

UNIVERSITY OF PARDUBICE

FACULTY OF ARTS AND PHILOSOPHY

**The City and the Country in Sarah Orne Jewett's
The Country of the Pointed Firs**

Ondřej Strádal

Bachelor thesis

2012

Univerzita Pardubice
Fakulta filozofická
Akademický rok: 2010/2011

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Ondřej STRÁDAL**
Osobní číslo: **H08329**
Studijní program: **B7507 Specializace v pedagogice**
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk - specializace v pedagogice**
Název tématu: **Město a venkov v díle The Country of the Pointed Firs
autorky Sarah Orne Jewett.**
Zadávací katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

The City and the Country in Sarah Orne Jewett's The Country of the Pointed Firs. Student s použitím relevantní sekundární literatury nejprve stručně uvede zvolenou autorku do dobového kontextu obecně americké a také americké regionální literatury. Vysvětlí pojmy regionální literatura, local color a uvede stručně teoretický rámec studia poetiky místa. Jádrem práce pak bude analýza zvoleného díla především z hlediska toho, jak je v něm zobrazeno město a venkov, jakou roli v textu mají, zda jsou stavěny do protikladu nebo je jejich vztah vyjádřen jinak, jaký je autorčin postoj a případně jaké jsou její preference. Student bude pracovat jak s kvalitními odbornými texty, tak s primárním textem, jímž bude své vývody ilustrovat. Student shrne své závěry. Literatura: Primární text: zvolený román Sarah Orne Jewettové, nejlépe v kritickém vydání. Sekundární zdroje: Kritické studie ke zvolenému textu, teoretické texty pojednávající o poetice místa v prozaickém textu, akademické dějiny americké literatury, ad., články z odborných periodik.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Primární: Jewett, Sarah Orne. *The Country of the Pointed Firs And Other Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996 Sarah Orne Jewett Text Project - *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. *The Atlantic Monthly* text, 1896. [<http://www.public.coe.edu/theller/soj/cpf/at-cpf-1.html>] Sarah Orne Jewett Text Project - *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Edited and annotated by Terry Heller, Coe College. First edition, 1896. [<http://www.public.coe.edu/theller/soj/cpf/cpf.html>]
Sekundární: Heller, Terry. *The Sarah Orne Jewett Journal*. Undergraduate essays by different authors. 2001-2008. [<http://www.public.coe.edu/theller/soj/ess/ess-cont.htm>] Brooks, Van Wyck. *New England: Indian Summer, 1865-1914*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1940

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

Mgr. Šárka Bubíková, Ph.D.
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

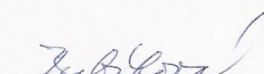
Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **30. dubna 2010**

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **31. března 2011**



prof. PhDr. Petr Vorel, CSc.
děkan

L.S.



Mgr. Šárka Bubíková, Ph.D.
vedoucí katedry

V Pardubicích dne 30. listopadu 2010

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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

V Pardubicích dne 29. 6. 2012

Ondřej Strádal

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I would like to thank my supervisor, Mgr. Šárka Bubíková, Ph.D., for her helpful advices about right sources, structure of my thesis and issues that I should focus on. I am also thankful that my family and friends had the patience to support and motivate me during the whole process of writing this bachelor thesis.

ANNOTATION

This thesis focuses on the specific features of the country portrayed in the short novel *The Country of the Pointed Firs* by the American regional author Sarah Orne Jewett in comparison with the city environment. The popularity of the local color movement was increasing during the era of the Industrial Revolution. Disillusionment of hard conditions brought by the new way of life in urbanized and overcrowded cities was one of the main reasons why thousands of readers were enthused to read about calm rural areas. The theoretical part introduces the Local Color movement together with the importance of Sarah Orne Jewett as one of the most significant New England authors of the 19th century. The analytical part deals with the specific features included in this novella, starting with the unusual usage of the narrator, followed by a women's world of Dunnet Landing, ending with different dialects used in this book, the superstitions and the importance of community.

KEY WORDS

Jewett; City and Country; Local Color; Dunnet Landing; short novel

NÁZEV

Město a venkov v díle *The Country of the Pointed Firs* autorky S. O. Jewettové

SOUHRN

Tato práce se zaměřuje na specifické prvky venkova vyobrazené v díle *The Country of the Pointed Firs* americké regionální spisovatelky S. O. Jewettové v porovnání s městským prostředím. Popularita venkovské prózy vzrůstala v období průmyslové revoluce. Rozčarování z těžkých podmínek, které přinášel nový styl života v urbanizovaných a přelidněných velkoměstech byl jedním z hlavních důvodů, proč

tisíce čtenářů nadšeně četly o klidném venkovském prostředí. Teoretická část uvádí do kontextu venkovskou prózu společně s jejím významem v oblasti Nové Anglie v 19.století. Analytická část se zabývá specifickými prvky zahrnutými v tomto díle, počínaje neobvyklým zasazením vypravěče do děje, pokračuje světem žen ve fiktivním městečku Dunnet Landing, konče různými dialekty použitými v této knize.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Jewett; město a venkov; venkovská próza; Dunnet Landing; krátká povídka

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Introduction

Industrial revolution during the 19th century started great changes in a whole American society. Building new factories and manufactures in cities or on their outskirts rose a wave of urbanization. Thousands of immigrants from all over the world (mainly European countries) and people from rural areas, looking for work opportunities, found there a better chance to be employed. Salary was higher and stable but as the density of population in towns and cities had grown, living conditions became poor. Nothing was prepared for such a quick expansion. The expectations and hopes of many of those who dreamed about a better life were dashed. The reason of increasing alcohol and drug consumption, gambling or visiting of brothels was at first just a profligacy. But as time went on, it became an unhappy solution of personal crisis that stemmed from the new way of life that no one was prepared for.

Local color literature brought a contrary point of view and a new perspective. The first part of this thesis takes an interest in discovering what is typical for this mode of writing and why it became so popular in American literature in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first chapter consists of the definition of local color in general and short novel as a form used by Sarah Orne Jewett in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. This book is unusual by its narrator, who has not only the narrative function, but is also one of the characters. His role is crucial for reader to be easily and more deeply involved in the story and to understand better the life of folks. The whole second chapter aims to expound the link between the city and the country through the narrator.

Regional literature, especially in New England region, is typical for major representation of women writers. Worth mentioning are Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811 – 1896) and Rose Terry Cooke (1827 – 1892) from the first generation of the local colorists of this region, and Marry E. Wilkins Freeman (1852 – 1930), Alice Brown (1856 – 1948) and Sarah Orne Jewett (1849 – 1909) as their followers. All of them contributed to make the hidden rural life of New England known from the intimate point of view. Jewett invites readers to her hometown of South Berwick, Maine, by using its fictional equivalent called Dunnet Landing.

After the Civil War rural areas continued living their own lives and regional authors tried to portray the calmness and different troubles and anxieties than those that would have been found in urbanized cities at that time. But the influence of the industrial revolution was still considerable. Very often it was just men who moved to cities; there was neither enough space nor there were possibilities for the whole families. While working men were getting used to the new lifestyle and all the wiles of the city, solitary women had to face up to problems that emerged from living alone and keeping a whole household on their own. The industrial revolution was not the only reason for men to leave their families. Another great disillusion brought the Civil War in years 1861-1865, where many young men (not only soldiers) died. Last but not least reason was the era of Gold Rush in California and other parts in the West, which became an allurement for men who dreamt about the easiest ways how to get rich. (Donovan 8)

One of the results of missing men in families was a different upbringing of children. Boys were often cosseted and behaved more girlish and girls felt strong bonds to their mothers and were admonished by them to be careful about the rough men's world. That is the reason why the motif of mother-daughter relationship is so frequently occurring in the local color literature. Since women lead *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, the third chapter of my thesis deals with their relationships, importance and position in the country environment. Jewett herself knew her country very well, as she proved also in her novel *A Country Doctor* (1884), very often considered her autobiography. Her real father worked as a country doctor and she accompanied him on his ways around the region. Meeting people, especially old folks, gave her also another valuable experience – the knowledge of different original dialects which she was very interested in and which she then used in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. To complete the picture of the country life of Maine, apart from the dialects, she also touched the folks' spirituality and the position of superstitions in their everyday lives. Last two mentioned features became subjects of the analytic part, aiming to exemplify the use of the dialect on the direct speech of old captains and dealing with the issue of religiosity, strangely influencing Joanna Todd, one of the relatives of the main character Mrs. Almira Todd.

The Country of the Pointed Firs is generally considered to be the Jewett's masterpiece. Published in 1896, as one her last works, it includes signs of a mystic

realism that are typical for her other later pieces (e.g. *The Foreigner*). Above all, *S.O.* Jewett is a typical representative of the New England local color movement.

1. Definition of the New England Local Color and a Short Novel

Local color or *regional* literature is fiction and poetry that focuses on the characters, dialect, customs, topography, and other features particular to a specific region. (Campbell, Regionalism)

New England, as a region situated in the northeast corner of the United States of America, includes six states: Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont and Rhode Island. Strong cultural identity and isolation versus huge influence of immigration, combination of Puritanism and liberalism and both importance of agriculture and industry are just some of the typical characteristic clashes. Historically, this region made a rapid social progress, becoming the first transformed by the Industrial Revolution and playing a major role in the movement to abolish slavery. Soon after Captain John Smith gave a name to this land newly explored in 1614, New England was settled by English Puritans. Before and after the Civil War, a huge wave of labour force caused changes in society and it also meant rising of the influence of Roman Catholicism. (Britannica, New England) Ranked among the world centers of education, medicine, technology and finances, New England remains also known as an agriculture and fishing area with beautiful nature.

The movement of the New England local colorists was established in the second half of the 19th century. Especially after the American Civil War (1861 – 1865), the awareness of landscape increased a lot. Every region was interested in portraying its area in the best colours. Though the main stress had been put on the reunited country as a whole, patriotism became more popular and visible also on the regional level. And the regional writers, especially women, played an important role in these attempts. In the North-East coast of the USA (including Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut) it was Harriet Beecher Stowe, Rose Terry Cooke, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (later Ward), Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary E. Wilkins (later Freeman) that are considered the first and also the most distinctive representatives of this movement which is based on realism. All of them were born there and spent there a major part of their lives. They felt quite a close bond to this country area and it can be easily reflected in their works. They wanted to present closer the beauty and preciousness of their homeland. The main target of their novels was the urban population. Helpful feature is a

narrator who is discovering the country, in which the short story is set to, from the point of view of a city inhabitant, and the rural charm is either new for him or at least uncommon and interesting. I will focus on this feature more in the following chapter.

We can also see quite close connection to the *Atlantic Monthly* (literary and cultural magazine founded in Boston, 1857). Majority of local colorists started their career by sending their short stories to the editing. Since most of the readers of the *Atlantic Monthly* were from a city or a bigger town, they often liked stories from the countryside. And so did the editors who then helped young local color writers to become known by accepting and publishing their works. Sarah Orne Jewett is a good example of this process. Based on a real piece of a land, the state of Maine, she created a new fictional world with the center in a small quiet coastal village called Dunnet Landing. We can easily recognize the inspiration in her hometown of South Berwick, where she always liked to return to. It is used also as the setting of the novel *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and *Dunnet Landing Stories* (*The Queen's Twin*, *A Dunnet Shepherdess*, *The Foreigner* and *William's Wedding*). The portrayal of fictitious Dunnet Landing sometimes depicts the real world of Jewett's hometown of South Berwick and its surroundings better than any historical report.

One day as I went along the shore beyond the old wharver and the newer, high-stepped fabric of the steamer landing, I saw that all the boats were beached, and the slack water period of the early afternoon prevailed. Nothing was going on, not even the most leisurely of occupations, like baiting trawls or mending nets, or repairing lobster pots; the very boats seemed to be taking an afternoon nap in the sun. I could hardly discover a distant sail as I looked seaward, except a weather-beaten lobster smack, which seemed to have been taken for a plaything by the light airs that blew about the bay. It drifted and turned about so aimlessly in the wide reach off Burnt Island, that I suspected there was nobody at the wheel, of that she might have parted her rusty anchor chain while all the crew were asleep. (*The Country* 103)

Such a description of one ordinary afternoon gives us the right feeling of the decaying village and acquaints us with the real situation of the nineteenth century typical coastal town's life. Dunnet Landing, as well as South Berwick, has lived through the era of the decline. Aging population, solving different problems than the youth or younger adults, does not understand all the changes and faster and faster development. It is not because they would not be able, they simply don't want and have no power and

no need to change anything. They live more from their past than in presence or future.

Sarah Orne Jewett is rightly regarded as the top author of the American regional literature. According to Rhode, regarding the background and implementing features of nature into her stories, she found a reasonable way that would be adequate and interesting for readers, not boring or interrupting the story:

She never ceased to take her backgrounds seriously, but after some experimentation she began to weave them into her stories, so as to give them an even, woodsy atmosphere, rather than to paint them out on large canvases. ... By 1896 she had learned the superiority of developing her setting chiefly by brief suggestion and implication rather than by lengthy, continuous descriptions. Another important fact is that at the same time her method was changing in this way, her awareness of nature as a living thing was affecting her whole attitude and feeling toward her raw materials. (Rhode 67)

As many other local colorists do, she also perceives nature as a living thing. So the description of landscape is not just a simple list of what the narrator sees and how it looks like. The fairness consists in various imagineries, in personifications and in masterful integration of all these aspects into the whole narration. Though the description is often very detailed, Jewett has the ability to write it the way you feel it wouldn't be complete if something was omitted. Every detail helps the reader to become more deeply involved in the story. On the other hand, the details are just a tool of realism. They serve to give the same feeling as if the reader was the narrator. The one who is able to see everything very precisely and to notice even things that a real inhabitant of the area never noticed. To present the very core message of the text she uses just simple and clear sentences and phrases. The following citation exemplifies two of three features mentioned above: the detailed description and the simplicity of the expression of the basic message.

The way went straight uphill, and presently I stopped and turned to look back. The tide was in, the wide harbor was surrounded by its dark woods, and the small wooden houses stood as near as they could get to the landing. Mrs. Todd's was the last house on the way inland. The gray ledges of the rocky shore were well covered with sod in most places, and the pasture bay-berry and wild roses grew thick among them. I could see the higher inland country and the scattered farms. On the brink of the hill stood a little white schoolhouse, much wind-blown and weather-beaten, which was a landmark to seagoing folk; from its door there was a most beautiful view of sea and shore. (The Country 12)

The core message of this part says that the narrator went from Mrs. Todd's house uphill to the schoolhouse. The rest of the details and colourful descriptions acquaints the reader with surroundings and make the picture of the setting complete. And piece after piece, we discover the whole rural country which the story is set into. Beautiful and breath-taking as it is. This is, in brief, the magic of a local color literature. The third mentioned feature, personification, makes the whole description more living and emphasizes the co-existence of the folks with their surroundings. Their house, the sea, the coast, the shore, the trees, the flowers, the rock shelf, the path to their home – every piece of land was almost of the same importance as were the other people who they lived there with. For example the personification of houses expresses their illusive eternity. People are passing away, but houses remain with their memories, waiting what comes next.

These houses made the most of their seaward view, and there was a gayety and determined floweriness in their bits of garden ground; the small paned high windows in the peaks of their steep gables were like knowing eyes that watched the harbor and the far sea-line beyond, or looked northward all along the shore and its background of spruces and balsam firs. (The Country 7)

Sarah Orne Jewett wrote only a few novels; not so impressive works as many of her shorter stories or novellas. As we can read in professor Terry Heller's introduction in another edition of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*:

“Her novels had been less successful, but, except for *The Tory Lover* (1901), were well received. From its first appearance in book form in 1896, her novella *The Country of the Pointed Firs* was recognized as a masterpiece.” (The Country, VII)

Novellas, short stories and sketches were the literature forms that fit with Jewett's style of writing the best. Some critics are not sure about the exact classification of her shorter works. Also in case of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, there are ambiguities whether it should be called novella or rather only a series of sketches. I will come back to this problem in the next part of my thesis.

The origin of a novella is dated to the late medieval times. Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1353) is a typical example of a collection of one hundred novellas. Jewett was not the only one who used this literary format in her time. Kate Chopin, one of her

contemporaries, followed her with a novella called *The Awakening* (1899). Short novels remained popular all around the world also in the twentieth century. Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937) or *The Metamorphosis* (1915) by Franz Kafka are just a few examples of famous authors who found this type of narration suitable for their work. But Jewett was original and created a form that is not easily distinguishable. Gardner calls it a "hybrid cross":

The last major element that may modify the fictional thought is style. In true yarn and tale presentation, style is a given. If the story is presented in the form of a realistic novel, novella or short story, or in some hybrid cross of realism and something else, the writer's choice (to do so would be impossible in any case); it will be enough simply to suggest that each choice has implications. The writer must decide what point of view he will use, what diction level, what "voice," what psychic-distance range. (Gardner 84)

Though some critics value the whole short novel as almost plotless and are not sure whether it should be ranked among novels or rather sketches, if written in a classic way of writing novels, spontaneity and unaffected tone would disappear and the aim of providing readers with a real picture of times that already passed, but are very important for right understanding of a contemporary situation, would fail.

2. Sarah Orne Jewett as a Significant Local Colorist

Sarah Orne Jewett (her full name was Theodora Sarah Orne Jewett) was born in 1849 in South Berwick, Maine as the second of three daughters of Dr. Theodore H. Jewett and Caroline Perry Jewett. Her family had a deep roots in New England. Her late childhood was partially influenced by the Civil War, but she concentrated her attention on the life before the Civil War, which is demonstrated by her characters who, mostly at least one generation older than she was, remembered the ancestors and antecedent times. Nevertheless, her health problems determined her life much more than any other event. She suffered from rheumatoid arthritis which not only limited her school attendance, but mainly thwarted her plans to become a doctor and continue with what her father and

grandfather had built. But paradoxically, the illness helped her to become a successful writer because it enabled her to read a lot, to go for a walk to the countryside very often and also to accompany her father, whose profession required a lot of travelling to his patients. (The Country, Introduction)

Her father was probably the most influential person in her life. Not only that he was trying to compensate her inability to attend the school regularly by teaching her, but the experiences from their medical journeys “provided her, by her own account, with material throughout her writing career.” (Lauter 130) These possibilities meant a great opportunity to discover the surroundings, to meet many interesting people and observe their behaviour, manners and habits, to listen to their language and as a bonus, to explore and learn about different plants, flowers and herbs. And Jewett was able to connect and utilize this knowledge to create many unforgettable works. Love of nature and a close relation to New England, especially her hometown of South Berwick, she implemented into all her literary works.

Jewett was not the first local colorist, though she is very often used as a symbol and representant for the local color movement as a whole. In fact, she is the second generation of important regional authors in New England. There were several significant predecessors who inspired her. For example, as we read in Donovan’s New England Local Color Literature, “Harriet Beecher Stowe pioneered the women’s tradition of local color realism in this country.” (Donovan 50) Jewett admired her books and after the graduation at Berwick Academy, she began her own writing. Starting with poetry and children’s novels, later on she tried also to write one historical romance, but she found her position in writing short fiction. (Reuben) *The Country of the Pointed Firs* was often commented by critics who were not able to categorize it unambiguously. Voelker deals with this problem in his article asking: “Should it be referred to as a collection of short stories, a series of sketches, or something totally different?” (Voelker 3) The answer is not easy. Although Voelker tried to doubt it, majority of critics agreed that it is not a novel. (i.e. Matthiessen 101) Voelker then summarized the arguments saying that he hopes that “the widespread contention that Miss Jewett could not write a conventional novel will leave room for the possibility that she may have been able to write an unconventional one.” (Voelker 4)

Jewett never married, but she “sustained friendships with several men, most of whom shared her literary and professional interests“. (Reuben) One of them was William Dean Howells, an American realist author, literary critic and also an editor of the Atlantic Monthly, journal in which she published her first important story in 1860. However, she became more known after publishing a novel *A Country Doctor* (1884), a collection of short stories called *A White Heron* (1886) and finally, her masterpiece, novella *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896). (Cary 12, 29) According to her relationships, the term “Boston marriage“ is connected with her, referring to the fact that she lived together with a writer Annie Fields after her husband, publisher and editor of the Atlantic Monthly, James Thomas Fields, died in 1881. Due to this unusual close friendship and because of their correspondence, it has been speculated that they were lovers. (Cary 25)

To the style of Jewett’s writing – apart from the greatest tendency to belong to Regionalism or Local Colorism, her work is also being classified as an imaginative realism carrying some features of transcendentalism, romanticism and mystic realism. (Reuben) One of the most accurate descriptions has left Robert D. Rhode in his book *Setting in the American Short Story of Local Color*:

Jewett made use of long and intrusive descriptions of scenery mainly to reveal deep and intimate impressions of all the stages of life about her. Jewett, like most other local colorists, was working away from the traditional notion of Matthews and others that the short story must be a structural unity based upon a highly dramatic situation; she was learning, like Cable, to make use of an emotional unity based upon atmospheric effects. (Rhode 170)

3. Specific Features of Jewett’s *The Country of the Pointed Firs*

3.1 A Stranger as a Narrator

One of the first things that we notice while reading some book is a style in which the book is written. By “the style“ I mean the complexity of ideas, the length of sentences, the dialect or the type of language that is used and, last but not least, the form

of a narrator. Now we will focus on the last mentioned feature – the narrator. Jewett was not the first local colorist whose narrator is often a visitor coming to the rural area from the city environment. Similar approach can be found in works of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman or Edith Wharton, but Jewett set it almost in the perfection. The first chapter of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* called Return starts very poetically, if not even mysteriously. The narrator is unnamed and for more confusion, the first chapter is written from a third-person point of view, not in the first-person form as it is used in the rest of the book. One of the explanations of this detail offered Paul D. Volker in his article in the journal *Colby Quarterly*:

At this point in her development the first-person narrator cannot yet make such an observation. She does not know the town and, indeed, has no desire to know it. It is a vision from her “affectionate dreams” which she wishes to make use of but not become involved in. Only a third-person narrator can present us with this insight. (Volker 4-5)

We are even not introduced to where the narrator comes from or what is the reason of his or her visit. Such facts can be observed (or better guessed) later on, not at the very beginning. In this case, it is an advantage. Following passage demonstrates the focus on the scenery instead of the visitor who, in the role of a woman-narrator, talks about herself. More than getting into some action or describing how was the visitor’s journey to Dunnet Landing and where she is coming from, the stress is put on her inner feeling and impression of the rediscovered land. Masterful is the combination of shaping both our feeling and at the same time the realistic and tangible image of the country :

After a first brief visit made two or three summers before in the course of a yachting cruise, a lover of Dunnet Landing returned to find the unchanged shores of the pointed firs, the same quaintness of the village with its elaborate conventionalities; all that mixture of remoteness, and childish certainty of being the centre of civilization of which her affectionate dreams had told. One evening in June, a single passenger landed upon the steamboat wharf. The tide was high, there was a fine crowd of spectators, and the younger portion of the company followed her with subdued excitement up the narrow street of the salt-aired, white-clapboarded little town. (The Country 7)

To know more about the narrator would be unnecessary and intrusive and, as the short novel continues, the narrator becomes one of the main characters that shows the growth and development. (Voelker 4) Colorful description of the landscape, enriched with feelings of someone who has visited Dunnet Landing just once before, grows in importance and Jewett was able to perfect it to such a quality that catches reader's attention from the very first sentence. The reason why it is so, is partially hidden in her ability to reduce all descriptive phrases and mix them with feelings, as I've already mentioned a few lines above. And the shortening does not affect neither the quality nor the richness of the description. For better imagination she even uses the term "love at first sight". It serves to compare the development of a relationship between the visitor of such a beautiful area and the place itself:

When one really knows a village like this and its surroundings, it is like becoming acquainted with a single person. The process of falling in love at first sight is as final as it is swift in such a case, but the growth of true friendship may be a lifelong affair. (The Country 7)

For people negatively influenced by the stereotypes of the city environment, the purity and vulnerability of the country life enables to experience an amazing and breathtaking moments. The fact that the narrator is some unknown stranger also serves to transform us as readers into the one who has just landed at the shore; a small person amazed by the greatness of a view that is so rare for people living in a bigger city.

A stranger in this short fiction does not stand for any dangerous or untrustworthy individual coming from some remote country. It is a welcome visitor who is trying to adapt and become friendly with all citizens of Dunnet Landing. Step by step we reveal more and more details about this stranger-visitor-narrator:

...a middle-aged woman returns to Dunnet Landing late in June. She is a writer from a city, probably Boston or New York. She has apparently come to this remote area seeking a place to write, but one also senses that she is in search of spiritual regeneration. (Donovan 113)

Very interesting about the narrator is the fact that though she is new to Dunnet Landing (she has been there once before), she is still able to introduce the landscape and its inhabitants in very deep details including their relations to each other or the historical

connections. The source of her cognition is a combination of her perfect observation skills, her empathy and the telling of all the folks who she met and talked to, especially her host Mrs. Todd. In case of the narrator, her loneliness is not a disadvantage. It gives her the opportunity to fully immerse herself into observing the folks. She stays at Mrs. Almira Todd's house, learns the herbalist knowledge of healing power of different plants and herbs and becomes acquainted with the spirituality of this interesting woman. Eventually, the visitor realizes that "Mrs. Todd ministers not only to people's physical ills but also to their spiritual needs." (Donovan 114) I will come back to the theme of the spirituality in the last part of this thesis. From a literary point of view, it is the synthesis of Jewett's very good knowledge of New England area with the fictional world set into this real country, what allows the narrator to use such details.

Apart from being enriched by new experiences and knowledge, the narrator opens a fictitious gate to the negative aspects of a rural world of coastal Maine. To draw readers' attention to the problems of disappearing tradition of the real country life is one of the Jewett's goals. The decaying fishing villages became isolated and their inhabitants lived their own lives, remembering the great times that are already over, with almost no vision for the future. It makes them the same outsiders like the narrator is. Volker in his article also brings very apposite statement:

The narrator regards the town and its inhabitants as she did in her "affectionate dreams," as essentially "quaint." She views them from the vantage point of a "cosmopolitan" Bostonian; the people are provincial and childish and must be protected lest their fragile bubbles of provincialism shatter at the sound of a harsh word. (Voelker 5-6)

Regardless her effort to become a part of the Dunnet Landing community, a proof that it is impossible (or at least very difficult) to overcome the sense of distance, comes with the scene where she is watching people at Mrs. Begg's funeral from the schoolhouse window. She realizes that the distance among her and the funeral procession is not only the real, measurable one, but it has also something to do with the relationships among the people living in the village. She feels that she does not really belong to Dunnet Landing. She came to Dunnet to work on writing her book. But she has to rent an empty schoolhouse to have a better chance to concentrate on writing

because Mrs. Todd's lifestyle interrupted her too much. This is a little paradox. Someone who lives in a bigger city should be used to work in a busy and interrupting environment. But the work conditions here are different than in the city. The problem personified as Mrs. Todd consists in her need to talk and to integrate her guest into the everyday country life. Despite the narrator's concern and desire to become one of the folks at least for the time of her staying there, she had to look up for solitude and privacy to be able to work. And the place she had chosen was not in nature, but in the center of the small town which proved some kind of dependence on a city environment she is used to live in.

The empty schoolhouse was also the place where Captain Littlepage, an old unsophisticated sailor (but a lover of a poetry), came after the funeral and told her several stories from his times spent at sea. His telling contained a supernatural and transcendental elements, but still it was not as interesting as the stories by Mrs. Todd or other Dunnet inhabitants and the narrator did not try to hide that she is bored which a bit offended him. But finally, when Captain Littlepage is leaving, the narrator "felt sure that Captain Littlepage's mind had now returned to a safe level." (The Country 29) And when Mrs. Todd asked about him, she said that she "had a very interesting afternoon with him." (The Country 30)

Robert D. Rhode from Texas A&I University in his book "Setting in the American Short Story Local Color" calls the narrator "expositor" (Rhode 117), which mirrors the role more precisely. This also leads us to the fact that if you want to present the life and the scenery of one small coastal town in such details, you have to show off a perfect knowledge of the area including its inhabitants or perfect ability of imagination. Jewett had both. Her biographer Mathiessen observed that "she found herself equipped at the start of her career with... an almost complete knowledge of her environment" (Rhode 117).

3.2 Women's World of Dunnet Landing

As previously mentioned in the first part of my thesis, Dunnet Landing, a fictional region made up and used by Jewett as a setting for some of her novels, novellas and short stories (*The Country of the Pointed Firs*, *The Foreigner*, *The Queen's Twin*, *A Dunnet Shepherdess*, *William's Wedding* and some others), is based on reality. Professor Terry Heller in his notes for Chapter 1 of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* states that "Dunnet Landing is a fictional town, though its readers have associated it with the area of Martinsville and Port Clyde, Maine, where Jewett summered in 1895." (*The Country*, Notes 1) Be it truth or not, the whole short novel offers a feeling that the author was familiar with every single flower of the whole countryside. If it had not been known that it is a fictional world, nobody would have doubted that the setting is a description of a real land that the author had visited and saved to her mind. Dunnet Landing is presented as almost forgotten, fading coastal town, living its own life. Every inhabitant, every folk, would hardly agree there is any better place to live. The narrator, coming from Boston, the largest city of New England, neither put these two opposites next to each other, nor she judges which she would prefer. Nevertheless, some signs of her preferences, had appeared much earlier than she wrote *The Country of the Pointed Firs*.

The tension between country and city runs throughout Jewett's work. Jewett's own love of the country is evidenced in scores of comment she made in letters and in the loving detail she used to describe its realities in literally hundreds of stories. Already in *Deephaven* (1877), her earliest collection, one senses, however, a decided ambivalence toward rural life. (Donovan 103-104)

New England women writers of the second half of the 19th century dreamed about a life without the anxiety of a male domination. Therefore, the women characters of this literary work are very outnumbered, no matter the fact that in the environment of a typical fishing village of Maine we could have rather expected some stories about fishermen who were brought up on a boat, and who in their older age became familiar with the pub and the life style of doing nothing except of telling half fictitious stories from their wild adventures. This stereotype has been broken, though not completely. The narrator of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* talks not only to women, but she is also

enriched by old sailors' narrations, either told by Captain Littlepage or by Mr. Elijah Tilley. Both two conversations (in case of Captain Littlepage in was almost a monologue) contain one main common observable feature: their loneliness. Captain Littlepage is a retired sailor who is, among other things, telling the story about the wreck of his best boat Minerva, while Mr. Tilley is an old fisherman who is, after eight years of living alone, still not faced up to the death of his wife. They both miss something that they have been addicted to, which they spent the most time with, and that made their life complete. But still they are able to take care about themselves, as well as about their home. Captain Littlepage has a housekeeper Mari Harris, but as the narrator remarks, it was not her merit that he looked elegant all the time.

He looked, with his careful precision of dress, as if he were the object of cherishing care on the part of elderly unmarried sisters, but I knew Mari Harris to be a very commonplace, inelegant person, who would have no such standards; it was plain that the captain was his own attentive valet. (The Country 18)

As a result of their loneliness, they do not have almost anyone who would listen to them, talk to them and understand their inner feelings. They became a bit weird in their older age. While talking to Captain Littlepage in the schoolhouse, the narrator thinks: "I now remembered that Mrs. Todd had told me one day that Captain Littlepage had overset his mind with too much reading; she had also made dark reference to his having 'spels' of some unexplainable nature." (The Country 17-18) And during narrator's visit to Mr. Tilley, he says that "Folks don't come now as they used to; no, 't ain't no use to ask folks now. My poor dear she was a great hand to draw young company." (The Country 106) And suddenly, there comes the visitor-narrator, who is interested in their life stories and whose concern is even strengthened by the fact that she is a woman without encumbrance, just concentrated on writing, collecting experiences and inspiration. When introducing Mr. Tilley's background to the readers, she says: "I often wondered a great deal about the inner life and thought of these self-contained old fishermen". (The Country 104-105) The insight to the private life of these living memorials means a lot for discovering the real local color. Old folks were not directly affected by the Industrial Revolution, but still it touched their lives too. Closely

connected with nature, their time passed in a daily routine. Often they became the last generation having this lifestyle as their destiny. Although Jewett does not mention namely the descendants of these patriots (if they had some), it is evident that they disappeared with the wave of urbanization and small coastal towns like fictitious Dunnet Landing or Jewett's real hometown South Berwick, which remained undeveloped in comparison with majority of other cities in New England, were no longer attractive for them. The loneliness of many "souls of the country", crowned with unrepeatable relationship to their motherland and bond with their neighbors and old friends, creates the right local color and inherently belongs to the accurate presentation of each specific region.

The issue of a loneliness is also inseparably connected with poor Joanna Todd living majority of her life alone on Shell-heap Island. The narrator tried to imagine how tough life she had. Nobody to accompany her, no matter her feelings and need. Even though Joanna chose this life voluntarily, the narrator really felt sorry for her.

I drank at the spring, and thought that now and then some one would follow me from the busy, hard-worked, and simple-thoughted countryside of the mainland, which lay dim and dreamlike in the August haze, as Joanna must have watched it many a day. There was the world, and here was she with eternity well begun. In the life of each of us, I said to myself, there is a place remote and islanded, and given to endless regret or secret happiness; we are each the unaccompanied hermit and recluse of an hour or a day; we understand our fellows of the cell to whatever age of history they may belong. (The Country 75)

The apparently matriarchal society, uncovers new possibilities and new points of view. To be precise, Mrs. Almira Todd, as local elderly apothecary (or to update it a bit, we could perceive her also as "homeopathic herbalist"), for example acquaints readers with a plenty of herbs, flowers and trees. Many of them are not any of the usual ones, so the publishers decided to attach the list of explanation called *Pharmacopoeia*, compiled by Ted Eden. (The Country 341-343) Mrs. Todd's relationship to her garden and to the surrounding is quite similar to the bond of friendship among people. The rural world in combination with women like Mrs. Todd also "encourages the development of one's psychic powers and one's sensitivity to spiritual realities" (Donovan 104). These features are quite typical for women, especially mothers. The issue of female world is

represented best by the relationship of Mrs. Almira Todd and her eighty-six-year-old mother Mrs. Blackett. Both are widows, both still full of life and popular among the people. Again, there is a feature of loneliness, but in this case quite weakened. Although Mrs. Todd lives alone, she often visits or is being visited by some of her friends, for example the visitor-narrator. Her mother, Mrs. Blackett, can not travel so much anymore because of her age, but she is beloved by other old folks, who visit her from time to time. And she is also accompanied by her reclusive son William, who has had a forty-year courtship with Esther Hight, but never married her, so he still lives with his old mother. This is what this courting couple have in common. Esther's mother is invalid, fearsome and forbidding. Esther takes care about her and also about the sheep. She used to be a teacher, but in older age, there remains only her mother, their sheep and William. Their open relationship is not so important in the short fiction, but it demonstrates the paradox of aging protagonists. All characters are fifty years of age or more, but the reader does not find it strange or maybe not even notice that it is not usual. By excluding younger generations, which corresponds to the situation in coastal villages at that time, Jewett avoided typical intergenerational clashes. And it is not only about the age. The roots and origin is also highly influential in being a part of the rural community. The example of incomprehension and separation of native New Englanders claimed Mrs. Fosdick, one of the visitors of Mrs. Todd.

“There, it does seem so pleasant to talk with an old acquaintance that knows what you know. I see so many of these new folks nowadays, that seem to have neither past nor future. Conversation's got to have some root in the past, or else you 've got to explain every remark you make, 'an it wears person out.“ (The Country 57)

Mrs. Fosdick's remark confirms the difficulty of being integrated into the closed rural community. To keep traditions and continuity can only those with strong bonds to their country and deep family roots. In the contrary, the second female character – the narrator – observes everything as quite unknown for her. Her city roots made her life less nature-oriented. As a result, every reader, who comes from the similar environment as the narrator, feels to be more drawn into the story and deeply discovers the beauty of Dunnet Landing together with the narrator through her visitor's eyes. Using unbiased

observer, Jewett highlights her own original theory of literature that she based on the knowledge of the work and thoughts of her predecessors and it was also her father who gave her many useful advices. One of them deals with the realist theory – the writer should “tell things just as they are“. (Letters 52) This realistic aspect is included in any part of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, either through the direct speeches that can be perceived more or less as a transcription of real dialogues or through the description of the details that would not be necessary for the plot of the story, but serves to get as realistic and complete notion about the specific region and its characteristics as possible. Jewett built her fiction on reality, enriched with an optimistic tone that emphasizes the bright side of matriarchal society and points out the power stemming from women’s ability to create a supportive society. As Mrs. Todd once told a story about young Joanna, who escaped to the near abandoned small island because of an unhappy love, Dunnet inhabitants were not indifferent, even though she did not belong to their relatives.

“How everybody used to notice whether there was smoke out of the chimney! The Black Island folks could see her with their spy-glass, and if they’d ever missed getting some sign o’ life they’d have sent notice to her folks.“ (*The Country* 63)

Living in a village or a small town meant a lot of physical work and a reliance on natural sources. Frequent townspeople’s dissatisfaction sounds that the village people do not have to work hard and have a lot of time to rest. While the same argument used to be heard from the other side, from farmers or fishermen. Jewett leaves these illusions aside and presents the life as it is, neither rejecting the city nor the men. She just shifted the priority from the city to the country and from men to women. Slightly amusing evidence of women’s ability to manage all male positions the narrator experiences on a boat when going to visit Mrs. Todd’s mother. No matter there was also one man present - Johnny Bowden – she commanded the whole trip including the navigation. The narrator found out something new about her.

I had become well acquainted with Mrs. Todd as landlady, herb-gatherer, and rustic philosopher; we had been discreet fellow-passangers once or twice when I had sailed up the coast to a larger town than Dunnet Landing to do some shopping; but I was yet to become acquainted with her as a mariner. (*The Country* 33)

We have to realize that the main protagonists are in fact old pensioners. Sarah Orne Jewett herself died at the age of fifty-nine. Which means that majority of characters of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* were living through the period of life that Jewett never experienced. Again, here is another evidence of a great empathy that enabled her to transmit the observations to the readers through her writing. Some passages have autobiographical features. Especially when Mrs. Todd speaks about her mother Mrs. Blackett who is more than thirty years older than the author, but Jewett had serious health troubles since her youth which a bit counteracts the age difference. Mrs. Blackett undoubtedly inherited Jewett's quality to accept problems and fight with them.

“Your mother!” I exclaimed, with great interest.

“Yes, dear, cert'in; I've got her yet, old 's I be. She 's one of them spry, light-footed little women; always was, an' light-hearted, too,” answered Mrs. Todd, with satisfaction. “She 's seen all the trouble folks can see, without it 's her last sickness; an' she 's got a word of courage for everybody. Life ain't spoilt her a mite. She 's eighty-six an' I 'm sixty-seven, and I 've seen the time I 've felt a good sight the oldest.” (*The Country* 30-31)

Mrs. Blackett lives on Green Island, about five miles out from the coast of Dunnet Landing, separated by water and addicted on the mainland. The comparison of Dunnet Landing with Green Island noticeably reminds the relation of Maine's city and country in general. The rural areas were also in a way addicted on bigger industrial cities, although situated far away from each other. As well as Dunnet folks like visiting Green Island and consider it a great place to take a rest in silence in the middle of nowhere, visitors from cities have the same approach when they visit some village or small town like Dunnet Landing. The narrator summed up her experience by this colorful description:

I never shall forget the day at Green Island. The town of Dunnet Landing seemed large and noisy and oppressive as we came ashore. Such is the power of contrast; for the village was so still that I could hear the shy whippoorwills singing that night as I lay awake in my downstairs bedroom, and the scent of Mrs. Todd's herb garden under the window blew in again and again with every gentle rising of the sea-breeze. (*The Country* 51)

Another difference of the city and the country in this short novel is the perception of time. Every visit of any guest means an important event for Mrs. Todd,

the more in case of someone important or someone who they have not met for a long time. The narrator noted that “Mrs. Todd put aside all herb-gathering plans, and went through the various stages of expectation, provocation and despair“. (The Country 52) Everything had to be prepared for the case that the visitor would come earlier. And ‘earlier‘ could mean several days. The hospitality is a quality connected with American character in general and in case of folks it is even more valid. The old Mrs. Blackett’s house ceased to be a house when she hosted some visitor. It became the place where you would feel pleasantly - full of love, family reception and enthusiasm. The narrator also thinks of the reason why such a kind and friendly person lives on this lonely place and tries to come up with an explanation.

Her hospitality was something exquisite; she had the gift which so many women lack, of being able to make themselves and their houses belong entirely to a guest’s pleasure, - that charming surrender for the moment of themselves and whatever belongs to them, so that they make a part of one’s own life that can never be forgotten. Tact is after all a kind of mind-reading, and my hostess held the golden gift. Sympathy is of the mind as well as the heart, and Mrs. Blackett’s world and mine were one from the moment we met. Besides, she had that final, that highest gift of heaven, a perfect self-forgetfulness. Sometimes, as I watched her eager, sweet old face, I wondered why she had been set to shine on this lonely island of the northern coast. It must have been to keep the balance true, and make up to all her scattered and depending neighbors for other things which they may have lacked. (The Country 45)

Even though women are presented as almost saint and perfect, they are also just people with an ordinary behaviour, mistakes and bad qualities. The main character, Mrs. Todd, shows off her hypocrisy and an effort to be popular among all people. However, it is evident that one of her visitors, Mrs. Fosdick, who she knows for many years, does not belong to people which should accompany her every day. Right before the welcome ritual, Mrs. Todd proclaims that “she ‘s one I should n’t like to have find me unprepared“, which the narrator comments saying: “Mrs. Fosdick was already at the gate, and Mrs. Todd now turned an air of complete surprise and delight to welcome her.“ (The Country 53) To underline the realistic tone of the whole short novel, other examples of such common imperfections can be found very easily almost in any part of the book. The characters’ dialogues recall everyday situations that we all know from our lives almost two centuries later. The author does not avoid even amusing and slightly

impolite comments. While preparing the meal for everyone who participated in the journey to Green Island, Mrs. Todd wants her mother to assure her that there will be enough food: "There 's Johnny Bowden come with us, you know," she reminded her mother. "He 'll be hungry enough to eat his size." (The Country 42) The only allusion to the clash between men and women in the peaceful Dunnet Landing comes at the beginning of the trip to Green Island when a problem with pushing off from the landing occurs. One of the folks watching the boat from the shore, uttering a word addressed to their attempt, caused a little mockery of the other observers.

"Your bo't ain't trimmed proper, Mis' Todd!" exclaimed a voice from shore. "You 're lo'ded so the bo't 'll drag; you can't git her before the wind, ma'am. You set 'midships, Mis' Todd, an' let the boy hold the sheet 'n' steer after he gits the sail up; you won't never git out to Green Island that way. She 's lo'ded bad, your bo't is, - she 's heavy behind 's she is now!" (The Country 33)

The scorn for an incompetence of women is followed by a polite answer of Mrs. Todd, who, not trying to pick a quarrel, stays calm and does not let him bewilder her. She continues with assertiveness that is also very typical for women brought up by the countryside. Jewett's predecessor Harriet Beecher Stowe uses the same women characters in her works. As Donovan noted in the part focused on H. B. Stowe, the American local color literature "posit the rural locale as a site that nurtures genuinely sensible and assertive women." (Donovan 50)

3.3 Differentiation of Dialects in City and Country

Dealing with the dialects, we have to realize that they essentially belong to the countryside. Even nowadays the differences in using the same language in city and country is visible. Firstly, it differs from state to state, from region to region, from village to village. Secondly, it depends on the age group of the speaker. Searching for the main determinants of the dialect formation, we have to mention the historical background of the language development, then the influence of immigrants (very important in the nineteenth century New England) and also the intelligence and cultural

level of the specific society. In case of dialects used in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, there are several possible purposes why Jewett didn't write the whole book using the same one. The need to distinguish who is speaking seems to be irrelevant, but it is closely connected to the differentiation of the city and the country which is a crucial one. The narrator who came from Boston represents the city. By the clear, standard English, the author demonstrates the educated society and its higher morals. On the other side, uninteresting and artificial tone lack the dynamism, while speaking the local Maine dialect catches reader's attention for sure. One hundred and sixteen years after Jewett published this short novel it is quite difficult to understand the exact meaning of some expressions in this accent and so it was for people from the city who were not used to use it everyday. It is like a rediscovery of an ancient and forgotten links between contemporary and past times. The same revitalization appeared in the chapter "Poor Joanna" in the dialogue between Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Fosdick when they remembered and missed the past times which were more interesting from their point of view:

"Yes," said Mrs. Todd after a moment of meditation, "there was certain a good many curiosities of human natur' in this neighborhood years ago. There was more energy then, and in some the energy took a singular turn. In these days the young folks is all copy-cats, 'fraid to death they won't be all just alike; as for the old folks, they pray for the advantage o' bein' a little different."

"I ain't heard of a copy-cat this great many years," said Mrs. Fosdick, laughing; "'twas a favorite term o' my grandfather's." (The Country 60)

No matter the fact that the main protagonists spent more than half of the century living on Earth, speaking the dialect makes them younger. This feature brings also another importance: the reader feels more involved in the dialogues and gets into the same position as the narrator. The conversation and telling stories is as spontaneous and natural as possible. Another positive impact of using the dialect can be seen in so called "intergenerational dialogue". The dialect is being transmitted from generation to generation just orally, which requires the social interaction of the older and younger generation. Anne E. Perkins came up with the notion how it used to look like providing with several examples.

In the earlier days young people were told "to be seen and not heard" and they listened to older folk who had many expressions like the following. They told a person who was too confiding or familiar to "keep yourself to yourself." Of a

good hearted person with a high temper who spoiled all the effects of good deeds by violent outbreaks of temper they said that he or she was “like a cow that gives a good mess of milk, then kicks the pail over.” Someone unpopular or undesirable who left the community was spoken of in this wise: “He has gone, and sweet Hell go with him.” One who was shallow-pated, pretentious and probably dishonest was a “cheap cutter“. (Perkins 118)

As we can observe on the majority of the exemplifications and short extracts from *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, the dialect used in the region of Maine contains probably as many changes in linguistic features as possible. It differs in vocabulary, sentence structure, grammatical rules and pronunciation too. There is one “rule“ valid in this work: the more educated person, the less usage of the dialect. If we order the main characters according to their spoken language in the short novel, it would be the narrator first with her standard English, then Mrs. Todd, Mrs. Fosdick and Captain Littlepage using the dialect occasionally, and finally old fisherman Mr. Tilley and Mrs. Blckett having the dialect as their mother tongue. This sorting reflects also the age of the protagonists. To exemplify the accent briefly, I have chosen two short direct speeches of Mr. Elijah Tilley. The first one said from the shore while watching a fisherman who could not control his boat: “Boy got kind o‘ drowsy steerin‘ her; Monroe he hove him right overboard; ‘wake now fast enough...” (The Country 103) The second one when answering the narrator’s question wondering what he is going to have for a supper: “Goin‘ to have this ‘ere haddock an‘ some o‘ my good baked potatoes; must eat to live.“ (The Country 105)

3.4 The Issue of Superstitions in the Country Life

Before discussing the feature of superstitions, it is important to foreshadow briefly the religious and spiritual tradition in the nineteenth century New England. This region had become a place where came the Puritans from England, mainly during the seventeenth century, after they became unpopular for their attempt to reform the Church of England. (Campbell, Puritanism) The religion and influence of the church in the New England society was never as considerable as in the Great Britain or other parts of America, but

still, even in the works of Sarah Orne Jewett we can observe the impact of traditional protestant faith. The motif of the spirituality in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is not easily distinguishable. However, it is included and unobtrusively mentioned in different situations. At the end of the second chapter, when the narrator finds that “the July days fly fast“ while accompanying and helping Mrs. Todd with her business and herb-gathering, she decided to “said unkind words of withdrawal to Mrs. Todd“, for she needed more time to work on her writing; there came an affectionate reaction from her old hostess saying: “I’ve took great advantage o’ your bein‘ here. I ain’t had such a season for years, but I have never had nobody I could so trust.“ (The Country 10-11) Then the narrator shares her notion that it meant, after all, a start of “a deeper intimacy“ in their relationship, mostly in the evenings when Mrs. Todd needed to talk and she was the only to listen:

We both fell under the spell, and she either stood outside the window, or made an errand to my sitting-room, and told, it might be very commonplace news of the day, or, as happened one misty summer night, all that lay deepest in her heart. It was in this way that I came to know that she had loved one who was far above her. (The Country 11)

The whole Jewett’s fictional society is ruled by women which determines the form of the spirituality. “This is the ultimate transcendence Jewett presents: a kind of matriarchal Christianity; a women’s religion.“ (Donovan, Vision) No straight and reasonable belief typical for men, but rather a lot of inner feelings, strong bonds between generations (especially mother and child) and primarily the unusual relationship with the nature leads the way to find out how much the spirituality influences the country life. Jewett very often deals with the issues of transcendence and with superstitions. Old folks of Dunnet Landing do not participate and are not personally influenced by the church as much as people from the city who live their lives either traditionally in the church community, sharing the faith with other believers, or unaffected by Christianity at all. The country environment is characteristic by its loneliness and deeper personal experiences. Long cold winter evenings, the distance from one dwelling to another, the need to work hard for a living and the rest of time devoted to take care of their household or boat are some of the reasons why any opportunity to meet people and talk to them was so rare and appreciated. Telling stories shapes also the spiritual dimension of S. O. Jewett’s work. As I have already mentioned

in the part focused on the narrator, old seafarers play an important role in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Captain Littlepage who entered the schoolhouse after the funeral in need of some company found there the narrator who became his “confessor“. Though she was warned by Mrs. Todd that the old captain “had overset his mind with too much reading; she had also made dark reference to his having "spells" of some unexplainable nature.“, she wondered why he came. After a while, when talking about the funeral and the death of poor Mrs. Begg, they both agreed on the transcendental thought about the the life after death or at least about the Judgement Day:

“It may be found out some o’ these days,“ he said earnestly. “We may know it all, the next step; where Mrs. Begg is now, for instance. Certainty, not conjecture, is what we all desire.”

"I suppose we shall know it all some day," said I. (*The Country* 18)

But it was not enough for Captain Littlepage. He added a conviction that we can find out what will come after our death already here when we are still alive. However, his opinion is based on his own life experience of forty-three years being a shipmaster. Suggesting to change our ways of life to find the truth, he has also expresses contemptuous attitude towards the Dunnet inhabitants.

"We shall know it while yet below," insisted the captain, with a flush of impatience on his thin cheeks. "We have not looked for truth in the right direction. I know what I speak of; those who have laughed at me little know how much reason my ideas are based upon." He waved his hand toward the village below. "In that handful of houses they fancy that they comprehend the universe." (*The Country* 18-19)

His view on our looking for truth can be understood at least in two different ways. On the one hand, from the religious point of view, it would mean that we know the right way, but our mistakes and inability restrain us from reaching the goal. On the other hand, he might express his disappointment resulting from his weak faith that God exists and that Christianity is really the “right direction“. Similar doubts can arise when we read the chapter “Poor Joanna“. Christian belief suffers a lot here. Firstly, because of the excessive reaction of Joanna Todd, who was “crossed in love“ when just one month before the marriage her fiance “got bewitched with a girl ‘way up the bay, and married her, and went off to Massachusetts.“ (*The Country* 61) Joanna gave him her whole heart

and was prepared to marry him. When being betrayed, she left the mainland to the small Shell-heap Island and neither returned back nor visit the mainland again as long as she lived. And secondly, for her inexplicable strange relation with God and ineptitude of the Reverend Mr. Dimmick. Mrs. Todd visited Joanna and tried to persuade her that the folks miss her and that there is no problem to return back and live with her or with her mother at least for the winter time. No such offer met with success because Joanna stubbornly refused, giving an explanation:

“I don’t deserve it. I have committed the unpardonable sin; you don't understand,' says she humbly. 'I was in great wrath and trouble, and my thoughts was so wicked towards God that I can't expect ever to be forgiven. I have come to know what it is to have patience, but I have lost my hope.“ (The Country 70)

Strange Joanna’s approach provokes an internal protest of many readers resulting in a reasonable suspicion that she was under the influence of the Church which changed her mind and behaviour in a bad way. Neither the Dunnet community nor any of her friends cast her off. On the contrary, they felt sorry for her. Only when they found out that she is so stubborn and refuses to return to the normal life on the mainland, some of them turned to laugh at her judging her behaviour as crazy. But it was not the case of Mrs. Fosdick who went through the opposite procedure. "I called her a great fool," declared Mrs. Fosdick, with spirit, "but I pitied her then, and I pity her far more now.“ (The Country 64) Previously, she declared: “No, I never could laugh at Joanna, as some did.“ (The Country 61)

The Church is represented here by a minister (pastor) Mr. Dimmick who “felt that he ought to go out and visit her. She was a member of the church, and might wish to have him consider her spiritual state.“ (The Country 65) Mrs. Todd went on Shell-heap Island with him, so she became a witness of his acting. She described how impractical person Mr. Dimmick was. This recognition could be understood as a gentle criticism of the Church, saying that the Church is here for Church, not for people. Being able to keep traditional ceremonies, but not able to give a helping hand to the person in need. Mrs. Todd, an ordinary person, knows better what should be done to help her more effectively.

I thought he might have seen the little old Bible a-layin' on the shelf close by him, an' I wished he knew enough to just lay his hand on it an' read somethin' kind an' fatherly 'stead of accusin' her, an' then given poor Joanna his blessin' with the hope she might be led to comfort. He did offer prayer, but 't was all about hearin' the voice o' God out o' the whirlwind; and I thought while he was goin' on that anybody that had spent the long cold winter all alone out on Shell-heap Island knew a good deal more about those things than he did. (The Country 438)

Apart from christian spirituality, more different strange-looking superstitions appear in the narration. Mostly those stories were never written but just handed on from generation to generation. One of such legends were spread about Shell-heap Island.

“ 'T is a place worth visitin' when you once get there. Some o' the old folks was kind o' fearful about it. 'T was 'counted a great place in old Indian times; you can pick up their stone tools 'most any time if you hunt about. There's a beautiful spring 'o water, too. Yes, I remember when they used to tell queer stories about Shell-heap Island. Some said 't was too far a great bangeing-place for the Indians, and an old chief resided there once that ruled the winds; and others said they 'd always heard that once the Indians come down from up country an' left a captive there without any bo't, an' 't was too far to swim across to Black Island, so called, an' he lived there till he perished.“ (The Country 428)

Some of the stories were known as a fiction or a legend but others were taken seriously and people were still, after many years, afraid of those places. Especially when they knew just few historical facts about their region, then they were often deeply influenced by what they heard it has been said about it by folks. Mrs. Todd continued with the legend, soothing all the listeners, saying:

I've heard say he walked the island after that, and sharp-sighted folks could see him an' lose him like one o' them citizens Cap'n Littlepage was acquainted with up to the north pole," announced Mrs. Todd grimly. "Anyway, there was Indians—you can see their shell-heap that named the island; and I've heard myself that 'twas one o' their cannibal places, but I never could believe it. There never was no cannibals on the coast o' Maine. All the Indians o' these regions are tame-looking folks." (The Country 59)

3.5 Bowden Reunion as a Symbol of Community

Four chapters of the last quarter of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* are focused on one great event called Bowden Reunion. There are several interesting features that help to complete the picture of the country life. Bowden Reunion means a big meeting of members and close friends belonging to the Bowden lineage. The first sign depicted is the importance of keeping and knowing the ancestry which is far more followed in the countryside than in the city environment. The reunion is the second sign which stresses the need to meet each other once in a while. The folks (especially the old ones) had few opportunities to get together, so when that time came, they regarded it as a great event that required a lot of preparations. The importance of community is evident throughout the whole reunion including the preparations, the expedition, the meeting itself and also the journey back home. We can observe different problems the folks are troubled by than the city inhabitants. Not so important, but interesting is the feature of safety. When Mrs. Todd, Mrs. Blackett and the narrator left their house, Mrs. Todd remembered after a while that she forgot to close the door. But she isn't afraid of a burglary. She even refused the narrator's offer to run back and close the door. It was enough to stop when they "met the doctor, and Mrs. Todd asked him to stop and ask her nearest neighbor to step over and close the door if the dust seemed to blow in the afternoon." (*The Country* 82)

The reunion meant also another opportunity. While making such a journey, they decided to make the most of it and visit as many friends and relatives as possible. But they were afraid that they could be delayed because they knew almost everyone in their surroundings. As they continued in their travelling, Mrs. Blackett compare the trees to the folks:

We had just passed a piece of woodland that shaded the road, and come out to some open fields beyond, when Mrs. Todd suddenly reined in the horse as if somebody had stood on the roadside and stopped her. She even gave that quick reassuring nod of her head which was usually made to answer for a bow, but I discovered that she was looking eagerly at a tall ash-tree that grew just inside the field fence.

"I thought 'twas goin' to do well," she said complacently as we went on again. "Last time I was up this way that tree was kind of drooping and discouraged.

Grown trees act that way sometimes, same's folks; then they'll put right to it and strike their roots off into new ground and start all over again with real good courage. Ash-trees is very likely to have poor spells; they ain't got the resolution of other trees."

The reunion is the biggest honour for old Mrs. Blackett because she knows it could be her last meeting with her friends that she had no other chance to see during the whole year. Thankfulness for the small common things is another light spot that is being hardly seen in the gloomy city atmosphere. Mrs. Blackett, full of joy and enthusiasm, feels much younger at least for a while. The narrator has a disadvantage of not being allied with the others, especially after Mrs. Todd said that:

"There's one thing certain: there's nothing takes in this whole neighborhood like anything related to the Bowdens. Yes, I do feel that when you call upon the Bowdens you may expect most families to rise up between the Landing and the far end of the Back Cove. Those that aren't kin by blood are kin by marriage."
(The Country 88)

Conclusion

The New England local colorists, however, presented the first women's literary tradition which moved beyond a negative critique of reified male-identified customs and attitudes. The New England women created a counter world of their own, a rural realm that existed on the margins of patriarchal society, a world that nourishing strong, free women. The culmination of this tradition is to be found in Jewett's master-work *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. (Donovan 3)

There is no doubt about Sarah Orne Jewett to be one of the most significant American regional writers of the second half of the nineteenth century. She succeeded in popularization of the countryside in the New England area. She was able to reveal the scenic beauties and to revitalize the memories of old folks preceding the times when she lived. Her works are being classified as a modern fiction, though - based on her personal experience and knowledge gained by her lifelong observation - including features of realism. She put women into the lead position, backing men off into the background. The only exception is the old captains and fishermen who are the representants of the past times and all the traditions, customs and dialect. By this step, Jewett created a new women world, a modern matriarchal society.

Sarah Orne Jewett, as I tried to portray her, drew her inspiration from the great authors like Flaubert, Zola or her contemporaries Mark Twain or Nathaniel Hawthorne. Herself, she became a mentor and a model for the following authors, namely Willa Cather or Mary E. Wilkins Freeman. Her literary career started with accepting and publishing her first collection of short stories called "Deephaven" (1877) by the editor of the "Atlantic Monthly" William Dean Howells whom she became a friend with. From her other works, a novel "Country Doctor" (1884) or "A White Heron" (1886) are those which caught more attention. Although her literary account does not contain hundreds of novels or plays and despite the fact that her works miss the plot and the clear structure, she succeeded mainly because her ingenious sense for empathy and her ability to transform the common boring issues into the interesting and breath-taking ones.

In 1896, Jewett's master-piece "The Country of the Pointed Firs" was published. Its greatest value is hidden in a detailed presentation of the fictional town of Dunnet Landing, including its inhabitants and customs. From the second chapter on, I analyzed the main features of the short novel that are connected to the country and I also tried to uncover the links to the city which is not directly included. The first feature chosen is the narrator who stands for one of the characters by whose eyes the whole story is seen. All the realistic details including her internal and intimate feelings and imaginations created by observing the countryside and listening to the folks' narrations are transmitted in an intriguing way. Though it would be reasonable, Jewett does not want to provoke or to wage any arguments. Neither she wants to openly criticize. The main goal is to present her homeland in the best colors. She does not keep away from the inconveniences caused by the lack of the male element. She strengthened the bonds between mother and daughter and between females in general. While rather shifted to the background, majority of men are awkward there and sometimes people also laugh at them; except for the old folks whose narrations have an important place in the novella. Being one of them who carry the heavy burden of loneliness and dissatisfaction of the modern world, the author has a deep understanding for them.

Another important feature mentioned in the analytical part of my thesis is the superstitions, supernatural elements and spirituality in general. Jewett often deals with the transcendentalism and mysticism. In this novella, it is not directly expressed, but just in small pieces like a puzzle. The main protagonist, Mrs. Todd, working as a herbalist, knows much about herbs and flowers. The mystic allusion has something in common with modern homeopathy which is more about human's will and psychic power than about a medical treatment. The transcendentalism is presented mainly in the narration of Captain Littlepage who experienced during his journeys and sails how close the death can be. And finally, there is also poor Joanna who decided to spend a rest of her life alone in seclusion after her fiance decided to marry someone else only one month before their marriage. She is a Christian, but her faith is kind of strange and her reaction inexplicable. Jewett picked the most interesting stories that are not so important for their content or a dramatic plot, but every single narration and dialogue hides several

features that are to be demonstrated through the specific part of the text. For example the dialect that can be most easily observed in old folks' speech.

Jewett made a complete picture of the New England local color. The country is presented as a contrast to the city. The author does not judge which environment has more advantages and which is more suitable for living. She did not include the feature of the city directly into the story, but it is there hidden in the background in the context. It is readers' task to find the right connections and choose the more tempting for them. Jewett's preference is seemingly obvious because she loved the countryside and had a fantastic personal detailed knowledge of it, but at the same time who else than her should represent the narrator, a writer from Boston? That is probably the reason why the narrator never mentioned the city in a negative comparison to the country where she is in the position of the guest.

Resumé

Sarah Orne Jewettová je bezpochyby jednou z nejvýznamějších a nejvýraznějších amerických spisovatelek druhé poloviny 19. století. Zasloužila se o zviditelnění venkova v oblasti Nové Anglie. Poutavým způsobem dokázala přiblížit krásy přírody a oživit vzpomínky na život starousedlíků předcházejících dob, v níž ona sama žila. Ve svých dílech postavila ženy do popředí, zdůraznila jejich samostatnost a důležitost a vytvořila tak nový druh matriarchální společnosti, kterou ve své době mohla pozorovat u stárnoucí generace osamělých žen, jejichž muži a synové je opustili z důvodů popsaných níže.

S. O. Jewettová je řazena mezi velké autory, jakými byli například Nathaniel Hawthorne nebo její současník Mark Twain, kteří pro ní byli vzory. Ovlivněna byla také díly Tennysona, Thackeraye, Flauberta nebo Zoly, které se zaujetím četla. Svě poznatky poté využila ve vlastní tvorbě. Byla mistryní v zachycení místního koloritu, v němž využila prvky těsného spojení člověka s přírodou, vztahy jednotlivých obyvatel, nářečí charakteristické pro daný region a v neposlední řadě také zvyky, obyčeje, pověry a spiritualitu místa, do něhož povídku zasadila.

Sama se stala mentorkou a vzorem pro další autory jako byli Willa Catherová nebo Mary E. Willkins Freemanová. Její literární kariéru odstartovalo v roce 1877 přijetí a publikování prvního souboru povídek s názvem "Deephaven" editorem magazínu "Atlantic Monthly" Williamem Deanem Howellssem, jehož přátelství pro ní i do budoucnosti znamenalo velký přínos. On byl také jedním z několika mužů, s nimiž navázala bližší vztah. Nikdy se však nevdala. Naopak druhou polovinu svého života strávila po boku své dobré přítelkyně Annie Fieldsové, s níž si už dříve velmi často dopisovala a byla s ní i jejím mužem v blízkém kontaktu. I ona tedy, stejně jako některé z postav jejích děl, tíhla spíše ke vztahu s ženami, který přerůstal dle některých kritiků v lesbickou lásku.

Z dalších děl, která byla všechna převážně kratšího rázu (autorka sama o sobě tvrdila, že nedokáže napsat delší dílo, protože umí popisovat, ale ne tvořit zápletky), vešlo ve známost například dílo "A White Heron" (1886) nebo o něco delší román "A Country Doctor" (1884). V roce 1896 bylo vydáno stěžejní dílo této regionální autorky,

které je často označováno za mistrovské – “The Country of the Pointed Firs“ (Krajina špičatých jedlí). Jeho největší hodnota spočívá v detailním vyobrazení fiktivního městečka Dunnet Landing a jeho obyvatel podaném nezaujatým pohledem vypravěčky, která, pocházející z prostředí velkoměsta, vnímá a čtenářům předkládá všechny realistické detaily včetně svých vnitřních pocitů a imaginací, které jí návštěva tohoto kraje, upadajícího a zapomenutého v čase, přináší. Neméně důležitá je perfektní znalost všech výše uvedených prvků, kterou autorka postupně nabývala od svého raného dětství převážně díky svému otci.

Ač se to vzhledem k situaci, v níž se upadající americký venkov v té době nacházel, nabízí, Jewettová tímto dílem nechce provokovat, rozpoutávat hádky, nechce ani příliš otevřeně kritizovat. Jejím hlavním cílem je představení své domoviny v nejlepších barvách. Takováto propagace a zviditelnění celého regionu a jeho krás napomáhá upozornit obyvatele urbanizovaných velkoměst na svůj nesouhlas a lítost nad úpadkem venkovských oblastí, především menších pobřežních vesnic a přístavů, jejichž námořnická a rybářská historie byla postupně v 19.století přebíjena vlivem urbanizace industriálních oblastí. Hlavní cílovou skupinou čtenářů jsou právě měšťané, v nichž se autorka snaží probudit či obnovit lásku k přírodě a soužití s ní. Dalším velkým důrazem, který se promítá nejen v tomto konkrétním díle, je jakýsi důkaz o síle a samostatnosti žen. Mnoho mladých mužů padlo v Občanské válce nebo se vydali za hledáním štěstí a lepšího živobytí na Západ do Kalifornie a dalších oblastí, které byly zasaženy Zlatou horečkou. Další nezanedbatelný vliv měla průmyslová revoluce, která přilákala mnohé do měst. Velmi často se u těchto pokusů shledáváme se ztrátou iluzí a s osobními krachy. Ne každý měl takové štěstí, aby nalezené zlato změnilo jeho život k lepšímu a co se týká uplatnění v průmyslu, města nebyla na takový přísun přistěhovalců připravena a často se tak dělníci potýkali s velmi nepříznivými životními podmínkami a jejich výdělky končily v kasách pivnic, zábavních podniků či veřejných domů.

Jewettová nezastírá nesnáze způsobené chybějícím mužským elementem, ale současně buduje silnou matriarchální společnost s důrazem na posílené vztahy mezi matkou a dcerou, popřípadě mezi přítelkyněmi, které nezřídka přerůstají v partnerství a lesbickou lásku. Muži jsou v této novele spíše upozadováni, v některých případech i zesměšňováni. Jedinou skupinou, která má v tomto ohledu tak trochu protekci, jsou staří

vysloužili námořníci a rybáři. Autorka vnímá jejich důležitost ve vývoji venkovských přímořských oblastí. Oni jsou také těmi věrnými, kteří udržují tradice a jsou nositeli cenných zkušeností z historie. V neposlední řadě s nimi soucítí, protože se nacházejí v podobné situaci jako opuštěné ženy. Většinou se jedná o vdovce, kteří se na stará kolena o sebe musí postarat, a kteří navíc také trpí rozčarováním z toho, že nemají komu předat svou štafetu, a že si své zkušenosti a zážitky vezmou s sebou do hrobu.

Jak už jsem zmínil, vypravěčka je osobou, která prožívá vše, co se odehrává. Celá novela je psána z jejího pohledu a přitom ji čtenářům autorka nijak blíže nepředstavuje. Víme jen, že se jedná o spisovatelku z Bostonu, která přijela do Dunnet Landing za účelem své tvůrčí činnosti. Tato neurčitost je cílená - v první řadě umožňuje každému čtenáři dosadit si na její místo sebe a prožívat dál mnohem intenzivněji celý příběh. Druhým důvodem je poukázání na nedůležitost města v této venkovské próze a také je tím vystižena anonymita velkoměsta. Pokud člověk není něčím významný a proslavený, nikoho jeho jméno ve velkém městě nezajímá. Zatímco na venkově se znají všichni navzájem a každý tam má své místo.

Dalším, již v úvodu zmíněným významným motivem, na němž je toto dílo vystavěno, je matriarchální společnost. Hlavními protagonisty nejsou rodiny ani muži, ale ženy, které jsou propojeny buď příbuzenskými nebo přátelskými vztahy. Celá novela je z důvodu primárního zastoupení žen úplně jinak pojetá. Ženy si obecně více o všem povídají, sdělují si své zážitky, každý detail hlouběji vnitřně prožívají a ve stáří rády společně vzpomínají. To platí i v případě tohoto díla, které je na všech těchto aspektech založeno. Bez žen by byla tato novela, neobsahující souvislý příběh a zápletku, prázdná. Jak sama vypravěčka popisuje, staré námořníky zaslechla spolu promlouvat jen výjimečně; rozumí si i bez zbytečných slov. Změna nastává pouze v případě, že dostanou možnost vyprávět o svých zážitcích a svém životě jako tomu je v této novele v případě kapitána Littlepage a pana Tilleyho. Ti vyprávějí příběhy týkající se smrti, pohrávající si s transcendentálními myšlenkami, jestli po ní něco následuje či nikoliv. Tím se dostávám k dalšímu motivu, kterým se v mé práci zabývám, a tím je význam pověr, nadpřirozených jevů a spirituality obecně. Oblast Nové Anglie byla ovlivněna příchodem Puritánů v 17.století. Protestantská křesťanská víra se tam rozšířila a i v období, v němž žila Jewettová, neměla zanedbatelný vliv. S tímto prvkem se

setkáváme v příběhu o Joanně, která z nešťastné lásky utekla na nedaleký opuštěný ostrov, aby tam prožila zbytek života v samotě a bez kontaktu s okolním světem. Důvodem k tomuto rozhodnutí bylo její přesvědčení, že spáchala neodpustitelný hřích, protože byla moc zahleděná do svých životních plánů a nenaslouchala Bohu. Tento zvláštní projev její osobní víry nikdo nechápe, ale postupem času se s ním (někteří s posměchem, jiní s lítostí) smíří. Tak, jak jsou muži v celé novele převážně neschopní, tak i v tomto případě se projeví nepraktický přístup reverenda Dimmicka, který se při návštěvě Joanny nedokáže nijak víc vcítit do její situace a nikterak jí ze své role pastýře (pastora) nepomůže.

Hlavní postavou je paní Toddová, která je hostitelkou vypravěčky a zároveň vesnickou bylinkářkou. Na ní a jejím chování můžeme pozorovat všechny důležité prvky - od schopnosti vyprávět, přes znalost všech starousedlíků, okolní přírody a všech druhů bylin, až po dialekt, kterým mluví všichni kromě vypravěčky. Může to být vnímáno jako další odlišení města a venkova, kdy měšťané mluví obecným, univerzálním jazykem jako tisíce dalších, zatímco venkované mají ve svém dialektu něco vlastního - kus regionální tradice a společného povědomí a sounáležitosti.

Život S. O. Jewettové skončil v nedožitých šedesáti letech, což bylo poměrně brzy oproti mnohým jejím kolegům a kolegyním. Se špatným zdravím (především artrozou) bojovala už od dětství. I tak po sobě zanechala nesmazatelný odkaz pro všechny budoucí generace.

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