

University of Pardubice

Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Cultural Clash in *The Mountain is Young* by Han Suyin

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Bachelor Thesis

2017

Univerzita Pardubice
Fakulta filozofická
Akademický rok: 2015/2016

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Bára Müllerová**
Osobní číslo: **H14067**
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro odbornou praxi**
Název tématu: **Kulturní konflikt v románu The Mountain is Young od Han Suyin**
Zadávající katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Studentka se ve své bakalářské práci zaměří na dílo čínsko-vlámské anglicky píšící autorky Han Suyin *The Mountain Is Young*. Dílo této autorky nabízí řadu analytických možností analýza etnické identity (v případě Han Suyin značně komplikované), zohlednění genderové identity autorky či otázka míry autobiografičnosti jejího díla. Právě s ohledem na nesporné autobiografické prvky v primárním díle se studentka bude věnovat i klíčovým momentům v životě analyzované autorky. Dále se pak zaměří na dobový kontext relevantní pro analyzovaný román tj. etnickou identitu, krizi identity imigrantů a střet kultur, dobový britský pohled na imigraci, dobové vztahy Velké Británie se zeměmi, do nichž Han Suyin zasazuje děj svého románu (tj. Nepál, Tibet, Indie a Čína). Následná literární analýza románu *The Mountain Is Young* rozpracuje konkrétně tematiku řešenou v teoretických kapitolách.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Asian-American Autobiographers: A Bio-bibliographical Critical Sourcebook, "Han Suyin (Rosalie Chou)". John Jae-nam Han.
Identity, Gender, and Sexuality. Fonagy, Peter Krause, Rainer Leuzinger-Bohleber, Marianne
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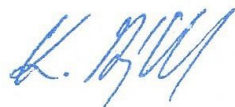
Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

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Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **30. dubna 2016**

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **31. března 2017**



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Prohlašuji:

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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

V Pardubicích dne 29. 3. 2017

Bára Müllerová

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D., for her guidance, encouragement, and immense patience. I would also like to thank my family for their support.

Annotation

In this thesis, Han Suyin's novel *The Mountain is Young* is closely analyzed as a semi-autobiographical piece of literary work portraying the political and personal clash of cultures between East and West as perceived by Han, a Eurasian writer of Chinese-Flemish ancestry and British citizenship, while on a diplomatic visit in Asia. Written and published during the second half of the 1950s, *The Mountain is Young* is set in Nepal in 1956 on the occasion of the coronation of the then Nepalese king. As such, the novel is examined through its central themes, cultural clash and identity search, which are then continuously traced back to the author's inspiration to write about them. Firstly, Nepalese culture is observed by the protagonist as an outsider, providing a platform for an introspective theme of search of one's identity. Secondly, apart from the sense of rootlessness, the purely private topic is contrasted with the gradual industrialization of Nepal by the Westerners who, in turn, are observed by the protagonist as outsiders causing cultural conflicts. Lastly, the novel also pertains the declining yet omnipresent power of Great Britain, hinting at the relationship between the country and its former colonies, now presented as free though still impoverished and regressive as a result of the long-term oppression. In addition, the author compares Western and Eastern neocolonialism, emphasizing the need for progress which comes from Easterners. Cultural clashes, the postcolonial (or neocolonial) Britain, and, with regard to Han's bi-racial ancestry and her experience as a person whose "Britishness" is striking in Nepal, yet who is not British enough according to the British, identity discourse comprise the focal point of the thesis. The main aim is to gain a better understanding of Han's motive to write the novel in the way she did. This thesis thus proposes Han's belief in the necessity of absolute autonomy for postcolonies and Eastern countries otherwise affected by British influence in the 1950s as well as her belief in the ability of the said countries to achieve that level of autonomy due to their "young" and independent spirit, undefeated by clashes and colonialism.

Key words

clash of cultures; the East-West dichotomy; identity; cultural identity; ethnic identity; Britishness; postcolonial Britain; Han Suyin; *The Mountain is Young*

Název

Kulturní konflikt v románu *The Mountain is Young* od Han Suyin

Anotace

Teze se zabývá podrobnou analýzou zčásti autobiografické novely *The Mountain is Young* od Han Suyin, která popisuje politický a mezilidský střet kultur mezi východními a západními zeměmi, jak je vnímala autorka, žena eurasijského původu s čínskými a vlámskými kořeny, při své účasti na diplomatické návštěvě v Asii. Novela *The Mountain is Young*, která vznikala v druhé polovině padesátých let minulého století, se odehrává v Nepálu v roce 1956 za příležitosti korunovace tehdejšího nastávajícího nepálského krále. Vzhledem k dobovému, kulturnímu a politickému kontextu tato teze zkoumá ústřední témata střetu kultur a hledání sebe sama v tomto střetu. Zároveň nabízí vhled do událostí, které autorku k zachycení právě těchto témat inspirovaly, jelikož poukazuje na paralelismus mezi životem Han a dějem knihy. Analýza probíhá primárně ve třech bodech. Zprvce zkoumá motiv identity a jejího hledání jako důsledek ztráty kořenů. V tomto bodě se klade důraz na protagonistku novely. Skrz ni se čtenář dozvídá o nepálské kultuře, ale vždy jen očima hosta v cizí zemi; její postavení někoho „zvenčí“ tak dává prostor introspektivnímu rozboru konceptu identity a jejího hledání. Zadruhé Han pokládá toto čistě osobní téma ztráty kořenů do kontrastu s globálním problémem, a to vlivem západních zemí na postupnou industrializaci Nepálu. Protagonistka (eurasijského původu jako Han) komentuje zásahy Angličanů, Američanů atd. kritickým tónem. I když ví, že je sama v Nepálu hostem, pro změnu označuje za někoho „zvenčí“ obyvatele Západu, zejména protože v Asii svou sílu uplatňují jako doma. Nakonec se teze soustředí i na slábnoucí, ale stále všudypřítomnou moc Velké Británie nad bývalými koloniemi a dalšími asijskými zeměmi, nad nimiž měla v dané době Velká Británie mocensky navrch. Poslední bod tedy nastiňuje vztah mezi teritorií, která nedávno získala autonomii, přestože se stále nachází v regresivním stavu kvůli dlouhodobé éře kolonialismu, a bývalým kolonizátorem. Han dále porovnává západní a východní neokolonialismus a prosazuje názor, že pokrok přinesený pro asijské země musí pocházet od (dalších) asijských zemí. Centrálními tématy teze jsou proto střet kultur, postkoloniální (a neokoloniální) Británie a hledání identity, to poslední z důvodu smíšeného původu jak Han, tak protagonistky knihy, jejíž „britskost“ se jeví zřejmá v Nepálu, nikoliv ale v Británii. Tato bakalářská práce vznikla, aby vysvětlila motivaci Han k napsání dané novely. Po zpětném zhodnocení pak vyplývá, že Han prosazuje absolutní autonomii postkoloniálních politických subjektů a asijských zemí ovlivněných západními silami obecně, ale zejména Británií v padesátých letech. Stejně tak je zřejmá důvěra autorky v to, že post-kolonie jsou schopny takové míry autonomie dosáhnout a uchovat si ji navzdory Británii, a to vzhledem ke své nezlomené a „mladé“ podstatě, jak již nastiňuje metafora v názvu novely, které se kolonialismus a kulturní střety nedotkly nadobro.

Klíčová slova

střet kultur; Východ versus Západ; identita; kulturní identita; etnická identita; britskost; postkoloniální Británie; Han Suyin; *The Mountain is Young*

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Introduction

In terms of historical context and literary theory, any attempt to cohesively classify an author of Han Suyin's range and experience, an author whose life was lived on the margins, is to compromise the classification by "marginalizing" at least some of the aspects of Han's authorship. To select a category in which Han could "fit" comfortably without simultaneously simplifying the author's rich subjectivity and intersectionality must therefore be a method convenient when working with a particular piece written by Han rather than her bibliography as a whole. Consequently, the Eurasian writer, half Hakka half Flemish, completing her medical studies in three European countries and practicing as a physician primarily in Asian countries, marrying three times three men of three nationalities, gaining a British citizenship and Swiss residency, is categorized in this thesis precisely and only in the historical and literary context limited by and relevant to the novel chosen as the subject matter. Concentrating therefore on Han's *The Mountain is Young*, a novel written from the point of view of a tourist in post-Rana Nepal now being heavily Westernized, it is Han's deteriorating marriage to a British officer, her British citizenship acquired through the marriage, and her bi-cultural identity as a guest in her husband's country as well as a guest in a foreign Asian country which permit to tolerably classify Han as a British-Asian postcolonial writer. Additionally, Han is presented through her protagonist as an observer of postcolonialism and British neocolonialism in Nepal, and an observer and receiver of institutional and interpersonal racism regardless of her location.

Using subtle symbolism and, mainly, personification, Han likens the protagonist as well as the newly autonomous countries relevant to the subject novel, Nepal and India, to mountains. Continuously, Han refers to the mountains in her novel as strong, lasting, and untamed, all of which are self-explanatory attributes within the context, without any doubt used in reaction to past and present struggles imposed by the British, be it on a bigger scale (colonialism) or smaller (Han's marriage). More importantly, though, the acclaimed Nepalese mountains are referred to as young – an adjective which may seem contradictory at first when used together with the attribute "lasting," which implies an eternal concept, peaks which have been standing for ages already. Yet, Han's choice of words is neither random nor contradictory, as instead the adjective, young, gives a witty response to the British (and Western in general) habit, stemming from a sense of superiority, to call people from other, usually Asian and African places *children*. Throughout the novel, the natives are referred to as such, fondly at times, with open disdain at others, and so is the protagonist, a woman of mixed heritage modelled after Han who has become so indoctrinated with the British point of view that even she sees herself as a child, unable to rule herself. It is then Han's statement,

through her heroine Anne, to become young now, not a child anymore but an adult independent of her former subservient position, autonomous like Nepal, like the Nepalese mountains, and forever unfit to be treated otherwise again. Moreover, Han depicts the growing self-reliant sentiments of Asian countries, promoting aid for postcolonies within the Asian framework and not from West. Lastly, Han advocates for a change and self-criticism for the British before an equal East-West relationship can be established.

Methodology determined as the most efficient was an eclectic synthesis subsisting of definitions, interpretations, and information from varied and valid sources in the theoretical part in order to preserve the economical medium that is a bachelor's thesis. The practical part, meaning the actual application of these definitions, interpretations, and information to the subject novel, then merges with theory continuously throughout the paper. The method was selected to better illuminate theoretical proposals and demonstrate the main hypothesis, i.e. Han's belief in the necessity of autonomy for postcolonies and Eastern countries otherwise affected by British influence in the 1950s, as well as her belief in the ability of the said countries to achieve that level of autonomy due to their "young" and independent spirit.

1 Identity

The term "identity" is consulted in this thesis from two standpoints selected, after much consideration, as the most relevant concerning the subject novel: ethnic identity and cultural identity, the former serving as a sort of sub-category (along with e.g. racial identity, national identity etc.) of the latter due to reasons listed further on after a thorough research. Relatedly, gender identity is discussed; however, as shall be proven in the thesis, it is primarily ethnic and cultural identity in Han's novel causing clashes even in the protagonist's marriage, so gender identity is mainly mentioned in connection with the other two viewpoints. Preceding the explanation of these standpoints, a general introduction is given into the identity discourse, including what one's identity is and what kinds of identity can be perceived and classified in an individual. Concomitantly, these concepts are contextualized in practice, using Han (and Anne) as examples, introducing them.

This division into two primary points, ethnic identity and cultural identity, is done for the purpose of laying the foundation for a better understanding of the novel *The Mountain is Young* and its themes of identity search, rootlessness, and clashing cultures.

What is Identity?

Early into the plot, the heroine corners herself: “But who am I?”¹ It is a question any identity discourse is preoccupied with, and a matter deeply personal and subjective indeed, which is why a uniform answer cannot be provided.

Before attempting to satisfactorily define identity as a concept, it must be mentioned that not only that opinions on what one’s identity is differ dramatically, but even approaches towards identity theory vary. For example, “identity theory is principally a microsociological theory that sets out to explain individuals’ roles and behaviours,”² meaning the theory is primarily focused on what kinds of roles (a woman, a writer) an individual takes on himself or herself in a society and how he or she acts those roles out, while “social identity theory is intended to be a social psychological theory that sets out to explain group processes and intergroup relations,”³ meaning the theory consults so-called social categories, for instance nationality. Despite their preoccupation with concepts of self-identification in a society, each theory treats identity and the search of it from a slightly diverse point of view. The former, identity theory, shall be touched upon as well as the latter, social identity theory, which is discussed in more detail due to the multi-faceted identities of Han Suyin, relating especially to her ethnicity.

All theories on identity discourse considered, although “the field of ‘identity studies’ has become of key significance to the social sciences and humanities,”⁴ it is still problematic to collectively assert what identity is. Disputable is whether a clean-cut way to describe and define the term even exists. That is especially true with all the newly emerging takes on the subject, bringing yet more classifications and points of view to consider when delving into the identity discourse. To validate this statement, several varying opinions on the meaning of the term “identity” along with their most basic definitions when introduced by different experts on the topic can be compared. From these, the most suitable specifications of the term “identity” will be selected and elaborated on.

In her book, Chris Weedon states this: “Class remains a key ingredient of subjectivity and identity.”⁵ While undeniably true, it is a process of thought which shall not be followed. Motifs of social classes and classism are surely to be found in Han’s novel, but must be put aside as irrelevant for the aim of this paper.

1 Suyin Han, *The Mountain Is Young* (London: Panther Books, 1973), 87.

2 Michael A. Hogg, Deborah J. Terry and Katherine M. White, “A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 58 (1995): 255.

3 Hogg, Terry and White, “A Tale of Two Theories,” 255.

4 Anthony Elliot, ed., introduction to *Routledge Handbook of Identity Studies* (London: Routledge, 2011), accessed February 25, 2017, https://books.google.cz/books?id=MoUc0A0bT_sC&printsec=frontcover&dq=history+of+identity+studies&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=history%20of%20identity%20studies&f=false.

5 Chris Weedon, *Identity and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2004), 10.

Gender identity (“the subjective, internal sense of being a man or a woman,”⁶ never questioned by the protagonist and connected especially with her role of a “respectable, devoted ... wife”⁷) is discussed e.g. by Judith Butler. Along with it, the concept of gender is introduced as a construct which can be performed,⁸ ⁹ consciously or not, after e.g. being taught performative behaviour by parents to “reinforce gender identity.”¹⁰ In the novel and Han’s life, gender identity is an aspect prominent mostly with regard to marriage. Anne, just like Han did during the creation of the subject novel, experiences a deteriorating interracial marriage, in the novel described as abusive, documenting thus the struggle associated with womanhood. Nevertheless, it is the adjective *interracial* which allows to focus mainly on ethnic and cultural identity because, as proven further on, it is actually the husband’s racial supremacy and cultural clashes of the couple due to which their marriage fails. Similarly, performativity is treated in following chapters as a behaviour Anne knowingly adopts to assimilate herself into her husband’s culture, to reinforce her Britishness. Thus, while Anne undergoes mistreatment specific of her gender, it is not gender identity she seeks to discover, attempts to alter, or analyzes closely. In a sense, while Han is a female writer, she is first and foremost a critic. Yet, her writing is not genderless because she writes from a woman’s point of view and about women, in this case about a woman who adheres to traditional gender roles (wifely, devoted).

Erik H. Erikson, when contemplating “the elusive subject of identity,”¹¹ claims: “A sense of identity means a sense of being at one with oneself as one grows and develops.”¹² Such statement could prove to be a little too abstract, but works when applied to the metaphors relating to the identity of postcolonies and Anne’s identity after leaving her husband. Erikson’s interpretation is thus necessary to be considered, despite its abstractness, because it is one of the goals to follow Anne’s path to self-identification, including her growth in terms of self-acceptance.

6 Lawrence S. Mayer and Paul R. McHugh, “Gender Identity,” *The New Atlantis: A Journal of Technology & Society (Special Report)* 50 (2016): 86.

7 Han, *The Mountain*, 223.

8 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2011), accessed February 27, 2017, https://books.google.cz/books?id=2S0xAAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=judith+butler&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=judith%20butler&f=false.

9 Sverre Varvin, “Commentary,” in *Identity, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. Peter Fonagy, Rainer Krause and Marianne Leuzinger-Bohleber (London: Karnac Books, 2009), accessed February 27, 2017, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=FeWlwTCZ2uQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:ITt72lQkgHMC&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjg0ZK-iPFSAhUDDxoKHRNfBdAQwUIIDAB#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

10 Georgia Warnke, *After Identity: Rethinking Race, Sex, and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), accessed February 27, 2017, https://books.google.cz/books?id=h2yd-qS1FukC&printsec=frontcover&dq=after+identity+rethinking+race+sex+gender&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiJhd_q-vbSAhXDAxoKHQZfALUQuwUIHjAA#v=onepage&q=after%20identity%20rethinking%20race%20sex%20gender&f=false.

11 Erik H. Erikson, *Dimensions of a new Identity* (W. W. Norton, 1979), 27.

12 Erikson, *Dimensions of a New Identity*, 27.

According to Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets, “an identity is the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person.”¹³ They further explain that “individuals have meanings that they apply to themselves when they are a student, worker, spouse, parent (these are roles they occupy) ... when they are Latino (these are memberships in particular groups), or when they claim they are outgoing individuals or moral persons (these are personal characteristics that identify themselves as unique persons).”¹⁴ In short, Burke and Stets categorize identity in three major ways: societal role, group membership, and personality. Because these often overlap, Burke and Stets talk about “multiple identities.”¹⁵ To put these ideas in context, Han as well as her fictional recreation, Anne, can be perceived as a writer, her profession giving her a societal role, and as an Eurasian, her mixed ancestry giving her a membership in a particular group.

Using similar terminology, Kath Woodward further polemicizes aspects of identity which are inherently shared and which are chosen. Woodward assesses that “identity is different from personality in important respects. We may share personality traits with other people, but sharing an identity suggests some *active* engagement on our part.”¹⁶ Stating this, Woodward elaborates on the idea of societal roles, group memberships, and personalities as factors in one’s self-identification which can be chosen in some cases, but cannot in others.

Woodward’s theory applies to Han when the writer’s mixed ancestry is considered. While Han’s ethnicity is equally European and Asian, she could choose either one, or the other, or both when actively trying to identify herself. Such choice is visible in a list of characters who play an important role in the plot. In the compiled list, preceding the preface of the novel, the protagonist is introduced as “a beautiful English girl”¹⁷ at first, leaving it up to readers to create a picture of her for themselves, by their own standards. It is only a little later that readers discover the protagonist is “one of that small handful of Eurasians ... and illegitimates,”¹⁸ changing very likely the image some of the readers may have conjured. (Noteworthy is the placement of the two attributes, “Eurasian” and “illegitimate,” into a sequence, serving in the quote as words with corresponding meanings which the speaker wants to convey and both having negative connotation.) At that point in the novel, however, neither description of Anne is asserted by her person, as instead it is either

13 Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets, *Identity Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), accessed February 25, 2017, https://books.google.cz/books?id=7-bnlPeT_1YC&printsec=frontcover&dq=what+is+identity&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false.

14 Burke and Stets, *Identity Theory*.

15 Burke and Stets, *Identity Theory*.

16 Kath Woodward, “Questions of Identity,” in *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class, Ethnicity*, ed. Kath Woodward (London: Routledge, 2004), accessed February 25, 2017, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=oShn7UnbEUsC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

17 Han, preface to *The Mountain*.

18 Han, *The Mountain*, 35.

Han's choice to portray her as an "English girl," intending perhaps to point out internalized processes of whitewashing which may subsequently occur, or the choice of a secondary character, a white woman, to describe the protagonist as distinctly "Eurasian." In view of this arbitrariness of Anne's perceived ethnicity, it may be said that not only individuals can (and sometimes cannot) choose how they identify themselves, but that the premise is also valid when reversed: people may categorize others in the same manner according to their expectations. This is an idea Han consciously examines in the subject novel.

Be it Burke and Stets' approach or Woodward's, an agreement appears in the way they collectively point out the connection between one's identity and the societal perception of it in relation to a person's position in the said society: societal structures.^{19 20} To contextualize, in Han's case her self-identification as a writer would remain the same in Western as well as Eastern context. (In all actuality, Anne, the protagonist, is first described as "a wayward writer"²¹ and remains treated as such throughout the entirety of the novel.) On the other hand, her being Eurasian would be demonstrated differently in each location. There, in order to actively identify herself as a member of a particular group, Han would have to act according to particular expectations and constructs – structures.

The concept of societal structures and their consequence when dealing with identities is seconded by Weedon: "Identities may be socially, culturally and institutionally assigned, in the case, for instance, of gender and citizenship, where ... social and cultural practices produce the discourses within which gendered subjectivity and citizens are constituted."²² In other words, being born in a certain place or being assigned sex at birth would determine parts of a person's identity prior to their ability to choose. Alternately, a person must intentionally adapt to certain standards upheld by the society they live in were they to change their sex or citizenship with the intention of being accepted as a bearer of the new identity. To illustrate, Anne describes the need to adjust some aspects of her self in order to become that "English girl," which is clear from the following excerpt:

"I was born in Asia, in Shanghai. That too has conditioned me, made it easier for me here, harder for me to understand John perhaps ... Then war broke out in China and I was sent to England ..."²³

19 Woodward, "Questions of Identity."

20 Burke and Stets, *Identity Theory*.

21 Han, preface to *The Mountain*.

22 Weedon, *Identity and Culture*, 6.

23 Han, *The Mountain*, 220.

Through the experience of Anne, it may be presumed from the small confession that being partly Asian has instilled some barriers between Anne and her second husband, a British man. Additionally, she elaborates that “at the beginning there was nothing that I would not overcome with my desire, my anxiety to please,”²⁴ implying the need to conform to certain standards on her side, to assimilate, all in order to make her interracial marriage work and to integrate herself within the country whose citizen she had chosen to become.

Attention should be brought to the topic of citizenship for an instant. Han, born in China, acquired Chinese citizenship by birth. Along with it came the culturally and socially rooted ideas of what is Chinese, including the language, traditions, beliefs etc. Han’s acquisition of British citizenship came later on through her second marriage to a British officer. Owing to the fact that Han was a fully formed adult by then, familiar with the English language, although not under any compulsion to act English with all the societal constructs it would include, labelling her (or Anne’s) identity as British must seem insufficient. While the ideas of Britishness and Chineseness will be contemplated in relation to Anne in greater detail in the following chapter, an assertion can be made that what was British (or British-pleasing) in Anne was very likely to be performative²⁵ at first. Such assertion may be exemplified in a record of Anne’s attempts at assimilation:

... to his ‘What, what’s that? What d’you mean!’ (always abrupt, delivered with a jerk of the head to emphasize the virile precision, and a flash of the eyes, employed for fifteen years of administratorship in a colony now become self-governing) she had responded with laughter verging on a giggle, a puzzled, girlish, unassured mirth which was her reflex to jokes she did not understand. He had known this timidity in her, an uncertain apprehension of causing offence, and it had pleased him ...²⁶

Upon reminiscing of the early years of marriage, the protagonist’s struggle to grasp her husband’s mentality and to adapt to it in any way possible in order to escape the feeling of not belonging and being inferior is evident. She tries to achieve integration and mutual understanding by repeating an act which she has discovered to be accepted by the husband, albeit in superior amusement of the member of a majority.

In juxtaposition, the protagonist professes her concern at becoming the same as a circle of white British missionaries and former colonizers in the habit, historically ingrained, of passing racist judgements regarding the Nepalese; a circle into which she belongs because of her citizenship and claimed Britishness: “She must stop coming to terms with them, or she would become like them.”²⁷

24 Han, *The Mountain*, 224.

25 In the context of this paper, the idea of performativity refers to Judith Butler’s definition of the term, i.e. the performance of repetitive acts through which a person constructs certain aspects of their identity.

26 Han, *The Mountain*, 13-14.

27 Han, *The Mountain*, 198.

A more complex and particularized take on identity is then presented by Mary Fong and Rueyling Chuang, who propose racial, ethnic, and cultural identity.²⁸ Treated as separate, the terms still intersect in many aspects, and as such – intersecting yet separate – shall be approached. The latter two concepts will be explained thoroughly in the next section of the chapter.

In summary, when inquiring after “What is identity?” answers are numerous, often overlapping, and open to every individual’s interpretation of the term. Still, theories on identity discourse frequently meet in one point. An individual’s self is defined by their relationship to and position in a society, for example in forms of roles or group memberships. When analyzing the matter from a deeper viewpoint, however, it may be necessary to deal with various sub-categories, such as ethnic, cultural, and gender identity.

It may be concluded that, while all of the aforementioned interpretations deserve consideration and could be, when approached from a different point of view and with different intentions, applied to Han’s novel (some more than the others), in this thesis it is ethnic identity and cultural identity which are the main focus.

Ethnic Identity

To define ethnic identity, a term not uncommonly used interchangeably with racial identity and cultural identity alike, it is crucial to note that though the terms often overlap, they are distinguished in the paper; moreover, ethnic identity is treated as a *part of* cultural identity, in agreement with Thomas H. Eriksen’s proposal that ethnicity stresses cultural similarity of people,²⁹ and not as an equivalent of it.

Ethnic identity can thus be presented as a fluid concept due to “ethnic boundaries ... continually changing,”³⁰ premising the complexity of the term with respect to shifts of peoples (migration). But what is ethnic identity, then, except fluid and dependent on internal and external forces alike? And how does one draw a boundary between ethnicity, race, and culture?

Sapna Cheryan and Jeanne L. Tsai describe ethnic identity as “the degree to which individuals identify with their country of ancestral origins,”³¹ including the culture, traditions, and the language of the country. However, the interpretation is challenged by Kanchan Chandra, who instead

28 Mary Fong and Rueyling Chuang, ed., *Communicating Ethnic and Cultural Identity* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), accessed February 28, 2017, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=Ue4CCUhRYa4C&pg=PR1&lpg=PR1&dq=Communicating+Ethnic+and+Cultural+Identityedited+by+Mary+Fong,+Rueyling+Chuang&source=bl&ots=-xaLGZjmmI&sig=z9QxM71Nkf42xRF76a4Q4bhiKqY&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjWtYGpsrPSAhUFNxQKHb16BUkQ6AEILjAD#v=onepage&q=Communicating%20Ethnic%20and%20Cultural%20Identityedited%20by%20Mary%20Fong%20C%20Rueyling%20Chuang&f=false>.

29 Thomas H. Eriksen, “Ethnicity versus Nationalism,” *Journal of Peace Research* 28 (1991): 264.

30 Judith A. Howard, “Social Psychology of Identities,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 375.

31 Sapna Cheryan and Jeanne L. Tsai, “Ethnic Identity,” in *Handbook of Asian American Psychology*, ed. Frederick T. L. Leong et al. (Sage Publications, 2006), 125.

proposes that “ethnic identities are a subset of identity categories in which eligibility for membership is determined by attributes associated with, or believed to be associated with, descent,”³² prioritizing common roots due to the possibility of not sharing an ancestral country’s language etc. for reasons such as migration.

Relatedly, ethnicity, like race, cannot be chosen, as Jean S. Phinney and Anthony D. Ong declare,³³ ascribing it instead to a set of characteristics which can be observed in an individual and which are determined at birth. A person cannot suddenly choose to become a different race or ethnic group because these are genetically conditioned. In contrast, citizenship and culture may be changed and therefore chosen (adopted).

To elaborate on the distinction between ethnicity, race, and culture, Han’s roots may be considered, “Eurasian” being her race and “Flemish-Chinese” being her ethnicity. Roots then represent a common denominator when it comes to the two terms. Nevertheless, race is a notion which has a connotation connected to the physical and biological. Ethnicity, on the other hand, belongs more to an individual’s nationality and culture.³⁴ An illustration is furthermore offered in the novel:

“Nepal really has lots of different ethnic groups, Tibetans, Botthiyas, Gurungs, Limbus, all very different from each other. In Khatmandu Valley the Newaris are the original people ...”³⁵

While each mentioned ethnic group’s umbrella race is the Asian race, the race is in turn branched into smaller units: nationalities, and even more specifically, ethnicities.

Culture, then, encompasses cultural traditions, beliefs, and languages assigned to Han by birth but also those accepted or learned later on. Hence, when contemplating culture, Han’s inherited Chineseness as well as, upon obtaining British citizenship, her Britishness must be both taken into consideration.

Returning to ethnic identity, another defining force of the concept is an individual’s ethnic feeling, which depends on the degree of interest in the ethnic aspect of their identity, called internal identification,³⁶ and external ascription,³⁷ i.e. the willingness of the society to accept them as a part of an ethnic group. A link between an individual’s self-perception and the societal perception

32 Kanchan Chandra, “What Is Ethnic Identity and Does It Matter?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (2006): 398.

33 Jean S. Phinney and Anthony D. Ong, “Conceptualization and Measurement of Ethnic Identity: Current Status and Future Directions,” *Journal of Counselling Psychology* 54 (2007): 275.

34 Anthony Moran, “Identity, Race, and Ethnicity,” in *Routledge Handbook of Identity Studies*, ed. Anthony Elliot (London: Routledge, 2011), accessed February 25, 2017, https://books.google.cz/books?id=MoUc0A0bT_sC&printsec=frontcover&dq=history+of+identity+studies&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=history%20of%20identity%20studies&f=false.

35 Han, *The Mountain*, 39.

36 Howard, “Social Psychology,” 375.

37 Howard, “Social Psychology,” 375.

of them, mentioned already, is thus reasserted. An example from the novel illustrates the idea of belonging into an ethnic group, either by choice or by outer assertion:

The women's faces were powdered, their eyes outlined with kohl, and in their hair, long, oiled ... were flowers ... They varied greatly in looks; some totally Indian and others with distinctly Mongol features; many with the Valley mixture of Indian with Mongol, features delicate and fine, skin flawless and translucent, long slanting eyes.³⁸

Through the protagonist's eyes, native women from different ethnic groups are described. As noted, they seem similar in cultural customs with the inclusion of traditional make-up and adornments, yet distinct in physical aspects. Relatedly, Anne, in this case half-mistakenly, ascribes ethnicity to another character in accordance to his physical appearance and the language he speaks. Upon assuming his ethnicity, she is corrected:

“... I've been here four years, I'm always finding new things to look at.”
“You're not from Nepal then?”
“Not altogether. My father was Indian and my mother Nepalese.”³⁹

In the former excerpt, the protagonist's record of others must suffice, whereas in the latter readers learn about a character's mixed ethnicity through his internal identification.

In conclusion, ethnic identity spans a set of characteristics shared by a certain group of people who have the same ancestry, and along with it a sense of belonging to the ethnic group. Han uses ethnicity to distinguish territorial and cultural segments of a race; she does so to illustrate both similarities and differences between respective ethnic groups. At the same time, ethnic identity is alluded to in the book as something which can be either ascribed by others, even mistakenly, or felt personally.

Cultural Identity

Having already hinted at the meaning of culture and all it covers, or else intersects with, cultural identity shall be examined shortly, primarily in relation to the subject novel.

Cultural identity can be understood, in words of Stuart Hall, as “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being.’ It belongs to the future as much as to past.”⁴⁰ In essence, unlike ethnic and racial identity, which are constant (though in case of their duality, a person may choose to identify with one more than the other), cultural identity relates mostly to what is made-made, constructed, accepted, and

38 Han, *The Mountain*, 103.

39 Han, *The Mountain*, 113-114.

40 Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 225.

constantly evolving. Weedon then adds the concept is repeatedly “produced and reproduced in practices of everyday life, in education, the media ... the arts, history and literature,”⁴¹ specifying some of the sectors culture consists of. When put into context, it can be deduced Anne identifies herself, or tries to, as culturally British. By far the most striking fashion in which she claims Britishness is her awareness of Britain’s past wrongdoings, urging others to “look at the Victoriana in the Ranas’ palaces, that was *us*, fifty years ago,”⁴² not exempting herself from the country’s colonial legacy which needs to be atoned for.

In what he calls “the colonial experience,”⁴³ Hall further elaborates on the importance of culture, cultural identity, and the relevance of both where colonized countries, their precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial cultural feelings are concerned, along with cultural self-identification of the people living in the respective countries. In fact, colonization, acculturation, and assimilation play an important role in the formation of cultural identities, as shall become evident in the chapters ahead. In those, cultural exchanges and conflicts with relevance to colonialism and neocolonialism are analyzed in depth.

Concluded may be that cultural identity is a concept less limited than the two preceding ones; correspondingly, cultural identity covers a vaster set of interpretations and ideas. It can be chosen by means of acculturation, or forced upon an individual by means of assimilation. When analyzing the subject novel, Chineseness and Britishness shall be selected as the representative identity of East and West, respectively.

2 Clash of Cultures

Being the focal point of the paper, the concept of clashing cultures shall be explained with respect to both Eastern and Western culture and the divide between them. Attention shall be paid in particular to the concept of Britishness, serving in the context of this paper as the representative of Western culture, and the concept of Chineseness, serving as the representative of Eastern culture, symbolized here by Han. Inseparable from the problematics of the East-West divide, the terms Orientalism, Occidentalism, and racism are touched upon as well.

Clash of Cultures

By far the most prominent issue, the notion of clashing cultures is omnipresent in the subject novel and in Han’s writing in general not only when comparing Eastern and Western civilizations, but also

41 Weedon, *Identity and Culture*, 155.

42 Han, *The Mountain*, 102.

43 Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 225.

when comparing a range of countries from the West and a range of countries from the East, respectively. Nevertheless, ensuing the broadest definition of the concept of clashing cultures, attention shall be paid exclusively to cultural conflicts between West (represented by Britain) and East.

When civilizations meet, cultures exchange – but they can also clash. In this paper, cultural clashes should not be understood as inevitable and multiculturalism as a threat, as Samuel P. Huntington insists^{44 45 46} in his divisive hypotheses. Nevertheless, when diverse populations of diverse cultures encounter each other, the truth is conflicts may arise due to intolerance towards differences in faith, value systems, traditions and so on. It is also imperative to remind that cultural exchanges, in their peaceful sense, cannot always be achievable or even expected, e.g. in case of colonialism. After all, “cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths.”⁴⁷ In Han’s novel, from her perspective clashes of this particular kind are portrayed. Frequently, religion causes the foremost offense. Han dedicates long-winded paragraphs to the problematics of religious intolerance, stemming in the majority of cases from the assuredness of Westerners that their faith surpasses that of Eastern heathens. Examples can be presented, the first from the perspective of a British missionary and the second from Anne’s:

“We merely show, by example, what a higher and nobler ideal it is than those revolting idols and all that preposterous throwing about of flowers.”⁴⁸

And this anthropocentric aim of our religion seems to entitle us to look down upon people who care only about their souls still, as we did nine centuries ago.⁴⁹

Complementing each other, the two excerpts clarify cultural clash between two religions as well as Han’s opinion on the conflict which keeps being perpetuated by the British.

On the whole, Britain’s history with what Edward W. Said calls the Far East⁵⁰ and the political, territorial, and cultural domination of thereof is long and ingrained most prominently in its colonial practices. In particular, it is Britain’s past governance over India which keeps being referred to in Han’s work from the point of view of an outsider. Concurrently, from Han’s personal

44 The opinion of the author on Huntington’s premises is shaped by Maria Boletsi.

45 Maria Boletsi, *Barbarism and its Discontents* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 48-49.

46 Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72 (1993): 25-27, 48.

47 Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* 91 (1991): 34.

48 Han, *The Mountain*, 350.

49 Han, *The Mountain*, 310.

50 Edward W. Said, introduction to *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 17.

experience while performing medical practice there, it is British colonialism in Hong Kong shaping Han's novels.⁵¹ Finally, in the subject novel, Han concentrates on Nepal, describing clashes caused by the British regarding religion and religious art.

The East-West Dichotomy

Considering the clash of cultures, it is significant to address the so-called East-West dichotomy, divide, or dispute, a philosophy positioning East and West as polar opposites and, historically, even mutual antagonists.⁵² Although the divide must seem too broad and general, with accordance to the fact that the East-West binary has been criticized in past⁵³, the author of this thesis still takes the liberty of not including the whole of East as well as the whole of West when particularizing the matter in paragraphs to follow. Moreover, merely those observations which were originally made by Han are utilized to illustrate some of the facets of the East-West dichotomy, which means that only the scope of material Han decided to outline in her work shall be in turn used as an example of the diversity between what is Eastern and what is Western.

Culture-wise, the world has long been entertaining the idea of a strict division between East and West and concentrating on the otherness of the two,⁵⁴ including different religions, customs, sciences, or hierarchies. Said asserts: "Men have always divided the world up into regions having either real or imagined distinction from each other,"⁵⁵ hinting already at the premise of man-made distinctions to which this paper returns repeatedly in this chapter.

Worth mentioning is that the East-West dichotomy, even if natural and not invented, initially served to, regarding culture and ideologies, invent "a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles,"⁵⁶ making it more than a mere idea but a system to, under colonialism, categorize and shape Eastern countries according to the Western idea(l), and to rule over it. That gives the East-West divide a political dimension. Similarly, the East-West divide has been upheld by writers who "have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions,"⁵⁷ immortalizing the otherness of East in art.

51 Noted shall be that this particular period of Han's life is delineated in her other novel, *A Many-Splendoured Thing*.

52 Thorsten Pattberg, *The East-West Dichotomy* (New York: LoD Press, 2009), accessed March 7, 2017, https://books.google.cz/books?id=1flQexwAm4EC&dq=thorsten+pattberg+east+west+dichotomy&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

53 E. J. R. David, Sumie Okazaki and Nancy Abelmann, "Colonialism and Psychology of Culture," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 2/1 (2008): 91.

54 Pattberg, *The East-West Dichotomy*.

55 Said, *Orientalism*, 39.

56 Said, introduction to *Orientalism*, 2.

57 Said, introduction to *Orientalism*, 2.

The otherness, real or imagined, and its exploration comprises a bulk of Han's work, be it concerning Anne's self-perception and re-definition upon entering Asia, or concerning cultural and socio-political issues on a macroscopic scale observed by the author herself during her life. To be specific, the East-West dichotomy dissected by Han in critical tone applies to art, religion, economy, politics, technology, and institutional and interpersonal relationships, as shall be illustrated.

Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Racism

With the image or reality of the East-West dichotomy, a number of discourses appeared respecting cultures and the clashes and exchanges between them. These are Orientalism, to which the majority of this section is dedicated, and, concurrent rather than simply reactionary to it, Occidentalism. The two terms are connected in meaning and symbolize a way of thinking in which Eastern (Oriental) and Western (Occidental) civilizations portray and represent each other.⁵⁸ To explain, two excerpts documenting Orientalist discourses can be offered, perceived by Anne:

“... I find the foreign colony here does not get round to knowing the real Nepalese, the true values of Nepalese life ...” Eudora enlarged on this theme; she felt that she alone had penetrated to the hearts of Asians; to begin with, she had always had the right political approach. “Even in London my flat used to be crowded with those darling Asian students ... I made friends with so many people who later went back to help their countries become independent. I feel in a very small way I've helped them to find themselves. D'you know what some of them used to call me? Mother Asia ...”⁵⁹

The conversation took the familiar competitive flavour which such conversations have at gatherings of tourists, foreign correspondents, and would be experts on the Far East ...⁶⁰

Both quotes deal with Orientalism in a way which not only explain the term, but it also illuminates the wrongness in assuming that Westerners have that right they believe in to faithfully and without ego depict the East.

Emphasized should be that neither Orientalism nor Occidentalism is inherently better or more correct than the other because, fundamentally, each works with generalized notions, convictions, and at times prejudices regarding something unknown. In essence, Orientalism and Occidentalism correspond in the sureness in which definitions and representations of the Orient/Occident are assigned and asserted, when instead the peoples belonging to either Orient or Occident should be the ones to define and represent themselves.

58 Said, introduction to *Orientalism*, 10.

59 Han, *The Mountain*, 240.

60 Han, *The Mountain*, 144.

An exchange between two Europeans provides a graphic illustration of the damage Orientalist practices, orchestrated for the purpose of monetary gain and objectification of “Oriental women,” do:

“... I can assure you that there are no naked dances in Nepal.”
“But *zis monsieur* says there are.” *Zis monsieur* was ... a self-promoted guide and eagerly sought by the tourists ... organizing ‘dances’ with prostitutes (whom he called temple virgins) doing a kind of Egyptian belly wobble, which was new to Khatmandu.⁶¹

As Said explains, besides fantasies and fetishization, “Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it ... ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,”⁶² as opposed to Occidentalism, which does not have the (colonial) base of enforcing its power over the Occident. It is logical, then, that Orientalism, save for white fantasies (“Nepal, the land of Gods. You should go there, madame. There it is still Shangri-la.”⁶³) also plays a crucial role in Han’s novel when consulting postcolonies and the countries now influenced by British neocolonialism.

Incidentally, one cannot talk about Orientalism and Occidentalism without being aware of racism, for each discourse comprises of ideas which, because they are based on preconceptions and prejudices, generalize the whole race, and are thus deeply racist. It is above all Orientalism in which racist notions are felt, as Orientalism has always capitalized on the notion that Westerners must be superior to Easterners, and therefore must dominate them for their own good.⁶⁴ When discussing racism in connection to Orientalism, it must be recognized that, unlike Occidental preconceptions and prejudices, this branch of racism (which is, in brief, both an ideology and behaviour,⁶⁵ i.e. an ideology of inferiority of a certain race and the subsequent behaviour towards the respective race) is institutional, as it proceeds from the position of power.

Institutional racism is in sum defined as “any policy, practice, economic structure, or political structure that places minority groups at disadvantage in relation to the white community.”⁶⁶ Elaborated should be that where colonialism is concerned, it is not a minority in the quantitative sense who is being discriminated against, though the definitions still applies: The white people benefit at the expense of non-white peoples due to structures they have set up.

61 Han, *The Mountain*, 286.

62 Said, introduction to *Orientalism*, 3.

63 Han, *The Mountain*, 43.

64 Said, introduction to *Orientalism*, 7.

65 Tzvetan Todorov, “Race and Racism,” trans. Catherine Porter, in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, ed. Les Back and John Solomos (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2001), 64.

66 Shawn Benjamin, “Tracing the Development of Institutional Racism,” *The Core Journal* 21 (2012): 156.

Not the opposite of institutional racism but a sort of complement to it, interpersonal racism is a form of racism where it is an individual, not the whole society with its possibilities of systemic oppression, who discriminates against a member of a minority (a member of a different race). To contextualize:

“... Even now I remember Isobel and a few others, at night in the dormitory, sticking out their tongues at me and dancing round my bed chanting: ‘You’re a bastard, you’re an ugly little yellow bastard.’”⁶⁷

As seen above, Han’s recreation of interpersonal racism creates a joint with institutional racism, as it relates mainly to the protagonists’ memories of childhood spent in “an expensive school,” administered by British Christians, where she was “always made to feel ashamed.”⁶⁸ There, the racism Anne experienced was of both kind due to obvious reasons.

Concluded can be that, as to Orientalism and racism, Han focuses on white supremacy, white tourism, white fantasies and fetishization of the natives, especially of Asian women, and the “expert syndrome,” an Orientalist practice of those Westerners who claim to know everything about the East, including Eastern customs, art, religion, and even mindset of the peoples.

Chineseness

Throughout the entirety of the novel, Anne, the protagonist, refers to herself in terms of the Western “us,” adopting Britishness, though not uncritically. Very rarely does she point to her British acquaintances as “them,” unless she employs the word as a personal pronoun in reference to a smaller and particular group. Yet she is also very aware of her Eurasian origins, specifically her Chinese roots, reminiscing of her childhood in Shanghai. At the same time, even when she begins to show alignment to what is Asian rather than what is European, she never presumes to be anything else than an appreciative visitor in Nepal and India – for she finds it “humbling” that she who “comes from elsewhere should now be here ... admitted,”⁶⁹ – which is also why it is Chineseness in particular which is the next subject to be considered in this paper, and not for example Nepaleseness. However, Chineseness is analyzed here as a set of characteristics rather than an identity, since Han remarks on it precisely in the context of typical personality traits, not delving into other dimensions of Chineseness.

To elaborate, Chineseness is, according to Oscar Chiang, a way of thinking as well as a cultural trait rather than physical appearance.⁷⁰ Chiang lists for instance “an intellectual sense of superiority” and

67 Han, *The Mountain*, 222.

68 Han, *The Mountain*, 222.

69 Han, *The Mountain*, 133.

70 Oscar Chiang, “On Chineseness,” *Chinese American Forum* 4 (1987): 21.

“individualistic and self-centered” orientation to specify his interpretation, meaning that people who claim Chineseness are more likely to “excel in whatever they may be doing, but collectively, they often fail to achieve harmony among themselves.”⁷¹ In compliance with the definition, Anne’s description as a silent and solitary person (with her “long silences” and “a quaint way of articulating each word, exactly, making even the punctuation felt, as if she were typing, and thus establishing a distance”⁷²), crippled with fear of failure as a writer, can suffice to affirm these traits as prototypical. For instance, the protagonist’s ambitions as an artist and her hyper-awareness of her writer’s block are evident in the excerpt where she discusses her work with an acquaintance of hers:

“I didn’t mean to hurt you, Anne.”

“You haven’t. It’s just that I know I can’t write.”

“Oh nonsense, Anne, your book...”

“That was six years ago. I’ve done nothing but magazine articles since then.”⁷³

Not only this illustrates a sort of over-achieving tendency of the protagonist to render anything less than a fully-fledged book as unimportant and so not a contribution worthy of notice and praise but also the protagonist’s anxiety at possibly not being able to excel ever again when it comes to her career.

Additionally, upon meeting another Chinese character, Anne remarks: “I see that Dearest’s Chinese mentality, practical, intelligent, gifted, is scornful of the less endowed.”⁷⁴ It shows the protagonist’s knowledge, or at least perception, of Chineseness, which in turn shows Han’s consciousness of it. (The link between Han and the heroine is to always be remembered.) Moreover, while still contemplating the same character, a girl named Dearest, her hunger for knowledge is pointed out, as well as her “owlish peace.”⁷⁵ Both attributes make Dearest similar to the protagonist, who is eager to learn about and, more importantly, from the Nepalese and whose most highlighted traits are her taciturnity and composure, often depicted as clashing with her British companions.

Thus, Han’s consciousness of what is Chinese can be easily deduced and discerned when dealing with ethnically Chinese fictional characters, seeing she assigns them personalities and mentalities she supposes, from own experience, to be typically Chinese. Also, although the heroine never specifically claims Chinese identity, her overall characterization resembles Han’s ideas of mental Chineseness.

71 Chiang, “On Chineseness,” 21.

72 Han, *The Mountain*, 36.

73 Han, *The Mountain*, 22.

74 Han, *The Mountain*, 138.

75 Han, *The Mountain*, 138.

Britishness

As has already been established, during her life Han acquired British citizenship, which is perhaps why, despite her lack of ethnic ties to Britain, Han decided to introduce her protagonist as English. Cultural ties and cultural identity are to be consulted, then, in terms of British influence over Han and her writing.

A distinction shall be foreshadowed between Britishness and four cultural and national spheres belonging to the collective term due to Britain's "defined boundaries:"⁷⁶ Englishness, Scottishness, Irishness, and Welshness. Since Han primarily discusses Englishness, so does this paper; however, the term Britishness is introduced prior to such specification.

Theories often associate the rise of a distinguished sense of Britishness and British national and cultural sentiment with a reaction to a certain "Other"⁷⁷ before a more pluralistic approach was adopted,⁷⁸ be it civilizations colonized by Britain or other countries within the UK. Relatedly, an already mentioned Western colonial and Orientalist tendency to claim difference from East and, according to West, superiority over the colonized can be alluded to again. Han finished her novel in the period when this was true about the British, which is why she associates conceit, epitomized in the novel by characters convinced of their role of a "heroic conqueror, humane judge, and civilizing agent,"⁷⁹ with British ex-colonizers and missionaries as well as tourists.

Still, during the Second World War national sentiments in Britain were scarce, gravitating instead to patriotism,⁸⁰ as George Orwell writes in his essay. How has then Britishness develop, and what does British identity signify? And yet more specifically, how does the protagonist of Han's novel declare her Britishness (Englishness)?

In actuality, according to John Brannigan, it was appearing victorious from the war which "made a deep and lasting impression on British culture"⁸¹ and identity-forming because it "placed Britain on the side of moral righteousness, in contrast to the bitter and grubby roles Britain had played and continued to play after the war in its colonies."⁸² Brannigan further argues the victory exaggerated the saviour mentality among the British; simultaneously, problems such as divisive social classes, disparity among them, and poverty were disregarded under the pretense of "national unity."⁸³ The post-war situation thus marks the rise of national feelings in the era, in parallel shaping

76 Mike Storry and Peter Childs, *British Cultural Identities* (Tokyo: Tuttle-Mori Agency, 1999), 7.

77 Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," *The Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992): 311.

78 Jon Stratton and Ien Ang, "On the Impossibility of a Global Cultural Studies," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. Kuan Hsing-Chen and David Morley (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 381.

79 Colley, "Britishness and Otherness," 323.

80 George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn* (Penguin Books, 1941), 35.

81 John Brannigan, "Twentieth Century, 1939-2004," in *English Literature in Context*, ed. Paul Poplawski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 602.

82 Brannigan, "Twentieth Century," 602.

83 Brannigan, "Twentieth Century," 602-603.

the contemporary idea of Britishness. Up to this point, Britishness as perceived by Han echoes these British attitudes of the time: convinced of their right and their exceptionality from others, and ignorant of their own problems and the problems they have caused elsewhere.

Specifically, it is two fictional British characters prominent in the book who represent the 1950s attitudes in flesh: the protagonist's husband, "employed for fifteen years of administratorship in a colony now become self-governing,"⁸⁴ and her former schoolmate from the mission school in Shanghai, "daughter of missionaries and Superintendent of the Girl's Institute in Khatmandu."⁸⁵ Firstly, an account on the husband, John, and his career and family is offered:

"What's the husband like?"

"Quite all right. What they English call a decent chap. I think an early-retired colonial civil servant. The flat belongs to his brother who, John gives me to understand, is a baronet or something, living on an estate in Surrey ... John doesn't do anything except get his pension, which I feel isn't very big. He is devoted to Anne, in the English manner, tries to catch her attention, talks loudly, listens to his own voice ... and it all falls flat because she is away dreaming, and doesn't look at him or talk to him."⁸⁶

Before an analysis is attempted, it should be noted the dialogue takes place between two European men and, apart from the fact they solidify in their description the general overview of what was perceived as British at the time in their conversation about John and his situation, they also reinforce the removedness, otherness, and individuality of Anne and her Chineseness in the process, perpetuating the notion that while the husband is English to the core, the protagonist behaves in a way which alienates her from the Westerners: Anne, influenced by British culture and claiming British identity, still possesses Chinese traits. After all, the premise of dual and multiple identities, as well as the discord between how society sees a person and how the person sees themselves, have already been established. From that short exchange quoted above, what is visible is Han's consciousness of the duality, or multiplicity, and arbitrariness of the concept of identity and clashing cultures, making her writing many-faceted and complex.

In another instance, the husband is depicted bargaining with an Indian fortune-teller, treating the man's livelihood like a quaint form of entertainment and a way of asserting his own importance:

"Twenty rupees, did you say twenty, master? Oh that is too much, too much." With the replete, derisive bonhomie often employed in the last days of colonial administration, John parleyed with the Sikh, happy because ... being called 'sar ...'⁸⁷

84 Han, *The Mountain*, 13.

85 Han, *The Mountain*, 33.

86 Han, *The Mountain*, 25.

87 Han, *The Mountain*, 15-16.

However, to return to the point, the link between post-war, postcolonial attitudes towards Britishness, or rather the attitude of the British towards the “Others,” which has first shaped the very notion of Britishness, is seen clearly in Han’s storytelling and choice of words. What stands out is the husband’s indulgence in memories of his great past, his self-importance, and arrogance and joviality when dealing with the natives from postcolonies. Peculiar, too, is the off-hand remark about John’s brother, the mysterious baronet, a figure representative of the class-ridden, pastoral past Britain. Preceding and concurrent with the process of decolonization, mass immigration, growing consumerism, and the rise of pop culture, all of which later changed the homogeneity of Britishness and the old-fashioned conception of it, the accounts given of each brother could provide a perfect prototype but also a perfect parody of an Englishman of that time; indeed, even today such characters would be recognizable as typically English.

Similarly, of Isobel, the former schoolmate of Anne’s, are given accounts more fitting into times of past glories, the first impression remarked by John and the second by Anne:

To John, Isobel looked capable, solid, and sensible. The kind one met in the colonies, in social welfare departments, matrons in charge of hospitals.⁸⁸

Her frame was larger than I remembered, a bulk achieved and permanent, imposing and imperious, straight and firm and solid in brown, with the Nepalese so small in homespun grey about her; Boadicea with her arms crossed and the wind plastering her dress upon her with an armour sheen.⁸⁹

While the husband’s description of Isobel is that of an Englishman recognizing a fellow citizen belonging to the former Empire, noteworthy is the protagonist’s likening of Isobel to a figure from British history because she opts automatically for the simile, conveying two things at once. Firstly, Isobel’s character is delineated and her Britishness asserted, at least from outside. And secondly, the protagonist’s knowledge of British history appears deep and overreaching colonial times, and her association (Boadicea) within the British historical and cultural framework seems quick and authentic. A reader may thus gain a better understanding of why Anne is an “English girl” – or *also* an English girl, which does not negate her inherent Chineseness.

Turning back to the novel, in other instances it is appearance, personality traits, and arts which are referred to as idiosyncratic of Britain and the British. Han talks of “dogmatic and certain”⁹⁰ people

88 Han, *The Mountain*, 37.

89 Han, *The Mountain*, 45.

90 Han, *The Mountain*, 46.

with “a sense of their own importance”⁹¹ and of “prosperous Edwardian gentlemen;”⁹² of interiors “non-descript as any living room in England”⁹³ and furniture “restful and darkly and quiet and very English;”⁹⁴ of literature which has the “extraordinary, breezy, slangy, oh-so-jolly style flavoured by modern muscular ex-China missionary Christianity;”⁹⁵ and most importantly, Han writes of “prudery, Kinsey and Freud, and all those other unhappy and lugubrious products of the Teutonic strain in us Anglo-Saxons”⁹⁶ whose work in postcolonies “appears noble, unselfish,” but is only “a greater selfishness, the satisfaction of our spiritual pride in doing something for lesser mortals.”⁹⁷ Han encapsulates English culture and mindset in these brusque, not uncritical remarks, leaving it afterwards to readers to create for themselves the picture of those certain, prudish, and self-elevated people to whom she at the same time proclaims to belong, speaking thus self-critically from her own experience.

In many aspects, Han’s accounts of the British correlate with Orwell’s; he, too, writes of hypocrisy about the realities of the Empire and privateness,⁹⁸ which can be linked to “noble unselfishness” and “prudery.” Orwell also lists gentleness and morals,⁹⁹ attributes which, while not uniformly rejected by Han, are nevertheless challenged by her because, more often than not, that gentleness and morality only turn out as authentic on a personal scale. For example, upon encountering a Nepalese woman with a sick child, it as a British missionary, Geography (who, unsurprisingly, teaches Geography), who urges the mother to visit a doctor despite a lack of success to persuade her:

Geography, defeated, stood up. Her lips were trembling, she seemed on the verge of tears. Her feet were in sandals, there was a large bunion on the joint of each big toe. It must hurt her to walk. And now Anne was ashamed of herself. She’s mocked, scorned Geography, felt she was vulgar and narrow-minded, yet it was she, with her aching feet, who had tried to do something for the baby. It was she, and people like her, who would one day convince other mothers not to let their children go blind.¹⁰⁰

That “extreme gentleness”¹⁰¹ that Orwell proposes is therefore mirrored in Han’s overview of Britishness, proving her opinion on her fellow citizens is neither biased nor cursory. Privateness, too, is alluded to by Han, this time in contrast to Asian perception of it:

91 Han, *The Mountain*, 147.

92 Han, *The Mountain*, 67.

93 Han, *The Mountain*, 47.

94 Han, *The Mountain*, 82.

95 Han, *The Mountain*, 309.

96 Han, *The Mountain*, 206.

97 Han, *The Mountain*, 310.

98 Orwell, *The Lion*, 39.

99 Orwell, *The Lion*, 41, 44.

100 Han, *The Mountain*, 265.

101 Orwell, *The Lion*, 41.

I remembered that Asian conception of privacy is not ours. It is an old misunderstanding of ours to think that what is private does not belong to the community.¹⁰²

Naturally, too, since colonialism and its effects is one of the focal points of this paper, cultural exchange in form of vigorous tea-drinking should also be mentioned as something accepted by the British and now seen as typically theirs, for in the majority of scenes in which Westerners encounter each other, tea-parties serve as a reason and a way to socialize.

All in all, the collective concept of Britishness has met its turning point after the fall of the Empire and has been altered by post-war attitudes. On the one hand, the population of Britain was unified due to the won war, appearing heroic and noble, reminiscing, however, of past glories and turning a blind eye to the crushing impact of colonialism which must have been felt in former British dependencies. On the other hand, despite the surge of British nationalistic sentiments in the decade, this unification against the “Other” has never erased the four distinct British identities. Moreover, while the typical English person as described by Han (solid, sensible, tea-loving, private, and very gentle, yet self-important, derisively jovial, and hypocritical of their present, immersed instead in memories of previous successes) fits the overall mood of that time, as supported by Orwell and Brannigan.

3 Britain in 1950s

To put the concepts of clashing cultures and of one’s ethnic and cultural identity to perspective, the period in which the subject novel was written is outlined and approached historically, politically, and socially in this chapter. Firstly, it is necessary to define the status of postcolonial Britain in the 1950s and, equally important, to explain the notion of neocolonialism as a practice of continually upheld influence on and dominance over the newly liberated areas; secondly, to introduce the then contemporary literary ideas of postcolonial writing; and lastly, to focus on immigration.

Postcolonial Britain

Beginning *en masse* in the late 1940s, the process of decolonization would extend over the several succeeding decades. Patterned on the gradual gaining of independence of British colonies located in South Asia was the decolonization of colonies located in Africa during the 1940s and 1950s, respectively.¹⁰³ Predating and concurrent with the publication of Han’s novel was thus this

¹⁰²Han, *The Mountain*, 314.

¹⁰³Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007), 191.

“postcolonial” state of affair in which the post-war Britain, a colonizer of three hundred years, and its former colonies found themselves.

The Second World War won and over and its aftermath survived because of economic dependence of Britain on the United States,¹⁰⁴ Britain had to prioritize when it came to finances. Was the independence of British colonies granted, or achieved, then? On British side, the impact of the Second World War was felt, lessening its power and reassessing its place in this new reality,¹⁰⁵ but it was not war alone which made the colonies impossible to keep. South Asian colonies in particular were becoming unsustainable not only financially but ideologically. The idea of anti-colonial nationalism, a form of nationalism criticizing the foreign governance of a previously autonomous subject, had already risen to stimulate the need to decolonize.¹⁰⁶ To put it frankly, it all came down to circumstances where Britain and its loss of power was concerned.

It would be a simplification, certainly, to state that the intricate process of decolonization was caused by the two reasons alone. As Philippa Levine suggests, “like colonialism, decolonization too was a global phenomenon.”¹⁰⁷ She further lists shifted alliances, competition, and change in economic structures as the contributing factors to Britain’s ultimate loss of political power and its reputation of an all-embracing empire. And yet, while it would be an inadequate approach to treat decolonization as a process completely removed from international interventions and other conditions, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized must be considered a focal point of this chapter; a limited point of view in a general sense, perhaps, but of paramount importance in the novel.

The system of governance built on exploitation of colonies partially over and the economically depressed Britain now recovering owing to the United States’ aid, an endeavour to somehow retain power over and “the ability to go on extracting profit from formerly colonized areas”¹⁰⁸ still occupied Britain. Such strive to stay politically and otherwise involved in the affairs of liberated territories in Asia, albeit indirectly (and directly in others, e.g. Hong Kong), gave origins to a term whose meaning in theory and impact in practice Han records in *The Mountain is Young* – neocolonialism.

The term neocolonialism defines and observes the objective to preserve political, cultural, and economic power over former colonies (or simply less developed countries) via indirect influence

104Brannigan, “Twentieth Century,” 603.

105Ronald Carter and John McRae, *The Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland* (London: Routledge, 1997), 447.

106Levine, *The British Empire*, 168.

107Levine, *The British Empire*, 191.

108Peter Childs and R. J. Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (London: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1997), 5.

and control. As such, neocolonialism should be understood as a continuation of and companion to rather than the counterpart of colonialism, for one must not forget that the two were concurrent at that time: colonies were not liberated all at once. “It is, ironically, in this conspicuously neocolonial global environment that the countervailing term ‘postcolonial’ is achieving widespread currency,”¹⁰⁹ comments Graham Huggan aptly. The quote affirms the affinity between the two expressions.

In 1950s, British relationships with countries relevant to the subject novel (Nepal, India, China, yet also e.g. Tibet) were, according to Han, of neocolonial but also of distinctly competitive type. Where India is concerned, Han describes the British-Indian relationship intricately. The British are still present and powerful in their former colony, and especially impoverished natives seem to cater to them (e.g. when John encounters the fortune teller). However, India, a former colonizer of Nepal, is shown as having similar power over Nepal to that that Britain has over India, which renders India Britain’s rival in gaining influence there. Comparably, China poses as a competitor (this statement is illustrated further below in connection to the comparison of Eastern/Western aid to Nepal) politically and economically despite the fact that partially, it is still a colony. Nepal and Tibet, then, symbolize new territories for Britain to explore, re-shape, and govern. Ironically, it is Britain’s former and current colonies which partially obscure its neocolonial reach.

Clearly, Han alludes to neocolonialism repeatedly. In her novel, it primarily takes the form of Western industrialization re-shaping Nepal and depriving the country of its agency, leaving little to no opportunity for the native Nepalese to employ their own people and use their own resources to carry out their own project. Where neocolonialism perpetrated by the British is concerned, Han focuses mainly on missionaryism. Universally, Western (including American) as well as Eastern (Indian) neocolonial impact demonstrated in the book comprises of various aid programs. To be specific, Han documents the construction of power plants (“They’re installing a brand new electric plant, Diesel run, for the Coronation.”¹¹⁰), roads (“A road to India. Everything has to come to Nepal through India.”¹¹¹), and hospitals.

Regarding aid programs, Han takes a considerably more positive stand for foreign help which comes from within Asia, recognizing especially Indian and Chinese help, as follows from a dialogue between Unni, an Indian-Nepali engineer, and Anne:

“... Aid, as it is called, is often not suited in style and scope to the country for which it is aimed. Our friends the Americans are the worst offenders in that respect: they build a marvellously equipped hospital, and then leave

109Graham Huggan, “The Neocolonialism of Postcolonialism: A Cautionary Note,” *Links & Letters* 4 (1997): 20.

110Han, *The Mountain*, 48.

111Han, *The Mountain*, 47.

it to fend for itself, and of course it goes to bits in no time ... then they're surprised that the countries they help are not a bit grateful."

"The Chinese?"

"Oh, they will come, but they're not really competing, though the Americans always feel jittery about them. ... They've build some good roads in Tibet, and they're a serious-minded people. But they have enough on their hands. So far India has done most to help this country ..."¹¹²

Already the contrast between Western and Eastern approach is obvious, Eastern efforts being evaluated as more considerate and efficient. American and British endeavours to help, conversely, could not be more unlike what the Nepalese expect from this progress, since they do not have Nepal in mind; instead, they still strive to remodel it into "the fountain of Western culture."¹¹³

Connected with neocolonialism, it is the expansive Westernization of Asian countries that also manifests itself in the novel. According to Han, in 1950s "progress" flowed from Britain and America to India and from India to Nepal: food, cars, cigarettes and fashion items were being imported along with modern technology.

Curiously, while the British sought to modernize Nepal, the loss of local traditions whose labour and products could potentially be exploited was at the same time seen as detrimental:

And Isobel now bemoaned the lack of skilled handiwork: "It's all dying out, all these people want now is machines, progress."

"Well," said Anne, almost shouting above the noise of the jeep, "isn't that what we're bringing them, progress?" But the other two did not hear. Anne wanted to say: this abeyance of taste, sudden ignorance of beauty, is a temporary disarray, an alienated sense, not permanent token of ineptitude. And we've had the same aberrations; look at the Victoriana in the Ranas' palaces, that was *us*, fifty years ago.¹¹⁴

In the excerpt, Han refers back to British colonization and Westernization of India; simultaneously, she hints at the growing Western influence over traditional Nepalese industries, bringing up a more recent issue in the process. The most significant idea, however, carries Han's certainty that Asia, just like the mountains immortalized in the title of the novel, is "young and active ... still moving about,"¹¹⁵ and will inevitably reclaim what is hers; it will adapt, perhaps, but on its own terms.

Other cases of British reach relate to architecture, be it constructions of new buildings all across Nepal or reconstructions of Nepalese historic sights:

112Han, *The Mountain*, 114-115.

113Han, *The Mountain*, 148.

114Han, *The Mountain*, 101-102.

115Han, *The Mountain*, 114.

Here and there were modern bungalows with gardens, built in the last six years: hideous, whitewashed, utilitarian. ... Everywhere in Asia people were losing their sense of beauty ...¹¹⁶

This was an edifice of white stucco and indeterminate “Western” architecture ... The Durbar Hall, in its whitewashed, Calvinistic ugliness ...¹¹⁷

It can be concluded that for Han, neocolonialism and gradual attempts at Westernization were felt strongly in the postcolonial 1950s, represented by a metaphorical extended hand of Western countries trying to grasp and regain control culturally, economically, and politically over former dependencies. Han furthermore portrays a struggling Britain that cannot always compete with America and has now to compete with India and China; in turn, Han elucidates the futility of American as well as British manner in aiding Nepal. Ultimately, while the general tone of the novel is conscious even of colonialism which took place within Asian countries, Han nevertheless documents Asian assistance to Nepal as more fruitful and, above all, more suited for Nepalese mentality of the time, their resources, and needs.

Postcolonial Literature

Unlike initial political and social responses to the victory in the Second World War, assisting in maintaining positive attitudes and a complimentary self-perception of the British, post-war and postcolonial literature is characterized by the “lack of heroic representation,” presenting the conflict as “a pointless, dishonourable farce.”¹¹⁸ In poetry, especially, disillusionment was felt.¹¹⁹ ¹²⁰An utter reversal, then, when faced with general artificial attitudes and beliefs in own nobleness through which a face-saving act was performed after the war and decolonization.

This shift towards shedding all pretenses, saviourism, and supremacy is of course materialized in Han’s work, though usually from her point of view. She remains adamant about evoking the mainstream mood: missionaryism, neocolonialism, and institutional as well as interpersonal racism, as has been proven. However, at the same time no shortage of humane approach, cultural appreciation, and self-honesty in facing past faults and crimes could possibly be discovered.

On that note, Anne’s sentiments upon arriving to Nepal with those of John and Isobel can be juxtaposed. While Anne expresses affinity and appreciation of the place, John and Isobel remain the walking epitomes of neocolonialism: their internalized racism, religious intolerance, and saviourism all summarized by Han as unchanging:

¹¹⁶Han, *The Mountain*, 101.

¹¹⁷Han, *The Mountain*, 319.

¹¹⁸Brannigan, “Twentieth Century,” 620.

¹¹⁹Carter and McRae, *History of Literature*, 469.

¹²⁰Brannigan, *Twentieth Century*, 618-619.

For Isobel and John will keep their perspective of feeling and language, they are in strong grip of themselves, their souls their own, moulded strongly and stonily, while I just lose myself, I *become* elsewhere, altered by them, myself ...¹²¹

Anne's metamorphosis was different. She felt exalted, but only as part of the general ecstasy of the Valley, an integration of herself with all around her.¹²²

At that point in the novel, the protagonist remains subjective, spiritual; this personal approach is later complemented by a more politically and culturally cognizant movement of thinking, repentant, self-aware, and thus pertaining the British literature of the time. For instance, when contemplating Nepalese art and faith, Anne acknowledges a shift towards religious tolerance in her acquaintance, a Catholic priest who, unlike some Christians from the mission, does not demonstrate prejudice against the many-faced gods of Nepal. The contrast between a progress of thinking in the British in Nepal and the lack of it can be compared:

I perceive why we, the Christians, are so disliked. We exhibit an extraordinary grossness and vulgarity about other people's religion. We have no respect for beliefs not ours. In the coarsest, rudest way, we speak of others gods with contempt, derision, utter lack of courtesy. Here Father MacCullough scores ... But here at the Girls' Institute we have intolerance and narrowness ...¹²³

Another white character professes that she disapproves "totally, absolutely, of imperialism" and its effect, e.g. the ability of the colonizer to execute their power over the colonized, making them "fight colonial wars."¹²⁴ The same character is then seen wearing a sari¹²⁵ to express cultural appreciation. Just as importantly, on a personal as well as political scale, postcolonial affairs and attitudes are summarized in another quote from the book, combining the fact that a drastic change is yet to come, but come it must: "We don't seem to bother enough about what Asians think and feel."¹²⁶ These statement goes hand in hand with Han's tone: critical but provoking future possibilities.

In a word, Han prophesizes changes rather than portrays it; her accounts of shifting attitudes are reluctant and, in majority of instances, remain in agreement with the mainstream mood of the 1950s in Britain. As such, her novel bares the regresiveness of the British who believe in their heroism and nobleness, yet behave anything but heroically and nobly. In historical, political, and literary context of the time, Han could then be classified as a typical postcolonial writer and critic.

121Han, *The Mountain*, 87.

122Han, *The Mountain*, 150.

123Han, *The Mountain*, 309.

124Han, *The Mountain*, 96.

125Han, *The Mountain*, 377.

126Han, *The Mountain*, 315.

The Immigrant Issue

Han does not write about immigration, but she writes about an immigrant, which is why the issue of immigration deserves to be mentioned. By the 1950s, Han had previously studied in Britain, and has now lived there with her husband permanently as a citizen. Therefore, it is especially the sense of rootlessness and the question of immigrant identity rather than the immigrant experience which is reflected in Han's novel. The ensuing paragraph elaborates on the topic of "not belonging," supplying yet another reason for Anne to be alienated from the culture she claims.

The early 1950s represented a new wave of immigration in post-war Britain from its colonies, especially labourers,¹²⁷ despite the prevalent "common ground in British political circles that migration ... needs to be controlled."¹²⁸ A suggestion can be made that while labour was valued, the people who performed it were not. Similarly, Anne is only valued for her emotional labour, her child-like attempts to please her husband which he finds quaint at most, solidifying his power rather than the relationship of the married couple. In another piece on the subject, it is proposed that the legislation to restrict in particular non-white immigration "might have been rather embarrassing for Britain as a head of the Commonwealth," knowing that "the immigration controls based on race did not conform to international laws."¹²⁹ The hypothesis corresponds with the Janus-faced attitudes of the British in 1950s already asserted by Han.

In brief, British attitudes towards non-white immigration in the post-war, postcolonial era may very well be evaluated as one of the reasons for Anne's abrupt assimilation as Han describes it. Assimilated, not integrated, Anne with her "stranger syndrome" only begins to rediscover herself in Asia. Meanwhile, the British majority stays unified against the "Other."

4 Han Suyin

The ensuing section of the thesis shortly introduces Han Suyin as a person and as a protagonist. The introduction of the prominent and prolific author, known and acclaimed in predominantly Chinese and English-speaking countries, though canonically overlooked in others, is done by outlining Han's life in several points preceding and parallel with the publication of *The Mountain is Young*, assuring thus their relevance to this paper.

As a Person and as a Protagonist

In order for Han Suyin's work to be understood, it is almost necessary to treat the author as a person and as a protagonist at the same time. After all, nowhere else can be found such great and extensive

127David Childs, *Britain Since 1945* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), 60.

128D. A. Coleman, "International Migration," *The International Migrant Review* 29 (1995): 156.

129Natálie Abrahámová, "Immigration Policy in Britain since 1962" (MS thesis, Masaryk University, 2007), 18.

record of the author's existence and experience than in her novels. The treatment of Han in the role of a self-defined character (as well as that of the writer who defines the "fictional" character) is attempted in this paper in an effort to create a link between what can be assumed due to facts from her life that Han knows and what she writes, or, to be more precise, to cast light on the link which has already been created by Han herself in her novel. As a matter of fact, parallels between Han and her protagonist can be backed up by the factual evidence of her life, making her novels probably the vastest and most reliable source of information of the author available today; while alternately, Han's life can be envisioned through her novels due to their factuality. The relationship between Han as a person and Han as a protagonist of her novel *The Mountain is Young* shall therefore be examined in this chapter.

Han Suyin was the pen name of a China-born Eurasian writer, physician, and British citizen, under which her novels were first published and which she kept from that time on. Though for this thesis the writer's pen name shall suffice, it is not for the lack of other names she possessed while alive.¹³⁰ Incidentally, the author has aptly been called "many-named,"¹³¹ equally in reference to her numerous identities, assigned or assumed, and as a subtle pun on the author's best-selling piece, *A Many-Splendoured Thing*. In actuality, the multilayered nature of Han's self, providing an ample amount of choices on the branched road to the author's self-identification, is one of the recurring key themes in her autobiographical and semi-autobiographical works.

Born in 1917, Han would witness several wars, the course and consequences of British colonization of Asian territories, the slow decline of British powers over said territories, and the yet slower recovery of these former colonies as politically, economically, and culturally independent countries. It is no wonder that Han's novels would never be apolitical, as Xuding Wang alludes in his work:

Han Suyin, personal correspondence, 2 March 1996. Han Suyin has herself remarked: "As to research on my writing, it has not been done in an academic manner for several reasons." According to her the main reason is political.¹³²

¹³⁰In *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: V. 2: Twentieth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2016), Lily Xiao Hong Lee presents Han's original name, Zhou Yuebin; in *Asian American Autobiographers: A Bio-bibliographical Critical Sourcebook* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001) by Guiyou Huang, John Jae-Nam Han states Han was christened as Matilda Rosalie Elizabeth Chou, later referred to simply as Rosalie Chou; in *Encyclopedia of China: History and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2013), Dorothy Perkins claims her real (e.g. generally used) name to be Elizabeth Comber. Han accepted the name "Comber" upon marrying her second husband, a British officer, in 1952. Other (non-academic) sources, such as electronically published obituaries, also state other variants of her name. These include "Rosalie Matilda Kuanghu Chou," "Elizabeth Kuanghu Chou," "Kuang-Hu Chou" etc.

¹³¹Emily Hahn, "A Woman Scorned," review of *A Mortal Flower*, by Han Suyin, *Saturday Review*, September 24, 1966, <http://www.unz.org/Pub/SaturdayRev-1966sep24-00038>.

¹³²Xuding Wang, "The East/West Relationship in *The Crippled Tree*," *Journal of Humanities* 4 (1997): 226.

Aside from her subjective endeavour to discover and determine her place in the world as a Eurasian person, the socio-political context of her novels cannot be ignored. As a result, Han (*as* a protagonist, or *through* her protagonist) appears in equal importance as a writer, a woman, and a wife, but also as a politically conscious critic.

Preceding her ambitions as a writer, Han had spent the first nineteen years of her life in China¹³³, where she had received her high school and pre-medical education. Han then pursued her medical studies in Brussels, which she only completed years after in London, following her brief return to China during the Japanese invasion. The Chinese, Belgian, and British-educated author became a medical doctor at last, moving yet again from one continent to another, this time to Hong Kong.¹³⁴ During this period of her life, Han also begun publishing her works.

It may be presumed, in concurrence with the time period and place, that Han's initial need for capturing the reality of "the British Hong Kong" during the Japanese invasion (1941-1945) solidified her literary aspirations and her political stance on any foreign intervention which may threaten the autonomy of a subject. Hence, Han's first non-fiction, *Destination Chungking*, was published in 1942. From her first work on, three major motifs have been repeated in Han's writing: identity, cultural clash, and, last but not least, autonomy; though it must be admitted that in each book, the experience sufficiently differs in accordance to Han's location and social position. In *The Mountain is Young*, these three motifs come together in an especially significant way. The identity of an individual, the clash of diverse cultures both experienced on a personal level and perceived on a political scale, and the question of personal and political autonomy are presented and looked at from different angles. Interweaving these together are the ideas of what is Eastern, what is Western, and how the two meet in the author's world. Until Han's death, her life-long preoccupation with both literary and non-literary (e.g. in interviews) criticism and examination of the three motifs would be steady but never stale. In many ways, her "stagnation" on the same topic would over the decades allow a definite growth: of her material on a multitude of thorough, in-depth studies of the issue of clashing cultures.

To turn to Han's bibliography, its range should be noted as it consists of novels, autobiographies, and also essays, rendering Han a prolific writer. It was not just her productivity, however, that made Han a prominent author of her time, but, above all, her presence as a mediator between what is Eastern and Western and, at the same time, as a mirror of both. The omnipresence of the comparison and contrast between, and the criticism of the relations between East and West, are constant thorough her work. In his theses on Han's documentation of the East-West dichotomy, Xuding

133Han, biography in *The Mountain*.

134Han, biography in *The Mountain*.

Wang puts emphasis on Han's "very interesting comparison between the two as well as a sharp contrast at the same time, and the exchanges and the conflicts between the two cultures,"¹³⁵ encompassing the importance and appeal of her writing.¹³⁶

With regard to the fact that Han was a person of dual ancestry, numerous names, and yet more homes, it is understandable that the East-West dichotomy in her novels, and especially in *The Mountain is Young*, is presented through the events of the outside world as well as through Han's inside world. Being Eurasian is the attribute through which Han must define herself, seeing the world will not let her forget it ("As a Eurasian, I was always fighting. I am still fighting race prejudice today."¹³⁷), and so it does not come as a surprise that the protagonist of *The Mountain is Young* is similarly defined from the beginning to the end of the novel by the same attribute, marking "being Eurasian" perhaps the only thing that remains constant in the eyes of others about the protagonist during her journey.

It has been stressed in this paper already that Han's writing is not apolitical. Nevertheless, while it would do the author disservice to let the reader assume that her work is somehow a result of one individual's biased opinion put on paper, it would be equally insufficient to assume that Han's commitment to the criticism of any form of oppression and her consciousness of it is simply shaped and moulded by her observances of the events of that time rather than experience, and therefore removed. Instead, Han captures the raw reality of life, objectively observed, and connects it with what is subjective, deep-rooted, and suffered by her person. On that score, the political and personal themes Han writes can be logically traced as coming from two sources: institutional and interpersonal oppression.

Throughout her life, Han was discriminated against because of her Eurasian roots while in China and Europe alike.¹³⁸ Interpersonal oppression is thus an experience known to her just as well as institutional oppression. In China, the writer of Hakka heritage was ostracized as a child born of an interracial marriage; in Europe, she was discriminated against because of her Asian ancestry. Even among her own, Han was a minority; always a minority. Not being able to belong is therefore a topic often touched upon in her narrative. Furthermore, Han's encounters with racism and

135Wang, introduction to "The East/West Relationship."

136Xuding Wang, "Of Bridge Construction: A Critical Study of Han Suyin's Historical and Autobiographical Writing" (PhD diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1996).

137Amy Ling, "Chinese American Women Writers," in *Asian American Writers*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), accessed 27. 12. 2016, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=ePD2fK2r44kC&pg=PA80&dq=han+suyin&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjvtofi8snPAhXHL8AKHZcFA-s4ChDoAQhUMA#v=onepage&q=han%20suyin&f=false>.

138Helena Grice, *Negotiating Identities: An Introduction to Asian American Women's Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), accessed December 27, 2016, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=1pxnOLUeY7gC&pg=PA141&dq=han+suyin&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjvtofi8snPAhXHL8AKHZcFA-s4ChDoAQgvMAM#v=onepage&q=han%20suyin&f=false>.

discrimination are not inclusively portrayed in her books, leaving the reader wonder what is fiction and what is not, but her experience is evidenced in other sources. Han's having to face discrimination by the Chinese is seconded by Irene Cheng:

During the 1930s in China, her husband Pao had insisted in front of his friends that Han was a pure Chinese. His intense race-consciousness, Han believes, was the result of the humiliating 'imprint of the West in Asia.'¹³⁹

Alluding to the racism suffered at the hands of her first husband who was Chinese, and at the same time recording the racism suffered at the hands of her second husband who was British, Han conveys the feeling of not being good enough in *The Mountain is Young*. Depicting an interracial marriage which is falling apart, Han outlines the protagonist's situation as a Eurasian among the Asian and the European who voice the ideas of institutional racism, internalized by them, through interpersonal relations. The confession Han makes in the novel serves as a juxtaposition in which comparison rather than contrast is asserted, for although it may be different people of different races who react to Han's protagonist, the reaction always stays the same.

A certain sense of rootlessness, as well as that of yearning for a state of unconditional belonging, can be therefore discerned in Han's introspective writing. This is particularly true in *The Mountain is Young*, in which Han documents her diplomatic visit in Nepal during the coronation of the then king. Here she appears, a stranger again, in her native continent, yet in a different nation. Her strangeness to the place can be noted through the experience of the protagonist in the very beginning of the novel, where the protagonist is addressed as "meh sahib"¹⁴⁰ by a Sikh man, rendering her too white to belong. However, further in the novel it is also asserted that "she was small boned and light like a Nepalese girl,"¹⁴¹ her white-passing appearance still too little to hide that she is too Asian. The protagonist thus, similarly to Han, passes through places, scarcely belonging, behaving as a visitor, an observer, and a conscious critic of colonial and neocolonial processes, Oriental practices, and clashes of cultures.

Han died in 2012, leaving a legacy of "bridge-building" between East and West¹⁴² as well as a politically conscious body of criticism of the East-West relationship, institutional or interpersonal, where Oriental and racist practices are concerned. To this day, the message Han sends strikes a chord because of its time-transcending relevance.

139Irene Cheng, "The Old World: The Chinese Girl Behind a Eurasian Face," in *Being Eurasian: Memories Across Racial Divides*, ed. Vicky Lee (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), accessed December 27, 2016, https://books.google.cz/books?id=CWLQAQAAQBAJ&pg=PA213&dq=han+suyin+racism&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=han%20suyin%20racism&f=false.

140Han, *The Mountain*, 13.

141Han, *The Mountain*, 66.

142Wang, "Of Bridge Construction," 302.

5 The Mountain is Young

To clarify and perhaps justify the choice to label Han's novel as semi-autobiographic, it is necessary to note the classification, perhaps self-serving for the purpose of this thesis, is derived from the parallels between Han's life and some of the events she writes about. It must first be mentioned that, in fact, in the preface Han states that the contents of the novel, along with the characters, are purely fictional.¹⁴³ Taking that into consideration, this thesis does not presume to disprove of the author's own foreword and for that reason handles all of the characters as fictional, with the exception of the protagonist who has been continuously treated as Han (or a heroine modelled closely after her) and the husband. Similarly, it does not take all of the events of the novel at face value, except those which show significant parallelism between fictional and historical events, and the life and experience of Han and her heroine.

Aside from what is experienced and therefore personal for Han, the novel is historically accurate on several accounts. Firstly, it portrays India in its postcolonial state and Nepal as a former subject of the Indian Rana monarchy. Secondly, the plot is set in now democratized, sovereign countries; however, it shows India largely Westernized and Nepal in the process of Westernization not only through British and American political, economic, and cultural influences but through the progressive India as well. And finally, the novel follows events preceding, concurrent with, and subsequent to the coronation of the Nepalese king.

Incorporating thus excerpts from the subject novel, the concept of clashing cultures and, additionally, rootlessness and self-acceptance shall be illustrated specifically. At last, Han's usage of metaphors and symbolism shall be analyzed.

Identity Reflected

Anne the many-labelled: the English girl who cannot achieve mutual understanding with her husband and acquaintances, encountering racism instead; the Eurasian who is a visitor in Asia; the child who needs "someone to look after her,"¹⁴⁴ but who is "just like Mana Mani, the young mountain"¹⁴⁵ which stands sovereign and outlasts all external forces. These contradictions alone suffice to unfold the motif of rootlessness. From the moment when Anne asks "Who am I?" to the end of her journey when she leaves her husband because of whom she used to attempt integration, but achieved assimilation, discovering herself, Anne does not renounce her Britishness. However, she embraces other aspects of her identity, too, in order to finally be at home, not necessarily in Nepal, but somewhere.

¹⁴³Han, preface to *The Mountain*.

¹⁴⁴Han, *The Mountain*, 80.

¹⁴⁵Han, *The Mountain*, 306.

To become that person who is at one with Asia, independent, Anne recalls her first revolt, her refusal of the child-like role assigned to her by her British husband, saying: “I really owned myself then.”¹⁴⁶ From then on, her self-discovery and rediscovery of her autonomy become obvious. It reminds Anne of her identity and ability to self-identify. Although her identity can be invaded and questioned from the outside, it is primarily “choosing deliberately, choosing my body, choosing myself”¹⁴⁷ for Anne.

On the whole, it is again the hopeful, future-oriented sentiment which, despite the political and cultural issues Han approaches as a social critic, pervades the novel.

Clash of Cultures Reflected

Clashes of religious, artistic, political, and interpersonal kinds comprise a bulk of subjects which cannot be ignored in the novel. Han exposes deeply rooted racism, supremacist philosophies, and the general unwillingness to understand other human beings, unless with the elevated idea of own self-importance and the right to govern over them in return. Though not the only way in which two cultures meet in the novel, a clash rather than an exchange is the prevalent reality Han portrays.

To focus on racism and the scale of power it has if enabled institutionally and adopted by an individual, a comparison of Isobel’s memories with Anne’s on their years spent together in a missionary school (see also chapter Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Racism) can provide an insight into how damaging racism can be to the receiver and, at the same time, how it is shame of the should-be-noble racist (“prickled by Christian guilt”¹⁴⁸) rather than remorse which is felt, years later, by Isobel, as illustrated:

Twenty years ago. Odd, it still felt odd, hurting yet pleasant, thinking back to the school, and Anne punished, Anne behind the blackboard, standing with a cap on her head on which was written *The Devil Is In Me*.¹⁴⁹

Unsurprisingly, Isobel keeps her attitude towards Asian children (and the adults she calls children) even when she is no longer a child herself. She remains convinced of their inferiority, immorality, and dependence:

Horrid, nasty brats. All Nepalese were the same. Only *one* thing in their minds, all the time. Even the children. You had to watch those girls at the Institute like a hawk ... as if there were no such things as saving souls, and

146Han, *The Mountain*, 86.

147Han, *The Mountain*, 217.

148Han, *The Mountain*, 228.

149Han, *The Mountain*, 38.

sin, and suffering for one's own good. It was those... those frightful carvings and paintings everywhere ... Horrid, horrid things. ... "Nasty, nasty," she said aloud, her voice shaking.¹⁵⁰

Incidentally, it is art, either dedicated to gods or erotic motifs, which revolts the British, "from time to time exclaiming about the Nepalese, expressing ... inquisitive disgust at the shrines, with their lingam,"¹⁵¹ the most. Not uncommonly the typical tourist in Han's novel exclaims: "How horrible ... how can anyone worship these horrors?"¹⁵² Han specifically points out the connection the British (and Westerners in general) seem to draw between religion and eroticism, giving them another reason to render the Nepalese as immoral and in need of help, or damnation. Accordingly, the prevalent missionary discourse of the time that every Nepalese is morally corrupt and must be deprived of their agency for their own good arises from the condition, confirmed by the attitude of an Institute teacher:

"Always out playing with boys ... says they're cousins of hers. I know what she wants." Her voice became vulgar, flat. "That's what they *all* want. That's all they ever think of. Filthy I call it ... Satan won't have this one, I'll see to that ... make her take those flowers out of her hair ..."¹⁵³

Cultural clashes as presented by Han therefore do not merely depict differences of two cultures which meet, but internalized social processes and prejudices causing problems on a social scale. The girls from the Institute, especially, are being oppressed, forced into assimilation to the point where even something as innocent as flowers in one's hair must symbolize otherness and thus depravity.

Relatedly, the effort to whitewash and control the Nepalese, to dehumanize them, creates the idea that they are children, their country is "primitive" and "disorganized,"¹⁵⁴ and that the British (or otherwise Western) culture should become the dominant one in East, since the natives are "so *ignorant*, one does try to help them," but "they don't help themselves *one* little bit."¹⁵⁵ In fact, when a doctor who claims that that "happy fatalism"¹⁵⁶ of the Nepalese who may come off as earthy, "always laughing or singing or telling ribald stories,"¹⁵⁷ is caused by malnutrition and therefore light-headedness, his defence is refused ("Isobel disagreed violently, put it all down to native character, like children, no thought for the future ..."¹⁵⁸). In other cases, that perceived child-like

150Han, *The Mountain*, 34.

151Han, *The Mountain*, 54.

152Han, *The Mountain*, 54.

153Han, *The Mountain*, 136.

154Han, *The Mountain*, 37.

155Han, *The Mountain*, 36.

156Han, *The Mountain*, 207.

157Han, *The Mountain*, 50.

158Han, *The Mountain*, 50.

nature of the Nepalese, “a feckless, godless people (though one did love their childishness),”¹⁵⁹ is referred to almost fondly. However, one can immediately apprehend that neither point of view is exactly positive, each taking autonomy, or at least a part of it, from the Nepalese.

In conclusion, Han writes of cultural clashes at length, mostly in form of in-depth social commentaries, illuminating issues such as racism and white supremacy, religious intolerance, and, as discussed in previous chapters, Orientalism, neocolonialism, and Westernization. While thus in other contexts the right expressions to use for two civilizations encountering each other would be cultural exchange and acculturation, what Han mostly writes about is cultural conflict, marginalization, and assimilation. She does so in respect to past and present conflicts between East and West, transcending colonial times and continuing during the first years of the postcolonial period.

Metaphors

Briefly, because Han’s message has been continuously referred to in the thesis by explaining the protagonist’s journey to self-discovery and hinting at the growing self-reliance amongst Eastern countries, the imagery of the novel shall be discussed as the final point of this paper.

Established has been that Anne rejects her dependence on her husband, finally “owning herself.” Similarly, newly autonomous Asian countries reject their dependence on Britain (though they are not unaltered by the country and, wholly, by West). Together, Anne and Asia reject the attribute “child-like.” Instead, they now bear a striking resemblance to the acclaimed Nepalese mountains, young and active, still moving about, and impossible to dominate.

For a mountain, such a solid and lasting concept, to combine adjectives like “young” and “active” is peculiar, but it has a meaning for Han. Where trying to move a mountain is laughable, taming it is impossible, and treading it is a “sacrilege,”¹⁶⁰ Han works with the same analogy. Neither Nepal nor the protagonist can remain under a yoke because it is unnatural to them; because they have grown and are young now, not children anymore, yet not worn and old from being colonized, either. They are independent.

In the novel, Han appeals to humanism where there had been nothing but “manlike desecration”¹⁶¹ by means of colonialism and a sense of superiority before, documenting therefore colonialism and all it spans as the root of cultural clashes in the particular context.

159Han, *The Mountain*, 81.

160Han, *The Mountain*, 52.

161Han, *The Mountain*, 52.

Conclusion

To any reader familiar with the subject novel, it must seem as if humongous portions of it, substantial enough to have a whole bachelor's thesis dedicated to them, have been left unexplored. And, undeniably, the reader would be correct. The fact that this paper works with a mere fraction of the layered literary piece may illuminate the importance of Han as a writer, her bibliography as a whole, this novel in particular, and, last but not least, her legacy pertaining the postcolonial discourse. At the same time, realizing that merely a fragment of Han's message is covered in this thesis proves neither the author nor her works are one-dimensional. In terms of literary analysis, insight into Han's writing is thus nowhere near complete. On the contrary: For reasons already mentioned and supposed by Han to be in connection with her political stances, she remains an author disparagingly unexamined in Western contexts. One of the few significant analyses of Han's books written in English belongs to Xuding Wang, to whose contributions this paper occasionally refers. Additionally, to the knowledge of the author of this paper, no previous examination of Han and her work conducted by a Czech student does not exist. While thus not a primary aim of this work, the possibility of it serving as a source for any future exploration of Han, her novels, or her political and social critiques has been an underlying reason for the realization of this thesis.

To return to the primary objective of the paper, the portrayal of cultural clashes in Han's semi-autobiographic piece *The Mountain is Young*, the collected data and conclusions drawn from them prove the key role of the theme in the subject novel as well as the correlation between fictional storylines and non-fiction, i.e. the events which Han documents as a writer and as a critic. Set in the 1950s in post-Rana Nepal where Indian influence is still felt and Western influence is newly felt, the novel immortalizes social problems (not exclusive but typical) of the respective decade, raising awareness of them. Han depicts and compares Eastern as well as Western neocolonialism of Nepal, juxtaposes personal and political cultural clashes, touches upon missionaryism, racism, and Orientalism, and overall renders the atmosphere of the time. Incidentally, these issues could be pinpointed as idiosyncratic of Han's writing, largely because of her experience with most of them.

It is due to the link between Han's life and what she writes about that the treatment of the novel as semi-autobiographic may be permitted in this context. From the point of view of a protagonist modelled after Han, the East-West relationship in the years closely following the Second World War and decolonization is observed. Han works with the inclusion of the then sentiments of the British in the 1950s, describing characters who still believe in their own high morals and their right not only to intervene in Eastern countries but to dominate them altogether, excusing neocolonialism and

reminiscing of colonial times. The majority of the British characters Han creates thus behave in correspondence with the typical postcolonial attitude of the former Empire. To specify, Han focuses on ascribing artificial heroism and a sense of nobleness and superiority to the characters. Avoiding shallowness of narration, however, Han builds the story with deep consciousness of the wrongdoings executed in the colonial past of the fallen Empire, ascribing guilt to the protagonist, a Eurasian woman who claims Britishness, and allowing some of the minor Western characters to also grow conscious of the past and present conflicts caused by the Western intervention. Therefore, Han presents a possibility of a future where cultural exchanges and cultural appreciation replace cultural conflicts, her condition to achieving a peaceful East-West relationship being that the British begin to perceive themselves critically and give up their neocolonial influence over postcolonies and otherwise impoverished Asian countries, instead letting the peoples to aid themselves.

Already, a clash can be noted on a smaller scale. It is because of the protagonist's multiple identities that Han is able to juxtapose personal cultural clashes, seemingly insignificant because they relate "merely" to interpersonal conflicts such as racism and intolerance, with political cultural clashes, alluding to problematics which take place on a bigger scale, in this case neocolonialism and abrupt Westernization.

Firstly, interpersonal racism and religious intolerance stand out prominently in the novel regarding personal clashes, the former being experienced by the protagonist and, as supported by evidence from her life, by Han herself, and the latter being observed by Anne as a tourist. Combining personal and political, Han describes the consequences of missionarism and Asia, depicting schools where children of mixed ancestry are more susceptible to become the target of interpersonal and institutional racism. In the novel, Han presents this combination when referring to Anne's childhood. On an interpersonal level, Anne is called racial slurs by her schoolmates. On an institutional level, she is punished by white missionaries in position of power who act on their prejudices, presuming Anne to be more sinful by nature.

Secondly, political clashes as depicted in the novel relate to neocolonial practices in Nepal and Westernization. While Westernization in form of new trends, imported products, and British architecture shall not take root in Nepal according to Anne, unable to outlast what is naturally Nepalese (again, an allusion may be made to the Nepalese mountain that outlast everything and everyone), neocolonialism poses a threat because it perpetuates the attempt and ability of the British to interfere with and gain control over politically and economically weaker territories. It is especially missionarism and aid programs which are criticized and, in comparison to Asian help, evaluated as harmful, depriving the Nepalese of their autonomy, and self-serving.

Finally, Han concentrates on the clash within the heroine. Anne's Britishness and Chineseness, the former claimed and the latter manifested despite her attempts at assimilation, coexist. Because of that, Anne belongs neither to Asia nor to her husband's country. A substantial part of the paper is dedicated to the identity discourse due to the theme of rootlessness. Eventually, Anne in her identity search embraces multiple self-identifications, realizing her involvement in past and present events as a British person and her roots as an Asian. This growth and acceptance, although as an Eurasian she might still face discrimination anywhere, again represents a certain hopefulness towards Anne's future and the possibility of her finding a place to call home.

Parallelism can thus be found between fiction and non-fiction, between Anne and Han, and between the overall tone – critical but not hopeless – and the major metaphor of the book, hinting at the present state of Nepal, yet at its ability to face and outlast what is Western. Han portrays a postcolonial world where former dependencies keep struggling to deflect Western influence, especially political and that which erases or demonizes Nepalese culture. She further conveys a strong message aimed at the general infantilization of Easterners by Westerners, defying the term *children* as not applicable to the native people anymore. Instead, she likens Nepal to the mountain which is young and, as supported by the novel, “angry at all this interference.”¹⁶² Similarly, it is the protagonist's self-identification and newly found strength which allows to liken her to Nepal and to the lasting Nepalese mountains as well.

¹⁶²Han, *The Mountain*, 410.

Resumé

Předmětem této bakalářské práce je rozbor zčásti autobiografického literárního díla *The Mountain is Young* od spisovatelky Han Suyin, postkoloniální menšinové britské autorky eurasijského původu. Vybraná novela, která vznikala v druhé polovině 50. let minulého století, popisuje jak politický, tak mezilidský střet kultur mezi východními a západními zeměmi. Děj se odehrává v Asii, přesněji pak v Nepálu v roce 1956 u příležitosti korunovace tehdejšího krále, které se autorka osobně zúčastnila. Novela *The Mountain is Young* vzhledem k dobovému, kulturnímu a politickému kontextu zkoumá ústřední témata střetu kultur a hledání sebe sama v tomto střetu. Tato teze zkoumá totéž a zároveň nabízí vhled do událostí, které autorku k zachycení právě těchto témat inspirovaly, jelikož poukazuje na paralelismus mezi životem Han a dějem knihy. Teze tedy zkoumá dílo *The Mountain is Young* z následujících hledisek.

Zprvce práce primárně nahlíží na střet dvou odlišných kultur. V širokém pojetí se Han zabývá střetem mezi Východem a Západem, který je stěžejním motivem novely. Tento konflikt mezi Východem a Západem reprezentují buď střety britské a nepálské, a to kvůli zasazení děje do Nepálu, kam více a více zasahují britské vlivy, anebo střety britské a čínské, které se týkají výhradně osobních střetů s ohledem na mnohočetné aspekty autorčiny identity (a tedy i identity protagonistky, protože sdílí etnickou a kulturní identitu s Han). Sekundárně tato teze v souvislosti s konfliktem mezi Východem a Západem zmiňuje existenci kulturních střetů mezi jinými východními (například Indie) a západními (například Amerika) zeměmi a kulturami, ale okrajově se zmíní i o střetech mezi dvěma východními zeměmi a dvěma západními zeměmi. V obecném slova smyslu tudíž teze analyzuje, jak se projevují odlišnosti Východu a Západu, jak jsou vnímány a jaké mají důsledky.

V souladu s autorčíným zachycením těchto střetů mezi lidmi ze západu, ať již bývalými kolonisty nebo turisty, a lidmi z východu, kteří ve valné většině pocházejí z nedávno zrušených kolonií, britských či asijských, se teze věnuje základnímu rozlišení mezi mezilidským a politickým kulturním střetem. Prvého se týká zejména to, jak Han dokumentuje projevy interpersonálního rasismu, orientalismu, náboženské nesnášenlivosti apod. ze strany Britů vůči Asiatům v nově autonomním Nepálu, zbaveného nadvlády indické monarchie. Druhé, tedy politického kulturního střetu, se pak týká institucionální rasismus a autorčina dokumentace přetrvávajících tendencí bývalého Britského Impéria pokračovat v koloniálních praktikách.

V této práci se soustavně vytváří linka mezi Han a Anne, protagonistkou novely, které podle doložených materiálů ze života Han sdílí mnohé životní zážitky. Ty se týkají třeba právě projevů interpersonálního a institucionálního rasismu, jak je Han nebo Anne zažívají a jaký mají dopad

na utváření zejména identity Anne. V mnohých ohledech Han poukazuje na místa, kde interpersonální a institucionální rasismus působí najednou, kupříkladu v britských misionářských školách na území Asie, kde se interpersonální rasismus projevuje jako šikana spolužáků a institucionální rasismus je výsledkem jak nesnášenlivosti a diskriminace, tak pozice autority a moci britských misionářů nad svěřenými studenty. Z novely vyplývá, že takové zacházení zanechalo na protagonistce stopy a učinilo ji snadno podléhající nátlaku rasové a kulturní většiny.

Ze svědectví Han se lze dále dozvědět, že britské snahy o udržení politického vlivu a až nadvlády nad Asií, ať už nad osvobozenými koloniemi nebo obecně politicky a ekonomicky slabšími státy s nově nabytou samostatností, se v dané době projevovaly zejména neokoloniálním chováním. Nejpádňějšími projevy neokolonialismu jsou v dané novele britské křesťanské misionářství, budování misionářských škol s britským školním sborem a snaha konvertovat a převychovat „barbarské“ civilizace, které se v očích Britů chovají jako nezodpovědné a bezbožné děti, a proto potřebují pomoc. Jinými slovy Han poukazuje na všeobecné postkoloniální nálady a názory Velké Británie, bývalého (a současného) kolonizátora, který stále věří ve svou morální nadřazenost a ve své právo zasahovat do politiky a kultury národů, jež vnímá jako jiné a podřadné. Dále Han popisuje neokolonialismus jako sílu, která jde ruku v ruce s postupnou anglikanizací (popř. amerikanizací) nepálské architektury, kuchyně, módy atd.

Zadruhé se tato bakalářská práce věnuje úvodu do teorie identity, a to tak, že vztahuje tematiku identity, jejího hledání a její multidimenzionality jak k Han, autorce díla, tak k Anne, protagonistce díla, zpola fiktivní postavě, která sdílí mnoho faktorů identity a zážitků z osobního života právě s autorkou novely. Navíc zde tyto základní definice termínu „identita“ slouží k lepšímu pochopení novely, jelikož následně dochází k jejich aplikaci na tematiku střetu kultur a hledání sebe sama v tomto střetu.

K identitě přistupuje tato teze ze dvou klíčových úhlů pohledu. Analyzuje nejprve etnickou identitu, aby lépe nastínila pocit vykořeněnosti jak Han, tak Anne vzhledem k jejich eurasijským kořenům. Poté analyzuje kulturní identitu, termín, k němuž teze přistupuje jako k zaštiťujícímu celku, do kterého patří i např. etnická identita.

Etnické identitě se bakalářská práce věnuje z toho důvodu, že ponechat takové téma netknuté s ohledem na původ autorky by znamenalo nevyužít potenciál této problematiky. Přestože je zde etnická identita vyhodnocena jako něco neměnného (na rozdíl od kulturní identity, kterou lze přijmout) a souvisejícího s biologickými kořeny člověka, etnická identita Han je poměrně rozvětvená a naskýtá tudíž vhodný úvod do tvrzení, že identita má mnoho aspektů, z nichž lze někdy volit a někdy ne, ale málokdy je možné ji vyjádřit jednoduše a jednotně. Tomuto tvrzení se ještě podrobněji věnuje následující segment kapitoly „Identita“, „Kulturní identita“.

K vysvětlení kulturní identity a jejímu rozboru v souvislosti s Han a Anne tu dochází z toho důvodu, aby došlo k ilustraci několika problémů: V tezi se nastiňuje, že kulturní identita nemusí být jednolitá. Dále se tvrdí, že k adopci kulturní identity mnohdy dojde asimilací místo akulturací (jako v případě Han a po ní koncipované protagonistky Anne). A konečně tato teze navrhuje, že identifikace sebe sama se jakožto člena určité kultury se nemusí vždy scházet se všeobecně přijatými normami a očekáváními, podle nichž člověka posuzuje společnost. Han se problematice identity věnuje z mnoha ústředních úhlů, proto se jimi řídí i tato bakalářská práce. Ve zkratce se v kapitole „Identita“ zkoumají tři hlavní body: multidimenzionalita identity (v tomto případě spojení britskosti a čínskosti), přizpůsobování se předem nastaveným prvkům dané identity či kultury, a dále pak přijetí či nepřijetí člena menšiny, který adoptuje kulturní cítění společenské většiny, touto společenskou většinou. Teoretické termíny použité ve všech sekcích kapitoly „Identita“ prostupují průběžným srovnáním s původem a sebeidentifikací Han i hrdinky knihy.

Posledním klíčovým tématem teze je dobový kontext. Vzhledem k zasazení knihy (1956) je předmětem zkoumání dobového kontextu poválečná, postkoloniální Británie. Kapitola „Británie v 50. letech“ zvolna navazuje na předchozí segment, v němž se rozebírá koncept britskosti, jak ho vnímá, přijímá a popisuje Han. Z toho důvodu se tato část teze zabývá nejen historickými údaji a nastíněním politické situace, ale objasňuje také všeobecnou poválečnou a postkoloniální náladu a postoje Britů. Z praktického hlediska se v dané sekci zohledňují již probrané teoretické koncepty použité v této tezi, tj. například neokolonialismus, jak se v daném období projevoval a jak o něm píše Han.

K dobovému kontextu se tato práce obrací také v souvislosti s poválečnou a postkoloniální literaturou, kterou rozebírá velmi obecně. Účelem podkapitoly „Postkoloniální literatura“ je naznačit obrat v dosavadním smýšlení spisovatelů nejen v porovnání s tím, o čem a jak psali před koncem války a masovou dekolonizací, ale zároveň i v porovnání s velmi optimistickou a nesebekritickou náladou Britů v 50. letech. Ze zdrojů vyplývá, že první výrazněji pesimistické a sebekritické tóny vůči roli Velké Británie ve válce a vůči její dosavadní roli kolonizátora pochází od britských autorů té doby (viz srovnání poválečné britské nálady a poválečné britské nálady v literatuře). Očividné je, že Han, britská občanka, se stavěla k britské kolonizační minulosti stejně kriticky jako mnozí další autoři poválečného proudu. Na ukázkách z knihy pak tato teze zkoumá přesnou manifestaci tohoto nového literárního smýšlení.

Kromě výše probraných tří stěžejních témat, kulturního střetu, identity a dobového zasazení, se odevzdaná bakalářská práce zabývá ještě několika vedlejšími teoretickými úseky, zejména pak krátkou biografií Han Suyin vzhledem k malému povědomí o životě a díle autorky v České republice.

Kapitola „Han Suyin“ poskytuje novému čtenáři základní informace o životě autorky, a to především do konce 50. let, aby se zachovala relevance tohoto úseku k práci jako celku. Proto je možné biografii Han v této tezi shrnout v několika bodech týkajících se období až do sepsání díla *The Mountain is Young*. Čtenáři již seznámenému s Han pak kapitola o ní poskytne hlubší náhled do problematiky a tematiky jejích děl obecně, osvětlí autorčinu motivaci psát o kulturních střetech mezi Východem a Západem a ve zkratce přiblíží autorčinu inspiraci, sesbíranou v průběhu let, k zasazení zkoumané novely právě do postkoloniální asijské země, kde začínají nově působit britské politické a kulturní vlivy. Kromě stručné biografie je tedy tato kapitola i jistou sondou do motivací a inspirací Han Suyin, menšinové (a v tomto kontextu postkoloniální) autorky, k celoživotnímu rozboru právě problematiky Východu a Západu a hledání své vlastní identity v tomto střetu.

V práci se průběžně prokládá teorie s praktickými ukázkami, vysvětlivkami a ilustracemi. Metoda zvolená k sepsání této bakalářské teze se dá nazvat eklektickou metodou, v níž relevantní teoretické návrhy z četných a verifikovaných zdrojů přicházejí do kontrastu a do souvislosti s praktickými ukázkami z knihy. Praktické ukázky tudíž slouží k okamžitému doplnění a osvětlení teorie. Od tohoto modelu se mírně odkloní teprve poslední kapitola teze, v níž dochází k syntezě nápadů, návrhů a dokazovaných tvrzení bez nových teoretických podkladů.

K nejzásadnějšímu a nejkonzistentnějšímu, přestože již nejstručnějšímu zohlednění stěžejních témat teze tudíž dochází až v poslední části, kapitole „The Mountain is Young“. Zde se předkládají nejrepresentativnější ideje celé bakalářské práce a zároveň se sumarizují. Tím je myšleno, že v poslední kapitole se znovu rozebírá střet kultur s ohledem na jeho popis a smysl v novele *The Mountain is Young*, analyzuje se, jak Anne nachází svou identitu se všemi jejími aspekty, dosud potlačovanými, a v neposlední řadě vyvozuje závěry z rozboru klíčových témat v sekci „Metafory“. Z vyhodnocení zkoumaných témat, střetu kultur a identity, vyplývá jasně autorčin záměr k napsání dané novely.

Střet kultur je v díle Han Suyin něco všudypřítomného, a to zejména kvůli nedostatku sebekritiky a ochoty změnit svůj dosavadní přístup (politické a kulturní zásahy, interpersonální předsudky atd.) ze strany Velké Británie, kolonizátora, který se nyní více či méně úspěšně pokouší o nekolonialismus v oslabených, přestože autonomních asijských zemích. Zároveň ale z této bakalářské práce vyplývá, že si sice Han konflikt mezi Východem a Západem uvědomuje, ale nepovažuje ho nutně za konečný stav věci. V průběhu děje Han umožňuje růst nejen protagonistce Anne, ale i vedlejším postavám britského (a obecně západního) původu, díky čemuž je z novely patrný optimistický přístup k budoucnosti a otevřená možnost, že dojde k nastolení rovnosti.

Naprosto zásadní je pak metafora, k níž se Han vrací a v různých podobách ji obměňuje, aby do ní obsáhla několik kontextů. I v samotném názvu knihy už totiž Han předesílá, že „hora je mladá“,

a tato hora personifikuje jak Nepál, tak britské kolonie obecně – mladé a zároveň trvalé subjekty, kterých se ani britská, ani jiná nadvláda nadlouho nedotkne; pozmění je snad, ale nezničí. Když totiž Han používá adjektivum „mladý“, prosazuje nejen názor, že bývalé kolonie si zachovaly to nutné ze sebe a britská nadvláda je neznabila (protože jako hory tu budou stát dál), ale zároveň i odmítá britský (a celkově západní) zvyk nazývat obyvatele bývalých kolonií dětmi. V neposlední řadě ta samá myšlenka, že mladá, svobodná, okolním vlivům odolná hora něco či někoho personifikuje, může být použita i na Anne, protagonistku novely.

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