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Steinbeck's Work
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Zásady pro vypracování

Závěrečná bakalářská práce se zaměří na zobrazení samostatnosti, komunity a přátelství migrujícího obyvatelstva v novele *Of Mice and Men* (1937) a románu *Cannery Row* (1945) od Johna Steinbecka. V teoretické části student zasadí dílo Johna Steinbecka do literárně-kulturního kontextu, pojedná o Kalifornii a migrující pracovní síle v době velké hospodářské krize ve 30. letech 20. století a vysvětlí termíny, s kterými bude pracovat v analytické části. (např. self-reliance či individualism). Autor tyto termíny rovněž zasadí do společensko-historického kontextu a vysvětlí jejich význam v americké společnosti. Analytický celek se bude soustředit na vyobrazení důležitosti komunity, přátelství a samostatnosti ve výše zmíněných dílech. Srovnávací analýza bude založena na primární literatuře, kvalitních sekundárních zdrojích a na vlastním rozboru. Práci zakončí přehledné shrnutí daných zjištění.

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ANNOTATION

This bachelor's thesis focuses on the depiction of friendship, community, self-reliance, and loneliness in the works of American writer John Steinbeck, specifically in the novella *Of Mice and Men* and the novel *Cannery Row*. Furthermore, the thesis provides a cultural-historical context of the 1930s. It deals with the lives of migrant farmworkers during the Great Depression in California.

KEYWORDS

Friendship, community, self-reliance, loneliness, *Of Mice and Men*, *Cannery Row*

NÁZEV

Zobrazení samostatnosti, komunity a přátelství v díle Johna Steinbecka

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na vyobrazení přátelství, komunity, samostatnosti a osamocení v dílech amerického spisovatele Johna Steinbecka, konkrétně v novele *O myších a lidech* a románu *Na plechárně*. Práce se dále zabývá kulturně-historickým kontextem 30. let 20. století. Soustředí se na životy námezdních zemědělských dělníků během Velké hospodářské krize v Kalifornii.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Přátelství, komunita, samostatnost, osamocení, *O myších a lidech*, *Na plechárně*

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INTRODUCTION

John Steinbeck, the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and Nobel laureate in literature, is considered one of the most influential American writers. Two of his works, the novella *Of Mice and Men* and the novel *Cannery Row*, are the subject of this bachelor's thesis. Although the books were written eight years apart, they still share a similar setting, which is California during the period of the Great Depression. His experiences subsequently influenced him while writing the selected pieces, as Steinbeck himself used to work on a farm in his youth, where he met many migrant farmworkers who were struck by poverty.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse and compare the depiction of self-reliance, friendship, community, and loneliness in *Of Mice and Men* and *Cannery Row*. The selected themes are not only used to highlight similarities but also to discuss differences in their portrayal in the books. In addition, the thesis seeks to present the cultural-historical context of the 1930s and the experiences of migrant farmworkers in California at that time.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter discusses the importance of agriculture in the Great Plains during the first decades of the 20th century, with special attention to the Dust Bowl, a period of severe dust storms that occurred in the early 1930s. Moreover, the chapter explores the "Okie migration," which was a mass departure of farmworkers from the Great Plains to the West Coast in search of more favourable conditions for growing crops. Definitions and explanations of terms used in the practical part are presented in the second chapter. Additionally, the chapter mentions the struggles the Dust Bowl migrants experienced in the Golden State, such as the difficulty of finding stable employment.

The practical part examines and portrays the selected themes in *Of Mice and Men* and *Cannery Row*. The third chapter explores the importance of friendship and community. The emphasis is put on the relationship between the main characters. It portrays the rare friendship of George and Lennie as well as analyses the significance of a community for Mack and the boys. The following chapter deals with the concept of self-reliance, which is depicted in George and Lennie's plan of acquiring their dream farm and, additionally, in George's own idea of freedom. Their intentions are then compared with the ambitions of Mack and the boys and how the idea of becoming self-reliant is reflected in their lives. Finally, the portrayal of loneliness and its impact on the characters in both works is the focus of the last chapter. The depiction is presented mainly on the minor characters, such as Crooks' experience in *Of Mice and Men* or the story of William in *Cannery Row*.

1. THE DUST BOWL AND “OKIE” MIGRATION

The first chapter of this bachelor thesis highlights the significance of agriculture in the Great Plains during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Special emphasis is put on severe dust storms that occurred in the Great Plains during the 1930s, also known as the Dust Bowl, as well as one of its consequences for farmers, the “Okie” migration. Lastly, a literary context of the 1930s is provided.

On 29th October 1929 the stock market crash on Wall Street happened, which marks the beginning of the Great Depression. During the early 1930s many people experienced unemployment and poverty. Consequently, prices of goods dramatically fell. Crafts and Fearon claim that the biggest price drop was in agriculture. Because of that, farmers’ income had decreased by more than 65 per cent, causing serious problems to many farmworkers who were unable to financially support operations of their farms.¹ This situation left many farmers in debt, forcing them to start working for lower wages in cities.

In addition, farmers in the Great Plains during the 1930s experienced long periods of drought, later known as the Dust Bowl. To understand the Dust Bowl thoroughly, it is necessary to mention the Homestead Act of 1862 and its outcome. According to Potter and Schamel, this legislation allowed anyone older than 21 years old to obtain a 160-acre parcel of land for a small fee under two conditions. Firstly, the person must have been a citizen of the United States or at least attempt to become one. Secondly, the person had not fought against the USA.² Thanks to this legislation, vast migration to the Great Plains not only from the East Coast but also from Europe had started. Reis suggests that homesteaders claimed the parcel for free after no less than five years of cultivating the land. In this way, homesteaders turned more than 400 million acres of the Great Plains into arable farmland.³ By the end of the nineteenth century former prairies were completely turned into farmlands. Edwards adds that for the first time in US history official legislation was not restricted to white people only, allowing African Americans to acquire the land for themselves.⁴ Therefore, the Homestead Act of 1862 is considered revolutionary legislation, making it one of the first steps towards equal rights for African Americans.

¹ Nicholas Crafts, and Peter Fearon, “Lessons from the 1930s Great Depression,” *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 26, no. 3 (Autumn 2010): 291.

² Lee Ann Potter, and Wynell Schamel, “The Homestead Act of 1862,” *Social Education* 61, no. 6 (October 1997): 359.

³ Ronald A. Reis, *The Dust Bowl* (New York: Chelsea House Publications, 2008), 22.

⁴ Richard Edwards, “The Homestead Act and the Struggle for African American Rights,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (Summer 2021): 175.

After arriving at the Great Plains in the 1860s, farmers soon experienced the harsh reality of the region. DeAngelis and DeAngelis argue that many families came to the region with almost nothing, having started to build their own houses from scratch. The first settlers did not intend to become permanent residents but rather to make a few dollars and move closer to the West Coast.⁵ Since the Great Plains lacked any trees, settlers struggled from the very beginning to build their dwellings. According to Reis, homesteaders had to build their houses from sod, grass, and dirt. Sod is a top layer of land, and it is used for making bricks. The bricks were then used for making the walls of the dwelling. The process was very demanding, and more than half of the homesteaders could not successfully accomplish it.⁶ Therefore, these people had to move westward to find forests. Moreover, this area is known for its abundance of grassland and changeable weather when longer periods of drought follow longer periods of rainfall. Because of that, the population in the area was constantly changing. DeAngelis and DeAngelis mention that in the 1880s, approximately three million people lived in the Great Plains. In the early 1890s the population more than doubled. However, after a period of drought, which lasted from 1889 to 1895, some parts of the area were hit even harder than during the 1930s. Hence, the population in these parts dropped by more than 90 per cent.⁷ At the beginning of the 20th century, rainfall came, significantly restoring the population.

In the decades preceding the Dust Bowl, the climate was stabilised. Thus, farmers saw this as a great opportunity and invested a lot of money in buying new tractors, better ploughs, and hiring additional farmworkers. As Worster suggests, when the First World War ended, Europe desperately needed food; therefore, an import of crops from the USA started. Despite more acres of land, crops could be harvested twice as quickly as at the beginning of the century thanks to new technological advancements in agriculture.⁸ Thus, farmers could make a profit, but the farmland started to be exploited.

In addition, towards the end of the 1920s weather began to worsen, with scorching temperatures during summers. Nevertheless, as for Schubert et al., higher temperatures in the Great Plains were nothing new. The difference was that between the years 1932 to 1938 it hardly rained for a longer time. In fact, during those years, average precipitation was the lowest in the

⁵ Therese DeAngelis, and Gina DeAngelis, *The Dust Bowl* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publications, 2001), 34–35.

⁶ Reis, *The Dust Bowl*, 26–27.

⁷ DeAngelis and DeAngelis, *The Dust Bowl*, 36.

⁸ Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 89.

entire 20th century in the USA.⁹ The National Weather Service adds that during the Dust Bowl years, average annual precipitation was lower than ten inches, which could be compared to precipitation in desert areas.¹⁰ The extreme droughts lasted for almost the whole decade before the rainfall finally came at the beginning of the 1940s.

Consequently, the top of the soil became so dry that it turned into small particles of dirt and dust. Lee and Gill state that it happened because farmers' cattle overgrazed the land, destroying the sod. After the land lost these thick grass roots, it was prone to wind erosion.¹¹ The combination of droughts, overgrazed land, and strong winds in the Great Plains during the 1930s resulted in the Dust Bowl. Logsdon claims that the term was first used by an Associated Press reporter, Robert Geiger, who witnessed this ecological disaster while visiting Guymon, Oklahoma. Three months after publishing his article, the term was widely used across the USA.¹² Worster defines the Dust Bowl as "fulvous dirt began to blow all the way from the plains to the East Coast and beyond."¹³ Although the period of droughts in the 1930s affected the whole country, the Dust Bowl hit mainly Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. Logsdon refers to these areas as "the Dust Bowl States."¹⁴ The exact boundaries of the Dust Bowl, however, are not straightforward to define.

The occurrence of the first dust storm in the 1930s varies in sources. According to Reis, the first Dust Bowl duster happened on January 21, 1932, in Amarillo, Texas, where 10, 000 feet high black cloud appeared outside the city.¹⁵ This was the first occurrence out of many in the following six years in the area. Egan mentions that people during the first dust storms did not know what these huge black clouds were because they had not seen anything similar before, so they asked the government. Even with some help from the weather bureau in Lubbock, experts could not define it, saying that it was just a rarity and did not observe it for a longer time.¹⁶ Little did they know that these dust storms would re-occur repeatedly during the decade, causing one of the most severe ecological disasters.

⁹ Siegfried D. Schubert, Max J. Suarez, Philip J. Pegion, Randal D. Koster, and Julio T. Bacmeister, "On the Cause of the 1930s Dust Bowl," *Science* 303, no. 5665 (March 2004): 1855–1856.

¹⁰ "Dust Bowl Versus Today," National Weather Service, accessed December 30, 2024, https://www.weather.gov/ama/dust_bowl_versus_today.

¹¹ Jeffrey A. Lee, and Thomas E. Gill, "Multiple Causes of Wind Erosion in the Dust Bowl," *Aeolian Research* 19, no. 22 (December 2015): 32.

¹² Guy Logsdon, "Dust Bowl Lore," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, January 15, 2010.

¹³ Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 4.

¹⁴ Logsdon, "Dust Bowl Lore."

¹⁵ Reis, *The Dust Bowl*, 45.

¹⁶ Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), Last of the Great Plowup, <https://www.perlego.com/book/3183457/the-worst-hard-time-the-untold-story-of-those-who-survived-the-great-american-dust-bowl>.

Dust storms could be categorized into two types: “sand blows” and “black blizzards.”

DeAngelis and DeAngelis state:

“Sand blows” were frequent occurrences caused by the constant southwest winds that blew across the Great Plains. Sandy, heavier soil was picked up by these low winds and drifted into dunes along fence posts, ditches, and buildings. The second kind of storm, the ominous “black blizzards,” were the result of cold air masses from the north generating static electricity that lifted the silty, lighter soil into the atmosphere.¹⁷

Furthermore, Worster claims that “sand blows” were not as strong as “black blizzards.” On the other hand, they were much more frequent. During “black blizzards” the temperature would dramatically decrease, and the storm was often supported by lightning. Thanks to electricity that lifted particles of dirt and dust, “black blizzards” could be even higher than 8, 000 feet.¹⁸ These storms were extremely dangerous not only for the countryside but also for cattle and people.

As years passed, dust storms altered between mild and severe ones. One of the strongest dust storms would be “Black Sunday,” which happened on April 14, 1935, in the panhandles of Texas and Oklahoma. As Reis explains, the day started as a typical Sunday in which people were heading to church. Suddenly, the temperature plummeted, and flying dust became so thick that it completely blackened the sun, and nothing could be seen, even lights in rooms.¹⁹ Egan adds that during the day over 300, 000 tons of topsoil was caught in the storm, doubled the amount that was dug out while building the Panama Canal.²⁰ This afternoon was one of the darkest moments in the US history. Based on Jess C. Porter’s research, which was carried out on 356 respondents that were of different age groups, “Black Sunday” was the most memorable event for respondents during the Dust Bowl, especially for those who directly experienced it.²¹ The research shows that the term “Black Sunday” is recognised even by people who were born towards the end of the 20th century.

The Dust Bowl lasted in most areas until 1938. The first heavy rains occurred at the beginning of the next decade. Nevertheless, as Egan explains, in 2006 some parts of the Great Plains were still dry because of droughts in the 1930s. On the other hand, with the help of the government and the Forest Service, some parts of the grassland were successfully restored.

¹⁷ DeAngelis and DeAngelis, *The Dust Bowl*, 51–52.

¹⁸ Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 14.

¹⁹ Reis, *The Dust Bowl*, 55.

²⁰ Egan, *The Worst Hard Time*, Introduction: Live Through This.

²¹ Jess C. Porter, “What Was the Dust Bowl? Assessing Contemporary Popular Knowledge,” *Population and Environment* 35, no. 4 (June 2014): 404.

Comanche National Grassland, the biggest recovered area by then, covered more than 600, 000 acres of grassland.²² Even today the Forest Service is trying to preserve the land, making life possible for many endangered species and plants.

However, by the time the rain finally came into the Great Plains, many farmers decided to move out of the region to an area that provided better climate and job opportunities. The dream destination for migrating farmworkers was California. Gregory states that although the migration from the Great Plains to the Southwest had already started in the 1910s, the biggest migration wave appeared during the 1930s because of the Dust Bowl, in which most farmers settled in California.²³ The migrants from “the Dust Bowl states” were nicknamed “Okies.” Logsdon explains that the term has been used since 1905 as an abbreviation for residents of Oklahoma. Ben Reddick, a journalist for Paso Robles Press, first used it to label migrant farmworkers because he saw a vast number of cars with Oklahoma license plates 'OK' heading to the West.²⁴ Since then, the term has been used to describe migrant farmworkers not just from Oklahoma but also from other states of the Dust Bowl area.

During the migration, the Great Plains lost a significant amount of population. DeAngelis and DeAngelis claim that Oklahoma lost almost 19 per cent of its population, the highest number of all states. Migrants were heading not only to California but also to the Pacific Northwest. During this period, Washington and Oregon obtained almost a half million new settlers.²⁵ The reason why these farmers migrated was usually simple and obvious. To gain higher profits from crop selling, they borrowed money from banks to buy better equipment, making farming more efficient. But when the droughts came, they were unable to make the repayments, leading them to go into debt; therefore, they were often forced to sell their own farms. As DeAngelis and DeAngelis continue, “Okies” sold some of their possessions to buy old cars, packed them with the remaining items they had kept, and headed to Route 66. Some of them settled in neighbouring states but most “Okies” headed to California,²⁶ to their promised land. Guttmann et al. mention two important reasons why “Okies” wanted to move to the West. Firstly, between the years 1933 to 1939, the highest annual precipitation in the USA was on the West Coast. Secondly, California was the least unemployed state in that period.²⁷ Therefore,

²² Egan, *The Worst Hard Time*, Epilogue.

²³ James N. Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 7.

²⁴ Guy Logsdon, “Okie (term),” *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, updated July 6, 2021.

²⁵ DeAngelis and DeAngelis, *The Dust Bowl*, 72.

²⁶ DeAngelis and DeAngelis, *The Dust Bowl*, 72–73.

²⁷ Guttmann, Myron P., Daniel Brown, Angela R. Cunningham, James Dykes, Susan Hautaniemi Leonard, Jani Little, Jeremy Mikecz, Paul W. Rhode, Seth Spielman, and Kenneth M. Sylvester, “Migration in the 1930s: Beyond the Dust Bowl,” *Social Science History* 40, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 733.

roads were filled with thousands of cars heading to California hoping for job vacancies and higher wages.

People who did not have a car or a truck could travel to the Golden State thanks to railroads. Reis states that families with enough money could purchase tickets, while those unfortunate ones who did not possess spare dollars could get on the train among freight and hope not to be spotted. This means of transport was only for the brave ones, as it was dangerous to fall off the train or freeze to death.²⁸ But only few people chose to get to the West by train, and the majority went by car. Gregory highlights that while travelling “Okies” noticed many signs along the road. These signs were made by California’s authorities to prevent newcomers from entering the area, saying there were not any jobs left in the state.²⁹ They feared that “Okies” would steal jobs from local people. Some travellers were discouraged by these signs and decided to move in a different direction.

Nevertheless, most farmworkers kept going. After arriving at their destined locations, “Okies” soon discovered that the area was not as pleasant as they imagined, with only few job opportunities and more competition. As Worster suggests, some “Okies” became migrant farmworkers as a replacement for Mexican workers, who could not stay because of immigration restrictions. “Okies” worked on large farms and collected crops that were ripe enough to be picked.³⁰ This job was only seasonal, and farmworkers did not receive much money from it. After the work was done migrant farmworkers had to move to different places, where new job vacancies had to be filled. Employment agencies were established during the Great Depression to help people find new jobs quickly. One such company could be spotted in *Of Mice and Men*. In the first chapter, while they are going into their new employment, George asks Lennie: “You remember about us goin’ into Murray and Ready’s, and they give us work cards and bus tickets?”³¹ Murray and Ready provided job opportunity for George and Lennie on a farm near Soledad, California, after they had to run from their previous job in Weed because of Lennie’s inappropriate behaviour. Furthermore, as Gregory claims, most “Okies” were unemployed, and because they did not have enough money to rent a flat or a house, they had to stay in camps called “Little Oklahomas.” These places were built just outside of a larger city. Families rented a tent, in which they stayed until they managed to find themselves a job and earn enough money to build their own house.³² Many of them could not bear living in these bad conditions and

²⁸ Reis, *The Dust Bowl*, 84.

²⁹ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 22.

³⁰ Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 52.

³¹ John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), 6–7.

³² Gregory, *American Exodus*, 70.

either searched for different places in the region, where jobs were needed or went back to the Great Plains after the period of droughts had ended. The “Okie” migration was captured by photographer Dorothea Lange, who very precisely documented the struggles of farmworkers in the Great Depression era after their departure from the Great Plains.

The 1930s has been portrayed in many literary works. Conn suggests that a major event that influenced literature in this decade was the Great Depression, which started at the end of the previous decade.³³ Poverty and people from lower classes during this era had been the subject of many novels. One of the best-known pieces is John Steinbeck’s magnum opus, *The Grapes of Wrath*. It tells the story of the Joad family, who decided to move to California in search of a better life. The novel also highlights the struggles that these migrant farmworkers had to face in their promised land. Ruland and Bradbury claim that the book perfectly depicts the decade, emphasising the harsh conditions in which migrants had to live. As the book became immediately popular, it brought attention to how the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression affected farmers’ lives.³⁴ One year after publishing the novel, Steinbeck received the Pulitzer Prize. Apart from *The Grapes of Wrath* and many other books, Steinbeck wrote *Of Mice and Men* and *Cannery Row*. Both are set during the Great Depression in California and will be analysed in the next chapters.

Furthermore, another author who emphasises social problems in his works is Erskine Caldwell. One of his most famous novels is *Tobacco Road*, which examines the life of a poor, rural family during the worst time of the Great Depression on a farm in Georgia. According to Lindberg, the main characters in Caldwell’s books are often from the bottom of society and are exaggerated by their greediness and unpredictability.³⁵ Since many of Caldwell’s works are set in the American South, he is considered to be part of the Southern Renaissance, along with other prominent writers, such as William Faulkner or Katherine Anne Porter. The harshness of the Great Depression is also depicted in Michael Gold’s semi-autobiographical novel *Jews Without Money*, which centres around Jewish immigrants and their struggles in New York’s slums.

³³ Peter J. Conn, “Introduction: History and Literary History,” in *The American 1930s: A Literary History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.

³⁴ Richard Ruland, and Malcolm Bradbury, “Radical Reassessments,” in *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature* (New York: Viking Press, 1991), 338.

³⁵ Stanley W. Lindberg, “The Legacy of Erskine Caldwell,” *The Georgia Review* 66, no. 3 (2012): 496.

2. SELF-RELIANCE, FRIENDSHIP, COMMUNITY AND LONELINESS IN THE 1930S

Since John Steinbeck deals with similar themes in many of his works, this chapter identifies and characterises those that appear both in *Of Mice and Men* and *Cannery Row*. Apart from definitions and explanations of these terms, a cultural-historical context of the Dust Bowl migrants' experiences in California during the Great Depression era is provided. Moreover, the themes will be used in the practical part not only to highlight similarities but also to suggest how they are portrayed differently in the selected books.

The first main theme that plays a pivotal role in the books is self-reliance, which the protagonists desire and dream of. As for a basic definition from a dictionary, self-reliance is “the ability to do or decide things by yourself, rather than depending on other people for help,” according to Albert Hornby.³⁶ From this given definition, self-reliance promotes the idea of trusting and relying on one's own abilities. In order to provide a comprehensive definition, many attempts have been made. One of the first who explored the concept in depth was Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essays published in 1841. Emerson states:

Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous half possession. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him.³⁷

In other words, an individual should trust his own instincts rather than follow what others are doing. To succeed, each person ought to be original and rely only on oneself. Although the essays are nearly two hundred years old and the concept of self-reliance has changed throughout time, Emerson managed to define fundamental characteristics of the term.

Self-reliance is considered one of the core American values. Apart from self-reliance, Maryanne Datesman et al. describe five other traditional American values: individual freedom, equality of opportunity, competition, material wealth, and hard work.³⁸ These values help to define and form American people and their beliefs. Datesman et al. add that self-reliance in its traditional sense relates to the benefit of individual freedom. Individuals have to be self-reliant; otherwise, they are in danger of losing their individual freedom. By being self-reliant for

³⁶ Albert S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 7th ed., ed. Sally Wehmeier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1378.

³⁷ Ralph W. Emerson, *Self-Reliance* (Middletown: Rise of Douai, 2017), 38.

³⁸ Maryanne K. Datesman, Joann Crandall, and Edward N. Kearny, *American Ways: An Introduction to American Culture*, 4th ed. (New York: Pearson Education, 2014), 32.

Americans means to be financially independent from their parents as quickly as possible, usually after finishing high school or obtaining a university degree, simply to be able to “stand on their own feet.”³⁹ Although help from parents or the government was respected, it was not as admired as being fully self-reliant. Greater support may weaken the individual’s position in society. It is also necessary to mention that self-reliance, as well as other American values, are still evolving to meet the demands of modern society.

The idea of becoming self-reliant and independent again appealed to “Okies” after they departed from the Great Plains. Ultimately, it was the reason why they left the region and aimed for California in order to seek their own piece of land where they could farm. Reis claims that the government tried to help with unemployment by establishing the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1933. This program provided job opportunities for more than three million young unmarried men earning one dollar per day for heavy construction work. Each month, they sent twenty dollars home to financially support their families.⁴⁰ Even though programs such as CCC would help “Okies” for a while, it was not adequately sufficient for longer time. Therefore, as it was mentioned, a vast migration wave started. “Okies” were looking for a place where they could start their own businesses and thus became self-reliant and not be dependent on the support from the government anymore. After their arrival on the West Coast, primarily in California, their intention had changed. As DeAngelis and DeAngelis suggest: “what the migrants hoped to find in the Golden State of California and what they actually found, however, were very different. They had almost no hope of owning their own farms in the vast, company controlled farms of California.”⁴¹ In the hope of having a job “Okies” had to work for these large companies as migrant farmworkers for very low income, and therefore, their dream of becoming self-reliant shattered.

Another theme that greatly resonates among the main characters in the books is friendship. Uri D. Leibowitz in his article defines friendship as “a relationship between two people in which each participant values the other and successfully communicates this fact to the other.”⁴² Leibowitz adds that friendship has three distinctive features. Firstly, an individual can be in a relation of friendship with more people at the same time. Secondly, because friendship is a social relation, an individual can be simultaneously involved in other social relations as well, therefore, co-workers or siblings can also be friends. Lastly, a bond of

³⁹ Datesman et al., *American Ways*, 33.

⁴⁰ Reis, *The Dust Bowl*, 68.

⁴¹ DeAngelis and DeAngelis, *The Dust Bowl*, 76.

⁴² Uri D. Leibowitz, “What Is Friendship?” *Disputatio* 10, no. 49 (November 2018): 97.

friendship needs to be emphasized as an essential component in life.⁴³ In other words, friendship is a mutually beneficial relationship that is exclusive only to two people, however, it is possible to maintain these relationships with multiple people at once.

Friendship among migrant farmworkers during the Great Depression was seen as a rarity. Gregory claims that this lack of strong bonds mainly originated from the nature of their job. Since the range of occupations in California in the 1930s was very limited, many people had no other option than to choose a migratory lifestyle and move from farm to farm as the crops grew.⁴⁴ As a result of being constantly on the move to seek employment, migrant farmworkers did not settle anywhere for a longer time, and therefore, were missing permanent relationships among each other. On the other hand, Gregory continues that those who created strong connections with Californians or knew somebody from the area beforehand were advantaged when seeking jobs. These personal ties were crucial for having proper housing and steady employment, whereas migrant farmers without these connections in many cases were struggling to avoid poverty.⁴⁵ Thus, friendship and creating strong bonds frequently played a pivotal role in determining the quality of life for the Dust Bowl migrants in California.

Furthermore, friendship and personal connections between more people may result in the establishment of a community. Robert N. Bellah et al. define community as “a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussions and decision making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it.”⁴⁶ While friendship is seen as a relationship specifically between two people, community is understood as a concept that is mutual among several people. A similar approach is shared by Cobigo et al.: “A community is a group of people that interact and support each other, and are bounded by shared experiences or characteristics, a sense of belonging, and often by their physical proximity.”⁴⁷ To put it differently, members of communities have something in common. An individual in a community craves to be accepted and cooperate with others towards a common goal.

The importance of communal life is also expressed by Steinbeck himself. In 1933, Steinbeck wrote to his friend Carlton A. Sheffield: “When acting as a group, men do not partake

⁴³ Leibowitz, “What Is Friendship?” 98.

⁴⁴ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 58.

⁴⁵ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 46.

⁴⁶ Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life: Updated Edition with a New Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 333.

⁴⁷ Virginie Cobigo, Lynn Martin, and Rawad Meheimech, “Understanding Community,” *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* 5, no. 4 (December 2016): 195.

of their ordinary natures at all. The group can change its nature.”⁴⁸ In other words, people act differently in a community and when they are alone. After individuals join a community, they can work better and more efficiently as a unit rather than as single entities. This concept Steinbeck named “a phalanx theory” in a letter written to George Albee.⁴⁹ As Christopher S. Berardino suggests, the title itself is based on “phalanx” which was a military formation used by Roman legion. In this tactical formation, soldiers stood very close to each other to form one large entity.⁵⁰ Steinbeck’s idea was similar to this concept, as individuals can benefit from the community, and therefore, they can improve their own qualities. This theory and theme of close-knit communities Steinbeck used in many of his works, such as *In Dubious Battle* or *Cannery Row*. Each novel depicts destitute people who are struck by poverty and the Great Depression, but because they create a community, their situation improves. Moreover, William James Connor in his article suggests that when creating the “phalanx theory” Steinbeck was heavily influenced by the government of the USA in the 1930s and its inactivity in providing help to those who needed it.⁵¹ According to Connor, Steinbeck in his theory mentioned that each person is original but works for his own interests; thus, works against somebody else, who has the same intention. However, when working together, communities have the potential to overcome any challenges.⁵² In other words, an individual should suppress his own needs for the possible benefit of the community.

Although it was mentioned that many of the Dust Bowl migrants in California worked as migrant farmworkers alone, without any personal ties to other people, some “Okies,” however, stayed in their communities from the Great Plains. As Gregory suggests, the Dust Bowl migrants had difficulties with integrating themselves into a new society after entering the Golden State. Many locals felt hostility towards “Okies” from the beginning. This was partly due to prejudice based on an assumption that people from the South were rural, uneducated farmers who lived in poverty, which caused disrespectful reactions from Californians.⁵³ In the context of the Great Depression and few job opportunities, locals may have felt threatened by the Dust Bowl migrants because they could be employed in place of Californians. As a result of the unfriendly environment, some migrants felt isolated and not fully accepted in the group.

⁴⁸ John Steinbeck, *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters*, ed. Elaine A. Steinbeck, and Robert Wallsten (New York: Viking Press, 1975), 75.

⁴⁹ Steinbeck, *Steinbeck: A Life*, 79.

⁵⁰ Christopher Seiji Berardino, “‘A Man in a Group Isn’t Himself at All’: Revisiting Steinbeck’s Phalanx Theory,” *The Steinbeck Review* 18, no. 1 (2021): 56.

⁵¹ William James Connor, “Steinbeck’s Phalanx Theory: Reflections on His Great Depression Novels and FDR’s New Deal,” *The Steinbeck Review* 17, no. 2 (Fall 2020): 214.

⁵² Connor, “Steinbeck’s Phalanx Theory,” 217.

⁵³ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 78.

Hence, instead of integration, “Okies” decided to create a community with their own subculture in the West. Gregory claims that the creation of the “Okie” subculture was not a short process. The first important centre of the community was in San Joaquin Valley, and its main objective was to focus on values that were connected to Southwestern “plain folk.”⁵⁴ Due to the fact that the majority of the Dust Bowl migrants came from the South, they tried to restore the culture of their origins. As Gregory continues, Southwestern “plain folk” were primarily associated with a set of social and political values that thrived in the 19th century. Their beliefs opposed big companies and supported rural farmers and working-class people.⁵⁵ Although California’s Okie culture was based on these beliefs, the “Okie” community was also inspired by California, which resulted in the emergence of new elements. Gregory mentions that one of the new changes was the formation of the “Pea-Patch Press,” a collection of newspapers from the late 1930s, which included information about current issues, political debates, a list of regulations, or whatever would be at that moment helpful for the community. Afterwards, apart from current information, newspapers started to issue also poems, jokes, or gossip.⁵⁶ Establishment of this press was just one of the aspects that defined the community. It is also necessary to mention that some Dust Bowl migrants did not want to be part of the “Okie” community and either integrated into Californian society or lived separately.

Those individuals who are not part of any community can feel lonely. Loneliness is the last theme that will be analysed in this bachelor’s thesis. Daniel Perlman and Letitia Anne Peplau define loneliness as “the subjective psychological discomfort people experience when their network of social relationships is significantly deficient in either quality or quantity.”⁵⁷ Anne Forbes adds that loneliness cannot be precisely measured. Some people are happy alone and do not need anyone to talk to. In contrast, others might feel lonely, even though they have many social interactions.⁵⁸ Based on these explanations, loneliness can be characterized as a mental state in which an individual feels he lacks close companionship. Therefore, loneliness might stand in stark contrast to friendship, as loneliness is a direct consequence of an individual lacking a faithful companion.

Loneliness was also very common as a side effect of a migratory lifestyle for the Dust Bowl migrants in the 1930s. As it was mentioned, many migrant farmworkers travelled and

⁵⁴ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 139.

⁵⁵ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 142.

⁵⁶ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 143.

⁵⁷ Daniel Perlman, and Letitia Anne Peplau, “Loneliness,” in *Encyclopedia of Mental Health*, 2nd ed., ed. Howard S. Friedman (San Diego: Academic Press, 1998), 571.

⁵⁸ Anne Forbes, “Loneliness,” *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 313, no. 7053 (August 1996): 352.

worked alone without close bonds to others; therefore, they might have felt lonely. Besides their occupation, many “Okies” were isolated from society by some Californians. DeAngelis and DeAngelis claim that this was not the first occurrence of excluding a particular group, as many Californians were already hostile towards immigrants from Asia and Mexico.⁵⁹ The difference this time was that “Okies” did not arrive from other countries but were native Americans. As Worster describes, H.L. Mencken, a famous journalist and essayist, was deriding rural farmers in his texts, stating that the Dust Bowl was not an environmental disaster caused by periods of drought but rather a farmers’ failure to cultivate the land properly. In addition, Mencken mentioned that “Okies” are not welcomed in California and should be sent back to the Great Plains.⁶⁰ Since Mencken was relatively well-known at that time, his opinions influenced other Californians which caused a greater wave of antipathy towards “Okies.” With the combination of frequently moving for work, “Okies” felt socially isolated and lonely in their promised land of the Golden State.

⁵⁹ DeAngelis and DeAngelis, *The Dust Bowl*, 78.

⁶⁰ Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 53.

3. FRIENDSHIP AND COMMUNITY IN *OF MICE AND MEN* AND *CANNERY ROW*

The first chapter of the practical part analyses the importance of friendship and a community in *Of Mice and Men* and *Cannery Row*. Firstly, the theme of friendship is examined in *Of Mice and Men*, with particular attention to the unique relationship of George and Lennie. Subsequently, it is compared with the community of Mack and the boys in *Cannery Row*.

Of Mice and Men, a novella published in 1937, tells an intriguing story of two migrant farmworkers who work on a ranch near the town of Soledad in California at the time of the Great Depression. According to Gerald Newman and Eleanor N. Layfield, the title of the novella was originally *Something that Happened*.⁶¹ However, before publishing it, Steinbeck changed the title to the current name. Newman and Layfield add that the new title was proposed to Steinbeck by his close friend Edward Ricketts, who was heavily influenced by Robert Burns, a Scottish poet, and his famous poem *To a Mouse*, published in 1785.⁶² The speaker in the poem ploughed directly through mouse's nest in the field, destroying its haven. Although the mouse had been diligently preparing for the winter, its plans were shattered after losing its nest. As Burns wrote: "The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men, Gang aft agley."⁶³ In other words, the best-laid schemes of mice and men often go wrong. This line suggests that even though the plans could be prepared in the best possible way, they may still not go as intended. Hence, there might be a parallel between Burns' poem and Steinbeck's novella, as the protagonists *Of Mice and Men*, George Milton and Lennie Small, have a dream of owning their own farm, where George would be his own boss, and Lennie could pet his rabbits. Although their dream starts to be realistic with financial support from Candy, their plan gets destroyed after Lennie kills Curley's wife. Since the novella contains many dialogues, it was converted into a stage play and screenplay shortly after its publication, such as the first film adaptation from 1939, and most notably the 1992 version directed by Gary Sinise.

The theme of friendship in the novella may be best portrayed in the unique relationship between George and Lennie. To ensure a better understanding of their relationship, it is necessary to mention their characteristics. Steinbeck describes George as "small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose." Whereas Lennie is described as a complete

⁶¹ Gerald Newman, and Eleanor Newman Layfield, *Reading and Interpreting the Works of John Steinbeck* (New York: Enslow Publishing, 2016), 35.

⁶² Newman and Layfield, *Reading*, 36.

⁶³ Robert Burns, *Robert Burns: Poems*, ed. Don Paterson (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 43.

opposite: “a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with wide sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws.”⁶⁴ Apart from their physical appearance, one possesses certain qualities that the other one lacks and vice versa. Therefore, they need each other, as their relationship is mutually beneficial. Furthermore, although it is not precisely specified, Lennie has an intellectual disability, and thus besides being friends, George fulfils the role of his protector, telling him what he needs to do even though they are not relatives. Newman and Layfield claim that George, in their relationship, due to his intelligence, portrays the brains, while Lennie represents the brawn.⁶⁵ The fact that Lennie is dependent on George and does not know what to do on his own is apparent when Curley, the farm superintendent’s son, attacks him, and Lennie without help from George is desperate: “George,” he cried. “Make ‘um let me alone, George.”⁶⁶ After encouragement from George, Lennie manages to crush Curley’s hand because of his enormous strength. Nonetheless, this situation shows that Lennie is completely dependent on George, obeying everything George says. In addition, Lennie likes to touch soft and fluffy items, such as velvet, rabbits, or mice. However, unaware of his physical qualities, he frequently presses them too hard, which results in the death of the animals. Therefore, George must constantly watch him carefully to ensure that Lennie does not get himself into trouble.

Despite these minor issues, George and Lennie manage to create a strong bond of friendship, which is an impossible relationship to establish between the other characters on the farm. Louis Owens argues that a deep commitment is a rarity in the world *Of Mice and Men*⁶⁷ as other characters lack close companionships. George and Lennie’s relationship is also unique in the context of the Great Depression in California. As it was mentioned, many migrant farmworkers used to move a lot in the region with the aim of having steady employment and income. Therefore, they were unable to establish stronger bonds among each other. This was due to the shortage of job vacancies and lower salaries in California, which resulted in intense competition among the migrant farmworkers rather than being an ideal place for forming friendships.

The strong bond between the protagonists is suggested multiple times in the novella. George reassures Lennie of their common future and highlights their unique relationship: “Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don’t

⁶⁴ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 4.

⁶⁵ Newman and Layfield, *Reading*, 40.

⁶⁶ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 63.

⁶⁷ Louis Owens, “Of Mice and Men: The Dream of Commitment,” in *Critical Insights: John Steinbeck*, ed. Don Noble (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2010), 147.

belong no place.” Lennie interrupts him: “But not us! An’ why? Because ... because I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you, and that’s why.”⁶⁸ Therefore, George and Lennie’s relationship represents a prototypical example of friendship, according to Leibowitz’s definition, stated in the second chapter, as it is a special relationship merely between two people in which both participants value the other. The fact that George and Lennie managed to form a bond of friendship in harsh conditions might be influenced by their common past. After Lennie’s aunt Clara died, who raised Lennie from an early age, George started to support him. Even though George confesses to Slim, who works on the farm as a lead driver of the mule team, that he used to mock Lennie’s intellectual abilities: “One day a bunch of guys was standin’ around up on the Sacramento River. I was feelin’ pretty smart. I turns to Lennie and says, ‘Jump in.’ An’ he jumps. Couldn’t swim a stroke. He damn near drowned before we could get him.”⁶⁹ After this incident, their relationship was established and developed to the current form. Barry Ramachandra Rao claims that although it may seem that the friendship is beneficial only to Lennie, who, due to his disability, is hopeless on his own, it is equally important also to George. Otherwise, without Lennie, George would experience the feeling of loneliness because of not having a close companionship.⁷⁰ To put it differently, their friendship is as essential to Lennie as it is to George.

The uniqueness of their relationship is quickly observed by the other people on the farm. Slim admits to George: “Hardly none of the guys ever travel together. I hardly never seen two guys travel together. It jus’ seems kinda funny a cuckoo like him and a smart little guy like you travelin’ together.”⁷¹ Apart from Slim, the Boss and Candy, an older ranch handyman, are also surprised by the fact that Lennie and George come to the farm together. It seems that the other characters fail to understand their relationship and the importance of friendship because they frequently ask George why he does not travel alone but together with Lennie.

George watches Lennie as much as he can to ensure that Lennie does not cause any problems. Although Lennie tries to avoid talking to anyone except from George, he is engaged in conversation with Curley’s wife, which results in an accident of breaking her neck. After the body is found by Candy, George is fully aware of the seriousness of this situation and knows that his friendship with Lennie is coming to an end. For Bradley Steffens, the final chapter of

⁶⁸ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 15–16.

⁶⁹ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 41.

⁷⁰ Barry Ramachandra Rao, “A Study of Social Conflict,” in *Readings on Of Mice and Men*, ed. Jill Karson (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998), 46.

⁷¹ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 40.

the novella represents “the ultimate test of friendship.”⁷² Near the pool, where the book begins and ends, George disappointedly shoots Lennie. This final act is a favour from George because otherwise, Lennie would be lynched by the other farmworkers. On the other hand, by this mercy killing, George loses his only close companionship; therefore, is forced to experience the feeling of loneliness, which is typical for the other characters. As Newman and Layfield claim, the story happens in a vicious circle because it starts and ends at the same place. At the beginning of the novella, George walks with Lennie from a road to the pool. Whereas, in the final scene, George walks the opposite way without his only friend.⁷³ The circular structure of the book may imply that people are doomed to live in harsh conditions of the Great Depression as if they were stuck inside a circle and cannot get out of it. Even though George and Lennie tried to change their position to avoid loneliness by forming a bond of friendship, they are not successful, as George had to shoot Lennie; thus, become alone, like other ordinary people at that time.

Although friendship is the most noticeable in the relationship between George and Lennie, other close bonds were made on the farm, such as one between Candy and his dog. The dog is older and has an unpleasant smell; for these reasons, Carlson would like to shoot him. However, Candy, who is emotionally attached to the animal, disagrees: “Well, hell! I had him so long. Had him since he was a pup. You wouldn’t think it to look at him now, but he was the best damn sheep dog I ever seen.”⁷⁴ Over the years, Candy had created a strong bond with the dog, and he remains his only close companion. Nonetheless, under the pressure from others, Candy allows Carlson to shoot him, but later in conversation with George, he regrets it: “I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn’t ought to of let not stranger shoot my dog.”⁷⁵ Although Slim is willing to give Candy one of his puppies as compensation for his loss, Candy does not want any other. The bond with his former dog was so strong that it was irreplaceable.

Other attempts to create friendships are made by Lennie, who likes to stroke small animals. At the beginning of the novella, he pets a mouse and later he receives a puppy from Slim. Despite Lennie’s love for the animals, their relationship always ends the same, as Lennie unintentionally kills them by pressing them too much. Newman and Layfield suggest that even Curley’s wife tries to create a bond of friendship with Lennie. Although they both seem to understand each other, the moment Lennie touches her, their relationship ends tragically, as

⁷² Bradley Steffens, *Understanding Of Mice and Men* (San Diego: Lucent Books, 2002), 69.

⁷³ Newman and Layfield, *Reading*, 40.

⁷⁴ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 45.

⁷⁵ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 61.

Lennie breaks her neck.⁷⁶ Therefore, it can be concluded that not only George and Lennie's friendship but also all the other relationships on the farm ends by the death of one of the participants. This fact contributes to the idea of the vicious circle. Even though the characters try to make bonds of friendships between each other, they are doomed to stay on their own during the hard times of the Great Depression.

To compare the depiction of friendship in *Cannery Row*, it is necessary to introduce some background information about the book. This novel was published in January 1945, shortly before the end of World War II. Although the book was written during the war, it still observes poor people and their lives in one specific area in Monterey, California during the time of the Great Depression. As Jeffrey D. Schultz and Luchen Li claim, Steinbeck worked as a war correspondent in Europe. After witnessing the horror on the battlefield, he decided to avoid the harshness of the war and instead wrote an amusing story that would cheer his audience in the difficult period.⁷⁷ The novel is dedicated to Steinbeck's friend, Edward Ricketts. Schultz and Li highlight that Steinbeck consulted with Ricketts on the manuscript of *Cannery Row*. In addition, one of the main characters, Doc, is based on Ricketts, who was also a marine biologist and worked in Monterey.⁷⁸ For Steinbeck, the book might also have a nostalgic value, as he describes the place where he spent most years of his life.

Cannery Row consists of thirty-two short chapters some of which follow the main plotline, while other chapters are separate stories. Each of these vignettes depicts a different inhabitant of Cannery Row and its own story. Steinbeck suggests that the best way to understand the atmosphere of Cannery Row is "to open the page and to let the stories crawl in by themselves."⁷⁹ The only plotline in the novel centres around Doc, who has been generous and kind to the whole community. Therefore, a group of unemployed men, known as Mack and the boys, organises a party for him. However, it ends tragically, as Doc arrives late, and his laboratory is destroyed by unwelcomed guests. With the help of all the inhabitants of this cannery district, their second attempt is much more successful, and Doc can enjoy his deserved party.

In *Cannery Row*, similarly to *Of Mice and Men*, a strong bond of friendship is apparent among the main characters, Mack and the boys, namely Hazel, Hughie, Eddie, and Jones. Steinbeck often refers to his heroes as "the Virtues, the Graces, the Beauties of the hurried

⁷⁶ Newman and Layfield, *Reading*, 45.

⁷⁷ Jeffrey D. Schultz, and Luchen Li, *Critical Companion to John Steinbeck: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* (New York: Facts On File, 2005), 41.

⁷⁸ Schultz and Li, *Critical Companion*, 41–42.

⁷⁹ John Steinbeck, *Cannery Row* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), 6.

mangled craziness of Monterrey.”⁸⁰ Despite being unemployed and living in poor conditions, Mack and the boys still manage to fully trust each other. As a matter of fact, having a close companionship is one of the few things they have. In addition, their strong bonds allow them to create a close-knit community. This idea is also suggested by Micah Cokling in his article: “The group builds a community; its members do not isolate themselves in the midst of their social status as outsiders. Rather, they consort as fragile individuals and cultivate a unique and progressive community.”⁸¹ By establishing this community, Mack and the boys are no longer isolated individuals in society, but they learn to cooperate for their common benefit.

The fact of creating a community contributes to the idea of collectively organizing the party for Doc. As Mack suggests to the group: “That Doc is a fine fellow. We ought to do something for him.”⁸² This act shows that even though Mack and the boys lack stable income or adequate housing, they are still willing to invest their time and energy not into their benefit, but to pleasantly surprise the person everybody in the cannery district admires. Nonetheless, after the first party is unsuccessful, a second attempt is required. But this time, all the inhabitants of Cannery Row contribute to a preparation of the party to ensure its success: “The collection of presents was growing and the guest list, if there had been one, was a little like a census.”⁸³ Because all the guests manage to forget about their own struggles and unite for one common goal, the result in this case is much better. Berardino claims that the second party is a classic example of Steinbeck’s “phalanx theory.”⁸⁴ To put it differently, the first attempt ends disastrously because it is organised only by Mack and the Boys. For the second party, however, everyone in Cannery Row contributes to the event in a certain manner, either by helping with the preparation or bringing gifts for Doc. Therefore, since the whole community is involved in the event, the eventual outcome is much more successful. Moreover, in spite of the fact that both parties are planned for Doc, even he becomes directly involved in the preparation of his second party. After being suspicious of Mack’s behaviour, Doc wants to ensure the party’s success: “The next day he began making his own preparations for the party. His best records he carried into the back room where they could be locked away. He moved every bit of equipment that was breakable back there to.”⁸⁵ Furthermore, as Berardino highlights, Doc plays a vital role in the phalanx. Although he is not directly involved in the collective preparation of the party

⁸⁰ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 14.

⁸¹ Micah Conkling, “‘Half Christ and Half Satyr’: Seeing the Postsecular in *Cannery Row*,” *The Steinbeck Review* 12, no. 1 (2015): 70.

⁸² Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 13.

⁸³ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 147.

⁸⁴ Berardino, “A Man,” 56.

⁸⁵ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 146–147.

with others, he still greatly contributes to it. Since Doc's experience is different and the most crucial, he is regarded as the head of the phalanx.⁸⁶ Along with Doc's involvement, other Cannery Row residents are part of this phalanx as the entire community works as a one unit in order to hold the best party possible.

Therefore, although friendship among the main characters appears in both *Of Mice and Men* and *Cannery Row*, its depiction and consequences are quite contrary in the books. On one hand, George and Lennie's strong bond of friendship is an exception among other migrant farmworkers on the farm. Despite their joint efforts to have a common future, their plans are completely shattered, and George is left alone without his only close companion. Furthermore, the mercy killing of Lennie supports the idea of a vicious circle. Once George and Lennie enter the world of lonely individuals, it is impossible for them to maintain a lasting relationship or to create a close community; thus, Lennie's death is inevitable. On the other hand, Mack and the boys are able to establish a close-knit community thanks to their strong ties of friendship. In this case, however, their bonds are never broken. Additionally, their intention to hold the party for Doc positively influence other inhabitants of Cannery Row, which results in the party's success. The idea of creating a large, single unit to accomplish a common goal is embodied in Steinbeck's "phalanx theory." Hence, the friendship between George and Lennie is depicted as a relationship that is doomed and cannot last forever. Contrarily, bonds of friendship help Mack and the boys to create their own community, which helps them to survive during the difficult period of the Great Depression.

Another occurrence of a similar comparison might be spotted in both books in connection with dogs. As it was mentioned before, Candy's dog is old and carries a noticeable smell. Despite Candy's suggestions to keep him, so he can enjoy the final moments with his dog, Carlson decides to shoot him to remove the scent. Therefore, Candy's wishes are not accepted by other farmworkers, and he loses his only faithful companion. A similar scene occurs in *Cannery Row*. Darling, a puppy that Mack receives from the Captain, is severely ill, and it seems that she is about to die: "Now a genuine panic came over the Palace Flophouse. Darling had come to be vastly important to them."⁸⁷ However, Mack and the boys recognise the significance of Darling in their community; thus, they try to do everything possible to save her. With the assistance of Doc, who, despite the lack of knowledge in veterinary medicine, is willing to help, Darling begins to feel better until she is completely cured. This recovery is the most celebrated by Mack and the boys: "All the boys shouted at one another. Lee Chong heard

⁸⁶ Berardino, "A Man," 71.

⁸⁷ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 126.

them and snorted to himself as he carried out the garbage cans. Alfred the bouncer heard them and thought they were having a party.”⁸⁸ Mack and the boys’ happiness depicts that they highly value Darling as one of the members of their community, and her presence is crucial for them. In contrast, Candy’s dog is not loved or valued by anyone except from Candy, and the fact that he is shot by Carlson is not sorrowful but rather welcomed by the other farmworkers.

⁸⁸ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 127.

4. SELF-RELIANCE IN *OF MICE AND MEN* AND *CANNERY ROW*

The fourth chapter focuses on the concept of self-reliance and its depiction on the main characters in the selected works. In *Of Mice and Men*, self-reliance will be analysed in George and Lennie's shared dream, as well as illustrating George's own desire. This will be compared with what it means to be self-reliant for the community of Mack and the boys and how their ambitions are portrayed in *Cannery Row*.

Apart from a deep bond of friendship, George and Lennie also share a dream of having their own farm. For each of them, the motivation for owning their own piece of land means something different. Lennie would be happy to tend his own rabbits and have unlimited time to pet them. While for George, their dream represents a place to settle where he could become self-reliant and start his own business. George is no longer satisfied with the migratory lifestyle as well as he likes the idea of being his own boss, without having anyone telling him what he should do. With the intention of reassuring Lennie regarding their shared future, George, throughout the novella, describes their plan to him: "O.K. Someday — we're gonna get the jack together and we're gonna have a little house and a couple of acres an' a cow and some pigs."⁸⁹ Their dream supports the idea of becoming independent and relying solely on themselves and their abilities.

The dream, as the story progresses, starts to positively influence other characters on the farm, who are also longing for self-reliance. After losing his dog, Candy feels unwanted; thus, he is willing to give all his saved money to George in exchange for joining them on their farm: "S'pose I went in with you guys. Tha's three hundred an' fifty bucks I'd put in. I ain't much good, but I could cook and tend the chickens and hoe the garden some. How'd that be?"⁹⁰ Candy's desire of being self-reliant is the result of the fact that due to the advanced age and his physical limitation, he is worried that he would be made redundant, so he would like to be useful again and spend his final years with George and Lennie. Thanks to Candy's large sum of money, the plan seems feasible. Joseph Fontenrose, however, argues that the vision of acquiring their own land in California was very popular among migrant farmworkers but only few were able to realistically purchase it.⁹¹ Despite his initial positive reaction, Crooks, the only Black character in the novella, is also highly sceptical about George's plan: "Ever'body wants a little

⁸⁹ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 16.

⁹⁰ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 59.

⁹¹ Joseph Fontenrose, "The Dream of Independence," in *Readings on Of Mice and Men*, ed. Jill Karson (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998), 36.

piece of lan'. I read plenty of books out here. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It's just in their head."⁹² Even though George's plan of becoming self-reliant seems feasible, historically, such ideas have not been very successful.

In addition, even their dream shatters after Lennie kills Curley's wife. George is fully aware of this catastrophe when he sees the dead body: "I think I knowed from the very first. I think I knowed we'd never do her. He usta like to hear about it so much I got to thinking maybe we would."⁹³ From this moment, George knows that their plan of purchasing the farm together with Lennie collapses. As Fontenrose further aptly claims, "The land hunger of impoverished farm workers, a dream of independence, usually remains a dream; and when it becomes a real plan, the plan is defeated."⁹⁴ In other words, George and Lennie's dream of becoming self-reliant have the same ending as it has for most of migrant farmworkers in the 1930s, who travelled from the Great Plains to California in order to obtain their own land. Although the dream shared between George and Lennie materialise in the form of their farm, their desire, or at least George's, is not connected with the land or the physical building itself but with the need to be self-reliant and not dependent on others. Qualities, that migrant farmworkers desperately lacked, while working on seasonal farms for large companies.

Another example illustrating the desire to be self-reliant revolves again around George. In this case, however, it is not related to the dream of owning a plot of land but concerns George's separation from Lennie. Even though George enjoys the companionship with Lennie and values the friendship they have created, throughout the story, it is apparent that George is sometimes frustrated by him: "God a' mighty, if I was alone I could live so easy. I could go get a job an' work, an' no trouble. No mess at all, and when the end of the month come I could take my fifty bucks and go into town and get whatever I want. ... An' whata I got, I got you!"⁹⁵ George represents a parental figure for Lennie, someone Lennie should obey. Hence, George is limited in many of his activities, as he has to spend not a small portion of his time carefully watching Lennie so that he does not cause any problems due to his inappropriate behaviour. As Fontenrose suggests, "For George, who was tied to Lennie, freedom to enjoy cards, whiskey, or women was as much a dream as having a ranch."⁹⁶ Furthermore, Fontenrose adds that George has to make a decision between two contradictory dreams: to stay with Lennie and buy the farm

⁹² Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 73.

⁹³ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 93.

⁹⁴ Fontenrose, "The Dream of Independence," 36.

⁹⁵ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 12–13.

⁹⁶ Fontenrose, "The Dream of Independence," 38.

or separate from him and live a carefree life.⁹⁷ At the end, George chooses the second option, recognises that by keeping Lennie alive would only postpone what is inevitable because Lennie would always cause complications. Although the dream of having a farm is destroyed, another dream is fulfilled. George is no longer constrained by Lennie. He gains independence from him. Thus, his dream of being self-reliant, to do activities that previously with Lennie could not, becomes a reality.

On the contrary, the community of Mack and the boys in *Cannery Row* does not need to pursue self-reliance, as they already have a carefree lifestyle. Neither member of the community has a stable income or a job. The group is described as they have “no families, no money, and no ambitions beyond food, drink, and contentment.”⁹⁸ After negotiating with Lee Chong, a Chinese grocery store owner, Mack and the boys move to a building that was used for storing fish meal, which they name the Palace Flophouse. Because of their low standards of living, they do not need much. Their place even lacks beds, instead they sleep on the floor. According to Michael J. Meyer, Steinbeck wanted to portray rejection of materialism in the novel, emphasising that people can be truly happy, even though they lack expensive properties.⁹⁹ This rejection is embodied in Mack and the boys. They do not own anything and have no desire to change their ambitions, still they are satisfied with their lives. On the other hand, George and Lennie are not indifferent to their position in society; therefore, they created the plan of purchasing their dream farm.

Furthermore, for George and Lennie, having enough money is crucial to make the purchase. With Candy’s financial support, they anticipate buying their farm in one month. To achieve this goal, they must carefully save all their money and avoid buying alcohol or other unnecessary goods. Whereas for Mack and the boys, money does not play a pivotal role. Doc in conversation with his friend, Richard Frost, explains, “They could ruin their lives and get money. Mack has qualities of genius. They’re all very clever if they want something. They just know the nature of things too well to be caught in that wanting.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, Mack and the boys could be employed and earn a decent salary, however, they do not want to be spoilt by money. Therefore, they prefer to do nothing all day and pass the time idly in the Palace Flophouse. Billy Joe Lancaster in his article suggests that during the time the novel is set, in the 1930s, the U.S. economy was focused on material and monetary gain. Nevertheless, these

⁹⁷ Fontenrose, “The Dream of Independence,” 39.

⁹⁸ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 11.

⁹⁹ Michael J. Meyer, “Cannery Row,” in *A New Study Guide to Steinbeck's Major Works, with Critical Explications*, ed. Tetsumaro Hayashi (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1993), 56.

¹⁰⁰ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 122.

concepts are denied by Mack and the boys. Hence, Steinbeck created the inverted economic system in the novel.¹⁰¹ Mack and the boys do not measure success in material wealth or potential profit but rather in the close connections they have managed to establish. This is, further, observed by Doc:

I think that Mack and the boys know everything that has ever happened in the world and possibly everything that will happen. I think they survive in this particular world better than other people. In a time when people tear themselves to pieces with ambition and nervousness and covetousness, they are relaxed. All of our so-called successful men are sick men, with bad stomachs, and bad souls, but Mack and the boys are healthy and curiously clean. They can do what they want. They can satisfy their appetites without calling them something else.¹⁰²

In other words, Mack and the boys are described as “healthy and curiously clean” because their lives are not attached to material prosperity. Whereas their contemporaries are “so-called successful men with bad stomachs”, as they are motivated by financial success.

Moreover, the only time Mack and the boys work is not for the monetary profit of the individual members but for the benefit of the whole community. Lancaster claims that their actions follow the pattern of social exchange theory. That is, how material and non-material products are traded within a group of people, so it is advantageous for all parties.¹⁰³ Such example is noticeable in the suggestion of organising the first party for Doc. Mack and the boys would like to do “something nice for him.”¹⁰⁴ To help him with his work, they go to collect frogs for research. Even though they agreed to receive five cents for a frog, they decided to visit Lee Chong’s grocery store and exchange half sacks of frogs for food that would be used at the party and use the other half as a gift for Doc. Thus, their primary objective in collecting the frogs is not to gain financial profit but rather to help Doc and surprise him with the party. This act can be considered an application of social exchange theory, as Doc for his generosity and openness to Cannery Row’s inhabitants, receives a party that is organised exclusively for him.

Therefore, in *Of Mice and Men*, George’s desire to become self-reliant is also connected to the idea of being independent. This strong desire is first embodied in the dream of having a farm, and then in George’s separation from Lennie. Whereas Mack and the boys have no intention of possessing any property or leaving their community. Instead, self-reliance is

¹⁰¹ Billy Joe (Bill) Lancaster, “The Inverted Economy of Steinbeck’s *Cannery Row* Ecology,” *The Steinbeck Review* 12, no. 1 (2015): 55.

¹⁰² Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 122.

¹⁰³ Lancaster, “The Inverted Economy,” 55.

¹⁰⁴ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 38.

depicted in their behaviour through social exchange theory. They planned the party in exchange for the way Doc has always been kind to them.

5. LONELINESS IN *OF MICE AND MEN* AND *CANNERY ROW*

The last chapter of this bachelor's thesis focuses on loneliness and its impact on the characters in the selected pieces. The analysis of *Of Mice and Men* will not only depict George's inevitable loneliness but also reasons why other characters in the novella experience loneliness. It will then be compared with the individual stories of Cannery Row's inhabitants and how the feeling of loneliness affects them.

Loneliness is an ever-present theme that occurs multiple times in the novella, *Of Mice and Men*. Even the fact that the story happens on a farm near the small town of Soledad is not a coincidence, as "soledad" means "loneliness" or "solitude" in Spanish. Schultz and Li suggest that nearly all characters in the book are negatively affected by loneliness.¹⁰⁵ It is necessary to emphasise that each of the characters experiences feelings of loneliness for different reasons. Candy is prevented from doing the same activities as other farmworkers due to older age and the loss of his arm. Additionally, he feels lonely after the death of his dog, which was his only close companion. Crooks, who works as a stable hand, is the only Black character in the novella, and therefore, is excluded by the other men because of his race. Crooks notices: "A guy needs somebody—to be near him. A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you. I tell ya, I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick."¹⁰⁶ Crooks understands the powerful impact of loneliness on his life, but he cannot change his position. He is not accepted by the other farmworkers and has to live in a separate room, based on racial prejudice.

Another character who feels unbearably lonely is Curley's wife. Even though she is married to Curley, and therefore, it may seem that she has someone who cares about her, this is not the case, as their marriage is unhappy. Throughout the novella, they are never seen to be together, as they constantly search for each other. Whit humorously comments: "He spends half his time lookin' for her, and the rest of the time she's lookin' for him."¹⁰⁷ To avoid her loneliness, Curley's wife needs someone to talk to, but she is mostly ignored by the other farmworkers. Charlotte Cook Hadella describes that similarly to Crooks, Curley's wife desperately lacks companionship. In this instance, however, she is not ostracised by the other characters because of the colour of her skin but because of her gender,¹⁰⁸ as she is the only woman on the farm. Curley's wife expresses her loneliness to Lennie: "I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful

¹⁰⁵ Schultz and Li, *Critical Companion*, 146.

¹⁰⁶ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 72.

¹⁰⁷ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 54.

¹⁰⁸ Charlotte Cook Hadella, *Of Mice and Men: A Kinship of Powerlessness* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 58.

lonely. You can talk to people, but I can't talk to nobody but Curley. Else he gets mad. How'd you like not to talk to anybody?"¹⁰⁹ She also confesses to him with her dream of becoming an actress, which was not accomplished, and now she has to stay on the farm with Curley, whom she does not like. Candy, Crooks, and Curley's wife are all excluded by the other farmworkers based on different preconceptions that they cannot change. They try to establish stronger connections to avoid the feeling of loneliness. Candy wants to make close bonds with George and Lennie and join them on their farm. This idea is also appealing to Crooks, who is willing to work there as well. Even Curley's wife has a personal conversation with Lennie. Still, they are unsuccessful in making strong bonds and are, therefore, forced to be lonely.

Furthermore, as it was mentioned, even George eventually is left alone after choosing individual freedom over living together with Lennie. However, throughout the novella, George highly values his relationship with Lennie and is aware that thanks to Lennie he is not alone: "I ain't got no people. I seen the guys that go around on the ranches alone. That ain't no good. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean. They get wantin' to fight all the time."¹¹⁰ Their strong bond differentiated them from the other characters. According to Cian O'Driscoll, Lennie's death condemns George to experience the feeling of loneliness. Even though George has always maintained that because of their close relationship, they are spared from the lonely life lived by the other migrant farmworkers.¹¹¹ By killing Lennie, George freed himself of his burden, but at the same time, he became one of many people who "ain't got nothing to look ahead to."¹¹² George's only real bond is broken and now he has to face the harsh reality of living a lonely life, similar to what Crooks and Candy have been already experiencing. Thus, the fact that every character is eventually left alone at the end of the novella supports the idea that it was nearly impossible for migrant farmworkers to maintain lasting relationships in the 1930s.

The feeling of being excluded from a group is also experienced in *Cannery Row* by William, a former watchman at the Bear Flag restaurant, the busiest brothel in Monterey owned by Dora Flood. William was exhausted by female company; thus, he wanted to become a member of Mack and the boys' community. However, he is not accepted by them: "He walked out one day and sat on the pipe. Conversation stopped and an uneasy and hostile silence fell on the group. [...] Mack and the boys just didn't like William. Now William's heart broke. The

¹⁰⁹ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 85.

¹¹⁰ Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 41.

¹¹¹ Cian O'Driscoll, "Why Don't You Tell Us About Them Rabbits, George? The Tragedy of Just War," *International Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (June 2013): 234.

¹¹² Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, 15.

bums would not receive him socially.”¹¹³ Because of feeling lonely and not being understood by Dora or The Greek, a chef in the brothel, William commits suicide by stabbing an ice pick into his heart. As Owens argues, “The story is a stark lesson in the deadly effects of loneliness and apartness.”¹¹⁴ William’s loneliness is, thus, similar to what Candy, Crooks, and Curley’s wife experience, as he is also ostracised by the other characters. In this instance, however, he is not excluded by the community because of his age, gender, or race but merely due to his unpopularity.

Furthermore, since *Cannery Row* is also set in the Great Depression, the protagonists and even the minor characters that are introduced in the interlude chapters are struck by poverty and have to live in unbearable conditions, which often leads to their isolation and loneliness. Such an example is depicted in the character of Horace Abbeville. Horace had two wives and six children. Over the years, he had accumulated massive debt in Lee Chong’s grocery store. In order to pay off his debt, Horace gave Lee his old warehouse. After this trade, due to loneliness and despair, Horace shot himself. This was not the only occurrence of committing suicide because of financial issues. Joey’s father, who is long-term unemployed, decides to choose the same option by eating a rat poison. His story is portrayed in a conversation between two young boys, Joey and his friend Willard. To the news of Joey’s father’s suicide, Willard replies: “What’d he think — he was a rat? Did he go crawling around like this — look, Joey — like this? Did he wrinkle up his nose like this? Did he have a big old long tail?”¹¹⁵ Although the death of Joey’s father is in the talk between the boys depicted humorously, Meyer suggests that these suicides highlight the fact that no one can easily escape the feeling of despair.¹¹⁶ Therefore, the loneliness of some characters in the novel is not only the result of an individual’s exclusion from a group but also a negative consequence of living in the harsh conditions during the Great Depression era.

Another character who feels lonely is Henri the painter. His life is full of paradoxes. His real name is not Henri, and he is not a painter. For ten years, he has been building a boat, but being afraid of the water, he never finishes it; instead, the structure of the boat has been constantly modified. Henri does not long to be part of any community but still experiences loneliness due to his inability to maintain lasting relationships: “He had been married twice and had promoted a number of semi-permanent liaisons. And all of these young women had left

¹¹³ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 18.

¹¹⁴ Louis Owens, “Cannery Row: ‘An Essay in Loneliness,’” in *John Steinbeck’s Re-Vision of America* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), 181.

¹¹⁵ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 141.

¹¹⁶ Meyer, “Cannery Row,” 56.

him for the same reason. The seven-foot cabin was too small for two people.”¹¹⁷ Thus, Henri’s love life seems to be trapped in a vicious circle. He manages to find a partner, but because of his way of living, these relationships always end. It should be emphasised that contrary to William and Curley’s wife, who crave to end their loneliness and be accepted into the group but are unsuccessful because of rejection from the other characters, Henri’s loneliness originates mainly from his own actions.

Moreover, similarly to Henri, Doc also lacks a romantic relationship in his life. Unlike most inhabitants of the Cannery Row, Doc is not significantly affected by the Great Depression. He is an educated gentleman, earns a regular income, and lives in decent conditions. Although it may seem that Doc has everything he needs, a long-term relationship is missing in his life. Doc’s loneliness is mainly noticed by Mack: “In spite of his friendliness and his friends Doc was a lonely and a set-apart man. Mack probably noticed it more than anybody. In a group, Doc seemed always alone. [...] Even in the dear close contact with a girl Mack felt that Doc would be lonely.”¹¹⁸ Despite his popularity among all Cannery Row’s inhabitants, in his private life, Doc is a lonely figure who lacks company. According to Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, Doc’s loneliness is embodied in the penultimate chapter, which tells a story about a gopher.¹¹⁹ The gopher moves to Cannery Row, where “he had found the perfect place to live. There were no gardens about so no one would think of setting a trap for him.”¹²⁰ After storing enough food and digging up a tunnel with an extended chamber for his future offspring, the gopher waits for a mate. However, no potential partner occurs, so the gopher “had to move two blocks up the hill to a dahlia garden where they put out traps every night.”¹²¹ Therefore, the gopher is parallel to Doc’s life. They both live in a seemingly ideal place. Nonetheless, happiness is missing in their life, as they feel lonely because of lacking a close companion.

Hence, *Cannery Row* depicts loneliness in several characters. Similarly to Curley’s wife in *Of Mice and Men*, William’s loneliness also originates from social ostracism and leads to destructive effects. For Henri and Doc, on the other hand, loneliness is a consequence of not having a romantic relationship. Although both works portray loneliness and its impacts on the protagonists, *Of Mice and Men* ends more hopelessly, as all characters become isolated and experience the terrible feeling of loneliness, while the ending of *Cannery Row* is merely

¹¹⁷ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 116.

¹¹⁸ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 87.

¹¹⁹ Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, “Natural Wisdom: Steinbeck’s Men of Nature as Prophets and Peacemakers,” in *Steinbeck and the Environment: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Susan F. Beegel, Susan Shillinglaw, and Wesley N. Tiffney, Jr. (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1997), 123.

¹²⁰ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 164.

¹²¹ Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*, 165.

positive. The whole community manages to accept each other, and thus, the individual members do not feel lonely in spite of living during difficult times.

CONCLUSION

This bachelor's thesis aimed to analyse the depiction of friendship, community, self-reliance, and loneliness in the novella *Of Mice and Men* and the novel *Cannery Row* by John Steinbeck. Special emphasis was put on the main characters of these works and their experiences during the Great Depression. In addition, the thesis attempted to provide a cultural-historical context of migrant farmworkers and the obstacles they faced during the 1930s in the Great Plains and their migration to California.

As for the historical context, the thesis focused on the Dust Bowl and its immediate consequence, the "Okie migration." Since both *Of Mice and Men* and *Cannery Row* are set during the Great Depression in California, particular attention was given to the migrant farmworkers and their struggles during the 1930s in the Golden State. Moreover, to ensure a better understanding of the analysed terms, the theoretical part provided a detailed explanation of these selected terms.

In the practical part, the primary focus of this bachelor's thesis was to analyse and compare the chosen themes in the selected works. Both pieces present strong bonds of friendship between the main characters. The friendship that George Milton and Lennie Small created in *Of Mice and Men* is depicted as a rarity in the context of the novella because other characters in the book lack close companionships. However, even this unique relationship ended. In *Cannery Row*, Mack and the boys managed to establish a community, despite living in poor conditions. Hence, they are representatives of Steinbeck's "phalanx theory." A theory that suggests that individuals can work better and more efficiently as one unit rather than single entities, which is mainly apparent in the preparation of the birthday party for Doc. Thus, the setting of the Great Depression in *Of Mice and Men* depicts that it is not possible to maintain lasting relationships. Whereas, in *Cannery Row*, the harshness of the situation brings people together to form a close-knit community.

Another analysed theme in the thesis was self-reliance. Similarly to migrant farmworkers, George and Lennie experience the migratory lifestyle of moving from farm to farm and earning inadequate salaries. Therefore, they crave to become self-reliant and own their dream farm. However, after George kills Lennie, their dream collapses. On the other hand, by this act, George gains individual freedom from Lennie. In *Cannery Row*, Mack and the boys' self-reliance is demonstrated by their carefree lifestyle. Unlike George and Lennie, Mack and the boys do not wish to change their position in society. They reject materialistic values and do not long for money or to improve their living conditions.

Furthermore, the last chapter focused on loneliness. Many characters in *Of Mice and Men* feel lonely because they are ostracised by the other farmworkers. Candy is lonely because he has lost his dog. Moreover, due to an advanced age and his physical disability, he is not accepted by other men on the farm. Crooks' loneliness originates from the fact that he is the only Black character in the novella; therefore, he is isolated from other characters by living in a separate house. Curley's wife feels excluded because of her gender, as she is mostly ignored by the other male characters. Even George, after killing Lennie, loses his only companion; thus, he joins the lonely wandering life of other farmworkers. Similar social ostracism is portrayed through William's story in *Cannery Row*, as William is not accepted by Mack and the boys in their community. Another type of loneliness is experienced by Henri the painter, and Doc, who feel lonely due to a lack of a romantic relationship. Contrarily, because of the close bonds, Mack and the boys avoid the feeling of loneliness. The community does not ostracise but accepts each other.

Therefore, based on the analysis and comparison, it can be concluded that all the selected themes are portrayed in both works; however, they are presented differently. The analysis of the novella *Of Mice and Men* suggests that it is impossible for the characters to create lasting relationships. Despite their efforts to establish a community or bond of friendship, they are doomed to stay alone and experience the feeling of loneliness. Even George and Lennie's dream of becoming self-reliant is not fulfilled. On the other hand, through the community of Mack and the boys, the novel *Cannery Row* shows that while being struck by poverty, the characters can help each other and unite for a common goal. Mack and the boys manage to form a lasting community; thus, avoiding the feeling of loneliness. Additionally, due to their low standards of living and rejection of materialism, they become self-reliant, without the need to be dependent on others.

RESUMÉ

Cílem této bakalářské práce je vyobrazení témat přátelství, komunity, samostatnosti a osamocení v novele *O myších a lidech* a románu *Na plechárně* od amerického spisovatele Johna Steinbecka. Důraz je kladen na hlavní postavy již zmíněných knih, tedy na unikátní přátelství mezi Georgem a Lenniem a komunitu Macka a mládenců. Práce se dále zabývá historickým kontextem obou děl, kterým je Kalifornie v období Velké hospodářské krize a také migrujícím obyvatelstvem, které ve 30. letech 20. století v hojném počtu opouštělo Velké planiny a mířilo právě do Kalifornie.

Tato bakalářská práce obsahuje pět kapitol a je rozdělena na teoretickou a praktickou část. První kapitola v teoretické části pojednává o historicko-literárním kontextu. Zmiňuje důležitost Homestead Actu, tedy zákona o usedlících, kteří mohli za určitých podmínek bezplatně získat zemědělskou půdu. Díky tomuto dokumentu se mnoho amerických farmářů přesunulo na Velké planiny. Kapitola se, mimo jiné, zaměřuje i na životy těchto farmářů ve Velkých planinách na počátku 30. let 20. století. Řada z nich si musela vypůjčit nemalé finanční částky na koupi moderních zemědělských strojů a najmutí dalších pracovníků, aby jejich farma mohla zvýšit svoji celkovou produkci. Avšak kvůli dlouhému období sucha byla jejich úroda zničena, a tak zadlužení farmáři byli nuceni svou farmu prodat. Toto období sucha, kdy se vrchní vrstva půdy přeměnila na prach, který byl následně rozfoukán větrem, což mělo za důsledek vznik velkých prachových bouří, se nazývá Dust Bowl, neboli mísa prachu. V neposlední řadě se kapitola soustředí na přímý následek této ekologické katastrofy, kterým byla velká migrační vlna farmářů na západ Spojených států amerických, tedy do oblasti s příznivějším klimatem. Většina z nich se usadila v Kalifornii, kde však nemohli najít stálou práci a museli pracovat jako námezdní dělníci, podobně jako George s Lenniem. V rámci literárního kontextu byla Steinbeckova tvorba zařazena do 30. let 20. století. Primárně se zabývá vyobrazením nižší vrstvy společnosti. Podobným tématům se věnoval i Erskine Caldwell či Micheal Gold.

Druhá kapitola se zaměřuje na termíny, které budou následně analyzovány v praktické části. Tyto termíny jsou vysvětleny pomocí definic a jsou také zasazeny do společensko-historického kontextu 30. let 20. století v souvislosti s migrující pracovní silou v Kalifornii. Prvním definovaným termínem je samostatnost. Ta je popsána jako schopnost jedince rozhodovat se a spoléhat sám na sebe bez pomoci druhých lidí. Po tomto pocitu toužilo i spousta amerických farmářů, kteří snili o vlastnění hospodářství. Samostatnost je v kapitole vyobrazena i jako jedna z amerických hodnot. Dalším důležitým termínem pro tuto bakalářskou práci je přátelství, tedy vztah mezi dvěma lidmi, kteří si navzájem toho druhého váží. Silná přátelská

pouta však často mezi námezdními zemědělskými dělníky chyběla, kvůli častému stěhování za prací. Třetím vybraným termínem je komunita, která je definována jako skupina lidí sdílející stejné zájmy a podobné cíle. K vytváření komunity docházelo i v Kalifornii, kde bývalí obyvatelé Velkých planin vytvořili svoji vlastní kulturu, která měla za cíl odrážet jejich kořeny. Posledním termínem je osamocení, tedy stav, kdy jedinec má pocit, že mu chybí blízká osoba. Pocit osamocení dopadal na některé námezdní zemědělské dělníky, kteří se necítili být plně přijati místními Kalifornňany.

Stěžejní sekcí této práce je praktická část, která je členěna do tří kapitol. Soustředí se na vyobrazení a porovnání vybraných témat v dílech *O myších a lidech* a *Na plechárně* od autora Johna Steinbecka. Třetí kapitola se věnuje analýze přátelství a komunity. V knize *O myších a lidech* je přátelství vyobrazeno jako vztah, který je jedinečný. To je dáno převážně tím, že ostatní farmáři se v novele často přesouvají podle toho, kde se sklízí úroda a díky tomu si nedokáží vytvořit trvalé vazby. Jediným silným poutem přátelství je vztah mezi Georgem a Lenniem, kteří se znají už od dětství. I když George pro Lennieho kromě přítele, představuje i jeho opatrovníka, je si plně vědom, že díky Lennieho přítomnosti se nikdy necítí osamoceny. Avšak ani toto jediné přátelství nevydrží a George zůstane sám. *Na plechárně* představuje podobně silné přátelství v komunitě Macka a mládenců, kteří i přes strasti života v období Velké hospodářské krize, jsou schopni, na rozdíl od George s Lenniem, si tyto vazby udržet. Jejich soudržnost a spolupráce je vystižena i v nápadu a přípravě oslav pro Doktora.

Následující kapitola se zabývá samostatností a jejím vyobrazením v hlavních postavách obou vybraných děl. Z analýzy je patrné, že touha po samostatnosti a s ní spojená svoboda se projevuje u zvolených protagonistů jiným způsobem. Pro George a Lennieho je tato představa zhmotněna v jejich společném snu o vlastnění farmy. George chce být samostatný a spoléhat se sám na sebe, bez potřeby být závislý na ostatních lidech. George tedy touží změnit své postavení ve společnosti. Avšak zastřelením Lennieho o tento sen částečně přichází a místo toho získává samostatnost odloučením od svého jediného přítele. Naproti tomu, i když Mack a mládenci žijí v nuzných podmínkách, nesní o zlepšení kvality jejich života a nejsou ani motivováni vlastněním hmotného majetku nebo touhou po penězích. Díky jejich bezstarostnému životnímu stylu se cítí svobodní a samostatní.

Posledním analyzovaným termínem této bakalářské práce je osamocení, kterým se zabývá pátá kapitola. V díle *O Myších a lidech* trpí osamocením především Candy, Crooks a Curleyho žena. Všechny tyto postavy jsou vyčleněny z určitých důvodů ostatními pracovníky na farmě, navzdory tomu, že se pokoušejí navázat trvalé vazby. V románu *Na plechárně* je obdobným způsobem nepřijat do komunity Macka a mládenců William, který se z přemíry

osamocení rozhodne spáchat sebevraždu. Osamocení, které pramení z těžkosti života v době Velké hospodářské krize je vyobrazeno na postavách Joeyho otce a Horace Abbevilla. Naopak, Doktor a malíř Henri pocítují osamocení, nikoli z důvodů nepřijetí ostatními lidmi do skupiny, ale důsledkem toho, že jim v životě chybí dlouhotrvající romantický vztah.

Na základě analýzy lze konstatovat, že *O myších a lidech* i *Na plechárně* do značné míry vyobrazují zvolená témata. Většina protagonistů je negativně ovlivněna prostředím těchto děl, tedy Velkou hospodářskou krizí. Díky tomuto období mnoho postav musí žít v chudobě, což v některých případech vede i k pocitu osamocení. George a Lennie představují typické námezdní zemědělské dělníky té doby, jejich snem je mít vlastní hospodářství a tím získat i pocit samostatnosti. Avšak jejich sen je nenaplněn a jedinečné přátelství mezi Georgem a Lenniem tímto zanikne. Kvůli tomu zůstane George, stejně jako ostatní postavy v novele, osamoceny. Naproti tomu, kniha *Na plechárně* vyobrazuje, že je možné udržet si silná pouta přátelství i v těžkých časech. Příkladem jsou Macka a mládenci, kteří si dokázali vytvořit blízkou komunitu. Význam samostatnosti se odráží v jejich životním stylu. Netouží mít stálý příjem, ani zbohatnout. Nýbrž jsou šťastní, že mají jeden druhého a díky tomu nepocítují osamocení.

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