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Literary Depiction of the Alaska Gold Rush  
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## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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

Závěrečná bakalářská práce se zaměří na literární ztvárnění problematiky zlaté horečky na Aljašce. V úvodu práce student stručně nastíní historii Aljašky jako 49. státu USA, především s ohledem na objevení ložisek zlata na Klondiku. Dále uvede zvolené autory (Jack London a Peter C. Brown), jejich výběr zdůvodní a zařadí je do širšího literárního kontextu. Stručně uvede teoretický rámec (např. poetika místa, feminismus), do něhož svou analýzu zasadí. Jádrem práce bude analýza vybraných děl, v níž se student soustředí především na způsoby zobrazení konkrétních historických událostí (zlaté horečky) z pohledu obou autorů a zachycení specifík místa tedy pojedná o Aljašce také z hlediska poetiky místa. Své argumenty bude ilustrovat ukázkami z primárních děl a opře je rovněž o zdroje teoretické. Zaměří se rovněž na literární prostředky, které zvolení autoři používají. Závěrem své analýzy přehledně shrne a obě díla porovná.

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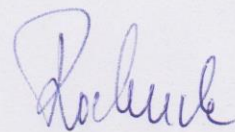
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Prohlašuji:

Tuto práci jsem vypracoval samostatně. Veškeré literární prameny a informace, které jsem v práci využil, jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury.

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## **ANNOTATION**

This bachelor thesis is concerned with the role of setting and the depiction of female characters in the works of Jack London and Peter C. Brown portraying the Alaska Gold Rush at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The theoretical part of the thesis describes the literary and historical context with emphasis on early discoveries of gold in Alaska, the position of women in society and their role in the Gold Rush. There are also described the influences on the analyzed works of the selected authors. The analytical part of the thesis is initially concerned with how both authors use and implement the setting and how they have managed to portray female characters in their gold rush fiction.

## **KEY WORDS**

Alaska, Jack London, Peter C. Brown, gold rush, setting, women

## **ANOTACE**

Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřena na roli literárního prostředí a vyobrazení ženských postav v dílech Jacka Londona a Petera C. Browna zachycujících zlatou horečku na Aljašce na počátku 20. století. Tato práce je rozdělena na teoretickou část, která se zabývá literárním a historickým kontextem doby, především s ohledem na objevení ložisek zlata na Aljašce, pozici žen ve společnosti, jejich roli ve zlaté horečce a vlivy na dílo zvolených autorů. Další částí práce je analýza vybraných děl, která se jednak zabývá tím, jak jednotliví autoři využívají literární prostředí a jednak tím, jakým způsobem zachycují ženské postavy v literatuře vyobrazující zlatou horečku na Aljašce.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Aljaška, Jack London, Peter C. Brown, zlatá horečka, prostředí, ženy

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## Introduction

This thesis focuses on literary works describing the Alaska Gold Rush, specifically the Klondike and Nome stampedes, written by Jack London and Peter C. Brown.

Jack London's first book, *The Son of the Wolf* (1900), is a collection of short stories. It was one of London's first notable literary achievements upon his arrival back to the United States from his Alaskan journey, but most importantly, it set the course for his literary works in the following years and brought him popularity and artistic recognition.<sup>1</sup> In 1902, London published his first novel from the Klondike – *A Daughter of the Snows* (1902). Nevertheless, it was not until 1903 that London gained worldwide popularity and even more acclaim for his literary feats, after having published his novel *The Call of the Wild* (1903), which is, according to Earle Labor, still: “[...] one of the finest short novels in American literature.”<sup>2</sup> London's works are still relevant nowadays and most likely will be further discussed, targeted by critics and be an interesting subject for research, because they essentially represent what it meant being an American at an important point in time both from the cultural and historical perspective.<sup>3</sup> Even though Jack London's works have been thoroughly discussed by scholars and literary critics, Brown's *The Fugitive Wife* (2006) has never been a subject for analysis in academic papers before, therefore this thesis is the first paper to address this novel. The only available critical resources for analyzing Brown's novel are thus reviews and opinions of readers on sites such as goodreads.com which will be used as sources that demonstrate the readers' perception of the novel, and function as a critical commentary on its features and themes.

The reasoning behind choosing Jack London for the purposes of this thesis is thus rather obvious. London is one of the most influential and well-known authors in the history of American literature, he personally participated in and experienced the Alaska Gold Rush and the time periods preceding it, and his works can thus provide a first-hand, accurate description of those events. Earle Labor describes him as: “[the] father of the American short story.”<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Peter C. Brown is a rather unknown, contemporary writer who, of course, did not personally participate in the Alaska Gold Rush. Nevertheless, it was the life story of Ned

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<sup>1</sup> Earle Labor, “A Dedication to the Memory of Jack London: 1876-1916,” *Arizona and the West* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1964): 94.

<sup>2</sup> Labor, “A Dedication,” 95.

<sup>3</sup> Susan M. Nuernberg, “Give Us Howling and Naked Savagery”: Jack London and “The Call of the Wild” review of *The Call of the Wild*, by Jack London, *The English Journal* 85, no. 5, September 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Labor, “A Dedication,” 94.



Brown, Peter Brown's grandfather, that inspired Peter Brown's *The Fugitive Wife* (2006), as the author himself states: "[Ned] joined the stampede to Nome in 1900 as engineer for the Cape Nome Hydraulic Mining Company."<sup>5</sup> The novel is based on Ned Brown's diaries and other historical documents, but some parts of the story had to be adjusted, names left out and dates of some historical events changed to complement the storytelling aspect of the novel. Peter Brown cooperated with many local institutions in Alaska, analyzed historical sources and even ventured to Alaska himself to: "[...] [observe] the ruins of the roadhouses and camps inhabited by the writers of the diaries [he] carried."<sup>6</sup>

The two authors were thus chosen for comparison because one of them wrote about Alaska shortly after the Gold Rush, while the other more than a century later. Therefore, the latter's moral values, mentality and general views of the world might greatly differ from London's based solely on that time difference. The other aspect that incited my interest in the work of Peter C. Brown was that the novel's main protagonist is a woman in contrast with works of Jack London, where strong female characters appear scarcely, especially in his Alaskan short stories and novels with only a few exceptions.

This thesis is comprised of two parts. The first part serves as a theoretical background of the thesis. Firstly, there is described the historical context of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the events which lead to the acquisition of Alaska, including its consequences – the Klondike and Nome stampedes. Secondly, there is described the role of women in the Gold Rush and the beginnings of the Women's Rights Movement in the United States, followed by a chapter describing the literary context. Lastly, there is a chapter devoted to Jack London which analyzes the themes of his literature and the possible influences on his works, which were projected into his writings.

The second part of the thesis analyzes and compares London's Klondike short stories and novels with Brown's *The Fugitive Wife* (2006), focusing on how both authors implement the setting into their works and how they have managed to illustrate female characters participating in a historical event – the Klondike and Nome Gold Rushes, which were predominantly experienced by and reported on by the male part of the 1900s population.

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<sup>5</sup> Peter C. Brown, *The Fugitive Wife* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 409.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 414

## 1. Historical and Cultural Context

This chapter is concerned with some of the changes the United States underwent during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including territorial changes and social reforms. It describes how these variables influenced and contributed to the development of the American culture with emphasis on the changes which were projected into the literary movements.

### 1.1. The Frontier

The territory of the United States doubled at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with The Louisiana Purchase of 1803. This started the westward expansion and re-opened the frontier. People started venturing westwards to seek better life and to explore the unknown. The mentality was best described by John O’Sullivan and his Manifest Destiny and links to it can be found even in the 1845 inaugural address of the 11<sup>th</sup> American president James K. Polk: “It is confidently believed that our system may be safely extended to the utmost bounds of our territorial limits, and that as it shall be extended the bonds of our Union, so far from being weakened, will become stronger.”<sup>7</sup>

According to Tucker, it was a commonly advocated doctrine that Americans were destined to settle the American continent from coast to coast. They were the agents of progress and their calling was to spread their knowledge, culture and fundamentally civilization itself across the whole continent. The Mexican-American War broke out in 1846, ultimately leading to the acquisition of Mexico’s former territories that had later become the states of New Mexico, Wyoming, Arizona, Nevada, Utah and most importantly California, as gold was discovered there in 1848 just before the war ended on February 2.<sup>8</sup> A massive migration wave followed shortly after, and the California Gold Rush began in 1849. The settlement of the western parts of the US was further encouraged with the Homestead Act of 1862 and the western frontier officially closed by the 1890s, which marked, according to Frederick Jackson Turner, an important event in the American history: “And now, four centuries from the discovery of America, at the end of a hundred years of life under the Constitution, the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States Volume 1: George Washington (1789) to James A. Garfield (1881)* (Bedford: Applewood Books, 2013), 101.

<sup>8</sup> Spencer C. Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Mexican-American War: A Political, Social, and Military History Volume 1: A-L* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 357.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921), EPUB e-book, 26.

Consequently, it can be established that the Frontier was an essential factor, which profoundly contributed in shaping the American culture. Jackson also states that the frontier is a place where the civilization struggles and meets with the wilderness<sup>10</sup>, which was particularly accurate, in case of the northern frontier that started to be challenged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **1.2. The Northern Frontier**

In 1867, the frontier opened yet again when the American territory was to be enriched by an enormous piece of land that lay outside of the boundaries of the United States. As Ritter states, Alaska was acquired from the Russian Empire for \$7.2 million. Nevertheless, people were skeptical about its at first and they even nicknamed it “Seward’s Folly”, after the former Secretary of State William H. Seward, a strong supporter of Manifest Destiny, who incited the negotiations about the purchase of Alaska with Russia.<sup>11</sup> In a letter dated May 12, 1868 Joseph S. Wilson, Commissioner of the General Land Office, argues: “The acquisition of this territory is essential to the full success of that career of wonderful progress upon which the United States have lately entered.”<sup>12</sup>, which eventually proved to be true, but initially there was a strong wave of negativity and skepticism towards the deal.

According to Haycox, Seward initially incited the negotiations because he thought the Alaskan territory would guarantee the United States an entry point to the promising markets in Asia. Seward’s idea was that the Alaskan coastal land could serve as a strategic point both for the resupply of American merchant ships on their commercial journeys and as a strategic point for military bases in case the United States needed military support, but his ultimate expansionist vision was to create a unitary territory by connecting Alaska to the United States through the annexation of British Columbia.<sup>13</sup>

Even though Seward’s expansionist plan was not fully carried out, the discoveries of natural resources in the northern frontier eventually proved that the deal, indeed, was an excellent opportunity for the United States to pursue Manifest Destiny. In the following chapters, there will be described the early discoveries of gold and the events that have consequently followed.

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<sup>10</sup> Turner, *The Frontier*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Harry Ritter, *Alaska’s History: The People, Land, and Events of the North Country* (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Books, 1993), EPUB e-book, under “Seward’s Folly”.

<sup>12</sup> "The Alaska Purchase." Joseph S. Wilson to Nathaniel P. Banks. May 12, 1868.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Haycox, “Truth and Expectation: Myth in Alaska History,” *The Northern Review*, no. 6 (Winter 1990): 65.

## **Early Gold Discoveries, Journey to the Klondike**

Even though gold had been discovered in small quantities in the area as early as in the 1850s by the Russians, major waves of stampedeers did not venture to Alaska until the late 1890s. As Ritter argues, the reason for that was simple as the coverage of the local terrain was limited because the previous settlers, apart from the natives, simply had no desire nor need to discover or venture to the Interior Alaska.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, before the discovery of gold, the arctic, unpleasant “wasteland” had seemingly nothing to offer and the overall knowledge about the land and its potential riches was scarce in the US. Several trading outposts such as Fort Yukon or Fort Selkirk were established in the area even prior to the Alaska Purchase of 1867 by enterprises such as the Hudson’s Bay Company or the Russian-American Company with the intent of settlement, colonization and trading with the natives, but even despite the trading activity, the geographical coverage of the area was still practically non-existent.<sup>15</sup>

A breakthrough in surveying the land came, as Hunt points out, in 1883 when an expedition comprised of U.S. Army soldiers under the command of Lt. Frederick Schwatka was given the assignment to survey the land and map the territory along the whole length of the Yukon River.<sup>16</sup> It was, at that time, one of the most important transportation routes in the area, because it courses through the Yukon Territory and continues through Alaska all the way up to the Bering Sea. Schwatka and his crew have encountered some mining activity in the region as well as miners migrating from Juneau after the gold strike of 1880-1881, but gold was mined near Sitka and on Mackenzie River even before in the 1870s<sup>17</sup>. The journalistic coverage of the expedition increased the general interest in the land and Hunt suggests that Schwatka’s reports on the occurrence of gold might have incited others to pursue fortune in the northern frontier as well, but most importantly the journey surveyed the routes, which would be, in the following years, used as a gateway to the Klondike goldfields by thousands of prospectors and other fortune seekers.<sup>18</sup>

The notable discoveries of gold include the ones in Juneau (1880), Forty Mile (1886) or near Circle and Rampart (1893), but the most influential one, which arguably started the Klondike stampede of 1897, occurred in summer of 1896 when a party of prospectors comprised of George

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<sup>14</sup> Ritter, *Alaska’s History*, under “Seward’s Folly”.

<sup>15</sup> William R. Hunt, *North of 53°: The Wild Days of the Alaska-Yukon Mining Frontier, 1870-1914* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Hunt, *North of 53°*, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Hunt, *North of 53°*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Hunt, *North of 53°*, 5.

Carmack, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charlie discovered gold on Rabbit Creek on the Yukon River.<sup>19</sup> The news quickly spread among miners in the area and even though they at first refused to believe Carmack, his claims were later confirmed by others and before the winter of 1896 came, many of them from Forty Mile rushed there to stake their own claims but it was not until January 1897 when the news reached Circle only to attract another waves of stampedeers from within the region.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Stampedes**

In July 1897, two ships carrying the names *Excelsior* and *Portland* returned to the Seattle and San Francisco ports with the first wave of miners returning from the Klondike. The returning miners brought with themselves over 1 million dollars' worth of gold and the news of their success spread like wildfire.<sup>21</sup> The attention of journalists predetermined the start of the Klondike stampede, and especially provided a great influx of new people from outside the northern frontier, who got fresh news about the promising claims up North. Hunt points out that the role of Seattle was crucial due to its strategic position, which was an ideal starting point for expeditions heading up North, earning it the nickname "Gateway to the Goldfields".<sup>22</sup> Many men and women from all social layers, of various races, occupations and skills started to migrate to the suddenly tempting frontier, which was a mining frontier in many respects very similar to the previous ones in California and Colorado, but at the same time very different due to the hardships tied to its general location and the fierce climate, however, the journey to the goldfields itself also proved to be difficult for many. Allegedly, around 100000 people initially set out for the journey, but only around 40000 of them made it there in the end.<sup>23</sup> However, individuals had little to no opportunity to get rich in the Klondike as the richest claims were soon staked. Many of the miners had to work for mining companies, some of them went bankrupt, or barely broke even and a lot of them soon returned to the United States. As Hunt points out, the focus of the fortune-seekers shifted from the Klondike to a different location at the turn of the century because gold was discovered at the beaches of Nome, Alaska in 1898-1899. Another major stampede followed shortly after and lasted up until 1909.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Hunt, *North of 53°*, 24.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> James H. Ducker, "Gold Rushers North: A Census Study of the Yukon and Alaskan Gold Rushes, 1896-1900" *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (July 1994): 82.

<sup>22</sup> Hunt, *North of 53°*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Ritter, *Alaska's History*, under "The Klondike Stampede".

<sup>24</sup> Hunt, *North of 53°*, 97.

### 1.3. Women and the Gold Rush

The prospect of the rough mining frontier, combined with the harshness of its climatic and weather conditions and the unpleasant reality of the newly built, initially lawless, mining hubs overflowing with people might suggest that it was, at the time of its relevance, appealing only to the male part of the population. That was mostly true, as Ducker points out in his demographical study, because the female population was relatively small and: “[women] were very rare on the prospecting frontier.”<sup>25</sup> According to Ducker, the population of Nome, was composed mainly by males, who took up roughly 90% of its whole population and the situation in other major hubs like Treadwell, Skagway, Douglas and Juneau was similar with approximately three quarters of their population being male.<sup>26</sup> The trend of dominant male population was prevalent throughout the whole frontier, however, one of the exceptions occurred in Sitka with 43% of its population being composed by female residents. Firstly, Sitka was established long before the stampedes and thus its population was more gender balanced and secondly, gold did not occur there in such quantities as elsewhere, meaning the number of newcomers during the Gold Rush was not as excessive as compared to, for example, Nome.<sup>27</sup>

According to Joan London, the response of men and women in terms of excitement for the new possibilities up North in 1897 was nearly the same, but many women initially helped with promotion or invested in stocks rather than immediately travelling to Alaska, but those who could allegedly did, mostly to accompany their husbands with a small number of women travelling alone.<sup>28</sup> Ducker’s report shows that it was common for about three quarters of women in each locality to be married.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, 20% of the women who had an occupation were, as Ducker concludes, servants or housekeepers, and there were also teachers, clerks, nurses etc., but also many prostitutes whose numbers cannot be precisely estimated as the enumerators conducting the census often listed them as unemployed, or in other categories (singers, dancers). However, the data show that in 1900 there were only 5 women listed as miners, compared to 7072 men.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ducker, “Gold Rushers North,” 83.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ducker, “Gold Rushers North,” 86.

<sup>28</sup> London, *Jack London*, 146.

<sup>29</sup> Ducker, “Gold Rushers North,” 83.

<sup>30</sup> Ducker, “Gold Rushers North,” 88.

## 1.4. Position of Women in Society

This chapter describes the position of women in society of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As the centuries slowly shifted, there came a series of social reforms including those advocating for women's rights. This chapter describes the beginnings of the Women's Rights Movement and the ideal of the New Woman that is discussed in the latter part of the thesis.

As McMillen describes, men and women had unequal positions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century society. The general social standard for women was to stay at home to take care of the children and the household, while men were to provide for the family and thus had the "upper hand" in the social hierarchy. The inequality of genders affected many spheres of the public life because women were generally perceived as inferior and thus did not have equal opportunities of pursuing a career, education or getting involved in the political life.<sup>31</sup> They did not have the right to vote, because: "[...] voting was a privilege, not a right, of citizenship."<sup>32</sup> Additionally, movements advocating for women's rights in America were virtually non-existent prior to 1848.

The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 was one of the first developments in the history of the Women's Rights Movement in America. Men and women gathered there to voice their disapproval with unequal treatment of women and their arguments were projected in the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments, which addressed eighteen injustices women had to face in society and proposed possible solutions for those problems.<sup>33</sup> The Seneca Falls Convention set up a precedent for future meetings advocating for women's rights and in the following years, there followed a series of campaigning to secure an equal position for women, including the struggle for them to get the right to vote. Nevertheless, according to McMillen, one of the biggest obstacles was to persuade women as such that they need to fight for their independence and equal rights and it was not until 1920 when the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified, securing the right to vote for all American women.<sup>34</sup>

One of the examples of the ongoing social reform was the emergence of the ideal of the New Woman. It was an ideal that emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in America especially in the last decades of the century, describing middle, upper-middle and upper-class women who dared to

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<sup>31</sup> Sally G. McMillen, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=TzVRIFXiYswC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

<sup>32</sup> McMillen, *Seneca Falls*, 24.

<sup>33</sup> McMillen, *Seneca Falls*, 4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*



challenge the traditional social and gender roles. The term New Woman, as Bordin explains, refers to women: “[...] who exercised control over their own lives be it personal, social or economic.”<sup>35</sup> The new women advocated for women’s rights, they indulged in professions which were traditionally perceived as male, and they often exchanged their domestic lives to pursue their intellectual ambitions. Marriage was an option, but women looked for relationships of mutual respect and as the era progressed, women advocated for more sexual liberty. These reformed women thrived for education and at the turn of the centuries, America was presented with one of the first generations of college educated women.<sup>36</sup>

One of the main concerns of the New Woman was the struggle for independence from their male counterparts and equal treatment in the face of the law. Being able to take up jobs, women were emancipated on the economic level and they frequently lived apart from their family and as Bordin states, the difference between the new women and the previous female social reformers was mainly in their responsibility for their own lives.<sup>37</sup> The New Woman simply challenged the traditional gender norms to advocate for equal treatment of both genders.

The Women’s Right Movement and the emergence of the New Woman were among other social changes that predetermined the rise of the feminist movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Morris, feminism can be interpreted as a political view targeting the mechanisms in society which cause gender inequality. Its main purpose is to target and change these mechanisms to stop the systematic social injustice towards women and the gender-oriented discrimination in general.<sup>38</sup>

### **1.5. Literary Context of the Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

As described in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, with the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery in 1865, the South had to assimilate to the northern model of economy, which also meant that 4 million former slaves were to ascend and make their newly claimed status into reality. Major urbanization was arguably one of the consequences of the transformation and certainly one of the effects of the Industrial Revolution, which predetermined the shift in economy

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<sup>35</sup> Ruth Bordin, *Alice Freeman Palmer: The Evolution of a New Woman* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 2,  
[https://books.google.cz/books?id=TDDsZc1g2JMC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=TDDsZc1g2JMC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>36</sup> Charlotte J. Rich, *Transcending the New Woman* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 1,  
<https://books.google.cz/books?id=x1VXXYs6P3gC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+new+woman&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwimi5K6voHhAhUSmrQKHfyHCYEQwUIWDAH#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

<sup>37</sup> Bordin, *Alice Freeman*, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Pam Morris, *Literatura a feminismus* (Brno: Host, 2000), 11.

from agriculture to heavy industry. The industrial production promised more job opportunities, which along with major immigration waves from abroad and the transportation revolution lead to a massive increase of population and further development of the cities.<sup>39</sup> With the increased population also came many social problems such as poverty and crime, the industry was heavily profit driven and business owners often exploited the workforce. These conditions were the everyday reality for the lower and middle classes and that was also projected into the themes of literature. The change of direction in literary movements was inevitable and the tendencies of literary romanticism were shortly substituted by those of realism. In the following chapters, there will be described the properties of realism and naturalism, which are further used in the latter part of the thesis.

## **Realism**

As suggested in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, realism is a tendency in writing which gives the reader an impression that the literary work is a recording of the actual way of life. The term can be described either as a literary method based on detailed description, or a tendency contrary to the approach of romantic fiction, which is highly subjective and implements idealization and escapist tendencies.<sup>40</sup> As Link suggests, the terms naturalism and realism were often used interchangeably, or even synonymously in the 19th century.<sup>41</sup> That is understandable, because these movements have a lot in common. Both realism and naturalism provide an objective image of reality, where realism aims to provide a precise reflection of the real world and the everyday life of an average person, while naturalism simultaneously offers a more exaggerated image of reality with emphasis on the external forces that influence the human character.

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<sup>39</sup> Richard H. Brodhead, "The American Literary Field, 1860-1890," in *The Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol. 3: Prose Writing, 1860-1920*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12, [https://books.google.cz/books?id=xyefIV\\_Q6XAC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=xyefIV_Q6XAC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>40</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 212, [http://armytage.net/pdsdata/%5BChris\\_Baldick%5D\\_The\\_Concise\\_Oxford\\_Dictionary\\_of\\_L\(BookFi.org\).pdf](http://armytage.net/pdsdata/%5BChris_Baldick%5D_The_Concise_Oxford_Dictionary_of_L(BookFi.org).pdf).

<sup>41</sup> Eric Carl Link, "Defining American Literary Naturalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*, ed. Keith Newlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 76.

## Naturalism

Literary naturalism emerged in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century France as a movement based on the doctrine set up by Émile Zola, as one of the forms of literary realism. As described in *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*, Zola set, in “*The experimental novel*”, the founding ideas of the movement – there he advocated for the incorporation of the scientific method into the novel, which would: “[...] be used as a scientific tool for the study of human documents.”<sup>42</sup> Hence, it can be stated that naturalists are also, as realists, interested in depicting the reality with attention to detail, but their main focus is to provide a believable representation of reality where the characters are influenced by the environment that surrounds them. Walcutt suggests that the main sources of inspiration for naturalists in the scientific field include the works of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, specifically the evolution theory and the ideas of Social Darwinism based on the doctrine of natural selection, which states that only the fittest are eligible for survival, either in the evolution process as such, or in the conditions dictated by the society itself.<sup>43</sup>

In any case, one of Zola’s main arguments, according to Link, was that the lives of naturalistic characters are not driven by free will, but rather by other forces that are beyond human control such as their ancestry and various environmentally or socially determined elements.<sup>44</sup> These factors surface in extreme conditions and critical situations to which the author, “the scientist”, guides the character. The characters often act according to factors which they cannot influence, following the deterministic approach of naturalism where free will is virtually non-existent and all future developments are based on: “the theory that everything that happens must happen as it does and could not have happened any other way”<sup>45</sup>, as defined in the *Cambridge Dictionary*. Link further suggests that when the experiment is created cautiously, with attention to scientific accuracy, the result will be a novel which should offer an outlook on the human nature, which is verifiable by and in accordance with the principles of everyday life.<sup>46</sup> According to Charles Child Walcutt, the

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<sup>42</sup> Link, “Defining,” 77.

<sup>43</sup> Charles Child Walcutt, *Jack London - American Writers 57: University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), 6.

<sup>44</sup> Link, “Defining,” 77.

<sup>45</sup> *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. “determinism,” accessed February 21, 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/determinism>.

<sup>46</sup> Link, “Defining,” 78.

main motives of naturalism include those of: “determinism, survival, violence and taboo.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, it can be concluded that major focus of naturalism is the character, the human nature and the often-abstract forces that influence it such as instincts and other natural desires, or in words of Frank Norris: “[...] the unplumbed depths of the human heart, and the mystery of sex, and the problems of life, and the black, unsearched penetralia of the soul of man.”<sup>48</sup>

To identify some of the authors who could be categorized as representatives of American literary naturalism, Link provides the names of Stephen Crane, Theodor Dreiser, Frank Norris and Jack London, but points out that it is a difficult task to strictly name representatives of American literary naturalism, simply because there are no specific guidelines and forms in which it occurs, but follows up by mentioning that the works of those representatives, nevertheless, resemble in the portrayal of human nature influenced by outside factors and their use of extreme environments as their setting, usually portraying human struggle.<sup>49</sup> As suggested above, one of the representatives of American literary naturalism was also Jack London and especially his early works from the Klondike are compatible with the typical themes of American literary naturalism.

## 2. Jack London

This chapter describes the early periods of Jack London’s life, it introduces the important people and major events of his life, which influenced his beliefs and inspired his works, it describes his earliest literary efforts and the beginnings of his literary career.

The author known as Jack London was born as John Griffith Chaney on January 12, 1876 in San Francisco to a local spiritualist and music teacher Flora Wellman. As London’s biographer Jeanne Reesman states, his life was off to a rough start since its very beginning as his father, William Henry Chaney, decided to leave the family, allegedly because Flora refused to have an abortion.<sup>50</sup> Flora was not fit to care for the baby physically nor mentally. She attempted suicide shortly after childbirth and was diagnosed as half-insane and emotionally unstable, so Jack found

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<sup>47</sup> Charles Child Walcutt, *American Literary Naturalism: A Divided Stream* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1939), 378, <https://archive.org/details/americanliterary00walc>.

<sup>48</sup> Frank Norris, *The Responsibilities of the Novelist and Other Literary Essays* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), 220, <https://archive.org/details/responsibilities00norruoft/page/220>.

<sup>49</sup> Link, “Defining,” 72-3.

<sup>50</sup> Jeanne Reesman, *Jack London's Racial Lives: A Critical Biography* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 23, [https://books.google.cz/books?id=fbrV\\_fwgcq4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=jack+london%27s+racia+lives&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwisvNCTupjhAhUOPVAKHc4\\_C-kQ6AEILDAA#v=onepage&q=jack%20london's%20racia%20lives&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=fbrV_fwgcq4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=jack+london%27s+racia+lives&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwisvNCTupjhAhUOPVAKHc4_C-kQ6AEILDAA#v=onepage&q=jack%20london's%20racia%20lives&f=false).

himself in the hands of their neighbors Virginia and Alonzo Prentiss. Earle Labor's biography claims that London embraced Virginia as his true maternal figure, because she showed him affection and love unlike his biological mother Flora, who was quite cold, detached and not eager to take part in the upbringing of the young boy.<sup>51</sup> His mother later married John London, who was: "[...] the tender, feeling person; his mother, hard-driving and masculine, disliked her son because she looked on him as her badge of shame, as the mark of her rejection by William Chaney."<sup>52</sup> The family was forced to move to Oakland and the conditions in the city were harsh. Jack had to contribute in the family's budget by taking up jobs at early age and turning in all the money he made to his mother. He describes this period as the end of his childhood.<sup>53</sup>

In *Letter to Houghton Mifflin and Co. (Oakland, Calif.), 1900 Jan. 31*, London describes his earliest contact with literature and states the importance of literature during his childhood, commenting on the harshness of said times: "Naturally, my reading early bred in me a desire to write, but my manner of life prevented me attempting it."<sup>54</sup> As his daughter, Joan London, comments on Jack's writing: "The dominant theme of all his writings was struggle – the struggle of an individual to survive in a hostile environment or to be successful against great odds."<sup>55</sup>, which, along with the facts stated above, provides a clear image of how his childhood might have influenced the themes of his writing.

London also describes that even despite his hard conditions, he would always find the time for reading.<sup>56</sup> At first, he found liking especially in the works of Washington Irving and Ouida (Maria Louise de la Ramée) such as *The Alhambra* and *Signa*. As Labor mentions, the latter had even greater impact on his life as it sparked up his ambitions and interest to venture beyond the borders of California to seek a better life.<sup>57</sup> Other authors who were of major significance in shaking London's beliefs include Herbert Spencer and his *First Principles* and Charles Darwin and his *Origin of the Species*, a copy of which he carried with him even during his stay in the Yukon and

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<sup>51</sup> Earle Labor, *Jack London: An American Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 10-11.

<sup>52</sup> Abraham Rothberg, "Land Dogs and Sea Wolves: A Jack London Dilemma," *The Massachusetts Review* 21, no. 3 (Fall 1980): 580.

<sup>53</sup> Alex Kershaw, *Jack London: A Life* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2013), 14.

<sup>54</sup> Jack London, *The Man behind the Legend: Memoirs, Autobiographical Novels & Essays of Jack London* (n.p.: Mosaic Books, 2017), 1852, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=HVIODwAAQBAJ&num=19>.

<sup>55</sup> Joan London, *Jack London and His Times: An Unconventional Biography* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1939), 378, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.475713>.

<sup>56</sup> Labor, *Jack London: An American Life*, 21-22.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

as Berkove argues, most scholars agree that Darwin and his evolution theory were indeed one of the substantial influences on London's writing.<sup>58</sup>

Jack would spend a lot of time in the bay area, where he would fish, hunt and sail small boats. During this period, he also turned to alcohol to escape the reality of everyday life: "I did not like the taste, so I drank for the sole purpose of getting drunk, of getting hopelessly, helplessly drunk."<sup>59</sup> He would often find himself in various establishments along the San Francisco and Oakland waterfronts. As Kershaw describes, it was there that he would listen to countless stories of seasoned, rugged men, who worked as whalers and sailors. He admired these men, was inspired by them and dreamt about living their adventurous and interesting lives.<sup>60</sup>

### **Jack London and the Gold Rush**

Nevertheless, a major development in London's both professional and personal life came with the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897, which later proved to be one of the most significant moments of his entire life. As his daughter and biographer Joan London states, Jack London was also, like many others, inclined to venture to the Klondike in search of fortune, but such journey required a substantial amount of money for equipment and other expenses, which Jack London at that time did not possess. He could not refuse such a tempting adventure and he decided that he must go. The support came from his sister's husband and on July 25, 1897 they were aboard the ship that would take them up North.<sup>61</sup> Jack London hardly even prospected gold in the Klondike, but the riches this endeavor brought him laid elsewhere because it was the: "[...] store of impressions of things heard and seen, which were to yield him a fortune during the succeeding years."<sup>62</sup> There he would get inspiration, but most importantly develop interest in one of the motives which occurred in many of his gold rush stories, as Joan London stresses out: "[...] it was the land itself that most deeply impressed him and man's not always successful struggle to exist in it."<sup>63</sup> He would listen to stories of men and the trail, which gave foundation to many of his stories. Jack had plans to stay in the

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<sup>58</sup> Lawrence I. Berkove, "Jack London and Evolution: From Spencer to Huxley," *American Literary Realism* 36, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 243.

<sup>59</sup> London, *The Man Behind*, 1246.

<sup>60</sup> Kershaw, *Jack London: A Life*, 16.

<sup>61</sup> London, *Jack London*, 140.

<sup>62</sup> London, *Jack London*, 142.

<sup>63</sup> London, *Jack London*, 148.

North at least until the summer of 1898, but he had to return given his health condition as he was affected by scurvy because of improper nourishment during winter.<sup>64</sup>

### **Jack London's Women**

According to Rothberg, writing fiction was one of London's coping mechanisms, which he used to come to terms both with the experience of his past and his present.<sup>65</sup> He used his writings to reflect on the problems he encountered during his life, and that also applied for the problems connected to his perception of women and how he wanted to be perceived as a writer. London, as many writers, thus projected the conflicts of his mental life into his heroes, for him personally the conflicts of being: "a 'man's man' and an 'effeminate writer.'"<sup>66</sup> Rothberg states that the roles of London's parents were, in a sense, interjected, because his mother was the masculine figure, while his father was the person to show him affection, which was also projected into London's fiction.<sup>67</sup> These influences, according to Rothberg, contributed into creating some form of repression, which caused London to both despise women, while lusting for them in the sexual sense.<sup>68</sup> Rothberg summarizes by pointing out that London's dislike of women and his arguments of female biological inferiority were fundamentally caused by London rejecting the feminine in himself, but also by him having known superior women and by him having been rejected by such women.<sup>69</sup> Jack London's attitude in portraying female characters is thus best summarized by Morris, who argues that male writers often project into their female characters their countless longings and fears, using the negative portrayal of females itself to advocate for their biological and social inferiority.<sup>70</sup>

However, Stasz confirms that London's perception of women was also influenced by the women he had encountered during his life – on one side there were middle-class women holding the traditional values of marriage and domesticity like his first wife, Bess Maddern, on the other side there were women like Charmian Kittredge, his second wife, who reflected the ideal of the New Woman.<sup>71</sup> His fiction thus, based on the above describes facts, can be interpreted as: "[...] an

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<sup>64</sup> London, *Jack London*, 150.

<sup>65</sup> Rothberg, "Land Dogs," 576.

<sup>66</sup> Rothberg, "Land Dogs," 578.

<sup>67</sup> Rothberg, "Land Dogs," 580.

<sup>68</sup> Rothberg, "Land Dogs," 577.

<sup>69</sup> Rothberg, "Land Dogs," 585.

<sup>70</sup> Morris, *Literatura a feminismus*, 48.

<sup>71</sup> Clarice Stasz, "Androgyny in the Novels of Jack London," *Western American Literature* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1976): 121.



attempt to resolve some of the cultural contradictions and ambiguities concerning gender behavior.”<sup>72</sup> For this reason, there will be, in the analytical part of the thesis, described London’s ambivalent approach on the gender related concerns depicted in his works.

### **3. Peter C. Brown**

Peter C. Brown is an American writer and a retired business consultant from Minnesota. His debut novel *The Fugitive Wife* was published in 2006. It is a historical novel, which takes place in the American Midwest in the 1880s and later in the gold rush-stricken Alaska, specifically in the city of Nome and the surrounding areas. Even though it is a work of fiction, the author manages to describe the historical events and the locations with their atmosphere brilliantly as he did an extensive amount of research prior to writing the novel.

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<sup>72</sup> Stasz, “Androgyny,” 122.

## Analysis of the Selected Works by Peter C. Brown and Jack London

### 4. Role of Female Characters

In the following chapters, there will be described the representation of women in the Alaska Gold Rush as depicted by both Peter C. Brown and Jack London contrasted with the social position of women in the 1900s, considering the beginnings of the Women's Rights and feminist movements. However, it is not the direct representation of women in the Gold Rush that this chapter is mostly concerned with, but rather the instances where Brown and London implement into their female characters the attributes of the New Woman, or on the other hand different attributes contrary to the ideal of the New Woman.

#### 4.1. Female Characters as Depicted by Peter C. Brown

Brown's depiction of female characters will be contrasted with readers' opinions as well as compared and analyzed considering stereotypical motives of literature depicting female characters as described by Pam Morris and Cynthia Griffin Wolff.

Whether a contemporary male author can provide an accurate portrayal of the gender equality questions from the perspective of a 1900s female character is one of the first questions that arises when discussing *The Fugitive Wife*. According to Morris, men can also identify and capture the social inequality among genders, even though they are not directly affected by them as women are.<sup>73</sup> However, female readers Stacey and Mary-Frances suggest it was rather obvious that the novel was written by a male author, because, as reader Stacey elaborates, Brown included a number of gratuitous sexual innuendos, just to create sexually arousing scenes<sup>74</sup>: "His hand went to her neck, her breasts, down the length of her to the end of her gown and the up inside it, feeling the down of her skin, the proudness of her breasts, and the tracing the line of her spine into the declivity of her buttocks, the soft heat inside of her thigh."<sup>75</sup>

Nevertheless, according to Segal, Brown managed to avoid any forms of stereotypes while retaining historical accuracy of Esther's thoughts and actions related to the questions of feminism and multiculturalism in the context of the 1900s, contrary to other historical novels which

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<sup>73</sup> Morris, *Literatura a feminismus*, 12.

<sup>74</sup> "The Fugitive Wife by Peter C. Brown," Reviews, goodreads.com, [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/83220.The\\_Fugitive\\_Wife#other\\_reviews](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/83220.The_Fugitive_Wife#other_reviews).

<sup>75</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 347.

frequently offer an inaccurate and anachronistic portrayal of these topics.<sup>76</sup> Reader Diane confirms Segal's claims regarding historical accuracy of people's behavior and adds that the presented image of the Gold Rush is a compelling reflection of a non-romanticized past.<sup>77</sup> For these reasons, it can be established that Brown managed to accurately describe the problems of a 1900s woman while implementing stereotypical, sexually-oriented imagery that slightly undermines the precision of a story told from a perspective of a 1900s female character.

The gender imbalance in the Gold Rush is noticeable in *The Fugitive Wife* since there are only two notable female characters in the chapters describing the Nome Gold Rush – Esther Crummey and her acquaintance Lena Walton, whose struggle with gender inequality is further complemented by discrimination based on her ethnicity and even though she is a college educated, upper class woman, her ethnicity is the factor which keeps her character from developing, from truly achieving the status of the New Woman. Reader Kayla Tornello suggests that Brown did not manage to develop other characters as much as he did Esther's, which might have, apart from Lena's ethnicity, caused that lack of emphasis on further development of her character in the novel.<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, Brown managed to incorporate the concept of the New Woman into the character of Esther Crummey, or rather illustrated the processes which shape her character towards that ideal. Using the composition of the novel, often switching between different timelines to expand on the descriptions of his main characters, Brown provides retrospective insights into Esther's past, commenting on the negative experience she had as a woman growing up in the American Midwest of the 1880s.

Esther grew up in a farm environment surrounded by men, whom she watched and compared herself to. She felt inclined to work as hard as the rest of the men to prove her equality, but even though she had worked hard, her father did not always acknowledge her efforts: "Words that struck like fists, knocked her breathless, and then dissolved her before him. Certain as she had been of earning his praise. Certain to have proved herself worthy alongside any man that threshed."<sup>79</sup> Esther's urge to compare herself, her abilities or her labor in general are a constant theme of the novel, but Brown illustrates that similar encounters had contrary effects on her motivation as she

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<sup>76</sup> Marta Segal, review of *The Fugitive Wife*, by Peter C. Brown, *Booklist*, 2006.

<sup>77</sup> "The Fugitive Wife by Peter C. Brown," Reviews, goodreads.com, [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/83220.The\\_Fugitive\\_Wife#other\\_reviews](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/83220.The_Fugitive_Wife#other_reviews).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 36.

stubbornly decides to work even harder to prove her physical and mental equality to the other gender.

Interpersonal and especially intersexual relationships are one of the major themes of the novel. These relationships are mostly illustrated on the relationship of Esther and her husband Leonard, but other male characters also have an important role in depicting Esther's social position and her experience with gender inequality during her stay in Alaska. Wolff suggests that relationships of female characters are stereotypically described only by their relation to male characters, while their relationships with other women and children are mostly diminished.<sup>80</sup> However, Brown managed to stay clear of that stereotype as he focused on depicting Esther's relationships with her son Gabriel and her female friend Lena Walton. Leonard, however, is the ultimate obstacle for the development of Esther's beliefs and thus it is essential to analyze their relationship and his character in greater detail.

Leonard is a man with a troubled past, a victim of child abuse who struggled for survival after having escaped to live on his own, often switching jobs and finding comfort in heavy drinking.<sup>81</sup> He is an embodiment of many vices and complexes, which are firmly implanted in his nature because of his traumatizing experience during his childhood. Leonard reflects these complexes into his behavior towards women, whom he sees as inferior and easily exploitable.

Leonard gets attracted to Esther and through a series of what at first appear to be coincidences, gains her trust. One day when she was working in the barn, Esther had cut her hand and Leonard came to help her.<sup>82</sup> His motives for helping her were dishonest from the beginning, as he later reflects on the incident: "As Leonard walked behind the plow, his mind turned over the problem of Esther. The accident had been a gift. Made her weak and needful."<sup>83</sup> Exploiting Esther's helplessness makes Leonard satisfied, he wants to experience the feelings of superiority over a woman again. To replicate the above described scenario, Leonard decides to release a snake in their kitchen. The snake ends up biting Esther into her breast when Leonard forces her to pet it.<sup>84</sup> Even though Leonard knows the snake does not have any poison, he offers to suck the poison out of

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<sup>80</sup> Cynthia Griffin Wolff, "A Mirror for Men: Stereotypes of Women in Literature," *The Massachusetts Review* 13, no. 1/2 (Winter – Spring 1972): 207.

<sup>81</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 133.

<sup>82</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 152.

<sup>83</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 155.

<sup>84</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 165.

Esther's wound, having achieved his goal: "I keep getting myself in trouble and owing you thanks, don't I?" 'Maybe I'm the trouble,' he said, knowing he was."<sup>85</sup>

Brown created through Leonard a character with twisted views who simultaneously upholds the traditional outlooks on marriage and the position of women in society. Through a series of unfortunate life decisions, Leonard complicates Esther's life – he is fundamentally the force that keeps Esther's progressive ideas from developing. Esther fails to discover Leonard's deceptive behavior and dishonest intentions at first, she admired his masculinity and because she perceived herself as a strong self-conscious woman, she wanted her companion to be equally strong: "Other women wanted a man to hold them down, but Esther did not. She wanted one that was as strong as she was."<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, Esther soon recognizes Leonard for whom he really is and his unstable, aggressive behavior along with the reoccurrence of his habitual drinking makes their marriage difficult.<sup>87</sup>

Esther wants to break free from the abusive marriage, but she cannot for when Leonard assures that she will bear his child, her fate suddenly becomes: "[...] determined by [her] womb"<sup>88</sup>. Brown incorporates a clear example of biological determinism, which Morris describes as one of the main reasons for the inequality of genders in society.<sup>89</sup> The presence of these stereotypical instances of motherhood in literature is described by Wolf as: "[...] a convenient plot device for eliminating extraneous young women."<sup>90</sup> Although Esther is the main character, her childbirth is used as a plot device for maintaining her submissive position to her husband. It is not thus used as a tool of rivalry among two women competing over one man, but rather as a tool used by her husband to subdue Esther's progressive ideas.

Nevertheless, when Leonard's carelessness results in the death of their child, Esther no longer has any obligations that would keep her from escaping their troubled marriage. She decides to leave Leonard and with her decision also occurs a major shift in Esther's character, moving from a woman holding traditional values to a self-sufficient, emancipated woman who explores new possibilities in the northern frontier. As Morris argues, female characters are usually depicted in a passive relation to the events influencing the plot, and the events which determine their fate simply

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<sup>85</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 166.

<sup>86</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 155.

<sup>87</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 186.

<sup>88</sup> Morris, *Literatura a feminismus*, 15. (author's translation)

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Wolff, "A Mirror," 206.

happen as a matter of coincidence.<sup>91</sup> Even though Esther ends up in the position of a horse wrangler for the Cape Nome Company headed to Alaska almost accidentally, after having resolved an incident in the Seattle docks, it was her own decision to leave her husband and head to Seattle in the first place, and for the first time in the novel her own actions truly determine her destiny.

When Esther arrives to Nome, she explores a completely new world, where she meets women unlike the ones from Minnesota. She encounters prostitutes, dancers, shopkeepers, but also miners and other emancipated businesswomen: “Two miners pushed past her, and as she tried to catch the drift of their talk the hair stood up on her neck; they were not men at all but women who had cut their hair and pulled on men’s trousers.”<sup>92</sup> Esther’s perspective suddenly changes and she soon starts to explore the opportunities of autonomy in the Gold Rush. Her initially described feelings of inferiority are substituted by feelings of freedom because:

People looked at her differently here. She felt like she had found a part of herself she’d always longed for but never knew how to get, and she didn’t know if it was being in Alaska that made her feel this way and it would disappear the minute she went to her sister’s, or if she was different for real and she could take it with her.<sup>93</sup>

In Nome, Esther’s autonomy is also described on the level of her financial self-reliance, which was quite an unusual attribute for women in the preceding decades as many of them were not even allowed to work, because it was the obligation of their husband to provide for the family while they stayed at home.<sup>94</sup> Reader Jules mentions that the most fascinating part of the novel was Esther’s success as a businesswoman.<sup>95</sup> Esther starts a successful business in Nome selling dogs after another woman gives her a tip that horses are not suitable for the Alaskan conditions, because they are too expensive to feed over the winter and they simply cannot compare to the qualities of dogs.<sup>96</sup> Esther grasps the opportunity and contacts a horse peddler Thurl with a proposition of a mutual business. She also starts delivering mail around the beaches of Nome for the US Post Office, securing her financial independence. Her income from these businesses yields more money than she has ever seen: “For the first time in her life she had some money, and for the first time it wasn’t

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<sup>91</sup> Morris, *Literatura a feminismus*, 46.

<sup>92</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 84.

<sup>93</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 285.

<sup>94</sup> McMillen, *Seneca Falls*, 4.

<sup>95</sup> “The Fugitive Wife by Peter C. Brown,” Reviews, goodreads.com, [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/83220.The\\_Fugitive\\_Wife#other\\_reviews](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/83220.The_Fugitive_Wife#other_reviews).

<sup>96</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 100.

money that she thought about, or her old life, or who she used to be.”<sup>97</sup> Her financial self-reliance thus also contributes in her transformation to an emancipated woman.

Esther becomes a self-sufficient, successful businesswoman and she is perceived as equal among her male companions who are often depicted as astonished by her capabilities, comparing her to the traditional, home-bound middle-class women they were accustomed to in the United States: “She was not in need of constant talk, nor shy of speaking her mind but had a naturalness uncommon to the women he had known.”<sup>98</sup> The conditions in the Alaskan community were different than those Esther had endured in Minnesota. In Nome, she found herself in a society where she does not feel socially or physically inferior, because her labor yields more profit than the gold prospecting business itself does to most of the male gold seekers around her and because she is treated equally by her male colleagues: “And when you talk, everybody will listen, because you don’t spout flowers, you talk like you have something to say.”<sup>99</sup>

Her reformed attitude also projects into her personal life, when she gets involved with a man who is the exact opposite of the tradition-bound, abusive Leonard. Esther’s colleague, foreman for the Cape Nome Company, Nate Deaton is a prototypical, sensitive and reasonable gentleman. Esther exchanges her life in an abusive relationship with a tradition-bound husband to form a relationship of mutual respect with Nate Deaton. Her transformation thus also occurs on the level of sexual freedom. However, Esther’s possessive husband travels to Alaska to find her but learns that she is with Nate’s baby. Leonard gets drunk and freezes in the outdoors of Alaska, but with him gone, Esther realizes the force that had driven her to reform is no longer there: “She had lived her life against him, steered by the force of him. Now he was nowhere, and she was adrift. Weightless as the ash he’d burned down to. Left without a thing to push against.”<sup>100</sup> However, Esther’s fate is again affected by biological determinism, when she gets pregnant with Nate Deaton. She decides to settle for a domestic life again, but her new relationship is that of mutual respect and equality, contrary to her previous relationship with Leonard.

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<sup>97</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 285.

<sup>98</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 262.

<sup>99</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 358.

<sup>100</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 403.



## 4.2. Female Characters as Depicted by Jack London

Firstly, as London's outlooks on the subject are of ambivalent nature, there will be presented instances from London's writings in which he reflects his negative attitude towards women. Secondly, there will be presented his contradictory attitude, where London implements, into his writings, the progressive ideas and the ideal of the New Woman.

### 4.2.1. The Negative Image of Women

One of the best examples of a female character that London portrays in a negative light is the character of Mercedes in London's novel *The Call of the Wild* (1903). London does not attribute her any heinous character traits, but the negative connotation the character possesses comes from her biological inferiority because she is depicted as an obstacle for her two male companions, or even as a burden on their journey in the Klondike. Not only because of her physical limitations, but also because of her feminine nature, her sentimentality and essentially because as Rothberg describes London's view on female inferiority: "[...] women make men capable of softness, tenderness and compassion"<sup>101</sup>, which is a statement that is ultimately reflected in the fate of Mercedes and her companions.

Buck and the other dogs on his sledge team got sold, because they were too exhausted and weak from the toil they have experienced on the trail in the preceding weeks.<sup>102</sup> To their misfortune, the sledge team was bought by a party of inexperienced pioneers, newcomers to the Klondike from the United States, who were: "[...] manifestly out of place, and why such as they should adventure the North is part of the mystery of things that passes understanding."<sup>103</sup>

The party was comprised of two men – Hal and Charles, and of one woman called Mercedes. Upon arriving back to their camp, London ironically comments though the eyes of Buck on the party and their effort to disassemble their tents, giving the reader the first hints of Mercedes's incompetence: "Mercedes continually fluttered in the way of her men and kept up an unbroken chattering of remonstrance and advice."<sup>104</sup> She ordered the men around, giving them useless advice on how to load their equipment on top of their sledge. The men were inexperienced, and they

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<sup>101</sup> Rothberg, "Land Dogs," 586.

<sup>102</sup> Jack London, *The Call of the Wild* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1903), 46, <https://www.ibiblio.org/ebooks/London/Call%20of%20Wild.pdf>.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> London, *The Call*, 47.

overburdened the sledge so the dogs could not pull it even when they were being whipped, but Mercedes showed compassion and advocated for better treatment of the dogs.<sup>105</sup> Onlookers gave them advice to get more dogs and to get rid of some of their belongings, however, that is when London expresses the mere essence of Mercedes's incompetence, because she goes into a sentimental tantrum:

Mercedes cried when her clothes-bags were dumped on the ground and article after article was thrown out. She cried in general, and she cried in particular over each discarded thing. She clasped hands about knees, rocking back and forth broken-heartedly. She averred she would not go an inch, not for a dozen Charleses. She appealed to everybody and to everything, finally wiping her eyes and proceeding to cast out even articles of apparel that were imperative necessities. And in her zeal, when she had finished with her own, she attacked the belongings of her men and went through them like a tornado.<sup>106</sup>

Jack London implemented into the character of Mercedes the stereotypical features of a sentimental woman, which are, according to Wolff, attributes that influence the reader into seeing the woman as being completely helpless, weak and most importantly the woman must be represented as utterly incompetent, seeking aid for the dilemmas that occur in her life from the men in her environment.<sup>107</sup> Additionally, Wolff argues that women are often depicted as "moral" by nature and that they, thus, behave on the basis of their emotions and not on other rationally motivated principles, which gives way to their feelings of compassion and empathy.<sup>108</sup>

A manifestation of the above described arguments occurs in *The Call of the Wild*, when the party gets on the trail from Salt Water to Dawson, after having already decreased the amount of their belongings to about a half. Mercedes's sentiment and compassion for the dogs influenced Hal into feeding the dogs more than they should have: "And to cap it all, when Mercedes, with tears in her pretty eyes and a quaver in her throat, could not cajole him into giving the dogs still more, she stole from the fish-sacks and fed them slyly."<sup>109</sup> Their supplies soon ran out as a result of her incompetence – their dogs were malnourished and tired from pulling the heavy sledge overburdened with Mercedes's unnecessary belongings and by them also having to carry Mercedes on top of their usual cargo, because she was physically unable to travel on foot:

It was her custom to be helpless. They complained. Upon which impeachment of what to her was her most essential sexprerogative, she made their lives unendurable. She no longer

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<sup>105</sup> London, *The Call*, 48.

<sup>106</sup> London, *The Call*, 49-50.

<sup>107</sup> Wolff, "A Mirror," 211.

<sup>108</sup> Wolff, "A Mirror," 210.

<sup>109</sup> London, *The Call*, 51.

considered the dogs, and because she was sore and tired, she persisted in riding on the sled. She was pretty and soft, but she weighed one hundred and twenty pounds—a lusty last straw to the load dragged by the weak and starving animals.<sup>110</sup>

Mercedes eventually retracts from her compassionate outlook on the poor animals, given her physical inability to keep up with the sledge on foot, and only becomes interested in her own comfort. Jack London foreshadows the fate of the party since they are introduced to the reader, following the deterministic approach and the theory of survival of the fittest. Mercedes, Charles and Hal are clearly not physically, nor mentally equipped for a journey into the wilderness, let alone for a journey on the trail in the Klondike and their incompetence naturally results in their deaths.

The way Jack London decided to illustrate these three individuals can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, as a direct criticism of the feminine sentimentality and his perception of women as beings spoiled by the society, unsuitable for independent life, or as Stasz interprets his views: “[that] females are generally made infant-like by society.”<sup>111</sup> Secondly, it can be generalized as a criticism of the inconsiderate, unprepared people whose behavior and incompetence in the wilderness eventually lead them to their destruction.

Similarly, in his collection of short stories depicting the Klondike Gold Rush, *The Son of the Wolf*, London makes a few remarks on the gender question. However, these instances are rather motivated by his early opinions on the racial inferiority of the native population than by the gender question itself. Berliner describes London’s attitude as the one of a “racial chauvinist”<sup>112</sup>, because as he describes, in London’s fiction, white men were illustrated as members of a superior race, because they had originated from the sturdy Anglo-Saxon stock.<sup>113</sup>

Women in *The Son of the Wolf* are thus depicted mostly as companions of these white Anglo-Saxon men, whom they serve and admire: “The woman threw off her gloom at this, and in her eyes welled up a great love for her white lord- the first white man she had ever seen- the first man whom she had known to treat a woman as something better than a mere animal or beast of burden.”<sup>114</sup> The man had to communicate with Ruth using sign language, but his affection and to her unknown

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<sup>110</sup> London, *The Call*, 53.

<sup>111</sup> Stasz, “Androgyny,” 132.

<sup>112</sup> Jonathan Berliner, “Jack London’s Socialistic Social Darwinism,” *American Literary Realism* 41, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 64.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Jack London, *The Son of the Wolf: Tales of the Far North* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company: 1900), 2, [http://pdfbooks.co.za/library/JACK\\_LONDON-THE\\_SON\\_OF\\_THE\\_WOLF.pdf](http://pdfbooks.co.za/library/JACK_LONDON-THE_SON_OF_THE_WOLF.pdf).

feelings of fair treatment: “[...] pleased her poor woman’s heart.”<sup>115</sup> Her male companion Mason was about to die, but Ruth willingly followed the orders of their third male companion and did not seem to struggle to advocate for Mason’s rescue even though she loved and admired him for: “[...] she had bowed, and seen all women bow, to the lords of creation, and it did not seem in the nature of things for woman to resist.”<sup>116</sup>

In “The White Silence”, there are depicted two contradictory approaches to the female character, because on one hand, Ruth is seen as biologically inferior and obedient as illustrated above, and on the other hand, even the prototypical white man of Anglo-Saxon stock Mason, voices his admiration for she had built her reputation over time:

I didn’t care so much for her then. It was more like she was pretty, and there was a smack of excitement about it, I think. But d’ye know, I’ve come to think a heap of her. She’s been a good wife to me, always at my shoulder in the pinch. And when it comes to trading, you know there isn’t her equal.<sup>117</sup>

Grace in “The Priestly Prerogative” from the same collection of short stories from the Klondike is portrayed as being somewhere in the middle between the image of the inferior woman and the ideal of the New Woman. She is not physically inferior, nor independent, but London implements her image rather to illustrate the social inferiority of women during the Gold Rush, because even though the woman did all the work, her husband got the credit and collected the reward, for: “In the Northwest Territory a married woman [could not] stake or record a creek, bench, or quartz claim; [...]”<sup>118</sup> London depicts her as physically superior to her husband as well, because:

[...] it was the man who followed in the rear, and the woman who broke trail in advance. Of course, if anybody hove in sight, the position was instantly reversed. Thus did his manhood remain virgin to the travelers who passed like ghosts on the silent trail. There are such men in this world.<sup>119</sup>

Her inferiority lies in her obedience to her husband and she is depicted as socially inferior, because she does resist being used by the means of her husband’s cowardly, exploitative nature and because the social standard of a married woman essentially prevents her from acting differently. Nevertheless, in his novel *A Daughter of the Snows*, Jack London created a completely different

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> London, *The Son*, 8-9.

<sup>117</sup> London, *The Son*, 6.

<sup>118</sup> London, *The Son*, 55.

<sup>119</sup> London, *The Son*, 52.

female character from the ones in *The Call of the Wild* and his short stories from *The Son of the Wolf*.

#### 4.2.2. The Positive Image of Women

London's character Frona Welse in *The Daughter of the Snows* is a clear example of the New Woman. Nevertheless, Frona herself does not identify as the New Woman, but rather as a reflection of the "new womanhood"<sup>120</sup>, because she is: "sincere; because [she] desire[s] to be natural, and honest, and true; and because [she] [is] consistent with [herself]."<sup>121</sup> In any case, Frona is a self-conscious, independent, educated woman, who was, as Stasz argues, a reflection of London's friend Anna Strunsky and her views on women's rights.<sup>122</sup> Her progressive behavior and opinions were quite shocking for some of the male characters she encountered for she was a woman, as one of the male characters Vance Corliss expresses: "[...] unrelated to all women he had met."<sup>123</sup> As might be expected, Frona also dresses accordingly to what the conditions of the Klondike might require, but simultaneously wears short skirts in milder conditions, which is quite radical compared to the typical women of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the prevalent Victorian fashion standards.

Her new womanhood is further reflected in her physical capabilities, her progressive ideas and the mere independence originating from these properties. According to Derrick, Frona's character simply carries masculine properties while violating the gender boundaries of that time period.<sup>124</sup> The violation of gender boundaries occurs on many levels as Frona indulges in activities which were perceived as a predominantly male, including sports for she: "can swing clubs, and box, and fence, [...] and swim, and make high dives, chin a bar twenty times, and--and walk on [her] hands."<sup>125</sup> She is depicted as capable of overcoming any physically demanding challenge, such as traveling over the Chilkoot Pass while the male characters around her perish in the process or end up severely injured.

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<sup>120</sup> Jack London, *A Daughter of the Snows* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1902), 123, <http://www.freeclassicebooks.com/London%20Jack/A%20Daughter%20of%20the%20Snows.pdf>.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Clarice Stasz, *Jack London's Women* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 63, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=uuMtEHq3Nu8C&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

<sup>123</sup> London, *A Daughter*, 80.

<sup>124</sup> Earle Labor, "Making a Heterosexual Man: Gender, Sexuality and Narrative in the Fiction of Jack London," in *Rereading Jack London*, ed. Leonard Cassuto, Jeanne Reesman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 110, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=7Fc6nj852y8C&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

<sup>125</sup> London, *A Daughter*, 123.

Therefore, London took a reverse approach in depicting her character as compared to Mercedes from *The Call of the Wild*, who is essentially the exact opposite of Frona – a manifestation of London’s disapproval with the previously described stereotypical image of socially and biologically inferior middle-class women, who were compared to her: “[...] pretty, helpless, well-rounded, stall-fatted little things, blissfully innocent and criminally ignorant. [...] not natural or strong [...].”<sup>126</sup> While Mercedes was depicted as a burden for her companions on the trail, Frona on the other hand was the one who helped others on multiple occasions in the story, demonstrating her physical and mental capabilities. Her supremacy is reflected in her condescending commentary when she meets a man unable to continue his journey to the goldfields:

This is no place for the weak of heart. You cannot work like a horse because you will not. Therefore the country has no use for you. The north wants strong men,--strong of soul, not body. The body does not count. So go back to the States. We do not want you here. If you come you will die [...].<sup>127</sup>

However, Stasz suggests her physical and mental capabilities were criticized as being unrealistic at the time of the novel’s publication but argues that rather the plot itself can be perceived as carrying unrealistic features and not the actual attributes of Frona’s character, because: “[...] other women of the day did match Frona’s accomplishments.”<sup>128</sup>

Nevertheless, even a clear manifestation of the New Woman such as Frona cannot maintain her supremacy over the male characters in London’s *A Daughter of the Snows* forever, because as Stasz argues, regardless of how superior London’s heroines initially are, they are never allowed to retain their superior position and they may be: “[...] equal to men, but no matter how talented, they are not to be above men [...]”.<sup>129</sup> Consequently, as Stasz states, even the very much independent Frona eventually accepts her future of living a domestic life of the previously criticized middle-class women.<sup>130</sup> In other words, London might have created a character resembling the New Woman, but he combined her depiction with a stereotypical theme of literature when the protagonist must decide between two suitors, which as Morris argues, can be perceived as a form of predeterminism because her fate is not ultimately determined by her own actions, but rather by her choice of the best husband.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> London, *A Daughter*, 123-4.

<sup>127</sup> London, *A Daughter*, 38-39.

<sup>128</sup> Stasz, “Androgyny,” 132.

<sup>129</sup> Stasz, “Androgyny,” 133.

<sup>130</sup> Stasz, “Androgyny,” 122.

<sup>131</sup> Morris, *Literatura a feminismus*, 47.

### 4.3. Comparison: Role of Female Characters

Jack London's Klondike fiction presents two contradictory images of women, while Brown's fiction creates an image of a socially inferior woman who eventually becomes emancipated. London's approach is best described by Stasz, who suggests that: "[He] is no feminist's dream, but he is a male chauvinist's nightmare."<sup>132</sup> because on one hand, London created female characters which are depicted as biologically and socially inferior but on the other hand; he also managed to create superior female characters. Frona Welse reflects the strong women in London's life and in some respects, her qualities and progressive ideas resemble the ideal of the New Woman. In any case, in the analyzed writings, London's female characters either are and remain inferior, or begin as superior and through convenient plot devices are subdued into being equal to men or under them, developing towards the criticized ideal of the domestic middle-class women. While Peter C. Brown's Esther Crummey initially does not correspond with the ideal of the New Woman, as she is depicted as socially inferior and obedient to her husband, when she undergoes a transformation in the rough mining frontier, her thoughts and actions eventually become compatible with the ideal of the New Woman. Esther becomes independent and the values she advocates for strictly defy the set social standards of a 1900s woman, even though that she, similarly to London's Frona, decides to settle for a domestic life in a new relationship of mutual respect and equality. London thus created entirely inferior women or entirely superior women, whose ideas eventually become regulated by her social position, while Brown depicted a woman who starts as a subdued, inferior woman and through her experience forms her emancipated opinions.

## 5. Role of Setting

To fully understand the differences between the different settings in the works of Jack London and Peter C. Brown, it is important to elaborate on the way the setting is depicted by both authors to portray the conditions of the Alaska Gold Rush. Furthermore, to provide some background, it is crucial to elaborate on the term *topos*. According to Hodrová, it is one of the foundations of poetics of place, because the *topoi* are a reoccurring and simultaneously changing conceptions of the characters or the literary setting.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Stasz, "Androgyny," 133.

<sup>133</sup> Daniela Hodrová, "Paměť a proměny míst," in *Poetika míst*, ed. Daniela Hodrová (Praha: H&H, 1997), 8.



The setting in *The Fugitive Wife* and London's Klondike short stories and novels correlates with a definition of a literary topos of wilderness, which is, as Hodrová explains, a commonplace distanced from the point of view of the author or his characters, based on its remoteness, time or the natural or social manners prevalent in that setting, which are substantially different from the social or natural manners of the original "homeland" of either the author, or his characters.<sup>134</sup>

In *The Fugitive Wife*, the contrast in literary settings is presented on the differences between a Minnesotan farm and Alaskan mining city Nome and, for example, in London's *The Call of the Wild*, these differences are similarly contrasted when the setting shifts from California to the Yukon Territory. Moreover, Hodrová suggests that wilderness can be also perceived as a commonplace that is located on the borders of the "civilized" world.<sup>135</sup>, which is particularly accurate when analyzing literary works that describe the Alaska Gold Rush, where representatives of the civilized world meet and struggle with primitive environment at the edge of the 1900s civilization itself.

Therefore, *The Fugitive Wife* and London's Klondike novels and short stories can be categorized as literature portraying "the descent into the wilderness", which is, as Hodrová explains, literature where the character's reason behind venturing into, or challenging the wilderness can be either motivated by exploring new worlds, colonization or by the conflict of the characters with civilization.<sup>136</sup> In the analyzed works, the motivation of the characters to journey into the Northland is mostly a combination of all the above described reasons. Nevertheless, the most frequent motivation to journey into the wilderness in the gold rush fiction is colonization, or rather its economic and social transformation because in that case, as Hodrová explains, the character's goal is to change or civilize the wilderness, to bring it closer to the ideal of a civilized environment the character comes from.<sup>137</sup> In both London's and Brown's Alaskan stories, the characters struggle with the unpleasant conditions of the barely settled and civilized mining frontier, however, the approach of both authors in depicting the reality of that mining frontier is different as described above and in the following chapters, there will be described how both London and Brown use the literary setting to convey their message, or complement different aspects of their writings.

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<sup>134</sup> Daniela Hodrová, *Místa s tajemstvím* (Praha: KLP – Koniasch Latin Press, 1994), 133.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Hodrová, *Místa s tajemstvím*, 133-4.

## 5.1. Role of Setting as Depicted by Jack London

London's interpretation of the natural environment in his Klondike writings is a clear manifestation of his naturalistic tendencies. As explained above, naturalists implement into their writings characters whose lives are greatly determined by forces beyond their control such as their ancestry, their social conditions or other environmentally driven forces.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, as London's daughter and biographer Joan London explains, the main motive of London's writings is: "[...] the struggle of an individual to survive in a hostile environment [...]"<sup>139</sup>, which is particularly true in his stories from the Klondike Gold Rush, where London uses the environment as an element defining the course of the plot and essentially as an obstacle the characters either overcome or not. According to Hodrová, the setting in a realistic novel is perceived as an image of a socially characterized environment, similarly to a naturalistic novel where this image is additionally extended by using the setting in function of a model.<sup>140</sup> London thus creates a literary model of the real world, where his characters are put into the literary setting of wilderness, where they struggle for survival or accomplishment with brutal environmental conditions.

Earle Labor distinguishes between four versions of wilderness London uses in his fiction. The one related to his Klondike stories is the White Silence, which Labor describes as: "[...] the vast, still wilderness of the Northland."<sup>141</sup>, where the: "[...] nature is cold, austere, and inviolable; [the] man, puny and insignificant."<sup>142</sup> London describes the White Silence as the moment when:

All movement ceases, the sky clears, the heavens are as brass; the slightest whisper seems sacrilege, and man becomes timid, affrighted at the sound of his own voice. Sole speck of life journeying across the ghostly waste of a dead world, he trembles at his audacity, realizes that his is a maggot's life, nothing more.<sup>143</sup>

The theme of human insignificance and biological inferiority appears across most of London's gold rush stories, where London uses the environment, which he often portrays as empty, vast and unpleasant to illustrate the characters as completely helpless and frightened by its greatness, emptiness and remoteness:

Everything in the Northland had that crushing effect—the absence of life and motion; the darkness; the infinite peace of the brooding land; the ghostly silence, which made the echo of

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<sup>138</sup> Link, "Defining," 77.

<sup>139</sup> London, *Jack London*, 29.

<sup>140</sup> Hodrová, "Paměť a proměny míst," 15-16.

<sup>141</sup> Earle Labor, "Jack London's Symbolic Wilderness: Four Versions," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 17, No. 2 (September 1962): 149.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> London, *The Son*, 3.

each heartbeat a sacrilege; the solemn forest which seemed to guard an awful, inexpressible something, which neither word nor thought could compass.<sup>144</sup>

In his short story “To Build a Fire” (1908), London implements the natural environment as a main element of the story. It could indeed be perceived as one of the characters, because as Raskin argues: “London’s wild is a physical entity embodied in the forest, the ice and the snow [...]”<sup>145</sup> London accordingly uses figurative language to complement the fact that his natural environment is a “living entity”. In his Klondike stories, he often uses personification, similes and metaphors to bring the “character” of his environment as close to animate beings as possible: “The White Silence, for the moment driven to the rimming forest, seemed ever crushing inward; the stars danced with great leaps, as is their wont in the time of the Great Cold; while the Spirits of the Pole trailed their robes of glory athwart the heavens.”<sup>146</sup>

In “To Build a Fire”, the main character decided to travel through land which: [...] was all pure white. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white.”<sup>147</sup> London sets the mood by describing the environment as vast and empty and through the description of the landscape hints that the character is against great odds: “There was no sun or promise of sun, although there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day. However, there seemed to be an indescribable darkness over the face of things. That was because the sun was absent from the sky.”<sup>148</sup> There the word “darkness” is used in a symbolic manner, to contrast the actual looks of the landscape with the prospect of the man’s success on the trail. The sentence essentially states that with the absence of sunlight, the temperature and thus the man’s probability of survival were going to be low. London presents a series of similar statements which point the reader towards the assumption that the main character is an inexperienced newcomer to the Klondike: “Fifty degrees below zero meant 80 degrees of frost. Such facts told him that it was cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to consider his weaknesses as a creature affected by temperature.”<sup>149</sup> As Berliner suggests, London’s approach of depicting landscape would be best described as environmental determinism, which is a theory that: “[holds] that one’s response to changing circumstances is the

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<sup>144</sup> London, *The Son*, 38.

<sup>145</sup> Jonah Raskin, “Calls of the Wild on the Page and Screen: From Jack London and Gary Snyder to Jon Krakauer and Sean Penn,” *American Literary Realism* 43, No.3 (Spring 2011): 201.

<sup>146</sup> London, *The Son*, 15.

<sup>147</sup> Jack London, “To Build a Fire,” *The Century Magazine* 76, No. 4 (August 1908): 64-65, [https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/to-build-a-fire.pdf](https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/to-build-a-fire.pdf).

<sup>148</sup> London, “To Build,” 64.

<sup>149</sup> London, “To Build,” 65.

marker of biological fitness.”<sup>150</sup> The man depicted in the story lacks basic knowledge needed for survival in the arctic and London foreshadows the plot by many accounts of the man’s incompetence, pointing towards the deterministic fate of the main character – his inevitable demise.

The man’s only companion is his dog, who serves as an agent for comparison of humans and other species. London demonstrates the biological inferiority of humans as compared to other species in terms of their inability to adapt to fierce natural conditions. Humans may be intelligent, but their knowledge relies on their experience, whereas the dog’s knowledge is only a reflection of its mere instincts:

The dog did not know anything about temperatures. Possibly in its brain there was no understanding of a condition of very cold, such as was in the man’s brain. But the animal sensed the danger. Its fear made it question eagerly every movement of the man as if expecting him to go into camp or to seek shelter somewhere and build a fire.<sup>151</sup>

The contrast between the dog and the man demonstrates London’s ironical environmental determinism because even though the man comes from a civilized environment and represents the most intelligent species on the planet, his dominance is meaningless once he faces unpleasant natural conditions the dog is biologically accustomed to. In other words, the man was evidently not biologically fit to survive in the wilderness. He perished because of his poor judgement, for in London’s wilderness, as Labor points out: “[...] those who are weak in physical or moral character do not survive.”<sup>152</sup>, whereas those who are able to adapt are typically allowed to survive.

On the other hand, in *The Call of the Wild*, where the story is told from a perspective of a dog Buck – a being biologically equipped for adaptation, London illustrates a successful environmentally predetermined transformation of the main character.

It is as early as in the opening paragraph of the novel, when the reader is introduced to the concept of the main character being a dog: “Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was brewing, not alone for himself, but for every tidewater dog, strong of muscle and with warm, long hair, from Puget Sound to San Diego.”<sup>153</sup> Buck unusually expresses his emotions and thoughts, which some of the critics understood as an unnatural interpretation of nature, specifically criticizing the alleged unnatural attribution of human properties to other species. Roosevelt, for example, argued that provided the authors who described nature truly

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<sup>150</sup> Berliner, “Jack London’s Socialistic,” 65.

<sup>151</sup> London, “To Build,” 66.

<sup>152</sup> Labor, “Jack London’s Symbolic,” 151.

<sup>153</sup> London, *The Call*, 5.

understood it, they would have never humanized animals in such an inaccurate and absurd manner.<sup>154</sup> The above described notion is called anthropomorphism, which is, according to the *Oxford Dictionary*, “the attribution of human characteristics or behaviour to a god, animal, or object”.<sup>155</sup> Nevertheless, Auerbach argues that Buck in *The Call of the Wild* cannot be categorized as an anthropomorphic character as he goes on to explain the claim by comparing *The Call of the Wild* with E. T. Seton’s dog stories, where Seton simply attributes his dog characters some human traits without elaborating on their mental processes.<sup>156</sup> Auerbach further suggests that the best possible way to categorize Buck’s role in *The Call of the Wild* would be as an example of allegory, which is carefully woven into the story, giving the reader the option: “[...] to imagine London’s hero as a dog despite all his complex mental attributes.”<sup>157</sup> Therefore, it is possible for the reader to empathize with Buck because he is essentially depicted as a human character, even though his physical form is that of a dog.

For this reason, it is possible to compare Buck’s adaptation to the natural environment in *The Call of the Wild* with the man’s inability to adapt in “To Build a Fire”. The literary setting of arctic wilderness is likewise a key component in *The Call of the Wild*, because: “[...] it brings out the deepest racial passions in both man and the beast.”<sup>158</sup> When Buck is kidnapped and sold to work as a sledge dog in the Gold Rush, the mild Californian weather and good living conditions he is accustomed to are exchanged for the ruthless conditions among savage dogs in the harsh arctic climate: “He had been suddenly jerked from the heart of civilization and flung into the heart of things primordial.”<sup>159</sup>

Consequently, Buck through his experience with the rough nature, by observing others and by his ancestral knowledge that has awoken because of him being placed in the primitive environment, adapts to the new conditions: “He lay down on the snow and attempted to sleep, but the frost soon drove him shivering to his feet. Miserable and disconsolate, he wandered about among the many tents, only to find the one place was as cold as another.”<sup>160</sup> Buck eventually finds that the other

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<sup>154</sup> Jonathan Auerbach, “Congested Mails: Buck and Jack’s Call,” *American Literature* 67, No. 1 (March 1995): 51.

<sup>155</sup> Oxford Dictionaries, s.v. “anthropomorphism,” accessed March 8, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/anthropomorphism>.

<sup>156</sup> Auerbach, “Congested Mails,” 55.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Berliner, “Jack London’s Socialistic,” 66.

<sup>159</sup> London, *The Call*, 15.

<sup>160</sup> London, *The Call*, 18.

dogs dig holes in the snow where they hide from the cold and he adjusts his habits to theirs: “He was fit, that was all, and unconsciously he accommodated himself to the new mode of life.”<sup>161</sup>

His body soon underwent physical and mental transformations, making him able to endure the arctic conditions, because, as Labor suggests, in London’s wilderness: “Those who survive are made better because of their adaptation to its laws [...]”<sup>162</sup> Buck did not learn only by experience, but also because of his biological superiority to humans his: “[...] instincts long dead became alive again. The domesticated generations fell from him. In vague ways he remembered back to the youth of the breed, to the time the wild dogs ranged in packs through the primeval forest and killed their meat as they ran it down.”<sup>163</sup> As Benoit argues, Buck represents the American spirit of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – a response to the changing conditions and industrialization because Buck’s story fundamentally represents: “[the] ritual enactment of the American wish to turn back to simplicity.”<sup>164</sup>

## 5.2. Role of Setting as Depicted by Peter C. Brown

Peter C. Brown uses the setting in *The Fugitive Wife* mostly to complement the historical accuracy of the novel. He often includes detailed descriptions of the historical events, important people or he thoroughly describes the mining equipment and the mining procedures:

‘This is the coastal area of Nome. The ore is in these creeks, here. The fact has been known for two years, although the richness of the deposits was news last year, and the creeks and streams have been rapidly staked. The ore is also in the beach sands, as you and I have read. I believe the stampede came out last fall with something like two million dollars dug from the beach, no deeper than a foot or two.’<sup>165</sup>

Reader Lori states that Brown’s portrayal of the literary setting was not made particularly appealing to the readers but suggests the interesting aspect of the literary setting was the contrast created between the initially described Midwest and Alaska in the latter part of the novel.<sup>166</sup> Even though Brown’s approach in portraying the setting and the gold mining processes is mostly technical, relying on extremely detailed, realistic description without using much figurative language and symbolism, the shift in the literary setting itself can be, according to Alice Logsdon, perceived:

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<sup>161</sup> London, *The Call*, 21.

<sup>162</sup> Labor, “Jack London’s Symbolic,” 151.

<sup>163</sup> London, *The Call*, 21.

<sup>164</sup> Raymond Benoit, “Jack London’s ‘The Call of the Wild,’” *American Quarterly* 20, No. 2 (Summer 1968): 246.

<sup>165</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 262.

<sup>166</sup> “The Fugitive Wife by Peter C. Brown,” Reviews, goodreads.com, [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/83220.The\\_Fugitive\\_Wife#other\\_reviews](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/83220.The_Fugitive_Wife#other_reviews).

“[...] as a metaphor, contrasting the fertile emptiness of Minnesota with the exotic wildness of Alaska, a reflection of Essie’s journey from tradition-bound female to independent woman.”<sup>167</sup> The change in setting significantly alters the main character, because as Hodrová argues: “The literary commonplace in great extent determines the character [...]”<sup>168</sup>

Alaska is depicted as a place of opportunity; however, the literary setting is in no way portrayed in a romanticized or sentimental fashion, it is still described as a vast and unpleasant environment with many faults:

Alaska was something to see but no place an ordinary person could afford. Nor had she found anything in these past hours that she liked or approved of. Nor did that signify. Wasn’t to like or dislike; sole purpose was a place a person came to get rich so you could afford to go back to live what kind of a life you could not see clear to getting otherwise. Wasn’t anybody here for any other reason.<sup>169</sup>

Hunt describes the coast surrounding the beaches of Nome as flat and monotonous, however the conditions there are harsh because: “In winter, snow blizzards slash the land; in all seasons searing storms rage in from the sea.”<sup>170</sup> Hunt’s explanation confirms Esther’s reflection on the conditions in Nome, he describes that in winter, there is nothing but a snow desert around, and in summer, the tundra similarly turns into a hostile quagmire.<sup>171</sup>

Consequently, the change in setting from Minnesota to Alaska is what Hodrová explains as a traditional feature of literature about “the descent into the wilderness”<sup>172</sup>. The mild climate and bearable living conditions in the American Midwest are substituted by the extreme arctic winter and uneasy living conditions in Nome, Alaska where: “The snow was shoveled from the boardwalks into the streets, the streets rising on the snowpack so you had to look up to see the occasional passing dog team or horse and sleigh. The cold and dark steered over Nome like affliction.”<sup>173</sup>

Nome is described as an overcrowded place, which from a distance resembles: “[...] a jumble of white rectangles spilled down the coast like cubed sugar, crawling with life.”<sup>174</sup> However, upon further description of the city, Brown suggests that the reality of living on the beaches of Nome is

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<sup>167</sup> Peter C. Brown, “The Fugitive Wife,” review of *The Fugitive Wife*, by Alice Logsdon, *Historical Novel Society*, August 2006.

<sup>168</sup> Hodrová, “Paměť a proměny míst,” 18.

<sup>169</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 88.

<sup>170</sup> Hunt, *North of 53°*, 95.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> Hodrová, *Místa s tajemstvím*, 133.

<sup>173</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 405.

<sup>174</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 80.

quite different because it is a dirty, overcrowded place, where living is further complicated by adverse weather conditions:

The wind blew in from the sea, driving its dampness deep into the tents and bedding and forcing the men to stoke their stoves to beat back the moisture. On days that the weather swung around to the north and blew down out of the Kougarok, spilling the arctic chill over the lip of the tundra, the camp swirled with eddy currents of grit and smoke. The coal stoves balked and puffed from every joint, and the fires heated poorly. The soot burned their eyes and the backs of their throats and they roused out testily and set about their work with headaches and the sensation of oncoming colds.<sup>175</sup>

As suggested above, Brown puts the most emphasis into describing Nome as overcrowded. The Alaskan part of the novel begins in summer of 1900, almost 2 years after the first discoveries of gold in the sands on the beaches of Nome. Brown metaphorically describes the setting as follows: “The beach was a dog’s tail overrun by fleas. Where one man dumped his slop into a hole, the next man cursed to find he’d dug it up and sluiced it through his rocker.”<sup>176</sup> There Brown also illustrates the situation of many stampeders who did not discovery any gold during their Alaskan endeavor, which is fundamentally also what happens to the expedition of the Cape Nome Company portrayed in *The Fugitive Wife*:

Nate and Donaldson shoveled up the little deltas and dumped them into the top of the box, and then reset the riffles. Sunderhauf had filled a reservoir at the top with water, and now he released a trickle and Nate stirred the dirt to settle any gold against the riffles while the sand and gravel washed out. There was none.<sup>177</sup>

As reader Bobbi suggests, the novel could be perceived as a record of how few prospectors, in fact, found any gold.<sup>178</sup> Nevertheless, in the above presented example, there is also apparent that Brown’s descriptions of essentially trivial processes are unnecessarily complicated. Reader Kayla Tornello suggests that these details were fundamentally what created a fascinating image of the Gold Rush in literary fiction, however, Reader’s Sharman, Amy and Diane share the opinion that these overly detailed descriptions were disturbing and often interfering with the reader’s experience.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 231.

<sup>176</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 241.

<sup>177</sup> Brown, *The Fugitive Wife*, 271.

<sup>178</sup> “The Fugitive Wife by Peter C. Brown,” Reviews, goodreads.com, [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/83220.The\\_Fugitive\\_Wife#other\\_reviews](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/83220.The_Fugitive_Wife#other_reviews).

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.



### 5.3. Comparison: Role of Setting

Jack London's setting in his Klondike fiction typically functions as one of the active "characters" of the story, or at least as one of the elements which directly influence the characters' fate and thus the course of the plot itself. The wilderness is depicted as cruel and ruthless, there humans are unimportant, and their wellbeing is disregarded. They either adapt to the new mode of life and the rules of the wilderness, or they die because they are not biologically fit to survive in the new environment. When they survive, their moral and physical sides are improved. On the other hand, Peter C. Brown's wilderness is relatively tame compared to London's. Brown relies on historical and factual accuracy; however, his interpretation of the Alaska Gold Rush does not present a romanticized image of the event. Brown likewise captures the ruthlessness of the mining frontier but in his interpretation, it only complements the element of preciseness a historical novel should provide. London does not pay much attention to thorough description of the mining processes and other historically meaningful events of the Gold Rush, nevertheless both authors provide an interesting outlook on the topic for Jack London creates fierce natural environments inspired by his firsthand experience, while Peter C. Brown utilizes his elaborate research to create an equally captivating image of the Alaska Gold Rush.

Furthermore, according to Hodrová, wilderness as a literary topos can be interpreted in analogy to traditional literary settings of paradise and hell. In case of the former, the author allows the characters to experience direct primitive relationships in the wilderness and in case of the latter, the environment is depicted as barbaric, hostile, and primitive.<sup>180</sup> For this reason, Jack London's naturalistic depiction of the literary landscape in his Klondike fiction can be perceived as analogical to the traditional hostile environment of hell. London places his characters into unpleasant, primitive environments where they struggle for survival. On the contrary, Brown's literary setting correlates with the traditional setting of paradise because it essentially represents Esther journey into the wilderness, which allows her to gain independence and develop her progressive ideas. It is there where she experiences primitive relationships and thus defies the female social standards of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the environment fundamentally changes her character, similarly to London's wilderness, however, she becomes reformed like Buck in *The Call of the Wild*.

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<sup>180</sup> Hodrová, *Místa s tajemstvím*, 133.

Moreover, Hodrová claims that literary settings have a metaphorical character.<sup>181</sup> In case of London's *The Call of the Wild*, Auerbach compares his portrayal of the literary setting to London's own struggle for success and his struggle for being recognized as a writer.<sup>182</sup> In case of Brown's *The Fugitive Wife*, the literary setting itself can be perceived as metaphorical to the transformation of the heroine as described above.

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<sup>181</sup> Hodrová, "Paměť a proměny míst," 15.

<sup>182</sup> Auerbach, "Congested Mails," 53.

## 6. Conclusion

This bachelor thesis focused on the literary interpretation of the Alaska Gold Rush from a perspective of two authors whose works were published more than a century apart from each other. The basis for analysis of the literary works by Jack London and Peter C. Brown was their depiction of female characters and the way they have implemented the literary setting. The thesis aimed to discover the differences between the works of one of the most critically acclaimed authors in American history and a contemporary author whose work has not yet been analyzed in academic papers.

Women faced discrimination in many spheres of the public life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nevertheless, the 19<sup>th</sup> century also marked one of the first efforts to create a society of equal rights for both men and women. After the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, a series of protests advocating for social reforms occurred and with it also, at the turn of the centuries, emerged the ideal of the New Woman, which was also accordingly projected into the contemporary literature of that age. The analysis of London's and Brown's points of view on the Alaska Gold Rush thus provided an interesting insight on the question of gender equality at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when one of the first outcomes of the rising Women's Rights Movement could be observed on the ideal of the New Woman.

In his Klondike fiction, Jack London presents both the image of the middle-class woman holding traditional values and the newly established ideal of the New Woman. On one hand, London advocates for female biological inferiority through characters like Mercedes from *The Call of the Wild*, who is sentimental, physically inferior and "spoiled by the society". On the other hand, he presents the New Woman through his Anglo-Saxon superwoman Frona Welse in his novel *A Daughter of the Snows*, whom he describes as a physically capable woman with progressive ideas. However, his motivation in depicting ambivalent female characters was mostly of personal nature, affected by his opinions and the women he had personally met. Moreover, this thesis merely covers the earliest periods of London's literary career and the images of women in his latter works greatly differ from the ones analyzed in this thesis.

Peter C. Brown took a different approach in depicting his heroine. Even though Esther Crummey in *The Fugitive Wife* is initially described as socially inferior, she eventually achieves some form of emancipation and self-sufficiency brought upon by her rebelling and escaping her

abusive marriage to participate in a voyage to Alaska, where she discovers economic, sexual and fundamentally personal freedom.

However, the initially anticipated differences between London's and Brown's portrayal of female characters in their writings, based on the time difference of their publication, were minimal as Brown's novel *The Fugitive Wife* mainly aimed for historical accuracy, presenting similar, historically influenced accounts of female characters to London's, nevertheless, without projecting Brown's personal experience and agenda and according to readers' reception also a non-stereotypical image of a 1900s woman and her problems tied to the unequal position of genders in society. Both authors thus created female characters according to the standards of the 1900s society, who were portrayed as inferior, rarely allowed to gain equal social position to men, but certainly not yet allowed to achieve complete gender equality.

Peter C. Brown's aim in *The Fugitive Wife* is to create a captivating story, which is simultaneously enveloped in a historically accurate depiction of the Nome stampede, focusing on accurate description of the mining processes and the local community in Nome, while London's Klondike stories were fundamentally created to provide a shocking and fascinating insights into the Klondike stampede for 1900s contemporary readers back in the United States. Writing became London's main income after having returned from the Klondike, his motivation to write was therefore influenced by his vision of profit. London thus used his literary setting to create a thrilling atmosphere while depicting the hardships people had to endure in the Klondike, creating stories of adventure and human struggle, into which he implemented his naturalistic symbolism and themes.

To conclude, the setting is fundamentally what makes London's stories appealing, contrary to Brown's overly precise descriptions, which were, based on the analyzed readers' opinions mostly perceived as overdone and thus disruptive. However, both authors use the setting as means that in one or another way alter the characters through their either successful, or unsuccessful adaptation to the new mode of life in the wilderness.

## Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývala zejména rozdíly mezi vyobrazením ženských postav a prostředí v dílech Jacka Londona z období zlaté horečky na Aljašce a v historickém románu *The Fugitive Wife* současného autora Petera C. Browna.

Jack London je jedním z nejproslulejších autorů v historii americké literatury. Peter C. Brown je na druhou stranu poměrně neznámým současným autorem, který se ve svém románu *The Fugitive Wife* rovněž zabývá problematikou zlaté horečky na Aljašce. Porovnání díla autora, který osobně zažil události zlaté horečky na Aljašce a bezprostředně je také reflektoval do své tvorby s dílem současného autora, který s touto problematikou nemá osobní zkušenosti, poskytuje dobrý základ pro analýzu už jen díky časovému rozdílu mezi publikací děl jednotlivých autorů. Dalším faktorem pro výběr těchto autorů pro analýzu bylo, že v roli hlavní postavy historického románu Petera C. Browna se objevuje žena, na rozdíl od Londonovy tvorby vyobrazující zlatou horečku, kde se silné ženské postavy vyskytují pouze zřídka.

V průběhu 19. a na počátku 20. století se v Americe odehrálo mnoho změn, ať už v oblastech vědy, kultury nebo společenských reforem. Jednou z nejvýznamnějších změn bylo také stále se rozšiřující území Spojených států, jelikož pohraniční území oddělující „civilizovanou“ část kontinentu s neprobádaným územím směrem na západ bylo již od počátku kolonizace kontinentu podmětem pro další expanzi. V posledních dekádách 19. století byla západní část kontinentu již osídlena, ale další podnět pro expanzi amerického území přišel v roce 1867 se zakoupením Aljašky, které se projevilo býti další příležitostí následovat doktrínu Manifest Destiny.

Na Aljašce bylo objeveno zlato již v 50. letech 19. století, ale největší rozmach tento fenomén zaznamenal v 90. letech 19. a na počátku 20. století po objevení bohatých ložisek zlata v oblasti okolo řeky Yukon skupinou složenou z prospektorů George Carmacka, Skookum Jima a Tagish Charlieho, kteří objevili zlato v oblasti Králičího potoka v létě roku 1896. Zprávy o jejich úspěchu se rychle dostaly do okolních těžařských komunit a do USA a předznamenaly tak začátek zlaté horečky, která propukla v roce 1897. Cesta za bohatstvím přilákala mnoho lidí, ale pro velkou část z nich se již samotná cesta stala příliš náročnou. Těžké podmínky v kombinaci s rozčarováním z neúspěchu přiměly velikou část těžařů k návratu do USA. Na přelomu století bylo zlato objeveno i na plážích Aljašky, kde v následujících letech vyrostlo město Nome a propukla tak další fáze zlaté horečky, která trvala přibližně do roku 1909.

Jednou ze změn ve společnosti byl počátek boje žen za rovnoprávnost mezi pohlavími. V průběhu 19. a na počátku 20. století měly ženy a muži stále nerovnoprávné společenské postavení, jelikož role mužů většinou byla rolí živitele rodiny, který pracoval a poskytoval tak prostředky pro chod rodiny, zatímco ženy se staraly o děti a domácnost a neměly tak možnost se vzdělávat, nebo se jinak účastnit společenského či politického života. Největší změny se začaly projevovat po sjezdu aktivistů v Seneca Falls v roce 1848, kde se sešli podporovatelé rovnoprávnosti mezi pohlavími a předznamenali tak vznik hnutí bojujících za rovnoprávnost žen. Jedním z výsledků těchto reforem bylo také zrození ideálu reformované ženy na konci 19. století. Jednalo se většinou o ženy ze střední nebo vyšší třídy, které měly kontrolu nad svým osobním životem, účastnily se aktivit, které byly do té doby striktně privilegiem mužů jako například sport, kariéra, univerzitní vzdělání, ale jejich hlavním záměrem byla přednostně rovnoprávnost v očích zákona a samostatnost od mužů.

I ženy se účastnily zlaté horečky na Aljašce, i když jejich počty nebyly nijak markantní. Situace ve většině těžařských měst byla taková, že 90 % populace tvořili muži, i když se našly i výjimky jako město Sitka, kde 43 % z celkové populace tvořily ženy. Ženy se živily jako služebnice, učitelky, prodavačky, ale i jako zpěvačky, tanečnice, či prostitutky. Velká část z nich pak pouze doprovázela jejich manžely na cestě za bohatstvím a úplné minimum z nich se vydalo na Aljašku těžít zlato.

Vyobrazením žen a jejich rolí v těchto dílech zachycujících zlatou horečku na Aljašce se také zabývala první kapitola analytické části této bakalářské práce. Nejprve bylo poukázáno na přístup Jacka Londa, který ve své literatuře z období zlaté horečky na Aljašce poskytuje dva různé pohledy na ženské postavy. Londonův pohled na otázku genderové rovnosti byl z velké části ovlivněn jeho dětstvím a jeho osobními zkušenostmi s ženami, ale také stereotypním obrazem tradiční ženy střední třídy 19. století. Role Londonových rodičů byly v určitém smyslu prohozeny, jelikož jeho otec byl osobou, která mu projevovala náklonnost, přičemž jeho matka Flora byla k Jackovi odtažitá a chladná. Jak již bylo zmíněno, ke konci se 19. století se začaly ve společnosti objevovat ženy, které prahly po rovnosti pohlaví, vzdělání a osobní svobodě. I Jack London ve svém životě narazil na tyto ženy, jednou z nich byla třeba jeho druhá manželka Charmian Kittredge nebo jeho přítelkyně Anna Strunsky. Tyto skutečnosti byly reflektovány v jeho literatuře, kde na jedné straně stál obraz ženy, která byla typickým příkladem ženy střední třídy, kterou London vyobrazoval jako rozmazlenou společností, neschopnou a biologicky méněcennou. Příkladem této

ženy může být například jeho vyobrazení postavy jménem Mercedes v jeho románu *Volání divočiny* (1903). Mercedes je sentimentální žena, která je vnímána jako překážka jejich mužských společníků na jejich cestě za úspěchem. Její přítomnost nakonec také přispěje k nezdaru, a nakonec také ke smrti všech členů výpravy. Právým opakem této postavy je pak například Frona z Londonova románu *Dcera sněhu* (1902), která přímo odráží ideál reformované, univerzitně vzdělané ženy, která je také vyobrazena jako fyzicky zdatná. Peter C. Brown pojal vyobrazení jeho hrdinky poněkud jinak, jelikož Esther v historickém románu *The Fugitive Wife* (2006) začíná jako utlačovaná žena na americkém středozápadě. Její postava se v průběhu románu ale změní a přiblíží se tak ideálu reformované ženy, která je ekonomicky nezávislá, uznává osobní a sexuální svobodu, čímž narušuje sociální normy, kterými se ženy řídily ke konci 20. století. Oba autoři tedy vyobrazují ženy různých sociálních postavení, avšak dílo Jacka Londona i Petera C. Browna sdílí atribut, který udává, že žena může být vyobrazena jako společensky podřadná, či rovná mužům, ale nikdy ne vyobrazena jako dlouhodobě nadřazená a plně emancipovaná. Původně předpokládaná rozdílnost vyobrazení ženských postav založená na časovém rozdílu publikace analyzovaných děl se tedy neprokázala být nijak markantní, jelikož cílem Petera C. Browna bylo zachytit tuto problematiku s historickou přesností, a tak se některé motivy a atributy jeho ženských postav shodují s literaturou Jacka Londona, která reflektuje určité sociální normy a stereotypy spojené s postavením žen ve společnosti na počátku 20. století.

Společenské, kulturní a teritoriální změny se promítly i do literárních směrů. S příchodem industrializace a nárůstem počtu obyvatel měst v důsledku zvýšené migrace do USA, průmyslové revoluce, zrušením otroctví v roce 1865 a s ním spojeným přechodem z modelu agrární ekonomiky na těžký průmysl se v literatuře již přestaly objevovat motivy romantismu a jeho subjektivita, idealizace přírody a života na venkově. Začala se objevovat literatura realistická, která zachycovala život takový, jaký opravdu je, objektivně a bez idealizace. Naturalismus se objevil jako extrémní forma realismu, přičemž naturalistická literatura rovněž zachycuje realitu, ale především s ohledem na vnější jevy, nad kterými daná postava nemá moc a které přímo ovlivňují její život, jako například různé environmentální a společenské vlivy. Oporou těchto naturalistických tendencí v literatuře jsou vědecké poznatky z konce 19. století jako například evoluční teorie Charlese Darwina a teorie sociálního darwinismu Herberta Spencera. Hlavními představiteli amerického literárního naturalismu jsou autoři jako Stephen Crane, Theodor Dreiser, Frank Norris a Jack London, jejichž

literaturu spojuje především motiv užití extrémních environmentálních podmínek a následné vyobrazení boje charakterů s těmito nelítostnými podmínkami.

Literární prostředí je jedním z prostředků, kteří naturalisté používají jako jeden z vnějších faktorů, který je mimo kontrolu postav a přímo tak ovlivňuje jejich život. Druhá část analytické části této bakalářské práce se zabývala právě tím, jak jednotliví autoři v jejich dílech využívají literární prostředí. Jack London do své literatury promítá jeho naturalistické tendence a prostředí jako takové je jedním z nejdůležitějších prvků jeho děl. Často by se dalo popsat jako jeden z hlavních elementů, který nějakým způsobem ovlivňuje život Londonových postav. Především v jeho literatuře zachycující zlatou horečku na Klondiku je pak prostředí popsáno jako nehostinné a kruté, v arktickém klimatu jsou lidé vyobrazeni jako podřadní a nepodstatní. Právě toto nehostinné prostředí pak testuje postavy, které se buď přizpůsobí a tím, ať už po morální či fyzické stránce, nějakým způsobem zlepší, nebo se přizpůsobit nedokážou a tím pádem zahynou. Brownovo vyobrazení tohoto prostředí není ani zdaleka tak radikální jako Londonovo, ale i Brown vyobrazuje Aljašku jako nehostinnou a v žádném případě ji neidealizuje. Společně s pestrým popisem krajiny a podmínek života v těžařské komunitě města Nome pak poskytuje věrný obraz tohoto prostředí a doby. Nicméně i Brownovo prostředí má určitý vliv na jeho hlavní postavu, jelikož právě díky změně prostředí se hrdinka románu *The Fugitive Wife* stává samostatnou a její přizpůsobení k těmto novým životním podmínkám její charakter vylepší, podobně jako v případě postav Jacka Londona, které se úspěšně přizpůsobí nelehkým podmínkám v novém prostředí. Hlavní motivací Jacka Londona pro psaní těchto příběhů z období zlaté horečky byla vidina zisku, přičemž Peter C. Brown se snažil zachytit tuto dobu s ohledem na historickou přesnost. Prostor Jacka Londona tak mělo tehdejší čtenáře pohltnout a jeho surovost šokovat, přičemž Peter C. Brown spíše pouze poskytuje detailní popis prostředí a doby, který mnoho současných čtenářů označilo spíše za přehnaný a do jisté míry rušivý.



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