

## ETHNIC ISSUES IN THE WORKS OF JOHN STEINBECK

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### **Abstract**

John Steinbeck is an author whose literary oeuvre has evoked a rich palette of reactions, from open admiration to total rejection. This divided reaction to his works is probably at least to some extent due to the fact that his works address several contentious issues, one of them being ethnic issues, which will be discussed in this paper.

**Key words:** ethnic issues, ethnicity, literary works, non-literary works

### 1.0. JOHN STEINBECK AND HIS HOMELAND

In his literary career, Steinbeck ventured in many different directions in terms of the subject, genre, as well as style and form. Regardless of his many ventures, he could be said to be primarily a naturalist writer dedicating most of his literary works to his homeland, California. Steinbeck's literary beginnings were humble, the first turning point in his literary career being his California novel *Tortilla Flat* (1935), a picaresque account of the lives of Monterey paisanos, followed by three novels dealing with the plight of migrant labourers *In Dubious Battle* (1936), *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), all of which further promoted Steinbeck's career as a writer.

Steinbeck proved to be at his best when writing about his homeland and the people he encountered there, that is why, according to many critics his works written prior to his change of residence from California to New York, which coincided with the onset of World War II, established him as a prominent and important American novelist of his time. After experiencing the terrors of the war front in 1943, he returned to New York disillusioned by what he had seen and once again retreated to the security of his homeland, now by writing about it, the result being the novel *Cannery Row* (1945). Most of Steinbeck's literary as well as non-literary works that followed did not attract much attention from contemporary critics or were most often denounced by them. His reputation also declined with readers, whose limited attention was attracted only by the works of American pastoral life, including the novelette *The Pearl* (1947) and the epic novel *East of Eden* (1952).

## 2.0. STEINBECK'S TREATMENT OF ETHNIC ISSUES

No matter which direction Steinbeck took in his literary career, one of the features that can often be traced in his works is his interest in the lives of the marginalised, the dispossessed and the poor. This paper will focus on the author's interest in the representatives of different ethnic minorities and related issues. Following the three main areas into which most of Steinbeck's literary works have been grouped since 1947 – novels focusing on the California working class, witty comedies and works of American pastoral life – I will first briefly outline the treatment of ethnic issues in the works within these three groups. As the questions who Americans are and what the prevailing characteristics of American society are, are also dealt with in the non-literary works that Steinbeck wrote in the last decade of his life, the paper will round up with a discussion on the treatment of ethnic issues in these works. Some of the topics which will be discussed in my article have also been dealt with in studies written by Danica Čerče.

### 2.1. Ethnic issues in literary works

#### 2.1.1. Works focusing on the California working class

In the novels that focus on the California working class – *In Dubious Battle*, *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath* – Steinbeck relates the struggle of the migrant workers in California, taking a different point of view in each of them.

The novel *In Dubious Battle* depicts events in California orchards, where migratory workers organise themselves against the orchard owners. Steinbeck objectively recognises and exposes the main failings of both sides – the exploitation of the individual resulting in the sacrifice of an individual for the 'common cause' and the depersonalization of individuals. Both of these characteristics are also discernible in the treatment of ethnic issues, which deal with various aspects of ethnicity in the USA. The first brief mention of ethnicity, in which the protagonist Jim Nolan relates his experience of sharing a cell with "a Mexican and a Negro and a Jew and a couple of plain mongrel Americans like me" (Steinbeck 1936: 24), concludes with the realization that "In that cell were five men all raised in about the same condition" (ibid.). By treating nationality as a fact that has no further implications, Steinbeck sets the scene for his "phalanx theory," which he primarily uses "to explain mob psychology" (Lisca 1958: 118). His concept of a group-man (ibid.) is further elaborated in relation to ethnicity when Mac, the strike organiser and Jim's teacher, explains that the violent citizens or vigilantes are "the same ones that burned the houses of old German people during the war... that lynch Negroes" (Steinbeck 1936: 166). While Mac and Jim, when addressing their cause, use minorities, the orchard owners, on the other hand, when later in the novel they are trying to persuade strikers to stop the strike by offering them a minimum wage rise, use the American majority: "I know American working men. Give American working men something reasonable to listen to, and they'll listen" (244). The last treatment of ethnic issues is included in Mac's narration of a string of events at the lynching of a "nigger" (269), which is again used to demonstrate the phalanx theory and mob psychology.

The short novel *Of Mice and Men* relates the life of farmhands who live an underprivileged life at the bottom of society in California. In contrast to the protagonists of the preceding novel, the protagonists of this novel accept their lot and do not question the structure of society (Fontenrose 54). In the framework of this central topic, Steinbeck also addresses the still topical issue of the position of African Americans in American society. The latter is addressed in the treatment of the Negro stable keeper Crooks, who is forced into a subservient position because of social prejudice and racial discrimination felt and openly expressed both by the ranch owners as well as the white farmhands. His name Crooks could thus symbolize not only his bent spine but also the subservient position of the black race. To avoid being hurt for being isolated by other farmhands, he retreats into self-imposed isolation and tries to fight loneliness by reading books. One night his solitude is disturbed by the intrusion of Lennie, the simple-minded protagonist, who in his childlike neglect of social rules approaches Crooks and shares with him his dream of a home for himself, George and Curley. By approaching Crooks, he not only awakens that same dream in him but also reminds him of his loneliness. Crooks thus pleads with Lennie and Curley, who also joins them, to let him join their plans for the future and offers to work for them for free, which again symbolizes his subservient position. The reality of the fact that he and his race are still at the very bottom of the social-ladder is openly addressed by the farm owner's wife, who reminds him of his subservient position in class as well as race when she intrudes on the three of them: "Well, you keep your place then; Nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny" (Steinbeck 1937: 141). Crooks' dream of a better life and companionship thus lasts only for a brief moment; disheartened he asks Lennie and Candy to leave his room and retreats to nursing his bent spine.

The last novel from this trilogy, *The Grapes of Wrath*, depicts the plight of the dispossessed farmers from Oklahoma who are forced to set off for California to find work as fruit pickers and a new home. In the framework of ethnicity, 'Okies' could be seen both as an underprivileged minority in California, whose dream of a better life is soon ruined by the hostile attitude of the locals, as well as a microcosm of the American nation for possessing the will to go on and the opposition to become serfs (Thorp 131). Because of their will to endure, they paradoxically pose a threat to California middle class fruit owners, who strive to retain their position by holding on to their property and the rights deriving from it (115). In this respect, the minority issues related to 'Okies' are intricately interwoven with the native theme, primarily with the 'primal sin' (Tóth 6) in the history of the USA – the killing and dispossession of the Native Americans: "Grampa took up the land, and he had to kill the Indians and drive them away" (Steinbeck 1939: 45). Further reference to Indians and their legends can be found in the opening inter-chapter on the land turtle, in which the westward migration of the Okies is related to the Native American legend about a turtle that led an Indian tribe to "a new and unknown land" (Tóth 5). The fact that Indians and their culture continue to present an important aspect of contemporary American society is exposed in the episode depicting the migrants' Saturday night dance in a government camp, in which Steinbeck juxtaposes Indian culture with American by depicting a "Texas boy" and "Cherokee girl" (449) who join the dance.

### 2.1.2. Witty comedies

In the witty comedies *Tortilla Flat*, *Cannery Row* and *Sweet Thursday* (1954), Steinbeck, in a comically romantic tone, recounts the lives of Monterey “drop-outs” (Lisca 1972: 78) living in two special areas of Monterey, Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row.

The first and most successful of these comedies is the novel *Tortilla Flat*, which portrays Monterey paisanos, who are uncorrupted by the materialism of twentieth century civilisation and live in the poor uphill district called Tortilla Flat. The destinies of these protagonists, who upon returning from World War I gather around Danny, a newly proclaimed man of possession, are set in a plot inspired by the Arthurian legend, which interfaces with the organismic and ecological themes. By recounting the lives of paisanos, mixed-blooded Mexican-Americans, Steinbeck in this novel intricately interweaves the aforementioned Arthurian, organismic and ecological themes with ethnic issues. Although paisanos are “a mixture of Spanish, Indian, Mexican and assorted Caucasian bloods” (Steinbeck 1935: 57), which is pointed out when they are first introduced and on several other occasions, ethnic issues do not seem to be in the forefront of their treatment. Nevertheless, as regards their ethnicity, it should be noted that paisanos are not equally proud of their entire heritage and like to stress their Spanish blood as dominant and superior to their Mexican and Indian ancestry. The ethnic group that frequently meets with paisanos are the Italians, who together with Americans inhabit the lower parts of Monterey. Most of these Italians are men of some possession and thus the superior race on which paisanos depend on for their survival, which could be one of the reasons why paisanos do not think and speak fondly of them, be it the fishermen whom Danny meets in the harbour and verbally attacks, or the Italian local wine merchant, from whom they buy low-quality wine and who eventually buys Danny’s house, the only possession left after the house rented to Pilon has burnt to the ground. The novel thus ends with the dissolution of Danny’s group, which is brought about by the group’s failure to resist the weight of property ownership.

After witnessing the horrors of World War II, Steinbeck, upon his return home, tried to find an escape from the war and the discontenting realities of post-war times in the novel *Cannery Row*, which recounts the lives of Monterey bums in the 1930s, this time the ones living in the lower parts of Monterey, called Cannery Row. The protagonists of this witty comedy are Mack and his boys, who are “American bums,” not the paisanos of *Tortilla Flat*. The topical thread of the novel is again intricately interwoven with the organismic and ecological theme, both of which occasionally intersect with the ethnic theme, especially when the basic organism formed around Mack and his boys, and the broader one, Cannery Row and its community, are juxtaposed with Lee Chong, a Chinese grocer, and with the old Chinaman. In this respect, Lee Chong could be seen as a representative of a foreign culture who successfully adapts to the community of Cannery Row. With the help of oriental philosophy, he namely manages to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with Mack and his boys and the other residents of Cannery Row and thus lays ground for his successful business and the respect he enjoys. His successful adjustment is not the result of an unconditional surrender to American culture and its shortcomings but rather of his successful balancing of these shortcomings with

the oriental philosophy. His diametrical opposite is the old Chinaman, who unlike Lee Chong is completely detached from the community of Cannery Row, crossing its streets at dusk and dawn with his wicker basket like a ghost, evoking in the Row's residents their greatest fears. The old Chinaman's total detachment could be interpreted as his total rejection of American culture and his aversion to assimilation, whose inevitability is foreshadowed in a young boy's rhyme: "Ching-Chong Chinaman sitting on a rail – 'Long came a white man and chopped off his tail" (Steinbeck 1945: 14).

The last novel in this group is *Sweet Thursday*, which repeats not only the setting and many of the characters of *Cannery Row* but also the general outline of the plot. In this novel, Steinbeck's disillusionment with the post-war society of Cannery Row is also reflected in the treatment of ethnic issues through the replacement of Lee Chong and his Oriental philosophy with Joseph and Mary Rivas, a Mexican American with a questionable reputation, whose core business is not selling groceries but smuggling illegal immigrants from Mexico. While Lee Chong, whose sudden and unexpected departure takes the residents of Cannery Row by surprise as well as disappointing them, stands for wisdom and natural goodness, his successor could in this respect be seen as his direct opposite: "Everything he did naturally turned out to be against the law" (Steinbeck 1966: 11). Another contrasting difference between Lee and Joseph and Mary is their relationship with other people; while Lee predominantly fosters altruistic and mutually beneficial relationships, Joseph and Mary is predominantly driven by self-interest, which leaves little room for altruism and charity. Accordingly, his prime interest in the grocery is not selling groceries but providing "a kind of labor center" (15) for illegal immigrants from Mexico. His lack of morality is further demonstrated by his exploitation of his own people, who are less fortunate and in a worse position than he is. Besides repeating the setting and general outline of the plot, Steinbeck in this novel thus also repeats the focus of ethnic identity; following the pattern of *Cannery Row*, he again contrasts two groups of immigrants to American society, this time from Mexico, and their level of assimilation. In this respect, Joseph and Mary's denial of his roots, his self-interest and preoccupation with money-making could be interpreted as his total surrender to American culture, resulting in his "successful" assimilation and putting him in a superior position to his less privileged and unassimilated fellow countrymen, the advantage of which he takes without much of a guilty conscience.

### 2.1.3. Works of American pastoral life

In the works *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932) and *The Long Valley* (1938), Steinbeck takes us to the idyllic countryside of the Salinas Valley, while the novelette *The Pearl* recounts the legend of an Indian living in a coastal village in the suburbs of the Mexican town of La Paz.

In *The Pastures of Heaven*, Steinbeck recounts lives in the seemingly idyllic valley situated about twenty miles from Monterey. A series of ten stories, each of them an account of the destinies of a chosen individual or family, is rounded up by the opening and closing chapter, in which first the Spanish corporal and finally the bus driver and his passengers stop at the top of a ridge and contemplate the possibility of retreating

to this village. The ill fortune of the valley and its inhabitants is foreshadowed in the first chapter, which recounts the story of a Spanish corporal, who discovers the valley after recapturing a group of runaway Indians that had escaped forced labour in clay pits. Admiring the beauty of the valley's countryside from a nearby ridge, he dreams of retreating to its beauty and peacefulness in his old age. The realization of his dream is later prevented by his death of pox, which has ironically been transmitted to him by an Indian woman. The valley, being spoiled by the primal sin of the American culture, is ironically named The Pastures of Heaven, the name chosen by a Spanish corporal whose "rapacious manhood was building a new race for California" (Steinbeck 1932: 2). The origins of the valley being linked to this "savage bearer of civilization" (ibid.), thus inevitably result in the curse that hangs over the valley as well as its inhabitants from the very beginning and is reawakened with the arrival of the Munroe family, whose main sin seems to be their mediocrity, which has unforeseeable consequences for the valley's inhabitants. After the explicit treatment of ethnic issues related to the Spanish conquerors and Native Americans and their implications for life in the valley, Steinbeck later deals with ethnicity in a less explicit manner. When recounting the destinies of the valley's inhabitants of Indian origin, he thus only briefly mentions or just alludes to their ethnic origin; such examples are a Mexican Indian Pancho, a farm hand who one day finds an infant Tularecito, whose very name, affinity with nature and the alienation from the world of the whites allude to his Indian roots. Not being able to conform to the norms of the white majority, Tularecito is confined to a mental asylum. Similarly, the paisano sisters Lopez, who make their living by selling Mexican food and providing their customers with sexual services, when faced with the accusations of a jealous village woman, can do nothing but leave the valley for San Francisco to become prostitutes. Steinbeck's interest in ethnicity is further developed in his treatment of the Mistrovics, a family of Slavic origin, whose members almost completely isolate themselves from other residents, with whom only the son occasionally speaks. The family, whose Slavic origin is alluded to with their surname, physical appearance and foreign accent, departs the valley as mysteriously as they had settled in it. Their apparent opposition to assimilation is provided a counterpart in an old German worker, whom the idle Junious Maltby hires as a farm hand and who readily surrenders to idle contemplation over any thought that might enter Junious's and his mind.

*The Long Valley* is another collection of short stories, most of which share the same setting, Steinbeck's native region of the Salinas Valley. The latter being a homeland to a relatively large number of Indians, it is no surprise that Native Americans and their present day descendants represent the most often addressed ethnic group in this work. The first story to address the native theme is "Flight," an account of a young Indian's initiation into manhood. Most of the story concerns itself with a set of events triggered by the protagonist's impulsive killing of a man, which forces him into a flight into the mountains. Upon his final departure from his family, the protagonist's mother presents him with his late father's possessions, all of which are symbols of Western civilisation. On his journey to an inevitable death in the mountains, he gradually rids himself of these "Western artefacts of his family's acquired culture" (Britch and Lewis 45), and freed of them as well as being matured by his experience, he proudly awaits the deadly shot. While Pepé, the protagonist of "The Flight," retreats into the moun-

tains to face his untimely death, Gitano, a paisano character of “The Great Mountains,” retreats into the mountains to await his timely death. After being rejected the right to await death at the farm where he was born, he steals an old horse named Easter and rides him to the mountains, taking only his father’s rapier with him. Like Pepé, Gitano is also influenced by Western culture, which is symbolised by the horse’s name and a rapier that accompany him on his final journey. Leaving behind all other artefacts of Western culture, he rides out proudly “in the manner of a warrior and an Indian” (51). Besides Indians, Steinbeck also presents a representative of the Chinese and Yugoslav minority. The racial prejudices linked to the Chinese minority are addressed in “Johnny Bear,” in which a town’s respected aristocratic spinster gets pregnant with a Chinese tenant farmer. Her sin of carrying an illegitimate child is doubly degrading because of the child’s Chinese paternal origin. The sin being unacceptable to the town’s social norms, the pregnant sister, to protect the family’s reputation, commits suicide. Another story alluding to the perceived racial superiority of Nordic peoples (French 86), “The Murder,” could be interpreted as a study of the constraints of a mixed culture marriage experienced in small-town America during the time frame of the story (Schultz and Li 143). On the wedding day, the protagonist Jim, of apparent Anglo origin, is warned by his father-in-law: “Jelka is a Slav girl. He’s not like American girl. If he’s bad, beat him” (Steinbeck 1956: 173). No matter how appalled by this proposal, Jim later, after finding his wife in bed with her cousin, kills him and on the next day severely whips her. The fact that he is so deeply offended by his wife’s adultery, although he himself regularly visits a town’s whorehouse, and the fact that he gets away with murder, illustrate Jim’s superior position as a man and as an American.

The novelette *The Pearl* is a parable set in a Mexican fishing village, La Paz, recounting an anecdote of a Mexican-Indian boy who finds a great pearl. The discovery of the pearl brings to Steinbeck’s protagonist, Kino, the promise of future prosperity and happiness. After experiencing the evil that the pearl has brought, the promise of future prosperity turns into the ominous symbol of greed and envy. By pointing out the evil that materialism brings as well as its effect on the inhabitants of a small Indian fishing village, on the one hand, and the townsmen, most of whom are Mexicans of Spanish descent, on the other, this story could also be read as an insight into ethnic divisions in Mexico (Methuen’s Study-Aids 22). Kino is thus a representative of the oppressed and exploited Indian community, which lives by Indian traditions as well as adapts to some aspects of Western culture; he and his wife instinctively first revert to their ancient tradition – chant their songs to give voice to their inner feelings, treat their son with a poultice – but seek further advice and help from the town-community and their culture – their Christian religion, medicine and the commercial contacts of the pearl buyers. The latter representing their oppressors, the Indian community fosters mixed feelings of awe and distrust towards them, both longing for the prosperity and safety that Western culture and Christianity promise as well as being cautious of their greed and treachery. Losing his beloved son as well as all of his possessions, Kino realizes that his dreams of happiness that the pearl should bring were as misleading as his illusion that he could fight against the injustices inflicted upon his community by the townsmen. Realizing that materialism does not bring happiness or respect from the oppressors, he finally throws the pearl back into the sea and reverts to living by Indian traditions.

## 2.2. Ethnic issues in non-literary works

Although Steinbeck is primarily known for his literary works, it should be noted that his non-literary works provide us with an invaluable insight into his concepts and view of life by shedding a different light on both of them. To round up the treatment of ethnic issues in Steinbeck's works, this paper will thus conclude with a discussion on how ethnicity is dealt with in the travelogues *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* (1951) and *Travels with Charley in Search of America* (1962) and a collection of essays *America and Americans* (1966).

*The Log from the Sea of Cortez* recounts the experience, biological findings and philosophical views pertaining to the biological expedition to the Gulf of California or Sea of Cortez, which Steinbeck joined to escape his long feared popularity and public attention. This work gives full voice to the concepts already dealt with in his previous works, including his views on ethnicity and related issues. The first treatment of the latter is included in the appendix dedicated to Edd Ricketts, in an account of an incident in which an Italian woman, upon visiting Edd's laboratory, is shown the foetus of a Negress and a Chinese. Unlike the representative of an aristocratic white race, Amy, from "Johnny Bear," who commits suicide, this Negress is killed against her will, her murderer being unidentified. Furthermore, while Amy's foetus is buried together with her, the Negress' foetus is exposed to public scrutiny, which further alludes to the Negress' apparent inferior position. This incident could also be interpreted as an allusion to the Italian woman's non-assimilation into American society, which is demonstrated by her inability to speak English. With regards to assimilation, two representatives of Chinese origin, a young Chinese who one day visits the laboratory and speaks perfect English as well as the Chinese grocer who like in *Cannery Row* and *Sweet Thursday* is treated with respect, could be seen as her opposite for their successful assimilation. In the chapters recounting a set of events from the biological expedition, ethnicity is primarily dealt with in encounters with the inhabitants of the Gulf of California and its hinterland. In their first encounter with the locals, the latter board or near the ship in hierarchical order: first the Mexican officials in uniforms, then business agents in business suits, after them the soldiers and finally the Indians. Further in the bay, the crew is approached by the Indians who are very cautious, which Steinbeck ascribes to the "evil that the white man had brought to their ancestors" (Steinbeck 1967: 135). Steinbeck's sympathy with the natives, who are uncorrupted by the materialism of modern society, is outspoken in several more accounts of encounters with them, as well as further developed in his criticism of tasteless Spanish wooden sculptures of Christ, created to "impress the Indians of the Gulf" (142) and the failures of American society, the biggest of them being materialism. Although admiring the Indians' still clean and unspoiled minds, Steinbeck concludes his brooding over their destiny and the effects of Western culture on them by foreshadowing the inevitable change in their attitude towards "temporal and material things" (292), resulting in their surrender to them.

The travelogue *Travels with Charley in Search of America* is an account of a journey Steinbeck took across the United States with the goal of rediscovering and redefining his home country as well as identifying Americans and their defining traits.



His only companion on this journey was his dog Charley, with whom he travelled in a camper called Rocinante, the name symbolising his Don Quixotian quest for the idealized America of his boyhood in the commercialized “atomic-age” America of the 1960s (Fontenrose 138). Striving to identify Americans, Steinbeck in this work inevitably deals with various aspects of ethnicity in the USA, including specificities of inhabitants of various regions, the problem of racial discrimination and segregation, the concept of the melting pot, and the common traits of all Americans. In this patchwork of America’s rich ethnic makeup, Steinbeck strives to find the prevailing traits of Americans as “a nation, a new breed” (Steinbeck 1962: 185). To his fascination, all Americans have developed certain common traits that define them as Americans.

His concern about Americans and the contentious issues of contemporary America are further discussed in his collection of nine essays titled *America and Americans*. In these essays, Steinbeck addresses the topical issues of his America, starting where he left off in *Travels with Charley in Search of America*: “our people are every race, of every ethnic category – and yet ...Americans” (Steinbeck 2002: 319) and continuing with his search for the answer to the question who Americans are. In the opening essay, he first provides us with his insight into the underlying reason for the fast assimilation of newcomers into mainstream American culture – the “very cruelty toward newcomers” (322) – and the development of their common traits, which as he observes is reflected in “an American look” (324) recognized worldwide. The two ethnic groups that are set apart from more or less fully assimilated newcomers are the Indians and the Negroes. In the essays to follow, Steinbeck addresses several more contentious issues of American society, some of them being their paradoxical dream of home struggling with their restlessness, slavery and related issues, the illusion of a classless society, the irresponsible exploitation of the land, and their attitude toward foreigners (Schultz and Li 28-30). In his final essay, Steinbeck concludes that present day America might be permeated with failures and vices, many of them originating in materialism and the insatiable desire for material things, but he still believes that based on their previous knowledge and experience, Americans will find a way to successfully adapt to “the change that is coming” (Steinbeck 2002: 402).

### 3.0. CONCLUSION

It seems inevitable that Steinbeck, as the author who was deeply concerned with the social and economic issues of the America of his time, should pay as much attention as he did to the divisions in contemporary American society, including class, ethnicity and race. In the treatment of ethnicity, he casts light on important aspects of American society, including the native theme, the phenomenon of the melting pot and assimilation, and the position of immigrant workers. His treatment of ethnic issues culminates in the attempt to find the answer to the paramount question who Americans are and how well they are prepared for the challenges of the America of the 20th century.

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## ETNIČNA PROBLEMATIKA V DELIH JOHNA STEINBECKA

John Steinbeck je avtor, katerega dela so tako pri širši javnosti kakor tudi pri literarnih kritikih izzzvala nasprotujoče si odzive, vse od popolnega navdušenja do zavrnitve. Tako razdvojen odziv vsaj deloma lahko pripišemo dejstvu, da je Steinbeck v svojih delih veliko pozornosti namenil perečim družbenim vprašanjem v svoji domovini, med drugim tudi etnični problematiki, katera bo obravnavana v tem članku.

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*Nataša Potočnik*

## WENDY JONES NAKANISHI - AMERIČANKA, ŽIVEČA NA JAPONSKEM

Wendy Jones Nakanishi je profesorica angleškega jezika in primerjalnih kultur na univerzi Shikoku Gakuin University na otoku Shikoku na jugu Japonske. Svoje otroštvo je Wendy Jones preživela v majhnem mestu v Indiani (ZDA) in prejela mednarodno univerzitetno izobrazbo v Indiani, v Angliji in na Škotskem. Nakanishijeva je poleg svojih strokovnih del in člankov s področja angleške literature iz 18. stoletja, analize sodobnih japonskih in britanskih avtorjev (kritične monografije, kritike knjig) v zadnjih letih izdala tudi več kratkih zgodb, ki temeljijo na njenih lastnih izkušnjah o življenju na Japonskem v zadnjih sedemindvajsetih letih. Tako kot Američanka, univerzitetna profesorica in žena Japonca ter mati treh sinov, v svojih kratkih zgodbah, ki so bile izdane v številnih literarnih revijah na Japonskem in v tujini, izraža pogled tujke na raznolikost in velik pomen tujih kultur (predvsem Japonske), običajev in sprejemanju le- teh.

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*Marija Javor Briški*

## STRAH – ŽALOVANJE – SRD. ,EMOCIJE' V PESMI O NIBELUNGIH

Prispevek se osredotoči na prevladujoče emocije v *Pesmi o Nibelungih*: na strah, žalovanje in srd. Pričujoče upodobitve emocij so med drugim vedenjski vzorci, ki so podvrženi določenim konvencijam in katerim se pripisuje določen pomen v socialni interakciji. Avtorica jih v glavnem obravnava z vidika specifičnosti spola, v njihovem odnosu do racionalnosti in kot simbolno dejanje, odgovarja pa tudi na vprašanje, ali je