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**Human in Henry David Thoreau's, William Faulkner's, John Barth's Novels: The Comparative
Aspect**

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**Žmogus Henrio Davido Thoreau, Williamo Faulknerio, Johno Bartho romanuose: lyginamasis
aspektas**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Relevance and novelty of the theme. This research takes into consideration novels written by three significant American authors: Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), William Faulkner (1897–1962) and John Barth (born in 1930). All the mentioned authors have been crucial figures concerning American literature development. Works they have written are still prominent and valued these days as they present a wide range of themes and problems which have not ceased to be relevant. They have been explored, criticised and worshipped by a number of scholars, such as: Charles B. Harris, Patrick Chura, Philip Cafaro, Philip M. Weinstein and many others¹. Even though the chosen novels *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (H. D. Thoreau), *As I Lay Dying* (W. Faulkner) and *The End of the Road* (J. Barth) have been of particular interest for many scholars, there are still many aspects to be examined.

The first of the mentioned authors, Henry David Thoreau, was a notable American author, essayist, philosopher, naturalist and representative of American Romantic Period. His major works include *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers* (1849), *Civil Disobedience* (1849), *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854) and some others. The latter book is of particular importance as the author presents a well-structured and accurate observations related to nature. The book is based on his own experience: he had spent two years and two months living in a small cabin near Walden Pond (Massachusetts). It was believed that “[t]he building of the cabin, described in great detail, is a concrete metaphor for the careful building of a soul”². Accordingly, he promoted simple life, but also praised rich inner world of an individual and reflected: “While civilization has been improving our homes, it has not equally improved those who live in them”³. However, this and some other peculiarities related to human beings will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Another writer is William Cuthbert Faulkner. He has been considered as a modernist of American literature and had written numerous novels and short stories which have brought him recognition from the public. His most important works are the following: *Soldiers Pay* (1926), *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932), *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), *The Mansion* (1959), *Flags in the Dust* (1973) and many others. He is best known for his experimental writing style, continuous use of “stream of consciousness”, interior monologue and other techniques which make him unique and distinctive figure in the overall literary history. He was immersed in human matters and this

¹ See Charles B. Harris, *Passionate Virtuosity: the Fiction of John Barth*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983; Patrick Chura, *Thoreau the Land Surveyor*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010; Philip Cafaro, *Thoreau's Living Ethics: Walden and the Pursuit of Virtue*, Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2004; Philip M. Weinstein, *Faulkner's Subject: A Cosmos No One Owns*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992, etc.

² Kathryn VanSpanckeren, *Outline of American Literature*, Washington: United States Department of State, 1994, p. 29–30.

³ Peter B. High, *An Outline of American Literature*, New York: Longman Inc., 1998, p. 47.

is best reflected in his works. Moreover, it is being said that “Faulkner's descriptions of human goodness are as powerful as his descriptions of human evil”⁴. Hence, his concern in human nature is of great relevance to this research.

The final author to be introduced is John Barth. In contrast to above mentioned authors, he is one of representatives of contemporary postmodern literature. His most famous writings are: *The Floating Opera* (1956), *The End of the Road* (1958), *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1967) and *The Development* (2008) and a few more. Reflecting these novels, we must understand postmodernism: “[...] the insistence that reality amounts to cultural stories and interpretations that we impose upon existence to create meaning for ourselves and of ourselves is the most typical characteristic of postmodern writing”⁵. Barth creates an obvious atmosphere of fiction in his works. The problems his characters are dealing with seem quite mundane and familiar to many readers. Emotional paralysis, the question of existence or death, humanity and many other issues are key themes in his works. John Barth’s poetics include such techniques as “stream of consciousness”, wordplay, parody, irony, etc. Due to such a specific manner of writing and being a charismatic personality, John Barth remains to be one of the most remarkable writers in today’s world.

Having presented those three authors, it can be claimed that they are all distinctive from various points of view. The novelty of this research is an attempt to reveal and compare different human versions depicted by those three authors who were creating in different periods of time. To be more precise, the fundamental ways of human self-expression (i.e., how human shapes oneself) will be discussed in the further chapters of the Bachelor thesis.

The object of the research is human in Henry David Thoreau’s, William Faulkner’s, John Barth’s novels with regard to comparative aspect. In present research, human is not a concrete man, but rather a phenomenon consisted of other human beings, their ideas, actions and the surrounding milieu.

The aim of the research is to analyse the novels of the mentioned authors by identifying and comparing different aspects of human, its reflections and expressions in the works of art.

To reach the aim, the following objectives have been set up:

1. To present a theoretical background of the comparative method and Hannah Arendt’s human conception.
2. To provide and interpret various aspects of human presented by the mentioned authors.
3. To compare the revealed aspects of various human shapes identified in those three novels.

The research methodology. This work is supported by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek’s theory of Comparative Literature which is found in his book *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application* (1998). Here he asserted that Comparative Literature is strongly connected with borrowing, particularly if to speak about application of methods belonging to other disciplines. He defined that

⁴ Ibid., p. 155.

⁵ Pam Morris, *Realism*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 30.

“Comparative Literature means the knowledge of more than one national language and literature, and/or it means the knowledge or application of other disciplines in and for the study of literature”⁶. What is more, he manifested Comparative Literature to be interdisciplinary and inseparable from culture. Such a flexible, modern and convenient treatment allows us to apply this method while analysing and comparing different manifestations of human.

Paying attention to the mentioned aspect of interdisciplinarity, Hannah Arendt’s, a philosopher’s human conception, presented in her book *The Human Condition* (1958), will be also taken into account while analysing various aspects of human which appear in the novels written by authors from different generations. In this book, which serves as one of the bases for the present Bachelor thesis, she presents a number of accurate insights into human beings, politics and the world itself. According to her, “Men in the plural, that is, men in so far as they live and move and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves”⁷. In simple terms, she claimed that we need other humans in order to live a proper life as we are all closely interconnected. This and many other observations will be presented and explained in the theoretical part, paying special attention to the formulated object of the research.

Even though it can be conventionally stated that human is an open question and there have been and always will be lots of things to be explored, it will be attempted to show to what extent the chosen methodology is able to reveal and explain human images that appear in the introduced novels.

The structure of the paper. The present paper comprises typical parts of a Bachelor thesis which include introduction, the theoretical part, the main part which consists of three chapters, conclusions, English and Lithuanian summaries, the list of references and annotations in both English and Lithuanian. Introduction provides the main facts related to the writers. In the theoretical part the main ideas on the comparative method and Hannah Arendt’s philosophy are presented. The main part essentially deals with human representations identified in the novels *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, *As I Lay Dying* and *The End of the Road*. Conclusions provide the most important results of the research.

⁶ Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application*, Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B V, 1998, p. 13.

⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, With an Introduction by Margaret Canovan, Second Edition, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 4.

II. DEFINING COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND HUMAN: CONCEPTIONS BY STEVEN TÖTÖSY DE ZEPETNEK AND HANNAH ARENDT

1. A Brief Look at Comparative Literature as a New Interdisciplinary Method

In this chapter the most relevant ideas, expressed in the book entitled as *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application*, written by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, will be presented in brief.

At the very beginning, it would be sensible to present an intelligible definition of Comparative Literature. In most general terms, today it refers to literature and its various connections related to time, country, language, genres, other disciplines, other forms of art, etc. To have a more precise view, we shall focus on the following observations. One notable scholar, Susan Bassnett, suggests that this term essentially “[...] involves the study of texts across cultures, that it is interdisciplinary and that it is concerned with patterns of connection in literatures across both time and space”⁸. It confirms the idea that Comparative Literature deals with a complex network of connections and operates as a form of study using knowledge acquired from other sciences. Besides, it is still being argued whether Comparative Literature should be maintained as a separate discipline or simply as a field of literature studies. To compare, Tötösy de Zepetnek ascribes Comparative Literature to the concept of discipline by claiming that “[...] the discipline is difficult to define because thus it is fragmented and pluralistic”⁹. At this point we find Comparative Literature a bit problematic. Basically, such a complexity is caused due to lack of clear and definite method. Therefore, it induced comparatists to choose the most convenient methods even from very distinct disciplines. It diminishes the noticed lack of strict method and allows exploring literature in a more productive way. Those and some other factors induced Tötösy de Zepetnek to emphasise this problematic aspect of Comparative Literature. Such a standpoint is best reflected in his straightforward assertion that “[...] discipline of Comparative Literature is in toto a method in the study of literature [...]”¹⁰. Later in his book, Tötösy de Zepetnek provides a broader and more precise definition of Comparative Literature. He believed that “[...] most importantly [...] Comparative Literature means the recognition of and the engagement with the Other, may that be a “non-canonical” text (popular literature, for instance) or the literary and cultural aspects of another race, gender, nation, etc. [...]”¹¹. Now we have a bit clarified point of view as we know that integration

⁸ Susan Bassnett, *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p. 1.

⁹ Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

of borrowed methods not only involves classical, or canonical literature, but it also deals with literary works which are beyond conventional norms.

Having presented a couple of introductory statements, we can focus now on basic aspects of Comparative Literature. The most relevant Tötösy de Zepetnek's ideas are presented in a form of Manifesto and divided into general principles of Comparative Literature. His Sixth General Principle highlights "[...] [the] focus on literature within the context of culture"¹². In this respect, we can maintain that literature would be barely explored without cultural knowledge because of its reflections in overall literature. Hence, this apparent connection between literature and culture will be considered in the chapters that represent the practical part.

Another aspect to be considered is a case of interdisciplinarity. In The Eighth General Principle, Tötösy de Zepetnek emphasises the focus and "[...] insistence on methodology in interdisciplinary study [...]"¹³. In further chapters of the book he provides detailed explanations for this specific term, for instance:

First, it postulates that literature may (or should) be studied by attention to conceptually related fields such as history, psychology or other areas of artistic expression such as film, music, the visual arts, etc. [...] Second, interdisciplinarity postulates the principle of method, that is, the application of theoretical frameworks and methodologies used in other disciplines for the acquisition of knowledge in the analysis of literature and/ or the literary text or texts.¹⁴

Thus he highlights the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge and possibility to employ it in literary studies. However, such a possibility to apply "universal" knowledge acquired from various fields of studies seems a bit vague and barely implementable. Despite of this, Tötösy de Zepetnek proved that such a framework of Comparative Literature can be efficiently implemented in literary research.

Even though the term *interdisciplinary* now seems quite easily definable, some confusion arises in its perception. Therefore, some additional terms appeared to diminish this confusion. Those terms, introduced by Tötösy de Zepetnek, were adopted from Julie Thompson Klein. They involve *intradisciplinarity*, *multidisciplinarity* and *pluridisciplinarity*. With regard to some assertions provided in Thompson Klein's book *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory and Practice* (1990), Tötösy de Zepetnek adopts the proposed terminology and makes some generalisations. For instance, he claims that we imply *intradisciplinary* when "[...] methods borrowed from sociology, history, or psychology

¹² Ibid., p. 17.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

are applied in the study of literature and/or the literary text or texts”¹⁵. Hence it means searching for various connections within literature maintaining that borrowed methods function as a core tool. Moreover, those methods should be employed from closely related fields of study. Thompson Klein states that *multidisciplinarity* “[...] signifies the juxtaposition of disciplines. It is essentially *additive*, not *integrative*”¹⁶. In this case, not only closely related disciplines are involved. The notion of *multidisciplinarity* refers to scholars working in isolation who additionally apply methods taken even from very distant disciplines. Finally, the third term to be observed is *pluridisciplinarity*. This concept differs very little from *multidisciplinarity*. The fundamental difference lies in a number of researchers dealing with problems. Whereas the latter concept is applied only to one scholar, *pluridisciplinarity* involves a combination of theories and methods used by a team of scholars. Summing up the identified distinctness of terminology, Comparative Literature can be studied either by a single person (*intradisciplinarity*, *multidisciplinarity*) or by a group of specialists (*intradisciplinarity*, *pluridisciplinarity*).

Both Tötösy de Zepetnek and Thompson Klein emphasise borrowing which is significant for Comparative Literature as a method and interdisciplinarity too. Thompson Klein has distinguished fundamental problems associated with borrowing:

1. [...] distortion and misunderstanding of borrowed material; 2. use of data, methods, concepts, and theories out of context; 3. use of borrowing out of favour in their original context (including an overreliance on “old chestnuts”); 4. “illusions of certainty” about phenomena treated with caution or scepticism in their original disciplines; 5. overreliance on one particular theory or perspective; and 6. a tendency to dismiss contradictory tests, evidence, and explanations.¹⁷

These six common problems of borrowing show that a researcher must keep in mind an essence of borrowed discourse and its context.

Having observed the main aspects of Comparative Literature, such as its definition, strengths and weaknesses, cultural relevance and the concept of interdisciplinarity, not neglecting other related terms which include *intradisciplinarity*, *multidisciplinarity* and *pluridisciplinarity*, we are now able to employ this framework into our analysis. Just before doing that, the major ideas of a philosopher Hannah Arendt will be presented in the further chapter. This will effectively support this Bachelor thesis looking from an interdisciplinary perspective.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁶ Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory and Practice*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990, p. 56.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 88.

2. Hannah Arendt's Conception of Human Based on Fundamental Activities We Perform

As it has been mentioned in the introductory part, *The Human Condition* was chosen as a theoretical background to distinguish between the essential aspects of human shapes. Those shapes, in fact, manifest through fundamental activities we perform. Due to a detailed explanation of such activities, this philosophical book plays a major role in the present Bachelor thesis.

The Human Condition was written by Hannah Arendt (1906–1975); a famous German American social theorist. Despite having no exact genre and the fact that it first appeared in 1958, the book is still relevant these days. Margaret Canovan, who has had a particular interest in Arendt's personality and in her major works, maintained: "When she published *The Human Condition* in 1958, she herself sent something unexpected out into the world, and forty years later the book's originality is as striking as ever [...]. Although Arendt never tried to gather disciples and found a school of thought, she has been a great educator, opening her readers' eyes to new ways of looking at the world and at human affairs"¹⁸. This opinion reveals the undeniable relevance of the book which provides many accurate insights in politics, society and individuals in general. The main principle of the book's organisation is an extraordinary distinction of three forms of activity that are essential to the human condition. The forms include *labor*, *work* and *action*. The main chapters of the book are entitled according to those three activities and, consequently, they were analysed by Arendt from various points of view.

To distinguish between those similar but at the same time very distinct terms, we should consider a couple of definitions which will certainly lead to a better understanding of the mentioned terms. According to Arendt, "[l]abor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body [...]. The human condition of labor is life itself"¹⁹. Then, she assumed that "[w]ork provides an "artificial" world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings"²⁰. Finally, Arendt explained that the notion of "[a]ction, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world"²¹. It suggests that our existence is conditioned by other people who surround us. Besides, here we encounter the concept of *plurality* which plays an important role in overall Arendt's philosophy. Coming back to the point, it follows that the terms are far from being synonymous in a sense that *labor* generally refers to naturalness and our biological life;

¹⁸ Margaret Canovan, "Introduction", in: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Second Edition, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. vii.

¹⁹ Hannah Arendt, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

work, on the contrary, refers to unnaturalness and artificially created things; while *action*, as distinct from the two, implies perhaps the highest level of existence where the presence of people is an obligatory condition to reach existential goals. To compare, it is worth to take into consideration another definition suggested by Margaret Canovan who has been already mentioned above. She, similarly to Arendt, differentiated between “[...] labor, which corresponds to the biological life of man as an animal; work, which corresponds to the artificial world of objects that human being build upon the earth; and action, which corresponds to our plurality as distinct individuals”²². If to focus on both definitions, it occurs that all the activities represent obligatory elements of human life. In other words, *labor*, *work* and *action* are inseparable from any human and, to a certain extent, they emerge into men’s lives and correlate with each other. Such a correlation can be explained by a logical postulate that it is not enough just to survive from *labor’s* point of view. In order to survive, we essentially need extra things which already belong to the concept of *work*, and finally, *action* is the activity which develops from the previous ones and thus makes us entirely different from animals. Having observed the basic facts about Arendt’s unique division of human activities, we can focus now on more detailed descriptions of *labor*, *work* and *action*.

Primarily, she started to contemplate on *labor*. We already know that it essentially involves the vital processes we perform. Besides, Arendt noted that *labor*, in a sense, corresponds to life itself. In this respect, it is worth to explore her thoughts on such a controversial term as *life*. In fact, she believed that life is “[...] a process that everywhere uses up durability, wears it down, makes it disappear, until eventually dead matter, the result of small, single, cyclical, life processes, returns into the over-all gigantic circle of nature herself, where no beginning and no end exist and where all natural things swing in changeless, deathless repetition”²³. Thus she emphasised the power of nature cycles which is interconnected with human life. Human beings constantly appear and disappear from this world as they are bound to two basic conditions known as birth and death. What is more, Arendt exposed that *life* can be ascribed to any kind of existing thing:

Limited by a beginning and an end, that is, by the two supreme events of appearance and disappearance within the world, it follows a strictly linear movement whose very motion nevertheless is driven by the motor of biological life which man shares with other living things and which forever retains the cyclical movement of nature.²⁴

²² Margaret Canovan, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

²³ Hannah Arendt, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

At this point we should make a considerable distinction between what refers purely to human life and the life which can be attributed to a large group of inanimate objects which surround us.

Approaching the concept of *work*, we will focus on the unnatural realm of human life. According to Arendt's philosophy, it occurs that this unnatural world would be impossible without things that surround us. To be more exact, in this context the term *thing* will denote artificial, inanimate items which are usually created by men. Relying upon Arendt's belief, the very human existence is closely linked to the world of things. Generally speaking, today's human beings could not go without things as well as those things could not even exist without interference of humans. She noted that "[t]he work of our hands, as distinguished from the labor of our bodies, [...] fabricates the sheer unending variety of things whose sum total constitutes the human artifice"²⁵. This statement indicates the fact that people are involved in a continuous existential cycle dependent upon themselves and the things which Arendt treated as a crucial condition of human life.

It is not a secret that humans now belong to what is called *Consumers' Society*²⁶ and thus we require more and more things. Due to such reasons, all machinery has become a necessity nowadays as it eases the process of *labor* and, at the same time, makes *work* as a leading and most productive human activity which provides us with needed things. However, it causes some doubts. For instance, it remains unclear "[...] whether man should be "adjusted" to the machine or the machines should be adjusted to the "nature" of man"²⁷, as Arendt had noticed. Concerning this arguable question we confront the disadvantageous aspect of emerging modernisation which results in shattering the very nature of men. On the other hand, there is an exceptional kind of things which will always remain of high value. The works of art are also attributed to the concept of *things*. However, their functions are slightly different. Arendt maintained that "[...] works of art are the most intensely worldly of all tangible things; their durability is almost untouched by the corroding effect of natural processes, since they are not subject to the use of living creatures, a use which, indeed, far from actualizing their own inherent purpose — as the purpose of a chair is actualized when it is sat upon — can only destroy them"²⁸. This statement resembles one paradoxical phrase presented by a famous Irish writer Oscar Wilde. Once he asserted: "All art is quite useless"²⁹. It generally means that art is such a superior power that cannot be valued according to any criteria related to benefits or usefulness. Even though men tend

²⁵ Ibid., p. 136.

²⁶ See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Second Edition, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 126–136.

²⁷ Hannah Arendt, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 167.

²⁹ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1993, p. viii.

to consume everything, the works of art will never be consumed because their major function is to be admired.

Having presented the essential ideas related to *labor* and *work*, we can observe the final and the most supreme human activity referred to as *action*. As far as we know, the activity includes humans' ability to speak and various expressions of their complex behaviour. In other terms, *action* is typical only to human beings and it cannot be ascribed nor to animals or other inanimate objects. Furthermore, it has been asserted that humans could not exist without the presence of other humans because we could never know who we are if there were no men around. Arendt reflected: "If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood. Signs and sounds to communicate immediate, identical needs and wants would be enough"³⁰. In such a way she emphasised the distinctness existing among people. The presence of language together with our ability to express ourselves through *action* makes our lives exceptionally human-like. Regarding what *action* consists of, Arendt pointed out that "[...] disclosure of who somebody is, is implicit in both his words and his deeds"³¹. In this way she explicitly accentuated the prominence of *action* and suggested that it is basically the activity which best reveals human beings. In conformity with her words we also encounter the concept of *deed* which refers to a variety of actions performed by humans, usually with a positive connotation. Speaking on deeds further, Arendt manifested: "Greatness, therefore, or the specific meaning of each deed, can lie only in the performance itself and neither in its motivation nor its achievement"³². It is plain to see that language and good deeds are presented as one of the highest opportunities to express oneself.

In conclusion, it is worth to mention the major aspects which play an important role in this Bachelor thesis. First and foremost, the very division of human activities into *labor*, *work* and *action* is a significant theoretical background and it will help to understand human nature represented in three different novels. Besides, such aspects as the notion of *life* and *things*, influential processes of modernisation, the case of arts, the phenomenon of *plurality* and, last but not least, language and deeds that humans inherently perform will be also considered. By applying Hannah Arendt's human conception in the further chapters, it will be sought to reveal different human shapes that manifest in the mentioned novels.

³⁰ Hannah Arendt, *op. cit.*, p. 175–176.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 206.

III. HUMANS' REPRESENTATIONS FROM PERSPECTIVES OF *LABOR*, *WORK* AND *ACTION*

1. Living Life as *Labor*: Human's Animal-like Side from Birth to Death

As it was mentioned previously, the rest of the chapters will be essentially linked with Arendt's proposed activities. According to her, "All three activities and their corresponding conditions are intimately connected with the most general condition of human existence: birth and death, natality and mortality"³³. This definition will help us to distinguish between different aspects related to human beings. In addition to Arendt's human conception, some interdisciplinary aspects presented by Tötösy de Zepetnek will be also considered. By employing those means, it will be attempted to reveal humans portrayed by three mentioned authors. Not forgetting the idea that *labor* involves a wide range of vital activities, we can start our analysis immediately with Thoreau's novel *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*.

As soon as the definition of *labor* has been observed, a simple question automatically arises: what are those necessary things which enable men to survive? Thoreau answered this question by introducing several necessities of human life which included: "[...] Food, Shelter, Clothing and Fuel [...]"³⁴. Evidently, he emphasised the importance of the four necessities by writing them in capital letters. However, one may notice that even provided with a shelter, clothing and fuel, we could not exist without food. We could survive a number of days but neither months nor years. In this respect human beings share many similarities with animals, especially if we have in mind satisfying our most general needs. Thoreau, as the main character of his novel, chose the simplest way to survive by eating modest, cheap and, sometimes, even poor food (such as beans, rice, potatoes, lard, etc.), but it does not mean at all that he lived a meaningless life. On the contrary: paying the lowest price for necessities, he lived an interesting and meaningful life. He believed that material things meant nothing and claimed that life "[...] looks poorest when you are richest" (*W*, p. 212). This statement reveals the author's scepticism towards riches and indicates that indeed he preferred living a simple but no less worthy life.

Those above mentioned necessities can be ascribed to animals as they are not essentially human-like features. Paying attention to Thoreau's philosophy, we may presume that tender feelings are no less important than just introduced need for food, shelter, clothing and fuel. It is out of the question that those necessities help to survive physically. However, humans are intelligent beings with a wide range

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁴ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995, p. 7. Further quotations from this source will be indicated as an abbreviation (*W*) and a page.

of feelings and, due to this reason, they were directly accentuated by Thoreau: “Man wanted a home, a place of warmth, or comfort, first of physical warmth, then the warmth of the affections” (W, p. 17). It follows that men would be just empty vessels without feelings which can be treated as an inherent part of their existence. To compare, Arendt also emphasised this distinctive trait of humans. She stated that “[...] only man can express this distinction and distinguish himself, and only he can communicate himself and not merely something — thirst or hunger, affection or hostility or fear”³⁵. Hence we encounter an evident similarity between the philosophies of Thoreau and Arendt who both treated feelings as an integral part of human life. Humans would be *non-humans* without their varied feelings.

With regard to Arendt’s notion of *labor*, we know that it matches the human condition known as life. It follows that the two terms, *labor* and *life*, are more or less synonymous. Therefore, some ideas related to life have been detected in Thoreau’s novel. He had reflected: “The life in us is like the water in the river. It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it, and flood the parched uplands; even this may be eventful year, which will drown out all our muskrats” (W, p. 215). It shows the unpredictability of human life, which is thought to be an inevitable peculiarity of man’s existence. Besides, Thoreau encouraged his readers not to neglect their connection with nature. It is well known that he even treated nature like religion and, by performing his experiment, he was able to live particularly close to it. Presumably, such objects of nature *milieu* as the woods and the Walden Pond inspired him to write down his unique reflections upon both nature and men. He noticed: “By a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences; and all things, good and bad, go by us like a torrent. We are not wholly involved in Nature” (W, p. 88). It seems that humans are losing their contact with nature. Although many difficulties may interfere with life, nature should be never abandoned as it is one of essential realms which surrounds us and fulfils our existence.

Another important aspect related to human life is a process of modernisation. Year after year it penetrates into human life with a greater force, affecting overall human existence. Even though Thoreau had written his novel quite a long time ago, he already noticed the impact of modernisation on human life. He had pointed out that man “[...] has no time to be anything but a machine” (W, p. 3). It implies that the process of *labor* is taken over by machinery. Arendt also emphasised the negative effect of modernisation processes and reflected on “[...] men becoming the servants of the machines they themselves invented and of being “adapted” to their requirements instead of using them as instruments for human needs and wants”³⁶. Evidently, she noticed the controversial effect of automation and believed that due to such innovations men’s role as laborers is continually diminishing.

³⁵ Hannah Arendt, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

Those several observations just illustrated that human beings inevitably have to perform what Arendt called *labor*. Thoreau, as the protagonist of his own novel, was mainly absorbed in *labor* activities to make his living in the woods. Besides, he openly condemned riches, slavery and some other social phenomena, for instance, high taxes. These might be the reasons why he alienated from the society and lived in isolation surrounded by forests. For Thoreau, freedom was one of the principal values³⁷. Thus, the criticism towards society and governmental matters is fairly felt while reading the novel.

Having reviewed Thoreau's representation of human, it is important to look at Faulkner's novel. It is well known that Thoreau and Faulkner were creating in different periods of time and, consequently, their writings differ. To compare, the very title of the further novel (*As I Lay Dying*) indicates that the contents will be entirely different from Thoreau's novel. At this point we approach two opposite things related to human existence: *life* versus *death*. According to Arendt's way of thinking, those are inevitable conditions of man's life belong to the concept of *labor*. As distinct from Thoreau, Faulkner presented more complex novel with a variety of characters. The story is told about a poor family from different points of view and thus a reader have to think a lot and pay attention to details in order to perceive the essence of the novel. Furthermore, it is very important to understand that "Faulkner's entire corpus examines the relationship between a people and their land"³⁸. So, we should envisage all diversity of life and humanity. Thoreau, in contrast, was the only one narrator in his novel while Faulkner presented even fifteen different narrators. In relation to the theme of this Bachelor thesis, we can claim that in turn we encounter fifteen versions of depicted human. Their age, roles they perform, narrative complexity, world perception, feelings and emotions triggered by certain events vary. Those events particularly concerns death of Addie Bundren and the lack of money. Apparently, the Bundrens belonged to the lowest class of society. In order to better understand various circumstances which determined misfortunes of the Bundrens, it is important to remember that situation in the United States was quite complicated at that time. Due to high prices, the Bundrens had some difficulties in making their living. Some hints of such social realia are provided from the youngest character's point of view: Vardaman, being quite curious and observant child, stated: "Pa said flour and sugar and coffee costs so much. Because I am a country boy because boys in town"³⁹. Even though Vardaman's language is a bit shattered in order to make it sound more childish, we come across an important economical fact related to both novel and American society of that time. Many products were very expensive and most of

³⁷ As we know, Thoreau reflecting freedom, human and polity wrote a unique essay *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* (1849) which philosophically solves a question of human being too.

³⁸ Gail McDonald, *American Literature and Culture 1900–1960*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 58.

³⁹ William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, New York: Random House, Inc, 1957, p. 62–63. Further quotations from this source will be indicated as an abbreviation (*LD*) and a page.

people simply could not afford them. The Bundrens were not an exception and thus they had to perform various activities related to *labor*, such as farming, keeping domestic birds and cattle, etc. However, the novel is more concentrated upon human matters and, hence, *labor* activities performed due to survival purposes are little described. On the other hand, it cannot be claimed that our efforts to view the novel from perspective of *labor* are totally futile. Comparing the titles of the first two novels, we already encountered an important term which shall be ascribed to forms of *labor*. That is the concept of death.

As I Lay Dying is a novel about the Bundrens and their tough life full of disasters, mostly of personal level. The events occurring throughout the story are more or less related to the death of Addie Bundren, who can be viewed from several angles according to the roles she performed in the novel. According to the context, her roles included that of a mother, a wife, a neighbour, and a lover. Death, in simple terms, implies a biological condition when a living being ceases to perform his or her (or its) bodily functions. In connection with the theme of present Bachelor thesis, I propose to examine this aspect in more detail.

From the very beginning of the novel readers encounter a clear image of a coffin: “Addie Bundren could not want a better one, a better box to lie in” (*LD*, p. 4–5). These words were told by Cash, one of four sons of the Bundrens and a gifted carpenter who was obliged to make the coffin for his mother. Under such circumstances it becomes explicit that Addie was going to die soon and thus her whole family was already preparing for her funeral to-be. The very cause of Addie’s death remains to be unclear, though there are some hints found in the novel. Let us have a look at an assertion made by the Bundrens’ neighbour, Tull. He reflected:

It’s a hard life on women, for a fact. Some women. I mind my mammy lived to be seventy and more. Worked every day, rain or shine; never a sick day since her last chap was born until one day she kind of looked around her and then she went and taken that lace-trimmed night gown she had had forty-five years and never wore out of the chest and put it on and laid down on the bed and pulled the covers up and shut her eyes. (*LD*, p. 29)

According to what is said, we can postulate that Addie might have died due to overworking, just like Tull’s mother did. Addie sacrificed her life for working as a teacher and maintaining her family. The depicted events might be linked with hardship of women which prevailed in many societies at that time. Addie’s life was based on *labor* level in a way that she put endless efforts to survive. Being a poor woman, living in the wretched family, deprived her of enjoying life. Such a hardship of women is sharpened by presenting a single chapter told from her point of view. Interestingly, it seems that Addie appreciated the natural *milieu*; or, Nature, as Thoreau referred to. She admitted: “[...] instead of going

home I would go down the hill to the spring where I could be quite and hate them” (*LD*, p. 161). Such an expression indicates her desire to alienate herself from tiring life. What is more, these words exposed an open dislike to her pupils and thus we see hints of apathy and disappointment within her character, most likely, caused by dull routine. Furthermore, she shared a reflection upon death once told by her father: “I could just remember how my father used to say that the reason for living was to get ready to stay dead a long time” (*LD*, p. 161). Such words sound very pessimistic. One could also recognise some paradoxical manifestations within that phrase in the sense that people barely live due to the purpose of being buried. On the other hand, we can look at this statement from a bit different angle by perceiving it as a message promoting to live as much meaningful life as possible because after death no one is able to come back to life. It follows that life should not be wasted but valued. Paying attention to Thoreau’s reflections on life and death, we should focus on his following assertion: “Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business” (*W*, p. 64). Thus he encouraged people to live life authentically and to be concerned about things relevant to existing, living beings, but not about death itself. To compare, Arendt believed that death should be treated as an inherent part of human life which relates to a continuous movement of natural cycles. She thought that “[...] mortality of men lies in the fact that individual life, with a recognizable life-story from birth to death, rises out of biological life”⁴⁰. Thus, the gift of life enables each individual to build up his or her own story and to become a significant part of this immense natural cycle to which all humans belong.

Another notable fact is that Addie expressed her personal viewpoint and told her life story only after death, when she was already lying in her coffin. Only one chapter was told from her perspective. With regard to the Sixth General Principle of Comparative Literature which has been offered by Tötösy de Zepetnek, some historical and socio-cultural circumstances should be taken into consideration here. Firstly, it is well known that women’s situation was quite complicated in the first half of the XX century. In America, they gained the right to vote only in the twenties, but “[e]ven among the most radical women calling for suffrage before the granting of the vote in 1920, employment outside the home was not a high priority in the revision of women’s rights”⁴¹. Women oppression was strongly felt in United States during this period and it might have influenced Faulkner’s idea to provide only one chapter from Addie’s point of view. From that chapter it becomes apparent that Addie felt being lonely even after she gave birth to her children. Moreover, she did not love her husband Anse. Love was far from meaning affectionate feelings to her. According to the text, she treated it as a mere word

⁴⁰ Hannah Arendt, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁴¹ Gail McDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

functioning within the language. She reflected: “He [Anse – inserted by E. P.] had a word too. Love, he called it. But I had been used to words for a long time. I knew that that word was like the others: just a shape to fill a lack; that when the right time came, you wouldn’t need a word for that anymore than for pride or fear” (*LD*, p. 164). These words show her passiveness and lack of warm feelings. Even lying in the coffin she seems to be tired. Hence, the routine and tiredness might have influenced her coldness towards family.

Having observed the concept of death, it is necessary to discuss the final aspect belonging to *labor* activities. This form of biological life is completely different from the previous one because, due to its performance, new human beings appear into the world. That is the case of reproduction, or, so called sexual intercourse. Looking from this point of view, humans are very similar to animals as they also are obliged to extend their kind. In Faulkner’s novel this biological activity is not presented directly, mostly because open descriptions of intimate relations in literary works were treated as inappropriate in this period of time. However, a couple of implicit examples must be taken into account. Those examples include situations of Addie and her daughter Dewey Dell. Generally, both of them got into trouble due to their sexual relations with men and became pregnant. Addie’s extramarital affair led to a birth of Jewel, who actually was her favourite child. Turning our attention back to Dewey Dell’s character, soon we found out that she was pregnant. When she went to milk cattle, she addressed the cow: “You’ll just have to wait. What you got in you aint nothing to what i got in me, even if you are a woman too” (*LD*, p. 61). Then, after she went to a drugstore to get illegal medicine which could cause an abortion, another disappointment struck her. A young man, working in the drugstore, pretended to be a doctor and gave her false medicine in exchange for sexual services. Although it is mentioned implicitly, some hints are worth attention: “That’s just the beginning of the treatment. You come back at ten oclock tonight and I’ll give you the rest of it and perform the operation. [...] It won’t hurt you. You’ve had had the same operation before” (*LD*, p. 237). She obeyed and later came to the drugstore, with her youngest brother Vardaman, who stayed outside the store and waited for her. After such examples have been surveyed, we may assume a few things. First of all, sexual relations are typical to both animals and human beings. The essential difference between them is the fact that animals perform this act due to reproduction purposes, whereas humans mostly perform it due to other reasons (such as pleasure, for instance). Even though sexual issues were limited by various social restrictions in literature, Faulkner presented an instinctive side of men through quite implicit depiction of events and characters. Although little described, it plays a major role within the story. To put it more exact, those cases of forbidden intercourse helped to understand complex family relations. Secondly, looking from

the perspectives of both Addie and Dewey Dell, women seem to suffer more than men due to such reckless actions. Thoreau, to compare, treated sex as interference into human's independence and, consequently, there are no ideas of such issue identified in his novel *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*.

If to continue the same issue of sex, we should consider Barth's novel. In a sense, Faulkner's novel presented problems similar to those which appear in *The End of the Road*, the postmodern novel. In order to better understand the novel, its major characters must be presented in brief. Jacob Horner, the protagonist of the story, is shown as a weak and undecided character. Promoted by his mysterious Doctor, he got a job at The Wicomico State Teachers College where he had to teach students grammar. Soon he got acquainted with Joe Morgan, who had already been working at the College. Joe was married and had two sons. Since Jacob became acquainted with his wife Rennie, Joe suggested them to ride horses together. It was Rennie's hobby and Joe explained both of them that he had no time. Shortly afterwards, those characters got involved in a dramatic love triangle which was triggered by Rennie's adultery with Jacob. Looking at the events from Jacob's point of view, it appears that he did not love any woman he had ever slept with. It can be justified by his genuine words, dedicated to Peggy, one of the women he had sex with: "This whole thing means more to you than it does to me. That's no criticism of anybody. I'm really afraid I might spoil it for you, if I haven't already"⁴². These words reveal that Horner had no affectionate intentions towards her. Their sexual adventure might be provoked by his instincts and he even did not try to conceal it. He just fulfilled his sexual desires and coldly stated to himself: "I'm sure we neither wished to see the other again" (*ER*, p. 281). Essentially, Jacob's sexual engagement with Joe's wife Rennie must be promptly observed. Regarding the mentioned idea that Horner had never loved a woman, we can maintain that his affair with Rennie was urged by simply an instinctive desire. In fact, it can be seen from one concrete chapter in the book in which sexual matters were discussed⁴³. The mood of sexuality is felt from very first words of the chapter: "The Dance of Sex [...]" (*ER*, p. 341). Of course, it is not the only one chapter dealing with this issue as it occasionally appears throughout the whole story. Further events of that day evolved into fantasies related to his students until it culminated in a night spent with Rennie. Shortly afterwards, he proved to be apathetic and even insensitive to what happened between them. He described that night in simple words: "We spent a wordless, tumultuous night together, full of tumblings and flexings and shudders and such, exciting enough to experience but boring to describe [...]" (*ER*, p. 348). To highlight Horner's coldness towards Rennie, it is worth to consider his further words: "It is with reason

⁴² John Barth, *The Floating Opera and The End of the Road*, New York: Random House, Inc., 1988, p. 280. Further quotations from this source will be indicated as an abbreviation (*ER*) and a page.

⁴³ See John Barth, *The Floating Opera and The End of the Road*, New York: Random House, Inc., 1988, p. 341–354.

that I say no more than this about our adultery: the whole business was without significance to me” (ER, p. 348). Moreover, he calmly generalized this act by stating that it was “[...] one of first general and later specific desire, combined with a definite but not inordinate masculine curiosity [...]” (ER, p. 348–349). It appears that he only wanted a physical advantage of her. Their affair was exposed by Rennie herself and soon the situation became more and more complex. She became pregnant and was not sure whether the father to-be was her husband Joe or Jacob. Sadly, this led them to a painful drama which ended in death of Rennie caused by failed abortion performed by Jacob’s suggested Doctor. In comparison to Faulkner’s novel, death is also of importance in this novel. However, it was far from being a natural condition as Rennie did not die of old age due to which her biological life should have ceased. Her death due to abortion shows how destructive consequences of human behaviour might be. In relation with *As I Lay Dying*, it might be claimed that again woman is depicted as a victim of tough reality. Barth’s novel would be a valid argument that “[...] postmodernism introduced into fiction a new, extreme kind of experimentation, a sceptical outlook far more severe than that of the modernists, and a stunning challenge to the notion that fiction or art of any kind could have redemptive effects”⁴⁴. Accordingly, sex, which is always related with a question of human being, is treated as nature in Faulkner’s novel while Barth provided it as an experiment. For Thoreau sex was rather an act of reproduction which might have a negative impact on human life. It can be grounded on his own life: “Thoreau avoided family and sex because, we might begin to suspect, family and sex presented to him the greatest immediate threat to personal independence”⁴⁵. The current analysis leads to a generalisation that *labor* to a great extent manifests in all three novels. The basic men’s biological conditions (such as life, reproduction and death) dominate in analysed novels. Thoreau, as we see from his writings, paid the greatest attention to life itself; Faulkner presented humans in a background of death, while Barth provided an example of destructive human life triggered by instinctive sexual desires. *Labor* activities and the way humans treat them are key factors influencing either a progress or regress of human development not only in those novels, but in real life too.

Having identified and analysed essential factors of human life, we shall concentrate on some other aspects. In the next chapter, human will be approached from *work’s* point of view: unlike it was done previously, now we will focus purely on artificial *milieu* which surrounds humans in the mentioned novels.

⁴⁴ Jesse Matz, *The Modern Novel: A Short Introduction*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, p. 128.

⁴⁵ Frederick Turner, “Reflexivity as Evolution in Thoreau’s *Walden*”, in: Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner (Ed.), *The Anthropology of Experience*, With an Epilogue by Clifford Geertz, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986, p. 78.

2. The Realm of *Work* or How Man-made *Things* May Affect Human Identity

Dealing particularly with unnatural realm, it will be sought to present its most significant illustrations relating to humans. Approaching human images from such point of view will enable us to have a broader look at them. Again we will rely on Arendt's proposed activity which is called *work*. She believed that "[w]ork and its product, the human artifact, bestow a measure of permanence and durability upon the futility of mortal life and the fleeting character of human time"⁴⁶. Such words reveal the prominence of artificial objects and promote to differentiate between immortal things and humans as mortals. With regard to essential ideas provided in the theoretical part, it should be noted that Arendt did not even imagine human existence without *things*. In order to make it clear, all three novels must be observed under a closer examination.

Our quest of human images in relation with the presence of *things*, as a rule, shall begin with observing Thoreau's novel. First and foremost, he undoubtedly needed a house during the time he had spent in the woods. Induced by practical purposes and by the basic need to survive; he had built a small cabin which he described as follows: "I have thus a tight shingled and plastered house, ten feet wide by fifteen long, and eight-foot posts, with a garret and a closet, a large window on each side, two trap doors, one door at the end, and a brick fireplace opposite" (*W*, p. 31). Even though it was extremely humble place to live, he could not go without that cabin even provided with food, clothes and fuel which he treated as necessities. Of course, we could not imagine any descent house without furniture as it provides us comfort. Thoreau encouraged to put some efforts and to take care of the comfort by ourselves: "None is so poor that he need sit on a pumpkin. That is shiftlessness" (*W*, p. 42). He acknowledged that things (in this case furniture) have the main and the only one purpose: to perform its primary functions. Thoreau did not attach much importance to aesthetics. However, he noticed that humans tend to become greedier: "When a man is warmed by the several modes which I have described, what does he want next? Surely not more warmth of the same kind, as more and richer food, larger and more splendid houses, finer and more abundant clothing, more numerous, incessant, and hotter fires, and the like" (*W*, p. 9). Despite of this, Thoreau himself was far from being greedy as he did not measure his life according to the value of money. As we know, he criticised riches and had asserted to his readers: "You may perhaps have some pleasant, thrilling, glorious hours, even in a poor-house" (*W*, p. 212). Thoreau's example is one of the many proving us that shelter is one of the most essential things in human life. At the same time, he was one of a few examples that demonstrated how to live an exciting and meaningful life even in an extremely cheap way. First of all, we should note that

⁴⁶ Hannah Arendt, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

his total outgoings of this experiment made up about 62 dollars. However, he covered about half of this expenditure by his own hard-working and farming activities and that, roughly speaking, constituted 37 dollars⁴⁷. He bought probably the cheapest products and materials but, according to the text, this had no effect on his high spirit and meditative moods.

Another aspect to be observed is the case of arts. According to our adapted conception of *work*, this form of activity shall belong to this category as it represents artificial objects. Thoreau appreciated works of art. However, he mainly elevated the inner values of humans and claimed: “It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts” (*W*, p. 59). For Thoreau, the term *art* not only included paintings, music, poetry and other artistic expressions. Most importantly, he was concerned about the art of living which generally meant a unique ability to live a life properly by taking various opportunities and using the best it can offer to a man. What is life but the art itself? Hannah Arendt, as distinct from Thoreau, mostly reflected upon tangible manifestations of art. She admitted that such works, unlike majority of fabricated things, are almost unspoilt by processes of modernisation and consumption. She thought that “[b]ecause of their outstanding permanence, works of art are the most intensely worldly of all tangible things; their durability is almost untouched by the corroding effect of natural processes, since they are not subject to the use of living creatures”⁴⁸. It is evident that she even praised arts. Regarding the fact that such works are not used up as food or fuel, they shall be considered as an inconsumable, divine kind of *work*, not that of *labor*. After some observations were made from *work* perspective, we can generalise that Thoreau’s portrayal of human is closely related to humbleness, work as toil and the artistic realm of either tangible or intangible things.

Following already used principle of order, we will pay attention to the second novel written by William Faulkner. We have already encountered an image of a coffin in relation with *labor* sphere or, to put it more precisely, with the issue of death. Probably everyone would agree that this kind of *thing* is not needed as long as we are alive. According to various cultural, religious and social traditions, it is accepted to put a dead body into a coffin just before it is buried. This specific hand-made *thing* is bound to be eternally buried with that human lying inside. From this point of view, the connection between human and a coffin is apparent. However, we must admit that it associates with sadness, grief and the end of human existence. Despite of its highly negative implication, it is necessary to present

⁴⁷ See Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995, p. 39.

⁴⁸ Hannah Arendt, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

this item as an important, repetitive image operating within Faulkner's novel and to assess its role and meaning in this specific context.

The image of the coffin appears in the majority of the chapters here and serves much more than simply a hand-made thing to be buried together with human's body in it. Speaking about Addie's death, her long and complicated funeral process functions as point of reference according to which the characters may be exposed. To put it directly, the characters (either voluntary or involuntary) demonstrate their virtues and vices after Addie's death. For instance, Jewel at once expressed his irritation caused by Cash making a coffin for Addie almost in her presence. He thought to himself: "It's because he stays out there, right under the window, hammering and sawing on that goddamn box. Where she's got to see him." (*LD*, p. 14). Jewel was sensitive and humane person if to judge from the text, particularly about his mother; while Cash was just absorbed in his activity to produce a neat coffin. He was so determined that he did not care about disturbing weather conditions, such as heavy rain, and kept on doing his job. Moreover, the rain in this text gains a symbolic meaning: it may be compared to lots of problems which arose to the Bundrens one after another. Accordingly, the whole story, centred upon Addie's burying process, shows how differently people cope with problems and how they can be affected by them. For example, Anse from the very beginning claimed that it was his duty to bury his wife Addie in her native land: "With that family-burying ground in Jefferson and them of her blood waiting for her there, she'll be impatient. I promised my word me and the boys would get her there quick as mules could walk it, so she could rest quiet" (*LD*, p. 18). However, he claimed so only in front of other people and thus many doubts in his honesty arise. Chapters written from his perspective revealed another motivation for that disastrous trip to Jefferson: it is related to greediness as he desired to buy false teeth: "But now I can get them teeth. That will be a comfort. It will" (*LD*, p.105). Even though teeth are needed for eating which is a biologically necessary process, their acquisition could be ascribed to obtaining *superfluities*. Addie's death provided Anse an opportunity to take advantage of this situation. He pretended to be religious, loving and respectful man due to selfish purposes. Needless to recall that the Bundrens were a poverty-stricken family and there were lots of things more needed to them than those teeth. Therefore, the symbolic image of the coffin performed a supporting part which helped us to familiarise with various virtues and vices typical to human beings.

Nevertheless, even such things as coffins cannot be acquired for free. Hence we come to another relevant aspect of human life which concerns money. Although some natural elements can be detected as its constituent parts (such as wood transformed into paper which is used for making banknotes), money still belongs to the category of *work* as it is created by men and has become one of the greatest

forces ruling the world and, probably, the basic factor in conditioning human life. It can be directly stated that human beings could not survive without money. To recall Thoreau's vision of human, he needed money only to get substantial things (food, building materials and the like). His leisure time, distinctly from that of modern humans, was based on reading and spending time in nature *milieu* and did not require money. Returning to Faulkner's novel, we should note a few examples related to the use of money. First of all, Jewel started to earn money secretly for his own purpose – he wanted to buy a horse and he did it. He used to work at nights and nobody could realise why he was so sleepy every day. The confusion was dispelled just after the family members saw his new horse. Jewel showed his dignity, pride and independence towards Anse by claiming: "It was my money. [...] I earned it. You won't need to worry about it" (*LD*, p. 127). Anse was rather insensitive even when a team of mules drowned during the flood. Although it was generally his fault, he was cold and determined to get a new team of mules so he got some needed money by selling Jewel's horse. Furthermore, due to the same purpose, he took away Darl's money which he carefully saved for buying a gramophone. Lastly, even Dewey Dell's 10 dollars were taken away by Anse and so her plans to get medication that might cause abortion failed. Besides, we shall consider that various things were extremely expensive at that time and 10 dollars were a large amount of money. After a short review on such events, it follows that Anse fulfilled his selfish desire to improve his appearance by going to the barber's and by getting new teeth at the price of destroying his children's dreams. Those distinct things would have made those people happy. However, Anse deprived his family of fulfilling their dreams and made himself happy instead. In relation with our general knowledge, it occurs that humans become more and more cruel and heartless in order to reach their goals as they treat any means to be justified, like just observed Anse character. Only strong spiritual values may prevent us from such a side effect. Fortunately, some people understand that the most precious things are those which cannot be valued by any currency. Reflecting upon money in relation with *labor*, *work* and *action*, we can presume that money have become one of necessities which we could even add to those four necessities proposed by Thoreau (*Food, Shelter, Clothing and Fuel*) despite of his negative attitude towards wealth. Money exists among us as a result of *work* since humans invented it and started to produce for the practical usage. Finally, only human beings, neither animals nor things, use and discuss money in their lives, so it is also connected with *action* activities as purely human-like feature.

What concerns the third novel written by John Barth, it is needed to point out that money matters, as distinct from Faulkner's novel, plays a minor role here. It is very little described and we identify it as ordinary way of paying for services. In one case it refers to Jacob's wage at the College. In the other

case – as a payment for his weird Doctor services which is clearly understood from the Doctor’s demand: “Good-by, now. Don’t forget to pay Mrs. Dockey” (*ER*, p. 340). Moreover, the moment when he suggested Jacob to have some coffee by handing a fifty-cent coin to him revealed some social restrictions towards black people. Not surprisingly, the Doctor “[...] was bald, dark-eyed, and dignified, a Negro [...]” (*ER*, p. 323). Thus, we should note the following words that were told by the Doctor: “I can’t go into that lounge over there. Get two cups of coffee for us and we’ll sit here for a minute and decide what to do” (*ER*, p. 325). In fact, it is true that black people were forbidden to show up in many public places at the time of 1950s in the United States. We could argue as long as the very mankind exists *who* or *what* has created the world itself, but social conventions, as well as culture, have been created by no one else but men themselves. That was one of the reasons why this mysterious Doctor changed his location very often. Despite of being such a tremendous force which might buy almost everything, money is not so relevant here as it refers only to general facts about the protagonist.

Regarding this particular text, now we will deal with entirely different procedure related to money known as *abortion*. In this novel, as well as in modern life, this strange kind of service is being paid and still remains a controversial issue among people. This surgery was totally illegal at the time when novels were published and still remains illegal in the majority of world countries today. It is natural because even performed by qualified doctors; abortion may result in infertility, severe damage to health, or, at worst, in death. Rennie’s husband Joe was particularly concerned about the negative effects of such surgeries: “If it was a really competent abortion done in a good hospital by a good obstetrician it wouldn’t matter” (*ER*, p. 402). As later we could see, his suspicions confirmed: Rennie’s destiny was tragic. She died during the procedure of abortion which was performed by the mysterious Doctor who was treating Jacob from his mental paralysis. As a matter of fact, Jacob also had to observe the cruel procedure. After she died, “Rennie was lying curled on the back seat, dressed, washed, her eyes closed” (*ER*, p. 437). Jacob had taken her into his car and drove back to Joe’s house with bad news and with Rennie’s body. This scene seems quite grotesque and indicates that even after death Rennie was treated rather as a *thing* than a human being. In principle, two essential factors might have influenced such an ending: the surgery was performed not in hospital conditions by rather incompetent doctor, and, by applying general knowledge from medical disciplines in relation with *multidisciplinary* aspect; it is strictly forbidden to have a meal before anaesthesia. The second factor was fatal in Rennie’s case as she vomited the meal “[...] up from the ether and then aspirated it into her lungs” (*ER*, p. 436). Regarding most events occurring in the novel, we can assume that her irresponsibility, act of adultery and the lack of strict personal opinion induced the tragic ending to much greater extent than

the very abortion. Strictly speaking, if men were more responsible for their actions, neither abortion would be needed, nor tears and regrets after tragic consequences.

If to remember Faulkner's novel and quite often met image of a coffin, another artificial thing must be presented as we are dealing with the sphere of *work*. It is Laocoön's sculpture which is an important intertext. As we know, Tötösy de Zepetnek has emphasised the role of intertextuality as a relevant element in overall literary studies. The image of Laocoön's bust occurs several times throughout the novel and is very closely linked with problematic situation of the protagonist. Being such an indecisive man, Jacob often glanced at this sculpture which he had taken into his rented flat. Not only glanced, but actually he even consulted it. The shapes of things, or rather the way how they look to us, very much depends on our mood. Similarly it can be ascribed to Jacob as Laocoön symbolically represented his inner drama and twisty life events. The final Jacob's phrase told to this inanimate sculpture was as follows: "We've come too far" (*ER*, p. 441). Most likely, torturous destiny of this Greek mythological being can be compared to the gloomy destiny of Jacob. After Rennie's death Jacob abandoned his apartment together with Laocoön's bust and headed straight towards the Doctor's place to continue his treatment. While Rennie died physically, Jacob experienced his mental death. Even though humans are treated intelligent beings, sometimes they suffer from various problems caused by their stupidity and lack of consciousness. They simply are too weak to bear the burden of life and then they collapse.

Summing up the above mentioned ideas, it can be stated that humans are continually forming themselves during their life time. Various events, especially those which are unexpected and challenging, test our strength, the sense of humanity and contribute to constructing our identity. Moreover, we can conclude that no one is able to know and describe a man but others. Our link with other humans may be that key means which allow us getting acquainted with ourselves. Besides, such factors as money, the loss of material or immaterial property, abortion, the treatment of *things* and some others, can in particular reveal men and their world perception. Last but not least, according to the latter chapters of this Bachelor thesis we have to admit that humans are bound to balance between both *labor* and *work*. It is still difficult to identify which type of activities takes the greatest part of our lives: the biological one, or that of creation. The only way to find it out is to observe humans from the perspective of *action* and to see to what extent it enables us to analyse their different shapes.

3. *Action as the Most Humane Activity Which Expresses Man's Soul*

Finally, great attention will be paid to the last and the most important activity of human life which refers to *action*. In the theoretical part it was mentioned that human existence would be completely impossible without the presence of other human beings. The ability to speak and act as humans is indeed very distinct from animal life in a way that “[...] the "products" of action and speech [...] together constitute the fabric of human relationships and affairs”⁴⁹. According to Arendt, it follows that language and particularly human-like behaviour form the life itself. On the other hand, there is the realm of thoughts which not always are transformed into the stream of speech. Human's inner world even nowadays, when modern technologies prevail, remains a secret. However, assuming that men's soul is the crucial feature separating them from animals and things which are thought to be inanimate; we will try to explore how much *action* activities contribute to formation of human in the mentioned novels. Even if speech and actions are rather external expressions comparing to the complex process of thinking; it will be also attempted to show that this mysterious internal realm, or human's soul; can be considerably revealed through such *action* activities.

As a rule, we will consider Thoreau's novel first. It is very rich in philosophical reflections on human and thus only the basic aspects will be presented. Despite of having a considerable number of visitors in the woods, above all Thoreau appreciated solitude. He asserted: “I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating” (W, p. 88). The whole chapter was dedicated for this particular human condition in his novel.⁵⁰ Having in mind his reflections on visitors, we cannot state that he totally disliked company. He expressed his uncertainties by claiming: “I doubted if the near neighbourhood of man was not essential to a serene and healthy life. To be alone was something unpleasant” (W, p. 84). Furthermore, according to the text it occurs that he even enjoyed such an opportunity to meet so many different people: “It is surprising how many great men and women a small house will contain. I have had twenty-five or thirty souls, with their bodies, at once under my roof [...]” (W, p. 91). In this respect we see a clear distinction between two different constituent parts of human entity: a body and a soul.

Returning to specific activities belonging to *action*, it occurs humans could not share their ideas without their singular ability to speak and act among the others. Even Thoreau's philosophical ideas would not be so well-known if they have not been written and then published. Consequently, he made a clear distinction between spoken and written languages:

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 95.

⁵⁰ See Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995, p. 84–91.

The one is commonly transitory, a sound, a tongue, a dialect merely, almost brutish, and we learn it unconsciously, like the brutes, of our mothers. The other is the maturity and experience of that; if that is our mother tongue, this is our father tongue, a reserved and select expression, too significant to be heard by the ear, which we must be born again in order to speak. (*W*, p. 66)

It follows that the written language is somehow more worthy than the spoken one. All in all, language and actions enable us to spread and fulfil our ideas. At this point we may state that *action* is very closely related to history in a way that there were no historical events known if people have not been spoken about it among themselves.

Speaking about spreading ideas it is inevitable to mention one more important form of *action* known as education. It is obvious that education is spread among humans by means of written and spoken words. If to come back to Thoreau's philosophy, education generally equals his often used concept of *cultivation*. The truth is that education might be one of major steps taken for nurturing one's soul. On the other hand, complex theories are not enough. Thoreau noticed that one should also learn how to live a life properly and claimed: "If I wish a boy to know something about the arts and sciences, for instance, I would not pursue the common course, which is merely to send him into the neighbourhood of some professor, where any thing is professed and practiced but the art of life; - to survey the world through a telescope or microscope, and never with his natural eye [...]" (*W*, p. 33). It reveals that not only scientifically based *cultivation* is needed for humans. Experience through bodily and mental senses is the essential part of one's life. In order to reveal more peculiarities related to men's performance of *action*, as usual we will fix on Faulkner's novel.

Speech enables us to express a variety of human-like features, such as emotions, vices and virtues, religious, social and personal beliefs, etc. In Faulkner's novel, Addie's death exposed very different features of her family members. In fact, love as one of the greatest virtues was not unanimously felt within the family. Darl was the one who loved Addie most, but, according to the text, Jewel, her extramarital child, was her favourite one. Darl's affectionate feelings for her mother could be also recognised just before she passed away: "He just stood and looked at his dying mother, his heart too full for words" (*LD*, p. 24). Jewel was less sensitive. He valued independence and was inclined to demonstrate his pride towards the Bundrens. When they all set off on the unusual trip to Jefferson, Jewel rode his horse keeping a distance from the wagon. Ironically and rather artificially, Anse described such an act as follows: "I told him not to bring that horse out of respect for his dead ma, because it wouldn't look right, him prancing along on a durn circus animal and her wanting us all to be in the wagon with her" (*LD*, p. 99). Again it looks that Anse was trying to be a right, religious and

loving man, but further events showed a bit different reality. He was simply pretending due to his selfish purposes. Not only he took his children to such a dreary trip with a decomposing body of Addie, but, what is worse, he took away the money from Jewel, Darl and Dewey Dell. Such an obnoxious behaviour proved that Anse was perhaps the most immoral and the greediest person within that family. Besides acquiring material things, he dared to introduce his new wife to his children. It indicates that he certainly did not love his wife. In contrast, Addie was the character which most appreciated truth and honesty. In Cora's words, Addie "[...] had tried to teach us that deceit was such that, in a world where it was, nothing else could be very bad or very important, not even poverty" (*LD*, p. 123). However, deceit prevailed in this family due to the lack of love. Such absence of love between the two people who had created a family resulted in lots of unfortunate events that involved many people. One of them is Darl who experienced madness. This malfunction of human mental realm requires some extra attention.

Madness is one of the worst disorders affecting humans. Of course, it does not mean that people who experience serious mental problems are no longer able to act as humans. On the contrary, their speech and behaviour are the basic indicators according to which such a state can be recognised. Physically injured people are identified according to external wounds, while people's mental damage is revealed through their actions which usually are inadequate, beyond norms and so it signifies of possible madness. Let us take Darl as an example. The exact reasons that cause madness remain unknown nowadays. There are some factors which are believed to influence this disorder, but these are only postulates. However, according to what is widely known, we can assume that madness is caused by humans themselves, either by their internal conflicts, or by external problems caused by other humans. Speaking about Darl's case, it appears that firstly he encountered a number of events caused by other humans (his mother Addie, Jewel, Dewey Dell, etc.). He was the most sensitive and the most observant character in this novel. In the course of events, his internal conflict appeared as an outcome of such sensitivity and provoked madness. The first hint that indicates of his shattered mind is the very beginning of the Bundrens' trip to Jefferson: "[...] we hadn't no more than passed Tull's lane when Darl began to laugh. Setting back there on the plank seat with Cash, with his dead ma lying in her coffin at his feet, laughing" (*LD*, p. 99). It was completely inappropriate behaviour, especially if to remember that it happened in front of his dead mother's body, without a particular reason. However, one famous psychoanalyst Alfred Alder noticed that "[...] the psychological disorders, complexes and delusions that are found in nervous diseases are fundamentally no different in structure from the behaviour of normal individuals. The same elements, the same premises, the same development can be identified. The sole difference is that in the disturbed patient they appear more marked and are more

easily recognized”⁵¹. In this respect it can be noted that people having serious mental problems perform the same actions as ordinary people. However, those actions are performed inadequately because such people simply become unable to assess situations properly. In severe cases, those people totally lose their existential potential: even though they still can obtain Thoreau’s presented necessities, they become unable to assess life normally. Being deprived of the most humane activity as *action*, mentally ill humans just exist, but they do not live a life as ordinary people anymore.

Tolerance is also very important if one seeks an acceptance from other humans. As Arendt highlighted that we are humans living among other humans, we should admit that being accepted as an individual within the whole mankind is crucial. Probably nobody wants to be rejected due to different skin colour, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, etc. Having approached an issue of discrimination, we should come back to Thoreau’s philosophy and focus on one of his assertions. He believed: “The value of a man is not in his skin, that we should touch him” (*W*, p. 89). The racial aspect is of importance in Faulkner’s novel. One of the situations related to races deals with human dignity, self-esteem and sensitiveness towards various actions, but the exact race of the family members remains to be a conundrum. However, it seems that they definitely were not Afro-Americans. It is seen from Vardaman’s words: “You’re foot looks like a nigger’s foot, Cash” (*LD*, p. 214). Those and some other similar expressions using such a negative term as “nigger” indicate that they did not belong to them. However, later readers might become more and more confused because we encounter an idea that they were neither black, nor white. A bit ambiguous conflict occurred in the town when the Bundrens were heading for the hill where Addie had to be finally buried. Darl was the one who presented this situation: “Three negroes walk beside the road ahead of us; ten feet ahead of them a white man walks. When we pass the negroes their heads turn suddenly with that expression of shock and instinctive outrage” (*LD*, p. 219). Such a reaction was caused by Addie’s corpse which was rapidly decomposing in the wagon and smelt badly. Then, Jewel lost his composure and swore at them: “Son of a bitches” (*LD*, p. 219). Accidentally or not, at that moment the white man was passing them and so he was the one who heard Jewel swearing. The white guy felt offended and this triggered the conflict between them. Then, Darl was trying to soothe the situation in order to prevent them from violence as Jewel was swearing again: “Thinks because he’s a goddamn town fellow” (*LD*, p. 220). Finally, the white man went away and so the conflict ended. Indeed we find no evidence of the Bundrens’ possible race, but this situation provided us an understanding of various classification patterns that exist among humans. In this case, the classification involves both racial and territorial aspects because not only skin colour was differentiated but also location (consider the class of so called “town boys”). Even though it is

⁵¹ Alfred Adler, *Understanding Human Nature*, Translated by Colin Brett, Oxford: Oneworld Publications Ltd, 1998, p. 17.

linked with particular territory, this class also refers to social status as town people were treated richer and having more opportunities in life than those poor who lived in the countryside, like the Bundrens. Apparently, various kinds of differentiation cause many problems, such as racism, sex discrimination, etc. What is more, some cases of discrimination also relate with *labor* realm because race, as well as sex, are biological conditions and it is strange how some people judge according to such things which appear naturally, against our will. Only the actions we voluntarily perform can be judged according their appropriateness. The truth is that men cannot do whatever they want and wherever they want and so they have established a system of laws which is inherent in every society of this world.

The concept of *law* requires particular attention. As human beings are capable to perform a variety of actions, those actions are classified into legal and illegal ones according to a degree of complexity. Different religious and social *milieus* form different attitudes and conventions aimed at human behaviour. This assumption explains why there are so many laws which vary in different countries. In Faulkner's novel we encounter disturbance caused by Addie's corpse. It was rapidly decomposing and became a source of various diseases. When a marshal met the Bundrens, he sharply warned them: "[...] you get this thing buried soon as you can. Dont you know you're liable to jail for endangering the public health?" (*LD*, p. 194). Shortly afterwards, Addie was finally buried. With regard to Tötösy de Zepetnek's accentuated reflection of culture within the text, we get acquainted with law and order which was being followed at that time. The absurd state of the Bundrens led to threat on other humans and so attracted the marshal's attention. In comparison, Thoreau's novel presented a less severe action from the point of view of laws. His refusal to pay a poll tax was treated as civil disobedience and led to a night spent in jail. In such a way he expressed his negative attitude towards the Mexican-American War which began in 1846 and continued up to 1848. Thoreau recalled: "One afternoon, near the end of the first summer, when I went to the village to get a shoe from the cobbler's, I was seized and put into jail, because, as I have elsewhere related, I did not pay a tax to, or recognize the authority of, the state which buys and sells men, women, and children; like cattle at the door of its senate-house" (*W*, p. 111). As we know, he explicitly condemned slavery and some laws that seem unjust to him and hence it was one of the most prevalent issues in his writings. Laws must prevent us from inappropriate actions and chaos that might arise, but they cannot restrict humans so much that they could feel like in jail even being free. However, we have no choice but to adapt to the society we belong to and follow its rules. Such a problematic situation automatically raises a rhetorical question: can a human feel entirely free under the constraints of bureaucracy and social dogmas?

If to continue our discussion on laws, we must approach Barth's novel too. Attention was already paid to abortion theme as an activity of *work* and now it will be in short observed in the context of *action*. Needless to say that abortion in many societies remains a taboo. The novel was written at the time when abortion was strictly forbidden so it was performed secretly, outside the law. This secrecy is felt in the following lines: "When we came to the end of the driveway leading to the farmhouse, I cut out the headlights and drove quietly into the yard. I explained Rennie that the Doctor didn't want me to disturb his patients [...]" (ER, p. 432). It indicates not only that they were going to do something illegal, but also we confront a symbolical expression of "the end of the road" which warns of the tragic ending. What is more, the surgery was performed by the mysterious Doctor with particularly doubtful qualification and thus tragic events accelerated. On the other hand, the Doctor had no choice but to work in secrecy as he was black-skinned: racial segregation, which dominated in America in 1950s, greatly influenced such a situation. Having encountered racial matters again, it is noteworthy that over decades the situation of black people has changed. By amending or abolishing some laws, tolerance and equality have been promoted. Everybody has a right to be human regardless of one's skin colour, especially if a person lives a life legally, obeying to certain laws existing in the society. Tolerance and unanimity are the key factors that enable *action* activities to spread among humans.

Another noteworthy aspect is related to humans and the ways of building themselves as personalities. With respect to *plurality* which was highly emphasised by Arendt, it is obvious that human beings have no choice but to adjust themselves to other humans. Returning to Barth's novel, again we must pay attention to its protagonist Jacob who was a shattered personality with extremely limited self-perception. Moreover, he was paralysed emotionally and it was easy for other people to affect him due to his weak personality. One of the means to adapt to other people was performing various roles. Not surprisingly, human beings employ various ways of acting not just in this novel, but in reality too. In Jacob's case it was even prescribed by his Doctor as a therapy. He insisted: "It's extremely important that you learn to assume these masks wholeheartedly" (ER, p. 338). Moreover, he later explained that one "[...] mustn't put on two at a time. There's a source of conflict, and conflict between masks, like absence of masks, is a source of immobility" (ER, p. 339). It appears that *masks*, or roles of human behaviour, imply a variety of actions which are demonstrated either in formal or informal *milieu*. Jacob, for instance, tried to be similar to his friend Joe by imitating his behaviour. Joe was strong while Jacob was weak and so they were opposites. Jacob had committed an act of violence towards Peggy, the woman he had sex with, shortly after he heard of Joe's behaviour with his wife Rennie: "I slammed her as hard as I could and ran out of the place" (ER, p. 422). According to the

laws, such an act is illegal and thus we see that this role did not bring anything good in Jacob's life. While selecting the masks, one should note that human actions may be either productive or destructive.

Returning to the most vivid expression of humans which refers to speech, it is essential to consider Barth's novel further. If to treat language as one of conventions, we should remember that "[n]o matter how dogmatic or unreasonable the rules might be, they're the convention. And in the case of language there's still another reason for going along with even the silliest rules" (*ER*, p. 382). What is more, such regulations may cause a menace on human freedom. In Jacob's words, "That's the paradox: in any kind of complicated society a man is usually free only to the extent that he embraces all the rules of that society" (*ER*, p. 383). Men have to obey to certain rules despite of their personal opinion. However, speech as an arbitrary system can be still maintained as the crucial feature related to human uniqueness. This idea can be efficiently grounded on Arendt's words: "Speech and action reveal this unique distinctness. Through them, men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct [...]"⁵². Thoreau, in comparison with Arendt, expressed a clear distinction between spoken and unspoken language and claimed that "[...] speech is for the convenience of those who are hard of hearing; but there are many fine things which we cannot say if we have to shout" (*W*, p. 91–92). This quotation indicates a process of thinking which should not always be converted into the spoken words. For Thoreau, contemplation and meditation might signify much more than mere speech. Humans are totally free in mind, while their speech, as we have just observed, remains to be highly limited.

For conclusion it must be pointed out that *action*, as the most humane activity, manifests in a number of ways in all three novels. As a language, it can be expressed either in spoken or in written forms. In a similar way education is spread among humans. Besides, all actions are divided into legal and illegal ones and thus men are incapable to act however they want. It is natural for them to wear *masks*, or to ascribe some occasional roles. To some extent, laws and social conventions affect human freedom, but without them there would be a total anarchy in the world. As distinct from Thoreau's novel which was quite peaceful and based on his individual experience, the novels written by Faulkner and Barth showed how destructive human actions may be. The characters enabled us to arrive at a conclusion that disasters may touch all types of humans: either educated or uneducated, either rich or poor. Every action and every word must be considered until it is done or uttered because it always becomes a reflection of man's soul. The research showed that "[l]iterature is no more or less deceptive than other forms of cultural knowledge, but it constructs its knowledge otherwise, in a peculiar way"⁵³.

⁵² Hannah Arendt, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

⁵³ Charles Bernheimer, "Introduction: The Anxieties of Comparison", in: *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, Edited by Charles Bernheimer, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, p. 15.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

After the analysis of human in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854), William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930) and in John Barth's *The End of the Road* (1958), the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The methodology of the research included Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's method of Comparative Literature and Hannah Arendt's conception of human helped to reveal both a contemporary literary research and human's nature as complicated and polysemous discourses. Arendt's conception together with an extraordinary division of human activities into *labor*, *work* and *action* were employed as reference points in analysing the novels and thus helped to identify and interpret various human images. As we had three novels under analysis, Tötösy de Zepetnek's theory was essential as it helped to link philosophy with literature and contexts of distinct authors.

2. One of basic characteristics of Comparative Literature is that it remains a debatable issue among scholars. Firstly, it is still being argued whether it shall be treated as a separate discipline, or simply as another field of Literature studies. Secondly, it began with searching for links among various writings, but later it developed in such a way that even different disciplines can be efficiently implemented in comparing literature. As a result, the variety of disciplines induced an extra division of interdisciplinarity. The additional terms were introduced by Julie Thompson Klein and later were mentioned by Tötösy de Zepetnek in his book *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application* (1998). It helped to familiarise with terminology and to distinguish between *intradisciplinarity*, *multidisciplinarity* and *pluridisciplinarity*.

3. In the first chapter of the research we discussed all the novels from *labor* perspective. The very term was explained in detail and from a number of definitions we found out that it means biological life which is related with man's instinctive realm, or so called *animal-like* side. Three basic human conditions appear in the novels, which include life, sexual activities and death. Thoreau's novel is related neither with sex nor with death. He, as the protagonist, was mainly immersed in the joyous life. He believed that four necessities – food, shelter, clothing and fuel – were needed in order to survive. Accordingly, his life from the point of view of *labor* is treated as survival. Faulkner's novel, in contrast, showed death as an axis of all events and disasters. It reminds us the fact that human beings are only mortals and that various biological processes and men's reaction to them can indicate either of progress or regress of a personal development. Finally, Barth's novel was based on human instincts which were expressed as sexual intercourse and which later resulted in the woman's death. In this novel, sex was treated as an experiment and showed destructive consequences of such behaviour.

4. The further analysis was based upon *work* activities which, according to Arendt, involved the unnatural realm. It is linked with the world of *things* without which we could not imagine our existence. However, not only tangible things can be treated as manifestations of *work*. Such broad concepts as culture, social norms, abortion and some others also belong to the category of *work*. Unlike the animal-like side, *work* highly contributes to both formation and threat to man's identity. The way how men use those *things* as well as their attitude towards them are indicators of human's *inner I*. Thoreau directly condemned riches and believed that it ruins humans as personalities. Faulkner's novel had shown side effects of greediness and how humanity had lost a struggle against a voracious desire to acquire new, sophisticated things. Last but not least, Barth's novel also demonstrated negative side of humans by a severe interruption of biological activities known as abortion. The novels comparatively confirmed Arendt's warning that humans too rapidly converted into "Consumers' Society" and lead to an idea that humans also express themselves through *things*.

5. Lastly, the third chapter, as distinct from *labor* and *work*, dealt with the most humane activity referred to as *action*. According to Arendt, it comprised of language and behaviour. Treating soul as the most distinctive feature separating humans from animals, we came across the fact that man's soul could not be expressed without *action* and without the presence of other humans. Besides, various actions described in the novels enabled us to distinguish between vices and virtues, legal and illegal actions, etc. Thoreau provided a version of human with strong beliefs, with free and philosophically rich mind. In Faulkner's novel human appeared in a bit different shape. By means of interior monologues and stream of consciousness we encountered a notion of *madness* which, according to both the novel and modern theories, is caused by other humans due to their reckless actions. In Barth's novel a man was depicted as a shattered personality, living without particular purpose with an inability even to imitate others, or to ascribe *masks* (various roles) to himself. Finally, it must be stated that all the mentioned activities (*labor*, *work* and *action*) are typical to every human, ranging from primitive sphere which can be ascribed to animals, to that highest and the most humane activity which best reflects a man's soul.

6. In this research it was attempted to analyse human shapes found in the mentioned novels. In a similar way, human could be analysed for instance in such novels as Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and in John Fowle's *The Collector* (1963), but it is only future perspective. Due to the problematic nature of questions on human, the research certainly might have a further continuation.

V. SUMMARY

Human in Henry David Thoreau's, William Faulkner's, John Barth's Novels: The Comparative Aspect

Key words: *human, labor, work, action, philosophy, interdisciplinarity, thing, novel, author.*

The object of this research is human in Henry David Thoreau's, William Faulkner's, John Barth's novels (in philosophical, modernistic, postmodernistic novels).

The aim of the research is to analyse the novels of the mentioned authors by identifying and comparing different aspects of human and its reflections in the works of art. The objectives are the following: 1) to present a theoretical background of the comparative method and Hannah Arendt's human conception; 2) to provide and interpret various aspects of human presented by the mentioned authors; 3) to compare the revealed aspects of human shapes identified in those three novels.

The methodology of the research includes Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's theory of Comparative Literature as a method and Hannah Arendt's human conception, presented in her book *The Human Condition* (1958). Her ideas enriched this Bachelor thesis from an interdisciplinary point of view. Besides, her division of men's activities into *labor, work* and *action* was crucial in this research.

All three novels exposed different human shapes. The aspect of *labor* in Thoreau's novel revealed human as a survivor, whose needs were based on necessities. Faulkner's novel reminded us that humans are only mortals under constraints of society, requiring not only necessities, but superfluities as well. Barth's novel showed an instinctive side which exists in every human, but which is not always demonstrated.

Work, linked with man's treatment of *things*, helped to expose that Thoreau's human openly condemned riches due to its threat on man's identity. Faulkner's novel as if supplemented Thoreau's ideas by illustrating side effects of greediness and showed the loss of humanity against a voracious desire to acquire material things. Barth's novel presented rather immaterial and controversial aspect of humans which centred upon abortion and led to destructive consequences and certain moral decisions.

Action manifested in all the novels as an expression of one's *Inner I*. Thoreau, as the protagonist, proved to be a man with strong beliefs, who praised freedom and good deeds. Faulkner revealed a dark side of men which is caused by other humans due to their reckless actions. Similarly, in Barth's novel man was depicted as a shattered personality, living without particular purpose.

Finally, all the mentioned activities (*labor, work* and *action*) are typical to every man.

VI. SANTRAUKA

Žmogus Henrio Davido Thoreau, Williamo Faulknerio, Johno Bartheo romanuose: lyginamasis aspektas

Pagrindinės sąvokos: *žmogus, darbas, darymas, veiksmas, filosofija, tarpdiscipliniškumas, daiktas, romanas, autorius.*

Tyrimo objektas – žmogus Henrio Davido Thoreau filosofiniame romane *Voldenas, arba Gyvenimas miške* (1854), Williamo Faulknerio modernistiniame romane *Kai aš gulėjau mirties patale* (1930) ir Johno Bartheo postmodernistiniame romane *Kelio pabaiga* (1958).

Darbo tikslas – išanalizuoti minėtų autorių romanus, nustatant ir palyginant įvairius žmogaus aspektus bei jo vaizdavimą šiuose meno kūrinuose. Uždaviniai: 1) pateikti teorinius lyginamojo metodo ir Hannos Arendt žmogaus koncepcijos pagrindus; 2) nagrinėti ir interpretuoti įvairius žmogaus aspektus; 3) palyginti atskleistus žmogaus formų aspektus, nustatytus trijuose romanuose.

Šio tyrimo metodologiją sudaro Steveno Tötösy de Zepetneko komparatyvistikos kaip metodo teorija ir Hannos Arendt žmogaus koncepcija, pristatyta *Žmogaus būklėje* (1958). Arendt idėja skirstyti žmonių veiklą į *darbą, darymą* ir *veiksmą* leido konceptualiai ir tarpdiscipliniškai nagrinėti žmogų.

Visi trys romanai parodė skirtingas žmogaus formas ir vis kitoki žmogaus traktavimą. *Darbas* Thoreau romane atskleidė žmogų kaip besistengiantį išgyventi individą, kurio poreikiai apsiriboja būtiniaisiais dalykais. Faulknerio romanas priminė, kad žmonės tėra mirtingieji, veikiami visuomenės ir siekiantys ne tik būtiniausių, bet ir gausybės nebūtinų daiktų. Bartheo romanas parodė instinktyvią žmogaus pusę, kuri glūdi kiekviename iš mūsų, tačiau ne visada yra demonstruojama.

Darbas, susijęs su *daiktų* traktavimu, parodė, kad Thoreau žmogus atvirai smerkia turtus dėl jų keliamos grėsmės žmogaus tapatybei. Faulkneris tarsi papildė Thoreau mintis apmąstydamas godumo poveikį bei atskleisdamas žmoniškumo pralaimėjimą kovoje su nepasotinamu žmogaus troškimu įsigyti materialius dalykus. Bartheo romanas pateikė labiau nematerialųjį ir problemišką žmogaus dvasios aspektą, savitai reflektuodamas aborto problemą, jo pragaištingas pasekmes, moralinius sprendimus.

Veiksmas šiuose romanuose pasirodė kaip *vidinio „Aš“* išraiška. Thoreau, kaip pagrindinis veikėjas, pasirodė esąs tvirtų įsitikinimų žmogus, aukštinantis laisvę ir kilnius poelgius. Faulkneris parodė tamsiąją žmonių pusę, kurią savo neapgalvotais veiksmais atveria patys žmonės. Panašiai ir Bartheo romane, kuriame žmogus pavaizduotas kaip sutrikusi asmenybė, neturinti konkretaus gyvenimo tikslo.

Reziumuojant galima teigti, kad visos trys minėtos veiklos (t.y. *darbas, darymas* ir *veiksmas*) yra būdingos kiekvienam žmogui.

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VIII. ANNOTATION

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IX. ANOTACIJA

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