

LATVIJAS UNIVERSITĀTE

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RĪGA 2016

UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES

**THE IMAGE OF NATURE IN ANNIE PROULX`S
NOVEL ‘THE SHIPPING NEWS’**

**DABAS TĒLI ANNIJAS PROULKSAS ROMĀNĀ
„KUĢU ZIŅAS”**

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RĪGA 2016

ANOTĀCIJA

Mūsdienās ar dabu saistīti temati ir kļuvuši plaši izplatīti un būtiski. Priekšstats par to, ka cilvēce nodara bojājumus dabai ir nozīmīgs, un veidi kā saglabāt dabu patstāvīgi tiek meklēti un pētīti. Pats fakts, ka šādas tēmas ir kļuvušas populāras laikā, kad urbanizācija, industrializācija un globalizācija kļūst arvien izplatītākas, ir pārsteidzošs. Stājoties pretī globalizācijai, cilvēce ir atcerējusies par dabas nozīmību un par to ka cilvēki un daba ir nenovēršami saistīti.

Līdz ar to, šajā darbā tiek pētīti dabas tēli Annijas Proulksas stāstā *Kuģu ziņas*, jo tajā tiek aplūkoti iepriekšminētie temati. Šī darba hipotēze ir, ka dabas tēli savā būtībā ir cilvēku izgudrojums, kurš rodas cilvēku prātā. Tātad, dabas tēli atspoguļo cilvēku prātu, sajūtas, domas un būtību.

Lai sasniegtu darba mērķi tika pielietotas teksta analīzes metode, vēsturiskā metode, kā arī ekokritikas un ekofeminisma metodes.

Darba rezultāti atklāja, ka Ņūfaundlendā ainava iespaidoja galvenos tēlus un vietējo kopienas. Tā kā ainava bija skarba, tur dzīvojošajiem cilvēkiem bija jābūt stipriem un izturīgiem. Galvenais tēls Koils mainījās uz labo pusi līdz ko viņš pārvācās uz dzīvi Ņūfaundlendā; viņš atrada cerību un mājas.

Noslēgumā, šī tēma varētu tikt turpināta analizējot citus Annijas Proulksas stāstus, lai nostiprinātu ideju par to, ka daba un cilvēki ir saistīti.

Atslēgas vārdi: daba, ainava, reģionālisms, globalizācija.

ABSTRACT

Nowadays the topics concerning nature have become widely-discussed and relevant. The idea that humanity is damaging nature is prominent, and ways of preserving nature are researched, and looked for. The fact that such topics have become popular in the modern times when urbanization, industrialization and globalization are spreading and becoming more wide-spread is surprising. By facing the threat of globalisation, humanity has once again remembered about the importance of nature, and the connection that humans inevitably share with it.

Consequently, this paper analyzes the representation of image in Annie Proulx`s novel *The Shipping News*, because the aforementioned topics are discussed and revealed in the story. The hypothesis of this thesis is that the image of nature is essentially a human invention, born in the human mind. Meaning, that the image of nature also reflects the human mind, feelings, thoughts and being.

The methodological approaches used to achieve the goal of this paper are close textual analysis, historical method, ecocriticism and ecofeminism approach.

The results of the research revealed that the Newfoundland landscape influenced the main characters and the local community. Since the landscape was harsh, the people living there had to be strong and tenacious. The main character Quoye changed for the better once he started living in Newfoundland; he found hope and home.

In conclusions, this topic could be continued further by analyzing other novels of Annie Proulx to secure the idea that nature and humans are connected.

Key words: nature, landscape, regionalism, globalisation.

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INTRODUCTION

This work examines how the image of nature is constructed and used in literature, focusing on Annie Proulx's novel *The Shipping News*. Nature has been a part of literature ever since man learned to possess the ability to write. Nature writings came in various forms and sizes, whether just as simple descriptions of the surroundings, partaking as a character on its own in stories, or as a critique of the current lifestyle and problems.

The Shipping News combines all three of these possible variants. As a neo-regionalist Proulx uses nature to turn the attention of the reader to environmental problems, such as pollution, globalisation, and the disappearing appreciation of traditional values, which are prominent problems in modern times. Since nature is a very significant "existence" in *The Shipping News*, it is also a sort of character, influencing the lives and thinking of the main characters. Also, Proulx does this by skilfully portraying the visual image of nature.

It is important to know that while realistic descriptions of nature can induce certain feelings in characters and readers, and create an atmosphere in the story, the "definition" of what nature is, is much larger than that. Therefore, Proulx turns the attention towards people, their culture, especially in rural communities, because people are also a part of nature.

Nature in *The Shipping News* is a complicated notion, and it requires a more analytical approach, therefore:

The **goal** of this thesis is to clarify the representation of the image of nature in Annie Proulx's novel *The Shipping News*.

The **hypothesis** is that the image of nature is a notion created by humans, therefore the image of nature is based on one's imagination.

The **enabling objectives** for the achievement of the research goal are the following:

- to read and analyze the secondary sources about the representation of nature in American literary writing, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, regionalism, landscape fiction, frontier literature, and the novel *The Shipping News*;
- to gather literary examples from the novel that are relevant to the current study and topics;
- to systematize the literary examples into groups according to their topic and theme;
- to interpret the meaning of the literary examples according to the knowledge gained by reading the secondary sources;
- to combine the analysis of the literary examples with the analysis of the image of nature and its influence in the novel as a whole;

- to draw conclusions.

There are four **methods of research** used in this thesis. They are historical research, textual analysis, ecocriticism approach, and ecofeminism approach to the analysis.

The first chapter is devoted to summarizing the representation of nature in American literary writing.

The second chapter is devoted to the analysis of ecocriticism.

The third chapter concerns the analysis of ecofeminism.

The fourth chapter gives insight to the notion of regionalism.

The fifth chapter deals with landscape fiction.

The sixth chapter concerns the analysis of frontier literature.

The seventh chapter deals with the analysis of the representation of image in Annie Proulx's novel *The Shipping News*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will reveal the most important literary sources used in this paper. Since the topic of the thesis is to clarify the representation of the image of nature in the novel *The Shipping News*, all of the topics deal with nature. The literary sources in this chapter will be organized by their field – from the most general topic to the most specific. The topics will be discussed in the following order – ecocriticism, regionalism, landscape fiction, and the northern frontier.

In her work called *Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies: Transatlantic Conversations on Ecocriticism*, Catrin Gersdorf (2006) discusses the topic of ecocriticism and tries to define it. The work mainly includes essays from numerous authors, who expand on the theme of ecocriticism from their own point of view. The essays are divided into four main groups: *Theorizing the Nature of Ecocriticism; Locating Nature in language, Literature, and Everyday Culture; Nature, Literature and the Space of the National; Ethics of Nature*.

In the introductory part, Gersdorf writes that ecocriticism has evolved from a local interest in nature writings of Western America, that wanted to emphasize the ‘cultural value of nature writing’ (ibid; 9), to an international movement, and an

interdisciplinary community of scholars who agree that the current environmental crisis is the troubling material expression of modern culture’s philosophical assumptions, epistemological convictions, aesthetic principles, and ethical imperatives (ibid: 9)

During the 1990’s when this explanation of ecocriticism was popular, Gersdorf believes that this was a “loose” term. She cites Peter Barry’s thoughts on ecocriticism, with whom she disagrees. Instead she offers her goal for this book and for ecocriticism in general stating that ‘we strongly support the further development of ecocriticism as a methodology that re-examines the history of ideologically, aesthetically, and ethically motivated conceptualisations of nature’ (ibid: 10), as well as what effect ecocriticism has on the mind and body of humans, and environments.

The next topic of interest is discussed by David Jordan (Online 2). Jordan argues that regionalism should not be discussed as ‘artistic naivete’ (Online 2). He expresses disappointment that regionalism continues to be seen as naive descriptions of nature, when it ‘might mean more than just dressing up fiction with colourful local details’ (Online 2). He mentions the ideas of William Dean Howells and Hamlin Garland to portray the contrast of opinions on regionalism. Howells believed that regionalism served to reach a ‘greater end’ (Online 2), to prove that despite all differences humans are the same everywhere. Garland, on the other hand, believed that regionalism’s goal was to show the differences. Jordan himself

believes that it is possible to gain knowledge of ‘universal human values’ (Online 2) from regionalism, however it is only possible because of all the differences; the different native regions of the authors.

Another topic that is connected with regionalism is globalisation. Phillip Joseph begins his (2007) book *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age* with the fact that ever since the appearance of electronic infrastructure, it came with an ‘impoverished understanding, compromised forms of knowledge and loss of intimate communal relations’ (ibid: 2). The human presence in communication is a necessity. Joseph focuses on the local community as the centre of the discussion on globalisation. He especially emphasizes two regionalist movements in history when the idea of locality was prominent. The movements are that of the end of nineteenth century, and 1920`s, 1930`s. It is also important to distinguish between regionalism that focuses on nostalgic elements, and regionalism that might offer more insight into the local community. Joseph explains that it is surprising that regionalism is relevant in the American civil society which is based on the organization and unification of society. This leads to one of Joseph`s claims, that regionalism can make clear the possibility of localities in a civil society, and how can literature expand this topic.

The following topic is that of landscape literature, in *Projecting Words, Writing Images: Intersections of the Textual and the Visual in American Cultural Practices*, edited by John R. Leo and Marek Paryz (2011). This book is also a set of essays. It discusses such topics as *How Pictures Think; Spectacles of Poetry; Fiction, History, Visibility*, etc. It focuses on visual cultural studies, with an interest in photography, film, poetry. The chapter of interest in the present paper is *How Pictures Think*, which

require us to rethink their material formalities conventionally conceived of as “settings” [...], but now as blurring present and past, times and spaces, the haunted interiority and its porous “outside”, and even the overdetermined shorthand of “fantasy” and “actuality” (ibid: 1)

The essay *Photography and Story: Making and Marking Landscapes* written by Shelley Armitage, claims that the ‘topistic feeling’ (ibid: 55) that has the power to move one`s soul and mind, can make ‘its way to the surface as graphic expression’ (ibid: 55). She agrees with E.V. Walter that surfaces have the ability to ‘carry records of subjective experience, including our representations of place’ (ibid: 55). People want to make nature, landscape into something that they know, and can recognize. For example, an outsider to a landscape may find it hostile at the beginning, but as the times goes by, the landscape becomes familiar. She continues by explaining the idea of “photo-texts” that rather than separates the photo from the text, but combines them. However, photography essentially draws a much larger attention than a text. The photography expresses the existence of the photographer in that particular moment,

which the viewer of the photography can feel. It is especially prominent in landscape photography which ‘unlike other art forms about place, including narratives, which may depend on memory or imagination solely – is a trace of the artist’s *emplacement*, physically and creatively.’ (ibid: 58).

The last topic of interest is about the North as a frontier written about in the book *Writing the Northland: Jack London’s and Robert W. Service’s Imaginary Geography* by Barbara Stefanie Giehmann (2011). The topic is vast, because the north can be imagined as various images, for example, as Eldorado, as blank space “beyond the last boundary of the world”, as projection space for ideologies of white masculinity, as wilderness, etc. (ibid.). The main idea of this book is to explain how the image of North that was created by Robert W. Service and Jack London in the Klondike Gold Rush times is still so prominent in the minds of Americans. The author also expresses her surprise that Americans consider the Klondike Gold Rush to have happened in America, even though it was in the territories of Yukon, Canada. The reason for this is, that the two writers, London and Service, influenced the perception of Americans so greatly, that this misconception is still popular. Giehmann also emphasizes that their image of the North is imaginary, created. It is their representation of the North.

This concludes the literature review of the main literary works used in this thesis. The discussed topics on ecocriticism, regionalism, landscape fiction, the image of the North, and others, will be expanded on in the following chapters.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is devoted to the description of methodologies used in the present thesis of the representation of the image of nature in Annie Proulx's novel *The Shipping News*. The research methods applied in this thesis are textual analysis and the historical method.

However, there are another two methods of research used in this thesis that will be discussed in Chapter 2, and Chapter 3. They are ecocriticism and ecofeminism. The reason for this kind of layout is that ecocriticism and ecofeminism are strictly based on the analysis of nature writings. They are specifically relevant to the topic of nature and can give insight to the main questions and goals of this thesis. Therefore, it is significant that they are discussed separately.

As concerns textual analysis, Alan McKee (2003) explains that textual analysis is a method used to explain how humans understand and comprehend the world. There are numerous cultures, sub-cultures, and groups of people in the world, and all of them are different, have different opinions, ideas and thoughts. Even such grand topics like the meaning of life and what makes one a human, differ not only for each group, but for each human. Therefore, this data gathering process is used by researchers to reveal these differences. This method is mainly used by researchers from studies that deal with such abstract topics on human relations, the comprehension of the world and the self, etc., like cultural studies, mass communication, and media studies.

The method of textual analysis is used to interpret specifically a text, however, it can be done in various objects that contain text as information, for example, books, movies, magazines, advertisements, and even the writings on clothes. The researchers then can interpret, assume, or even guess the meaning of the text, and other relevant aspects of it like the meaning of the text to the author or the reader. The interpretations can vary greatly, because a single object can have numerous meanings, functions and goals, that depend on the place and time when it is used.

The historical method, on the other hand, is more precise. It is a systematic body of principles and rules designed to aid effectively in gathering the source materials of history, appraising them critically, and presenting a synthesis (generally in written form) of the results achieved (Online 4)

In general, it can be understood as a system which's goal is to attain historical truth. This method is used to write history, and to use history as a source of information. There are three stages of using the historical method. The first one is the heuristic stage that is 'the search for material on which to work to acquire sources of information' (ibid.). The second is criticism

that is ‘the appraisalment of the material or sources from the viewpoint of evidential value’ (ibid.), and the third one is synthesis and exposition that is ‘a formal statement of the findings of heuristic and criticism’ (ibid.)

The historical method is mainly used by historians, because for them a critical viewpoint of history is needed. It is important to not take everything that is written as true and as facts. A critical approach must be applied to topics concerning history. Also, of course, this method can be, and is, used by other sciences and researchers to gain a better understanding about their field.

Also, it is important to note, that historians cannot ‘restore the events “objectively”’ (Sreedharan, 2007: 147), because what is left behind by the past are just ‘some remnants and ideas [...] only the views of others or fragments of those which once existed’ (ibid: 147). This leads to the problem that all historians face – that the past cannot be restored fully, and ‘any possible recovery of it by the historian must largely be a matter of subjective opinion’ (ibid: 147).

In conclusion, these research methods are used because they were deemed the most appropriate for reaching the goal of this paper. The textual analysis method gives insight into the main body of text that is analysed in this paper – *The Shipping News*, and the historical method is effective when analysing secondary sources, especially those dealing with historical topics.

1. AN OVERVIEW OF THE REPRESENTATION OF NATURE IN AMERICAN LITERARY WRITING

Nature and literature have been connected since ancient times. Ever since man gained the ability to write, humanity still existed closely with nature and, therefore, portrayed nature in all its glory in the form of text. Until this day nature remains a significant plot device in literary works, contributing to the plot as a symbol, a place of setting providing crucial information, a place influencing the characters and events, etc., the possibilities are numerous. Since the current paper deals with Newfoundland, the representation of nature in American literary history will be briefly reviewed.

The history of nature's representation in American literature can be divided into certain periods, each pertaining to different portrayals of nature and its features. The first period begins from the discovery of the American continent in 1493, and lasts until 1850 (Murphy, Gifford, Yamazato, 1998). At that time nature was incorporated in writings for various reasons, which changed numerous times because of the alternating cultural conditions. For example, at the beginning of this period, the general idea was that nature was subordinated to serve mankind, and the uncivilized natives were of no importance. Columbus would describe the new lands through his own eyes, and mostly faulty, for example, referring to a bird as a nightingale, even though nightingales were birds found only in Europe (1998: 4).

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was an 'epistemological shift towards empiricism' (ibid: 5) in Europe, which gave rise to nature writing. Therefore, nature had to be explored and written about to discover new means of advancement for humankind. Also, after the American Revolution, more and more people found interest in the unknown American wilderness, which prompted them to write about their experiences and discoveries, for example, the *Journals* of Lewis and Clark (ibid.). The writings of this period are referred to as early American natural histories. Some of the people romanticized the portrayal of nature, like James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving, and others, like Susan Fenimore Cooper in her *Rural Hours*, kept to realism. Cooper 'marked a new maturity in the genre of nature writing' (ibid: 10), which led to nature writing of America to become a significant genre by the mid-nineteen century.

Continuing with nineteenth century literature, science was the chief component of the writings of the period, also influencing the literature of nature. In the Age of Science, it was a common idea that humankind had more or less taken control over nature and comprehended it

completely (ibid.). However, there were some writers like Emerson, Thoreau, Wordsworth, and others that were as much as in support of science as against it. Throughout the nineteenth century people valued the clear and systematic facts that science provided, but they also took into account the assets of nature writing, for example ‘the nature writer celebrated connections and sympathy with one’s fellow creatures’ (ibid: 19).

American literature of the 1930`s and 1940`s is known for portraying the Great Plains. It was the time of the Great Depression, and much of the literature focused on the corresponding emotions brought by the crisis, such as fear, terror, and negative feelings in general (ibid.). If not so long ago the writers described the American land in a romantic manner, then now ‘these Depression-era texts centered upon American dreams of progress with a modern sense of realism’ (ibid: 26). The Great Plains with its extreme weather, droughts and floods, were a symbol of the impoverished nation in the need of change. Perhaps, slowly, the changes were becoming more noticeable as some writers claimed that surviving in these conditions was a challenge ‘that would allow the rediscovery of American strength’ (ibid: 28), portraying it as an act of heroism.

The postmodern times after the year of 1945, were greatly influenced by the Second World War and its consequences. Also, postmodernism is a vast and multifaceted period of various theories, discoveries, and changes, that grows only longer and more difficult to comprehend, teach and learn (Duvall, 2012).

A common feature for the twentieth century is the almost innate idea that humans are separated from nature, seeing these two sides of a coin as completely different worlds. This idea developed as far as in the seventeenth century with the advancement of technology and science (Pepper, 1996). James T. Farrell notes that ‘contemporary American novelists [...] because they are “the products of urban life”, reject romantic symbolism as no longer meaningful’ (Goldsmith, 1991: 10). However, the continuous industrialization, railway building, and urbanization gave rise to many ecocentric movements and sciences, that will be discussed in the following chapters, because ‘the truth of the matter is surely that all regionalists are the products of modernity’ (Morley, 2012: 112). The continuous underestimation of nature, and the sense of “a loss” while living in an urbanized area might have been the reason for the nostalgia of nature, and its “rediscovery”, resulting in the creation of “ecological thinking”.

One of such movements is environmentalism which is widely recognized in the 21st century. Originating in the 1960`s, one of its main purposes is trying to attain a better future by being responsible. According to Milton, environmentalism is not as much as just “saving earth”, but it is also ‘a state of being’ (1993: 1). However, it seems that nowadays the chief

task of environmentalism is to keep humans away from nature, because any contact will inevitably create the destruction of some kind, therefore, some may see environmentalists as “overreacting”.

With the appearance of global warming threats, ecological thinking became more prominent and widely discussed. It was the “stepping stone” for nature to become relevant once again. Timothy Morton calls the forgotten nature as ‘the ghost of nature’ (2010: 5). Also ‘only now, when contemporary capitalism and consumerism cover the entire Earth and reach deeply into its life forms, it is possible, ironically and at last, to let go of this nonexistent ghost’ (2010: 5). The ecological thought emphasizes that humans are inevitably and deeply connected to nature, even though this fact had been fading away for some time in the public consciousness. According to Morton ‘thinking itself is an ecological event’ (2010: 8) which is the first step to overcoming these problems.

To conclude, the image of nature is always shifting, changing and at times even fading away. The most important aspect of trying to understand nature and its representation, is the fact that “nature” is a human notion, therefore its representation is also just a human projection of one`s mind, thoughts, feelings, experiences, etc. However, at times, the image of nature has been similar to large groups of people. This is the result of literature and various authors providing their image of nature, and the readers adapting that image, merging it with their own. These ideas of nature representing the humans mind will be explained in further chapters.

2. ECOCRITICISM

Another “movement” that emerged in the twentieth century is ecocriticism. This study of literature started out as a simple interest in environmental topics, nature and its value in culture, and now ecocriticism has grown into an international movement and community. It is

the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (Glotfelty, 1996: xix)

Its roots date back to nineteenth century American nature writing with authors and movements such as Jefferson, Bartram, Thoreau, Transcendentalism, and British Romanticism. Ecocriticism emerged in the United States, because Americans have always been interested in their land, ever since the discovery and exploration of the New World. It was a prominent opinion that the American culture is unique because of the unlimited access to nature (Gersdorf, Mayer, 2006). In the 20th century, such works as *Virgin Land* by Henry Nash Smith, *The Machine in the Garden* by Leo Marx, and *The Lay of the Land* by Anette Kolodny can be considered to be ‘proto-ecocritical works which inspired more recent scholars to shape specifically environmentalist approaches to literature’ (ibid: 26). The term “ecocriticism” first appeared in 1978, in William Rueckert’s article *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*.

Later in 1989, Glen A. Love ‘called for “an ecological literary criticism”’ (ibid: 26), inspiring young scholars and founding the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment to pay attention to ‘the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to literature [and interdisciplinary environmental research] that considers the relationship between human being and the natural world’ (ibid: 27). In a small amount of time this organization has developed immensely, with 20 countries participating. Therefore, this movement has grown from an interest in nature, to a more critical approach to literature, analysing it from different points of view. For example, old literary works and periods are being examined through this approach.

However, even though this field of research is flourishing, it is still underdeveloped

it often relies upon a naive realism and an unconscious [...] separation of the human “Me” from the exoticized “Not me” of a static and reified nature, and it has yet to seriously engage the technologized urban environments where most of its practitioners live (ibid: 28)

Therefore, the question of the influence of primal landscapes, childhood landscapes influencing one's further life, is raised. It is possible that the "practitioners" are still viewing nature without being closely related to nature and landscape.

One of the main problems that has not been resolved yet is the question of whether nature should be viewed through anthropocentrism, which has been a central point of analysis in many writings. The idea of Humanism is still deeply etched into the contemporary human mind. Usually people see themselves as 'superior being whose language and self-reflective consciousness place them above and at an abyssal remove from all other animals and the natural world' (ibid: 28).

To continue the topic of "Us" and "Them", this 'representation of identity [...] also reflects on interactions between humans and the environment' (ibid: 291). Irena Ragaišienė (ibid.) suggests that environment should not be understood as only something "natural" and "wild", but that it also is inevitably connected or interwoven with culture. Ecocriticism cannot only be viewed from the point of what is natural, but also from the point of human relations with nature and culture's interaction with nature, making humans bound to nature. Ragaišienė uses the poetry of Danute Paškevičiūtė, to explain that landscape and place is 'a social construction [...] that affect its development and shape self-identification' (ibid: 292).

As Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) explain, literary theory explores the connections between the work, the author and the world. The world, usually, is seen as being the same with society. Ecocriticism takes one step further and includes the notion of nature in to the sphere of "the world". Because 'literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter, *and ideas* interact' (ibid: xix). Therefore, everything is connected with everything, and culture cannot be separated from nature.

2.1. The Importance of Pollution in Ecocriticism

The first environmentalist writing is considered to be *A Fable for Tomorrow* by Rachel Carson, written in 1962. It is a fairy tale that introduces the reader to a town, where everyone lived together in peace and harmony. Then it continues by describing the harmonious life between people, animals and nature, portraying lush green landscapes and beautiful houses and farms. The fairy tale presents a place that seems changeless, and which no human activity can ruin. However, the story soon introduces a calamity that overtakes the town, killing the plants and animals. In the following paragraphs 'every element of the rural idyll is torn apart by some agent of change' (Garrard, 2012: 2), which is of unknown origin, emphasizing the mysteriousness of the event.

Not only does the first text of modern environmentalism begin with an idyllic description, it also includes the literary genres of apocalypse and pastoral (ibid.). Such topics and story-telling approaches may be dated back to the biblical stories in Genesis and Revelation. The story of the tormented town suggests that the catastrophe was of supernatural origin. It also, includes an epigram of a poem in which the beauty of a woman harms the surroundings, concluding that initially it was the humans themselves that destroyed the environment. The rest of the story is about how this town was not the only one suffering from the destruction of this illness of unknown origin.

Carson wrote that the culprits of the destruction were pesticides, that had been created after the Second World War. The book *Silent Spring* which included the story *A Fable for Tomorrow*, showed evidence that pesticides were a serious threat to wildlife, and humans, contrasting the unreal and utopian opinions of scientists. Ever since, Carson's explanations have been confirmed and people are more aware of the consequences of pesticide use.

Unfortunately, people are more attentive to problems that affect themselves, just like in the case of pesticides. If other environmental problems would gain so much interest and disdain, it would be a much easier and faster way of avoiding them, and not allowing the reappearance of such problems.

The moral of the story is that humans are the ones who destroy the environment, actively or passively is not the question. The story bears similarities with the history of nature writings. The peaceful town is symbolic to the peaceful times of regionalist writings, when the diversity of nature was a passionate discovery. The pesticide calamity reflects the modern environmental pollution caused by humans themselves.

The inspection of this problem is one of the main, if not the main, topics for ecocritics. Nowadays people live with 'the troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support systems' (ibid: xx). Glotfelty and Fromm emphasize that the time to decide what to do next is now. People can either stay the same or change for the better, 'if we're not part of the solution, we're part of the problem' (ibid: xx). One of the ways in how to change is by acknowledging that humanity is mainly responsible for damaging the environment.

2.2.Urbanature

In modern times urbanization is an on-going process, that seems to have no end, and is undeniably affecting the world. Ashton Nichols (2011) introduces a new term concerning the interaction between humans and nature. The new idea is 'urbanature', which

suggests that nature and urban life are not as distinct as human beings have long supposed. [...] all human and nonhuman lives, as well as all animate and inanimate objects around those lives, are linked in a complex web of interdependent interrelatedness (ibid: xiii)

He further gives examples of the interrelatedness of everything. For example, hawks are relaxing on the skyscrapers of New York after long flights, falcons are feeding on different buildings, and owls are living in Manhattan. At the same time, environmentalists are flying in air polluting planes to reach their destination of unspoiled natural beauty, to ‘get back to nature’ (ibid: xiii). The irony is undeniable.

Urbanature insists that ‘human beings are not *out of* nature when they stand in the streets of Manhattan any more than they are *in* nature when they stand above tree-line in Montana’ (ibid: xiii). One cannot “return” to nature, because nature is not a term that can be separated from everything else. Centuries, or even decades ago, the border between cities and nature was more evident; however, that idea has become outdated. Now urban and natural places have interwoven into a unifying term – urbanature.

3. ECOFEMINISM

A part of ecocriticism and the ecological thought is one of its many manifestations – ecofeminism. Feminist literary criticism is difficult to define. One reason for this is that the term is used in many ways. For example, some refer to a work written by a woman as being feminist, no matter what the topic of the work is. Others think that a work can be feminist no matter what the gender of the author is, as long as the author has been informed of feminist ideas (Vakoch, 2012).

Just like ecocriticism deals with the connections between nature and culture in literature, ecofeminism analyzes these questions from the point of view of feminism, based on male domination in society. There is not one feminism, there are many types of it, like Marxist feminism, liberal feminism, radical and social feminisms, black feminism, etc. Therefore, there cannot be only one general ecofeminist philosophy (Warren, 1997).

It has been discussed in the previous chapters that nowadays environment is in danger because of pollution, and other problems caused by mankind. Ecofeminists ‘claim that there are important connections between the unjustified dominations of women, people of colour, children, and the poor and the unjustified domination of nature’ and that ‘nature is a feminist issue’ (Warren, 2000: 1).

Something can be considered to be a “feminist issue” when an understanding of the issue ‘helps one understand the oppression, subordination, or domination of women’ (ibid: 1). For example, equal rights, and pay for work are feminist issues because by understanding them, one also can see the injustice towards women. Other problems, such as ‘racism, classism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism, anti-Semitism, and colonialism are feminist issues because understanding them helps one understand the subordination of women’ (ibid: 1). Concerning the topic of nature, naturism is also a feminist issue because ‘understanding them helps one understand the interconnections among the dominations of women and other subordinated groups of humans [...], and the domination of nonhuman nature’ (ibid: 1-2). Feminism views these problems through the prism of gender analysis.

However, why is special attention given to women, if other groups of people also experience injustice? It is because

A focus on “women” reveals important features of interconnected systems of human domination: First, among white people, people of colour, poor people, children, the elderly, colonized peoples, so-called Third World people, and other human groups harmed by environmental destruction, it is often women who suffer disproportionately higher risks and harms than men. Second, often female-gender roles (e.g., as managers of domestic economies) overlap with a particular environmental issue in a way that male-gender roles do not. Third,

some of the Western ideologies that underlie the conception and domination of “nature” are male-gender biased in ways that are distinct from other sorts of bias (ibid: 2)

Since, by the thoughts of feminists women are more likely to suffer more than other groups of people, more attention should be focused on women. Therefore, ecofeminists also view the corresponding problems through the question of gender.

Warren gives an example illustrating the power of ecofeminism.

In 1974, twenty-seven women of Reni in northern India took simple but effective action to stop tree felling. They threatened to hug the trees if the lumberjacks attempted to cut them down. The women`s protest, known as the Chipko movement [...] saved 12,000 square kilometres of sensitive watershed. The Chipko movement also gave visibility to two basic complaints of local people: commercial felling by contractors damages a large number of other trees, and the teak and eucalyptus monoculture plantations are replacing valuable indigenous forests (ibid: 3)

The main problem was not that the access for the locals to the forest was endangered, but that the ecological stability was in danger. To the Chipko women the forests were the main product of forests were soil, water, and oxygen, not timber. Therefore, this case shows how ecofeminism also incorporates and addresses other fields, for example, economy.

This concludes the discussion on twentieth century environmental movements, and literary studies focusing on nature. The following chapter will include topics about other important aspects of the representation of the image of nature.

4. REGIONALISM

Annie Proulx is known for her regionalist approach to her writings. Proulx gives importance to the local communities, their customs, speech, local landscape, nature, weather conditions, etc., meaning that the setting of the particular story is the main feature that defines the story and its plot. She has been interested in history since her student years, acquiring her university degrees in history related subjects. Proulx has always been interested in the everyday lives of ordinary people, who have lived through turbulent times, with great and well-known figures of history living beside the average, inconspicuous humans (Rood, 2001).

Regionalism has emerged again in a world consumed by globalism. People are starting to recognize that nature indeed has the power to affect one`s life from various aspects

Once viewed as a reaction against the forces of modernism, it has emerged in a globalized world as a repackaged, more aggressive endeavour to make a claim for the role of place and space – as opposed to gender, race, ethnicity, class, demography, or other cultural or physical distinctions – in the effort to understand ourselves and what it means to be human (Mahoney, T., Katz, W., 2008: 9)

Unlike these other aspects of life, regionalism focuses on self-understanding from the point of view of place, space, home, etc., therefore, it is inevitable that one`s self-understanding is deeply connected or influenced by nature and everything it incorporates.

To many regionalism may seem as just descriptions of the surroundings, however, more attention should be focused on the possibility that the author`s viewpoint can greatly affect the representation of the particular place, on the relationship between the local people and globalisation, and on a new kind of regionalism of which Annie Proulx is a part of. Therefore, the following sub-chapters will include these topics, and the last sub-chapter will refer to Annie Proulx as a member of neo-regionalism.

4.1. Regionalism and Authorship Influences on Nature Writing

The most common understanding of regionalism is that ‘*Local color* or *regional* literature is fiction and poetry that focuses on the characters, dialect, customs, topography, and other features particular to a specific region’ (Online 1). However, David Jordan (Online 2) in his article suggests that writings of regionalism might be more than just creative and artistic descriptions of the locale.

Jordan analyses regionalism from a critical standpoint, writing that

While some recent innovative approaches to regionalism have increased the term's currency in contemporary critical discourse, regionalism in its more traditional sense of art emanating from a deep personal attachment to a specific geographic locale continues to be dogged by lingering assumptions about artistic naivete (Online 2)

He notes that even though many new ways of understanding regionalism have been discovered, it continues to be analysed through this prism of art and nostalgia, which deludes the writer and the reader from seeing the reality.

Also, it is a common idea that the function of regionalism is to portray the various localities that differ from each other, making our planet, its people and nature, unique and diverse. However, regionalism can be looked at from a different perspective, as Jack Hodgins is ‘much more concerned with finding out what makes people the same anywhere’ (Online 2), despite his own affection to his native Vancouver island. Therefore, regionalism should actually be concerned with a greater purpose – to show that despite our differences, people everywhere are the same.

In the previous chapter of the representation of nature in American literary history, it was mentioned that in the nineteenth century writings depicting regionalism emerged and were quite popular. People sent in their short stories to the newspapers, like *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Colliers* (ibid.), to portray the everyday life of rural America. The reason for such writings was that ‘The surge of regionalist fiction in the United States at that time was fueled by rising nationalist sentiment and the belief that verisimilar depictions of diverse rural communities would capture a uniquely American national identity’ (ibid.). William Dean Howells was a prominent figure in regionalism at that time, and his views and ideas about regionalism still continue to influence writers of modern times. Howells also supported the idea of regionalism leading to the understanding that all people initially are the same despite their differences.

Another author of regionalism writing, Hamlin Garland, had opposing views to Howells. He believed that the representation of differences is the chief function of regionalism, and that ‘it is the differences which interest us; the similarities do not please’ (Online 2). Despite their different views on this topic, Howells and Garland did have one thing in common – the need to separate from the influence of British literature. However, both of them approached this problem differently, just like regionalism. Garland even believed that Britain is the country of yesterday, whereas America represents the future (Online 2). One of the main reasons for Garland’s inalterable opinions was his affection towards his native home of Midwest. It is inevitable for an author to feel influenced by nostalgia about childhood and the native home, therefore, for an author ‘all the associations of his youth and early manhood naturally appear in his art’ (ibid.). Also, another important aspect of regionalism writing is that only the locals can portray the place and setting completely and thoroughly. Otherwise the text becomes just a ‘descriptive realism’ (ibid.) and the author – a tourist.

Many writers of regionalism literature have tried to find an answer to what constitutes a text as true regionalism writing, and why descriptive details are not enough. For example, Mary Austin believes that regionalism literature is not just a catalogue of facts, but that it is an experience (ibid.). Therefore, the author must live in these conditions and experience them in opposition to being just an observer. However, it is not clear as to how this effect might be realised in text.

It has been discovered in cognitive psychology that people have a ‘sense of place’, that ‘describes the subliminal effect of environment on our daily lives’ (ibid.). Therefore, if each person has such a sense, it is clear that communities must have this unexplainable feeling of attachment to their native place as well. Since each region is different, the local people will be different from other communities; not only the lifestyle but also their reasoning, understanding and thinking will vary. A tourist, or just a person who has not had this intimate relationship with the particular place, cannot portray the place in its entirety, because ‘the nebulous "substance" of regionalism does not reside in a static collection of local details, but in an interaction between people and place, a dynamic process that will inevitably elude the author whose gaze is fixed exclusively on external phenomena’ (ibid.).

This leads to the idea that one’s “relationship” with childhood landscapes is undeniably influential. Such landscapes are referred to as “primal landscapes”, and will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.2.Regionalism and Globalism

Globalization is a term that is becoming more and more apparent in the modern world. Also in *The Shipping News* the small fishing villages were on the boundary of extinction because of the influence of bigger cities and the people in power of governmental affairs. The question of whether it is pointless to continue living in such unfavourable conditions to maintain the local peculiarities, or to move to a seemingly better place that offers much more possibilities, is raised in this novel.

Philip Joseph also analyses this problem in his *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age*. He writes that

Regionalism is essential in illustrating, through narrative fiction, the predicaments posed by broad communication networks and the continued importance of local forms of social organization. It also, however, presents us with many models of local community that are incompatible with a globalized world, a world where people and ideas circulate widely and populations often have little say in the regulation of state and market (2007: 3)

Joseph emphasizes that the smaller local communities have to struggle to survive and maintain their diversity in an age where everything seems to strive to unification. Many

regionalist texts present local communities as almost immune to the problems of the outside world, as if they were secluded from the rest of the world. Even though there are some communities like this, the numbers have become scarce. Another problem that Joseph approaches is that it is important ‘to distinguish between versions of regionalism’ (ibid: 3) that may present a place nostalgically, or that takes into consideration other actual topics influencing the portrayal of the place, making the reading more realistic.

Perhaps, the reason for regionalism’s rise of popularity is because of globalisation itself. It may seem that nowadays when everything and everyone is interconnected, surroundings are shrinking, and materialism gains the upper hand in everyday necessities, the role of nature, geography, place, etc., may not be so important and prominent in shaping one’s identity. However, ‘amid such perceived sameness, region and place – nature and custom – have come to matter even more for many people as they struggle to hold on to that which makes them distinct’ (Mahoney, T., Katz, W., 2008: 10).

Regionalism’s relevance in the times of globalisation is becoming more prominent just like the rise of ecological and environmental movements in the modern and urbanized world. Concluding from the analysed literature, it seems that people have a certain longing for nature and diversity.

As it has been mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 5, the following sub-chapter will discuss a new type of regionalism referring to Annie Proulx’s work.

4.3. Annie Proulx as a Neo-Regionalist

Annie Proulx embraces the regionalist approach to writing and literature. However, a place can no longer be portrayed through the prism of realism and simple fascination. Annie Proulx’s ‘fiction bears all the literary historical scars of its Modern and Postmodern heritage.’ (Hunt, 2009: 2). She is between the two periods: at times her landscapes and places may seem peaceful and delightful, however, behind them hides the harsh reality, history, and conditions of living. Hunt also notes that her characters are at times ‘deeply ironic, often hyperreal, caricatures of the real’ (ibid: 2). It seems that Proulx’s works do not tend to fall into a specific category; they always represent contrasts that blend together

While geography determines culture in Proulx’s work, geography itself is a category shaped by culture. It is this sense of complex reciprocity that lends tension to her work, as does her grappling with a series of other oppositions: a sense of beauty and an acknowledgment of squalor and insistence on reality and a non-realist aesthetic; a postmodern style and a critique of postmodernism (ibid: 2)

Therefore, Proulx has created a new kind of regionalism, which does not necessarily conform to the rules of traditional regionalism.

Her approach can also be viewed critically, because her “indecisiveness” at times can become confusing and complex. Almost any work written by Proulx is filled with awe-inspiring portrayals of nature, reminding the reader that sometimes words or realistic descriptions cannot fully depict the “real-ness” of nature, therefore making nature into something real that cannot be expressed by the real.

Even though, Proulx is a part of contemporary neo-regionalism, she supports the old-fashioned regionalism, calling the first half of the nineteenth century the ‘golden age of American landscape fiction’ (ibid: 4). As a time of new discoveries, fascination with the various regions of America, a strong affiliation with the place, it was a romantic period. However, she chooses to take a different stance towards her writing and characters.

5. LANDSCAPE FICTION

Landscape, as a part of what forms regionalism, is very prominent in Annie Proulx's novels, especially in *The Shipping News*. There exists a certain feeling of place or a 'topistic feeling' (Leo, Paryz, 2011: 55), that has the power to create a surge of emotions, positive, negative, sublime, uplifting or depressing. It depends on how the landscape is perceived through the human mind. According to E.V. Walter, places have a surface that

gathers symbols, for example the surfaces of cities which are covered with "marks, stains, symbols, images, messages". Thus surfaces carry records of subjective experiences, including our representations of place (ibid.)

Therefore, the image of landscape is just a creation of one's mind, and as cited above, there are many possible ways of trying to explain or "see" it, as a symbol, message, etc.

For example, Mary Austin who was a prominent American writer, especially concerning themes about the desert, foremost experienced the "topistic feeling" that changed her life. When Austin saw the Californian desert for the first time, it seemed 'foreboding and empty' (ibid: 56). However, after living near the desert and experiencing it firsthand for awhile, its image changed. It started to feel more familiar, almost sublime in its mysteriousness. Because of this experience, Austin found herself anew; she found her 'self behind the self – a more independent and free female life' (ibid: 56) which greatly contributed to her becoming a renowned writer. However, she did not only describe the desert, she became the "spokesperson" of the desert, mediating between humans and nature. She continued to write mainly about how the negative images of nature, especially the American desert, could be overcome and changed with experience, just like her own. Nature should be viewed as a subject not an object.

When writing about a certain place, usually there are some kinds of physical qualities that excel and are associated with that place. In the case of deserts it is the scorching sunlight 'which had promoted both fear and a romantic view' (ibid: 65). Personal experience of the landscape's physical qualities influences one's perception and image of the place, 'metaphysically bridging external and internal worlds' (ibid: 66). This may lead to an even more abstract experience, for example, desert's physical qualities of light and space may affect one's vision

from expectations, influence outer and inner realities. [...] Such "natural" effects are fundamentally expansive, changeable, mutable, shifting – the kinds of natural matter which defy any fixed notion of "desert" (ibid: 66)

Therefore, sometimes one may perceive the place differently than it is in reality. External factors such as light, space, etc, and internal factors like one`s imagination, mood, previous experiences, etc, blend together to create a unique representation of the particular landscape or place.

To sum up the main idea, landscapes inevitably leave an impression on humans, however, humans themselves are the ones to give meaning and “colour” to the landscape. The image of the landscape can vary depending on different factors, such as “closeness” with the place, physical factors of the place that affect one`s mind and vision, past experiences of landscapes, etc.

5.1.The Influence of Primal Landscapes

The situation is a bit different with people who have been in contact with the specific landscape since childhood. It has been mentioned in the previous chapters that usually writers are influenced by the landscapes and places that they have seen in their childhood. Pamela Banting (1998) introduces the reader to her own experience with the consequences of changing landscapes. Growing up in the spacious ‘middle of nowhere’ (ibid: 9), and hiking the Rocky Mountains in her later years, had made Banting accustomed to wilderness, spaciousness, and never-ending trails. It became more apparent after the few years spent in an industrialized area. Even while living in the city, the landscape had become unimportant, and secondary, however, after visiting conservation areas that could not even be compared to the “real” wilderness, ‘these experiences were like electric shocks to the body, mind and spirit’ (ibid: 9). The differences between natural landscapes and industrialized areas were so vivid that ‘without having grown up in such a place, I was at a loss as to how to be encompassed, overshadowed and sustained by a landscape so cut up and diminished from what must once have been its glory’ (ibid: 9). Don Gayton has called such childhood landscapes ‘primal landscapes’ (ibid: 9), and the ones that heavily contrast the landscapes experienced in one`s childhood may even evoke negative feelings.

6. FRONTIER LITERATURE

The stark contrast between civilization and wilderness, cities and nature, suggest that *The Shipping News* is a part of the frontier literature, a genre exploring the imaginative border separating the known world of humans from the unknown territories of nature.

Ever since the American colonial times and until the present day, there exists a collective imagination of a frontier. Centuries ago, it was the frontier separating the European travellers and the barbaric Indian natives of America. The frontier has gradually shifted towards the West, creating the well known Wild West myth. Essentially, the frontier, wherever it may be, has always segregated the civilized from the barbaric, the known from the unknown, etc, making the two sides contrasting, as they also were in *The Shipping News*. Mogen, Busby, and Bryant (1989) explain the idea of a frontier

as the limit of the settled and developed offered the possibility of new land, new resources, seemingly inexhaustible, yet to be gained. The frontier as the limit of existing society demarcated the line beyond which beckoned freedom from existing social and political restraints. In effect, the frontier was the gateway through which one might escape from time into space, from bounds to boundlessness, and from the works of corrupt and corrupting humanity to the works of God in uncorrupted nature (ibid: 6)

With this “definition” Mogen, Busby and Bryant pay attention to the importance of the idea of a frontier in American literature, and thought as well, even claiming it to be the source of the so-called American dream. The travellers setting their foot on American soil and exploring it further surely had expectations and dreams of a better future, ‘it was this [...] group, motivated by paradoxical dreams of freedom and ownership, that was to inspire America’s very own creation story’ (Asquith, 2014: n. p.). The idea of a place existing somewhere far away that could be the fulfilment of one’s hopes and dreams is still very prominent in American culture. The person does not even have to be near the frontier, nor does he have to be somehow connected with it; it is enough with just the idea of such a possibility.

6.1. The Frontier Hero

One of the most recognized symbols of the Western frontier times is the cowboy. The cowboy is not only a ‘Western hero but an American hero’ (Busby, Bryant, Mogen, 1989: 16) as well, therefore the terms “Western” and “American” can be seen as synonyms. The cowboy is such a renowned symbol because it bears striking similarities with ordinary humans, and ‘within the context of American literary tradition he represents the values of our last frontier, and his fate is ultimately an emblem of the last pure experience of the American Dream’ (ibid: 17). The stories about the frontier can be seen as paralleling the “real” emotions, and events of

one's life. For example, 'the frontier setting has always functioned as a symbolic territory expressing our aspirations and our deepest fears, as well as our ironic sense of tragedy brought by "progress"' (ibid: 17). The cowboy is the most prominent symbol of a human being progressing towards something new, in this case, towards the New World. While it may seem like an exciting journey, it is also filled with fear and perplexity.

Also, there are three main settings in American literature – the hero, setting, and narrative, where a hero acts in a "symbolic territory" to achieve the American Dream. The term "territory" is used to refer to the myth of the frontier. Mogen, Busby, and Bryant explain the correlation between the traditional American literature and the frontier in more detail

1. *Setting*: Opposition between Old World ("civilization") and a New World (associated with "nature" and/or "wilderness"), which also contains a transition area ("frontier"). Often symbolic rather than historical or geographical, these opposed worlds adapt, transform, and yet preserve the basic pattern of the Frontier Archetype.
2. *Hero*: A frontier figure (or figures, often with wilderness and/or civilized companions) who moves between these worlds.
3. *Narrative*: As "progress" triumphs, the hero's destiny resolves or dramatizes conflicts between the Old World and the New World – triumphantly, ironically, tragically, or comically – usually through some version of failed or achieved *metamorphosis* (ibid: 24)

It can be concluded from this idea, that not only real life cowboys represent such contrasts and dilemmas about progress. In this sense, any people living between wilderness and civilization can be seen as cowboys. As are, for example, the people still living in the less populated places in Newfoundland in *The Shipping News*.

6.2. The Northern Frontier

As it has been mentioned before, the frontier myth does not only apply to the Wild West and cowboys; they are to be taken as symbols. Therefore, the frontier can be experienced in any place with a similar setting with the idea of division between wilderness and civilization being present. In this case, Annie Proulx has written a novel taking place in Newfoundland, more specifically, its northern and less populated regions. *The Shipping News* deals with similar problems as do the heroes of Western frontier literature.

The Northern frontier is a part of an imaginary geography, closely associated with the Western frontier. When one thinks about the Wild West, 'wild shoot-outs, male rivalry and violent confrontations, individual freedom and the escape from old lives, the impulse to move on to another of successive frontiers, as well as the dream of finding gold' (Giehmann, 2011: 41) comes to mind. Another reason for the use of the word "frontier" is because in the late nineteenth century, the period of the Western frontier ended. The Americans had reached the Pacific Ocean. A national identity crisis swept over the American nation, and a new frontier

had to be found. The situation worsened when Americans were hit by two financial crises. At that time, the Klondike gold rush began, engraving the North as the next frontier.

Also, even though Klondike was mainly in Canada's territory of Yukon, it is mostly associated with Alaska, and Americans 'saw the Klondike Gold Rush always as "their" gold rush' (ibid: 44). The new Northern frontier seemed to be the answer to all the problems.

6.2.1. The Northland Image of Jack London and Robert W. Service

Barbara Stefanie Giehmann (2011) in her *Writing the Northland*, writes about how the image of the North came about. The North of North America, the territories of Canada and Alaska, are vast and include various natural areas that differ from each other in climate, flora, fauna, etc. Therefore, it is a very diverse territory, which is difficult to define. However, there is a common image of "The North" in the minds of people. It was created in the Klondike gold rush times by Jack London and Robert W. Service, whose image of the North had lasting impact through their stories and poetry, making them national heroes. The Northland (a term coined by both London and Service) territory 'transcends the national boundaries of Alaska and the Yukon, and extends roughly from south of the Alaskan Panhandle to Labrador in the east, the polar region in the north and [,] Kamchatka' (ibid: 9).

Giehmann refers to London's and Service's northern territories as 'imaginary geography' (ibid: 21). She explains that 'there are objective ('real' or 'actual') and subjective (imaginary) features for the assessment of one's environment' (ibid: 21). The objective features are the physical qualities of land, such as flora, fauna, the type of landscape like mountains, lakes, meadows, etc. They are objective because they are measurable features. For example, one can measure the height of a mountain, the length of a river, the temperature and other such features. However, it is not possible for humans to see landscapes as they are, especially when seeing a landscape for the first time, 'we instantly make comparisons with similar environments we have seen before or with what it reminds us of: we consider the subjective features of that particular environment and create imaginary geography' (ibid: 22). For example, when visiting New Zealand one might try to find similarities with Norway, Klondike can be compared to Eldorado, and so on. These are characteristics that "outsiders" attach to landscapes when they are influenced by the "topistic feeling" that has been explained in the previous chapters. Therefore, besides the "objective" (real) geography, there is another "subjective" (imaginary) geography. They exist simultaneously.

Another example of the "blurred lines" of objective and subjective geography is the Klondike Gold Rush. Even though it took place mainly in Yukon, in Canada, somehow people seem to associate it with Alaska and the United States. The reason for this is that the

‘image created of the North as second or final frontier of the USA was so strong, that in the public mind a blurring of boundaries took place that lasts till today’ (ibid: 48).

Therefore, even though Alaska and Yukon are two different territories, in two different countries, in the minds of unknowing outsiders, they are indistinguishable. Even the stories of the origins of Klondike differ in each country. Whatever the truth is, London and Service and their Gold Rush stories have become a part of American national identity.

6.2.2. The Ever-Changing Image of the North

North is a vast and remote territory, that has fascinated people ever since. Perhaps, its difference from other climate zones has influenced the creation of imaginary geographies about the North. These imaginary geographies change over time, therefore, the use of plural is needed.

The image of the North ‘is an ambivalence between positive and negative features that are attributed to the North’ (ibid: 30). The positive images of the North portray it as ‘promised land’, ‘ancient passage to the Orient’ (ibid: 30), contrasting with the negative images of the North being ‘land of failure, hell, non-living, a gulag’ (ibid: 30). So far, the negative images of the North have been more prominent than the positive ones. Although, one cannot say that the negative images completely dominate, they certainly influence the positive images, which appear more negative. Even in the Bible, the image of the North is portrayed as ambivalence between the positive and the negative; on one hand, being the place where all evil comes from, and on the other hand, being the gateway to paradise. In the Middle Ages, the image on the North was mainly negative due to the constant invasions by the northern people like the Teutons, the Norse, Saxons, the Vandals etc. All of the intruders were associated with negative traits and brutality, therefore, the image of the North was mostly maleficent.

So the image of the North is always in a constant change. It is also heavily dual, making it even more difficult to portray the image of the North in literature, to imagine it as a reader, and also to comprehend it as a human.

6.2.3. The Ocean as a Frontier

Another possible frontier experience might be attained in places where the land lies next to an ocean. A major contribution to the plot of *The Shipping News* is the importance of the Atlantic Ocean. The local life is greatly dependent on the maritime lifestyle.

Specifically the territories of America situated beside the Atlantic Ocean, also referred to as the ‘Atlantic World’ (Ahlberg, 2016: 6), have been written about ever since the discovery of the possibility of transatlantic travel that advanced the discovery of the American continent. In those times the Atlantic Ocean served as ‘a frontier of science and technology’

(Cohen, 2010: 4). The land was flourishing because of advancements in technologies, however, it was precisely the lack of technologies at that time that restricted oceanic travel and mapping. The lack of comprehension on the sizes and depths of oceans led people to believe that ocean was “endless” and ‘a zone beyond the reach of law’ (ibid: 4).

The vastness, seeming never-ending horizon of the ocean can induce the feeling of sublimity. The sublime is an unexplainable feeling. A feeling that “crosses the line” of reality and comprehension. So the ocean, just like landscapes in general, offers the possibility for “crossing” that imaginary line of reality. It could be said that the sublime line is another frontier of the ocean and landscape. It is the frontier between reality and the imaginary, unexplainable, even mystic.

Although landscapes mostly induce positive sublime feelings of elevation, the ocean has the power to induce negative sublime feelings, like terror and fear. However, the feeling is still sublime and necessary for the human being to try and grasp the grandeur of nature. Such feelings are called ‘sublime terror, in contrast to mountain landscapes, associated with elevation towards God’ (ibid: 113). The most prominent example would be an ocean in a storm. Many find such a spectacle entertaining, hard to ignore, grand, beautiful, and at the same time also terrifying (especially, if one is on a ship), frightening, and dreadful. The same goes for other cataclysms of natural causes like tornadoes, lightning, torrents, etc. They are enticing as much as they are scary.

Another important note to add is that the ocean can serve not only as a background landscape, but also as a character on its own, for example, as it does in *Moby Dick*. The ocean provides a place for reflection, and thought in general. Its never-ending vastness, unpredictable weather conditions, harsh waves or pleasant calmness induces one to feel insignificant and small. However, some people, like Ahab in *Moby Dick*, chose to stand against the power of nature, and prove that humans should not be looked down upon.

So the image of an ocean is not only capable of inducing both positive and negative sublime feelings but also possibly changing the characters of stories, like in *Moby Dick*, therefore becoming a character on its own.

7. ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF THE IMAGE OF NATURE IN *THE SHIPPING NEWS*

In the analysis part of this paper, the representation of the image of nature, and its influence on the local people and the main characters of Quoyle and Agnis, will be discussed. This chapter is divided into three sub-chapters that are devoted to the topics of the depiction of landscape in the novel, the local community, and how nature and landscape has shaped the lives of the local people and the main characters. The chapters will include literary examples from the novel on which the arguments of the author of this paper are based on. To further support the arguments, some quotations from other literature sources will be included.

7.1. The Depiction of Landscape: Land and Ocean

The first sub-chapter will reveal the representation on nature in *The Shipping News*. The reason for doing so, is to portray the setting or the world in which the story takes place. This chapter will mainly discuss the visual representations of nature, not so much its influence on the characters. Because it is important to understand the physical world of the story that undeniably is very prominent and important to the plot of *The Shipping News*.

As it was mentioned before, Proulx stands between the modern and the postmodern. Therefore, her landscapes are real because she writes about real places like Newfoundland, however, at the same time the places are also based on her imagination. Because the image of any landscape is born in the human`s mind, therefore, it is different for each person.

The beginning of the story takes place in Mockingburg, New York. It might seem unnecessary to include a description of a city in a chapter about nature. However, as it was clarified earlier, people are as much in nature when they are in a city. The term was “urbanature” – the interrelation between nature and urbanization.

The city was portrayed very negatively

Quoyle, stuck in bedraggled Mockingburg. A place in its third death. Stumbled in two hundred years from forests and woodland tribes, to farms, to a working-class city of machine tool and tire factories. A long recession emptied the downtown, killed the malls. [11] Factories for sale. Slum streets, youths with guns in their pockets, political word-rattle of some litany, sore mouths and broken ideas. (Proulx, 1993: 14)

It was a depressing, gloomy place without a future, and Quoyle was in the midst of it. It did not help him to improve in any way, in fact, his life only got worse. As the title of the city suggests, it seemed like everything was mocking Quoyle.

When seeing Newfoundland for the first time, it also appeared unwelcome, wet, cold, a bit uncivilized. To Agnis 'it was a strong place' (ibid: 28), fit for strong people. The reader has the opportunity to see Newfoundland through Agnis' eyes

This place, she thought, this rock, six thousand miles of coast blind-wrapped in fog. Sunkers under wrinkled water, boats threading tickles between ice-scabbed cliffs. Tundra and barrens, a land of stunted spruce men cut and drew away. (ibid: 27)

Most of the time the land was wet, and damp. It did not seem like a place fit for living

Wet, wet, the interior of the island, they said, bog and marsh, rivers and chains of ponds alive with metal-throated birds. The ships scraped on around the points. And the lookout saw shapes of caribou folding into fog. (ibid: 27)

Apart from the wetness of the landscape, there were also dangerous cliffs of the seaside

Cracked cliffs in volcanic glazes. On a ledge above the sea a murre laid her single egg. Harbors still locked in ice. Tombstone houses jutting from raw granite, the coast black, glinting like lumps of silver ore. (ibid: 29)

However, even though the cliffs were dangerous, most of them were named by the locals, for example there was 'Baker's Loaf', 'Cook-room Rock', 'Cleopatra', 'Old Gappy', 'Ireland Rock' (ibid: 103), etc. The names personify the rocks, making them seem important and standing there with a reason. The land and the rocks have been there since ancient times, therefore, the locals respect them, they are 'unchanged, unchanging' (ibid: 31).

The mountains appeared like 'blue melons' (ibid: 29) in the cloudy weather. Proulx also includes quite a number of descriptions about the sky, and clouds, for example 'Beyond the glass the sea lay pale as milk, pale the sky, scratched and scribbled with cloud welts. The empty bay, far shore creamed with fog' (ibid: 68), and 'Haze on the horizon. The sky a sheet of pearl, and through it filtered a diffuse yellow' (ibid: 101).

The following quote describes Newfoundland in winter time. The coldness and the ocean air create an especially unpleasant weather

By January it had always been winter. The sky blended imperceptibly into the neutral-colored ice that covered the ocean, solid near shore, jigsaw floes fifty miles out and heaving on the swells. Snow fell every day, sometimes slow flakes, as if idling between storms. Deepened, deepened; five, eight, eleven feet deep. The roads were channels between muffling banks, metal, wood silenced. And every ten days or so, by Quoy's reckoning, another storm (ibid: 172)

Another prominent feature of Newfoundland is the fog. It appears throughout the story, for example 'The fog tore apart, light charged the sea like blue neon' (ibid: 34), 'On Saturday the fog was as dense as cotton waste, carried a coldness that ate into the bones' (ibid: 144), 'The road shone under a moon like a motorcycle headlight. Freezing December

fog that coated the world with black ice, the raw cold of the northern coast' (ibid: 146). The image and the presence of fog only increases the feeling of wetness and damp.

Other natural and every-day features of Newfoundland are mentioned, like wind, and icebergs, 'Silence, except for the wind sharpening itself on the corner of the building, the gnawing sea' (ibid: 32), 'We spoke of the names of rocks on the way out, you'll remember, but there's other things in the sea that's a mortal danger, and they can never have names because they shift and prowl and vanish.'" He pointed at the icebergs on the horizon' (ibid: 105), 'On the horizon icebergs like white prisons. The immense blue fabric of the sea, rumpled and creased' (ibid: 29).

The main feature of landscape in this novel is the Atlantic ocean. It is a part of nature that changes all the time, therefore, the descriptions can be diverse, like 'black and white waves like a grim tweed' (ibid: 37). Also, the ocean in a storm is a sight to see, and the storms in Newfoundland seem to be especially strong

A little after daybreak there was a sea, a great towering wall that seemed made out of half the Atlantic, then a tremendous detonation. Dennis said he thought the ship had smashed into an iceberg or something exploded on board. Said he was deaf for a while afterward. But it was the sea she took. The *Polar Grinder's* steel hull cracked amidships under the weight of that wave, a crack almost an inch wide running from starboard to port (ibid: 57)

At times the sight of the sea and land induced memories and imagination for the characters. For example, when Quoyle was taken to Gaze Island, he imagined how humans had strived to survive at this place

These waters, thought Quoyle, haunted by lost ships, fishermen, explorers gurgled down into sea holes as black as a dog's throat. Bawling into salt broth. [...] Ice welding land to sea. Frost smoke. Clouds mottled by reflections of water holes in the plains of ice. The glare of ice erasing dimension, distance, subjecting senses to mirage and illusion. A rare place (ibid: 129)

Also, there were instances when the image of nature was creating sublime feelings in the characters and the reader. The first example is when Agnis performed a sea burial for her dog Warren. Since the reader knows that her dog was named after her lover Warren, who had died some time ago, this scene evokes sublime feelings, as if Agnis were saying goodbye to her lover

Miles up the coast the aunt looked at wind-stripped shore. As good a place as any. She parked at the top of the dunes and gazed down the shore. Tide coming in. The sun hung on the rim of the sea. Its flattened rays gilded the wet stones. Combers seethed under a strip of corn-yellow sky. The waves came on and on, crests streaked tangerine, breaking, receding with the knock of rolling cobbles. [...] She snorted into her handkerchief, waited in the gathering darkness, moving back a few steps at a time as the tide advanced, until Warren floated free, moved west along the shore, edging out and out, riding some unseen tidal rip. The sea looked as though it would sound if struck. Warren gliding away. Sailed out of sight, into the setting sun (ibid: 65)

This scene is as sad as it is dramatic, and perhaps even comical. Even Agnis thinks to herself that Warren floated towards the sun like in an old western movie.

The second example is when Quoyle took a walk by the shoreline, and decided to walk till the end of Quoyle's point. He felt as if he was at 'the end of the world, a wild place that seemed poised on the lip of the abyss. No human sign, nothing [...] The immensity of sky roared at him [...] Translucent thirty-foot combers the color of bottles crashed into stone' (ibid: 129).

This concludes the discussion of literary examples on the representation of the physical attributes of nature. Proulx uses various linguistic elements to convey the beauty and harshness of Newfoundland's landscape. The following sub-chapter will look into the lives of the local people of Killick Claw and how has the surrounding landscape influenced their lifestyle.

7.2. The Depiction of the Local Community, and Its Influence by the Newfoundlandian Landscape

As it was clarified in the previous sub-chapter, the landscape of Newfoundland is rugged, filled with rocky cliffs and boggy ground, the climate is harsh and cold, the nearby sea or ocean contributes to the unpleasantness of it all by making the air wet, and damp, the island is frequently visited by storms. Consequently, it is no easy task to live in Newfoundland. The people who do live there, are hardened by the unwelcoming landscape.

Even though it has been discussed before by many critics that it is impossible to fully capture the essence of a local community, at least to portray it in text via language, 'we nevertheless rely on language not only for understanding but for connotation, association, figuration – the richness that only language can provide.' (Rood, 2001: 3). Only then can the reader at least try to understand, to imagine the rural community, and their lifestyle.

Already at the beginning of Agnis' and Quoyle's journey to Newfoundland, the reader is given an introduction to Newfoundland's people as Proulx explains why Agnis left her home

Fifteen she was when they had moved from Quoyle's Point, seventeen when the family left for the States, a drop in the tides of Newfoundlanders away from the outports, islands and hidden coves, rushing like water away from isolation, illiteracy, trousers made of worn upholstery fabric, no teeth, away from contorted thoughts and rough hands, from desperation (Proulx, 1993: 28)

So the locals are already presented to be barbaric, uncivilized, poor, etc., etching this image into the readers mind. It is important to note that such lifestyle was lead many decades ago, and now the situation has improved. Another example of old Newfoundlander ways is portrayed as, from the many stories told to Quoyle about his ancestors, he imagines their unhuman image

The ghastly unknown tintured by thoughts of pirate Quoyles. Ancestors whose filthy blood ran in his veins, who murdered the shipwrecked, drowned their unwanted brats, fought and howled, beards braided in spikes with burning candles jammed into their hair. Pointed sticks, hardened in the fire (ibid: 109)

While most of the historic image is true, and many Newfoundlanders did live like this, it is still the imagination of Quoyles, therefore, not necessarily true. Although, Jack does give the information, that his great-great-grandfather had to practice cannibalism to stay alive.

However, as the story unfolds, it becomes clear that some Newfoundlanders still continue the barbaric traditions of their ancestors. The crime rate is high, and rape stories reveal themselves one at a time. It seems that Newfoundlanders have always been living “outside of law”, to them ‘See, what used to be called fun and high jinks they now calls vandalism and assault’ (ibid: 48). The rugged landscape had created people who were just as rugged, and to survive people had to think of and do anything, that would be a crime in a different place. As Nutbeem prepared to depart from Newfoundland, his words were ‘I’m going to remember this place for many things,’ said Nutbeem. “But most of all for the inventive violence and this tearing-off-of-clothes-in-court business’ (ibid: 151) .

To further emphasize the overall acceptance of delinquency, the people of Killick Claw loved to read the local paper called *Gammy Bird* which`s main focus was on the crime stories. It collected all the possible topics for articles like food, foreign news, the women`s gossip, and inevitably crime and accidents. The paper ‘was a hard bite. Looked life right in its shifty, bloodshot eye. A tough little paper.’ (ibid: 45). Also, ‘a favourite story with the *Gammy Bird* readers, the lunacy of those from away.’ (ibid: 73). Although, such topics like accidents and crime will always be used to bring in readers, and will always create interest, it is especially emphasized in *The Shippins News*.

Upon arriving in Killick Claw, the impression it leaves is that of a typical fishing village with ‘fish flakes, scaffolds of peeled spruce from the old days of making salt cod. He passed a house painted white and red. The door dead center. A straggle of docks and fishermen’s storage sheds. Humped rocks spread with veils of net.’ (ibid: 42). Throughout the village there was ‘a marine stink of oil and dirty water’ (ibid: 54).

As a part of regionalism writing, it is also relevant to portray the local speech peculiarities. Apart from the names of natural locations, like the names of rocks, villages, coves and bays, there are some colloquial words which are known only by the locals. For example, “‘What’s a tomcod?’” asked Quoyles. Billy leaned against a piling, yawned. “Small one, boy. Small cod. You got your tomcod, your salt cod, your rounders ... Any way you want to call it, it’s fish.” (ibid: 98), and also the word “omaloor”, which is ‘big, stun, clumsy, witless, simpleminded type of a fellow.’ (ibid: 43). This word has been used to name Omaloor

Bay which 'is called after Quoyles. Loonies. They was wild and inbred, halfwits and murderers. Half of them was low-minded.' (ibid: 102). The local men prominently used "ar" and "yar" instead of "yes". There were also other peculiar examples used throughout the story like "m`dear", "p`raps", and the mixing of singular and plural, for example, 'Me and Quoyle is down to Desperate Cove' (ibid: 111), 'AGNIS have a manly heart' (ibid: 112), 'they calls it' (ibid: 112), 'they was trying' (ibid: 112), etc.

The men of Killick Claw are "rough around the edges", shaped by the unforgiving landscape. They are prototypes of what one might call "real men". One of such men, is Jack Buggit. He is the founder of *Gammy Bird*, and a person closely related to the landscape of Newfoundland in a mysterious way.

It is revealed in the story that Jack has some kind of unexplainable powers regarding finding people who are missing at sea. He is tied to the sea in a tragic way. His oldest son drowned in the sea while fishing. Therefore, Jack forbid his younger son, Dennis, to ever fish and set his foot on the sea, because 'it's a hard, hard life with nothing to show at the end but broken health and poverty. And a damned good chance of drowning all alone in the freezing boil' (ibid: 56), and because he feared losing him. However, Dennis disobeyed his father, and worked on a cruise as a carpenter. The ship encountered a storm, and Dennis was lost in sea. As a surprise for everyone, Jack felt that something was wrong, and he went all alone in the sea, and found his son. Later on, in the present of the story, Jack also found Quoyle while he was drifting in the sea with his boat sinking. Jack continued his miracles when he awoke at his own funeral. He had drowned while catching lobster, and was undeniably dead when found. However, he broke the curse of his family, by awakening from the dead. It is not explained in the novel, how are such feats possible. The theme of what is possible versus what is supposedly impossible, bordering miracles and mystique, is to be found in *The Shipping News*. This theme will be expanded on in the following chapter about the main characters.

Lastly, the physical appearance of men of Killick Claw, is corresponding to their mentality. The most "iconic" character was Diddy Shovel, the local harbourmaster. His skin was 'like asphalt, fissured and cracked, thickened by a lifetime of weather, the scurf of age. Stubble worked through the craquelured surface. His eyelids collapsed in protective folds at the outer corners. Bristled eyebrows; enlarged pores gave the nose a sandy appearance' (ibid: 55). His appearance, speech, and unshaken passion for boats parallels the image of a comical pirate or a sailor. By gaining inspiration from such archetypes, Proulx created a man who 'had been renowned once for his great physical strength [...] As he grew older, he complemented, then replaced, his physical strength with a stentorian voice' (ibid: 54), and who could not even control his own strength. Diddy wanted to learn how to play banjo, however, he was afraid of

bursting the strings. While talking with Quoye, Diddy ‘Flexed his fingers, making the joints pop like knotwood in a fire. Showed a little finger like a parsnip’ (ibid: 56). Most of the men in Killick Claw are like Diddy, however, this character excelled in becoming a cliché.

The following sub-chapter will look at the local community as opposed to globalisation because this topic is prominent in the story, and affects the local people.

7.2.1. The Influence of Globalisation on the Residents of Killick Claw

Newfoundland is already considered to be quite far from the big urbanized cities, and some might even say that it is far from civilization. Killick Claw where the story takes place is even more segregated. However, even in such remote places, globalisation takes effect. Proulx tries to portray a traditional culture that is unique and different from the customary, but that has already been influenced in some way by the outside happenings. Many flee to Canada for better wages and for a better life, and few return.

One of the main sources of income and survival in Newfoundland are fish. Due to Canada allowing other countries to fish in Newfoundland’s waters, the populations of various fish and other maritime animals are depleting. The reduction of the quantity of fish inevitably influence the local fishermen, who usually fish near the coastline. For example, the Buggits family ‘fished these waters, sealed, shipped out, done every thing to keep going. It used to be a good living, fishing. It was all inshore fishing when I was young.’ (ibid: 46). Since all of the fish are caught in deeper waters, there are no fish to come and swim in the shallower shoreline waters anymore. This leads to another problem. Because of the depleting maritime animal populations, the local fishermen have to have a licence to fish, which has strict rules that have to be followed. In the story, Jack cannot stop renewing his licences for catching salmon and lobster, because if he ever stops, he cannot get it again. Although, in the story, there was one positive outcome – after Jack’s misfortune with the lobster traps, and his almost dying, he gave his licences to Dennis, therefore making it possible for Dennis to stay in Killick Claw and not emigrate to Toronto. Jack expresses his discontent with the new laws and the imposing power of Canada. For him in the old days

It was a hard life, but it had the satisfaction. But it was hard. Terrible hard in them old days. You’ll hear stories would turn your hair blue overnight and I’m the boy could tell ‘em. There was some wild, lawless places, a man did what he wanted. Guess you know about that, being who you are! But things changed. When the damn place give up on the hard times and swapped ‘em in for confederation with Canada what did we get? Slow and sure we got government (ibid: 46)

Seal hunting is another widely practised traditional custom and source of income. Seal hunting is perceived as being inhumane and malicious. Most environmentalist groups despise seal hunting, and it is understandable why. However, Proulx depicts Jack’s method of killing

the seals as humane and painless. Also, the numbers of seals that he hunts is limited, and the reason for the hunting is not for fashionable accessories for rich people, but as a source of food for the local people. Another source of food is the moose that has not been a local animal since long ago. Moose were brought in on ships around the First World War.

Alvin Yark is a local who excels as a crafty boat builder, which is yet another traditional activity for the Newfoundlers. In the story he explains to Quoye how to make the best boat, and it seems like boat building is his passion, because he knows practically everything that there is to know about this craft. It is revealed in the story that Newfoundlers especially know how to choose the best wood to make things. For example, the old Quoye house was still standing after at least half a century and it was a 'Miracle it's standing. That roofline is as straight as a ruler.' (ibid: 33). Such deep and detailed knowledge, and passion for one's craft is something that seems to be lost in modern times.

Jack especially is entangled in the negative side of globalisation. His job history shows how little appreciation is shown towards traditional and unique crafts and abilities. Before he began his Gammy Bird career, just like most of the locals, Jack was a fisherman. However, due to the reasons stated in the previous paragraphs, it could no longer sustain him.

So Jack went to the Canada Manpower and asked for a job. Even though fishing was all that Jack was capable of, they did not need fishermen, they wanted something that would bring profit. They promised jobs for the locals in a tannery. However, the tannery closed down after a few months.

The next job that Jack was promised was in St. John's in a machinery, which should industrialize Newfoundland. However, it never opened. Still believing that the Canada Manpower could help him, he went to look for a job again. This time they sent him to a cardboard-liner factory, which also closed down.

Finally, as Jack was struggling the most, with his wife being sick and losing his eldest son, Canada Manpower said that 'they had the perfect thing for me. Saving it all these trial years.' (ibid: 47). It was a leather glove factory that was supposed to help many of the locals. Jack was overjoyed because he had had experience with leather. However, when the locals arrived at the factory, it turned out that they had no one who knew how to make gloves, and they did not have leather. The factory closed. In the end, Jack founded the Gammy Bird which turned out to be successful, because he knew what interested people. No one from "outside" could know that.

This is the reality of such remote places. Nature provides the local communities with food and a source of income. However, because of globalisation, these opportunities are taken away, and more problems than necessary are caused.

Billy Pretty also expresses his discontent with the present. He reminisces of how it was in the old days, and notes that

Now, mind you, it was never easy at the Prettys', never easy on Gaze Island, but they had the cows and a bit of hay, and the berries, the fish and their potato patches, and they'd get their flour and bacon in the fall from the merchant over at Killick-Claw, and if it was hard times, they shared, they helped their neighbor. No, they didn't have any money, the sea was dangerous and men were lost, but it was a satisfying life in a way people today do not understand. There was a joinery of lives all worked together, smooth in places, or lumpy, but joined. The work and the living you did was the same things, not separated out like today (ibid: 106)

It is exactly the strong community ties that kept everything together. The land and the sea provided what was needed for living, and even though it was difficult at times, people helped each other out.

There are, of course, people who are in favour of globalisation, the modernization of Newfoundland, etc. For example, Ted Cart was a character who excelled the most in this sense. He was strongly in support for the oil industry overtaking the traditional fishing industry. In his mind 'Oil is strong and fish is weak. There's no contest. The whole world needs oil. There is big money in oil. There's too many men fishing and not enough fish. That's what it comes down to' (ibid: 125). However, he was the only one such character, who showed such strong and aggressive passion for it. And he was clearly shamed for it in the story.

Annie Proulx takes a strong stance against globalisation. That means that she is also not in favour of Newfoundland giving its autonomy to Canada and its people in power, who do not care about tradition, and the well-being of Newfoundlanders. The Shipping News portray the harsh reality through the stories of the local people, and urge the reader to appreciate traditional values and craft that is on the verge of extinction.

7.3. The Influence of Newfoundlandian Landscape on Quoyle and Agnis

The main character Quoyle is undergoing a journey of finding oneself, and hope. The character of Quoyle could be anyone, and his story could be anyone's.

All of his life Quoyle has been shy, fat, slow, 'pathetically self-conscious' (Rood, 2001: 62), without any goal in life, and without any memorable past. He is presented as the most insignificant and boring person imaginable. His lack of self-confidence makes his character even sadder. He lives the life of a third rate newspaperman, while letting other, like his employer, and humiliate him. In general, Quoyle is a nobody. Even his full name is not revealed throughout the whole novel. If it weren't for his aunt Agnis Hamm, Quoyle would have lived the rest of his life in the same manner. The reason for this being that Quoyle has

lived all his life in urbanized areas, cities, and since ‘a description of a landscape may, in typical novelistic fashion, reflect characters` mental states and help to create atmosphere, Proulx`s character psychology is even more powerfully a reflection of that character`s environment.’ (Hunt, 4), therefore, Proulx makes the reader see the city as disgusting and gloomy as Quoyale.

After meeting Agnis and moving to Newfoundland, Quoyale`s life changed completely. Even though he hated water, he was still going to this absolutely new and unknown place, ‘the idea of the north was taking him. He needed something to brace against.’ (Proulx, 1993: 27). This decision was the first step to Quoyale finding himself. Also, in the quote mentioned before, Quoyale saw Newfoundland as something “hard”, “complicated”, it was going to be a struggle. However, he wanted that. Another thing that proves Quoyale`s determination to change his life is that despite his fear of water, he decided to move to an island. For him Newfoundland was ‘A watery place. And Quoyale feared water, could not swim. Again and again the father had broken his clenched grip and thrown him into pools, brooks, lakes and surf. Quoyale knew the flavor of brack and waterweed.’ (ibid: 9).

An important aspect of understanding why landscape contributed to the betterment of Quoyale, is the “pilgrim” and “improver” contrast. Hunt states that ‘A pilgrim mindset is a prerequisite for achieving [...] “conjunction”, a state of belonging within landscape. An improver outlook will only cause [...] “disjunction”, a severance of human from land’ (Hunt, 39). Quoyale came to Newfoundland as an “improver”, which is the reason for the highly negative portrayals of the landscape through Quoyale`s eyes. He had not had any contact with nature, at least a positive one, so he saw Newfoundland as a threat, a dangerous place. However, with time and getting accustomed, he became a “pilgrim”, a human who understands the value of nature and feels “at home”. There were two such powerful moments that lead the reader believe that Quoyale was beginning to adjust. One of them was when he walked to Quoyale`s point, and the other when his family, Wavey and her son were picking berries. That moment seemed “right” for Quoyale, he saw ‘The small figures against the vast rock with the sea beyond. All the complex wires of life were stripped out and he could see the structure of life. Nothing but rock and sea, the tiny figures of humans and animals against them for a brief time.’ (Proulx, 1993: 122). It was a sublime moment, when Quoyale felt that everything was connected and there for a purpose.

The house of Quoyale`s is a symbol. It represented the old and dark ways of pirate Quoyales. It was ‘half ruined, isolated, the walls and doors of it pumiced by stony lives of dead generations.’ (ibid: 36). The fact that it was still standing in place after all of the years, meant

that Agnis still could not forget her past, and let it go. Also, since the house was moved there from a different place by Quoyles, it seemed to be “out of place”, and unwanted. For Quoyles

The house was heavy around him, the pressure of the past filling the rooms like odorless gas. The sea breathed in the distance. The house meant something to the aunt. Did that bind him? The coast around the house seemed beautiful to him. But the house was wrong. Had always been wrong, he thought. Dragged by human labor across miles of ice, the outcasts straining against the ropes and shouting curses at the godly mob. Winched onto the rock. Groaning. A bound prisoner straining to get free (ibid: 160)

When the storm and the winds tore down the house, it symbolically took away the strain of the past for both Quoyles and Agnis. Their idea to build a summer house in the same place proves that they are still connected to the place, however, in a more positive way.

To return to the beginning of the story, there is a contradiction in the escape to Newfoundland. Quoyles goes to Newfoundland to finally find peace in life, acceptance, and a new better life in general, even though the living conditions there are harsh. Therefore, this escape is “hyperreal”, which is ‘a postmodern substitution for reality – something that resembles the real but that contains no core links to the physical world’ (Hunt, 25). Essentially, such places are the complete opposite of what one is looking for, however, it is possible to attain that which is sought for.

The “real” and the “imaginary” interrelate throughout the story. It is clear that some of the events taking place in the novel were hardly “realistic”, or, at least, they left the reader on the brink of a question. For example, how did Jack come back to life, and how could he find missing people? Did uncle Nolan really possess some magical powers of calling storms, and sowing misfortune with his knots? Did Bunny really have precognitive abilities? Such questions makes the reader question other seemingly possible happenings of the novel. The very last paragraph summarizes the “essence” of this novel in a peculiar way

For if Jack Buggit could escape from the pickle jar, if a bird with a broken neck could fly away, what else might be possible? Water may be older than light, diamonds crack in hot goat’s blood, mountaintops give off cold fire, forests appear in midocean, it may happen that a crab is caught with the shadow of a hand on its back, that the wind be imprisoned in a bit of knotted string. And it may be that love sometimes occurs without pain or misery (ibid: 202)

The “what if” never leaves the reader throughout the story. If such miracles happen, then perhaps it is possible to love without pain. At least, it might be possible in Newfoundland.

Quoyles found his happiness in life, and it was exactly Newfoundland, its nature and people that helped him achieve that. Agnis, on the other hand, went through a reversed story, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

7.3.1. The Influence of Newfoundlandian Landscape on Agnis Hamm as a Female Character

The lifestyle of the people in *The Shipping News* can be seen as masculine. The landscape and the weather is rather harsh, so people have to be strong and survive. There is no time and place for feminine activities.

As opposed to Quoyles life that is discussed in open, Agnis life is shrouded in mystery. The reader has to “read between the lines”, piece together fractions of information that is given. However, that does not mean that she is secondary to the story, and put aside. Throughout the story, Proulx ‘lays a great deal of thematic groundwork that serves to underpin Agnis’s pivotal role in the overall narrative’ (Online 3). For example, she remembers how she was raped by her brother on the frozen pond, while walking by the pond in the present of the story

The aunt let herself remember an October, the pond frozen, ice as colorless as a sadiron’s plate, the clouds in thin rolls like grey pencils in a box. Crowberries encased in ice skins. The wind collapsed. Deepest silence, the vapor of her breath floated from her mouth. Distant sougning of waves. No dead grass trembled, no gull or tun flew. A pearl grey landscape (Proulx, 1993: 138)

It is also known that Agnis returned to her homeland with a sense of belonging that even brought tears to her eyes, despite her horrible memories of the place

She had not been in these waters since she was a young girl, but it rushed back, the sea’s hypnotic boil, the smell of blood, weather and salt, fish heads, spruce smoke and reeking armpits, the rattle of wash-ball rocks in hissing wave, turrs, the crackery taste of brewis, the bedroom under the eaves. But now they said that hard life was done. The forces of fate weakened by unemployment insurance, a flaring hope in offshore oil money. All was progress and possession, all shove and push, now (ibid: 28)

Her returning home shows the the power of primal landscapes.

The theme of rape and sexual abuse is used again and again throughout the story. For example, it is prominent in Nutbeem’s articles, and when Petal sold her daughters to a pedophile. These stories serve as a platform for the story of Agnis Hamm. Therefore, when the reader is told that Agnis was all alone on the pond, the reader already feels what will happen, even before it actually happens or is written about. This gives great importance to details in this story, because every detail may lead to something even greater.

These pieces of information are available only to the reader. The other characters do not know this crucial information about her. Proulx gives a privileged insight into her life, and being. Just as Quoyles starts to find his identity, Agnes seems to become quieter and more secretive. For example, she does not tell him about his father’s remains in the outside toilet, she keeps it a secret, and the reader knows that. Also, when Quoyles confronts her in the kitchen with his knowledge about her rape, she is surprised and hurt. Quoyles does not

understand that he has stepped over the line, and acted childishly, without knowing how to console her. However, the reader can sympathize with her, because both Agnis and the reader share mutual feelings and knowledge. In this situation, Agnis becomes the centre of attention; Quoyle is no longer the sole main character of that universe.

This means that even though Agnis mostly keeps quiet about things, does not mean that she does not think about them. She may seem like the “Stouthearted Woman”, who is a strong and invulnerable personality, however, her breaking down in the kitchen proves that she still is a vulnerable woman, a human with her own pains and sorrows in life; she just chooses to keep quiet.

The details that are returned to throughout the story, always suggest that there is something more, as it is with the story of Agnis. There is always something more to her than the characters and even the reader knows. This makes her a fascinating and surprising character, because she always offers more. It is the same with other female characters of *The Shipping News*. For example, Beatie who always seems to be in the kitchen, is kind and caring. She makes delicious food, takes care of Bunny and Sunshine, and she does it with pleasure, because that way she can be a part of the community. However, she is also a talented story teller, and a mimic. At the town fair, all of the people listening to her tales, were overjoyed by her performance. Another example would be Wavey Prowse. She appears to be the “Tall and Quiet Woman”, however, she has other fascinating qualities. For example, she seems to have skilful persuasion abilities, because she managed to create a special class in school for her son who suffers from Down`s Syndrome. In such a small and conservative place like Killick Claw, it is a noteworthy feat and achievement. Also, it is revealed that she can play the accordion which is no easy task. It may seem like an insignificant ability, because the moment portrayed in the story was very short and overshadowed by bigger events. Wavey also has her secrets of past, just like Agnis, and every time she appears in the story she seems to emit a certain presence, that has the ability to offer more insight about her life and thoughts.

These female characters may seem to be “flat”, one-dimensional and a bit masculine, because of the limited opportunities to emit female characteristics at such a harsh and seemingly unwelcome place like Killick Claw. However, it is revealed throughout the story, that these characters have the ability to offer much more than it may seem on the first look. They are not at all one-dimensional, in fact, since not everything is revealed about them in the story, they are even more enticing than the main character Quoyle.

CONCLUSIONS

The **goal** of this paper was to reveal the representation of the image of nature in Annie Proulx's novel *The Shipping News*. During the writing of this thesis, it was discovered that the notion of "nature" includes in itself also the world of people, i.e., culture, the interrelation between humans and nature, and even cities or urbanized areas.

The **hypothesis** of this thesis that the image of nature is a human creation was proven to be correct. The image is "imaginary" in the broadest sense, it is impossible to portray the "real" nature, because there is no "real".

The author tried to achieve the goal of this paper by:

1. reading and analyzing the secondary sources about the representation of nature in American literary writing, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, regionalism, landscape fiction, frontier literature, and the novel *The Shipping News*;
2. gathering literary examples from the novel that are relevant to the current study and topics;
3. systematizing the literary examples into groups according to their topic and theme;
4. interpreting the meaning of the literary examples according to the knowledge gained by reading the secondary sources;
5. combining the analysis of the literary examples with the analysis of the image of nature and its influence in the novel as a whole;
6. drawing conclusions.

The **analysis methods** of textual analysis, historical method, ecocriticism and ecofeminism approach were chosen to carry out his research. Textual analysis method was used to interpret the literary examples from the novel according to the gained knowledge from the secondary sources. The historical analysis method was necessary because of the research about the history of the image of nature, and other approaches of literary criticism. Ecocriticism was needed because this research deals with the topic of nature and the analysis of its image, and ecofeminism was deemed necessary because of the importance of female characters.

The analysis on the secondary sources on the topics of the history of the image of nature in American writings, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, regionalism, landscape fiction, and frontier literature revealed that the image of nature is always shifting and changing. It greatly depends on the socioeconomic situation. This leads to the idea that the image of nature is created by

the human mind. There are periods of times when a certain image of a specific part of nature will be the same for some groups of people. That is because of the authors of nature writing, who implement “their” image of nature into the readers.

Also, it was discovered that Annie Proulx is a neo-regionalist, meaning that she not only describes the image of nature, but connects it with the world of humans. That means, that nature is not a notion that is separate from culture, and human affairs; everything is connected. Therefore when analyzing the image of nature, people should be taken into consideration too.

Consequently, results of the novel’s analysis showed that the chapter could be divided into smaller sections. The first one dealt with the discussion on the representation of the physical attributes of the portrayed nature in the novel. It revealed that Newfoundland generated a hostile image, not only for the outsiders, but also for the locals. The landscape was mostly describes as being wet, damp and cold. However, in the midst of the unpleasant weather, there were moments when nature was seen as sublime, given the grand portrayal of it through the characters.

The second section focused on the local community of Killick Claw. It was revealed that the locals are strong, resistant and rugged just like their surroundings. At times the characters bordered clichés, because many of them seemed like the archetype for the typical sailor – a strong, witty man with white hair and a deep voice, who has great experience with the harsh seas. Also, another topic that was necessary to discuss was the influence of globalisation on the rural community. The village of Killick Claw and all of Newfoundland was definitely being put under the pressure of globalisation. The fishing industry and the traditional crafts were on the brink of extinction.

The third section revealed the influence of nature on the main characters of Quoye and Agnis. As the main character, Quoye went through a transformation. While living in the gloomy and dark Mockingburg Quoye was a nobody, drowning in self-pity. However after moving to Killick Claw, he started to change for the better. The unforgiving landscape “shaped him” into a more reliable human being, and the local people gave him hope and a sense of home. Agnis Hamm, on the other hand, was very enthusiastic at the beginning of the novel. She went back to her childhood home despite the horrible events that she lived through there. This proves that primal landscapes have great influence. As a female character Agnis was seen as “manly”, however, it was slowly revealed that even though she seemed to be a strong person, she had her own troubles and pains. Other female characters also had to be strong to blend in and survive in the harsh conditions; however, they were all capable of being womanly.

In conclusion, it could be possible to continue this kind of analysis with other of Proulx`s works, for example *Brokeback Mountain*, *Wyoming Stories*, *Accordion Crimes*, etc., because Annie Proulx is renowned to be an influential regionalist, and especially – neo-regionalist. The connection between all of these literary works could be expanded on.

THESES

1. Ecocriticism takes one step further and includes the notion of nature in to the sphere of “the world”. Because ‘literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system [...]’ (Glotfelty, Fromm, 1996: xix)
2. [...] regionalism focuses on self-understanding from the point of view of place, space, home, etc., therefore, it is inevitable that one`s self-understanding is deeply connected or influenced by nature and everything it incorporates
3. Regionalism`s relevance in the times of globalisation is becoming more prominent just like the rise of ecological and environmental movements in the modern and urbanized world. Concluding from the analysed literature, it seems that people have a certain longing for nature and diversity.
4. There exists a certain feeling of place or a ‘topistic feeling’ (Leo, Paryz, 2011: 55), that has the power to create a surge of emotions, positive, negative, sublime, uplifting or depressing. It depends on how the landscape is perceived through the human mind.
5. The stark contrast between civilization and wilderness, cities and nature, suggest that *The Shipping News* is a part of the frontier literature, a genre exploring the imaginative border separating the known world of humans from the unknown territories of nature.
6. Proulx stands between the modern and the postmodern. Therefore, her landscapes are real because she writes about real places like Newfoundland, however, at the same time the places are also based on her imagination.
7. [...] the landscape of Newfoundland is rugged, filled with rocky cliffs and boggy ground, the climate is harsh and cold, the nearby sea or ocean contributes to the unpleasantness of it all by making the air wet, and damp, the island is frequently visited by storms.[...] The people who do live there, are hardened by the unwelcoming landscape
8. *The Shipping News* portray the harsh reality through the stories of the local people, and urge the reader to appreciate traditional values and craft that is on the verge of extinction.
9. [...] there is a contradiction in the escape to Newfoundland. Quoye goes to Newfoundland to finally find peace in life, acceptance, and a new better life in general, even though the living conditions there are harsh. Therefore, this escape is “hyperreal” [...].

10. These female characters may seem to be “flat”, one-dimensional and a bit masculine, because of the limited opportunities to emit female characteristics at such a harsh and seemingly unwelcome place like Killick Claw. However, [...] these characters have the ability to offer much more than it may seem on the first look.

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Dokumentārā lapa

Bakalaura darbs „The Representation of the Image of Nature in Annie Proulx`s Novel *The Shipping News*” (Dabas tēli A. Praulksas stāstā „Kuģu ziņas”) izstrādāts LU Humanitāro zinātņu fakultātē.

Ar savu parakstu apliecinu, ka pētījums veikts patstāvīgi, izmantoti tikai tajā norādītie informācijas avoti un iesniegtā darba elektroniskā kopija atbilst izdrukai.

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Rekomendēju/nerekomendēju darbu aizstāvēšanai

Vadītāja: Prof. Irina Novikova

Recenzents:

Studiju metodiķe:

Darbs iesniegts Anglistikas/Sastatāmās valodniecības un tulkošanas nodaļā 25. 05. 2016.

Darbu pieņēma:

Darbs aizstāvēts bakalaura gala pārbaudījuma komisijas sēdē

2014. gada..... jūnijā, prot. Nr., vērtējums

Komisijas sekretāre: