Abstract

The subject of this BA thesis is contemporary American Indian literature. My aim is to explore how selected representatives of this minority literature portray death in their works. To be able to understand the native population’s approach to death, it is important to consider their traditional spirituality and how it stands on the question of death. The spirituality began to transform with the arrival of the European settlers. The traditional way of life of American Indians was disrupted and they became the object of exploitation. Not only were they subjected to physical elimination but their culture was also purposefully repressed. All this contributed to a transformation of the understanding of death which is reflected in the contemporary American Indian literature. The works which will be discussed are Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*, Louise Erdrich’s *Tracks* and N. Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn*.

The thesis is divided into theoretical and practical part. The purpose of the theoretical part is to offer a basic introduction to traditional native spirituality before the colonization of North America, describing its main features. It also presents the cultural conflict between the Indians and the white settlers and how the spirituality evolved under the pressure of Christianity and assimilating practices of the newly formed United States. The practical part consists of three chapters, with each focusing on one of the selected novels, analysing the author’s specific approaches to the portrayal of death.