Faulkner. William Faulkner is frequently compared with Cormac McCarthy, and it is not by chance. Critics noted it many times and Harold Bloom, an

⁵⁰ OWENS, Barclay, *Cormac McCarthy's Western Novels*, The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 2000, p. 13

American literary critic, was surely right about Faulkner's presence in McCarthy's novels. However, McCarthy's prose, despite the similarities to Faulkner's works is also remarkable for their differences.⁵¹

If we want to understand McCarthy's style and writing it is crucial to go back to his novels and study them from the point of view of his setting, themes, motifs, symbols, and linguistics as well. His works are generally gloomy, shocking and at some aspects also controversial, disturbing, and difficult to figure out what the author wanted to express. The characteristic sign of his prose is a detailed description of excessive use of violence and death through his protagonists. A proper example is Judge Holden, a main character in *Blood Meridian*, who is, according to American critics, the most frightening figure, or Lester Ballard, a dispossessed violent man from *Child of God*. Certainly, there are optimistic elements in his novels, such as love, generosity, human kindness, or friendship, however, they are in the contrast with violence.⁵²

Concerning his characters, they are criminals, homeless, villains, psychopaths, or deviants who dominate McCarthy's novels. Nevertheless, it is interesting that they are not understood as characters providing cultural, social, or moral message to the society, they cannot be seen as anti-heroes because they do not show any passion of rebel against society. They are more like strong individualist who are on the move, without home. Another notable aspect in McCarthy's novels is that the centrality of characterization is based mainly on male characters. He emphasised masculinity and it is repeated in every novel. The proper example can be seen in the Border Trilogy, where McCarthy describes the cowboy protagonist who come closest to the traditional Western hero. Certainly, these strange characters who dominate in the author's fiction are not the traditional representatives of common heroes; they rather represent the cruel and violent world and make reader think about the traditional conceptions of heroism and masculinity and about connection between masculinity and violence.⁵³

⁵¹ CREWS, L. Michael, *Books Are Made Out of Books: A Literary Guide to Cormac McCarthy's Literary Influences*, p. 2

⁵² CREMEAN, N. David, *Critical Insights Cormac McCarthy*, Salem Press, 2013, p. 15

⁵³ BURÁKOVÁ, Zuzana, *Obscure Characters in Cormac McCarthy's Fiction*, Article, University in Košice, 2015, p. 175

The important aspect of McCarthy's fiction is the usage of a language which deserves deeper attention. He mixed formal linguistic register with informal colloquial and vernacular ones, and it is called "high style" and "low style" of language. We can see this usage of language technique in the literature of many great writers, such as Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare as representatives of English literature and Mark Twain and, of course, William Faulkner as the legions of American authors. It seems that in the works of South and Southwest he uses slang of this particular area to make the guessing of the meaning harder for the reader. In his works he demonstrates that the most unfamiliar word is the only word that carries its accurate meaning. In addition, McCarthy's style of writing is famous for his long, sometimes seems endless, sentences. (Creman: 9) There is an influence of William Faulkner, whose sentences are so long that it is mentioned in The Guinness Book of Records; the longest proper sentence occurs in Faulkner's novel *Absalom, Absalom!* Has 1 287 words.⁵⁴ Long sentences are obvious in his first seven or eight novels, and it represented "high style" or writing. (Creman: 12) This aspect is observable besides other things in *The Crossing* where long sentences alternate with short ones.

„They took a blanket off the bed and they found Billy a belt and some clothes and they took all the shotshells out of a Carhart coat hanging on the wall at the back door, one double-ought buckshot and the rest number five and number seven shot, and they took a laundry bag and filled it with canned goods and bread and bacon and crackers and apples from the pantry and they walked out and tied the bag to the horn of the saddle and mounted up and rode out the little sandy street riding double with the dog trotting after them. A woman with clothespins in her mouth in a yard they passed nodded to them.” (McCarthy: 175)

This excerpt from his novel *The Crossing* shows how long his sentences are, and, in addition, how rarely he uses punctuation. This is possibly the most noticeable trait of his writing. Throughout *The Crossing*, we never notice quotation marks, exclamation points, or semicolons. Only few of commas, periods, question marks and sometimes apostrophes are applied. During a television interview with Oprah McCarthy claims: *“You shouldn't block the page up with weird little marks. If you write properly, you shouldn't have punctuate.”*

⁵⁴ Plain English Campaign, *Long Sentences* [online]. C2005, last revision 2011, [cit. 2022-04-13] <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/campaigning/examples/long-sentences.html>

(Cremean: 14) Personally, it was sometimes hard to read and understand these endless sentences without any interruption. However, it creates mystery and integrity, as if the long passages stick together and cannot be cut off.

Another significant element in his fictions is ambiguity according to the literary tradition of Nathaniel Hawthorne or Herman Melville. As well as endless sentences without punctuation, ambiguity expresses another part of mystery in his novels. The noticeable ambiguity appears at the end of the series of the Border Trilogy. However, the ending and its result is presented, but its exact meaning remains undiscovered. (Cremean: 15)

Concerning all these mentioned aspects of his literature, they are necessary for creating the vision of his unique world and his literary art. McCarthy also challenges the readers to discover his type of writing deeper and makes hard demands on them. As he said: *“Don’t ever treat your audience as if they’re stupid. Your reader is smart.”*⁵⁵

9. Cormac McCarthy as a Representative of the Southern Gothic and Western literature

Southern Gothic literature is a genre predominant from the early 19th century to this day. Main characteristics of this mode are occurrence of irrational, horrific and transgressive thoughts, desires, and impulses as well as grotesque protagonists, whose life is affected by surroundings forces, and dark humour. It brings taboo topics to the agrarian South such as slavery, racism, and patriarchy. In addition, Southern literature is characterised by a strong sense of place with boundaries, both territorial and social. Famous American writer, poet, editor, and literary critic Edgar Allan Poe is considered to be the first Southern Gothic writer whose poems and short stories portray all these elements typical for Southern Gothic. Another influential Southern Gothic writer is McCarthy’s idol William Faulkner. Gothic literature gives chance to taboo themes such as a world full of violence, sex, terror, and death. Many scholars describe this genre or discourse as a language of panic or unreasoning anxiety; others state that the Gothic is about the return of the past or something which culture does not want to know or admit.⁵⁶ Southern gothic elements can be seen in McCarthy’s novels set in Appalachian Tennessee such as *The Orchard Keeper*, *Outer Dark*,

⁵⁵ WALLACE, Garry, *Meeting McCarthy*, Southern Quarterly 30, 1992, p. 137

⁵⁶ BJERRE, Thomas, *Southern Gothic Literature*, University of Southern Denmark, 2017, p. 1-2

Child of God, *Suttree* and in his last Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Road*. His other novels can be classified as representing to the Western literature.

Speaking about contemporary Southern Gothic Cormac McCarthy belongs to the most recognized authors. His first novels are influenced by the tradition of the literary great authors of Southern Gothic genre mainly that of William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor. *The Road*, published in 2006, is the example not only of the Southern Gothic, but also of a post-apocalyptic story set in unspecified southern location. (Bjerre: 12) McCarthy also employs postmodern elements – self-reflexivity, ambiguity, and absence of references. Combining post-apocalyptic elements with the postmodern world creates a vision about the uncertainty of the future.⁵⁷ His novels also include the motif of undeadness, which is another aspect of Southern Gothic literature. It shows posthumous phenomena, such as funerary rites, mourning practices, post-traumatic flashbacks, and revenants, like ghosts, vampires, and zombies. These gothic aspects represent boundary between life and death, and they are portrayed in the novels of McCarthy. *The Road* is filled with these walking revenants and the architectural structures are completed with decapitated human bodies, who must live on reducing resources of canned goods or turn to “cannibalism”.⁵⁸

Cormac McCarthy likes to mix different literary genres, ranging from postmodernism, Southern Gothic to post-apocalyptic fiction. With *Blood Meridian*, one of his darkest and most violent novels, *All the Pretty Horses*, *Cities of the Plain*, *No Country for Old Men* and *The Crossing* his narrative shifted towards a tradition of western. However, second part of the Border Trilogy, *The Crossing*, is considered as a different sub-genre of the Western – the ecological Western, when depicting the she-wolf as she crosses border to be reunited with her own.⁵⁹ McCarthy takes thematic elements from the Southern gothic to the tradition of the American Western; violence becomes more emphasized, his characters still call for pastoral living, mainly in the Border Trilogy, and the narrative is still unchangeable.

⁵⁷ STIFFLEMIRE, B. Samuel et al., *Visions of After the End: A History and Theory of the Post-apocalyptic Genre in literature and film*, a dissertation, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, 2017, p. 200

⁵⁸ CROSS TURNER, Daniel. *Zombie South Cormac McCarthy's Architectures of the Dead*. In: LEE, Christina. *Spectral Spaces and Hauntings*. Routledge, 2017, p. 117-119

⁵⁹ KOLLIN, Susan. *Genre and the Geographies of Violence: Cormac McCarthy and the Contemporary Western*. In: *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 42, 2001, p.557-588

His Westerns also include cowboys, an American West influenced by Hispanic culture, ranches, Indians, the frontier, and gunfighters. Another difference between Western and Southern Gothic is that romantic love becomes bound to rural environment. This is a significant novelty which McCarthy stick to in the genre of the American Western. In any other manner, he diverges from the conventions of the literary tradition. (Greenwood: 21) An example of a difference between traditional Western narratives and McCarthy's fiction is the absence of redemption. In the literary Western tradition, the hero has a chance to redeem his sins through acts of conquest. McCarthy's characters try to be redeemed but it is impossible. The absence of redemption is grounded in the characters' lack of language. (Buráková: 178-180)

The American West is a complex area which encourages generations of writers and artist to seek for its rarity and inspires them in many ways. It is the region of contrasts where a landscape symbolizes both a promise and progress for a developing nation as well as a space with conflicting and contradictory hopes and expectations. This American West is often portrayed as a place enabling dreams of new beginnings for settlers. However, it seems to be more home for Indigenous populations and other ethnic and racial groups who have different vision about the potential of the land.⁶⁰

In the twentieth century, Western Literature evolves from traditional to modern literature and forms an intense contrast, even a conflict, with the literature of any past century. Cormac McCarthy and his novels have contributed to the creation of a new type of Western fiction that is a literary tradition. In his conception of western McCarthy describes a male world in which women are absent, domestic settings are temporary and later destroyed and characters do not seem to mature but continue in a self-destructive way of violence, repetition, and loss. McCarthy also tries to accept western mythic imagery and describes these images and myths to the readers closely. According to McCarthy, western landscape can be perceived as a postmodern point of view and as a liminal space, a location which is a transition between two other locations, or states of being, a space in which

⁶⁰ KOLLIN, Susan, *A History of Western American Literature*, Montana State University, Cambridge University Press, 2015

desires are both created and acted upon. His landscapes can be compared to the women in the Border Trilogy: disloyal, damaged, hopelessly desired and degraded.⁶¹

6. Literary Analysis of London's White Fang, The Call of the Wild and To Build a Fire

There is no doubt that Jack London was a talented author who found his craving for reading and writing in his early childhood. He discovered his thrilling stories not only by listening but by reading as well, because he was an extensive reader. He obviously had a talent for writing, he was gifted with an imposing imagination, and he was also well aware that he needed to develop it deeper. Jack London owned 15 000 items in his library, and it is obvious that he did not just collecting books but that he was also an author who had a professional library.⁶² Jack London's family as well as social background influenced him in many ways and many people who he met became an inspiration for him. He was also forced by his life to participate in the gold rush that spread around the United States at the beginning of the 20th century. This event influenced his further production of books as well. He drew an inspiration from his own experience. However, nature and natural environment played an important part in his short but intense life even more. Jack London was amazed by Darwin's theory of species, a social Darwinism, and Herbert Spencer's "survival of the fittest" ethic. This theory says that humans are in the same biological area as the animals and that they share some attributes which are characteristic for the animal sphere.⁶³ The animal and human world, nature and its condition, adaptation, socialization, survival in extreme conditions and the laws of civilization and wilderness can be found in Jack London's work.

When the Darwinism theory of evolution appeared and the concept of the struggle for existence became popular, literature, and Jack London as well, found a prosperous subject in this ethic which discovered this factor in every human being. This life philosophy enabled

⁶¹ MCGILCHRIST, M. Riley, *The Western Landscape in Cormac McCarthy and Wallace Stegner: Myths of the Frontier*, Routledge publishing, New York 2010

⁶² HAMILTON, D. Mike, „*The Tools of My Trade*“: *The Annotated Books in Jack London's Library*, University of Washington Press, November 1986, p. 1

⁶³ KERSTEN, Holger, *Going Twenty Miles Out of His Way: Notions of Human Superiority and Environmental Stewardship in Jack London's Dog Stories*, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, 2008, p. 66-67

him to describe his heroes in the combination with strong expressivity of thought. London's heroes in *The Call of the Wilde*, *To Build a Fire* and *White Fang* are dogs, however few critics have perceived them as "men dressed in furs" and they appreciated "the substitution of animals for men and women in the dramatis personae" as one of the novel's excellent features. Before that London had been interested in romance but the natural science caught his attention immediately. As he was influenced by Darwinian ideas, London began to perceive life in terms of survival values. This approach is expressed in the characters of his stories. Jack London put his heroes into extreme conditions and danger so that the cruel instinct of self-preservation could more powerfully enforce itself. In Jack London's literary masterpieces, *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* he reflected his strong belief that the powerful and adaptable being is an overall winner in the struggles and fights for survival. Both these works deal with heredity and environment which is symbolic for the naturalist movement. When animals, in London's works especially dogs, are hungry and they experience famine they display the theories of Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin. London explained that when the animals are weakened by hunger, they are able to devour one another only in terms of survival and only the strongest survived. Their adaptability and strength are important for the continued existence.⁶⁴ The main dog character of *The Call of the Wild* Buck experienced how important is to adapt to the surroundings and Jack London displayed the moral "*survival of the fittest*" many times in his dog stories through dogs. While living in civilization it was natural to distribute food among animals because the problem of survival was not the issue at all in these conditions. However, when Buck moved to the harsh North, he was forced to learn how to steal food, especially meat, from other dogs to survive day by day. This short excerpt describes Buck's first experience with stealing food from other dogs:

*„This first theft marked Buck as fit to survive in the hostile Northland environment. It marked his adaptability, his capacity to adjust himself to changing conditions, the lack of which would have mean swift and terrible death.”*⁶⁵

⁶⁴ KERSTIENS, J. Eugene, *Jack London's Superman: The Objectification of His Life and Times*, the University of Arizona, 1952, p. 32-37

⁶⁵ LONDON, Jack, *The Call of the Wild*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2020, p. 21

From this time, he continued to rely more on his instincts, which is the crucial topic of naturalist authors. Buck was a smart dog, so he realized that he had more chances to survive when he started to act differently. Another Buck's step was the act of killing a prey. From a civilized dog, Buck slowly became "the dominant primordial beast". This new character trait was stronger under the severe circumstances, and it gave him a control under his life. (London: 24)

„The blood-longing became stronger than ever before. He was a killer, a thing that preyed, living on the things that lived, unaided, alone, by virtue of his own strength and prowess, surviving triumphantly in a hostile environment where only the strong survived. Because all of this he became possessed of a great pride in himself, which communicated itself like a contagion to his physical being.“ (London: 77)

It is clear that Jack London wanted to express his life philosophy of Darwinism and naturalism in *The Call of the Wild*. The beginning of the novel portrays wolves and humans trying to survive in the hard condition of the North. There are many of the naturalistic features in his second dog story *White Fang* as well. It is also the survival of strong ones, the study of characters through their relationship to their surroundings, the pessimistic view, the dark side of nature, the harshness, the violence in relation to nature and drama. Jack London's works are full of topics such as sadness, pessimism, and harsh and dark nature. It is described in the form of silence and sorrow:

„A vast silence reigned over the land. The land itself was a desolation, lifeless, without movement, so lone and cold that the spirit of it was not even that of sadness.“ (London: 3)

What is more, Jack London personified nature and environment in his works and called it wild. This wild is similar and close to the character life and both humans and beasts must fight it. If people imagine nature, they usually see beautiful flowers, green trees, diverse types of animals and harmony between human and nature. Lake Poets, a group of English poets who lived in the Lake District of England, specifically William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey based their poetry on the love for small things and harmony between human and nature. On the contrary, London's nature, or wild, is rather a fearsome creature which can kill and destroy human's life unexpectedly. It is nicely described in the first chapter of *White Fang*:

„It is not the way of the Wild to like movement. Life is an offence to it, for lie is movement; and the Wild aims always to destroy movement. It freezes the water to prevent it running to the sea; it drives the sap out of the trees till they are frozen to their mighty hearts; and most ferociously and terribly of all does the Wild harry and crush into submission man – man, who is the most restless of life, ever in revolt against the dictum that all movement must in the end come to the cessation of movement.” (London: 4-5)

As I mentioned before, Jack London used a word ‘wild’ throughout his novel as a symbol of the treacherous nature of life. This wild represents life which is hard and full of struggles. It can be said that the main hero White Fang is an embodiment of the wild. As a pup, this wild was the unknown for him and after some time he became the epitome of unknown for others. Nevertheless, the wild in London’s masterpieces is not only perceived as the negative and pessimistic issue. Thanks to wilderness White Fang is much stronger and he experiences pleasure of freedom. He must learn quickly to survive the severe conditions, but he can feel the power of life and thrive. ⁶⁶

The theory of Darwinism dominates Jack London’s writings. The idea of ‘survival of the fittest’ is further developed in the chapter ‘The Law of Meat’ in *White Fang*. It is based on the law ‘eat or be eaten’ which is displayed through the part where the she-wolf kills the lynx’s kittens to give some food to White Fang while One-Eye is killed by the Lynx. (Urs: 57)

„The aim of life was meat. Life itself was meat. Life lived on life. There were the eaters and the eaten. The law was: EAT OR BE EATEN. ... He did not even think the law; he merely lived the law without thinking about it at all.” (London: 107)

Furthermore, the novel deals with the exploitation of the powerless beings and with the human cruelty. The nice example is relationship between Beauty Smith, a dog fighter, and White Fang. Beauty Smith is an embodiment of evil and a monstrous being, because he tortured White Fang and often leaves him in cage. For White Fang, the life had become a hell as long as he was not used to this treatment. The cruelty of human beings and animals’ intuition about human’s harshness is well portrayed in this short excerpt:

⁶⁶ URS, U. Harshita, *Theorization of Animal Studies and Re-reading White Fang*, International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, Department of English, Sivananda Sarma Memorial RV College, Bangalore, India, 2021, p. 56-57

„Not by reasoning, not by the five senses alone, but by other and remoter and uncharted senses, came the feeling to the White Fang that the man was ominous with evil, pregnant with hurtfulness, and therefore a thing bad, and wisely to be hated.” (London: 206)

It is interesting that Jack London assigns great number of human characteristics to his animal heroes, who are greatly inspired by Darwin's idea of 'survival of the fittest' and at the same time by the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. They must face some challenges, fight for the survival and they are forced to establish superiority over other dogs, humans, and their surroundings.⁶⁷ His protagonists' qualities are similar to his own. However, he experienced the most important transition of the development of the society and his works originate from his own life. The protagonist Buck from *The Call of the Wild* was a faithful dog at first but after being kidnapped he got to living in the wild and his originated dog instincts were transformed into the wild ones. But because of love for a human, John Thornton, he hesitated to leave him. He did not abandon him until he was killed by the wild Indians. So, on the one hand he desired to be a loyal dog of his human master but on the other hand he yearned for wilderness. As a result, he was caught in a helpless contradiction. Regarding White Fang he was totally different from Buck, because he was always a wolf who lived in wilderness. His mother showed him the civilized world and White Fang became an inseparable part of it. These two animal protagonists remained between two different worlds – the wild and the civilization. And this is the real reflection of Jack's life. His life started in a very poor family, and he always desired for a better and richer life. However, when he came to know the world that he was dreaming about, he was disappointed. It was not exactly what he was expecting, his dreams were destroyed, and he wanted to go back to the country. It was not an easy thing to break the bounds with the civilized society and he was struggling with his conflict. As Buck and White Fang, Jack London lingered between two sides of his life. ⁶⁸

In Jack London's stories the relationship between man and nature is visible and distinctive as it is tied to the ideas of the naturalist movement in which London had created his literary works. The themes of nature and man's role are crucial throughout his short story

⁶⁷ FLINCK, Amanda, *The Watching Dog: The Animal Gaze in Jack London's "To Build a Fire"*, Goteborgs Universitet, 2018, p. 6

⁶⁸ YANG, Hongyan, *Psychoanalysis of Jack London's The Call of the Wild and White Fang*, School of Foreign Languages, Leshan Normal University, China, 2015, p. 45

To Build a Fire as well, where the powerful relationship between the man and the dog suggested that the dog is an agent rather than just a symbol. Animals play important parts in human worlds and consciousness through the time. *To Build a Fire* presents the animal, its gaze and attitude, to set the dog's power over the situation and to restrict human's influence at the same time. (Flinck: 6) The dog watching over the man and the dog's fate can be also interpreted as the symbol of the man's fate and his final disaster.

The Call of the Wild, *White Fang* and *To Build a Fire* share several similarities and aspects; however, the reader can feel some differences as well. Even though they are stories about dogs, the two longer novels place the animals in the very first place and describe their canine thoughts throughout the novels. The shorter story, *To Build a Fire*, presents primarily the story of a man and his unlucky faith and subsequent downfall, where a dog plays a significant role, but he is not the central character to the story. The plot of this story is told without directly mentioning the dog and it does not deal with the dog's individual development as it is in Buck and White Fang's cases. It is supported by the fact that the author does not mention the name of the dog. However, it is still an important aspect of this short story because the unnamed dog fits into London's idea about the man-dog relationship as the dog is presented across the whole story by the man's side. (Flinck: 8)

Jack London's way of illustrating animal behaviour in his masterpieces is most likely the way he perceived it. He describes their manners as animals who are able to adapt to their environment and surroundings. They overcome challenges to feel more comfortable in the vicinity and to behave similarly to their canines' relatives. In view of this fact, humans are compared to the animals as they have the need for adaptability as well. They must adapt to the society and the manners and surroundings, and it is obviously different environment than the one of animals. Speaking about feelings of humans, as love and anger, they occur throughout the novels with canine-animals more than with humans and especially with the dog hero Buck in *The Call of the Wild*. In the narration Buck shows his strong emotions in the case of love for the male protagonist John Thornton. Buck admires him because John saved him from the torture which he had experienced with beasts. This affair shows how Buck is emotionally capable and it also indicates his instincts for good people as he was able to adapt to the specific environment of human society. Later, he did not only receive love from his new owner, but he also received the love from other animals. When Buck received love,

he started showing love back thanks to the adaptability. He also shows different emotions during the story and these emotions are activated by the different adaptations. These changes of animal behaviour show how London portrays animal manner and how animals can adapt in the same way as human do.⁶⁹

London's works are influenced by the main ideas of American Naturalism, which puts emphasis on the human characters who are connected with the presence of environment, heredity, instincts, adaptability and chance to survive in different circumstances. This literary movement is closely related to literary realism, and it is influenced by determinism; it means that a person's will is affected by heredity, natural surroundings, preceding events, or natural laws. In this case nature seems to be in clash with humankind. The story *To Build a Fire* clearly shows the struggle between humanity and nature. The main hero, who decided to travel alone, is fighting to survive in the cold and hostile conditions in the Yukon territory, but the nature is not favourable to him. Even though he is trying his best he became a victim of the tireless and intransigent power of nature. In most of London's stories the wildlife presents tricky situations which a man must tolerate. Unfortunately, humanity usually does not endure; humanity loses the fight and nature becomes the winner of the conflict.⁷⁰

Another significant and symbolic theme of London's tragic tale *To Build a Fire* which relates to naturalism and determinism is the necessity of possession instincts. This importance of inherent aptitude shows up when the main protagonist has decided to go on the long journey despite warnings from the people who know the nature and its deceptiveness better than the man. When the man sets out on the journey with the unmanned wolfdog, they experience extreme cold of the wilderness. From the short excerpt below it is clear that even the dog has better instincts than a man who has decided to fight his fate with nature.

„The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for travelling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment. In reality, it was not merely colder than fifty below zero; it was colder than sixty below, than

⁶⁹ How Did Jack London View Animal Behaviour? [online]. C2022, last revision 2022, [cit. 2022-02-20] <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/How-Did-Jack-London-View-Animal-Behavior-PJSL6VA8VU>

⁷⁰ Comparison of To Build a Fire and The Open Boat [online]. C2021, last revision 2021, [cit. 2022-01-15] <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/Comparison-Of-To-Build-A-Fire-And-765E020009021D79>

seventy below. It was seventy-five below zero. Since the freezing-point is thirty-two above zero, it meant that one hundred and seven degrees of frost obtained. “⁷¹

London shows the need for one to possess instincts throughout the whole short story. The readers can also perceive the contrast between the man’s instincts and the dog’s instinctive behaviour. Whereas the main hero evinces his inability to adapt to the extreme conditions of cold, the wolfdog is suited for the cold of the Yukon, and he is concerned because he knows the brutal North. The man misses the interest for lurking danger in the wilderness and he is unable to survive. The dog possesses instincts from its ancestors while the man lacks the kind of inherent aptitude. Jack London shows how crucial those instincts are for survival in the wilderness.

7. Literary Analysis of Cormac’s *The Crossing*

Cormac McCarthy, born in Rhode Island in 1933 but raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, is still a highly respected author of contemporary fiction. Richard B. Woodward, a famous critic in New York, stated that “*there isn’t anyone remotely like him in contemporary American literature.*”⁷² McCarthy’s life is as gripping as Jack London’s life, and he is also influenced by other authors and life circumstances. McCarthy’s works are hard to classify within any literary movements because they incorporate complicated views and opinions. Critics usually find him as a writer of southern fiction and his works has been compared to those from Herman Melville, William Faulkner, and Flannery O’Connor. Nevertheless, McCarthy has discovered his remarkable talent for writing in contemporary fiction about the West. The first signs of the West literature appeared in the frontier mythology *Blood Meridian*, which was published in April 1985, and he continued with this type of writing about the mixture and interaction between the myth and reality in his Border Trilogy. The Border Trilogy caused that from minority of people who have read his works became a mass audience. This extensive work comprises of three similar novels: *All the Pretty Horses* (published in 1992), *The Crossing* (published in 1994) and *Cities of the Plain* (published in 1998). This exclusive piece of work takes place in a postmodern and confusing place in the frontier between

⁷¹ LONDON, Jack, *To Build a Fire*, Dover Productions Inc., 2008, p. 2

⁷² DASH, S. Sekhar, *Explorations in Ecocriticism: Reading the Select Novels of Cormac McCarthy in the Light of Anthropocentrism and Cartesian Thinking*, Ravenshaw University, India, 2020, p. 34

Mexico and the United States in mid-twentieth century.⁷³ Starting with *All the Pretty Horses* and ending with *Cities of the Plain*, McCarthy chronicles lives of two young men in the Southwest and Mexico. These main characters stand on the border of the world which is about to change forever. McCarthy's Border Trilogy is full of beautiful moments which are alternated with sorrow and humour, and it is considered as a consummate work for the American borders. McCarthy's novels cover topics that are common in the US in the early 20th century such as cowboys or rural settings, however there are also more serious issues such as the drug or nuclear war. To sum it up, McCarthy wants to write about current themes as well as about religion, God, heroism, and truth which are further explored in his novels.⁷⁴ (Dash: 36) This could be the reason why McCarthy's novels enjoy popularity these days, because every reader can find the different subject that can be discovered throughout his fiction.

The second part of the famous work the Border Trilogy is called *The Crossing*. This work is a long novel which begins in 1939 and proposes a wide range of interpretations and views to the reader. The reader is pushed to think about the statements and theories in the novel. All his novels present some measure of ambiguity for the reader or critic to interpret. However, in *The Crossing* McCarthy leaves the reader without any closure and he places contradictory elements against each other. As the title suggests the novel is about three border-crossings between the Southwestern US and Mexico which is made by the young protagonist Billy Parham. During his long journey he realizes the fragility of life and the pure existential truth of living. The main protagonist is forced to live a nomadic life due to presented circumstances.⁷⁵ The interesting, but for McCarthy's novels common, thing is the sticking of the main protagonist between multi-dimensional borderland space. This means that Billy Parham is physically present on the frontier between Mexico and the United States, but metaphorically he lives on the border between childhood and adulthood. What is more, he is also caught in a kind of space between myth and reality. The presented state, Mexico, is a symbol for the tough conditions of the Wild West. It is perceived as a space of a

⁷³ RAIGADAS, R. David, *Cormac McCarthy's Borderlands: A Challenge to a Mythic Construct of the American West*, University of Pais Vasco, Spain, 2003, p. 194

⁷⁵ WELLMAN, Pamela, „*The truth cannot be anywhere but in the speaking of it*“: *Storytelling and the Action of Ambiguity in Cormac McCarthy's The Crossing*, Senior Paper, The University of North Carolina at Asheville, 2008, p. 16-23

lost time, and it serves as a place for those who do not feel comfortable in America. Mexico offers a new opportunity to find the fresh identity. Mexico firstly represents the wilderness and secondly the place where Billy recovers from the familiar past and the mythic frontier. *The Crossing* reflects the cultural differences between Mexico and the United States, but it also debunks the ideas of Mexico, which is perceived as a savage, unstable place with many opportunities. Instead of this, McCarthy rather emphasizes Mexico's borderland conditions and the cooperation of cultures and languages. Indeed, violence and wickedness can be found on both side of the frontier. It seems that Billy tries to be the real mythical western hero, but circumstances caused his abandonment of his original idealism and he only gain the main knowledge about human nature. (Raigadas: 198-199)

To compare Jack London's works where animals, especially dogs, are usually placed in the first position, in *The Crossing* there is also a wolf which plays an important role in the first part of the story. For most of the time Billy is on the trek as a miserable, defeated, and wretched boy who is perceived more like an anti-hero rather than a powerful and strong hero from the romantic story. In other Western frontier stories, a main protagonist, usually a man, enters the unknown territory in the wilderness, which is occupied by Indians or Mexicans who protect their region, only to make his life more thrilling. In case of the hero from *The Crossing*, his incentive to set off the unfamiliar wild is primarily motivated by his liking for the wolf, family horses, and his loved family member, Boyd. The first trip of unexperienced and young Billy over the border is held because of the encounter with the pregnant she-wolf in the trap. Due to his love for animals and his character he decides to return the wolf back to her home country and therethrough he knows he must make the strenuous journey back home by the wolf. This trip ends when Billy shoots a bullet into the wolf to end her suffering and pain.⁷⁶ It could be said that Billy Parham became obsessed with the thought that he can be the saviour who can set the she-wolf free across the border in the Mexican mountains. (Dash: 35)

However, Billy's attachment to the wolf is in the contrast with the conviction of Western ranchers. Actually, their aim is to kill every last wolf in America and Billy's instincts and attempts to rescue the she-wolf and let her free have tragic results for him as well as for his

⁷⁶ KIM, Yeojin, *Cormac McCarthy's The Crossing: Demystifying American West through Bioregional Reinhabitation and Nomadic Border-Crossing*, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 2014, p. 59-61

family. Cormac McCarthy tries to cover an important topic of naturalist writers in *The Crossing*. It is the relationship between a man, Billy, and an animal, the she-wolf as well as a harmony between man and natural environment. As mentioned before, Billy wants to save the she-wolf, which represents his calm and nature-loving character. Notwithstanding the fact that wolves often kill cattle, Billy does not decide to hunt the wolf, but he traps the she-wolf without causing her any pain or injury. He is a sensible young boy, and he considers the she-wolf as a living creature. The different example is the ranchers' approach who want to kill all wolves, which is a contradictory relationship to nature where non-human beings and their environment are required to be used only for human needs. The relation between two people or between human and nature is always a fragile issue. The clash between human and nature occurs at the borderlands. Throughout the story Mexico has been perceived as a hostile land. Two cowboys, Billy Parham and John Cole, the main character from the first Border Trilogy novel *All the Pretty Horses*, represent concord and sympathy for the natural world. They are different from people across the border as they do not engage in acts of violence not only against humans but also environment and its living being. What is more, they desire for living in harmony with nature and they continue to live in close association with the environment. In *Cities of the Plain*, which is the final novel of the Border Trilogy, the main representatives create a balance relationship with dogs which supports the idea that people cannot live without nature and animals. However, people across the border do not agree with this conception and they have decided to listen to the opposite and negative attitude to life. (Dash: 60)

The wolves in *The Crossing* are presented in the very beginning where they are perceived through Billy's eyes. Billy is really fascinated by the wolves because he is a participant in their run across the plain in their natural environment. (Dash: 61) Cormac McCarthy puts forward the precise depiction of physical features and movements of the wolves in Hidalgo.

„There were seven of them and they passed within twenty feet of where he lay. He could see their almond eyes in the moonlight. He could hear their breath. He could feel the presence of their knowing that was electric in the air.“ (McCarthy: 4)

This brief excerpt from the book shows the first connection with the human and the animal in this book. What is more, McCarthy indicates that both Billy and the wolves feel the

presence of each other. This short random meeting with animals prepares the young boy for the following encounter and connection with the she-wolf.

Speaking about McCarthy's perspective on the relationship between nature and human world in his works, McCarthy applies human handling with animals to show man's desire to control the natural world and the animals. Similarly to London's already analysed works, animals occur in McCarthy's fiction, and they usually symbolize some mystical feature, or they can even mirror human personality. However, the relationship in *The Crossing* is rather perceived as a noticeable closeness than some negative perception. As stated before, Billy Parham experiences an intimacy with the pregnant she-wolf. The beasts are placed in the significant positions as they occupy a territory that is usually overlapped with the human area, but it is still an important and distinctive place. It can be demonstrated in the situation with the wolves in *The Crossing*. (Dash: 36) The ranchers discuss domesticated cattle that were killed by wolves, but in a much more fierce way than they do some wild quarry, and "the ignorance of the animal was puzzle to them." (McCarthy: 25) The wolves are disappearing throughout the story, and they are seen as threats to cattle.

„The wolves in that country had been killing cattle for a long time but the ignorance of the animals was a puzzle to them. The cows bellowing and bleeding and stumbling through the mountain meadows with their shovel feet and their confusion, bawling and floundering through the fences and dragging posts and wires behind. The ranchers said they brutalized the cattle in a way they did not the wild game. As if the cows evoked in them some anger. As if they were offended by some violation of an old order. Old ceremonies. Old protocols.” (McCarthy: 25)

In this paragraph, the reader can spot different points of view. The first is the wolf's stance towards the cattle, when he describes the cow as a silly and useless being created by humans and describes it as an alien in the ecosystem. While speaking about human creation, cattle are predestined to be imperfect. The reference to the fence in the novel symbolizes the reliance of animals on humans and those animals need people as well as people need animals.⁷⁷ In the novel, there is contrasting a paragraph about the antelope:

⁷⁷ KOVÁŘOVÁ, Kateřina, *What Else Can Nature Mean: An Ecocritical Perspective on Cormac McCarthy's Fiction*, Muni Arts, 2019, p. 56

„At night she [the wolf] would go down onto the Animas Plains and drive the wild antelope, watching them flow and turn in the dust of their own passage where it rose like smoke off the basin floor, watching the precisely indexed articulation of their limbs and the rocking movements of their heads and the slow bunching and the slow extension of their running, looking for anything at all among them that would name to her quarry.“ (McCarthy: 26)

Cows as well as antelopes are presented as a possible prey of the wolf. Whereas the cow is described as a stupid creature, the antelope is depicted as a perfect animal in its natural environment. Movements of those animals emphasize the contrast between them even deeper from the point of view of the wolf as a predator; it is easy for the wolf to kill any kind of a cow, but it is necessary for the wolf to choose a weakened antelope from the herd. (Kovářová: 57)

In McCarthy's Border Trilogy there is a rising cognizance that civilization will either rise or the civilization will fall. But the invariable topics are war, brutality, death which are demonstrated in the Southwest and Mexico and thus his works are filled with apocalyptic themes and images. (Dash: 38)

The fact that Cormac McCarthy includes animals in his stories is supported by his interest in animals and nature. He often writes about people who sympathize with the natural world and all the aspects that belong to nature. The very beginning of *The Crossing* is a relevant example of this fondness for animal world:

„He carried Boyd before him in the bow of the saddle and named to him the features of the landscape and birds and animals in both Spanish and English.“ (McCarthy: 3)

Even though the tone of the first page of the novel is not optimistic, the animals give us a feeling of beautiful things around us and a feeling of calmness as well as a sense of security and certainty in an uncertain and cruel world. (Dash: 45)

Unlike London's works where primarily dogs present the animal kingdom, the author of *The Crossing* also brings horses in leading positions, but they still reach different type of significance. The wolves differ from horses in many ways, but the most important distinction is that wolves are hard to master. When Billy tries to domesticate one wolf as he wants it

does not end well and the part where Billy cradles the dead, she-wolf's head, McCarthy remarks that Billy tries to hold what "*cannot be held*". (McCarthy: 131) It could be said that the disappearing of wolves in the second part of the Border Trilogy is a negative metaphor for man's craving for having a control over the natural and animal world. (Dash: 45) To be more specific, if people can destroy the natural environment and its dwellers, it is our obligation to consider other perspectives and avoid subsequent disasters.

In McCarthy's novels, the world can be divided into human and nonhuman one, but they are connected with each other. Sometimes, it is hard to distinguish where one world ends and the other begins because the natural environment as well as human surroundings create the continuum. Cormac's nature plays an important role and has a potent power which has impact on the human temperament, however people assume responsibility for the future of the natural world. (Kovářová: 59)

To add my point of view to this chapter where I analyse Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing*, I suppose that the relationship between nature, animals and human is the most crucial thing for living in a life harmony. I would like to mention Henry David Thoreau, a famous American author, who is a perfect example of concord between humanity and nature. Thoreau had decided to spend some time in the isolation from humanity in nature with animals to realise the power of this environment and to get closer to small but irreplaceable things, such as leaves of grass, rivers, forests, air, or animals. In my opinion, everyone should spend some time in nature alone, with their thoughts and ideas. This little step out of the comfort zone brings so much to every individual. In today's world with development of technologies people have severed their attachment with nature. However, preservation of close relationship and harmony with animals and nature should be on the first place in an imaginary line of importance in the whole world.

Personally, after reading the novel *The Crossing*, I perceive the atmosphere and the whole book as a Western myth which elicits nostalgia about cowboys and their way of life on the Western frontier as well as author's expressions of socio-political affairs of the involvement of the US in the global warfare. However, McCarthy's ability to uniquely describe the surroundings of the borderland of the Southwest must be preferred. There is no

doubt that Cormac McCarthy is fascinated by the West, which is a kind of scenery that inspired him, and which boosts his muse in writing.

8. Comparison of Jack London and Cormac McCarthy's works

Concluding the deeper analysis of the lives and works of Jack London and Cormac McCarthy we can understand them more deeply and compare these two incredible authors of works which, in my opinion, will never be forgotten and every individual will find the thing he will looking for in them. Both London and McCarthy enrich not only American literature with their attractive ideas and conceptions and their attitudes to nature and relationship between man and nature.

Jack London was born in the 19th century, and he was at the top of his publishing and writing career in the beginning of the 20th century. Cormac McCarthy was born in the first half of the 20th century, so Jack London was his precursor. It is clear that London was McCarthy's role model as well as Faulkner, Melville, or O'Connor since their works have many similar aspects which cannot be overlooked. Naturalism is the literary movement, which is close to them, but Jack London stucked to it more intensively than Cormac McCarthy, who writes his books with the mixture of literary styles. However, the reader can find the relationship between humanity and the animal world, maintaining harmony and natural balance and, in many cases, the cruelty of natural conditions on the North American continent in the author's masterpieces. Each creator has a different opinion on these key topics according to their life experiences and circumstances. Jack London experienced the Klondike gold rush, so it is easily understood that he included this life event in his works. However, the main protagonists of their novels are mostly dogs, especially wolves, and both London and Cormac McCarthy describe their life evolution and gained experiences in relation to the person whom they accompany throughout the novel.

In Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing*, published in 2001, the wolf and decline of the species play a substantial role. Their decline in New Mexico symbolizes men's longing to handle the whole wild kingdom. The desire of mankind to have control over the wilderness is depicted in Jack London's dogs' stories as well when Beauty Smith beats White Fang, forces him to fight with other dogs and tries to show his power over animals. Humans think they can control nature as well as its inhabitants and that is why they consider wolves as

predators and creatures that must be killed to protect human's possessions. It has impact on the absence of wolves in the wilderness. In this way Cormac McCarthy wants to indicate the rivalry between a man and a wolf in Europe for centuries in *The Crossing*. Nevertheless, wolves are not only perceived as evil creatures, but they also play an important role in communicating the information. The animals are able to attract human attention; when Billy Parham hears the howl of wolves, he immediately makes an eye contact with the pack of wolves hunting the antelope. The motif of wolves can be inspired by the fact that the wolf population was in decline in the Southwest at the end of the 1930s. The only wolf character in the novel, the she-wolf, crosses the borders and becomes isolated from her pack. Cormac McCarthy leaves this fate of the she-wolf's family as a mystery for the readers. However, the she-wolf is the only main animal in the novel, so Billy Parham tries to make a relationship with her and understand wolf's instincts. He does not perceive it as an evil creature and he does not want to kill her, because he is aware of the treat of wolves' extinction.⁷⁸ There is a resemblance with human life; people are used to living in groups, and they often enter new relationships. However, they are also able to live alone but then their life is not so happy and satisfying. It is the same with wolves who are used to living in a pack but after isolation from their dog relatives, it is harder for them to be satisfied with their life.

The topic of wilderness and relation between humankind and nature is presented also in London's *White Fang*, where the difference between life in the wild and living with humans in their environment is explicit. White Fang, the main wolf from the novel, experiences tough life in the pack, though he must fight for survival every day and it shows the pitiless true life of the wolf pack. London describes that this cruel world of the wolves is the true way of nature. Animals' difficulties with which they must deal every day stand in the contrast with the world of people. From the excerpt below it is clear that dogs compare a man to God and the relationship between animals and men is profitable for both sides. (Šeřfraný: 35)

„Food and fire, protection and companionship, were some of the things he received from the god. In return he guarded the god's property, defended his body, worked for him, and obeyed him.” (McCarthy, *The Crossing*: 91)

⁷⁸ ŠEFRANÝ, Pavel, *The Wolf in American Environmental Literature: predator or scapegoat?*, University of Ostrava, Ostrava, 2020, p. 32-33

Another London's work *The Call of the Wild* presents the idea that even inactive wild side can be found in domesticated animal which gives us an apparent message; when animals or people are forced to live in hard conditions in the natural world the wild side emerges to help with survival. Buck's transformation from a domestic dog comes gradually, he serves as a man's helper and he is in the second position, but in the end, he ends up living with a wild pack of wolves again and he pushes through his dominant position. The main message is the possibility of domesticated animal that is initially submissive to the man but can gain the leading position in the severe life with a pack of wolves. Thanks to London's works the reader can look into the mind of wolves and their relationship with a mankind. (Šefraný: 35-36)

Even though Cormac McCarthy's masterpiece, the Border Trilogy, reminds us of the novels written by Jack London, their tone of writing and form of reading is different. Jack London's dogs' stories can be suitable for children who perceive them as fairy tales about dogs with relatively happy endings. There is no need to analyse his works in terms of the harmony between a human and an animal, or adaptability of dogs to harsh conditions of the North. Certainly, there is a legacy to behave well to animals and nature. However, London's books are understandable and easy to read. If a reader wants to find a hidden message, it is possible, but London does not use ambiguity as much as McCarthy does. Reading Cormac McCarthy's works is more time consuming and complex due to the syntactic structure with the very long sentences without interruption or commas or exclamation marks throughout the whole novel. The common characteristic of his novel is leaving some important things unsaid and let the reader think about these topics alone. The perfect example from *The Crossing* are Billy's three journeys which are not explicitly stated, and the journeys miss the motivation, so they seem unclear and vague. Billy seems to lack of interiority, and that he is easily influenced by others. However, this might be McCarthy's technique of writing which does not allow reader and narrator an access to his protagonists' thoughts or ideas. Due to this strategy, the reader perceives the main heroes as someone who lack the ability to act naturally and according to naturalism, they are at the mercy of intransigent and cruel world.

9. Conclusion

The aim of this diploma thesis was to analyse lives, works and literary styles of two well-known and celebrated authors of American literature of the 20th and 21st century, Jack London, and Cormac McCarthy. The main attention was paid to their masterpieces and symbols which are hidden in them. I have chosen three works of Jack London, a short story *To Build a Fire* (1902), and two dogs' novels *White Fang* (1906), *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and one, but extensive work written by Cormac McCarthy *The Crossing* from 1994, which is the second part of his series of novels called Border Trilogy. In the beginning of this thesis, I focus on the literary genres in which the authors created. Both authors and their works relate to the literary tradition of Naturalism, Postmodern Western and Postapocalyptic novel.

American naturalism, which began in 1865 and ended around 1900, is a literary genre, a philosophical doctrine, and Jack London is the leading representative of this style. It emphasizes the real or material world and denies the spiritual one. This material world is governed by natural laws and its human beings and in naturalism people are driven by their instincts. This style is fully influenced by Charles Darwin and by his theory "survival of the fittest". It means that in nature there are some laws and animals as well as people should adapt to this environment in order to survive. London's works serve as perfect examples of this movement, when he depicts domesticated dogs as creatures that suddenly need to adapt to the circumstances to hold on in the pack of wolves. Naturalism also points out to the powerful nature which can control human life. This fact can be seen in the short story *To Build a Fire* where an inexperienced man decided to make a journey in spite of bad weather to the harsh North and he had to face the hard conditions of the nature. However, the wilderness defeated him despite the fact an unnamed but seasoned dog accompanied him throughout whole story. Important topic of London's works are instincts which play necessary part in overcoming unpredictable nature.

Postmodern Western, Southern Gothic, and Postapocalyptic novel are complementary genres characteristics for the works of Cormac McCarthy. He is the master of mixture of different styles, such as western, Southern Gothic or post-apocalyptic literature, and he adds to them other aspects that make his works more readable. Postmodern Western literature

takes place in the Wild West and describes the clash between white civilization and indigenous inhabitants alongside the established borders. Western literature is a thrilling type of fiction which mixes the wilderness with romantic landscape. However, McCarthy's Border Trilogy is considered to be a sub-genre of the Western literature and it is called the ecological Western, where the author describes the scenery of the landscape as well as a relationship between a man and a she-wolf. Another literary influence on McCarthy's creation is Southern Gothic genre, which prevailed in the 19th century, but it is still progressive, was characteristic for Edgar Allan Poe as well as for William Faulkner. Cormac McCarthy's works mirror its themes, such as dark forces, taboo topics, irrational, and dreadful ideas in the place of the agrarian American South. *The Orchard Keeper*, *Child of God*, *Suttree*, *Outer Dark* and *The Road* are McCarthy's masterpieces in which southern gothic elements appear. Last important literary style mentioned in this thesis is Postapocalyptic novel. This genre is reflected in the post-modern book *The Road*, published in 2006, where the author describes the landscape as post-apocalyptic and pale with a fearful atmosphere. McCarthy pushes the reader to think about what has happened to the world and if there is any kind of redemption or salvation. The world in these types of genres is ruined and there is a challenge for the individual – to build new moral principles.

The next part of this work was a look into the lives of Jack London and Cormac McCarthy. London's life was really complicated and exciting and there is no doubt that his life was an inspiration for his masterpieces. To make it clear, I have divided his life into four parts, each a characterizing milestone in his short, but intensive life – Jack London as a sailor, Jack London as a tramp, Jack London's studies, and his involvement in California Gold Rush era. He experienced life full of miserable incidents (life in poverty) which were alternated with happy events (publishing of famous books), and it mirrors in his writings.

Cormac McCarthy, prizes winner for literature, is still a respected author in the 21st century. I have divided his life into three periods, from his birth to the present. Even though he was born in Rhode Island, his family moved to Tennessee, Knoxville and this moving is considered as a determining part in shaping Cormac McCarthy's perspective as a writer. He is influenced by living in poverty, Great Depression, duty in U.S. Force Army or hiding from public. Although he wrote many works, he gained mass audience after publishing his so-called Border Trilogy, which contains three novels.

Both mentioned authors lived in different eras, however, their works are similar in many ways, and they reflect a similar view of the preservation of harmony between a man and an animal. McCarthy's works are characterized by four key aspects: his unique depiction of scenery, his using of very long sentences during narration an action, his authentic dialogues, and the use of Spanish words in his writing. All the aspects can be easily found in *The Crossing*. Jack London's works are influenced by evolution and determinism, in particular by Darwin and Spencer and their theories of heredity. For most of the time, London was seen as an author of primitive works, but nowadays, critics find him as someone who dealt with the question of the urgent present environmental protection. *The Call of the Wild* is an influential work which is against human mistreatment of animals and human intervention into nature. London's nature has intrinsic value on which human life depends and he covers the topic of ecology in this novel. His works seem to be more relaxing under the atmosphere of cruel nature and society than McCarthy's work thanks to humour and wit. Both authors with their exceptional writing techniques, amazing description of landscape and language pull the readers into action and make them cry and laugh with the main characters' mood. Jack London and Cormac McCarthy are brilliant authors who brought not only immortal works with severe topics to our awareness, but they also produce vivid images and spirits that readers can still enjoy nowadays. In their works there are so many topics to be discovered, but the most important aim of this thesis was to analyse the concord between humanity and wilderness. While reading works of these two authors I came to realization that it is necessary to protect the nature and its inhabitants around us. Humans must be aware of their responsibility to nature and an eventual return to nature. Man should also not behave sovereignly in the wilderness, as such a being would not be able to survive without the inhabitants of nature.

10. Resumé

Tématem této diplomové práce byla analýza vybraných děl amerických autorů Jacka Londona a jeho „psích“ příběhů, konkrétně *Volání divočiny*, *Bílý Tesák* a *Založit oheň*⁷⁹, a také Cormaca McCartyho a jeho díla, které je jedním ze tří částí jeho takzvané hraničářské trilogie, a to *The Crossing*. Nejprve jsem se zaměřila na literární směry a žánry, ve kterých autoři působili. Jednalo se primárně o naturalismus, literární umělecký směr, který vznikl v 19. století ve Francii z realismu a jeho hlavním představitelem byl Émile Zola. Tento žánr usiluje o zachycení reality a detailní popis okolního prostředí, kde vybraní jedinci, kteří většinou prožili bídny život, stojí na okraji společnosti a jsou ovlivněni svými instinkty. Naturalismus klade důraz na ovlivnění jedince okolními přírodními zákony a odmítá spirituální život, který nevnímá jako reálný. Jack London a stejně tak tento směr jsou ovlivněni evoluční teorií Charlese Darwina. Darwin dospěl k závěru, že za velkým množstvím živočišných druhů stojí přírodní výběr, který platí nejen pro zvířata, ale také pro rostliny a samozřejmě i pro lidstvo. Tato přírodní selekce se řídí pravidlem „přežití nejschopnějších“ („survival of the fittest“). Jack London se s jeho tvorbou řadí mezi naturalisty díky tomu, že v jeho dílech jsou vyobrazováni psi jakožto hlavní hrdinové, kteří se musí z domácího prostředí adaptovat na kruté podmínky neklidného okolí a přizpůsobit svůj životní styl tak, aby byli schopni přežít. Naturalismus mimo jiné poukazuje na mocnou přírodu, která je schopna ovládat životy vybraných individuí. To můžeme sledovat v krátké povídce *Založit oheň*, publikované roku 1902, kde se nezkušený muž rozhodl vydat se i přes nepřízeň počasí na cestu na drsný sever. Zde musel čelit nemilosrdné divočině, která ho nakonec svou silou a mocí dostihla. Muž je celým příběhem doprovázen nejmenovaným, ale ostříleným, psem, který má viditelně lepší instinkty než muž, což hraje nezbytnou roli při překonávání nepředvídatelné přírody.

Další důležité žánry, které byly v této diplomové práci rozebrány, jsou postmoderní western, jižanská gotika a postapokalyptický román. Jsou to literární směry, ve kterých tvořil Cormac McCarthy a tím pádem se jeho díla vyznačují charakteristickými rysy těchto žánrů. Cormac McCarthy, stále velmi uznávaný autor vlivných děl, je mistrem mísení různých literárních stylů, k nimž přidává další symboly a aspekty, díky kterým jsou jeho díla ještě čtivější. Prvním z těchto žánrů je postmoderní western, který se většinou odehrává na

⁷⁹ Anglický originální název zní *To Build a Fire*, do češtiny volně přeloženo buďto *Založit oheň* či *Rozdělat oheň*.

Divokém západě a popisuje střet mezi civilizovaným obyvatelstvem a domorodými kmeny za účelem vytvoření hranic. Western je napínavý a strhující typ fikce, ve kterém se čtenář může setkat jak s nevyzpytatelnou divočinou, tak i s klidnou a romantickou přírodou. Co se však týče McCartyho hraničářské trilogie, dílo *The Crossing* je považováno za sub žánr westernu. Konkrétně se jedná o ekologický western, ve kterém autor popisuje a chrání krajinu a vztah mezi člověkem a zvířetem, zde vlčící. Další literární žánr příznačný pro McCartyho tvorbu je jižanská gotika. Tento směr převládal v 19. století, ale i dodnes je v literatuře významný. Nejprve byl charakterizován pro Edgara Alana Poea, ale i pro Williama Faulknera. Mistrovská díla Cormaca McCarthyho, konkrétně *The Orchard Keeper*, *Boží stvoření*, *Suttree*, *Vnější temnota* a slavná *Cesta*, odrážejí témata tohoto směru, jako jsou temné síly, tabuizovaná témata, iracionální a děsivé myšlenky v místě agrárního amerického jihu. Posledním významným literárním stylem zmíněným v této práci je postapokalyptický román. Tento žánr a jeho prvky se nacházejí v postmoderní knize *Cesta*, vydané v roce 2006, kde autor popisuje krajinu jako postapokalyptickou s pochmurnou až děsivou atmosférou. McCarthy svým stylem nutí čtenáře přemýšlet o tom, co se skutečně stalo se světem a zda existuje nějaký druh vykoupení nebo spásy. Svět v těchto typech žánrů je v troskách a na jednotlivce čeká výzva, kterou je vybudování nových morálních principů za účelem vytvoření nového světa.

Další částí této práce byl pohled do života dvou literárních velikánů, Jacka Londona a Cormaca McCarthyho. Nutno říct, že oba životy byly velmi bohaté na zkušenosti a zážitky, oba autoři zažili zlomové události, které ovlivnily jejich tvorbu. Někdy se až může zdát, že tolik událostí nebo nešťastných náhod nemůže jednoho člověka za život potkat. Rozbor jejich životů mě velmi zaujal a tím pádem je popis jejich životů rozsáhlý. Život Jacka London byl opravdu komplikovaný, ale zároveň vzrušující a není pochyb o tom, že jeho životní byla velkou inspirací pro jeho mistrovská díla. Pro větší přehled jsem jeho život rozdělila do čtyř částí, z nichž je každá charakterizována určitým milníkem v jeho krátkém, ale intenzivním životě – Jack London jako námořník, Jack London jako tulák, jeho studia a jeho zapojení do éry kalifornské zlaté horečky. Jack London prožil život plný strastiplných příhod (život v chudobě), které střídaly události veselé (vydání slavných knih), a to se odráží i v jeho spisech. Při analýze mě zaujalo, že Jack London prožíval ve svém dětství věci, které nekorelovaly s jeho věkem. Jako příklad může být tvrdá práce již od útlých osmi let, kdyby si dítě mělo užívat svého dětství s vrstevníky. Jack London nežil život jako jeho vrstevníci, jelikož již

v patnácti letech byl závislý na alkoholu a byl nucen jednat jako dospělý muž. Avšak i toto formovalo jeho budoucí tvorbu.

Cormac McCarthy, držitel několika cen za literaturu, je i dnes stále uznávaným autorem, který má před sebou ve svých téměř devadesáti letech publikování nejméně jedné knihy. Stane se tak pravděpodobně letos, po šestnácti letech od posledního vydání knihy *Cesta* z roku 2006. Stejně jako u života Jacka Londona, i jeho život jsem rozdělila do určitých etap, které se mapují od jeho narození až po současnost. Přestože se narodil na Rhode Islandu, jeho rodina se přestěhovala do Tennessee do Knoxville. Toto stěhování je považováno za určující součást formování perspektivy Cormaca McCarthyho jako spisovatele. Život Cormaca McCarthyho je ovlivněn chudobou, Velkou hospodářskou krizí, službou v armádě USA nebo skrýváním se před veřejností a médii. Přestože napsal mnoho děl, masové publikum si získal po vydání své takzvané hraničářské trilogie, která se stala velmi úspěšnou a obsahuje tři romány. Druhý z těchto románů vydaný v roce 1994, *The Crossing*, je součástí analýzy této práce.

Jádrem této diplomové práce je podrobný literárněvědný rozbor děl zmíněných autorů, jejichž společným tématem je vztah člověka ke světu zvířat, zachování harmonie a přírodní rovnováhy a v neposlední řadě krutost přírodních podmínek na severoamerickém kontinentu. Oba slavní autoři žili v různých dobách, jejich díla jsou si však v mnohém podobná a odráží obdobný pohled na zachování harmonie mezi člověkem a zvířetem. McCarthyho díla se vyznačují čtyřmi klíčovými aspekty: jedinečným zobrazením scenérie, používáním velmi dlouhých a složitých vět během vyprávění, autentickými dialogy mezi hlavními postavami a používáním španělských slov, která se hojně vyskytují v jeho tvorbě. Všechny tyto prvky lze snadno nalézt mimo jiné v díle *The Crossing*.

Tvorba Jacka Londona je ovlivněna evolucí a determinismem, zejména Charlesem Darwinem a Herbertem Spencem a jejich teoriemi dědičnosti. Většinu času byl Jack London vnímán jako autor primitivních děl. Dnes ho kritici považují za někoho, kdo se již před mnoha lety zabýval nyní aktuální otázkou náležité ochrany životního prostředí. *Volání divočiny* je vlivné dílo, které je proti lidskému týrání zvířat a lidským zásahům do přírody. Příroda Jacka Londona má vnitřní hodnotu, na které závisí lidský život. Jeho díla působí v atmosféře kruté přírody a společnosti uvolněnějším dojmem než McCarthyho tvorba, a to převážně díky

občasnému humoru. Oba autoři svými výjimečnými technikami, úžasným popisem krajiny a užitím jazyka vtáhnou čtenáře do děje. Čtenář se velmi snadno ztotožní s náladou hlavního hrdiny a prožívá s ním celý příběh. Jack London a Cormac McCarthy jsou výjimeční autoři, kteří do našeho povědomí přinesli nejen nesmrtelná díla se zajímavými a vážnými tématy, ale vytvořili živý popis krajiny a hlavních postav, které čtenář může prožívat dodnes.

V jejich tvorbě je stále tolik témat k objevování, ale nejdůležitějším cílem této práce bylo analyzovat soulad mezi lidstvem a divočinou. Při čtení děl těchto dvou autorů jsem došla k závěru, že je třeba chránit a respektovat přírodu, ale i její obyvatele, kteří žijí kolem nás a jsou nedílnou součástí našich životů, jelikož lidstvo tváří tvář k přírodě nemusí mít vždy navrch. Lidé si musí být vědomi své odpovědnosti k přírodě, kdy jen zdánlivou maličností může člověk výrazně ovlivnit divočinu kolem sebe, či způsobit její nenávratné poškození. Člověk by se také neměl chovat k přírodě svrchovaně a měl by se snažit žít v souladu s krajinou a živočichy. Jejich díla mimo jiné naznačila spletnost vztahů mezi lidmi a zvířaty, která na první pohled nemusí být zřejmá.

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