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California Gold Rush Depicted in the Works of Bret Harte

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ANNOTATION

This thesis focuses on the Gold Rush in California and its portrayal by the American author Bret Harte. The Gold Rush presents a breakthrough in the development of the Western parts of the United States. It attracted thousands of people to settle in California and, consequently, to enable the economic growth of the region. The theoretical part of this thesis deals with the significance of the Gold Rush that provided inspiration for many American writers. One of the most influential creators of the Western image remains Bret Harte with his short stories about mining communities. These narrations and their specific issues depicting the life in California, namely immoral characters, loneliness, crime and punishment and natural disasters, are described in the analytical part.

KEY WORDS

Harte; Gold Rush; California; miners; short story

NÁZEV

Kalifornská zlatá horečka zobrazená v dílech Breta Harta

SOUHRN

Tato práce se zabývá zlatou horečkou v Kalifornii a jejím vyobrazením v povídkách amerického spisovatele Breta Harta. Zlatá horečka představovala zásadní zlom ve vývoji západní části Spojených Států. Tisíce lidí přicestovaly do Kalifornie, umožňujíc tak ekonomický rozvoj dané oblasti. Teoretická část této bakalářské práce se zabývá významem zlaté horečky, která inspirovala mnoho amerických spisovatelů. Jedním z nejvlivnějších stvořitelů podoby západu tak, jak ji známe dnes, je Bret Harte, který se proslavil povídkami ze zlatokopeckých oblastí. Tato vyprávění spolu se svými specifickými prvky zobrazujícími život v tehdejší Kalifornii jsou popsána v analytické části práce.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Harte; zlatá horečka; Kalifornie; zlatokopové; povídka

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Introduction

The California Gold Rush began in January of 1848. The first steps westward were taken slowly and cautiously, on the other hand, not even one year later, massive immigration waves of miners from around the world headed to California to find instant wealth. The first part of this thesis takes an interest in the importance of the gold mining industry to frontier towns. In the first chapter, there is described how California gained a new fresh face during the first busiest years. The population of the boom towns, most prominent of them being San Francisco, exploded to thousands of people.

Not only gold-seekers and merchants found their paths to the West. California became an infinite parade of most fantastic characters that writers from the East could only dream of. The Gold Rush inspired more written documents than any other nineteenth-century historical event, except for the Civil War. More than any other writer, Bret Harte (1839–1902) was responsible for creating the legendary image of the Gold Rush. The second chapter deals with Harte's literary ambitions that, together with his first successful attempts, foreshadow his inclination towards regionalism. There is one crucial question discussed by many Harte's critics for decades. Harte created a certain fantastic world of which nobody can be sure whether it really existed. Therefore, his critics and literary historians find it difficult to classify him simply as a romantic or realistic author.

His indisputable claim lies in regionalism as he portrayed his characters as true Californians, behaving in their natural manners, speaking in dialects. The numerous descriptions of scenery and surrounding are considered to be a contributing factor to the local flavor of his writings. With stories of the American western frontier such as "The Luck of Roaring Camp" (1868), "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" (1869), and "Tennessee's Partner" (1869), Harte achieved instant fame and success. The second chapter continues with depicting this author as a pioneer of gold rush fiction. In his short fiction, he employed realistic description, stock characters, and local dialect and humor to nostalgically portray life in the California mining camps of the 1840s and 1850s.

The third, analytical part, attempts to deal with four specific issues about Harte's short stories. The first topic, and most often criticized approach of Harte, presents the romantic portrayal of immoral characters. Harte's villains does not appear as completely bad people thanks to their inner good qualities. The stories giving an account of rough miners can be seen as idealized for several reasons. It is highly improbable that such people would be in possession of ascribed characteristics. The examples are taken from three most distinct characters that Harte ever created- Yuba Bill, Mr. John Oakhurst and Mr. Jack Hamlin. These men together with the inhabitants of Roaring Camp in the story "The Luck of Roaring Camp" are seemingly a band of ruffians and still they teach the readers lessons of morality.

The following issue treats the feeling of loneliness penetrating the new state of California, and the mining camps full of men. There are two main types of solitude presented, the one that we can deliberately choose and that we are proud to live in, and the other one that is enforced. The miners of Roaring Camp decided for their independency, on the other hand, the group in "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" had no choice. It is only natural that men and women who left their families for the frontier were overcome by memories of their homes.

Not only loneliness troubled the inhabitants of the new state. In the society with no firm laws and rules established so far, more or less serious crimes happened on a daily basis. This together with the consequential punishment provided Harte with topics for his narrations. There is wide range of villains who commit the crimes, starting with clumsy pickpocket and ending with incorrigible thievery gangs. Namely, these "heroes" are depicted in the stories of "Tennessee's Partner", "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" and "The Postmistress of Laurel Run".

The final chapter is dedicated to Harte's favorite subject, to scenery and natural forces. He uses the interventions of nature as a means for ending his plots in the stories of "The Luck", "The Outcasts" and "Left Out on a Lone Star Mountain" that are analyzed from this point of view. Harte's love of nature is shown throughout his works in numerous portrayals of the California landscape that he left for good in 1871.

1. Definition of California Gold Rush

From a great number of important historical events that have occurred in the United States of America in the nineteenth century, it was the Gold Rush that found its place in the hearts of the people of California. It was a time of growth and abundance of the underestimated frontier. During only several years, this frontier changed into a province that was called the Golden State. Although the heyday of prospecting for gold was relatively short-lived, the strike of gold in the first half of the century helped to create the atmosphere of success and wealth that California has enjoyed ever since. The historian James F. Davis says that “no more interesting phase of history in America can be presented than that which arose in California immediately after the discovery of gold”. (12)

The gold era of the West proved to be one of the most triggering lures. In the years between 1848 and 1855, all of the Western towns experienced an unbelievable boom and a massive increase in population. San Francisco could be regarded as a Mecca to newcomers who dreamed of prospecting for gold. This city experienced fully the new taste of the California life. “Frisco” was referred to be “as picturesque and lawless as any lover of raw humanity could have desired it to be.” (Boynton 10) Kevin Starr, a specialist in California, describes it as a final frontier at that time: of geography and of expectation. (Starr, preface VII)

The events of January 1848 foreshadowed the following madness of the next several years. James Wilson Marshall, a wheelwright and a carpenter building a sawmill for his employer, was the first one to discover the glittering nuggets at Sutter's Mill, in Coloma. No matter how astonishing this discovery was, Marshall did not give it away at once. His primary goal was to finish his work and he feared the consequences of the possible, massive quest for gold. He managed to keep it as a secret for a while. Nevertheless, within three months, the word got out and the shouting “Gold, gold! Gold from American River!” was echoing through the streets of San Francisco. After these exciting news were published in the newspapers, the President James Polk confirmed the discovery of gold in the south-western parts. (Learn California)

The Gold Rush began. Thousands of gold-seekers soon arrived and settled in the northern and central portions of the Sierra Nevada. The immigrants who came to fulfill their dreams were named forty-niners, referring to the year in which they came in largest numbers. Novelists and poets usually used somewhat poetic name, the Argonauts, suggesting the similarity with the Greek legend about a group of brave men who undertook a voyage to unknown shores in the search of a golden fleece.

The general division of the Gold Rush is usually considered to fall into three phases: California from 1848 to 1858; Nevada and the far West from 1858 to 1868; and the remainder of the West beginning in the late 1860s. California was enriched during these years that changed its face and catalyzed the development of the state, economically and population-wise. The most productive part from all the eleven districts where gold was mined has been by far the Sierra Nevada, the dominant mountain range in California. (Clark 11)

Gold was both plentiful and – by happy geologic accident- easy to extract, making the gold-bearing gravels of California's rivers into what has been described as “the finest opportunity that, has ever been offered on any mining frontier.” A contemporary newspaper put it slightly differently: “The whole country, from San Francisco to Los Angeles, and from the sea shore to the base of the Sierra Nevada, resounds with the cry of ‘gold, GOLD, GOLD!’ while the field is left half planted, the house half built, and everything neglected but the manufacture of shovels and pickaxes.” (Gold Rush Era)

California was, technically, still a part of the Mexican territory of Alta California. However, mere nine days after the gold discovery, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, stating the end of the Mexican-American War, was signed in February 1848. California became a frontier of the United States. (Davis 34)

The early state was full of various races and nationalities, the yellow metal being the main reason. From the very beginning, the Native Americans participated in excavation of the gold nuggets and they were actually the first ones who used advanced methods. But as gold was harder to “pick”, Americans became convinced that the foreigners are stealing their fortune. Waves of racism were the cause of the new California State Legislature that ordered to foreign miners to pay tax of twenty dollars per month, which was devastating for the foreign miner who could ill afford to pay it. (Learn California)

Nevertheless, the minorities were not the only trigger of Californian's aggression. The Western adventurers were famous for being "rough and ready" as one famous name of a mining town proves. Judge Lynch did not earn his reputation for being merciful and the miners themselves often presented the law. Shooting at sight remained a popular part of many western movies and so did the punishment of villains. The first laws concerned staking a claim, which belonged to the miner if he worked it six days a week. A claim did not mean the ownership of the land, but merely the right to exploit it. (Learn California)

The majority of the newly-arrived population, however, was represented by the true and honest miners, prospectors, traders and everybody who set up a business when thousands of people migrated to the West. In 1852, a California newspaper declared that their state has "a population made up from the most energetic of the civilized earth's population; and the boast was true." (Merwin 65)

Man is man, in California: he exists for his own sake, not as a part of social organism. He is, in a sense, superior to the society. In the first place, it is not his society; he came from some other region on his own business. Most likely he did not intend to stay; but having summered and wintered in California, he has become a Californian and now he is not contented anywhere else. (Reviews and Literary Notices)

Contrary to popular belief, women and children participated in this fever as well. They accompanied their husbands and lovers on the long way westward. There were wives, mothers, daughters, mistresses, cooks and women who were not afraid of taking up unusual jobs, those who had awesome courage and a high sense of adventure. Still, for the shortage of chaste women, the handful of such creatures became usually the object of tenderness and chivalry. (Reviews and Literary Notices)

Economically speaking, everyone made their contributions to the whole area. Once gold was dug out, the miners spent it for food, materials and broad variety of pleasures. Only few people managed to save enough for the journey back to their homes and to bring their earnings for their families. On the other hand, the money was spent immediately in California and thus helped the economics of the developing state. Thanks to this fact, cities prospered and more people could come again.

It is apparent that the West attracted many characters and therefore also inspired many literary texts, starting with guidebooks and journals and ending with novels and

plays. The Golden State became enormously popular, owing to the work of publishers who included excerpts from early California writers in gold-rush guidebooks and pamphlets. The primary object was to attract even more immigrants and adventurers to the land. Local newspapers were quickly established so that they could satisfy the eagerness for stories about gold strikes and new discoveries of precious minerals.

California's gold-mining history stands for a popular topic and many writers took inspiration from that period and its people. They created a very specific picture of the romantic California. The most well-known author is Mark Twain. Other writers contributed with their views on this gold madness as well – Henry David Thoreau, Charles Warren Stoddard, Louise Clappe, and frontier humorists like Alonzo Delano and George Horatio Derby. “Led by Harte and Twain, western writers of the 1860s and early 1870s transformed the gold rush into mythic history, often obscuring the actual accomplishments of the miners.” (Learn California) This thesis focuses on Bret Harte, the most influential writer of the Gold Rush who succeeded in creating the atmosphere of adventure, humor and sentiment. Until today, the directors and screen writers read his stories and find their inspiration in the humorous and touching portrayal of the Pioneers.

2. Bret Harte as an Author and Regionalist

The American writers who first came to California and started to write when the first seven productive years of the Gold Rush passed are called the second generation. Bret Harte ranks among the best of them as he mastered the style of gold rush fiction and became famous for his subjective and original picture of golden California.

His beginnings were almost everything but literary. Francis Bret Harte, later omitting the first name completely, was born in Albany, New York in 1839. He had a strong feeling of Americanism even though he was of English, German and Hebrew origins. (Trent, Erskine 233) After his father had died, he set out on a journey with his mother across the whole American continent to settle in the western regions. Literary historians and his friends argue what his objections were. The most comprehensible conclusion would be that he wanted to try his hand at the mining business as well.

Thousands of people travelled this way, chasing after immortal fame and fortune connected with gold.

No age nor condition, no quality of manhood, nor grade of moral or mental culture was unrepresented in that motley tide of migration. The dreamy young student, the future poet of the Argonauts of 1849, drifted on with the rest. (Harte, Choice Bits 7)

Being a young, inexperienced man from the East, he came through many different occupations from the start. If being a miner was the dream of Harte, he soon awoke from it. He gathered a wealth of experience in various jobs, every one of them ending without greater success or impressive savings. All of his early jobs, namely an express company messenger, a printer, a school teacher, an Indian fighter and lastly a drug clerk, provided him with essential knowledge of Californian society and with enough materials for his later stories. Charles Warren Stoddard, his friend and a fellow-writer noted about him:

Probably his youth was his salvation, for he ran a thousand risks, yet seemed only to gain in health and spirits; and all the while he was unconsciously accumulating the most precious material that could fall to the lot of a writer—the lights and shadows, the colour, the details of a unique life, as brief as it was brilliant and one never to be lived again under the sun or stars. (241)

Fortunately for all his later readers and admirers, he succeeded in getting a job in the newspaper industry as a compositor for a weekly periodical *Golden Era*, and then for *The Californian* where he got acquainted with Mark Twain. (Harkins 32) Harte entered upon a new career when he took up a position of an editor of a newly founded *The Overland Monthly*. It was in this newspaper that Harte finally published his own short stories. The first short story of his, which remains until today also the most memorable one, was called “The Luck of Roaring Camp”. After unusually welcoming reactions from the East, other miners’ stories could follow. Among the best creations of Harte, according to Harkins, belong his earliest stories “The Outcast of Poker Flat”, “Tennessee’s Partner” and “Miggles”. (41)

Everything that he wrote until the year of 1871, when he left California for good, was collected all in a volume called *The Luck of the Roaring Camp and other*

Sketches. (Boynton 30) Though Harte is known mainly for his short stories, nobody can diminish his contribution to the world of poetry. It was the short poem “Plain Language from Truthful James”, later always referred to as “Heathen Chinee”, that made him famous worldwide. Surprisingly, Harte did not know why because “for this clever piece he never cared greatly”. (Trent, Erskine 237)

Harte is also claimed to be the first American local colorist as he focused on depicting one specific region of California. Together with Mark Twain, he played an important role in opening to public view the wild regions and society of early California and the Sierra Nevada. (Ramsay 5) His regionalism is well illustrated in his sketches and short stories about the mining society in California and nearby regions. With astonishing quickness, he acquired his typical style and refined it. Because of his novel style, he is considered to be a pioneer of the local color school. According to William Long, “Harte’s first stories were as new as the land and different from anything that had ever appeared in fiction.” (Linda ix) Bret Harte indeed longed to be known as the founder of a characteristic Western literature. This belief never deserted him until he convinced the world that it had become reality. (Pemberton 86)

There are many aspects that attracted his readers and shaped their images about the West. Firstly, the most discussed issue about his works is whether their author used his well-developed imagination or simply noted down the real stories of ordinary men in the mines and surrounding.

Critical evaluations of Harte’s accuracy take into account such elements as the characters he portrayed, the situations and events he described, and the general atmosphere he created, as well as the actual physical appearance of the land. Roughly half the critics who have considered this aspect of Harte’s work have asserted that he was historically accurate, the other half have denied it. The former have felt that his work was as good, if not better than, actual historical accounts. While commentators in the first two decades of the twentieth century were especially likely to advance this view of Harte’s work, it has been espoused throughout the century. Among those few who have denied the historical accuracy of Harte’s writing, slightly fewer than half have asserted that Harte was not accurate but that he should have been, while the remainder have asserted that inaccuracy is not a deficiency and that Harte should not be judged on that basis at all. (Linda x, xi)

The readers of Harte’s stories can believe that the author truthfully described the real life of the miners, or they might realize that Harte was an author of fiction and as such,

he was most likely to use his imagination when he needed to. However, this aspect would not make his work less valuable. He still remains one of the best regional writers that the state of California ever had.

Bret Harte uses various techniques to achieve the local flavor of the region. Throughout his stories, characters with typical clothes, manners and dialect deal with situations possible only under such extraordinary circumstances, and the scenery in all weathers depicted, evokes the reader's fantasy. As Boynton claims: "... hardly before or since have local color and type offered themselves so glowing and salient as in the California which Bret Harte knew." (81)

2.1 Harte's Gold Rush Fiction

In his lecture, *California's Golden Age*, Bret Harte described the Gold Rush days as "a kind of crusade without a cross, an exodus without a prophet. It is not a pretty story; perhaps it is not even instructive; it is of a life of which perhaps the best that can be said is that it exists no longer." (Kozlay 1) It is very surprising that this author, who made his name famous particularly through the stories from the golden period, should dislike the theme he dealt with. On the other hand, when taking a closer look on Harte's work, humor and sentiment are two vital ingredients of his writing, ingredients capable of changing the meaning to its opposite.

Firstly, when studying Harte's stories, one can not overlook the importance of subtle humorous remarks. Contrary to American humor, which is often exaggerative, Harte employs a minimizing style with sympathetic and analytical humor. (Merwin 304) According to Pemberton, one of Harte's main biographers, the characters portrayed are done so with gentle and absolutely original humor as this thesis tries to prove later in the analytical part. (191) Naturally, the environment contributed a great deal to the final humorous image of mining camps. "It is obvious that a world of such incongruities will furnish inspiration to the humorist", claim Erskine and Trent (247-248)

The Pioneer, struggling with a new country, and often with chills and fever, religious in a gloomy, emotional, old-fashioned way, leading a lonely life, had

developed a humor more saturnine than that of New England. Upon this New England and Western humor as a foundation, California engrafted its own peculiar type of humor, which was the product of youth, courage and energy wrestling with every kind of difficulty and danger. (Merwin 303)

Secondly, sentiment is Harte's device of escaping from too much seriousness resulting from accidental tragic events. Erskine and Trent think that the sentimentality is "necessary in such stern crisis as his Western stories are built on". (241) In the stories full of unexpected disasters and deaths, only humor would not suffice to ease the overall atmosphere. However, the question of the appropriate amount of sentiment is raised by his critics. Vedder argues that sentiment in Harte's tales "does not ring true; it often flats into sentimentality". (237) Another of his biographers disagrees with that opinion as he saw this aspect of Harte's works as a merit: "Bret Harte was a writer of sentiment, and that is the secret of his power." (Merwin 302) The best explanation comes from Linda:

One of Harte's strongest features was "the sure touch that plays on the heartstrings of his readers till they throb only as he wills." It was noted, however, that Harte had a tendency to be "almost too pathetic." But by using his sense of humor, Harte avoided his inclination to appeal excessively to his readers' emotions and achieved just the proper balance between humor and pathos. On the other hand, when reviewers noted an excessive amount of pathos with no counterbalancing humor, the charge of sentimentality was levied against Harte. (Linda viii)

By dint of humor and sentiment in his Pioneer stories, Harte acquired his typical style. His best works are found among short stories because their author is said to be unable of creating more complex characters and plot that would suit a novel. This narrowness enabled him to "do just one thing well, and that is to delineate the life with which he became familiar in his early days". (Vedder 224) The endings are unexpected and abrupt, caused by natural forces or death. It was in his powers to make a situation dramatic, but he usually needed "a convulsion of nature to end his stories". (Erskine, Trent 240)

Harte's work can be viewed from many perspectives. Throughout his short story collection, realistic as well as romantic features can be found together with the portion of sentiment and humor needed. His style is simple, brief and direct. (California Journal)

California Gold Rush was defined by the working mass of the new immigrant population- men, the miners. That is the reason why there prevails a masculine style of narration in the writings of Harte. (California Journal) Despite the fact that women play more or less important roles in all of his stories, the men are in the centre of readers' attention. The typical picture at that time in the street were stalwart, bearded men, deeply tanned and wrinkled, wearing red shirts or tight-waisted coats of buffalo hide and high boots. (Pemberton 38) Their dress was often home-made and rarely new or clean. Strips of cotton or cloth were used as suspenders over their shoulders, and their coats were at best fashionable in the eighteenth century. In Merwin's biography, Bayard Taylor describes the typical men as he met them on a ship:

“Long, loosely-jointed men, with large hands, and awkward feet and limbs; their faces long and sallow; their hair long, straight and black; their expression one of settled melancholy. The corners of their mouths curved downward, and their upper lips were drawn tightly over their lower ones, thus giving to their faces that look of ferocity which is peculiar to Indians. These men chewed tobacco incessantly, drank copiously, were heavily armed with knives and pistols, and breathed defiance to all foreigners.” (64)

As mentioned above, there is hardly any story without a single mention of a woman whatsoever. It is most probable that from the very beginning of the Gold Rush to catch sight of a woman was quite rare. On the other hand, Harte came to California after the year of 1851 when women started to arrive in larger numbers. (The Feminization) For this reason, Harte came across many types of womanhood which undoubtedly provided him with inspiration for his heroines. The possibilities of women characters can be easily observed in the story “The Outcasts of Poker Flat”. Virtuous young Piney and two unchaste prostitutes “Mother Shipton” and “The Duchess” sleep together in one camp. More contradictory characters are to be analyzed in the following part of this thesis.

Perhaps the great weaknesses of the majority of Bret Harte's heroines are vanity, coquetry and love of admiration. In short, they are very very human and their characters are so firmly and so finely etched that we catch every glimpse of their failings. (Pemberton 171)

The last but not least contributing factor to the image that Harte has given about the Gilded Age is the preservation of scenery of California at that time. He depicts the Sierras with sentimentalism and in great detail. Every short story of his contains at least the description of the surrounding landscape, the flora and fauna in all their forms, and, finally, the natural forces finishing the narrative. Harte's love of the countryside can be seen in his statement:

The setting was itself heroic. The great mountains of the Sierra Nevada lifted majestic, snow-capped peaks against a sky of purest blue. Magnificent pine forest of trees which were themselves enormous gave to the landscape a sense of largeness and greatness. It was a land of rugged canons, sharp declivities, and magnificent distances. (Boynton 13-14)

3. Specific Features of Harte's Gold Rush

3.1 Romantic Portrayal of Immoral Characters

Leaving aside the question of Harte's accuracy in the actual description, the characteristic feature of his work is the inclination towards idealization of the developing country. It is most distinctly shown in his characters and the scenery extracts. In general, his heroes and heroines are very often pleasant in appearance and have such inward qualities that the reader must admire them at once. Gamblers Mr. Jack Hamlin and Mr. John Oakhurst, and a stage coach driver Yuba Bill rank among his best characters. They appear as the main characters in a number of the short stories, or they are at least mentioned as a shining example.

In the story called "Miggles", Yuba Bill is, at first, presented as a rude man who batters down a gate with a stone. He does so because he seeks a shelter for himself and his passengers, and the owner of the only building in the area, named Miggles, is not reacting to their calling. He enters without permission and shakes the only person in the room by his shoulder, saying: "Miggles! Be you deaf? You ain't dumb anyhow, you know". (Harte 299) To his surprise, the figure collapses as he is not Miggles but Jim, a paralytic man who once used to court the lady until he was struck down by a disease.

In this first part of the narration, Yuba Bill seems to be quite a realistic figure, a resolute man with no moral inhibitions behaving in his natural way. The turning point comes with Miggles, a young and attractive woman. In that moment, Yuba Bill changes into a considerate helper and listener, looking admiringly at Miggles. Ending of the story even suggests that Yuba Bill might have fallen in love.

But as we reached the highroad, Bill's dexterous hand laid the six horses back on their haunches, and the stage stopped with a jerk. For there, on a little eminence beside the road, stood Miggles, her hair flying, her eyes sparkling, her white handkerchief waving, and her white teeth flashing a last 'good-bye'. We waved our hats in return. And then Yuba Bill, as if fearful of further fascination, madly lashed his horses forward, and we sank back in our seats. (Harte 310)

Mr. Jack Hamlin, on the other hand, falls in love in the first few moments of the story "Brown of Calaveras". He is a professional poker player and his family consists mainly of female adults. Yet, he possesses many qualities which any Eastern gentleman could envy him. Firstly, the physical appearance of this gambler is very appealing. The soft brown eyes, long lashes, delicate lines of his handsome mouth make him an irresistible person. Secondly, Hamlin is described as a fair singer with "a tenor so singularly sweet and shaded by a pathos so subdued and tender". (Harte 33) His most noble merit, however, is his sense of friendship.

This presents also the main theme of the short story, the decision between truthful friendship and affection for a woman. Jack falls in love with a beautiful lady, and only later he learns that she is a wife of his friend Brown. Nevertheless, he does not refuse having an affair with her when he is not in touch with her husband and his friend. The situation changes when Brown wants to talk to Hamlin because he can not bear seeing his wife leaving him for someone else as he still loves her very much. Hamlin feels the guilt and stab of conscience so he refuses to escape with her that night. Moreover, he advises the poor husband to spot her lover and kill him on sight. Afterwards, Hamlin runs away.

But early that morning the dwellers by the Wingdam turnpike, miles away, heard a voice, pure as a sky-lark's, singing afield. They who were asleep turned over on their rude couches to dream of youth, and love, and olden days. Hard-faced men and anxious gold-seekers, already at work, ceased their labors and leaned upon their picks to listen to a romantic vagabond ambling away against the rosy sunrise. (Harte 43)

Hamlin is also the leading character in a story “A Protégée of Jack Hamlin’s” where he prevents a young girl from committing a suicide on a steamship. He pretends to be her cousin so that he could stay close to her during the journey. Despite their rather embarrassing beginning, he starts to like her and regrets that he is unable to tell her the truth about him and his reputation.

He had never told her that he was a gambler like Stratton, and that his peculiar infelix reputation among women made it impossible for him to assist her, except by a stealth or the deception he had practiced, without compromising her. He who had for years faced the sneers and half frightened oppositions of the world dared not tell the truth to this girl, for whom he expected nothing and who did not interest him. He felt he was almost slinking at her side. (Harte 142)

Apart from the image of a singing gambler, he gained another one as a musician for playing wonderfully the organ and an *Agnus Dei*. Because of this single act, he becomes trustworthy to the ladies. Nevertheless, his image is later ruined because the young lady, his protégée, finds out the truth from her sister who knew Hamlin. Consequently, he leaves and the story ends. “Jack’s ideas of morality were vague, but his convictions on points of honor were singularly direct and positive.” (Harte 145)

The last distinctive character, the gambler Mr. John Oakhurst, comes to the fore in stories “The Outcasts of Poker Flat” and “A Passage in the Life of Mr. John Oakhurst”. The former and more famous story begins with a description of Oakhurst’s face- calm and handsome. He and three other citizens of Poker Flat are judged by a committee that decided to rid the town of all improper persons. Mr. Oakhurst receives his sentence with philosophical calmness as he is too much of a gambler not to accept fate. Together with a young woman called “The Duchess”, an older one known as “Mother Shipton” and “Uncle Billy”, a suspected robber and drunkard, they set out on a journey to the next camp because they are forbidden to return at the peril of their lives.

The ladies, being deported for their “professional impropriety”, suggest to make a break in the middle of the way to Sandy Bar over a steep mountain range. Oakhurst does not consider the idea lucky but he submits to the majority. There is a mention, almost inconsequential but important for the proper illustration of Oakhurst’s character. “He insisted upon exchanging his own riding-horse for the sorry mule which the Duchess

rode.” (Harte 349) This chivalrous behavior places him high above the usual image of outcasts. As the others stop to have a good rest, they drink the provisions of liquor, being calmly surveyed by Mr. Oakhurst. He does not drink because it interferes with his profession which requires “coolness, impassiveness, and presence of mind, and in his own language, he ‘could not afford it’”. (Harte 350) Oakhurst explains how he learnt not to sleep during his successful times in poker.

‘When a man gets a streak of luck- nigger luck- he don’t get tired. The luck gives in first. Luck,’ continued the gambler reflectively, ‘is a mighty queer thing. All you know about it for certain is that it’s bound to change. And it’s finding out when it’s going to change that makes you.’ (Harte 358)

Another peculiarity of this seemingly unrefined man would be his studiously neat habits. He washes his hands and face to forget his annoyance. Still, it never occurred to him to abandon his weaker and more pitiable companions. The short rest changes into an overnight stay when they are accompanied by two more travelers, Tom Simson known as ‘The Innocent’ and his betrothed, Piney Woods. Their overall goodness starts to make an affect on the whole group, except for Uncle Billy who steals their donkey with the food provisions at night. The others seem to enjoy the atmosphere of that night, Mr. Oakhurst does not say ‘cards’ once, Piney plays an accordion and Tom accompanies her on a pair of bone castanets, they are all singing, later listening to Tom’s recitation of the Iliad.

A sudden snow storm makes it impossible for them to continue in their journey over the mountains and their store of provisions is slowly decreasing. When the week passes, “with small food and much of Homer”, (Harte 360) here comes the moment for another character to show her qualities. Mother Shipton starved herself to spare enough food for “the child” Piney. Consequently, Oakhurst sends Tom through the snow to Poker Flat where their only hope lies. Unfortunately, he returns too late with help. Piney and The Duchess died in each other’s embrace and Oakhurst left for the nearby wood and shot himself there.

The second short story, “A Passage into the Life of Mr. John Oakhurst”, depicts the hero as a gambler who is willing to change his manners and habits for a lady he fell in love with. He is being praised as a good rider after a California fashion and, more importantly, as a honest man.

'But isn't he a gambler?' queried the youngest Miss Smith.
'He is,' replied Hamilton; 'but I wish, my dear young lady, that we all played as open and honest a game as our friend yonder, and were as willing as he is to abide by its fortunes.' (Harte 278)

Oakhurst undergoes great changes in his usual habits, he is seldom seen in a bar-room, or with his old associates, he reads more, takes long walks, he sold his fast horses and shaved off his long, silken moustache, had a new suit made and he even went to the church.

On the other hand, the lady for whom he improves his image is married and already having an affair with another man. Oakhurst does not see the reality through the beautiful appearance of the lady and he sacrifices for her his life style and even duels with his friend Hamilton. When he finds out the truth, he runs to her at once and wants to kill her and then himself. But her reaction makes him change his plans. She is not afraid at all, in fact, she thinks she deserves it. That is why he chooses to run instead and to return to his old habits. The ending shows Oakhurst playing in a bar room again. "The game was continued in that decorous silence which usually distinguished the table at which Mr. John Oakhurst presided." (Harte 295)

When speaking about idealized characters, the whole group of miners in the story "The Luck of Roaring Camp" can not be omitted. The narration takes place in one of many mining settlements in the year of 1850. The story begins with a simple statement of Cherokee Sal giving birth to a child. She is described as "a coarse, and, it is to be feared, a very sinful woman." (Harte 2) This event was rather an extraordinary in the camp because deaths were by no means uncommon, but a birth was a novelty. The characterization of the whole population of hundred men is expressed in one sentence. "One or two of these were actual fugitives from justice, some were criminal, and all were reckless." (Harte 3) In the course of the story, these settlers are turned into sensitive, self-sacrificing guardians of a newborn child.

From the beginning, all the men are eager to take care of the helpless child without any help of women. The mother is substituted by an ass and its milk, role of the father is played by all of the rest, as nobody can really guess who the biological father is. One of the miners, Stumpy, was appointed to be the children's "nun". They start to call the child Luck because he is thought to have brought luck to the camp.

And so the work of regeneration began in Roaring Camp. Almost imperceptibly a change came over the settlement. The cabin assigned to 'Tommy Luck' - or 'The Luck,' as he was more frequently called- first showed signs of improvement. It was kept scrupulously clean and white-washed. Then it was boarded, clothed, and papered. (Harte 10)

The expressman – their only connecting link with the surrounding world – sometimes told wonderful stories of the camp. He would say, 'They've a street up there in "Roaring" that would lay over any other street in Red Dog. They've got vines and flowers round their houses, and they wash themselves twice a day. But they're mighty rough on strangers, and they worship an Injin baby.' (Harte 14)

Erskine claims that Harte viewed the miners through an idealizing haze of romance (325) and the reader must admit that such changes would not be true to life with a group of hardworking and rough miners. The shouting and yelling is forbidden within hearing distance of Tommy's cabin and so the men converse in whispers and smoke with Indian gravity. Moreover, the miners feel happy as they have never felt before. The highly practical men start to discover beauty in the trifles that surround them.

A flake of glittering mica, a fragment of variegated quartz, a bright pebble from the bed of the creek, became beautiful to eyes thus cleared and strengthened, and were invariably put aside for The Luck. It was wonderful how many treasures the woods and hillsides yielded that 'would do for Tommy'. (Harte 13)

Their future plans and desires for improvement are, however, thwarted by the following winter of 1851. Because of a mass of snow in the mountains, the river North Fork swept up the whole valley of Roaring Camp. All were anxious to find out what happened to Tommy because his cabin stood nearest to the water. A relief-boat brought Kentuck, one of the biggest protectors of the baby, with the child in his arms. Unfortunately, The Luck is already pulseless and Kentuck dies in the next moment because of his many serious injuries that he had suffered in the wild water.

Harte's idealized characters are often young strong men courting young beautiful women. Mr. Oakhurst and Mr. Hamlin with their many love affairs proves this fact. The author gives usually the best qualities to the men and saves only few for his women. Except for Miggles, all the women in the mentioned stories had serious flaws in their characters. The prostitutes (Mother Shipton and The Duchess, Cherokee Sal), self-seekers (ladies in "A Passage" and "Brown of Calaveras") and a suicide ("A Protégée").

Nevertheless, there is always something good inside each of them to be found under the right circumstances.

3.2 The Issue of Loneliness in the West

California in its early years offered singular wilderness. The railroad to the West was built much later and the scenery remained unspoiled until the first gold-seekers arrived. As they did not come to settle there, they traveled usually alone, without family or friends. Many of the Pioneers lost their reputation, earned a new one, spent all their money and dug out gold, forgot their name and won another. Suddenly, they turned into completely new people with no past, strangers to themselves, with no attachments in the new country. It is no wonder that the feeling of loneliness often pervaded the camps.

The loneliness itself appeared in various forms. Probably the most natural seclusion in those days was the one of the mining camps. The settlements were spread all around the country and still too distant from each other. The camps were supposed to be independent in the numerous situations of natural disasters. Long winters in the mountains and wild rivers in the spring often prevented the inhabitants of such camps from traveling in order to shop or visit their neighbors.

“The Luck of Roaring Camp” deals with the feeling of uniqueness and the inhabitants of Roaring Camp are proud to live there in solitude. They refuse to admit that they would not be able to take care of a child on their own and they take pride in their self-sufficiency.

The camp was jealous of its privileges and looked suspiciously on strangers. No encouragement was given to immigration, and, to make their seclusion more perfect, the land on either side of the mountain wall that surrounded the camp they duly pre-empted.

This, and a reputation for singular proficiency with the revolver, kept the reserve of Roaring Camp inviolate. (Harte 14)

This is the example of liberal isolation, chosen as a life-style accepted by all. It was more difficult to trust someone in the days of gold madness, people blinded by easy money were capable of the worst crimes. That is also why Roaring Camp protected its secrets and successes so jealously from others. The gold diggers did not trust the other camps

either. "A disbelief in the honesty of other camps prevailed at Roaring Camp, as in other places." (Harte 8)

The only woman in the camp, Cherokee Sal, an Indian prostitute and mother of the child, dies soon after the childbirth all alone. From the beginning of the Gold Rush, women were not a common thing to see in such camps full of men. Women proved themselves more worthy in towns, but the mining settlements could not fully appreciate the tender feminine hand. The men of Roaring Camp are convinced that no decent woman would come deliberately to live there. That is the reason that Sal does not have a single female friend in the whole camp.

... she was the only woman in Roaring Camp, and was just then lying in sore extremity, when she most needed the ministrations of her own sex. Dissolute, abandoned, and irreclaimable, she was yet suffering a martyrdom hard enough to bear even when veiled by sympathizing womanhood, but now terrible in her loneliness.

... at a moment when she most lacked her sex's intuitive tenderness and care, she met only the half-contemptuous faces of her masculine associates. (Harte 2)

There are more stories employing the lonely women scenario. "Miggles" counts among one of them as she is living quite far away from civilization, out in the woods, only with her paralytic friend Jim who can not even talk with her. She is the one who has to take care of everything, food and entertainment. Their house has walls papered with illustrated journals so that she could read him in winter when they are sitting alone at home. She explains to her new listeners how her life used to look like six years ago. She enjoyed the feeling of being popular with everybody, had a lot of acquaintances, but she gave up everything for Jim when she learned about his state of health.

"They advised me to send him to Frisco to the hospital for he was no good to anyone and would be a baby all his life. Perhaps it was something in Jim's eye, perhaps it was that I never had a baby, but I said "No." (Harte 301)

She lived quite lonely, according to her own words, until she found a half-grown grizzly bear whom she named Joaquin and domesticated as a pet. She uses him now as her watch-dog and a guardian. The atmosphere of the narration changes

several times as does Miggles' mood. She shows signs of sorrow at one moment, contemplating about her future. In the next, she laughs in the most airy, off-hand manner. She realizes that she chose this life herself and tries to make it up to Jim, but at the same time, she pities herself as well.

The whole story is deeply romantic for the love and selflessness with which the beautiful woman takes care of her disabled friend.

‘Why,’ asked the Judge, ‘do you not marry this man to whom you have devoted your youthful life?’

‘Well, you see,’ said Miggles, ‘it would be playing it rather low down on Jim to take advantage of his being so helpless. And then, too, if we were man and wife, now, we’d both know that I was bound to do what I do now of my own accord.’ (Harte 309)

She puts an end to her story when the Judge asks her why she should not marry somebody else. From this reaction, one might conclude that she is afraid of changing her mind if she had the opportunity.

One example of an unwanted solitude, that was not caused by a personal decision, can be found in “The Outcast of Poker Flat”. The heterogeneous group consisting of two prostitutes, a gambler and a drunk thief is expelled from the community in Poker Flat under the danger of being killed, providing they should return. The ladies and two men travel together and yet alone to Sandy Bar, which is a day’s journey. There is no closer sympathy in the party, they know each other but they are no closer friends, they travel as a group and still, it is a forced journey interrupted only by swearing.

Contrary to “The Luck”, the group did not solve their difficult situation by the improvement of themselves, but by forgetting their misery by drinking alcohol. Partial relaxation of the tense atmosphere comes with the “Innocent” and Piney who complete the group and raise the spirits. When the snow storm foils their plans and isolates them from any civilization or help, they do not sink into desperation.

Day by day closer around them drew the snowy circle, until at last they looked from their prison over drifted walls of dazzling white, that towered twenty feet above their heads. It became more and more difficult to replenish their fires, even from the fallen trees beside them, now half hidden in the drifts. And yet no one complained. (Harte 360)

It is most probable that only down-to-earth Mr. Oakhurst recognizes the real danger and the tragic ending that is coming, but he does not disturb the others as they play the accordion and read the Iliad by the campfire. With the imminent crises, the lovers, Piney and Tom, look into each other's eyes and are happy, Mr. Oakhurst settles himself coolly to the losing game and The Duchess, more cheerful than she had ever been, takes care of Piney. As in "The Luck", the death caused by inevitable natural force ends the story.

The last type of loneliness is depicted in the story "Tennessee's Partner" and "Left Out on Lone Star Mountain". Both heroes portrayed in these stories are people who could not live or work without their friends and partners. The first short story opens with an explanation why the real name of Tennessee's Partner is not known. The ignorance of the man's past life is shown by others at Sandy Bar as they knew him only with Tennessee. They were work-mates for a long time when Tennessee's Partner brought his wife to live with them. What happened next is aptly expressed by the narrator:

Of their married felicity but little is known, perhaps for the reason that Tennessee, then living with his partner, one day took occasion to say something to the bride on his own account, at which, it is said, she smiled not unkindly and chastely retreated – this time as far as Marysville, where Tennessee followed her, and where they went to housekeeping without the aid of a justice of the peace. (Harte 18-19)

Their living together was short-lived and when Tennessee returned again, surprisingly, Tennessee's Partner was the first one to greet him with affection.

Whether Tennessee had any qualities for which his partner should value him is not known. More record is, however, preserved of his immoral deeds. He was known to be a gambler and suspected to be a thief. His last robbery can not stay without punishment and so Tennessee is chased, dragged to the court and sentenced to death. Tennessee's Partner takes the opportunity and speaks on the prisoner's behalf.

'I come yar as Tennessee's pardner – knowing him nigh on four years, off and on, wet and dry, in luck and out o' luck. His ways ain't aller my ways, but thar ain't any p'int in that young man, thar ain't any liveliness as he's been up to,

as I don't know. And you sez to me, sez you – confidential-like, as between man and man – “What should a man know of his pardner?” ’ (Harte 23)

His speech made no difference in the committee's final decision and after his last desperate attempt to bribe the jury he leaves the courtroom. The next day, Tennessee is hung on a tree and his partner comes for his body with a cart and his donkey. He makes a humble funeral and buries the body next to his solitary cabin. After that, Tennessee's Partner lives alone and his health and strength seems visibly to decline until he finally meets his friend for eternity.

Friendship, here seen as the highest value, that was evidently not shared by both of the men ended tragically. Tennessee's Partner would do anything for his close friend, even though he has to know there is nobody to pay him his kindness back. Tennessee was unworthy of his partner's devotion. It is unbelievable that despite all the bad qualities of the man, his friend stood by him. The possible explanation could be that his Partner did not want to live his life in solitude and was glad to share it even with such a person.

Similar desperation for company is portrayed in the second story “Left Out on Lone Star Mountain”. The main character, a mere boy of nineteen, is abandoned by his four fellow workers and friends in a “played out” claim. In California, the names were given quite humorously as this boy is called “Old Man” and his companions The Right and Left Bowers (they were brothers), Union Mills (according to the patch on his trousers) and the Judge (having no knowledge of the law). When the Old Man comes with a proposal for a new, though underpaid, job, the others are already planning to leave for more prosperous claim.

‘If,’ he added, turning to the Old Man, ‘if you want to stay, if *you* want to do Chinaman's wok at Chinaman's wages, if you want to hang on to the charity of the traders at the Crossing, you can do it, and enjoy the prospects of Noah's doves alone. But we're calculatin' to step out of it.’

‘But I haven't said I wanted to do it *alone*,’ protested the Old Man with a gesture of bewilderment.

‘If these are your general ideas of the partnership,’ continued the Right Bower, clinging to the established hypothesis of the other partners for support, ‘it ain't ours, and the only way we can prove it is to stop the foolishness right here. We calculated to dissolve the partnership and strike out for ourselves elsewhere. You're no longer responsible for us, nor we for you...’ (Harte 407)

Though the partners abandoned the Old Man, they left almost everything to him including enough money so that he could start somewhere else. He stays in their cabin alone, watching the new strange atmosphere of loneliness and remembering the old days with his friends. He decides to leave the claim for good because the happier memories would haunt him there. He sets out on a journey, without properly knowing where. After a while, he comes across a wild creek that was hastened by a sudden flood and changes his way towards the summit of the Lone Star Mountain so that he could see his friends one more time. When he reaches the peak, he sees that a landslide in an unfrequented part of the mountain has occurred and that there is virgin gold lying quite freely.

His first thoughts were those of happiness and satisfaction. "It was all his own! His own by right of discovery under the law of the land, and without accepting a favor from *them*." (Harte 415) Still, he can not forget his four workmates and decides to send each of them a draft for thousand dollars. He makes no plans for his own future and, in fact, he is grief-stricken in his loneliness. Therefore, he leaves the treasure behind and hurries back to tell the group to have their share. Suddenly, he hears a shot in the direction of the cabin. His friends returned to the cabin because they were worrying about the Old Man and were arguing among themselves whether he left or not.

Their meeting is described quite sentimentally:

There was a shout of joy; in another moment he was half-buried in the bosom of the Right Bower's shirt, half-dragged into the lap of the Judge, upsetting the barrel, and completely encompassed by the Left Bower and Union Mills. With the enthusiastic utterance of his name the spell was broken. (Harte 427)

This could have been a happy ending of the story about the reunion of the old friends mining gold. It turns out to be more complicated because a second slide has taken place and the whole treasure is buried again. In spite of this fact, the group is happy because "had he (the Old Man) stayed behind he would have been buried too. And thank God for showing us where we may yet labor for it in hope and patience like honest men." (Harte 430)

All these stories represented the issue of loneliness experienced in numerous circumstances. Desired separation takes turns with chosen and forced isolation; the

power of friendship and the consequences of losing one's partners; feelings of women without the feminine company are all illustrated in many of Harte's short stories.

3. 3 Description of Violence, Crime and Punishment

Together with new mining communities, the mining codes appeared. The gold-diggers realized that their lives needed law and order so that they could work in peace. Sometimes, the people of the camp took the law into their own hands. The period of the Gold Rush is filled with numerous tales of lynching and vigilantism. This theme of crime and consequential punishment by the court or by the ordinary people was very popular with Bret Harte as well. His stories are full of rough men who protect their property conscientiously.

When taking a closer look at the story "The Luck of Roaring Camp", one mention of the shooting to death between two men can be found in the first paragraph as well as a mention of a fight that was not novel in 1850. As the description of the inhabitants of Roaring Camp goes, the term "roughs" applied to them. The thievery is mentioned when all the miners come to see the newborn baby and give him more or less useful presents. One of them is a silver teaspoon with initials that were not the giver's.

In the camp, a rather incredulous view of women prevails. The men do not think highly of Cherokee Sal and they are against bringing another woman into the camp as "no decent woman could be prevailed to accept Roaring Camp as her home". (Harte 8) Only later the men agree that they would build a hotel for two or three families so that The Luck would profit by female companionship, although they are fiercely skeptical in regard to its general virtue and usefulness.

"Tennessee's Partner" perhaps does not mind his partner's flaws of character but the jury refuses to tolerate his robberies and petty thefts. Moreover, he is a drunkard, gambler and all in all not a very virtuous person. That is why he is chased and cornered by the Judge.

Both were fearless, both self-possessed and independent, and both types of a civilization that in the seventeenth century would have been called heroic, but in the nineteenth simply 'reckless.'

'What have you got there? – I call,' said Tennessee quietly.

'Two bowers and an ace,' said the stranger as quietly, showing two revolvers and a bowie-knife.

'That takes me,' returned Tennessee; and, with this gambler's epigram, he threw away his useless pistol and rode back with his captor. (Harte 21)

The trial of Tennessee is described as fair because the law of Sandy Bar might be implacable, but not vengeful. In fact, the jury is quite sure that such a criminal can not escape the death sentence and therefore they are ready to listen patiently to any excuses. This is the moment for his partner to enter the courtroom and present his speech for the defense. When he sees that he did not achieve the desired results he tries to bribe the jury with seventeen hundred dollars in coarse gold. That is a terrible offense to the committee and the man is lucky not to be shot or thrown out of the window. "Judge Lynch, whether bigoted, weak, or narrow, was at least incorruptible." (Harte 25) The fate of Tennessee was already mentioned in the previous chapter.

The next well-known story about criminals is "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" where the camp decides to banish four dubious characters from their midst. Two prostitutes, one gambler and one thief and drunkard are thought to create an improper reputation of the whole settlement

A secret committee had determined to get rid the town of all improper persons. This was done permanently in regard of two men who were then hanging from the boughs of a sycamore in the gulch, and temporarily in the banishment of certain other objectionable characters. (Harte 348)

It was even suggested that Mr. Oakhurst should be hung as a possible example because he once won a lot of money in cards from them. He is saved by those who were lucky enough to win some amount from him in return. Mr. Oakhurst and Tennessee have one thing in common – they both accepted their punishments with philosophical calmness. They would not take liberties with the jury's decision. The deported group is accompanied by a body of armed men to the outskirts of the settlement.

As mentioned already, the group, except for one member, is about to die in the mountains during the snow storm. It is not accidental that the only one who succeeds in escaping before the snow starts falling is the thief with no scruples, Uncle Billy. The real criminal is free again and the others who reveal their good qualities are sentenced to death anyway. It is questionable whether the punishment itself was adequate. It is also not known if the aim of the banishment was fulfilled and if the camp started to prosper without these four persons.

“An Ingénue of the Sierras” is a story of a girl who is tricked by one member of a gang of thieves. It takes place during a dangerous time of frequent road robberies. The coach drivers experience many unpleasant situations and they have to be wary. That is also the case of Yuba Bill who orders his passengers to extinguish all the lights, even their cigars so that they would not be given away to the bandits. The Ramon Martinez gang is hidden out in the woods, waiting for wealthy travelers. They manage to come through without being attacked but Yuba Bill knows that somebody signaled from the coach to the gang.

‘Well, Miss Mullins, I’ve got a question or two to ask ye. I ask it straight out afore this crowd. It’s in my rights to take ye aside and ask it – but that ain’t my style; I’m no detective. I needn’t ask it at all, but act as ef I knowed the answer, or I might leave it to be asked by others. You needn’t answer it ef ye don’t like... Well, the simple question I’ve got to ask ye is this: Did you signal to anybody from the coach when we passed Galloper’s an hour ago?’ (Harte 214)

The lady confesses to having signaled to a man that she is going to marry. She describes him as a honest man who collects money for his firm. She confides to the gentlemen that it is probably a Spanish firm because she once saw the name Ramon Martinez. The others are sure that they know to what fraud she is engaged to. Yuba Bill, however, takes two possibilities into consideration and he is determined to find out who the man, Mr. Charles Byng, really is. They meet him and Yuba Bill is at the wedding ceremony.

‘... there is not a particle of legal evidence before us of the criminal antecedents of Mr. Charles Byng, except that which has been told you by the innocent lips of his betrothed, which the law of the land has now sealed forever... Briefly no judge would charge, no jury convict, on such evidence.’ (Harte 224)

Later in a bar-room, Yuba Bill is informed by the divisional superintendent of the Express Company that Ramon Martinez gang is “played out”. New instructions to the agents were applied so that they would be able to recognize any stolen property. Moreover, all the gang are spotted at the offices and they can not afford to pay a middleman. The fact that they have lately robbed only ordinary passengers’ trunks proves that they are unable to sell their loot. The story ends with a surprising revelation that the man who married the “ingenuous” lady was Ramon Martinez himself.

The last story about the transgression of the law is called “The Postmistress of Laurel Run”. The postmistress is a woman who insists on observance of all the rules. For instance, when a heavy mail-bag arrives at the station, she insists on dragging it to the office herself because it would be against the rules if anyone else touched it. Mrs. Baker is that day surprised by a stranger who introduces as Harry Home, the Department Agent from the San Francisco office. He insists that he will receive the mail-bag that evening because there is a suspicion that Stanton Green, the postmaster from Hickory Hill post office, is stealing money letters. As Mr. Home explains:

‘In plain words, we have traced the disappearance of money letters to a point where it lies between these two offices. Now, I have not the least hesitation in telling you that we do not suspect Laurel Run, and never have suspected it. ... Tonight, however, will settle all doubt in the matter. When I open that bag in this office tonight, and do not find a certain decoy letter in it, which was last checked at Heavy Tree Crossing, I shall know that it remains in Green’s possession at Hickory Hill.’ (Harte 194)

Mrs. Baker is shocked, but she decides what she has to do in the name of her dead husband who once saved the life of Mr. Green in a falling mining tunnel. She knows well that otherwise the foolish person would be a disgraced and ruined man forever. She takes out the entire content of gold and silver from the office safe and saddles a horse to get in time to Hickory Hill and save Mr. Green’s reputation. He admits to having stolen a hundred dollars so they replace the amount with her money and send it away. He feels much obliged to his savior and proposes to her. To his great surprise, she screams at him because she did not risk her reputation for him but for her husband’s sake.

At Laurel Run, she and Mr. Home open the bag and find all the money there. “‘It’s all right, Mrs. Baker,’ he said gravely. ‘He is safe this time.’” (Harte 205) However, the agent knows what happened because the coins were marked so it was easy for him to find out that these coins were already exchanged. He only asks if the man has run away, for it is clear that he will be traced as thief by the government from now on.

All these stories presented different forms of violation of the law and its consequential punishment. In spite of the death penalty meted out to Tennessee, the cruelest sentence was pronounced in Poker Flat. The two last stories are examples of the justice that was satisfied even though the criminals were not arrested and so it proves that there are other ways of punishing a villain. Beside this, Harte’s villains are not really villainous as they possess also virtuous qualities.

3.4 The Role of Natural Disasters

The unpredictability of nature played a very important role in Harte’s gold rush fiction as well as in the actual lives of miners. All the new settlements that were established in the West could not count on unsettled weather or irregular earthquakes. Because of the exploitation of the land, landslides or sudden floods occurred quite often in the mining camps and usually claimed many lives. Natural forces complicated the gold-seekers’ lives, and as the civilization was quite distant, they had to learn how to survive out in the woods alone, only with what the nature offered them.

The romantic incident and catastrophe are very often used by Harte as a writing devices. The best example of the power of a sudden accident is shown in Bret Harte’s first short story “The Luck of Roaring Camp”. The mining camps were often established close to the gold-bearing river, so there was no surprise when such a river burst its banks. Roaring Camp was situated in the Sierra foothills and the snow affected it in winter.

The snow lay deep on the Sierras, and every mountain creek became a river, and every river a lake. Each gorge or gulch was transformed into a tumultuous watercourse that descended the hillsides, tearing down giant trees and scattering

its drift and debris along the plain. Red Dog had been twice under water, and Roaring Camp had been forewarned. (Harte 15)

The water swept up the valley of Roaring Camp and the camp was scattered when the morning broke. The cabin nearest to the water was gone and three people died.

In “The Outcasts of Poker Flat”, the group gets over one night hopelessly snowed in without enough food provisions. They do not take their situation tragically, even the description of falling snow is viewed romantically. “It came slowly in a whirling mist of snowflakes that dazzled and confused the eye. What could be seen of the landscape appeared magically changed.” (Harte 355) During the next three days, the snow continues to fall and the poetical narration contains first signs of desperation.

It was one of the peculiarities of that mountain climate that its rays diffused a kindly warmth over the wintry landscape, as if in regretful commiseration of the past. But it revealed drift on drift of snow piled high around the hut – a hopeless, uncharted, trackless sea of white lying below the rocky shores to which the castaways still clung. (Harte 358)

The short story named “Miggles” begins when eight people, travelling in a stage coach, are surprised by stormy weather. When they reach the place where a bridge is supposed to span across the river, they hear “ – a colloquy of which such fragments as ‘bridge gone,’ ‘twenty feet of water,’ ‘can’t pass,’ were occasionally distinguishable above the storm”. (Harte 297) The travelers are stopped by high water in front and rear and their only option is to spend the night at Miggles.

Another example of the power of nature is depicted in the story called “High-Water Mark”. The name already suggests that the water force is the main theme of the narration. First of all, the author described in detail the Dedlow Marsh when the tide was out and when, on the contrary, it was strong and full. The story takes place in a house of a logger and his wife, living between this marsh and a good-sized river. One day in the early spring, the husband leaves for work and the woman stays at home with their sick child. “And that night it began to storm and blow harder than she had ever before experienced, and some great trees fell in the forest by the river, and the house rocked like her baby’s cradle.” (Harte 117)

She is scared to be so alone but decides not to go to her nearest neighbor because if her husband returned wet at night in the storm he would find nobody at home. She can

not sleep and later at night, the water starts to get into the house. As she sees from the door, there is nothing but water too. It is not salt, therefore it is not the tide but the river that is usually quite far away, but because of the storm, it overflowed its banks. She leaves the house which is flooded in few moments, and together with her baby they are carried on a big trunk flowing in the water.

When she raised her head again the boom of the surf was behind her, and she knew that her ark had again swung around. She dipped up the water to cool her parched throat, and found that it was salt as her tears, There was a relief, though, for by this sign she knew that she was drifting with the tide. It was then the wind went down, and the great and awful silence oppressed her. (Harte 121)

They are lucky that the tree runs aground and the tide falls rapidly. Nevertheless, after all the stress and exhaustion the woman faints with the baby in her arms. They are found by Indians and safely guarded in their tent until her husband, looking ten years older in his anxiety, finds them and brings home again. They build the house anew, this time above high-water mark.

The last short story, "Left out on Lone Star Mountain", presents another natural force- the land. California is a country lying on the clash of two tectonic plates that cause many earthquakes and landslides. Moreover, the blasting of mountains and underground deposits of gold in the mining districts was an everyday routine. This story describes the Lone Star Mountain where such a landslip occurred on its eastern edge. The slide took place in an unfrequented part of the mountain, above an inaccessible canyon, and revealed a gold field underneath.

The group that decided to leave the Lone Star Mountain claim is surprised by the shake and following flood.

Union Mills was beginning to rub his leg when a distant rumble shook the earth. The men looked at each other; the diversion was complete; a languid discussion of the probabilities of its being an earthquake or a blast followed, in the midst of which the Right Bower, who was working a little in advance of the others, uttered a warning cry and leaped from the race. His companions had barely time to follow before a sudden and inexplicable rise in the waters of the creek sent a swift irruption of the flood through the race. (Harte 421)

The first lucky accidental slip was beaten by a second slide that took place meanwhile and covered all the treasure again under the ground. This story proves that the same natural force can be seen from two points of view, as beneficial and negative in the same time.

It would be, however, misleading to think that Harte lays emphasis only on the accidents. His California is described as a romantic wilderness developed out of the curious mixture of characters brought together in the mining towns. Harte shows his admiration to this country in his numerous descriptions of scenery that creates a substantial part of his narration. He treats the countryside as sentimentally as his characters. The descriptions of his are full of romantic scenes in a dramatic setting, with mountains towering above. The story of Tennessee contains following lines:

But the beauty of that midsummer morning, the blessed amity of earth and air and sky, the awakened life of the free woods and hills, the joyous renewal and promise of Nature, and above all, the infinite serenity that thrilled through each, was not reported, as not being a part of the social lesson. (Harte 25)

Conclusion

“More than any other author, Bret Harte was responsible for literary representation of the Gold Rush and for putting California on the world’s literary map.” (The Feminization) Harte succeeded in picturing the golden times in California and in the same time, he made it famous through his sentimental stories. Harte was the first writer to gain widespread popularity through the use of a distinctly western brand of humor and the lasting image of the West was more his creation than any other writer’s. He earned his reputation as an author of short stories, but he created poems, dramas and novels as well. On the other hand, it is necessary to add that except for a very popular poem “Heathen Chinees” he was never valued for his remaining works.

It seemed that his genius was limited to the Western scene as he was unable to create further quality works in the East or in Europe later in his life. His departure was criticized and there could hardly be two different opinions about the mistake he made, leaving California. The Gold Rush provided him with enough inspiration for the rest of his life, though the readership demanded a new topic as the early days of Gold Rush were far enough in the past. It was suggested that Harte, having nothing new to surprise with, only repeated fixed formulas. The popularity of gold-rush literature passed quickly, by 1875, with the Gold Rush dead and most major writers of the West having left for the East coast or for Europe, gold-rush literature had lost its appeal to most readers.

The theoretical part of this work deals with Bret Harte as an author who portrayed Californian life of the 1840s – 1850s. He was capable of creating an appealing mixture of mild humor and colorful character types who spoke an equally colorful language. In his works, there is a distinct barrier between the nonliterary heroes and the narrator who maintains an ironic, genteel and sophisticated distance from such dialect. Harte was also the first one to bring into the short story the element of paradox. Taking a closer look on his characters, contradictory features in them can be traced throughout his stories. Harte established stereotyped characters such as a cynical gambler or a kind-hearted prostitute.

Harte’s literary critics can not agree unanimously whether his men were idealized or truly portrayed characters. It remains unanswered until today to what degree Harte described western life as he saw it during his earlier jobs and where the pure imagination starts. During the late 1860s, Bret Harte was widely regarded as one of America's most

promising authors. Such tales of life during the California Gold Rush as “The Outcasts of Poker Flat”, “The Luck of Roaring Camp”, and “Tennessee's Partner” were applauded for exploring the romance and adventure of recent American history.

Prior to the Gold Rush, California was described in literature as a romantic wilderness, offering freedom and wealth. These descriptions were highly exaggerated and served only one purpose, to draw more adventurers. The Gold Rush promised fulfillment of the American dream of economic opportunity. Suddenly anyone in California could find great wealth and raise their social and economic standings overnight. Harte was disgusted with the influence that the civilization was having on the West.

The new era hastened the development of California in every aspect. The city of San Francisco grew from a small settlement to a boomtown, and in the same way, many towns were built and equipped anew. Roads, churches, schools and other towns were built throughout California. As many people crossed the continent, advanced means of transport became a necessity. New steamships and railroads came into regular service. The discovery of gold ensured that the transcontinental railroad would have its Western end in California. Harte considered the idea of the railroad unlucky and hated the way the white diggers were abusing the minorities, such as Native Americans, Chinese, and Mexicans.

As one of the biggest atrocities caused by the Gold Rush is considered the genocide of Native Americans who were attacked constantly and pushed off their traditional lands. Native American cultures that had lasted for thousands of years in California were lost and destroyed. On the other hand, California agriculture and ranching expanded throughout the state to meet the needs of the new settlers. Another example of the negative impacts are environmental harms that were caused by the gold mining that ravaged the countryside.

Today, aptly named State Route 49 travels through the Sierra Nevada foothills, connecting Gold Rush-era towns such as Placerville, Nevada City, Coloma, Jackson, and Sonora. The tourist-oriented business is encouraged in several boom towns that have been preserved in State Historic Parks, protected areas encompassing the historic business district of the mining towns and Gold Rush-era buildings.

The analytical part presents Harte's repeating issues in his writings. The most characteristic one is his treating of seemingly immoral characters. Some of his critics claim that Harte does not portray realistically as his characters seem to be created out of several persons. On the other hand, Harte combines these inner qualities on purpose so that the final product would catch readers attention. His heroes might possess more contradictory features than others, nevertheless, it helps to create humorous situations and dialogues. This point is proved by three men: Yuba Bill, Mr. John Oakhurst and Mr. Jack Hamlin who show their sense of humor combined with recklessness, their pleasant appearances confronted with their rough nature.

The majority of Harte's work reflects the need for a kindred spirit which, when not satisfied, leads to loneliness and desperation. The second chapter is devoted to this topic, analyzing the different variations of the solitude of miners and women as well. There is a major difference between the two stories "Miggles" and "Outcasts of Poker Flat" because of their decisions that were made after careful consideration in the former case, or that could not be affected at all in the latter example.

Another issue depicted in Harte's gold rush fiction takes advantage of the most commonplace scenario of the West. Criminals appeared in California together with first rich miners, making their lives harder and unpredictable. Each town had their own set of rules that was enforced not always justly, but quickly. The trial of Tennessee in the story of "Tennessee's Partner" is described almost as needless because the fate of the thief is known beforehand. Other story called "The Postmistress of Laurel Run" illustrates that there are other ways of punishing a villain than mere death sentence.

The last chapter shows Harte's admiration of pure nature, unspoilt by the civilization or mining activities. He considers nature as the highest value and force that can change intentions of ordinary men in a minute. As the best examples stand stories "The Luck of Roaring Camp" where a sudden flood destroys the camp, and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" where a first snow storm seals the outcasts' fate. The scenery of California offered Harte its spell and he captured it in his stories of gold forever.

Resumé

Kalifornská zlatá horečka znamenala významný předěl v historii celé zlatonosné oblasti. Její počátek je stanoven na den 24. ledna 1848, kdy James Marshall našel první zlatá zrnka. Největší rozmach způsobující následnou imigraci nastal v roce 1849, podle něhož dostali noví přistěhovalci své jméno – devětačtyřicátníci. Zlatá horečka zachvátila celou zemi a desítky tisíc lidí mířily na západ. Spolu se zlatokopy přišli také obchodníci a spisovatelé, kteří se snažili zachytit jedinečnou podnikavou atmosféru, která vládla v pohoří Sierra Nevada. Mezi přední autory, kteří se nejvýznamněji zasloužili o prezentování této nové Kalifornie, se řadí Bret Harte, o němž pojednává tato práce.

První část charakterizuje zlatou horečku jak z pohledu kulturního významu, tak i z hlediska ekonomického dopadu. Lze se pouze domnívat, zda by se stát Kalifornie stal tak významným nebýt nálezu zlata v devatenáctém století. Ekonomika by se tam nepochybně rozvíjela mnohem pomaleji, přistěhovalci by se usazovali jen postupně a Hollywood by měl dnes své sídlo na východě Spojených států. Z dlouhodobého hlediska vývoje oblasti by se mohlo zdát, že éra zlaté horečky byla velmi krátká, pouhých sedm let, během nichž se vytěžilo zlato o celkové váze 340 tun. Nové peníze v oběhu a stále přicházející imigranti se zasloužili o proměnu malých osad v prosperující velkoměsta.

Spojené státy se v době nálezu zlata snažily o připojení několika jižních států, včetně Kalifornie. Válka s Mexikem trvala do února roku 1848, kdy obě strany podepsaly smlouvu z Guadalupe Hidalgo. Zlatokopové se ovšem nestarali o politickou situaci a snažili se co nejrychleji využít příležitosti relativního období volnosti. Většina zákonů byla nepsaná či od konkrétních měst odvíjející. Kalifornie se stala zaslíbenou zemí pro všechny, kteří chtěli zbohatnout rychlou cestou, ať to byli muži či ženy. Jejich osudy byly pečlivě sledovány nově založenými novinami, jejichž cílem bylo přilákat další davy lidí na západ.

Také spisovatelé se rozhodli přijet do centra dění a psát o zlatém šílenství, které se postupně šířilo až do zámoří. Jedním ze snů o kariéře na západě byl i Bret Harte. V roce 1853 se přestěhoval do Kalifornie, aby nejprve zkusil štěstí v nejrůznějších zaměstnáních a posléze zakotvil ve vydavatelských kancelářích. Když

se stal redaktorem nově vzniklého literárního deníku "Overland Monthly", mohl začít vydávat i svá díla, pro něž načerpal inspiraci během svých cest po Kalifornii. Jeho první povídkou se stal v roce 1868 "The Luck of Roaring Camp", který okamžitě vzbudil hlasité ohlasy. Musel svůj příběh o zlatokopech obhájit, protože ten byl na svou dobu odvážný i ve svobodomyšlné Kalifornii. Nicméně na východě sklidil velký úspěch a mohl proto tvořit dál, následovaly další povídky a Harte se stal postupně známým autorem, který byl charakteristický svým stylem, jímž popisoval kalifornskou zlatou horečku.

V druhé části práce je Bret Harte (1839 – 1902) zařazen mezi autory regionalismu, protože se ve svých povídkách důkladně věnoval jedné oblasti Ameriky, popisoval krajinu Kalifornie, a své postavy se snažil vybírat co možná nejtypičtější pro období, které sám již nezažil. Harte stvořil svět plný fantastických příběhů, u nichž se nedá jednoznačně určit jejich realističnost. Dodnes tak vedou jeho kritici spory, zda byl Harte autorem realistickým, popisujícím skutečné události a osoby, či romantickým, upravujícím si šedivou realitu zlatokopeckého světa. Zůstává ovšem faktem, že právě jeho popis Kalifornie je brán jako výchozí bod pro následné ilustrace a další zpracování zlaté horečky.

Bret Harte je považován za spisovatele se specifickým zaměřením na určitý region a událost. Žádné další dílo z těch, které později vytvořil v Evropě, kam se odstěhoval a kde také zemřel, se kvalitou nemohlo vyrovnat jeho povídkám o zlaté horečce. Jeho styl je charakteristický pro svůj výrazný humor, který mnohdy zcela mění význam celého příběhu. Harte kombinoval různé charaktery, aby vznikly co nejkontrastnější situace, které dohromady s netypickým prostředím vytvářely směsici humorných příhod.

Druhým znakem Hartovy prózy je jeho sklon k sentimentalismu a idealizování. Někteří literární kritici v tom vidí další pokračování Hartova smyslu pro humor, jiní si ale myslí, že tím autor místy poškozují svá díla, která potom nevyznívají reálně. Zde se ovšem nabízí otázka, jestli měl Harte v úmyslu být věrný realitě při svém popisu, a zda by měl být vůbec na základě této otázky posuzován. Jeho povídky se věnují především mužské populaci, která byla pro těžařství nejdůležitější. To ovšem neznamená, že by nepřipisoval ženám a dětem důležité role.

Analytická část této práce se zabývá konkrétními znaky Hartových povídek, které vypráví o zlaté horečce v té či oné podobě. Prvním z těchto znaků je zobrazování a vykreslování jeho nemravných a záporných postav, které působí v konečném důsledku značně sentimentálně. Do jedné postavy byl Harte schopný vložit několik mnohdy protichůdných vlastností. Jeho nejpropracovanějšími charaktery jsou Yuba Bill, Mr. John Oakhurst a Mr. Jack Hamlin. Na těchto třech mužích je ukázáno, že i tvrdý, ostřílený gambler, popřípadě řidič dostavníku, může být ve skutečnosti vzorovým gentlemanem s velkým srdcem schopným osudové lásky.

Jednou z cenných vlastností, které Harte svým postavám přisuzuje, je smysl pro spravedlnost a přátelství. Ve většině příběhů jsou přátelství a soudržnost vyzdvihovány na post nejvyšších hodnot, které určují osudy lidí. V dobách zlaté horečky, kdy nejbližší kempy a osady od sebe byly často vzdáleny několik mil, bylo pro člověka velmi důležité, když se mohl na někoho obrátit a spolehnout. Pevné svazky, které spolu zlatokopové udržovali, se mohly stavět na roveň manželstvím. Žen bylo zpočátku zlaté horečky v Kalifornii jen pomálu, většinou se uplatnily ve větších městech jako provozovatelky hotelů či obchodnice. Příklad těch, které si vydělávaly na živobytí přímo v kempu, je ilustrován v příběhu "The Outcasts of Poker Flat", kde jsou dvě prostitutky vyhnány z osady, neboť údajně pohoršují ostatní obyvatele. I na těchto ženách je však Harte více než ochotný ukázat jejich srdce ze zlata.

Dalším námětem, který Harte často využíval ve svých povídkách, je téma osamělosti. Nebylo výjimečné, když muž z východu odešel od rodiny, aby vydělal a ušetřil pro děti dostatek peněz a mohl se vrátit zpátky. Západ oceňoval silné ruce a podnikavost, reputace byla druhotnou záležitostí, každý dostal druhou šanci. Lidé tak ztratili svou identitu a vytvářeli si novou uprostřed neznámého státu. Někomu osamělost vyhovovala a pyšnil se svou samostatností. Takový příklad lze najít v příběhu "The Luck of Roaring Camp", kde bylo celé osazenstvo tábora nesmírně hrdé na svou nezávislost na ostatních osadách.

Naopak samota jakožto nepříjemný společník vystupuje v povídce "The Outcast of Poker Flat", kde je skupina nevhodných osob vykázána z městečka pod trestem smrti v případě, že by se vrátili. Při své cestě do sousední osady jsou zastiženi sněhovou bouří v horách a odříznuti od civilizace a lidské pomoci. Jedna z Hartových nejlepších povídek, "Tennessee's Partner", vypráví o muži, který byl natolik věrným

společníkem svému příteli, že se ho snažil zachránit před rozsudkem třeba i podplacením soudu. A když je Tennessee popraven, jeho přítel viditelně chátrá až nakonec umírá ve šťastné představě opětovného shledání s ním. Partnerství neznamenal ve slovníku zlatokopů manželství, ale spíše pevné pouto mezi přáteli a spolupracovníky, jehož rozvázání mohlo mít za následek i bankrot dotyčného při následném vyrovnávání účtů.

Neméně problematickou součástí života zlatokopů tvořila vysoká kriminalita. Vzhledem k nedostatečně zavedeným zákonům si lidé vykládali právo po svém a města neměla k vykonávání spravedlnosti nikdy daleko. Hartovi zlodějíčci jsou ovšem spíše úsměvného charakteru. Jejich přečiny proti zákonu nebývají závažné, navíc je kompenzují jejich vrozené přednosti jako například smysl pro humor a čest. Znovu je v této kapitole použit příběh "Tennessee's Partner", který ukazuje Tennesseeho jako podprůměrně zdatného lapku, ovšem se stoickým klidem a soudností.

Divoký západ se ale potýkal i s opravdovými zločinci, kteří jsou popsáni jako lupičský gang v příběhu "An Ingénue of the Sierras". V té době bylo pro dostavníky nebezpečné vyjíždět na noční cesty, kde na ně číhaly tyto kriminální živly. Yuba Bill je proto opatrný a pustí se do vyšetřování, když zjistí, že někdo z jeho pasažérů z vozu signalizoval. Je však sám oklamán zdánlivě nevinnou dívkou, kterou dokonce nechá oddat s vůdcem gangu. Nepřímo je ale celá skupina zlodějů potrestána, když jsou přijaty zákony a opatření, která znemožňují nakupovat kradené zboží, čímž jsou podobné lupičské bandy zlikvidovány.

Posledním důležitým článkem všech Hartových vyprávění je kalifornská příroda a její zásahy do osudů postav. Autor využívá pravděpodobnosti, s jakou se vyskytovaly nejrůznější přírodní katastrofy, od povodní přes sněhovou bouři po sesuv půdy, které ukončují jeho zápletky. Harte byl obdivovatelem civilizací nezkažené a divoké přírody, kterou našel, když přijel jako mladík do Kalifornie. Ta se ale za dobu zlaté horečky proměnila natolik, že když ji Harte po osmnácti letech opouštěl, byl zklamán a ve svých pozdějších přednáškách uváděl zlatou horečku spíše jako odstrašující událost, na níž bylo nejlepší to, že již skončila.

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