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Bakalářská práce

Příroda a naturalismus v dílech Johna
Steinbecka
Nature and Naturalism in the Works of
John Steinbeck

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Abstract

The bachelor thesis focuses on characteristic of the American naturalism. It attempts to find naturalistic elements in John Steinbeck's short works, furthermore connection between naturalism and natural determinism. It introduces American naturalists of 1930s and outlines the social situation of this period. The thesis refers to John Steinbeck's life, the author's style and his approach of naturalism. The task claims to find a subject matter of connection of a man and nature. Further it outlines John Steinbeck characters' relationships to nature and the world. The main aim of the thesis is an analysis of the short works: *Burning Bright*, *To a God Unknown* and *The Pastures of Heaven*.

Anotace

Náplní této bakalářské práce bude charakterizovat americký naturalismus . Pokusí se nalézt naturalistické prvky v krátkých dílech Johna Steinbecka a také souvislost naturalismu s přírodním determinismem. Práce představí americké naturalisty 30.let 20. století a nastíní společenskou situaci této doby. Zmíní se o životě Johna Steinbecka a zaměří se na jeho autorský styl a pojetí naturalismu. Úkolem práce bude najít tematiku sepětí člověka s přírodou. Dále nastíní vztah Steinbeckových hrdinů k přírodě a světu. Hlavním cílem bude analýza krátkých próz Johna Steinbecka: *Burnig Bright*, *To a God Unknown* a *The Pastures of Heaven*.

Contents

Introduction	6
1. American Naturalism and Natural Determinism.....	7
1. 1. Natural Determinism.....	8
2. American Naturalists.....	10
3. Situation of 1930s	12
4. Biography	13
5. John Steinbeck's Style	18
6. John Steinbeck's Naturalism	21
7. Burning Bright	23
8. To a God Unknown.....	27
9. The pastures of Heaven.....	33
Conclusion.....	41
Bibliography	43
Primary literature.....	43
Secondary literature.....	44
Internet sources	44

Introduction

The United States is a beautiful country with spectacular nature that overwhelmed many American writers and John Steinbeck as well. Especially California which was his native landscape and had a great impact on his literary production. John Steinbeck belongs to the group of American naturalists of 1930s. He represents the author of novels and short works that are analysed in the thesis. The first chapter the thesis focuses on a definition of the naturalism and natural determinism when nature plays the most important role. It outlines the situation of the 1930s. The thesis introduces John Steinbeck's biography. The author's style and his approach of naturalism will be mentioned. At last it analyses three short works and finds elements of naturalism and natural determinism.

1. American Naturalism and Natural Determinism

The phrase “American literary naturalism” describes the thematic exploration of concepts arising out of post-Enlightenment developments in science and philosophy. It is the literature born out of the tension between older, traditional belief systems and the new science of the post-Darwinian nineteenth century. (Newlin, 2011)

The term *naturalism* describes a type of literature which attempts to apply scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to its study of human beings. According to Jackson J. Benson, an eminent Steinbeck biographer, all human beings are doomed at every moment to act or be acted upon according to circumstances external to them, such as birth and class, hardly makes for interesting fiction: “That man can act, that he has a measure of free will, and that the choices he makes are from genuine alternatives . . . this is what we call a story” (106-7).¹ Naturalism implies a philosophical position. For naturalistic writers, human beings are, Emile Zola entitled them “human beasts”, characters who can be studied through their relationships to their surroundings. In other words naturalists believed that the laws behind the forces of heredity and environment that govern human lives might be studied and understood.

Naturalism’s central belief is that these forces originate both within and outside them. These forces might include the need for food, sex, shelter, social dominance which belong to animal drives. External forces might include the natural environment, the man-made environment, or finance, industry and the economy. The lives of lowly individual humans are always controlled with something in naturalist works. The naturalists try to demonstrate that this is inevitable.

¹ PANESAR, Gurdip. *Critical Insights: John Steinbeck, Frank Norris, and Literary Naturalism*, http://salempress.com/Store/pdfs/steinbeck_critical_insights.pdf, p. 60

1. 1. Natural Determinism

Naturalism has its roots in the idea of scientific determinism. There was the rise of new scientific and philosophical ideas. The most important was Darwin's theory of evolution in the late nineteenth century. The naturalists believed that individuals' lives and characters are governed and determined by impersonal natural laws and forces, such as social conditions, the environment, and heredity. The naturalist writers described the forces of heredity and environment as they affect and afflict individual lives. Their lives are governed by the forces of heredity, animalistic instinct and raw passion. Hero's attempts to exercise free will or any choice are impossible. Characters cannot control "the brute within". The French novelist Émile Zola remains perhaps the single best-known exponent of the school. (Panesar, 1994). Zola's 1880 description of this method is found in *Le roman experimental*.

Concerning themes, naturalistic writers wrote detailed descriptions of the lives of the oppressed people. Writers were concerned about how men and women were overwhelmed by the forces of environment and by the forces of heredity. The American naturalists are interested in post-Darwinian reconsiderations of the relationship between humans and nature. "This engagement manifests itself in explorations of natural law, evolution, atavism, and degeneration, as well as in the philosophical, sociological, and psychological implications of such engagement."² Key themes are, simply said, represented by survival and according to Darwin's theory "survival of the fittest". The "brute within" each individual is composed of strong and often warring emotions such as passions, lust, greed, desire for dominance or pleasure and the fight for survival in an amoral, indifferent universe. Other themes introduce social determinism, violence and social taboo. According to Donald Pizer the writer's fictional world is unheroic and rounds of daily existence. However, the naturalist discovers qualities of man which are associated with the heroic or adventurous, such

² NEWLIN, Keith. *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0-19-536893-2, p. 72

as acts of violence and passion which invoke sexual adventure or bodily strength and which culminate in desperate moments and violent death.

Wullcat says that the conflict in naturalistic novels is often “man against nature” or “man against himself”. His idea is that the naturalistic novel offers “clinical, panoramic, slice-of-life” drama that is often a “chronicle of despair”. Technically the naturalists made detailed documentation of life and created gloomy and pessimistic atmosphere. Characters are often poorly educated members of lower middle class or lower class.

The plot often depicts progression toward degeneration or death. Settings of naturalistic novels represent slums, sweatshops, factories or farms. Nature in naturalist novels pictured as indifferent force acting on the lives of humans.

If we summarize typical characteristic of naturalism we conceive objectivity, determinism, pessimistic – emotional coldness, settings in the everyday world, ordinary events and everyday characters.

2. American Naturalists

Different versions and variants of naturalism dominated for two decades in America until modernism became its powerful opponent. One way led to the literature of coverage and other to the literature of documentation. Authors, who belong to the group of American naturalists, are Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, John Steinbeck.

Characters in Frank Norris' *The Pit*, Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and *Jennie Gerhardt*, Stephen Crane's *Maggie* are people who are class-men in a deterministic system. Norris examined the animal inside a man, so called *bête humaine*. Crane in *The Open Boat* portrayed nature as completely unendurable. Theodore Dreiser in *Sister Carrie* says that a man lives like an animal which is inexperienced and conforms to powers of nature but like a man, it is impossible for him to put up with it. It is transition stage where he oscillates because he does not have instincts which could lead him according to nature and his free will does not learn to this accordance. According to Norris, farmers and railwaymen are influenced by natural powers. He uses wheat as a basic naturalistic symbol.³

Stephen Crane was concerned with the aspects of violence in the life of individuals and by their fight for survival in the inhuman society and nature. His most important work was *The Red Badge of Courage* published in 1895. We can find a great degree of emotional involvement in the lives and passions of their characters in the hero of this work and chance and chaos are found there instead of determinism. (Procházka & COL., 2002)

³ My translation

Other American naturalist was Theodore Dreiser. "He believed that "man was merely a mechanism moved by chemical and physical forces beyond his control", that man was "merely an animal driven by greed and lust in a struggle for existence."⁴ His works are powerful in the portrayal of the American life. Dreiser's *American Tragedy*, published in 1925, was written in a naturalistic style despite the fact that modernism endangered it. It is the story about an American dream which broke down. The hero tried to achieve success but the plot ends in tragedy and death. This novel is a link between an early naturalistic prose and the literature of the social protest, it was during the crisis of 1930s.⁵

His best work is his first novel *Sister Carrie* which was important at least in two respects. First, for its concentration on the desires, dreams and fears of average Americans, and second, for its becoming the cause of Dreiser's long- lasting fight with censorship. (Procházka & COL., 2002) He accused contemporary society. Carrie Meeber was a girl who went to Chicago where she wanted to achieve financial and social success. Carrie used her own body to reach it. The plot irritated contemporary moral idealists but it captured the truth of everyday life.⁶

Jack London was a popular author who was proclaimed by his stories from Klondike for example by tales called *The Son of the Wolf*. He also examined society in *The People of the Abyss* about poverty in London's East End Jack London portrayed evolutionary fight in works such as *The Call of the Wild*, *The Sea-Wolf* or *White Fang*. London examined so called "the power of raw animality inside a man." He transformed naturalism into romantic celebration of life, free will and vitalism. His most important work is the novel *The Call of the Wild* published in 1903.

⁴ American Naturalism (1890s). [online]. last revision 22th of February [cit. 2013-05-09].<<http://www.english-e-corner.com/americanliterature/contents/Naturalism/default.htm>>

⁵ My translation

⁶ My translation

Frank Norris dealt with serious individual and social problems of the booming capitalist society. In *McTeague* Norris described the individual tragedy of a middle – class marriage. *The Octopus*, a well-researched novel, dealt with the vain fight of the prosperous wheat farmers in San Joaquín Valley south of Stockton, California, against the railroad company. Norris in *The Octopus* focuses on the vain collective resistance against the impersonal, chaotic forces of social development. (Procházka & COL., 2002)

3. Situation of 1930s

This time was very difficult for people not only for economic changes but also for social changes. The stock market crash was a major shock. Americans encountered a widespread economic failure. Thousands of homeowners lost their properties in 1930. People's lives depended on weather as well which caused them problems with farming. The worst drought in modern American history struck the Great Plains in 1934, and windstorms stripped the topsoil from millions of acres, destroying crops and livestock. People left the states of Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas, most heading to California, the Dust Bowl 'Okies'. The agricultural depression had already made farming untenable for many of them. However, the situation had overwhelmed the government by 1932. The action taken by Franklin Roosevelt and his administration's New Deal helped restore confidence, especially in the banking system, following an emergency bank holiday in March 1933. Yet the New Deal never effected a full recovery. (Eldridge, 2008)

The government tried to solve an internal politic and economic situation by the complex of precautions which would refresh industrial production and social conditions. There was the Federal Writer's Project in 1935 which was the campaign organised by American nation. Thousands of writers, scientists and publicists engaged in it and so John Steinbeck did. He examined living conditions of workmen at Californian fruit plantations and in a labour camp. Steinbeck inserted his impressions in

the article entitled *Dubious Battle* in California which was printed in the magazine called *Nation* in 1936. He fellow – travelled with people who were downgraded by the society for instance in *Of Mice and Man* or in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Steinbeck went to Oklahoma and joined the group of migrant workmen who pilgrimed to California to find livelihood there. He was living and working with them and used this experience to write this social novel. The Joads are travelling to California to find a work there. Hundreds of families are going from Oklahoma to California which is unfamiliar and hostile place for them. They put together to overcome hunger, terrible living conditions and face to ill-nature of the authorities. This novel was an impulse for Roosevelt's government to intensify corrective actions and other revisions. John Steinbeck was awarded the Pulitzer Prize due to *The Grapes of Wrath* in 1940 and this masterpiece was picturized as well. The novel brought fame to Steinbeck.⁷

4. Biography

John Ernst Steinbeck Jr. was born in Salinas, California, on February 27, 1902. He was the youngest of three siblings, with two older sisters, Esther and Elizabeth. His father, John Ernst Steinbeck, was a farmer and the treasurer of Monterey County; his mother, Olive Hamilton Steinbeck, was a school teacher in the public school in Salinas, and through Steinbeck's childhood, she read to him from the world's famous literature, cultivating in him love of words and story. (Bloom, 2000) His favourite works were for example *Crime and Punishment*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Le Morte d'Arthur* and he also loved to read the King James Bible. Besides books, he also loved nature. Steinbeck grew up in Salinas' fertile valley where he found much of the material that he would one day use in his books. (Bloom, 2000)

⁷ My translation

“Salinas was a vibrant and prosperous community in 1900, but it was a cultural backwater. In this regard it was utterly unlike the towns along the shore of Monterey Bay, where the Steinbeck family owned a Cottage where young John summered.”⁸ Monterey, Pacific Grove, and Carmel were the seacoast of Bohemia, these towns were the watering holes for such notable California literati as George Sterling, Charles Warren Stoddard, Mary Austin, and Jack London, and such then-famous social activists as Upton Sinclair and Lincoln Steffens. (Staff, 1987)

“As a boy, Steinbeck fell in love with the Monterey Peninsula. He was also charmed by the special softness of the Corral de Tierra which lies just west of Salinas, midway between coast and valley. And he was awed by Big Sur with its majestic sea cliffs and its dark misty forests. Steinbeck found the material for his dozen volumes of California fiction in the Salinas and neighboring valleys, along the shores of Monterey Bay, in the Croak de Tierra and on the Big Sur. Several of Steinbeck’s novels and short stories are set along Monterey Bay, near Old Monterey which “sits on the slope of a hill, with a blue bay below it and with a forest of tall dark pine trees at its back.” *To a God Unknown* (1933) is set near the small community of Jolon, in the southeastern region of Big Sur, where there are forests with “aisles and alcoves which seemed to have meanings as obscure and promising as the symbols of an ancient religion.” And *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932) is set in the Corral de Tierra where the “orchard lay in dark green squares; the grain was yellow and the hills behind, a light brown washed with lavender.” There is a way of seeing that gives meaning to the thematic design of his best work. In that work, landscape is central. Steinbeck’s California is a vital force in the lives of those of his characters who live in and move across it.”⁹

⁸ WESTERN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION STAFF. *A Literary History of the American West*. United States of America: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 1987. ISBN 0-87565-021-x, p. 424

⁹ p. 425

After graduation Steinbeck went to the Stanford University, which he attended intermittently for five years, leaving in 1925 without taking a degree. Steinbeck left Stanford and went to New York to become a writer. (Staff, 1987)

The year 1930 proved to be a turning point for Steinbeck. He married Carol Henning in January and met and developed a deep and abiding friendship with Edward Ricketts, a marine biologist in Monterey, California. Ricketts also stimulated Steinbeck's interest in biology and science. This year, John and Carol moved to Pacific Grove where they could stay in the Steinbeck family Cottage. (Schultz, Li, 2005) In 1932 *The Pastures of Heaven* was published and *To a God Unknown* the year after.

"His second book (*To a God Unknown*) grew from an unfinished play by Webster F. Street, a Monterey attorney whom he met while a student at Stanford. Steinbeck converted Street's text into a novel which chronicles the life of Joseph Wayne, a visionary hero of god-like stature. *To a God Unknown* is one of Steinbeck's only novels in which the protagonist look inward, and that looking is surely more mystical than it is psychological. The novel's importance lies in Steinbeck's presentation of his developing holistic world view and his belief in man's almost mystical ability to "break through" to an understanding of that wholeness."¹⁰ And *To a God Unknown* is Steinbeck's morphology of breaking through, which he supports with a comprehensive structure of myth and symbol. (Staff, 1987)

"The Pastures of Heaven is a book about clerks who try but fail to "break through" into heroism. The novel consists of a group of loosely related stories about the residents of the Corral de Tierra. These are simple people in retreat from complex urban environments which limit human freedom. But because they are shrouded in personal illusions and self-deceptions, they are unable to adjust to the simple patterns of valley life. They are dreamers whose fantasies are destroyed by the hard facts of reality. They hang on slender threads from a world they do not understand and with

¹⁰ p. 428

which they cannot cope. In the volume, Steinbeck shows compassion for the plight of simple people who strive for but cannot achieve lasting happiness. Indeed, while writing *To a God Unknown* he may have believed that only gods, kings, and heroes were worth writing about, but by the time he finished *The Pastures of Heaven*, he realized “that present-day kings aren’t very inspiring, the gods are on a vacation and about the only heroes left are the scientists and the poor.”¹¹

In *The Pastures of Heaven*, the book about the Pastures’ poor, Steinbeck never condemns their innocence or their simplicity, but he does portray their self-destructive tendencies towards fantasy and self-deception. This book is a bitterly ironic novel because in it Steinbeck shows that those Pastures, however lovely and redemptive, cannot be attained by most men on this earth. (Staff, 1987)

By 1939 Steinbeck’s marriage to Carol had begun to disintegrate. During that time he met Gwendolyn Conger, who later became his second wife. (Schultz, Li, 2005) In 1942, Steinbeck divorced Carol Henning and married Gwendolyn Conger in 1943 and moved to New York. (Bloom, 2000) The next year their son, Thomas Steinbeck, was born and in 1946 his son John was born. (Bloom, 2000)

Nineteen Forty Eight proved to be a difficult year for Steinbeck, because he was divorced from his second wife Gwendolyn and his close friend Edward F. Ricketts died in a car accident. (Bloom, 2000)

“After more than a year, he got his own thinking in order. One of the ways he was able to do this was to squash his ego and stretch his acceptance so that it did not matter whether his son was born of someone else’s seed or not – this was his son, in any event, and he could love him no less. A couple of years later, after remarrying, he brought the two stories together as the basis for a novelette-play. In that play Joe Saul,

¹¹ WESTERN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION STAFF. *A Literary History of the American West*. United States of America: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 1987. ISBN 0-87565-021-x, p. 429

with the counsel of Friend Ed, is finally able to accept his child, born of his wife Mordeen by Victor, with the declaration, "I had to walk into the black to know – to know that every man is father to all children and every child must have all men as father." It is one of the noblest sentiments ever penned."¹²

He had fallen in love again. Her name was Elaine Anderson Scott, a native Texan. During the summer 1949, the two spent as much time together as was possible, considering the circumstances, with Elaine and her daughter, joining Steinbeck and his two sons, and over the summer, Steinbeck began work on *Burning Bright*, an allegorical play-novelette, and one of the least successful of all of his works. Having been a Broadway stage manager, Elaine introduced John to a new group of influential friends so he became fascinated with the details of drama production. During 1950, Steinbeck arranged for the stage production of *Burning Bright* and in October *Burning Bright* opened on Broadway to almost completely negative reviews, despite a brilliant cast. Steinbeck and Elaine were married on December 28, 1950. In late October 1959, Steinbeck was treated for a severe kidney infection. He apparently suffered a minor stroke. (Schultz, Li, 2005)

"During the press conference held at Viking Press the day after the award was announced, a reporter asked Steinbeck if he believed he deserved the prize. According to Peter Hamill, journalist and essayist, who was present at the question-and-answer period, a look of deep anguish appeared on Steinbeck's face, as he answered, "Frankly, no." For the official awards ceremony, Steinbeck and his wife were greeted warmly in Stockholm. He delivered a speech of remarkable grace, making only a passing comment at the critical carping he had endured. Nevertheless, he did not get over the rejection of his worthiness by the literary elite and never wrote another word of fiction!"¹³

¹² BENSON, Jackson J. *The Short Novels of John Steinbeck: Critical Essays with a Checklist to Steinbeck Criticism*. United States of America: Duke University Press, 1990. ISBN 0-8223-0994-7, p. 11, 12

¹³ SCHULTZ, Jeffrey a Luchen LI. *John Steinbeck: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. United States of America: Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, 2005. ISBN 0-8160-4300-0, p. 15

His last year was a series of attacks, seizures, and hospitalizations, as the damage from severe arteriosclerosis increased and on December 20, 1968, with Elaine lying beside him on a hospital bed in their apartment in New York, John Steinbeck died. His remains were cremated and buried in Salinas, California. (Benson, 1990)

5. John Steinbeck's Style

John Steinbeck was living many lives due to his works. Each of them was a part of him, they were his loves. Steinbeck was asked to comment on the six short novels. He said: "As each was finished, the part of me was finished. It is true that while a work is in progress, the writer and his book are one. When a book is finished, it is a kind of death, a matter of pain and sorrow to the writer. Then he starts a new book, and a new life, and if he is growing and changing, a whole new life starts. The writer, like a fickle lover, forgets his old love. It is no longer his own: the intimacy and the surprise are gone. So much I knew, but I had not thought of the little stories thrust out into an unfriendly world to make their way. They have experiences, too-they grow and change or wane and die, just as everyone does. They make friends or enemies, and sometimes they waste away from neglect."¹⁴

Each of Steinbeck's works was unfortunately criticized by the critics, for example from R. W. B. Lewis's point of view Steinbeck's literary production was at the top of the tree during the war years. *The Grapes of Wrath* aroused a nondurable acceptance in America, 1939, and in Europe as well. Steinbeck was compared with the authors such as Faulkner or Hemingway; however he did not have much in common with them.

¹⁴ BENSON, Jackson J. *The Short Novels of John Steinbeck: Critical Essays with a Checklist to Steinbeck Criticism*. United States of America: Duke University Press, 1990. ISBN 0-8223-0994-7, p. 15

The critics emphasized his deterministic biologism, primitivism, the cult of the countryside which was the shelter from chaos of the metropolitan civilization, his love of natural forces and soil, he mythologized them. They criticized that Steinbeck was not be able to create characters which would be psychically portrayed. He was not interested in psychoanalysis like Joyce, Proust or Kafka.¹⁵ The critics accused the author of writing junk to please a mass audience. On the one side he was severely criticized for his offbeat experimentation, on the other side he was attacked for not repeating himself. (Benson, 1990)

Steinbeck was the epic poet who told stories. He was considered to be the author who grew the cult of the biologism and primitivism or pantheistic naturalism, he was a well-read man who believed that not only empiric experience but also cultural heritage lead a man through his life. Steinbeck preferred philosophy and long - time heritage to most modern scientific theories. His first important work was *The Pastures of Heaven*, published in 1935. It is the collection of the stories which take place in a native land, California. Neither this novel nor another one called *To a God Unknown*, disinterested readers. Steinbeck broke through with the book *Tortilla Flat*. Readers enjoyed its humour and an exotic regional colouring. This book was translated into foreign languages and it was picturized as well. The critics considered *Tortilla Flat* to be a free time book but it brought along fame and money.¹⁶

John Steinbeck wrote of California, especially Salinas and Monterey. There are long descriptions of the California landscape in his works. He loved these places which were his home. Steinbeck described Joseph Wayne's land in *To a God Unknown*. Joseph's farm is situated in the valley called Our Lady. He is overwhelmed by the land's lush fertility and he is intoxicated by it. Steinbeck focused on common individuals and he allegorized them. He portrayed the people who live close to earth in poverty or near poverty, and he portrayed them realistically through dialogue. (Panesar,1994)

¹⁵ My translation

¹⁶ My translation

“Steinbeck’s foremost concern is the human level. His fiction is grounded in earthly dialogue and actions and memorable, individualized characters.”¹⁷

Steinbeck’s characters are farmhands, ranchers or fruit pickers. The ordinary people are depicted collectively as a “brute” and the author signs the forces that tyrannize them.

Steinbeck created his characters in animalistic terms, for instance Thomas Wayne in *To a God Unknown*, who is in some respect flat and undeveloped figure. He loves animals and spends a lot of time with them and sometimes behaves like one of them, they respect him and love him as well.

Steinbeck portrayed natural environment, man’s relationship to animals and vegetation in his best works. His characters are related to animality. Humanity is a counterpart of it. These people are characters of ancient myths, they are part of some collective, for instance of a family, neighbourhood, they move along individuality and collectivity. Steinbeck is tolerant of people’s offences, joyful dissoluteness, but he loves neither church fanaticism nor another kind of it, he hates brutality, violence, selfishness and profit of workmen.¹⁸

Steinbeck also worked as a journalist. From his and Frank Norris’s point of view an American writer ought to be so called “the watch – dog of society” who would attack its injustices, satirize its silliness and put down its faults. Steinbeck wanted to capture real-life of people who had been exploited by American society, for instance the migrant farm-workers of *The Grapes of Wrath* or the striking fruit pickers of *In Dubious Battle*. He could draw on his wealth journalistic experience. (Panesar, 1994)

¹⁷ PANESAR, Gurdip. *Critical Insights: John Steinbeck, Frank Norris, and Literary Naturalism*, http://salempress.com/Store/pdfs/steinbeck_critical_insights.pdf, p. 14

¹⁸ My translation

John Steinbeck visited Prague on the way from Soviet Union in 1963. There was the meeting which took place at the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University where Steinbeck said that each genial book brought new adventure to a reader. It is true that each of Steinbeck's works brings new adventure. John Steinbeck is a meaningful author who falls behind Dos Passos, Faulkner and Hemingway.¹⁹

6. John Steinbeck's Naturalism

As well as Jack London John Steinbeck did a lot of professions. He was a carpenter, a geodesist, an office worker in a department store or he was a rancher. Steinbeck was interested in the ocean so he was an oceanologist and he examined biological theories of life. Steinbeck's best work was *The Grapes of Wrath*, the novel published in 1939 from the period of crisis, which was the story about displaced people who were exiled from the farms in Oklahoma because of long droughts and banks which exacted paying of mortgages from them. The book described wounds of economic depression and Hoovervilles, the shelters made by the homeless from salvaged wood and tin, where seasonal workers lived.

Steinbeck was a fellow traveller with migrants, he wrote: "Every effort I can bring to bear is and has been at the call of the common working people to the end that they may eat what they raise, use what they produce, and in every way and in completeness share in the works of their hands and their heads (qtd. in DeMott xxiii)." ²⁰

This is not only the protest novel but also the novel about all- society heading for the west. Steinbeck denied that he planned this novel to be the protest novel. This work circled round the world and got to know readers about an impact of droughts and

¹⁹ My translation

²⁰ PANESAR, Gurdip. *Critical Insights: John Steinbeck, Frank Norris, and Literary Naturalism*, http://salempress.com/Store/pdfs/steinbeck_critical_insights.pdf, p. 12

crisis on American farmers. Steinbeck was awarded with the Nobel Prize of literature in 1962 due to this novel.²¹

The novel *East of Eden*, published in 1952, should have been the top of his literary production. It is the chronicle of the author's native land. This work consists of two parts. First is an autobiographical part which tells the story about the family of John Steinbeck's mother and second is the story about fabulous Trasks' clan. There is a paraphrase of biblical fight between two brothers, Cain and Abel. There are symbolic and real elements which blended together. Steinbeck envisages a man as a part of nature and he considered him to be a person who possesses soul in which good and evil fought ever before. A man is born with basic characteristics which he regulates in his way. There is a symbolic parallel that mankind represents Cain's descendants who leaves the Lord and lives "east of Eden". An individual is in a position to overcome sin and he could gain a victory over evil and his disabilities.²²

²¹ My translation

²² My translation

7. Burning Bright

Burning Bright represents Steinbeck's third and last experiment with the "playnovelle" form. He managed to succeed with it in *Of Mice and Men* and *The Moon in Down*. The "playnovelle" was his literary invention. It presented a drama in a narrative format so that it could be read as fiction or performed as a play. According to Steinbeck this form would serve two purposes. First was that Steinbeck wanted to provide a play that would be more widely read because it was presented as ordinary fiction, which was a more familiar medium than scripts. Secondly Steinbeck wanted to have the fullest sense of the intention of the writer by a full knowledge of the details pertinent to the action. The "playnovelle" contains three acts and three settings: The Circus, The Farm and The Sea. Third act is divided into two scenes. First takes place in the sea (in a cabin of a ship) and second one in the hospital where the child is born, the scene is entitled The Child. Naturalists portrayed circus' environment very often due to the heroes living at the edge of the society.

It was performed as a play and produced as a book in October 1950. Both were designated as a spectacular failure by the critics. Steinbeck tried to make the play and the book out of a philosophical treatise so this attempt failed. The TV adaptation of *Burning Bright* was produced in 1959 and directed by Curt Conway.

The major characters do not appear to be ordinary people due to the first setting which is the circus' surrounding. The characters originate from a lower class. However, these people possess wishes, desires, dreams like other people from another class. Objectivity consists in this fact because people share almost the same desires. They want to spend their lives in happiness, but it does not depend on their free will but on determination and heredity.

Joe Saul, a middle aged man, marries a young woman Mordeen. They want to start a family but Joe Saul does not know his condition. He suffered from rheumatic fever, a long time ago, which caused his sterility. Joe Saul longs for a child to continue his bloodline. It is very important for him so his wife is able to do anything to please him.

She decides to have it off with Victor, a young handsome man, who is supposed to act with Joe Saul in the circus performance. This action could be viewed not only as a gift of Mordeen's great love but also as the action which happens due to Mordeen's passion. The forces which originated within Mordeen and Victor are raw passion and sex that a man shares with animals. It represents an animalistic instinct as well as the Darwin's theory of evolution. The fittest will survive so it will be Victor rather than Joe Saul who is older and whose bloodline will not continue due to his sterility. Mordeen's decision does not arise from her free will. She possesses no choice so she is forced by external circumstances as well. The brute within Victor desires for dominance and pleasure. He feels Joe Saul's disability and wants Mordeen for himself because he is more dominant, stronger, healthier and younger than Mordeen's husband. Ed, Joe Saul and Mordeen's friend, is not governed by the internal or external forces so he can remain calm and precede Joe Saul to learn the truth about Mordeen's pregnancy. Ed is the hero who intervenes instead of Mordeen in a desperate moment. He uses his bodily strength and a bit of violence to kill Victor in order to so that the secret would not be betrayed. The child is born. There is a conflict "man against himself" because Joe Saul has to put up with the situation. It outlines a parallel a man versus an animal and the Darwin's theory of evolution especially the survival of the fittest is apparent there. The theory emphasizes preservation of the mankind. Finally Joe Saul accepts Mordeen's gift of great love. He loves their son despite the fact that this newborn is not his own child. At the end of the play-novelette Joe Saul says: "What animal has made beauty, created it, save only we? With all our horrors and our faults, somewhere in us there is a shining." He exclaims, "every man is father to all children and every child must have all men as father."²³

²³ STEINBECK, John. *Travels with Charley and Later Novels 1947-1962*. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2007. ISBN 978-1-59853-004-9., p. 296

Steinbeck created “a kind of universal language” for his everyman characters. He noted that *Burning Bright* was an attempt to “lift the story to the parable expression of the morality plays.”²⁴ This universalized language annoyed critics.

“Steinbeck tried to make *Burning Bright* a lofty, universal experience. Surprisingly Victor is the most dynamic character in the book and he shows some flashes of real humanity. There is the collision of Steinbeck’s objective, scientific direction (the realities of human animal/sexual nature) with higher notions of morality (the human ability to love deeply and forgive).”²⁵

Lisca says that many elements in the play-novelette indicate the Christ story for instance Joe Saul’s first name (for Joseph), Mordeen’s blue gown (traditional for Mary), Joe is not the father of the Child and the Child is born at Christmas. *East of Eden* is Steinbeck’s main work in which he evolves the biblical themes. Caleb and Aaron represent Cain and Abel who are ejected from Eden. Contrary to critics John Steinbeck consider *East of Eden* to be a paramount work owing to biblical symbolism.

One of the major themes is connected with an American Transcendentalism which says that the Oversoul is a divine spirit pervading the universe and encompassing all human beings. There is an example when Joe Saul declares: “We were nature spirits once. . . . We lived in the wind and in the black storms. . . . We troubled the water and drove the thunder back. . . . we were doctors against hurt, and we had to make the form of hurt and sickness to drive it out, so that we were crooked for fits and spastic for poison.”²⁶ There is a connection with natural forces that belong to external forces characteristic of naturalism.

²⁴ RAILSBACK a MEYER. *A John Steinbeck encyclopedia*. United States of America: Greenwood Press, 2006. ISBN 0-313-29669—3, p. 41

²⁵ p. 42

²⁶ STEINBECK, John. *Novels and Stories 1932-1937*. New York: Literary Classics, 1994. ISBN 978-1-883011-01-7, p. 345

Another theme is the patriarchy. In accordance with western culture it is said that men are more important to the survival of the species than women. Attention is given to Joe Saul who is not the father of the child but he is the star of the circus act, the owner of the farm and the captain of the ship. He is the most important person in the “playnovelette”.

The most important theme is the family. Joe Saul longs for passing his knowledge on the child to be a good circus performer and a good farmer just like him. In this case the family appears to be unusual. Mordeen pretends that Joe Saul is the father of the child. He looks forward to the baby very much. Actually Victor is a rightful father but he is not allowed to tell the truth and participate in this unusual situation. Mordeen considers the baby to be Joe Saul’s. According to Joe Saul it does not depend on heredity. He cannot give the son his blood indeed but he can pass his heritage on the son.

Railsback and Meyer say that the moral message of Steinbeck’s allegorical play-novelette is that humans are both animal and god; if humans would recognize this chaotic existence, they might survive themselves. Joe Saul and his family survive the convoluted mess that leads to the Child, which is a product of the best and worst of humanity, is the positive theme of *Burning Bright*. (Railsback, Meyer, 2006)

8. To a God Unknown

To a God Unknown represents Steinbeck's second novel which was published four years after the *Cup of Gold*. This work explores not only man's relationship to nature, its forces and the earth itself but also man's belief in God or a superior force. The novel results from Ancient pagan beliefs, the Bible and the Greek epics. It lasted more than five years to be finished. *To a God Unknown* is an extraordinary work full of symbolism and knowledge of the Bible is very important to understand it.

Steinbeck's parents were Episcopalians and they influenced their son in a religious way by reading to him from the Bible. John Steinbeck wrote: "Literature was in the air around me. The Bible I absorbed through my skin."²⁷ Autobiographical elements could be found in the novel. It is set in Steinbeck's country, California, for example in Monterey, Pacific Grove or Nuestra Señora, a valley between the Salinas and the Pacific. Furthermore, Elizabeth McGreggor, one of the main characters, alludes to Olive Hamilton Steinbeck, John Steinbeck's mother, who was a country school teacher.

Concerning the main characters Joseph Wayne is the central character of the novel. He has three brothers. Burton, an elder brother, is very religious. Benjy, Joseph's younger brother, loves women and alcohol. Thomas, the eldest of three brothers, is an animal lover. John Wayne, the father, is a very old man. Other ones are Juanito, an Indian and friend, who helps Joseph with work at his new homestead, and Father Angelo, a priest from Nuestra Señora. Female characters are represented by Rama, Thomas's wife, and Elizabeth McGreggor, a country schoolteacher who becomes Joseph's wife.

Joseph is like his father, both are strong, calm, they lead others and tell them what to do. John and Joseph could represent Jesus Christ and his father as in the Bible. Joseph was an elected man. His father told him: "You're not the oldest, Joseph, but

²⁷ GILMORE, Alec. John Steinbeck's View of God. [online].c2012 last revision 18th May 2013 [cit. 2013-05-09]. <http://www.gilco.org.uk/papers/john_steinbecks_view_of_god.html>.

I've always thought of you as the one to have the blessing. Thomas and Burton are good men, good sons, but I've always intended the blessing for you, so you could take my place. I don't know why. There's something more strong in you than in your brothers, Joseph; more sure and inward."²⁸

Despite the fact that Joseph leaves his home, Vermont, to settle in the west in Nuestra Señora, California to establish a homestead there, he is connected with his father and feels that something is wrong: "He's dead," he whispered to himself. "My father must be dead."²⁹

Joseph worships the oak tree as it is apparent from the extract: "My father is in that tree. My father is that tree! It is silly, but I want to believe it."³⁰ The theme of worshipping the tree could be either found in the Thomas Hardy's novel *The Woodlanders*. Paganism and Christian's symbolism blend together if we concern searching for connection between the life of a man and a tree. John Steinbeck rather saw paganism instead of Christianity in relation to the world around him, America in 1930s, for instance in fight between a man and nature, further in fortune, heredity, natural forces etc. Upbringing contrary to education influenced his view of the world and reality.

Joseph was determined to establish a new homestead in Nuestra Señora, a valley between the Salinas and the Pacific, and new bloodline. There is the land in which he believes. It is a raw belief concerning paganism. Joseph understands the land but he is powerless, his free will does not act because its forces are stronger.

²⁸ STEINBECK, John. *Novels and Stories 1932-1937*. New York: Literary Classics, 1994. ISBN 978-1-883011-01-7, p. 176

²⁹ STEINBECK, John. *Novels and Stories 1932-1937*. New York: Literary Classics, 1994. ISBN 978-1-883011-01-7, p. 182

³⁰ p. 193

Regarding determinism Benjy, the youngest of four brothers, is determined to die. He loves women, who are married, and alcohol which becomes a fatal combination. His brothers suppose that one day Benjy's life will end grievously and they were right. Unfortunately Benjy was stabbed by the cuckolded Juanito. Every man faces determinism as well as animal males. A male must fight with others either to protect members of his family or to survive because he is the fittest and his bloodline must continue. Juanito wants Joseph to kill him but he refuses to do it because he does not want to stab his friend. Joseph let Juanito leave. People contrary to animals are able to forgive. They are not influenced by natural forces so much as animals. People possess free will and they could choose how they should behave.

Joseph appears to be a bizarre person because it seems that nothing could hurt him. We do not recognize his thoughts. He is a man unknown who is mysterious and unrecognisable. Joseph's brothers and their wives and children follow him to California, they respect and admire him as he is a God. It seems that he is strong enough so nothing could hurt him. He feels sadness only because of his father's death. Otherwise we cannot break into his heart for instance in a case of his marriage with Elizabeth McGreggor, tragic death of Joseph's brother or birth of their son etc.

Despite the fact that Burton is Joseph's brother he does not share his belief with him because he is a Christian. Joseph gets on well with Thomas and Rama. They understand his belief in the tree and they tolerate it because they possess their own beliefs as well. Thomas shares love to animals and nature with Joseph because of spiritual heritage which their father passed on them. Rama believes in the family, in good relationships among its members. She falls in love with Joseph due to his strength and mysteriousness.

It seems that Joseph prefers the earth and nature. He is bounded to the earth, to the land. It is evident in the extract when Joseph and his friend Juanito are talking about the land: "Joseph bends down, pats the earth with his hand and develops a new respect for nature. He forms a friendship with a local Indian, Juanito, and tells him he feels the land is full of ghosts, except that the ghosts are the reality — 'what lives here

is more real than we are'. Juanito explains to him how the dead never go away — the earth is our mother, and everything that lives has life from its mother and goes back to its mother. Here is another world — almost another deity.”³¹

On one hand there is a biblical allusion but on the other hand paganism is obvious in case of worshipping the tree or a rock which looks like an altar. Joseph, Tomas and Juanito convince it in a pine glade. Joseph says: “There’s something here, ‘. . . I know it . . . This is holy — and this is old. This is ancient — and holy.” ³² It is the only area where water can still be found. The power of the stone overwhelms Elizabeth as well. She is pregnant and goes to the pine grove because something attracts her to go there. The Indian women visited this mystery place when they were expecting their children. It is another pagan habit. Elizabeth’s attempt to confront fear of the stone by climbing a top of it ends with her tragic death when she slips on the moss-covered rock and breaks her neck.

Another example of the pagan traditions could be found in a part of the book when a New Year's fiesta takes place and Burton cannot stand it. He is observing how people are dancing and he considers it to be a devil-worship because it is contrary to his faith. Burton cannot stand Joseph’s addressing the oak tree because from his point of view it represents paganism and evil. Joseph is heartbroken when he finds out that Burton girdled the tree below ground level. It was an act which means killing his belief in the tree who he considers to be his father who reincarnates into it. Joseph learns from Juanito that all people live from its mother, the earth, and they go back to her after their death.

There is not apparent allusion about free will. Everything depends on natural forces, especially on rain because without it the land, the animals could die. Joseph hears the story about a dry season in the 1880s and he is aware of danger which drought could bring. It is necessary to put up with bad days without rain when the land dries. Concerning the earth he tries to protect not only the land and animals but also all

³¹ STEINBECK, John. *Novels and Stories 1932-1937*. New York: Literary Classics, 1994. ISBN 978-1-883011-01-7, p. 179

³² p. 210

people as well as Jesus Christ. Joseph can only save some of the cows if he drives them to the San Joaquin.

Joseph stays at the ranch alone because everyone leaves. He is unique and his strength and belief supply him courage to fight against nature. He decides to save the stream in the pine grove which is only hope for the arid land. Joseph is the fittest person who can manage to save it. Natural forces are unpredictable despite the fact that people are aware of coming of draught just like in 1880s.

Joseph asks father Angelo, the local priest, to pray for the land but he refuses. It means other kind of saving the land. Father Angelo is not willing to do it because his main point is to save a man's soul not the land. So he offers Joseph his help because he considers him to be sick. Joseph refuses the church and he returns to the glade. In father Angelo's words is found a biblical allusion: "Thank God this man has no message. Thank God he has no will to be remembered, to be believed in, else there might be a new Christ here in the West."³³ It is an allusion to Joseph's paganism. He sacrificed his life to save the land but not to be remembered and believed in because he is not a Christian but a pagan who believes that he will return to the earth and reincarnate into rain. These two beliefs differ this way. That is why pagans do not worship a particular person but "a god unknown". Joseph was an unknown man so they are in harmony after his death.

The stream which is flowing from the rock could not water the whole land but Joseph believes in it, in its power which is miraculous because it springs from a God unknown's altar. Joseph himself saves the land. The stream dried so he decides to cut his wrist. It is rainmaking. Joseph's last words: "I should have known (...) I am the rain. (...) I am the land (...) and I am the rain. The grass will grow out of me in a little while."³⁴ It begins to rain immediately.

³³ STEINBECK, John. *Novels and Stories 1932-1937*. New York: Literary Classics, 1994. ISBN 978-1-883011-01-7, p. 359

³⁴ p. 366

Some animals were sacrificed in the pine grove many years ago. It was a pagan habit to sacrifice them "to a god unknown". Thomas and Joseph meet an old man who sacrifices small creatures every night at sundown. It means sacrificing to "a god unknown" to send them good weather which could be necessary to crop to keep people and animals alive. Joseph sacrifices his life because of rainmaking to save the arid land.

Biblical allusions could be found in the work as well. One appears when Joseph and Elizabeth are married at a Protestant church in Monterey and she considered Joseph to be or look like Jesus Christ. Rama told Elizabeth: "I do not know whether there are men born outside humanity, or whether some men are so human as to make others seem unreal. Perhaps a godling lives on earth now and then. (...) You cannot think of Joseph dying. He is eternal. (...) I tell you this man is not a man, unless he is all men. The strength, the resistance, the long and stumbling thinking of all men, and all the joy and suffering, too, cancelling each other out and yet remaining in the contents. He is all these, a repository for a little piece of each man's soul, and more than that, a symbol of the earth's soul."³⁵

³⁵ STEINBECK, John. *Novels and Stories 1932-1937*. New York: Literary Classics, 1994. ISBN 978-1-883011-01-7, p. 247

9. The pastures of Heaven

The Pastures of Heaven represents John Steinbeck's first short story cycle published 1932. It consists of the prologue, individual ten stories and the epilogue.

The prologue contains information about origin of the setting. A valley impressed the Spanish corporal during his journey to transport his enslaved Native Americans and he named it *Las Pasturas del Cielo*, the Pastures of Heaven, due to its beauty. There is a theme of unfulfilled dream although characters live in such a beautiful environment (Edenic garden). Neither the corporal who was ill so he did not manage to return to The Pastures and establish a dynasty nor the inhabitants filled their dreams there.

John Steinbeck wanted to remind his readers that this land was owned by Native Americans who were enslaved and oppressed by European settlers. Their land that was their home for thousand of years was occupied by them. This punishment influenced Native American's descendants living in The Pastures of Heaven later on.

The short stories are interrelated by setting and the Munroes family who are the main characters of the work. Steinbeck portrayed their impact on the inhabitants of The Pastures. These characters are tied to the land. Themes such as ancestry and primogeniture and the importance of landscape are presented in Steinbeck's most popular works including *The Grapes of Wrath*, *East of Eden*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Cannery Row* and *Tortilla Flat*.

In the epilogue there is a sight-seeing tour. People from different positions (a businessman, a young couple, a priest, an old man and a tour bus driver) stand upon the valley and express their feelings and points of view about the place. They imagine how it would be like if they lived there. People see it in a simple way but they are not aware of pain and loss of Native Americans who lived in the beautiful valley long time ago.

Despite the fact that the most of the reading public ignored it critics' points of view were different. According to *The Chicago Daily Tribune* the characters were as vitally real as next door neighbor and the style and presentation of the novel were restrained, compassionate and compelling.

John Steinbeck's autobiographical experiences can be found in the work. His parents passed on an intellectual heritage to him. Steinbeck's mother, Olivia Hamilton Steinbeck, influenced his literary taste and his father, John Ernst Steinbeck, affected his son as well. She had been a country school teacher whose taste in literature was alluded by Miss Molly Morgan. He introduced him to the works of Greek and Roman classics. John Whiteside, the clerk of the local school board, remembers how his father read to him the three great authors, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon.

The first individual story deals with the character of Bert Munroe and his family, his wife Mrs. Munroe and three children, Mae, Jimmie and Manfred (a mentally ill boy), who move to the Battle's farm. Bert's business failed so he believed that curse follows him. He wants to return to farming which is his dream. In this case the farming in rural America is portrayed there. Bert looks after his farm and it flourishes. The Munroes have a negative impact on many of the inhabitants of the Pastures. Their fortune influences others's lives as in case of the second character Edward Wicks. His nickname is Shark because of his acumen in investing money to different things. People consider him to be wealthy but it is not true. Edward Wicks protects Alice, his beautiful daughter, from town's boys. He is determined to do it as all fathers. Alice is seen kissing Jimmie Munroe so her father takes a shotgun and goes to the Munroes but he cannot kill him. Edward is ordered to pay a large bond to a sheriff but he does not possess any money. Everyone in the Pastures knows that he did not have money neither before so he decides to sell the farm. His dream does not come true. It was an opportunity to live there in happiness but fortune afflicts his life.

Another character is one of the three mentally ill children. The boy is nicknamed as Tularecito – Little Frog due to his strange appearance. He is found in the mountains

and raised up by Franklin Gomez, the ranch owner. The parallel between a man and an animal is apparent because he behaves like an animal using violence to protect his creations (paintings of the animals on the blackboard, holes that he dug to find gnomes). Tularecito is fascinated by fairy tales about elves and gnomes. He believes in these mystical creatures and wants to find them and be one of them. Tularecito digs holes in the Bert Munroe's orchard. Bert fills the holes so Tularecito attacks him. Franklin Gomez is recommended to put the boy to an asylum for the criminally insane. Tularecito is not determined to live in the society because he could endanger people in the Pastures. He is ejected from the society and has to live in the asylum.

Second one is Hilda, Helen Van Deventer's daughter. Fortune is very savage to Helen because she has to bring up Hilda on her own. She believes that it is her fault that she gave birth to a mentally disabled child because she was desperate due to the tragic death of her husband Hubert. Helen is resigned with her fortune but she suffers a lot because it is very difficult for her to look after Hilda who sees ghosts, she has nightmares and from time to time she escapes from the house. Bert Munroe wants to welcome Helen who moves to the Pastures. Unfortunately he brings about that Hilda escapes to marry him because she considers him to be a groom who could rescue her. Helen is influenced by affect and thinks that this is not her fortune and she shoots her daughter who is runaway.

Junius Maltby alludes to Steinbeck's father because of two purposes. First one is the fact that his father worked as a clerk as well as Junius and the second is that Junius reads his son Robbie the works of the Greek and Roman classics as well as he did. Junius leaves San Francisco because of breathing problems and moves to the Pastures. He marries Mamie Quaker, a widow, and he is supposed to work on the farm but he reads books all the time instead of it. In comparison with environment in San Francisco he does not work on the farm because he cannot do it. Junius was brought up in the city so it is absolutely different lifestyle. There is a contrast education and upbringing versus environment. He is influenced by beauty, calmness of the Pastures thus he prefers reading and conversation to farming. Junius has to brought up his son Robbie

on his own because his wife and her sons died due to plague of influenza. He let his son live almost like an animal. Junius does not send him to a school. He is an educated man who reads Robbie from the books so he learns a lot of information but he cannot write. Heredity and Junius' upbringing in connection with environment causes that Robbie is like his father. They do not wear shoes, cut their hair etc. Contrary to other inhabitants of the Pastures Junius has different values so they disapprove him and exclude him from the local society. He realises that he should provide Robbie education and other important values so he decides to move to San Francisco. Junius does not want his son to live no longer like an animal. This is other example of parallel between a man and an animal.

Rosa and Maria Lopez are two sisters who live on a ranch on the outskirts of the Pastures of Heaven. They are poor and need money to livelihood so they decide to open a restaurant. They pray to Virgin Mary which is in contrast with a service that they provide their guests to encourage them to buy more plates of food. They do not consider it to be in conflict with a moral code. Women from the Pastures possess different point of view and they do not talk to them. One guest insults Rosa and Maria so they defend with their ancestor who was a general. It is a case of heredity in which two sisters believe. The Munroes intervene again to the life of the other inhabitant when Bert and Mrs. Munroe tell Allen Heuneker's jealous wife that her husband was seen with Maria going by a carriage to the town. The Munroes bring bad luck not only Allen but also the sisters because sheriff forbade them carry on business. The sisters are forced to leave the Pastures and they move to San Francisco. They wanted to fulfill their dream in the Pastures but fortune intervene again.

Other individual story deals with the character of Miss Molly Morgan, a young schoolteacher who grew up only with her mother and two brothers because her father was a traveling salesman so he was not at home during whole Molly's childhood. He disappeared one day and never returned but she loves him and believes that he is not dead. Molly is determined to fight with unhappy fortune and with poverty. She goes to teacher's college before taking a job in the Pastures and works as a charwoman to earn

money for her studies. Molly works in the local school and lives in the house of the Whitesides. Bert Munroe's farmhand appears to be Molly's father. Fortune is merciless and takes Molly's illusions about his father. She is forced to leave the Pastures in order not to meet him.

Raymond Banks is a man in his forties who keeps poultry. He and his wife Cley are hospitable people who give chicken barbecues with homemade beer for the whole valley. His friend Ed works in the San Quentin Prison where he goes to witness the executions. Raymond experiences excitement during execution of chickens and prisoners as well. It is the case of contrasting death of a man versus an animal's death. Inhabitants of the Pastures are shocked by his prison's visits. Bert Munroe wants Raymond to take him to the prison to witness an execution but he is horror-stricken by an appalling experience from his childhood when he saw how a chicken suffered due to an abortive execution. That is why Bert rejects to go there because he is afraid of regressing memories to the execution of a man.

Other farmer in the valley of the Pastures of Heaven is Pat Humbert. He is determined to take care of his old parents. They are ungrateful and give him a lot of duties all the time. After their death he has nightmares and is terrified by their ghosts which he sees in their living room. He faces to his fear by working on the farm and preparing events which are arranged by the school board. The house's environment has a negative impact on his psyche. He decides to change fortune by reconstruction of the living room. Pat does it because of one girl whom he wants to invite to the new house. The girl is Bert Munroe's daughter. Unfortunately he finds out that she is going to marry Bill Whiteside. He does not want to return to the house where are two ghosts of his parents. Pat is a crushed man who is determined to spend the rest of his life alone in a newly reconstructed house.

The last individual story deals with the character of Richard Whiteside and his son John. Richard, a single man who comes from New England, goes to the west and decides to build a house in the Pastures of Heaven for his future family and his

descendants. He wants to establish a dynasty. Richard is determined to marry Alice and have children but she gives birth to a son John and can have no more children. It is a case of heredity when people have sons and it depends on them if their bloodline would continue or not. Parents pass on their children not only blood but also education. John fulfills his father's dream of a new clan when his son William, called Bill, is born. He reads William Greek and Roman classics as well as his father. It means for him spiritual heritage that he can pass down his descendants. John's dream vanishes away when he finds out that his son is not interested in reading and learning about the classics and that Bill and his wife, Mae Munroe, do not want to stay in the Pastures and continue a dynasty. Fortune intervenes when their native house burns down. Their dream is not fulfilled just like other inhabitants' of the Pastures of Heaven.

In *The Pastures of Heaven* John Steinbeck outlined a number of important themes. First of them is rural farming in America.

At first sight The Pastures of Heaven are an ideal place for farming. The Pastures provide fertile soil and the best conditions to establish a profitable homestead. John Steinbeck captured change in the society when people left their farms and move to the urban areas to find other forms of employment. Farming represented a thing of the past. People like William (called Bill) Whiteside wanted to be successful in business and not to stay on the farm that had no future. They left a rural community to live in a modern a mechanized world.

Regarding to a family legacy there are families in which it is passed down from generation to generation. These families build beautiful houses and hope that their descendants will live in the Pastures for a long time and their dynasty will expand. Unfortunately the Battles and the Whitesides do not manage to fulfill this dream. The Battles die prematurely and neither other inhabitants of the farm stay there longer. The Munroes are the last inhabitants but they share with original inhabitants of the house some curse. These families do not pass down a family legacy but curse.

Concerning external circumstances some of the inhabitants of the Pastures are forced to leave their homes because they do not want to face the reality. Dealing with a character of Pat Humbert it is his fear which defends him to return to a dark empty house but he does not leave the Pastures. He is determined to live there alone because his attempt to court Mae Munroe fails. Miss Molly Morgan feels disillusionment due to discovery of her father who is a drunk so she is forced to leave the Pastures. Shark Wicks is supposed to be a rich business man who is ashamed when people from the Pastures find out the truth so he leaves the Pastures not to face the reality. Rosa and Maria Lopez cannot subsist in the Pastures after that their restaurant is forbade so they cannot stay there. In the case of Junius Maltby live on his farm contrary to conventional morality that is demand by local inhabitants of the Pastures. They do not share the same view of lifestyle and upbringing of his son. Junius agrees with them and moves to San Francisco to provide his son Robbie education, better living conditions and important values.

John Steinbeck outlined the theme of mentally ill in the case of Manfred Munroe, Hilda Van Deventer and Tularecito. These children have special needs but people around them ignore their problem because it is in conflict with normality and because they do not want to face it. Concerning Manfred, nicknamed Manny who bangs his head, and his parents who ignore that their son is mentally ill and do not pay much attention to influence his strange behaviour. The residents of the Pastures force Franklin Gomez to send Tularecito to school because it is a law to attend it. Tularecito is forced to study and nobody has regard to his capability of drawing and sculpture. Helena takes care of her daughter and tries to her best but she cannot bear with the situation so she decides to change her fortune and kills her daughter. These children can endanger other people so the society put them to an asylum to protect their lives. Children are ejected from the society. Another case dealing with abnormality is portrayed in the individual story of Raymond Banks. He witnesses executions in the prison which is in contrast to mentality or morality of the residents in the Pastures. Raymond is accustomed to executions of the chickens and he does it with no feelings.

He consider it to be necessary and do it quickly and efficiently. An executioner in a prison does it in the same way and that is the thing that Raymond is excited about.

Steinbeck's characters appears to be strong to bear with the external circumstances and fortune but they end up disappointed because it is impossible for them to face the truth, the reality. They move to the Pastures with a vision of fulfilled dream but it does not come true. At the beginnig everybody of them is happy but neither the most beautiful place cannot promise a beautiful life without problems.

Conclusion

The task of the thesis claimed to focus on introduction of the American naturalists of 1930s and to find a subject matter of connection of a man and nature in John Steinbeck's short works: *Burning Bright*, *To a God Unknown* and *Pastures of Heaven*. The first chapter characterized the American naturalism and natural determinism. Second and third chapter introduced American naturalists of 1930s and outlined the social situation of this period. Fourth chapter referred to the author's biography and fifth one introduced John Steinbeck's style. Sixth chapter outlined his approach of naturalism. Seventh, eighth and ninth chapter analysed John Steinbeck's short works.

The works analysed in the thesis differ in naturalistic elements, which were found successfully. In *Burning Bright* heroes are controlled by both internal and external forces. Fight "man against nature" and "man against himself" is apparent in the work. "Survival of the fittest" is mentioned and the case of continuation of the bloodline as well. The author portrayed the questions about morality and immorality, love and forgiveness.

In *To a God Unknown* a man is dependent on natural forces which influence his live and death. Nature and its cycle has the main role in the man's life. The man believes in its parts (worshipping the tree, praying to a "god unknown"). It means paganism as a view of reality, of the world. A man is tied to the land as well as in *The Pastures of Heaven*.

In *The Pastures of Heaven* John Steinbeck portrayed a beautiful place to live that is connected with American history. Native Americans were tied to the land as well as the inhabitants of the Pastures. There is a question about continuing the bloodline as in the *Burning Bright*. Fortune of one family afflicts other families. Nature is portrayed by farming in an American rural community.

The works vary by the form. *Burning Bright* is a playnovelette, *To a God Unknown* is a novel and *The Pastures of Heaven* is a short story cycle. The author elaborated the

first one the least, the second is full of symbolism and the most elaborated, and the third possesses an interesting structure concerning the same setting and characters of one particular family.

My task was to analyse naturalistic elements in John Steinbeck's short works in his wide prosaic production. I am aware of the main naturalistic work that is *The Grapes of Wrath* in which much more elements could be found and a comprehensive plan aims at social realism. Concerning religious symbolism and biblical allusions *To a God unknown* is similar to *East of Eden*. John Steinbeck was very proud of it and appreciated this work. Naturalism is expressed by allusions of war nightmares and perversion of the female character.

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