Abstract

“Every man’s work, whether it be literature, or music or pictures or architecture or anything else, is always a portrait of himself.” (Butler)

The aim of this thesis is to put forward the importance of the author behind the book and to see clearly the effect of an author’s life upon his work. The theme in focus is loneliness. This theme is to be analyzed in a dual manner. Firstly as an account of Steinbeck’s own experience of loneliness. Secondly as a theme of focus in the novels; *Of Mice and Men*, *Cannery Row* and *Tortilla Flat*. Where applicable, a correlation between the author’s own experience of loneliness and the struggle of his characters is to be highlighted.

This thesis is separated into five parts. The initial part is a brief definition of *loneliness* which serves the purpose of introducing the theme of study. It also states the terms that will be used throughout the thesis. The second part is an analysis of Steinbeck’s own experience of loneliness as obtained through a compilation of his letters. These two parts conclude the theoretic background of John Steinbeck and his intimate relation to the phenomenon of loneliness.

The further three parts are analyses of the three listed novels. The focus is on each applicable character and his/her portrayal of loneliness. By analysing each individual character in depth, the thesis is to depict the complexity of loneliness. The thesis tries to summarize the multifaceted nature of loneliness as personified by the characters. The interconnectedness between the author and his created characters is to be presented wherever supporting sources prove sufficient.

The overall outcome is to be a congruent analysis clearly stating the importance of an author’s own experience of loneliness and the physical demonstration of loneliness as depicted in the body of work.