

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Department of English Language and Literature



BACHELOR THESIS

Pacifism in the work of John Steinbeck and other anti-war manifestos in
the United States of America

Author: Jan Kruchina

Supervisor: Mgr. Jakub Ženíšek

Prague 2013

Declaration:

I hereby declare that this bachelor thesis, titled “Pacifism in the work of John Steinbeck and other anti-war manifestos in the United States of America”, is the result of my own work and that I used only the cited sources.

Prague, 3rd May 2013

.....

Acknowledgements:

I would hereby like to thank Mgr. Jakub Ženíšek for his time, patience and valuable advice regarding the compilation of this bachelor thesis.

Abstract

“All war is a symptom of man’s failure as a thinking animal.” (Steinbeck)

The aim of this thesis is an evaluation of John Steinbeck’s wartime works in connection with the development of anti-war tendencies in American literature from the seventeenth century up to the first half of the twentieth century. The theme will be examined from two perspectives. Firstly, as a description of the author’s personal experience and its influence on his attitude towards military conflicts. Secondly, as a complex analysis of the author’s wartime works: *The Moon is Down*, *Once There Was a War* and *Bombs Away*.

Key Words: pacifism, anti-war literature, John Steinbeck, war correspondent, censor, propaganda, politics, patriotism.

Anotace

Cílem této práce je zhodnocení válečné tvorby Johna Steinbecka v souvislosti s vývojem protiválečných tendencí v americké literatuře od 17. století do první poloviny 20. století. Na téma bude poukázáno ze dvou pohledů. Nejdříve budou zkoumány autorovy osobní prožitky a jejich vliv na vývoj autorova postoje vůči válečným konfliktům. Poté bude následovat souhrnná analýza autorových děl z válečného období – Měsíc Zapadá, Byla kdysi válka a Svrhněte bomby.

Klíčová slova: pacifismus, protiválečná literatura, John Steinbeck, válečný dopisovatel, cenzura, propaganda, politika, patriotismus.

Table of contents

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
II.	THEORETICAL PART	3
2.1.	Introduction to the Theoretical part.....	3
2.2.	Definition of the term pacifism	4
2.3.	Types of pacifism	5
2.4.	Development of the American Anti-war Literature	7
2.4.1.	The early American war literature	7
2.4.2.	The War of 1812	7
2.4.3.	The Mexican War.....	8
2.4.4.	The Civil War.....	9
2.4.5.	The Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars	11
2.4.6.	The First World War and its aftermath	13
III.	PRACTICAL PART	15
3.1.	John Steinbeck and the Second World War.....	15
3.1.1.	John Steinbeck's life prior to the Second World War.....	15
3.1.2.	John Steinbeck's engagement in the Second World War	16
3.2.	Critical analysis of John Steinbeck's war writings	20
3.2.1.	The Moon is Down.....	20
3.2.2.	Bombs Away : The Story of a Bomber Team.....	24
3.2.3.	Once There Was a War	28
IV.	CONCLUSION	33
V.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	38

I. INTRODUCTION

The subject of the thesis is an analysis of John Steinbeck's war writings. The main theme that will be examined in the thesis is pacifism, its types, differences and characteristics with reference to Steinbeck's work. I have chosen this topic because I am interested in history of the twentieth century, in particular in its conflicts and above that, John Steinbeck is one of my favourite writers. As a history enthusiast and reader of Steinbeck's works, I wanted to combine these hobbies into a one coherent thesis.

The thesis is divided into three main parts: The theoretical part, the practical part and the conclusion. The first section of the theoretical part contains the definition of the term pacifism as presented in several dictionaries and other sources. The following subchapter of the thesis concentrates on the division of the term pacifism and the differences between the types and varieties of the term. These subchapters also clarify the terminology used throughout the thesis. The latter section of the theoretical part is dedicated to the historical development and changes of the American anti-war literature from the mid-seventeenth century until the early twentieth century. This chapter includes a brief outline of the most notable anti-war writings of the American literature.

The practical part of the thesis begins with a description of the author's personal wartime experiences with brief comments on their influence on his work.

The further three subchapters of this thesis are critical analyses of the above mentioned literary works with special focus placed on the situations and characters which reveal author's attitude towards the war. Each part also includes a brief comment on the circumstances of its creation, publishing and perception.

The last part of this bachelor thesis is the conclusion which will examine the facts obtained from both the theoretical and the practical part of the thesis.

The thesis should answer the question of whether John Steinbeck was a pacifist and if so, to what extent. The overall outcome of the thesis should be a

complex examination of Steinbeck's war publications in the context of the American war literature with particular reference to the development of his personality and opinions. The secondary aim of the thesis is a research of the relationship between John Steinbeck and anti-war writers in the USA.

I believe that the present thesis could be an interesting insight into the life of one of the major American writers of the twentieth century and at the same time a deeper overview of the American antiwar literature as a reflection of the social and political situation in the U.S. during wartime.

II. THEORETICAL PART

2.1. Introduction to the Theoretical part

The theme of war is one of the most frequent subjects in literature but the way of depicting it is a highly individual matter and differs from author to author. According to Cynthia Wachtell, “The meaning of war is in the eye of the beholder and in the words selected by the writer” (19). Throughout the history, there are many examples of literature with the theme of an armed conflict. From the heroic epics of antiquity, chivalrous legends of the Middle Ages to the conquest literature of the early Modern era, man was always fascinated with combat and fighting. In those days, however, this theme was in most cases highly romanticized. Winners were celebrated and losers were condemned. Literary treatment of war was in this matter mostly one-sided.

The famous quote of Sir Henry Maine¹ says, “War appears to be as old as mankind, but peace is a modern invention”. Diplomatic solution of conflicts is indeed an achievement of modern society. Nevertheless, this evolutionary process applies on the development of literature as well. As the conflicts became more deadly, global and massive, their reflection in the literature was even more prominent, views on the war began to crystallize and works that often described the same events were considerably different. At this time, the anti-war literature was born.

¹ Sir Henry James Sumner Maine, English comparative jurist and historian.

2.2. Definition of the term pacifism

The term pacifism is generally perceived as the opinion that all conflicts should be resolved peacefully. Most dictionaries provide similar and quite brief explanation. This term, however, conceals much more complexity.

Webster's New World Dictionary of American English describes pacifism as a “belief that international disputes should be settled by peaceful means rather than by force of war”, whereas the *Merriam-Webster Thesaurus* defines the term pacifist only as a person that is “inclined to live in peace and to avoid war”. Other dictionaries are more or less identical in terms of the definition of pacifism.

According to *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* to pacify is simply “making or tending to peace”. This dictionary also provides information about the origin of the word pacifism. The term is based on the name of the Pacific Ocean “Mare Pacificum, so called by Magellan because he found it comparatively free from violent storms”.

Doctor Andrew Fiala, however, presents a different definition of the term. “The word “pacifism” is derived from the word “pacific”, which means “peace making” [Latin, *paci-* (from *pax*) meaning “peace” and *-ficus* meaning “making”]. According to Fiala, William James² used the term pacifism as a “rejection of militarism” for the first time in the modern history. However, the roots of the term date back to early Christianity. “Perhaps the most famous use of the word pacifism is found in the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5*), where Jesus claims that the “peacemakers” are blessed. In this passage, the Greek word *eirenopoios* is translated into Latin as *pacifici*, which means those who work for peace. The Greek *eirenopoios* is derived from the Greek *eirênê* or peace in conjunction with *poiesis*, to make” (Fiala).

Undoubtedly, the word pacifism represents many meanings. Nevertheless, the varieties and types of pacifism are even more important for this thesis.

² William James , American philosepher and psychologist, late 19th century.

2.3. Types of pacifism

The vast majority of dictionary definitions presents rather a vague idea of the concept of pacifism. In order to analyse the topic of this thesis, it is necessary to specify the types and varieties of pacifism.

The American professor of philosophy Douglas P. Lackey in his book *Ethics of War and Peace* distinguishes four different types of pacifism. “There is the universal pacifist view that all killing is wrong, the universal pacifist view that all violence is wrong, private pacifism that condemns personal violence but not political violence, and antiwar pacifism that allows personal violence but condemns all wars” (White 406). Lackey divides pacifism on the universal or selective basis and distinguishes the levels of pacifism according to the degree of the aversion to violence or military conflicts. Lackey remarks that the universal types of pacifism are generally associated with religion. The Old Testament and the concept of sacredness of life is a good example of the above statement. The selective types of pacifism are, on the other hand, closely linked to individual human principles.

According to the *BBC Ethics guide*, the people devoted to pacifism are divided into four groups as well. The most radical type of pacifism is the absolute pacifism. “An absolute pacifist believes that it is never right to take part in war, even in self-defence”. In addition to this definition, the absolute pacifism views the usage of violence unethical, even in the case of “rescue of an innocent person who is being attacked and may be killed” (“BBC Ethics guide”).

The second type of pacifism is the conditional pacifism. “Conditional pacifists are against war and violence in principle, but they accept that there may be circumstances, when war will be less bad than the alternative” (“BBC Ethics guide”).

The third kind of pacifism is the selective pacifism. Selective pacifists believe that “it is a matter of degree” (“BBC Ethics guide”) and they are only opposed to the wars involving weapons of mass destruction. They are, however, afraid of the destruction of the world by nuclear and biological weapons. These pacifists therefore may not be against conventional wars.

The last type of pacifism is the so-called active pacifism. As the term suggests, an active pacifist is “heavily involved in political activity to promote peace and to argue against particular wars” (“BBC Ethics guide”).

Nonetheless, Professor Andrew Fiala believes that there are more varieties of pacifism. In addition to absolute and conditional pacifism, he distinguishes maximal and minimal pacifism according to the “extent of the commitment to nonviolence”. Generally speaking, the “maximal versions of pacifism will condemn all taking of life” whereas the “more narrow versions of pacifism may take into account the distinction between the innocent and the guilty” (Fiala).

In addition, Professor Fiala also distinguishes the so-called deontological pacifism, a type of pacifism that is closely linked with the ethic system of Immanuel Kant³. Fiala points out that Kant’s categorical imperative may be applied on the concept of pacifism. “Some pacifists use the formulation of the categorical imperative to support their position by claiming that war treats persons as means and does not respect them as ends in themselves”. The core of the deontological pacifism should thus depend on the moral status of the individuals. Fiala implies that war violates the moral status of persons “the soldiers are viewed as interchangeable cogs in the war machine“. The principle of personal freedom of the human being is therefore the most important aspect of the deontological pacifism.

The paragraphs above specify the terminology used in the thesis. The next section of the thesis will examine the development of the American anti-war literature with brief comments on the main manifestos in connection with the provided terms.

³ Immanuel Kant, German philosopher, (1724-1804).

2.4. Development of the American Anti-war Literature

2.4.1. The early American war literature

“War has long been a reality of American life and a staple of American literature” (Wachtell 16). Since the colonists had arrived in the New World, they immediately became involved in conflicts. First enemies they had to encounter were the native tribes settled on the East coast of the North America.

“The colonists had been in America for less than two decades when they became engaged in the Pequot war” (Wachtell 18). The oldest writings with the theme of war date back to those days. The most famous one is the book called *Newes from America* by Captain John Underhill. *Newes from America* is a recording of Underhill’s firsthand experience during the Pequot war. As the vast majority of clashes between the colonists and native tribes ended as a victory of the colonists, this conflict also resulted in a massacre of the Pequot Indians. Although Underhill’s account is very shocking, he did not examine the morality of war since the misinterpreted Christian belief sufficiently justified the deeds of the colonists and the author himself. “The Lord is pleased to exercise his people with trouble and afflictions, that hee might appeare to them in mercy, and reveale more cleerely his free grace unto their soules” (Underhill 28). Captain John Underhill uses the same reasons as the Knights of the Crusades did several hundred years ago. There are no signs of any type of pacifism whatsoever.

2.4.2. The War of 1812

The War of 1812 against Britain is a significant landmark in terms of antiwar tendencies in the United States. One of the actual reasons for the war was a desire to annex Canada (Polner and Woods 2). This conflict can be described as a war of conquest since its reasons were largely materialistic. Moreover, it is the first conflict that caused a polarity of opinions among the Americans. The most

discussed issue was the question of mandatory conscription. Senator Daniel Webster delivered his speech called *The Draft is Unconstitutional* before the House of Representatives on December 9, 1814. The speech, consequently published in the written form, became one of the most prominent manifestos of pacifism in the United States. “Where it is written in the Constitution, in what article or section it is contained, that you may take children from their parents, and parents from their children, and compel them to fight the battles of any war, in which the folly or the wickedness of Government may engage it” (Polner and Woods 1). Webster points out that the abuse of political power is possible even in a country built on democratic principles. It can be assumed that he was an active pacifist. The most unfortunate aspect of the speech is its timelessness in the context of current events in Afghanistan and Iraq.

2.4.3. The Mexican War

The American-Mexican war from 1846 to 1848 is another example of American imperialistic ambitions. In this case, the expansion of the American territory is the main cause of the conflict. “The United States annexed Texas, which had once belonged to Mexico, in 1845; nine years after that province had declared its independence. Since Mexico had never officially recognized Texan independence, it viewed the annexation as a provocative act” (Polner and Woods 21). Except for Texas, the Government of the United States also wanted to conquer other Mexican dominions: California and the area of the present state of New Mexico. It is necessary to remark that this particular conflict was largely provoked by the United States and its government led by President James Polk. The action of the government immediately became controversial. “Abraham Lincoln, a congressman from Illinois, became suspicious of the official rationale given for the war” (Polner and Woods 22) and Lincoln was not the only one to find the actions rather peculiar. The war with Mexico ended as a victory for the United States, but Polk’s government was finished as well since the declaration of war was condemned as “unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President of the United States” (Polner and Woods 22).

Henry David Thoreau is widely considered as the most important representative of the anti-war literature during the period. In his famous essay *Resistance to Civil Government (Civil Disobedience)* he questions the importance of the government and the reasons for a war. “This people must cease to hold slaves, and to make war on Mexico, though it cost them their existence as a people” (Thoreau). Not only was Thoreau a passionate abolitionist, he was also a pacifist. Signs of the absolute pacifism and anarchism are present in his work. The essay *Civil Disobedience* serves as an inspiration for many thinkers and authors. At the time of the Mexican war, he became “so public in his complaints that they sent him to jail” (Polner and Woods 23).

Sources seem to suggest that Thoreau was one of the first representatives of the absolute pacifism in the American literature. Professor Andrew Fiala classifies Thoreau as a deontological pacifist. “Thoreau claimed that in military service the mass of men serve the State thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies”. Furthermore, Fiala points out that Thoreau is the author of the strongest “arguments against militarism”.

According to Lackey’s division of pacifism Thoreau belongs rather among personal and anti-war pacifists. Thoreau was also an active pacifist. His views on the war, however, did not meet with wider support in his homeland because “the people by and large did believe in their Manifest Destiny, did want Texas and California, were imperialistic-minded both in fact and in principle” (Polner and Woods 23). Nevertheless, the unfortunate circumstances do not diminish the impact of his work on the next generations of the anti-war writers.

2.4.4. The Civil War

Half a century later after the Mexican war, a completely different situation took place and the American people went through another ordeal. The Civil War was also a groundbreaking event in terms of the development of the American anti-war literature. Due to the technological progress, huge dimensions and tenacity of fighting, the literary perception of the war began to distinguish.

Cynthia Wachtell in her book *War No More: The Antiwar Impulse in American Literature* points out this diversity. She uses the battle of Chickamauga as a clear example.

The battle of Chickamauga was one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. The battle took place in September 1863. According to Steven E. Woodworth, the battle was “the first major victory won by the Confederacy’s hard-luck Army of Tennessee, and yet the battle was barren of results for its winners” (1). The conflict became the subject of a short story written by Ambrose Bierce and a poem composed by Mollie E. Moore. Both works are called *Chickamauga* but, according to Cynthia Wachtell, “the title, however, is virtually all that the two works have in common” (34). Mollie E. Moore was a Confederate poet. In his poem *Chickamauga*, he highlights the heroism of soldiers and bravery in the battle. Moore’s view of the war in this poem is quite positive. On the other hand, Bierce describes the event differently.

Ambrose Bierce was a veteran of the Union. He fought in the war for four years and he was badly injured. Like most veterans who wrote a book of their war experiences, Bierce also describes the shocking scenes of war. It is widely recognized that book which describes the horrors of war is by no means pro-war. That is why Bierce certainly is one of the most prominent anti-war authors of the period.

Bierce’s *Chickamauga* is a short story included in the collection of short stories called *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*, which was published in 1891. *Chickamauga* tells the story of a six-year old deaf boy who gets lost in the woods. The boy tries to find a way out of the forest for the whole day, but he is unsuccessful and falls asleep. The battle takes place during his sleep but he does not wake up due to his deafness. When he finally wakes up, he sees the horrifying scene after the battle.

Bierce describes the maimed soldiers in detail. His account of the battle of Chickamauga presents one of the most nightmarish scenes in the American literature. In contrast with the innocent child, there are dirty soldiers. Many of these soldiers are badly injured, they do not have their limbs, and they are pale and bloodied. One soldier, who is in contact with the boy, is described as a “face that

lacked a lower jaw – from the upper teeth to the throat was a great red gap fringed with hanging shreds of flesh and splinters of bone” (Bierce 46). Many more scenes in the story are similarly drastic.

The figurative description of the soldiers is not the only element of anti-war pacifism in the short story. Bierce also points out the absurdity of fighting. “Everywhere near the creek, which here had a margin of lowland, the earth was trodden into mud by the feet of men and horses. An observer of better experience in the use of his eyes would have noticed that these footprints pointed in both directions; the ground had been twice passed over – in advance and in retreat” (49).

The short story also reveals the suffering of civilians in the war. As the boy finally finds his way home, he discovers that his home is on fire and his mother is dead.

Although Bierce published the short stories roughly a quarter century after the war, his work is a hallmark of the American anti-war literature in the second half of the nineteenth century.

At this point of the thesis, it should be noted that the Civil War period is very rich in terms of the American anti-war literature. Many more great authors published works with the theme of the war. Although Stephen Crane has never seen a battlefield, he has become enormously popular after he published *The Red Badge of Courage*, Mark Twain and his novel *A Connecticut Yankee*, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Joseph Kirkland and many other writers who could not be further examined in the thesis.

2.4.5. The Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars

The Spanish-American war and the subsequent suppression of the Philippine rebellion is another example of a colonial conflict. The United States gained Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and Philippines from their former Spanish oppressors. “When the U.S. government decided not to grant independence to the Philippines, Filipino rebels led by Emilio Aguinaldo determined to resist American occupying forces” (Polner and Woods 88). The result of the rebellion was a “brutal

guerrilla war that stretched on for years and some 200,000 Filipinos lost their lives, either directly from the fighting or as a result of a cholera epidemic traceable to the war” (Polner and Woods88).

The conflict was perceived as a “betrayal of American very soul as she was to become an imperial power like all the rest” (Polner and Woods 88). The fact that the United States Army was engaged in a “colonial war to suppress another people’s independence” (Polner and Woods 99) caused much “soul-searching among important American thinkers, writers and journalists” (Polner and Woods 99).

Ernest Howard Crosby is the most prominent pacifist and significant figure of the American anti-war literature of the turn of the century. According to Cynthia Wachtell, Crosby was “the most prolific writer of the antiwar camp” (176). Not only he was a successful judge, he was also the president of the New York Anti-Imperialist League. In his work, Crosby insisted that there was “nothing glorious about the war” (Wachtell 176).

Crosby is an author of several collections of anti-war poems and one extensive novel called *Captain Jinks, Hero*. In his collection of poems *War and Hell*, Crosby clearly shows his pacifist tendencies. “War is hell, because it makes men devils. You and I, striving for a moment to squeeze or hack the life out of each other, are we not at once transformed into demons? Hell is ever man’s handiwork” (Wachtell 177). In the poem, Crosby stresses the absurdity of fighting. There are people in wars who do not even know each other and yet, they are trying to kill one another for often-dubious purpose.

In the novel *Captain Jinks, Hero*, the author refers to the wickedness of American expansionism in connection with the development of military technology. Crosby “not only criticizes America’s imperialist ambitions but also condemns the application of modern technology to warfare” (Wachtell 179). The mechanization of warfare is a typical object of criticism by pacifists at the turn of the century.

If Lackey’s distribution of pacifism is taken into account, Ernest Crosby can be classified as an anti-war pacifist. His work, however, has also elements of universal anti-killing pacifism.

2.4.6. The First World War and its aftermath

The First World War was, until the World War II, the largest military conflict in the history of humanity. Although the American soldiers were fighting in the war only from the year 1917 until the year 1918, even one year of combat experience was more than enough time to cause a new wave of anti-war literature.

World War I was fundamentally different from other military conflicts. Thanks to the huge number of people involved in the war, the immense battlefields and new technology of warfare, the war has become a global carnage of innocent people. Because the war took place only on the battlefields of Europe, it seemed distant to many Americans. The voices that proclaimed the policy of non-interference were therefore quite popular. The Monroe Doctrine also supported that view.

According to Cynthia Wachtell, the anti-war writing about the First World War is now largely thought of as a post war phenomenon (179). This statement can be regarded as a truth because the best-known works were actually written after the war. Nevertheless, the anti-war literature was created during the war as well and quite often right in the trenches, first aid stations or in the rear of the army.

The literature that was created under these circumstances often describes the war in its most horrific form. The authors emphasize the “dehumanizing effects of mass warfare, the absence of the traditional heroic virtues and the helplessness and horror of war” (Wachtell 181). The literature portrays mostly the destruction of nature, decayed bodies, unbearable stench and omnipresent parasites.

The journalist and poet John Reed is a very important anti-war author of the period. In his book *The War in Eastern Europe*, he points out the particular aspects of the war mentioned above. The author describes the “scarred landscape that lay between deserted Serbian and Austrian trenches” (Wachtell 180). Reed also published several anti-war articles in newspapers. The article called “This Unpopular War” was published right after the USA entered the war. In the article, he questions the “glory of the war” and describes soldiers as “cogs in a senseless and uninteresting machine” (Wachtell 180). This anti-militaristic view correlates

with that of Thoreau. John Reed became a keen socialist during the war. He died in the Soviet Union.

Ernst Hemingway is the most prominent anti-war author who published his works after the First World War. Hemingway worked as a volunteer in the Italian army. He drove an ambulance and suffered multiple injuries. *The Sun Also Rises* belongs to his most famous books. The main character of the book is Jake Barnes, a crippled veteran of the war. Jake lives a Bohemian life in the post-war Paris among other wealthy Americans. The book focuses mainly on the emotional deprivation caused by the war. Apart from physical injuries, Hemingway points out the worthlessness of life and crippled souls. *The Sun Also Rises* can be considered as the manifesto of the American anti-war pacifism and the Lost Generation.

The American anti-war literature is quite diverse in terms of both authors and subject matter. The authors of this type of literature were soldiers, politicians, officials, poets, journalists, activists and especially people affected by wars in various ways. There are innumerable works that describe horrors of war and have the ambition to warn humanity against future conflicts. On the one hand, “the proliferation of anti-war literature works has not accomplished putting an end to war” (Wachtell 187). The Civil War writers did not prevent the Spanish – American War and the Philippine War. The pacifist writers of the First World War failed to prevent the Second World War and so forth (Wachtell 187). On the other hand, the American anti-war literature has developed for several centuries. The twentieth century, however, discovered such literary giants as William Styron, Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut. The fact that there has not been World War III yet is also their victory.

III. PRACTICAL PART

3.1. John Steinbeck and the Second World War

The following chapter of the thesis focuses on John Steinbeck's life especially during the Second World War. The main purpose of this section is to introduce author's war experiences as a theoretical background of the analytical part of the thesis. John Steinbeck himself provides a sufficient amount of information about his involvement in the war. There are, however, more interesting facts available from other sources.

3.1.1. John Steinbeck's life prior to the Second World War

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California on the February 27, 1902. His mother, Olive Hamilton Steinbeck, was a teacher. His Father, John Ernst Steinbeck, had several professions, for example manager of a plant and owner of a shop (Shillinglaw). The birthplace of John junior had a very strong impact on his literature. Salinas Valley is one of the most fertile parts of California. It is also a place that is highly multicultural. John was the only boy in the family; he grew up with two older sisters and one younger sister. Steinbeck's family was not rich but well respected in the small town of Salinas for "both parents engaged in community activities" (Shillinglaw).

Revolt against the family characterizes John's puberty. During this period, John decided to become a writer. He spent most of the time writing poems and short stories locked in his room.

In 1919, he was admitted to the Stanford University, but left in 1925 without taking a degree. At the university, "he signed on only for those courses that interested him: classical and British literature, writing courses, and a smattering of science" (Shillinglaw). Sources seem to suggest that John Steinbeck was not very talented in other areas except writing. Charles McNichols, the president of the

English Club, summarized Steinbeck's presence at the University, "no other interests or talents that I could make out. He was a writer, but he was that and nothing else" (Benson 69).

At that time, John worked as a labourer, reporter and caretaker. After the marriage with Carol Henning, Steinbeck and his bride moved to Pacific Grove where he had the best conditions for writing. In the period from 1930 to 1940, Steinbeck wrote some of his most known fiction, *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932), *To a God Unknown* (1933), *The Long Valley* (1938), *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *In Dubious Battle* (1936), *Of Mice and Men* (1937), and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) (Shillinglaw).

By the outbreak of the Second World War, he was one of the most respected American writers and the winner of the Pulitzer Prize.

3.1.2. John Steinbeck's engagement in the Second World War

"So we go into this happy new year, knowing that our species has learned nothing, can as a race learn nothing – that the experience of ten thousand years has made no impression on the instincts of the million years that preceded" (Benson 456). This is a passage from the letter which Steinbeck wrote to his friend Pascal Covici on New Year's Eve, 1940. At the time the Second World War broke out, Steinbeck was preparing for his biological expedition which was a part of research for his book *Sea of Cortez*. Due to the findings of the research, Steinbeck started to perceive all wars as a matter of human instincts. These opinions were later pointed out in the introductory part of *The Log from Sea of Cortez*. "And perhaps our species is not likely to forego war without some psychic mutation which at present, at least, does not seem imminent" (Steinbeck 15). Conveniently, Steinbeck compares a man and a crayfish in terms of the biological behaviour. "Perhaps the crayfish feels the itch of jealousy, or perhaps he is sexually insecure" (15). "The effect is that he fights" (Steinbeck 15). According to Peter Lisca, the war seemed to Steinbeck as a diagnostic trait of *Homo sapiens*, like the tendency of the mentioned crayfish to fight when they meet each other (181).

The paragraph above illustrates exactly Steinbeck's frame of mind at the beginning of the war and his perception of human conflicts and humankind itself. The author presents a very interesting hypothesis. Steinbeck implies that war actually is a human instinct that cannot be suppressed unless there is some kind of evolution of the human race. John Steinbeck was a man with a high moral status. He was aware of the behaviour of man in a broader context. Due to this knowledge, Steinbeck might have been an example for other people. This assumption suggests that Steinbeck shares at least some characteristics similar to the deontological pacifism.

On the December 7, 1941, the Empire of Japan deliberately attacked the United States' naval base at Pearl Harbour. German declaration of war on the United States occurred several days later. The war became global. Although John Steinbeck was naturally a pacifist and "his instincts were largely pacifistic" (Benson 504), he was also a strong patriot and he wanted to help the war effort.

Steinbeck had offered the United States government some materials based on his previous research. These documents contained mostly geological information about several Japanese-held islands in the Pacific Ocean. Steinbeck compiled a "list of papers written by Japanese zoologists, papers which gave minute information about depth, tide, currents, reefs, and nature of coast" (Lisca 184). The military, however, did not consider the papers relevant because they were suspicious as written by the enemy. Another Steinbeck's contribution to the war effort was a proposal to flood the Third Reich with counterfeit money and destabilize its economy in this way "Steinbeck suggested that counterfeit money, properly aged, be dropped behind enemy lines to cause inflation and disrupt financial traffic" (Lisca 184). Nevertheless, the plan was also rejected. Steinbeck himself claimed that there is "no evidence that the government ever took any" (Coers 25) of the advice.

During the years 1942 and 1943, Steinbeck cooperated with several government agencies. The Coordination of Information agency, the forerunner of the CIA, is the most important one in terms of the author's war literature. Due to the external partnership with this agency, Steinbeck was able to meet many refugees

from occupied countries and consequently prepare the play-novelette *The Moon is Down*, which is the most controversial book written during the war.

Later in 1942, he was assigned a job to compile a book based on the observation of the Air Force recruits. “Other major writers such as Hemingway and Faulkner, refused similar assignments, but Steinbeck took it as his duty and because he wanted to know what it felt like to fly in a bomber” (Benson 505). Steinbeck fulfilled his duty and published the book *Bombs Away the Story of a Bomber Team*. The completion of this journalistic work did not take him more than a few months. *Bombs Away* was to be a book with purely propagandistic ambitions but Steinbeck turned it into something more elaborate than just a recruitment handbook. Because of that, the book was a commercial success.

In 1943, Steinbeck still had an impression that he did not do enough for the war effort. He desired to leave for Europe as a war correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*. Nevertheless, before he even got to Europe, he had to go through a bit of military bureaucracy. Steinbeck was repeatedly accused of being a communist sympathizer. “His request to become an air force intelligent officer was scuttled by his local draft board in California, which concluded on the basis of rumour and suspicion alone that the author of *The Grapes of Wrath* was sufficiently communistic to be regarded as a security risk” (Bowden). He was under investigation for some time but, finally, he managed to obtain permission. Steinbeck himself viewed the military officials as “little men with temporary authority who, armed with envy, have pushed him around” (Benson 517). The irony of the military bureaucracy is strongly reminiscent of Joseph Heller’s *Catch XXII*.

His presence in the European theatre of war lasted almost the whole second half of the year 1943. “For a while, he was stationed with Flying Fortress unit in England. In August, he was reporting from North Africa, and early September, after two weeks of silence, his communiqués came from the Italian front” (Lisca 185). On one hand, he saw quite an agreeable face of war in the crowded streets of London. On the other hand, he fought a fierce battle when the U.S. Army landed at Salerno.

John Steinbeck had experienced terrible things in the war before he left the frontline. He did not even finish his contract with the *Herald Tribune* and hurried

back home. When he returned to the United States, he was in “poor shape physically and emotionally” (Benson 540). Steinbeck was wounded by falling debris when a German shell exploded near him. In addition, he had “badly twisted an ankle while jumping out of the landing craft onto the beach, and both eardrums had been burst, so that he could only barely hear” (Benson 540). He was also the subject of periodic memory lapses.

Apart from being physically injured, Steinbeck had suffered even greater damage to his spirit. “Emotionally, in response to the horror he had witnessed – particularly the maimed children – and his own disabilities, he seemed to be in a state of prolonged shock” (Benson 540). For the whole next year, he was in the state of continual depression, gloom and melancholy. He was hiding his problems from other people. Steinbeck’s second wife Gwen later recalled, “One solid year after he came back from the war he had no sense of humour at all. He had a chip on his shoulder the whole time. He was mean, he was sadistic, he was masochistic, and he resented everything. The great sense of play that he had, the wit, the kind of happiness the he had, had disappeared“ (Benson 451). Given these facts, it is possible to say that Steinbeck really experienced certain transformation. The war left him with a deep mental wound and “the horror of it nearly overwhelmed him and stayed with him for months” (Benson 531).

In a few months, however, Steinbeck recovered to some extent and started to work on his next novel *Cannery Row*. Although he organized and prepared his war memoirs for publishing, he did not release them until the year 1958. He had enough of the war by that time.

3.2. Critical analysis of John Steinbeck's war writings

3.2.1. The Moon is Down

The Moon is Down is widely considered as the most controversial work published by John Steinbeck after the *Grapes of Wrath*. The publication of the book was followed by a journalistic struggle among the American literary critics and reviewers. The assessment of Steinbeck's book is, however, quite difficult. According to some experts, *The Moon is Down* is a nothing but propaganda. Others, on the other hand, argue that the evaluation of the book is not so simple. There were even speculations that Steinbeck supports the Nazis despite the fact that it is the same author who was accused of being a communist several months ago. Undoubtedly, the book was a great success, especially in occupied countries. For example, he received the highest decoration of Norway, "the Haakon VII Cross, bestowed personally by the king in Oslo in 1946" (Coers 48), precisely because of this book.

The *Moon is Down* was created under rather strange circumstances. At that time, Steinbeck collaborated with several government agencies. "Steinbeck himself said it was the Office of War Information which brought him into contact with refugees from countries overrun by the Germans and gave him the idea of writing a fictional account of the traumas of Nazi occupation" (Coers 26). He was deeply interested in the stories of the refugees and those "secret armies which refused to admit defeat even when Germans patrolled their streets" (Benson 487). It is not entirely clear whether the Office of War Information requested him to write the book. However, it is obvious that these contacts with refugees were a great inspiration for Steinbeck.

The book called *The Moon is Down* is the only war writing of John Steinbeck which is not largely journalistic. The work could be described as a play-novelette because it consists mainly of interpersonal dialogues. In addition to that, the plot of the book looks more like a theatre play than a novel. Steinbeck indeed

“originally began writing the manuscript as a play and added novelistic elements to it later” (Benson 488).

The story is set in an unnamed country which is most likely to be Norway or Denmark. Steinbeck “placed the story in an unnamed country, cold and stern like Norway, cunning and implacable like Denmark, reasonable like France” (Benson 491) because he wanted the story to be as universal as possible. He even named the characters with international names so that the people in various occupied countries had the opportunity to identify with them. “The names of people in the book I made international as I could. I did not even call the Germans Germans but simply invaders” (Benson 491).

The novelette begins with the occupation of an unknown city which has an important port and a coalmine. The battle of the city was extremely fast and the land quickly defeated. Steinbeck describes the nation of the occupied country essentially as pacifist. The rapid course of the war is a proof of this statement. “By ten forty-five it was all over. The town was occupied, the defenders defeated and the war finished” (Steinbeck, ch.1). According to Peter Lisca, “The invaded people exhibit softness of moral fibre caused by habitual security, a softness which makes them fall easy prey to the invaders” (188). John Steinbeck suggests that some nations, especially those democratic and peaceful, are more likely to be attacked and conquered. Mayor Orden, the main protagonist of the novelette, is a clear example of this assumption. In the situation when the city is occupied by a foreign army and he is about to see the commander of the invaders, his biggest concern is to look dignified and receive the officers appropriately. The only explanation of this strange behaviour comes from Doctor Winter, the friend of Mayor Orden. Doctor remarks that, “it has been so long since we conquered anybody or anybody conquered us” (Steinbeck, ch. 1). This fact indicates that the people of the city had never experienced any war.

However, Steinbeck continues with his argumentation about wars as a biological trait of humanity, “war is a phenomenon striking deep, unconscious roots in our species” (Lisca 188). Lisca further claims that Steinbeck’s theory of war is “exemplified in *The Moon is Down* by the invaders, none of whom is clear about the nature of the struggle in which he is participating” (188). Steinbeck suggests

that most soldiers of the occupation force are highly manipulated by the regime, presented by the “leader” where the leader is an allusion to Adolf Hitler.

The invaders are, however, described as human beings with quite common characteristics and interests. For example, “Captain Bentick was a family man, a lover of dogs and pink children and Christmas” (Steinbeck, ch. 2). Bentick is also an admirer of England, supposed enemy of the invaders. Among other officers, only Captain Loft is a ruthless careerist devoted to the leader. Steinbeck claims that there were also decent people among the German officers and there were scientists, poets and artists in the German Army. The description of the invaders is the most controversial point of the book. At the time when the Allies tried to demonize the Germans as much as possible, Steinbeck did quite the opposite. The author was by no means a Nazi sympathizer. He just wanted to point out that the Third Reich is not full of Hitlers, Himmlers and Goerings. According to Peter Lisca, the invaders “do avoid being prototypes of the brutal Nazi monomaniacs so often depicted in the novels and motion pictures about the war” (195). Literary critic Harry Slochower best summarizes the issue:

What Steinbeck seems to be saying is that a change of the capital-situation makes possible at least a partial readjustment of their (invaders) distorted humanity. To deny this is to invite as an alternative the necessity of exterminating all Germans or all deluded Nazi followers. Steinbeck’s hope seems to lie in the people’s aroused awareness that their capital is unrepresentative. (Lisca 195)

In view of these facts, it is quite likely that Steinbeck thought of the post-war world and wanted the society to think about the German nation. He rejected the theory that the response to violence should be further violence and promoted the idea of a peaceful denazification of Germany.

The commanding officer of the invaders is the most interesting character of the story. Colonel Lanser is a veteran from the Great War and a highly respected officer. He is the most contentious character of the novelette. Although Lanser should be the antagonist of the story, he is described as an extremely reasonable

person. He is also the smartest man of the occupiers. “Of them all, only Colonel Lanser knew what war really is in the long run” (Steinbeck, ch. 2). Lanser perceives war as a “treachery and hatred, the muddling of incompetent generals, the torture and killing and sickness and tiredness, until at last it is over and nothing has changed for new weariness and hatreds” (Steinbeck, ch. 2). These lines illustrate that Lanser is essentially a pacifist, which is quite ironic given to the fact that he is the commanding officer of the invading army. The evidence of Lanser’s attitudes towards the war is even more prominent in the play version of the novelette where he claims, “I suffer from civilization. That means I can know one thing and do another. I know I have failed - I knew we would before we started. The thing the leader wanted to do cannot be done” (Lisca 189). These facts seem to confirm the idea that Lanser is a character that has to be aware of the absurdity of the conflict. Nevertheless, from his position, Lanser cannot oppose the war because he is a German and he has to follow orders.

At this point, Steinbeck outlines his sociological concept that appeared in the book *The Log from Sea of Cortez*. Steinbeck presupposes that “over-integration in human groups might parallel the law in palaeontology that over-armor or over-ornamentation are symptoms of decay and disappearance” (257). The original purpose of *The Moon Is Down* is closely linked with the theory. According to Lisca:

The invaders must ultimately fail because the organization which gives them their immediate efficiency also prevents the tendencies toward improvisation and the habit of creation by which alone they can overcome new situations. Like all the herd men, they have a capital without whose direction and coordination they are helpless. (189)

Peter Lisca extremely effectively linked Steinbeck’s sociological theory of over-integrated system with the Nazi Third Reich which is considered to be an example of such a system. Due to these arguments, it is obvious that the Germans cannot win the war whereas the people of the occupied countries, which were largely democratic, find the strength to resist.

At the end of the book, Mayor Orden tells Colonel Lanser, “free men cannot be conquered, sir, and so they will not be. Free men cannot start a war, but once it is started, they can fight on in defeat. Herd men, followers of the leader, cannot do that, and so it is always the herd men who win battles and the free men who wars” (Steinbeck, ch. 8).

According to the *Time* magazine review, *The Moon is Down* is a “great propaganda because of its certainty of viewpoint that does not admit the possibility of final military defeat because it does not admit the possibility of moral defeat” (Coers 33-34) which is quite sufficient evaluation of the book. Steinbeck himself remarked that he wrote the book as a “celebration of the durability of democracy” (Coers 41). From this point of view, one could assume that *The Moon is Down* is to some degree propaganda. Nevertheless, this is not the main purpose of the book. Steinbeck’s intention was also to point out that the whole nation cannot be condemned because of its ruling elite. However, the book gave the people in the occupied countries hope and that is why *The Moon is Down* is so famous.

3.2.2. Bombs Away : The Story of a Bomber Team

Bombs Away: Story of a Bomber Team is chronologically second work with war thematics published by John Steinbeck in the Second World War. At first glance, it may appear to many readers as a purely propagandistic book. However, the reality is not so straightforward.

The New Oxford American Dictionary describes propaganda as “information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view”.

According to Clarence Hugh Holman and William Harmon’s *A Handbook to Literature*, propaganda is “material propagated for the purpose of advocating a political or ideological position”.

Steinbeck’s book was by no means biased or misleading and his work was not a propagation of any ideology. Steinbeck just proved to be an impartial journalist and thoughtful observer. At the same time, he managed to use this

seemingly superficial task and wrote a book which is a respectable successor of his prior works.

After the relative success of the play and book edition of *The Moon is Down*, Steinbeck was offered another assignment from the government of the United States:

The job was to write two books for the Air Force and Steinbeck was very dubious about it, since the books were obviously designed as publicity for the service and as enlistment bait – he did not know whether he wanted to lend his name to something like that or not. It was typical of him that in this he was not worried about the possible cheapening of his literary reputation, but rather that he did not want to be responsible for someone going to war and being killed. (Benson 504)

As Benson suggests, Steinbeck accepted this kind of job rather reluctantly. In one of his letters, he revealed the truth about the circumstances of his involvement into the *Bombs Away*. He was determined not to get involved in this kind of task. However, once he returned from a visit to the White House, he knew that he had to complete the mission whether he liked it or not:

He went into the Oval Office and there sat this very affable man, just oozing charm, puffing on a long cigarette. They never discussed anything but Roosevelt's interest in his writing. Then suddenly at the end of the interview, Steinbeck was taken aback, he recalled, when the President suddenly said, "Now John, you are going to do what I want you to do and what I want you to do, John" Steinbeck recalled, " Then I found myself saying "Yes Mr. President. I am" and that was it. (Benson 508)

Steinbeck found himself in a particularly difficult situation. According to Benson, "he had no lust for blood and battle, no need to certify his manhood, which

he always had deemed self-evident” (504). On the other hand, “he had a very strong sense of duty” (Benson 504).

At this point, it is necessary to mention that while Steinbeck’s instincts were “largely pacifistic” (Benson 504), on the contrary, he accepted the task also from curiosity. “He wanted to know what it felt like to be a bomber” (Benson 505).

The book consists of eight chapters. The initial chapter, called *The Bomber*, is a description of airplanes used by the USAF. The following six chapters are focused on the crewmembers of the flying fortresses. Steinbeck describes every single member of the crew in great detail. Although the characters are nameless, they are depicted in a way that even an ordinary reader is able to sympathize with them. The main heroes of this book are anonymous and ordinary boys with a lower-middle class background. Steinbeck describes their way through the tough training of the Air Force.

The final chapter then describes how these characters get through their training and put together a team. The team together with partnership and devotion is the essential motif of the book. Steinbeck also emphasized the “united effort of Americans to overcome the economic and concomitant social woes of the 1930s’ Great Depression” (Meredith). In the context of the author’s previous writings, *Bombs Away* thus seems to be not as distant. Steinbeck’s biographer Peter Lisca reviewed the *Bombs Away* and pointed out that the book is “less spectacular, but more efficient” (184) in terms of commercial success.

The type of writings such as the *Bombs Away* gives the author a very limited space to express his opinions. There are, however, few elements where author’s attitudes can be deduced.

In the Introduction of the *Bombs Away*, the author remarks “In all history, probably no nation has tried more passionately or more thoughtfully to avoid fighting than the United States had tried to avoid the present war against Japan and Germany” (Steinbeck). In this passage of the book, Steinbeck refers to the pacifistic mood of the United States and at the same time, he justifies the reason of the American involvement in this particular conflict. It is therefore quite clear that his sense for duty and patriotism overcame his “largely pacifistic instincts” (Benson 504). Steinbeck’s comment, however, shows that although the author himself was

largely against the war, he considered the war as the best solution in the given situation. This fact indicates that he was a conditional pacifist.

Steinbeck once again returns to his biological perception of human. “The attack on us set in motion the most powerful species drive we know – that of survival” (Steinbeck).

The author also emphasized the fact that while most countries tried to avoid another war during the years after the Great War, there was The Third Reich and the Empire of Japan that, on the other hand, were arming for war. “Germany and Japan were bound to blunder sooner or later, and blunder they did” (Steinbeck). He also stated that, by this grave mistake, the Axis nations have developed the strongest enemy possible. “By attacking us, they destroyed their greatest ally, our sluggishness, our selfishness, and our disunity” (Steinbeck). Steinbeck alludes self-critically to the American manoeuvring and indifference during the first two years of the Second World War.

According to Peter Lisca, “the book’s last chapter was to depict the climax of that rigorous training which the book describes by giving an account of an actual bombing run” (184). The work, however, does not end in this way. “Steinbeck refused to write such a chapter because he had never been on a real bombing run and was afraid his description might be false” (Lisca 184). Given these facts, one may observe that Steinbeck was able to maintain his moral credit as a writer despite the fact that he was working on such a task. Instead of pure fiction, the book ends with a powerful scene. “The thundering ships took off one behind the other. At 5,000 feet, they made their formation. The men sat quietly at their stations, their eyes fixed. And the deep growl of the engines shook the air, shook the world, shook the future” (Steinbeck).

Despite the circumstances, Steinbeck was able to create a decent publication about the young American men who went to do one of the most dangerous services for their homeland. With good judgement, one may assume that the major intention of *Bombs Away* was to calm the fears of the parents whose sons went to the war. On the one hand, Steinbeck did not forget to remark the fact that the United States is essentially a pacifist country. On the other hand, he stressed the importance of the Allied struggle against evil. The book as a whole looks very

patriotic but the author has avoided the traditional clichés that are typical for propagandistic works. Steinbeck created a book about people and for people. Therefore, he was able to maintain a high standard of his writings.

3.2.3. Once There Was a War

The book called *Once There Was a War* is a collection of Steinbeck's adventures from the Second World War. The work consists of newspaper columns that appeared in *The New York Herald Tribune* during the year 1943. The collection as a whole was published almost fifteen years after the end of the Second World War. Partly, it is due to the Steinbeck's effort to forget everything connected with the war and partly because he believed that the stories would not have any effect in future years. "Unless the stories had validity twenty years in the future they should stay on the yellowing pages of dead newspaper files" (Steinbeck xi). During the Cold War, however, the reports were certainly not out of date.

Due to the fact, that *Once There Was a War* was published such a long time after the war, it gave the author the opportunity to look at the topic of war with a greater sense of distance. The most noticeable signs of pacifism can be found in the introductory part of the book. At first, Steinbeck refers to the war as an "accident to which our species is prone" (ix) and as an accident which is to be forgotten. The author repeats his biological perception of the human species and war as its trait. Again, he observes that humanity is not able to learn from its mistakes.

Furthermore, Steinbeck's criticism of the war grows stronger. He identifies the war as a "murderous nonsense" at the beginning of the chapter and at the end of the introduction; his criticism is even sharper "all war is a symptom of man's failure as a thinking animal" (x). The author also warns humankind against another war "the next war, if we are so stupid to let it happen, will be the last of any kind" (x). Steinbeck alludes to the nuclear potential of the world powers and the real possibility of the destruction of the planet. "There will be no one left to remember anything and it that is how stupid we are, we do not, in a biologic sense, deserve to survive" (x). This warning is a sign of the selective pacifism as it is clearly defined

against the nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, the selective pacifism has not developed until the end of the Second World War.

Later in the chapter, Steinbeck recalls Mark Twain's novel *A Connecticut Yankee*. "Twain uses the horrifying and possible paradox of the victor's being killed by the weight of the vanquished dead" (x). It is not a coincidence that Steinbeck remembers one of the well-known anti-war works. His own views on the war were in fact quite similar.

The introductory part of *Once There Was a War* is one of the most important evidences of Steinbeck's anti-war conviction. Although he presents his ideas about wars quite bluntly, it is because the introduction was written in time of peace. The war would not allow him to write such a criticism.

It is, however, important to note the fact that John Steinbeck went to the war as a correspondent. He was working for the Army of the United States and thus for the government. For the aforementioned reasons, he could not afford to disrupt morale and war effort by his writing. Above that, the correspondence was highly censored and disobedient reporters were punished. Yet Steinbeck managed to create a very interesting piece of work. The main key to success lies in John Steinbeck himself. Mark Bowden noticed that, "Steinbeck had not lost his humanity as a writer". Because of this characteristic, he was able to focus more on the social face of the war. According to Bowden, "his reporting shows the same extraordinary empathy for the common man that ran so deep in all his work". Instead of trying to grasp the war as a whole, Steinbeck focused more on individual people, situations and experiences.

In addition to that, Steinbeck admits that there were certain events about which the correspondents were not allowed to write at all. "When General Patton slapped a sick soldier in a hospital and when our Navy at Gela shot down fifty-nine of our troop carriers, General Eisenhower personally asked the war correspondents not to send the stories because they would be bad for morale at home" (xiii). Through the introduction, Steinbeck does not hesitate to criticize the army:

There were several other rules that were not allowed to violate. For example, the correspondents could not admit that there were

cowards in the army. The army was also full of outstanding officers. There were no lazy, cruel or ignorant officers in the U.S. Army. Of course, these rules are ridiculous but as Steinbeck emphasizes “the convention was the law”. (xiii)

Steinbeck’s memoirs from the war are quite diverse. Some of the stories are purely journalistic, others are rather belletristic. A few of them became famous and reappeared in the author’s collections of short stories. Furthermore, Steinbeck himself “referred to his columns and thought of them as stories, not so much in the newspaper sense of the word as in sense of short story” (Benson 520). Benson further remarks that, “although they were not fiction, they were fictionalized, employing many tricks of the novelist in order to heighten their impact and provide a sense of depth to a rather narrow focus” (520). Steinbeck’s approach to his journalistic work was rather artistic. He wanted to incorporate his skills as a novelist into his correspondence.

Sources seem to suggest that Steinbeck’s works were not censored as much as the work of other correspondents. “Of all the journalists who covered World War II from the front lines, Steinbeck probably suffered the least from censors” (Bowden). Because he was a respected celebrity, he could afford to uncover the reality of war more than any other journalist. The author himself praised the conditions of his employment in the newspaper. “I have a good job with the Tribune. No strings at all and I can use my own judgement about what I send” (Benson 517).

Therefore, Steinbeck does not hesitate to describe the horrors of the war:

He might have seen the splash of dirt and dust that is a shell burst, and a small Italian girl in the street with her stomach blown out and he might have seen an American soldier standing over a twitching body, crying. He probably saw many dead mules, lying on their sides, reduced to pulp. He saw the wreckage of houses, with torn beds hanging like shreds out of the spilled hole in a plaster wall. There were red carts and the stalled vehicles of refugees who did not get away. (158)

Steinbeck describes the horrific scene during the invasion of Salerno. Although he is not afraid to describe the dead child in detail, he deliberately fails to mention the dead U.S. soldiers. There were, however, many American casualties during the battle of Salerno.

The author presents these heartbreaking scenes through conditional sentences. He does that because he “never admitted having seen anything himself” (Steinbeck xvi). It is apparently a part of Steinbeck’s defence mechanism. He simply could not admit that he had seen such terrible things with his own eyes.

Another example of Steinbeck’s creative freedom is the story called *Over the Hill* where the author describes a successful desertion of an American soldier. One U.S. soldier intentionally takes a hid among the Italian prisoners of war. Although he screams in English with Italian accent that he is an American soldier, he is knocked back among the prisoners and taken to the United States. Ironic fact is that the entire situation was caused by a bet with a friend and the purpose of the desertion was to get home in time for the World Series. The deserter is described as “the smart son of a gun” (Steinbeck 133). It is hard to believe that this story was published in the time when the Allies were still far from the victory. Even though Steinbeck openly glorified desertion, there is no evidence that he was punished for it.

Although Steinbeck was an army journalist, not all stories in *Once There Was a War* have a military character. From a certain point of view, even this can be understood as a sign of pacifism. In the story called *A Hand*, Steinbeck finds a hero in the wounded soldier who manages to move his paralyzed hand. *The Cottage That Wasn’t There* is essentially a Poe-like ghost story, whereas the stories about Big Train Mulligan are humorous and similar to *Catch XII* or *M.A.S.H.* All these stories are somehow connected with the war and still they look civilian.

In the collection of newspaper columns called *Once There Was a War*, John Steinbeck was not able to express his opinions completely freely. Nevertheless, from the introduction which was written fifteen years later, we are able to learn the truth about the author’s views on the war. However, some signs of pacifism can be found in the stories themselves. The most prominent sign of the

anti-war literature is the dreadful account of the battle of Salerno which almost took the authors life. Another sign of pacifism is the plot of certain stories. Some of them are not even related to the war. Being a thoughtful journalist, Steinbeck focused mostly on individual people, stories and events and his articles remain attractive even after seventy years.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is generally agreed today that John Steinbeck is one of the most valuable American authors. This bachelor thesis should answer the question of whether John Steinbeck was a pacifist and, if so, to what extent. The thesis has presented both the theoretical background for the research and the practical part which consists of critical analyses of the author's selected works. The conclusion of the thesis combines the knowledge from all parts of the thesis. What remains is to answer the question: Was John Steinbeck really a pacifist?

Steinbeck's biographer Jackson J. Benson and Steinbeck's critic Peter Lisca agree that he actually was largely an anti-war minded person. Whereas Benson points out Steinbeck's largely pacifistic instincts, Lisca analyses Steinbeck's biological and sociological theories about humanity connected with the war. Cynthia Wachtell in her book *War No More: The Antiwar Impulse in American Literature* also mentions Steinbeck as one of the anti-war authors. "Writers in the aftermath of World War II also weighed the morality of the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and worried about a future apocalyptic showdown" (199). Wachtell points out that Steinbeck presented his views on war extremely openly and she quotes Steinbeck's famous lines from *Once There was a War*. "The next war, if we are so stupid as to let it happen, will be the last of any kind. There will be no one left to remember anything" (200). From these examples, it is possible to deduce that even the literary experts are convinced that John Steinbeck definitely belongs among anti-war authors.

The question that immediately springs to mind is why would a pacifist voluntarily participate in the war and contribute to the war effort. Mark Bowden believes that "patriotism was part of it". As already mentioned, at certain times Steinbeck's sense of patriotism prevailed over the sense of pacifism. Bowden, however, considers the problem from another angle. "Steinbeck had benefited early in his career by some of the New Deal programs for writers and artists during the Depression and may have felt a desire to give something back". On reflection, it seems more accurate that Steinbeck's involvement in the war was caused by a

combination of these circumstances. It is worth stating at this point that Steinbeck surely wanted to be a part of history which was rapidly changing at that time. In the thesis, it has been mentioned several times that Steinbeck simply wanted to be in the action and wanted to see as much as possible. However, one must not forget the fact that Steinbeck's views of war have developed largely after he returned from the war. "There were those close to him who thought, when he returned from the war, that he had suffered a complete personality change – he was morose, despondent and preoccupied; he seemed for a while unable to function, unable to get any enjoyment out of life" (Benson 531). It is clear that he experienced terrible things during the battle of Salerno and other battles in Italy. He saw heroism and cowardice and he saw death. Steinbeck also went through a battle with army bureaucracy. All these experiences influenced his attitudes towards wars.

A considerable part of the theoretical part of the thesis deals with the development of the American anti-war literature. It is perhaps a surprising finding that John Steinbeck has much in common with several writers mentioned in the chapter. Steinbeck is in some ways similar to Thoreau and his *Civil Disobedience*. In *The Log from Sea of Cortez* Steinbeck claims:

Consider the blundering anarchic system of the United States, the stupidity of some of its lawmakers, the violent reaction, the slowness of its ability to change. Twenty-five key men destroyed could make the Soviet Union stagger, but we could lose our congress, our president and our general staff and nothing much would have happened. We would go right on. In fact we might be better for it". (258)

In these lines, Steinbeck questions the importance of the government in the same way as Thoreau. Although Steinbeck was by no means an anarchist, his theory is in many respects identical with the arguments presented in the *Civil Disobedience*.

Steinbeck is in some ways similar to Ambrose Bierce. Both the men were not afraid to express the horrors of war in their writings. Both the men experienced

war and were deeply affected by it. Their works also combine the theme of war with the suffering of innocents, civilians, women and children. Whereas Bierce in *Chickamauga* uses the boy as the main protagonist who sees the terrible consequences of the battle, Steinbeck describes in detail the body of a dead girl in Salerno and a soldier who cries for her. Both the men use these heart-wrenching scenes to show the people how terrible war is.

There are, however, many more minor connections between Steinbeck and other representatives of the American anti-war literature. As well as John Reed in the First World War, John Steinbeck was a war journalist in the Second World War. Both the authors were to some extent socialists. Although Steinbeck was largely apolitical, his views rather incline to the left.

Ernest Howard Crosby emphasized the fact that many people fight in wars without even knowing the purpose of the particular conflict. John Steinbeck dealt with a similar problem in *The Moon is Down*. As mentioned in the thesis, none of the invaders knew what the war is about.

The relationship between John Steinbeck and Ernst Hemingway is quite difficult to analyse. Both the men treated each other with competitive hostility (Benson 156). However, it is necessary to emphasize that their works are in some ways quite similar and share many features, including the theme of war. Both the writers also voluntarily went to the front line and suffered injuries.

All these facts point to the conclusion that Steinbeck shares many features with other representatives of the American anti-war literature and it is therefore reasonable to include this writer among other anti-war minded authors.

When reading this thesis one might argue that Steinbeck was not a pacifist because it is a well-known fact that he was a supporter of the War in Vietnam. It is true from a certain perspective. Steinbeck really supported the policy of John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. He was a great patriot and he perceived the Soviet Union as a huge threat to the world. However, he had considerable reservations about the war. "I am afraid bad days are coming. There is no way to make this Vietnamese war decent. There is no way of justifying sending troops to another man's country. And there is no way to do anything but praise the men who defend his own land" (Barden). Despite his advanced age, he again went to the war

as a correspondent. In 1968, a year after he had been in Vietnam, John Steinbeck died. Therefore, he could not have a comprehensive view of the Vietnam War because it lasted for several more years.

The theoretical part of the thesis contains a division of the term pacifism, its types and varieties. At this point, it is possible to evaluate John Steinbeck according to the terms specified in the introductory section of the thesis. John Steinbeck was by no means a universal pacifist. Although there is no evidence that he has ever fired a weapon, he actively participated in the war. However, sources seem to suggest that Steinbeck really resented violence both political and personal. *The Moon is Down* is a clear evidence of this statement. According to Lackey's distribution of the term pacifism, Steinbeck could be to some degree considered as a personal pacifist because he did not condemn political violence. He could also be considered partly as an anti-war writer even though he did not reject all wars in general.

The distribution according to the BBC Ethics guide offers greater opportunity to assess Steinbeck as a pacifist. In view of the findings of this thesis, it is reasonable to admit that Steinbeck was a conditional and selective pacifist. As this work showed, the author was against war and violence in principal but after the Pearl Harbour, he accepted the war as the best alternative. He became a selective pacifist after the Second World War. At that time, he realized the power of weapons of mass destruction and admitted the possibility of destruction of the world.

Doctor Andrew Fiala also emphasized the deontological type of pacifism which is highly individual and depends on the principles of every single human being. John Steinbeck was a supporter of the theory that war is a biological instinct of the human race. He also believed that this instinct could not be suppressed unless the human race evolves. Steinbeck, however, tried to suppress this biological trait in him and tried to act according to the categorical imperative.

This bachelor thesis examines the work of John Steinbeck in connection with the development of the American anti-war literature. While I was writing this work, I discovered many interesting facts about John Steinbeck, as well as other representatives of war literature throughout the history of the United States of America. The preparation of the thesis has greatly enriched my knowledge. I

sincerely hope that the present thesis may be interesting for other students of literature and history. I also believe that this bachelor thesis has fulfilled all the objectives that were set at the beginning.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barden, Thomas E. *Steinbeck in Vietnam: Dispatches from the War*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012. Kindle file.

Benson, Jackson J. *The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer: a Biography*. New York: Penguin, 1990.

Bierce, Ambrose. *In the Midst of Life, Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*. London: Nash, 1923. *openlibrary.org*. 24 September 2007. 12 April 2013
<<http://archive.org/details/newinmidstoflife00bieruoft>>.

Bowden, Mark. Introduction. *Once There Was a War*. By John Steinbeck. London: Penguin Books, 2007. Kindle file.

Coers, Donald V. *John Steinbeck Goes to War: The Moon is Down as Propaganda*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006.

Fiala, Andrew. "Pacifism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 6 July 2006. 15 April 2013 <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pacifism/#2.1>>.

Guralnik, David Bernard, and Victoria Neufeldt. *Webster's New World Dictionary of American English*. 3rd college ed. Cleveland: Webster's New World, 1988.

Harmon, William, and Hugh Holman. *A Handbook to Literature*. New York: Macmillan, 1992.

Lisca, Peter. *The Wide World of John Steinbeck*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1958.

Meredith, James H. Introduction. *Bombs Away: The Story of a Bomber Team*. By John Steinbeck. London: Penguin Books, 2009. Kindle file.

New Oxford American Dictionary, 2nd edition, Erin McKean, ed. New York: Oxford University Press. 2005.

Onions, C, George Washington Salisbury Friedrichsen, and R Burchfield. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*. 1st ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.

“Pacifism.” *BBC Ethics guide*. BBC: 2013. 29 March 2013
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/war/against/pacifism_1.shtml>.

“Pacifist“ . *Merriam-Webster. Com*. Merriam Webster, 2011. 27 April 2013
<<http://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/pacifist>>.

Polner, Murray, and Thomas E Woods. *We Who Dared to Say No to War: American Antiwar Writing from 1812 to Now*. New York: Basic Books, 2008.

Shillinglaw, Dr. Susan. “Biography in Depth.” *The Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies*. 6 April 2013.
<http://as.sjsu.edu/steinbeck/biography/index.jsp?val=biography_biography_in_dept>.

Steinbeck, John. *Bombs Away: The Story of a Bomber Team*. London: Penguin Books, 2009. Kindle file.

---. *The Log from Sea of Cortez*. London: Penguin Books, 2001.

---. *Once There Was a War*. London: Penguin Classic, 1994.

---. *The Short Novels of John Steinbeck*. London: Penguin Classic, 2009. Kindle file.

Thoreau, Henry David. "The Project Gutenberg eBook, On the Duty of Civil Disobedience, by Henry David Thoreau." *Project Gutenberg*. 12 June 2004. 1 April 2013 <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/71/71-h/71-h.htm>>.

Underhill, John. *Newes from America; Or, A New and Experimentall Discoverie of New England; Containing, A Trve Relation of Their War-like Proceedings These Two Yeares Last Past, with a Figure of the Indian Fort, or Palizado*. London: J.D. for Peter Cole, 1638. *Digital Commons@University of Nebraska – Lincoln*. 2007. 15 April 2013 <<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1037&context=etas>>.

Wachtell, Cynthia. *War No More: The Antiwar Impulse in American Literature, 1861-1914*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010.

White, James E. *Contemporary Moral Problems*. 9th ed. Boston: Thomas Wadsworth, 2009.

Woodworth, Steven E. *The Chickamauga Campaign*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010.