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Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

American Dream in Novels *The Grass Roof* and *East Goes West: The
Making of an Oriental Yankee* by Younghill Kang

Bachelor Thesis

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Kateřina Sofie Beneřov

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Zásady pro vypracování

Závěrečná práce se zaměří na zobrazení amerického snu v románu *The Grass Roof* a *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee* Younghilla Kanga. V úvodní části studentka nastíní historicko-kulturní kontext obou románů a podrobně charakterizuje americký sen, případně miní jeho historický vývoj. Studentka také specifikuje povahu amerického snu pro asijské přistěhovalce a zmíní proto také konkrétní důvody pro emigraci do USA, vlny přistěhovalců a legislativní úpravy imigrace do USA, apod. Dále budou také oba romány zasazeny do literárního kontextu a studentka pojedná o jejich žánrovém zařazení a použitých literárních prvcích. Analytická část se bude soustředit na zobrazení amerického snu v Kangových románech a pojedná o deziluzi (kterou bude také definovat), či naopak různých způsobech, jak se postavy snaží dosáhnout amerického snu (ať už úspěšně, či ne). Oba romány budou také náležitě porovnány z hlediska, jak k americkému snu přistupují (např. jestli je americký sen zobrazován pozitivně, či negativně). Svě vývody bude studentka ilustrovat úryvky z primárních zdrojů. Dále bude také své vývody opírat/konfrontovat s kvalitními sekundárními zdroji. Na závěr svá zjištění přehledně shrne a vyvodí obecnější závěr ohledně zobrazení amerického snu ve zmiňovaných románech.

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Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Mgr. Petra Kohlová**
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doc. Mgr. Jiří Kubeš, Ph.D.
děkan

Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D.
vedoucí katedry

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Prohlašuji:

Tuto práci s názvem Americký sen v románech The Grass Roof a East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee autora Younghilla Kanga jsem vypracovala samostatně. Veškeré literární prameny a informace, které jsem v práci využila, jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury.

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ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis deals with the theme of the American Dream in novels of Younghill Kang and how it is depicted. The first chapter focuses on the American dream itself, its history and what it entails. The second chapter describes immigration from Asia to the USA and the model minority. In the third chapter, the author is introduced, along with literary context of the novels and literary devices. The two analytical chapters target *East Goes West* and *The Grass Roof*, with the main themes being disillusion, social prejudice and the attainment of the American Dream.

KEY WORDS

Younghill Kang, American Dream, East Goes West, The Grass Roof, Asian American literature, disillusion

NÁZEV

Americký sen v románech *The Grass Roof* a *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee* autora Younghilla Kanga

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá vyobrazením amerického snu v románech Younghilla Kanga. První kapitola pojednává o historii tohoto snu a co vše představuje. Druhá kapitola popisuje asijskou imigraci a termín modelová menšina, který je spojen s asijsko-americkými obyvateli. Třetí kapitola představuje autora románů spolu s literárním kontextem a jazykovými prostředky. Dvě analytické kapitoly se zaměřují na díla *East Goes West* a *Drnová střecha*, hlavními tématy analýzy jsou dosažení amerického snu, předsudky společnosti a deziluze.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Younghill Kang, americký sen, East Goes West, Drnová střecha, asijsko-americká literatura, deziluze

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*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.*

- Poem engraved on the base of the Statue of Liberty

INTRODUCTION

The American Dream is associated with success and happiness that will undoubtedly come if a person is hardworking and ambitious enough. Other aspects connected to the dream, apart from those already mentioned, are freedom and equality. Although, as it can be seen from the experience of Chungpa Han and other characters of the novels, America was far from equal during their time.

The overall aim of this bachelor thesis is to analyse in detail what the American Dream entails in the two novels of Younghill Kang, the disillusion that came with being a newcomer and an outcast as an Asian immigrant in a predominantly white society, and whether the main characters achieved their dream in the promised land.

The thesis is divided into three theoretical and two analytical chapters. The first theoretical chapter describes the very nature of the American Dream and its historical development. Notable figures that have contributed to the creation of this phenomenon are mentioned. The next chapter focuses on immigration of Asian citizens to the United States of America, the different discriminatory laws that were enacted over time and how Asian people were viewed by the society. The third chapter explores the life of Younghill Kang, the father of Korean American literature. The literary context of the *Grass Roof* and *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee* is presented. The first analytical chapter targets Kang's first novel, the *Grass Roof*, published in 1931. The novel takes place in Korea and describes Chungpa Han's childhood. The protagonist is introduced and his fascination with the West is analyzed. Han is a bright and determined boy with high hopes of pursuing education and knowledge. This book serves as a bridge to Kang's second novel, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, which is analyzed in detail in the last chapter. The story begins with Chungpa arriving in New York City with very little money and belief in the American Dream. There he meets compatriots George and Kim. The analysis focuses on the gradual loss of ideals the characters had and how the USA did not live up to their expectations.

1 THE AMERICAN DREAM THROUGHOUT HISTORY

This chapter focuses on the phenomenon of the American Dream, mainly its historical and cultural roots. The term was coined by James Truslow Adams, a writer from New York City. In his book *The Epic of America* published in 1933, he described like this:

That dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement [...] It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order, in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.¹

It must be noted that for Adams success was not about materialistic values and owning things, but rather being spiritually rich. In the book he wrote that America has lost its way by putting material wealth above other values and saw it as a failure of the society.

Even though the term was coined in the 20th century, the idea of coming to America to have a better life can be traced in the 17th century and the times of Puritans. This religious group started to escape from the Old World with the intention of creating a better life for themselves and began forming colonies in the Promised Land.² The notion of freedom appeared here for the first time. Gail McDonald states in *American Literature and Culture 1900-1960* that the settlers had an approach of building a new Eden in America. Those who were less religious saw the opportunity to become richer thanks to natural resources the land had to offer.³ The core Puritan values were piety, hard work and freedom. They incorporated these into their everyday life.⁴ No matter how difficult the beginnings were and despite the fact that they treated Native Americans very poorly, Puritans lay the foundation of the American Dream. As Cullen claims in his book, they became masters of their own destiny.⁵

¹ "James Truslow Adams papers, 1918-1949," Columbia University Libraries Archival Collections, accessed February 6, 2022, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/archival/collections/ldpd_4078384/.

² "The Colonial American Dream," Encyclopedia, accessed February 6, 2022, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/educational-magazines/colonial-american-dream>.

³ Gail McDonald, *American Literature and Culture 1900-1960* (London: Blackwell, 2007), 61.

⁴ Alan Heimert, *The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 20.

⁵ Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 18.

Another historical milestone can be found in the Declaration of Independence from 1776, in which Thomas Jefferson included a quote: “[w]e hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”⁶ According to Cullen, this text can be considered the source code of the American Dream.⁷

Just six years later, a French aristocrat named Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur wrote an essay with the title *Letters of an American Farmer*. He was already familiar with the United States, living there for three decades. The way he viewed America corresponds with Adam’s definition of the American Dream. In the essay, he focuses on encouraging Europeans to make the move too. The optimistic paper was received very well and inspired many Europeans to leave the continent.⁸ Crèvecoeur expresses his respect and affection towards the self-reliant Americans. He puts emphasis on the wide gap between America and the unpleasant state of Europe. Throughout the piece, the importance of hard work is mentioned several times. The admiration of courage and determination is quite visible as well. It seems like Crèvecoeur believed one could become a completely new person in America, one abounding with virtues and high quality:

He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men.⁹

Benjamin Franklin is another crucial figure when it comes to the American Dream. The American inventor and author who made contributions to science is considered by many to be one of the most notable people achieving the American Dream.¹⁰ Powell declares that Franklin pioneered the spirit of self-help in America. He was an example of

⁶ “Declaration of Independence: A Transcription,” National Archives: America’s Founding Documents, accessed February 5, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

⁷ Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*, 36

⁸ “Letters from an American Farmer,” Britannica, accessed February 5, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Letters-from-an-American-Farmer>.

⁹ “Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur Describes the American people,” The American Yawp Reader: Stanford University Press, accessed February 5, 2022, <https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/a-new-nation/hector-st-jean-de-crevecoeur-describes-the-american-people-1782/>.

¹⁰ Kun Jong Lee. 2014. “The African-American Presence in Younghill Kang’s East Goes West.” *CLA Journal* 57 (3): 239.

a truly gifted man, learning on his own five different languages, multiple musical instruments and inventing the lighting rod.¹¹ The author is also recognized for the record of his life titled *Autobiography*, which demonstrates the dream accurately. He was able to rise from the middle class and became one of the most respected and praised men of America, all purely through determination and his self-discipline. Franklin proved that it is possible to become successful when one has enough will power. He considered the following virtues necessary for success:¹² Temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, humility. These virtues have formed the spirit of the American Dream.

Over the centuries, the dream never disappeared, even though in the 19th century the country struggled because of the Civil War and the 20th century brought the uncertain times due to Great Depression. The dream can be approached from two sides: the idealistic one and the material one. For the first one, values such as democracy, freedom, success and justice come to mind. The second entails what people have accumulated and by this their measure of success can be defined. According to Madelaine High, the dream has continued to become more materialistic.¹³ The issue is that the satisfaction with one's life is not as important as the property they own, the author claims. Focusing solely on economic prosperity and neglecting mental health and wellbeing overall can resolve in depression and other mental disorders. According to *Mental Health America*, almost 50 million Americans (19.8% of citizens) experienced mental issues in 2019. The access (or the lack thereof) to health insurance complicates this and many people do not get treatment. Even though there are several factors that contribute to the development of such illnesses, the work-life balance is incontestably one of them. While the European Union forbids companies to hire people for more than 48 hours a week, there is not such regulation in the USA and many people work longer than the European standard.¹⁴ Psychologists and doctors often warn against the live-to-work attitude, but it is deeply ingrained in the American society. Hanson and White in their book *The American Dream*

¹¹ Bernard Cohen, *Benjamin Franklin's Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 2.

¹² Kun Jong Lee. 2014. "The African-American Presence in Younghill Kang's East Goes West." *CLA Journal* 57 (3): 241.

¹³ Madelaine High. 2015. "The Reality of the American Dream." *Xavier Journal of Undergraduate Research* 3 (2), 1.

¹⁴ "The U.S. and Europe: Different Approached on Work-Life Balance," Center for Economy and Policy Research, Lara Merlin, Nicolas Buffie, accessed May 31, 2022, <https://cepr.net/the-u-s-and-europe-different-approaches-on-work-life-balance/>.

in the 21st Century claim that it is becoming increasingly difficult for Americans to hold onto the dream because the reality seems to be different from the promise.¹⁵

To sum up, Franklin believed that anyone could achieve the American Dream if they are willing to put the work into it. However, Lee in her article suggests that the model has a built-in ethnocentrism that makes it almost impossible for people of color to achieve it.¹⁶ There have been many obstacles in the way for those who are not privileged and thus have a hard time in America. The different discriminatory immigration laws and bans are presented in the following chapter; however one might ponder whether a country that was built on such unstable foundation can ever truly be considered free. While it is a noble thought that if a person is diligent, they can achieve anything they set their mind to, it is not always true. This disillusion can be seen in Kang's novel, too.

¹⁵ Sandra Hanson and John White, *The American Dream in the 21st Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 6.

¹⁶ Kun Jong Lee. 2014. "The African-American Presence in Younghill Kang's *East Goes West*." *CLA Journal* 57 (3): 241.

2 IMMIGRATION TO THE USA AND THE ASIAN-AMERICAN SOCIETY

The grandiose poem engraved on the base of the Statue of Liberty suggests that the United States are a safe shelter for anyone seeking refuge or an opportunity for a better life and everyone that comes is welcome heartily. Yet the history of immigration contradicts this notion on an immense scale. The history of Asian people in the USA is one based on human oppression, exclusion and inequity.

The beginning of immigration can be dated to 1850-s, when Chinese men started to move to America, mainly the West Coast, to work in the gold mines or to build railroads.¹⁷ The main premise of the Asian dream was economic prosperity along with escaping social and political issues.¹⁸ The immigrants were hoping for a better life, however a growing anti-Chinese movement and fear of immigrants taking away jobs resulted in Congress passing the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. This law prohibited the workers from entering the USA and was retracted in 1942 when 105 Chinese immigrants were allowed to enter each year.¹⁹ According to Erica Lee, Chinese men were seen as a sexual danger that could negatively influence white women.²⁰

The position of Japanese immigrants was not any easier. Because of xenophobia coming from Californian people, the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 prevented Japanese citizens from obtaining passports to leave for America.²¹ During World War 2, over 120,000 Japanese Americans were moved to detention camps in reaction to the attack on Pearl Harbor. The US War Department believed there are agents among this group, so they placed them in camps. The conditions were appalling and over 1,800 people died over the span of 4 years.²²

As it is stated at the United Department of State, The Immigration Act issued in 1924 was an attempt to curb immigration from certain countries: “[t]he quota provided

¹⁷ “Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts,” United States Department of State, Yuning Wu, accessed June 7, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/chinese-immigration>.

¹⁸ “The Asian American Dream,” Encyclopedia, accessed June 2, 2022, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/educational-magazines/asian-american-dream>.

¹⁹ “Chinese Exclusion Act,” Britannica, accessed June 7, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Exclusion-Act>.

²⁰ Erika Lee, *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2019), 73.

²¹ “Gentlemen's Agreement,” Britannica, accessed June 8, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Gentlemens-Agreement>.

²² “Japanese American internment,” Britannica, accessed June 8, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Japanese-American-internment>

immigration visas to two percent of the total number of people of each nationality in the United States as of the 1890 national census. It completely excluded immigrants from Asia.”²³ This, however, did not include citizens from Northern and Western Europe who were favored over those from Asian and Eastern Europe. The intention of this act was to preserve the U.S. homogeneity. This discriminatory law was replaced by the Immigration Act of 1965, signed by President Johnson, which opened America’s doors to those previously banned from entering. This resulted in a new wave of immigration from Asian countries, mainly the Philippines, South Korea and India.

Despite the acts banning Asians from entering the USA, in the middle of the 1960s, the perception of this group in the general public started to change. Being initially looked down upon, articles about their ability to succeed despite injustice began to appear, such as this one included in a chapter of *The Asian Pacific American Heritage*: “[b]y any criterion of good citizenship that we choose, the Japanese Americans are better than any other group in our society, including native-born whites. They have established this remarkable record, moreover, by their own almost totally unaided effort.”²⁴ When the expression *model minority* is mentioned, what people usually understand by it is a certain group of citizens who are in a way supposed to be role models for other minorities in the American society. In other words, they represent virtues others should aspire to acquire. Asian Americans are often labelled as intelligent, hardworking and agreeable. This is problematic for the individuals being portrayed as examples of success, because it puts pressure on them not to fail and live up to the expectations. While these characteristics do not sound offensive, this phenomenon can be seen as harmful because there is no such thing as collective success. According to the 2021 census, approximately 19 million Asian Americans inhabit the USA. 12.3% of those people struggle with being able to provide for their families and living below the poverty line, Bhutanese and Burmese Americans being the most affected (Tang 2000, 60).²⁵ On the other end of the spectrum there are Taiwanese and Indian Americans with the highest income of all. The Pew Research

²³ “The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act),” United States Department of State, accessed June 7, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act>.

²⁴ Brian Niiya, *The Asian Pacific American Heritage: A Companion to Literature and Arts* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1998), 36.

²⁵ Eric Tang “Collateral Damage: Southeast Asian Poverty in the United States.” *Social Text* 18, no. 1 (2000): 59-79.

Center concluded that Asian Americans are the most economically divided racial group in the United States.²⁶

Another issue is creating division and tension between races, especially African Americans and Asian Americans. The model minority might be used to trivialize the systemic racism which is still present in the USA and by which African Americans are heavily impacted.²⁷ It suggests that if one minority is accomplished, others should be too without any problems.²⁸ However, there is an underlying hierarchy of races in which different people of color do not have equal opportunities and the hindered position cannot always be overcome by working harder. The racism that different minority groups experience is not the same and while Asian Americans in the past were banned from entering the USA and still have to deal with prejudice, they never had to face the dehumanization of slavery like African Americans did. As Frank Chin, one of the fathers of Asian American literature, said: "[w]hites love us because we're not black."²⁹ This implies that Asian Americans started to appeal to the American society because they fit into an acceptable notion of immigrants. To conclude, the model minority is a myth that creates stereotypes, overlooks the struggles of African Americans and Asian Americans and ignores the disparities in this racial group.

²⁶ "Income Inequality in the U.S. Is Rising Most Rapidly Among Asians," Pew Research Center, accessed May 21, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/07/12/income-inequality-in-the-u-s-is-rising-most-rapidly-among-asians/>.

²⁷ Maria Krysan and Amanda E. Lewis, *The Changing Terrain of Race and Ethnicity* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 203.

²⁸ Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), 173.

²⁹ Robert G. Lee, *Asian American Studies Now: A Critical Reader* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 145.

3 YOUNGHILL KANG

This chapter aims at introducing Kang and his tumultuous life. The author is not quite well-known; therefore his life will be introduced in slightly more detail. He was born in 1903 (although there is certain ambiguity around the date) in a village named Song-Dune-Chi (the English translation is “Village of Pine Trees”).³⁰ The Hamgyong Province can be found in what is nowadays considered North Korea. Kang’s idyllic childhood was interrupted by the unsettling political situation between Korea and Japan. When he was seven, Korea was annexed by the Japanese government.³¹ This event had started a series of cruel acts towards the Korean citizens, described in *The Grass Roof*. Kang had to witness beating of his grandmother, unjustified imprisonment of his uncle and eventually of himself, too.

Being thirsty for knowledge and education, Younghill left Song-Dune-Chi in 1914 and walked all the way to Seoul in order to get a better quality education. Thanks to a missionary, Kang’s dream of escaping to the United States of America become reality in 1921, when the author was only eighteen years old. His financial situation was not satisfying, having only 4 dollars upon arrival. Nevertheless, Younghill was determined to succeed and studied English at a missionary college in Canada, at Harvard and at a Boston university, where he graduated. Later, his Harvard studies were successfully finished as well.

When Kang was lecturing at New York University, he became friends with Thomas Wolfe, who got interested in Kang’s novel *The Grass Roof*. The American writer described Younghill as poetic and original, showing the manuscript to the famous editor Maxwell Perkins. The novel was accepted and published in 1931. Six years later, the sequel titled *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee* was published. Both titles were received well by the critics, however as Sunyoung Lee suggests, they tended to praise the first novel more, not fully agreeing with the portrayal of the flawed American society and its prejudice.³²

The author had a great impact on the Korean American literature, according to Soojin Chung, he is considered to be its father and one of the pioneer voices of Asian

³⁰ Younghill Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee* (New York: Penguin Books, 2019), 29.

³¹ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 30.

³² Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 367.

American literature.³³ Filipino American writer Carlos Bulosan admits seeing Kang's success as impulse to write the novel *America Is in the Heart*.³⁴ Even though Kang's books were not widely read towards the end of his life and he had faded from public recognition, in recent years scholars have found them again and note the importance of the unique perspective of a first-generation immigrant.³⁵

Kang received several awards- two Guggenheim fellowships in 1930s, Halperine Kaminsky prize in France and an honorary doctorate from Korea University in 1970. He was even nominated for the Nobel Prize in 1971.³⁶ He was the very first Asian person to receive a Guggenheim, which helped him financially and on that account, he could spend time working on the novel.

In 1929, he got married to a white American woman named Frances Keely and due to unfortunate circumstances surrounding immigration, she lost her American citizenship because of the marriage. It was not legal for a white woman to marry an Asian man. Keely eventually regained it.

Because of the Immigration Act, Kang was unable to receive citizenship. Many influential figures have tried to help him obtain it through a citizenship bid in 1941, sadly without success.³⁷ Despite being literary gifted, a full-time position was never offered to him and Younghill's income came mostly from lecture tours.³⁸ He was also a prolific translator; *Meditations of the Lover* by Yong-un Han is one example. Other works by him include *The Happy Grove*, a children's book, and an unpublished play *Murder in the Royal Palace*.

Upon encountering preconceptions and racial discrimination, his works mainly focus on the critique of American society and function as a cultural bridge, drawing the readers closer to his very own experience as an Asian immigrant in the promised land. Kang died in 1972 after suffering a stroke at his home in Florida.

³³“Kang Younghill, the Pioneer of Asian American Literature,” Boston Korean Diaspora Project, accessed February 6, 2022, <https://sites.bu.edu/koreandiaspora/individuals/boston-in-the-1920s/younghill-kang-the-pioneer-of-asian-american-literature/>

³⁴ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 11.

³⁵ “Kang Younghill, the Pioneer of Asian American Literature,” Boston University School of Theology, accessed March 13, 2022, <https://sites.bu.edu/koreandiaspora/individuals/boston-in-the-1920s/younghill-kang-the-pioneer-of-asian-american-literature/>

³⁶ “The full list of writers nominated for the 1971 Nobel Prize in Literature includes just one woman,” Literary Hub, Walker Caplan, accessed February 4, 2022, <https://lithub.com/the-full-list-of-writers-nominated-for-the-1971-nobel-prize-in-literature-includes-just-one-woman>

³⁷ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 379.

³⁸ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 35.

As it has been mentioned earlier in the chapter, Younghill Kang is recognized as one of the pioneers of Asian American literature (an umbrella term), which emerged as a distinctive field in the late 1960's.³⁹ As Seiwoong Oh suggests, this was done with the intention to join together Americans of Asian origin and claim their right to call themselves American⁴⁰. Inspiration for creating a sense of community was gained from the African American movement and the fights for civil rights in general.

The authors often focus on topics like sense of identity, the experience of growing up in America, gender and cultural traditions. Considering the plethora of Asian countries that people emigrated to the USA from, it should be acknowledged how vast this racial group is and how many writers it has produced. Therefore, only several key authors will be mentioned here. One of the first pieces of Asian American literature was a collection of short stories from 1912 titled *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* by the Chinese American writer Edith Maude Eaton (her pen name was Sui Sin Far). Pungent racism is portrayed in *America Is in the Heart* by the Filipino American author Carlos Bulosan⁴¹ born in 1913 who is also a first-generation writer. It is set, like *East Goes West*, in the 1930's, and deals with a similar topic – how Asian immigrants were seen as outcasts, yet the promise of the American Dream was still alluring to them. Another first generation author is the Chinese American Hsi Tseng Tsiang, famous for his novel *The Hanging on Union Square* that is considered to be a classic of Asian American literature. Maxine Hong Kingston, born in 1940, focuses on gender and how ethnicity influences women's lives. Her most notable works are *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*. She was criticized by Frank Chin for trying to appease the white audience and erasing the Chinese culture.⁴²

A pivotal moment was the publishing of *Aiiieeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* in 1974 by the members of the Combined Asian American Resources Project. The book included selections from different authors, some of which had been already forgotten.⁴³ One of the members was Frank Chin, who is considered to be the pioneer of Asian American theatre. Certainly, John Okada with the first Japanese American novel *No-No Boy* has contributed greatly to the field as well. Lastly, the Korean American

³⁹ Srikanth, Rajini and Min Hyoung Song, *The Cambridge History of Asian American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 123.

⁴⁰ Seiwoong Oh, *Encyclopedia of Asian-American Literature* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 6.

⁴¹ George J. Leonard, *The Asian Pacific American Heritage: A Companion to Literature and Arts* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 372.

⁴² Seiwoong Oh, *Encyclopedia of Asian-American Literature* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 10.

⁴³ Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling, *Reading the Literatures of Asian America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 12.

author Chang-Rae Lee and his *Native Speaker*, which is a more contemporary novel than the previous works mentioned. Lee explores the journey of the protagonist named Henry Park and the confusion concerning identity and his Korean roots.

Considering the historical context, both novels discussed in this thesis were published in 1930's, which was a time of the Great Depression in the USA. According to Bernstein, more than 15 million Americans were unemployed. The public did not receive much support from President Hoover, who claimed that the citizens need patience and self-reliance to overcome the difficult crisis.⁴⁴ This response was received with frustration and disappointment. It was Franklin Delano Roosevelt whose New Deal helped to end the arduous situation. During the nineteen-thirties, xenophobia and racial prejudice were flourishing. As for *The Grass Roof* that is set in Asia, Japan dissolved the Korean government, the country was annexed and the nation was facing eerie uncertainty, just like the American public that had to deal with economic challenges.

As for the genre, the novels are considered to be autobiographical, although some scholars claim it to be picaresque novels. What makes the piece autobiographical is the plethora of similarities between Chungpa and Kang himself, which he talked about in a rare radio interview released in 1966. More specifically the landing in New York City, studies in Boston and working for Encyclopedia Britannica is what both men had in common. However, the common issue with this genre of literary works written by people of color is that it reduces them to a writer that can only record their own experience, someone who is not capable of creating fiction. Sunyoung Lee uses this argument in the afterword of *East Goes West*, claiming that the audience should distinguish between the protagonist and the author. It is clear that Chungpa is Kang's alter ego, but they are not the same person, and it would not be appropriate to consider them as such.

Both novels are chronological and written in first person narration. Chungpa has a critical eye and is very observant. This is the fly-on-the-wall style of narration, and it is quite symbolic, given his outsider status. Kang made the decision to be diplomatic and uses other characters to openly express the more controversial opinions. The books are filled with elevated figurative language, which is quite impressive, considering that English was not the writer's native language, yet he managed to use it so immaculately. An excerpt to illustrate follows: “[a]ll lives rise from nature, express it a moment, then come to destruction in the undying world—the scientist with his laboratory invention, the

⁴⁴ Michael A. Bernstein, *The Great Depressions: Delayed Recovery and Economic Change in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 30.

explorer with his passion for the undiscovered land, the mother with her devotion of love [...]”⁴⁵ There is an array of characters, some of which only appear for a brief moment. The people and places are meticulously described with a sense for intricate detail, making it vivid for the readers and increasing their involvement. References to classical literature are also frequent, along with comprehensive philosophical contemplations. *East Goes West* is a portrait of an era, a chronicle of an Asian immigrant that offers a unique insight into the American society of the early 20th century.

⁴⁵ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 357

4 ANALYSIS OF *THE GRASS ROOF*

Kang wrote this book in order to give Western readers more insight into his homeland. The story solely takes place in Korea and Japan; therefore it is more connected to Asian studies and an extensive analysis would not be relevant, hence the relative shortness of this chapter. The main focus will be on the protagonist's personality, his early years in Korea will be briefly examined, as well as his views on the West and the cultural differences between Chungpa's motherland and the USA.

The novel, whose title was derived from an old Korean poem used as an introduction, opens with Chungpa reminiscing on his early childhood. Kang named the first chapter "The Valley of Utopia", which reflects his appreciation for the village of his youth. Though there were already concerns about a possible war with Japan when Chungpa was born, it seems from his description like those days were usually flowing idyllically and blissfully:

I can remember in the mornings when the sun was getting up how its beams trembled on dew-shrunken foliage of the mountain, the poured down like sparkling bits of glass over the water in the valley—especially when the rice seeds were ripening in the fields. At such a time the whole world seemed to dance and glisten [...] ⁴⁶

Even though his family was not abundant in material possessions and financial resources, members of the Han clan were very keen on education and nurturing one's intellect, which earned them respect from other inhabitants. Knowledge seemed to be their consolation and a safe haven from the destitution they had to endure when the harvest was not successful, or the floods destroyed it. There were expectations of Chungpa to become the next scholar of the family, mainly due to his intelligence and diligence. His childhood shaped him into a sagacious man with a thirst for education and it also influenced the way he saw the world.

Korean people in Kang's novel have a deep connection with spirituality and a belief in destiny and the supernatural can be seen clearly throughout the story. Chungpa states that according to the Four Pillars of Destiny he was predetermined to be a man that never settles: "[i] was born to be a wanderer all my life, with no home but the wide world."⁴⁷ This serves as foreshadowing of his life, but this shall be revealed in the following chapter.

⁴⁶ Youghill Kang, *The Grass Roof* (New York: Norton & Company, 1975), 6.

⁴⁷ Kang, *The Grass Roof*, 5.

The character of Chungpa is quite riveting. A highly intelligent boy with lots of determination to achieve his dreams. He spent his free time reading works of Confucius and other philosophers. One of his flaws, however, is his superiority complex. Because of his intellect, he often felt as if others are there solely to listen to his commands. This can be seen when he describes the way he treated his comrades: "[i]n my group I was never a follower, but always a leader. Others must kiss the dust to me, and all must obey the orders which I dictate to Yun-Koo, the vice leader."⁴⁸ It can be said that Chungpa abused his power and his behavior towards his friends was quite condescending at times. Readers might get the impression that whoever seems less intelligent in his eyes will not be treated well by him. This is also the case with physical appearance. The protagonist frequently criticizes (mainly) women's bodies that do not fit into the stereotypical beauty standards: "[m]y fat aunt was the wife of the crazy-poet, the step-mother of Ok-Dong-Ya and Eul-Choon, and also the mother of the fat baby [...] often we were ashamed of her."⁴⁹ In the story, he always refers to his aunt using the derogatory adjective *fat*.

His first exposure to the West took place when his uncle who spent time in Seoul brought cards with Arabic numerals: "[i] remember well the long and very slender native cards [...] I thought them beautiful, fascinating and a little bit like black magic. This was my first taste of the Western Learning."⁵⁰ This experience had an impact on Chungpa's desire to explore the alluring and mysterious culture that seemed to be so different from Korea. His uncle's inclination towards the West sparked an interest in the young boy. The rest of his family disapproved of this newly found passion because the members were rather conservative. This caused turmoil even between other villagers who believed in traditionalism. At the age of nine, young Chungpa started attending a Western school and learned Japanese to gain more insight into the Western culture.⁵¹ Because of the tension between Korea and Japan, his father was furious when he discovered this about his son. This resulted in Chungpa leaving the school and going back to the previous one. It seems like the protagonist was not getting such high quality education there and therefore was not fulfilled. This dissatisfaction created distance between the protagonist and his father. While he cherished the parent deeply, the hunger for knowledge was equally strong. Shortly after Korea was annexed in 1910, Chungpa's mission was to get education in

⁴⁸ Kang, *The Grass Roof*, 25.

⁴⁹ Kang, *The Grass Roof*, 32.

⁵⁰ Kang, *The Grass Roof*, 31.

⁵¹ Kang, *The Grass Roof*, 152.

America. The country became his hope, due to conversations with Park Soo-San, a teacher in the Western school where he started studying again. Chungpa, originally having long hair, got a new haircut, which according to Chung-Hei Yun⁵² can be seen a symbolic transformation of leaving the old behind and starting over. When he was only twelve, he walked three hundred miles to Seoul in order to pursue knowledge get closer to his dream of America. This was quite a bold move, considering his age. After an exhausting journey, his ideals were lost. The Japanese school he was attending did not live up to his expectations, mainly because of the pressure to act Japanese and the attitude towards Koreans that was rather coarse. However, in Seoul he did become closer to America through Christian missionaries who lived in the city. Despite living in Korea, these Americans looked down upon Confucius and Buddha.⁵³ This seems like the very beginning of Chungpa's disenchantment with the USA. After the disappointment in Seoul, he relocated to Tokyo for four years where he studied. He came back to his village eventually but seeing the lifeless Han family and the somber atmosphere surrounding Korea, fighting for the country's freedom seemed like the best decision he could make. He was severely punished for attending a peaceful protest, being tortured for three months. The cruelty of the Japanese contrasts with the kindness of some Americans in the novel. Chungpa was lucky enough to fulfill his childhood dream of going to America thanks to a missionary named Mr. Luther. What seemed to bother the protagonist a bit was his inability to leave like a hero, instead he was a lonely and broken man witnessing the fall the country he loved deeply. The United States represented the possibility of creating a whole new life, one without suffering and pain. How much this hopeful dream became true will be examined in the following chapter.

A remarkable cultural difference between Korea and the USA in the story is the attitude towards marriage. Chungpa, an endless romantic, does not agree with arranged marriage and claims that one needs to fall in love first. However, matrimony was purely practical in this Asian country: "[t]his seems a barbaric custom to a Western reader, no doubt [...] marriage was business, not sentiment."⁵⁴ A lot of thought went into selecting a bride or groom. The couples hardly ever looked happy on their wedding day, mainly because they were too young to start a family. It was common to get married at the age

⁵² Chung-Hei Yun, *Reading the Literatures of Asian America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 81.

⁵³ Kang, *The Grass Roof*, 188.

⁵⁴ Kang, *The Grass Roof*, 56.

of fifteen. A wedding, in the West seen as one of the happiest days of one's life, was often spent in tears in Korea.

The approach to gender roles might also intrigue a Western reader. At the time of this novel, these roles seemed to be strictly divided. Women were in a submissive position and were expected to give birth at a very young age. If there was any discontent, the woman had to stay silent and be docile. To give an example, when the grandmother was reprimanding her daughter-in-law for gaining weight and telling her to get slimmer, Chungpa made this remark: “[m]ost fat women do not like to be told by others to reduce, but my fat aunt could say nothing [...]”⁵⁵ What possibly comes as astonishing is the lack of interest of fathers in their children. The parent is supposed to look away when the offspring tries to play with him.⁵⁶ This contradicts greatly with the American family model.

To conclude, the *Grass Roof* serves as a bridge to *East Goes West* and as an introduction to the Korean culture and the character of Chungpa. It explores his attitude towards America, and how this country seemed to be his only hope when his homeland as he knew it vanished. The story might also be seen as a justification for leaving Korea.

⁵⁵ Kang, *The Grass Roof*, 37.

⁵⁶ Kang, *The Grass Roof*, 82.

5 ANALYSIS OF EAST GOES WEST: THE MAKING OF AN ORIENTAL YANKEE

This chapter introduces the themes in the story that are connected to the American dream and culture. It explores the main characters, their expectations of the United States and the disillusion that inevitably appeared after discovering the reality of the American society and experiencing first-hand how blatantly racist it often is.

Firstly, the term *disillusion* will be defined since it is the major theme of the novel. According to the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, the definition is as follows: “to disappoint (someone) by telling them the unpleasant truth about something or someone that they had a good idea of, or a respect for.”⁵⁷ In the novel, the disillusion concerns the great expectations the characters had of America and the harsh reality they had to face mainly due to prejudice and the treatment of immigrants at the time. It can be seen throughout the book; however it is most emphasized towards the end:

This *is* American life, I said stubbornly. All day long the moving multitudes of humanity, with busy legs, constantly darting false smiles to cover their depressed facial expressions, the worn-out machine bodies turning round in the aisles of unmoving glass and china sets [...] But where were all the enchantment and romance, the glorious vision, which I had seen in my dreams of America as a boy?⁵⁸

To introduce the characters, there is a plethora of them in the novel, however only several play a pivotal role. Firstly, the focus of this chapter will be on Chungpa, the protagonist. He came to New York City from Korea at the age of eighteen with 4 dollars, hoping for an auspicious future and the attainment of the American dream. He was driven by his desire to get to know the West more deeply and to study literature. Since the previous chapter already introduced him in detail, this section targets his evolution as *East Goes West* unfolds.

Chungpa believed it was his destiny to come to the West, specifically New York. His love for this place was profound, in his eyes it was a land of golden opportunity and despite his stays in Canada, Boston and other locations, the “dream-come-true dazzling

⁵⁷ Paul Procter, *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 394.

⁵⁸ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 289.

city”⁵⁹ was the one he always wanted to come back to. Chungpa intended to start a new life in America, shedding his past. The following excerpt when the protagonist is in a tub, cleansing himself, demonstrates this desire: “[...] I was washing off the first of the Old World that was dead [...]”⁶⁰ These perhaps quite guileless ideals started to be shattered slowly when the character began to encounter problems along his journey. Coming to America with a few dollars and only books of Shakespeare in his suitcase, the need for money became more pressing. However, finding a job appeared to be harder than he originally thought because some places had a policy that prevented people of color from getting the position. Chungpa always managed to overcome the issues he was facing thanks to his determination and help of other immigrants. The kindness and solidarity made his move much easier, from free food to several job offers.

The protagonist seems to have a tendency to be quite gratifying and people-pleasing. This might be partially due to his diplomatic nature. Chungpa never started a controversial conversation with a white person that would make them uncomfortable. He just carefully observed other people of color stating the obvious truth - America is by no means the paradise land, despite the idealistic imagine it is trying to portray. While he usually agreed with what was expressed and made the same points internally, he never bothered to confront Americans about their racism on his own. As Lowitz suggests in her review of the book, Chungpa developed a sense for showing only the acceptable parts of himself over time:

A series of jobs as a waiter, door-to-door encyclopedia salesman, department-store clerk, and lowly assistant to an evangelical minister leads him to construct a persona that is neither Korean nor American. He becomes a kind of chameleon, changing in response to the occasion—the first step in the making of a Yankee.”⁶¹

This is a reoccurring theme, however one of the most palpable moments is a particular dinner party thrown by Miss Churchill. The elderly lady was said to invite young people from different parts of Asia. As was the case with several other characters in the story, the lady was entertained by the exoticism of her guests but did not tolerate

⁵⁹ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 347.

⁶⁰ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 11.

⁶¹ Leza Lowitz. 1999. “Review of *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*.” *Manoa* 11 (2): 202.

anything outside the set norm. The Japanese Miyamori was too agreeable in her eyes, talking about the USA with exuberant enthusiasm and admiration. He fully gave up on his Asian origins, considering the continent primitive and barbaric. This excessiveness eventually led to eliminating Miyamori from the guest list. A similar issue appears to be with Senzar, a young man from India studying in America, who is on the other side of the unacceptable and undesirable extremes. Having lots of accumulated anger about the British, he talked about the way British people treated natives in India⁶². His choice of words might not have been the most fortunate, however it seems like the oppressed were not allowed to express their frustration without being castigated and punished. Chungpa made a successful attempt to calm the situation, which was certainly appreciated by the host because Miss Churchill started inviting him regularly after the incident. Thanks to his complaisant personality, Chungpa was always seen as an acceptable dinner guest, sadly at the expense of expressing his inner thoughts and feelings and staying silent about issues that were burdening him.

The next two characters are the protagonist's companions - George Jum and To Wan Kim. They are both Korean, just like Chungpa. They demonstrate the immense disparity between Korean immigrants who came to live in the United States and how diverse their experience can be. It is also clear from the story how their attitude towards the American Dream differs greatly.

Chungpa encountered George early on when he was destitute in New York with no job and less than a dollar in his wallet. Jum was recommended to him by a mutual friend. As he described it in the story, Chungpa desperately needed someone who would help him adjust to a new way of life, but George was out of town, and no one knew when he would be back:

Even in the midst of Hamlet's subtlest soliloquies, I could think of nothing but food. I often passed that charitable soup kitchen, but it, too, wore a closed and alien look and I shrank from passing myself off in there. My only hope was George Jum. Almost every day I walked up to his house. There was no news.⁶³

Eventually Chungpa got the opportunity to meet the man who later on became his mentor. It was mentioned immediately that Jum relinquished his Korean roots and fully

⁶² Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 293

⁶³ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 30.

embraced the American culture: “George Jum looked very Americanized in his red leather slippers and a bathrobe of heavy striped black-and-grey necktie silk.”⁶⁴ They soon became friends thanks to Jum’s amiable nature. There seemed to be a vast contrast between Han’s arduous living situation and the way George casually showed him a closet full of clothes and a bathroom overflowing with personal care products. George adopted an almost fatherly role in the life of his newfound comrade, showing him how to succeed at elemental and primitive tasks such as shaving or taking a shower. That happened to be an unforgettable experience for Han: “[i]t was marvelous, like being inside a flower. Water came down as if it were harnessed rain, a tropical rain.”⁶⁵

The protagonist found comfort in the tranquil presence of Jum who had compassion for the young man’s hardship and offered to help him with job search. The solution was to become a cook, which according to George was a better occupation than a bank clerk or college instructor, thanks to the board and provided accommodation. He said it is also more profitable than working for the Korean government. This experience of meeting the relatively affluent George seemingly gave Han a sense of knowing that he made the right decision when he relocated to New York where he felt much more secure and safe after getting to know George. Even though Chungpa was basically penniless, George assured him that obtaining it is not a problem in the city they were in: “[w]ell, don’t worry about not having any money. [...] Not in New York, which is wealthier than all Asia.”⁶⁶ George indulged in a life of luxury and beautiful women, in Chungpa’s eyes he was very Americanized. Knowing that there is someone else that also made it in the New World, Han was more certain of his future success again.

To Wan Kim, on the other hand, did not share the enthusiasm of George Jum. Chungpa met this character in the middle of the story at a restaurant in Chinatown and admitted that this compatriot challenged his starry-eyed views of the USA. When they introduced each other, Chungpa asked whether Kim was Korean. He replied with saying that he used to be but since he had been gone for so long, he does not feel like one.⁶⁷ This loss of identity certainly must have been very difficult to deal with and perhaps was one of the factors that contributed to Kim taking his life at the end of the novel. There seemed to be a sort of ambivalence in his mind because he did not want to come back to his

⁶⁴ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 32.

⁶⁵ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 33.

⁶⁶ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 35.

⁶⁷ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 148.

homeland yet was unsatisfied in America and shared a very skeptical opinion on the state of the society. In the alleged land of freedom, Kim questioned what this term means and claimed that no one is truly free. It was not only the United States that Kim was skeptical of, but he did not have much hope for Asia and Europe either: “[...] but the West is much the same everywhere. Everywhere troubled and uncertain. Very much like Asia. Educated people everywhere no longer believe in their own culture, religion, or civilization.”⁶⁸ This quote gives the impression that Kim did not feel at home anywhere in the world, and perhaps he gave up on searching for happiness since it was perpetually so out of reach. At the time of their first meeting, Chungpa had a very different view on America, seeing it as the dazzling paradise he dreamed of: “[w]ell—New York gets me! Here I do not feel that hopelessness you speak of. Here you can think anything, see anything, learn anything! [...]”⁶⁹ Even though Chungpa never became as skeptical as Kim, the progression towards disillusion is obvious as the novel advances. Although they both felt very differently about America, they became close friends, sharing their love for both Western and Eastern literature. Both men were fond of intellectual discussions and deep ruminations about philosophy and life, and this brought them closer together. Kim treated Chungpa as a younger brother who still had a chance to achieve what he did not: “[...] I expect you to get something out of the West, something that I have missed.”⁷⁰

The distressing atmosphere surrounding Kim’s presence was visible even in his apartment, where he had an art collection. One of the paintings depicted a lonely boat and another art work had decorative calligraphy with the words “The Exile Man”, both resonated with Kim’s mental state of feeling alone in the world. He did not have to worry about money in New York since his family in Korea was supporting him and he did not have to work at dull jobs like the protagonist. This prosperity did not make him any more optimistic, however. It seems like the educational system in the USA was not of high quality in his eyes because he was seeking more depth instead of shallowness. Another source of disappointment was that the professors only had sympathy for Asians if they were docile and obedient.⁷¹ Chungpa was still holding onto hope, a college degree was for him a gateway into the American culture he wanted to master.⁷² This remark was received with laughter of Kim, because in his opinion the American culture was not

⁶⁸ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 149.

⁶⁹ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 149.

⁷⁰ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 182.

⁷¹ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 251.

⁷² Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 156.

something worth mastering. The disillusion in his case is obvious: “[y]ou and I came to the West to find a new beauty, a new life, a new religion. But is there any? Alas! we have come at the wrong time. It is too late. [...]”⁷³ He never truly found what he was searching for in the USA.

Moving on to another character, D. J. Lively is the epitome of the American Dream. The businessman Chungpa was introduced to is described as a very handsome jubilant gentleman with a cordial personality, successful and wealthy. On top of that he has a wife, children and a house. Even though he did not attend university, he was still able to become rich and he attained the dream: “[h]ow I do like to see manly independence! The spirit that inspired Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. [...] George Washington, the father of his country, was only a poor bookseller. Did you know that, my boy? Yes, a poor bookseller.”⁷⁴ Lively saw potential in Chungpa and decided to include him in his book-selling business, offering him to stay in his house with the family. After a few days, the business found out Chungpa has more talent for literature than making business: “[y]our approach in selling me these pens was very very poor [...] But you’ll learn. I can see that. Cultivate your faith in yourself.”⁷⁵ The faith is emphasized several time, pointing out to the basis of the American Dream and what the poor Korean immigrant might need to succeed in the USA. Chungpa mocks him a little for only using one quote from Shakespeare whenever they talk about literature.⁷⁶ Lee in her analysis claims that Kang caricatures Franklin’s List of Thirteen Virtues into Lively’s ladder of success.⁷⁷ There were classes specifically focused on advanced salesmanship Chungpa took that mostly focused on the human psychology and how to sell a product people might not even need. Eventually, the businessman realized that Chungpa really is not the right choice for him. The young man felt relieved when he got an offer to work at a farm and not having to be employed by Lively because walking from door to door and selling books was not fulfilling for him. Chungpa also realized that the man was not very genuine, and the sales talk was all he had to make an impression. Kang quite humorously criticizes the obsession with materialism that is common when trying to achieve the American Dream.

⁷³ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 161.

⁷⁴ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 129.

⁷⁵ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 131.

⁷⁶ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 164.

⁷⁷ Kun Jong Lee. 2014. “The African-American Presence in Younghill Kang’s *East Goes West*.” *CLA Journal* 57 (3): 241.

Critique of the USA can be also found in the character of an African American preacher Chungpa met in Baltimore. According to him, Elder Bonheure was one of the strangest figures he had encountered in the New World.⁷⁸ The hypocrisy of religious figures is emphasized here. Bonheure was telling the Saints that he was poor yet used their money to buy a new car. Chungpa seemed to enjoy making the Elder a bit uncomfortable, using his critical thinking and asking questions the preacher did not want to answer. An example might be appropriate: “[...] it worries me, Elder, not to be able to find that ‘no smoking’ verse in the Bible.”⁷⁹ Once again, Kang uses wit to show the readers his frustration with American hypocrisy.

A topic that is present throughout the book is the different view on relationships and love interests. George is very fond of women, although marriage is not a functioning institution according to him. When asked whether he would like to have a wife by his side, he claimed that matrimony is doomed to fail simply because it is law-abiding.⁸⁰ When something is forbidden, one desires it more than if it was permitted. That is the symbol of Western civilization in his opinion:

Man makes laws. And laws make his wants more complicated. If the law says you should have one wife, then you want more than one. If the law says live with the same woman, then you want to try different ones. Isn't that funny? That's human nature. Just like the wild ducks."⁸¹

This implies that George's attitude towards women is rather licentious, and love is simply another source of pleasure for him, just like luxury clothing and dinners at sumptuous restaurants. Sandra Si Yun Oh claims in her dissertation that George's preference of white women implies a marker of American identity.⁸² It is possible that being around Caucasian women made him feel like he truly belonged in the USA, however this idea is so complex that it will not be explored in this thesis any further.

Chungpa falls in love towards the end of the novel with an American woman named Trip. Since this was the first time he had experienced romantic feelings, his thoughts were

⁷⁸ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 317.

⁷⁹ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 327.

⁸⁰ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 36.

⁸¹ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 36.

⁸² Sandra Si Yun Oh. 2001. "Martyrdom in Korean American Literature: Resistance and Paradox in *East Goes West*, *Quiet Odyssey*, *Comfort Women* and *Dictée*." Published diss., University of California, Berkeley, 45.

a bit naive. Trip was the prototype of an independent woman and quite unattached, yet she was all he could think about. He claimed to love her although he only heard about her from a mutual friend Laura: “[w]ithout jolt, with suavest gliding motion, my dream took on its disguise of reality. I loved her. I loved Trip.”⁸³ Chungpa seemed to idealize her the same way he idealized America. When Chungpa invited her to a restaurant in Chinatown, they were stopped by a detective whose job was to protect American women in the neighborhood.⁸⁴ It is obvious that Trip was stopped because she was there with an Asian man by her side. The novel was published thirty years before interracial marriages was legalized, this kind of discrimination was sadly common for such couples.

She vanished for three years and there was no contact between them, Chungpa managed to find her again through her friend. The continuity of their relationship is unclear, but Trip seemed to be as elusive as the American Dream, both desired greatly by the protagonist. He never lost hope that one day his dream would become reality.

The businessman Mr. Lively shared his perspective on love as well. According to him, having one loyal woman by his side can contribute greatly to a man’s happiness and good life in general: “[i] would not be where I am today without the help of Mrs. Lively.”⁸⁵ Matrimony and family are also essential parts of becoming successful in his eyes: “[i] stepped another rung up the great American ladder of Success when I married Mrs. Lively.”⁸⁶ However, Chungpa soon understood the reality of this seemingly perfect family when Mrs. Lively shouted at her husband and the son that was so loved by his father enthusiastically shared how much money he will inherit once his parent passes away. Despite the obvious disharmony, the businessman still insisted on the superiority of the American way, saying that Americans are the models of family life.⁸⁷ This suggests that Kang intended to compare Mr. Lively to the United States – both sparkling on the outside, but disappointment might be found at a closer look. America is also criticized for its food waste when Chungpa worked at a Bostonian hotel and saw how much was thrown away: “[...] it was so wasteful, so fantastic, so American! [...] you could feed more people with the waste food than those who had already been fed!”⁸⁸ This slight sarcasm is used throughout the book to point out at the flaws of the USA.

⁸³ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 301.

⁸⁴ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 311.

⁸⁵ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 135.

⁸⁶ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 133.

⁸⁷ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 137.

⁸⁸ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 179.

Racism and stereotyping people based on their origin is another central theme of *East Goes West*. Chungpa was forced to take off his rose-colored glasses when he started to experience disdain because of his Asian origin. First subtle hints of inequality can be seen at the moment of the protagonist spending the majority of his money on a haircut. An unnamed person approached him and asked if he wanted to look like an “Indian”. It was obvious to Chungpa from the way the individual spoke that to resemble a Native American was not desirable nor accepted among white people.⁸⁹ It seems like Han did not harbor racist thoughts, judging from the way he treated people of color. The poetic description of his visit to Harlem early in the story was full of admiration and excitement:

“[...] everywhere laughter was more hearty, the air was richer in suggestions, more emotion-filled; the colors had more depth, so had the smells; the lights, though not so numerous, seemed mellower, gaudier, more picturesque, the spice of Africa was in the atmosphere.”⁹⁰

Chungpa had a hard time making Americans understand the distinction between different Asian countries. During a conversation with a homeless man he was spending a night with in a basement upon his arrival, Chinatown was mentioned. When Chungpa said he had never heard of this neighborhood, the homeless man displayed his surprise. He assumed that all Asian people come from China and could not understand that Korea is a country too.⁹¹ Another encounter with an unknowledgeable American was in Boston. An unnamed gentleman walking his dog asked Chungpa whether he is from China or Japan.⁹² The same situation repeated several times. In general, many Americans seemed to have a skewed and limited idea of Asia.

Upon leaving New York, the protagonist found employment as a houseboy through his friend Pyun. Needless to say, quite poorly paid—forty dollars per month. However, the hostile treatment he received from his employer exceeded the insufficient salary. The American was blatantly showing her antipathy to Chungpa, mainly because his English still needed slight improvement. The lady, whose name was not mentioned in the story, also commented on the Korean books the protagonist brought with him in a rather

⁸⁹ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 17.

⁹⁰ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 18.

⁹¹ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 23.

⁹² Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 254.

xenophobic way: “[i] hope they have no germs.”⁹³ In this excerpt it can be seen that no matter how intellectual the immigrants were, they were still seen as less civilized and potentially unsafe to be around. The lady’s reasoning on why she hired Asian men as servants was as follow: “[m]y former cook was a very tall Negro. He was able to do the work of two. But I hired you to be presentable.”⁹⁴ Kang introduced here a sort of hierarchy of races and how they were viewed in the society at the time. The approach towards Asian immigrants versus African-Americans was racist in both cases by no means, however the latter group’s circumstances were even more challenging.

Kang used African American characters in the novel to criticize the racial bigotry, according to Lee.⁹⁵ She also suggests that Chungpa identified with the discriminated black men, Lorenzo and Wagstaff. Lorenzo was a cook of the Schmitt’s, a family of German origin living in Boston. Chungpa spent two months being a host in their house. Lorenzo was always diligent and well-mannered during the week. How the time went on, however, he developed issues with alcohol, which seemed to be his way of coping with feeling inferior in the society: “[a]h my God, now I’s happy! [...] And it’s because I’s drunk. [...] I feel like a king...[...] It’s the only way for a niggerman in this world.”⁹⁶ Lorenzo studied medicine in university, had plans of studying at Harvard and was frustrated with being a cook. When he got drunk, expressing this frustration was easier. It seems like he trusted Chungpa enough to be vulnerable with him because as an Asian immigrant, he would probably understand his desperation. The derogatory way Lorenzo spoke about African American women gives the impression of self-hatred and shame for being dark-skinned: “[...] I don’t bother going round with no nigger gals...not me! They don’t like me neither because of my education.”⁹⁷ Showing interest in white women only was perhaps because he wanted to elevate himself, yet again with the inevitable judgement of a prejudiced society for being in an interracial couple. This paints a picture of how painful it must have been to be a person of color in the USA in the past. The alcohol problems caused Lorenzo to lose his job because the Schmitt’s dismissed him after his several attempts of stopping to drink. Chungpa had sympathy for him, admitting that it was when Lorenzo was under influence that he actually got to know him. The

⁹³ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 57.

⁹⁴ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 57.

⁹⁵ Kun Jong Lee. 2014. “The African-American Presence in Younghill Kang’s *East Goes West*.” *CLA Journal* 57 (3): 225.

⁹⁶ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 258.

⁹⁷ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 258.

helplessness of this discriminated African American man can be seen in Chungpa's contemplation: "[h]e was ready to show the world then that he stood on his own two feet—but he couldn't stand on them."⁹⁸

A similar standpoint on racism came from another African American character named Wagstaff, a law student. Chungpa met him at the Boston university where he studied. Despite the fact that he was highly intelligent, had strong willpower and had passion for education, he always found himself in menial jobs. The future did not look bright in his eyes, for he believed that he would be an elevator man his whole life. Just like Lorenzo, Wagstaff found an ally in Chungpa, confiding in him with his feelings of an outcast in a white man's world. Whenever they would talk about racial issues and a white person appeared, he would stop talking. It seems like his effort to blend into the predominantly Caucasian society of the USA had a different result from what he intended: "[a]nd the more American culture I absorb, the more Whitman, Emerson, Lincoln I read, I give you my word, the more hatred and revengeful spirit I have..."⁹⁹ He saw America as his homeland that he did not want to leave, yet he was painfully aware of its flaws. When Chungpa invited him to a café, they kept waiting to be served, but no one came. Wagstaff explained to the protagonist that this is not an uncommon situation for him, he encounters this kind of discrimination every day.¹⁰⁰ He claimed to not be bothered by it anymore, but Chungpa could tell it was not true. This experience made Chungpa realize how differently people are treated based on their origin: "[t]hrough Wagstaff I was having my first introduction to a crystallized cast system, comparable only to India, here in the greatest democratic country of the world."¹⁰¹ Here Chungpa voices his disappointment and realizes that each race experiences a different kind of racism, according to Kuo.¹⁰² The illusion of America that welcomes everyone with open arms and gives them equal opportunities Chungpa once had incrementally started to fade away.

Chungpa had found several jobs during his first years in America, most of them menial- a houseboy, a farmhand, a door-to-door salesman and a waiter. When working at a Chinese restaurant, which was one of his earlier occupations, he started to shift his view

⁹⁸ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 260.

⁹⁹ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 269.

¹⁰⁰ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 269.

¹⁰¹ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 269.

¹⁰² Karen Kuo. 2013. "Asian American Model Masculinities –Younghill Kang's *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*." *EurAmerica* 43 (4): 767.

on the USA from being a bit naive to disenchanted. This change was caused by witnessing the reality of what kind of jobs are offered to highly educated people of color. Chungpa found waiting to be exhausting and not easy work, however what came as a shock to him was seeing that out of the nine Asian waiters, eight had a college degree. This made him realize that no matter how much one studies, it might never be good enough if he is not a white person. A waiter named Chong had two doctors' degrees and kept telling the customers about it.¹⁰³ This gives the impression that Chong wanted to show Americans that he is worth more than serving them food and drinks. He did not leave New York, even though the opportunity to come back to Peking was there. Chungpa eventually lost this job because he spilled soup into a customer's lap. The lady automatically assumed he did not speak English, so the boss had to come. Getting a temporary job and being dismissed became a pattern for Chungpa, making him realize that he is not suited for this kind of work: "[s]o far I had failed in everything undertaken in America [...] in nothing was I good. It remained to be seen if I could remedy this by education."¹⁰⁴

He did manage to get a scholarship at a Canadian Maritime University to study English Literature but disenchanted came with noticing the lack of diversity at the campus: "[w]hile I was standing, a little apart, somewhat overwhelmed by the racial, national and religious homogeneity [...]"¹⁰⁵ It was even in the academic environment where he had to deal with disparaging remarks. One of his classmates gave him a nickname *yellow dog* and also beat him up. Chungpa was confronted by his tutor and told to ignore it. This part explores the response of white people to racism. The oppressed were supposed to hide their anger and not defend themselves. This experience made the protagonist bitter, and he decided not to stay in Canada for longer. Even though others at the university treated him with kindness, he did not feel like he truly belonged: "[w]hy then did I feel myself so lonely and sad, small, lowly, and unappreciated? [...]" The magnificent journey to America, the avid desire for Western knowledge, had it come to this?"¹⁰⁶ It is clear that the main character was struggling with finding his place in the society.

Another profoundly prejudiced opinion came from the affluent Lively family that was Chungpa's benefactor, during a visit of George Jum and his Caucasian fiancée June.

¹⁰³ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 79.

¹⁰⁴ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 82.

¹⁰⁵ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 94.

¹⁰⁶ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 103.

Mrs. Lively acted very agitated when she met the couple, showing her disapproval openly. Chungpa did not understand the sudden change of behavior, however when he was confronted about the meeting, it was rather obvious that his friend did not leave a good impression on the Lively's: "[y]ou have been taken into a good Christian family and treated like a son here. And I am sure that boy is not a good Christian boy."¹⁰⁷ Considering Chungpa was not a child to be raised but a man approaching his twenties, this attitude was quite irreverent. It was not clear whether the issue was George's playful and relaxed attitude towards dating, or the fact that June was white. Only when Mrs. Lively burst out confirming her prejudiced beliefs, Chungpa understood the sudden coldness: "[...] it is not wise for an Oriental boy to go round with an American girl. He should marry his own kind, and she should marry hers."¹⁰⁸ Seeing an Asian man with a woman of another race made the family very uncomfortable and triggered their racist tendencies even though they previously treated Chungpa with great care. Something so seemingly innocent as seeing a happy couple being affectionate caused a kind family turn into hostile strangers who laugh at the notion of a mixed-race child. The inanity of this whole incident that is quite difficult to comprehend for a 21st century reader lays in the words of Mr. Lively:

My dear boy, see here, I love you just as much as if you were my own boy. But you are getting wrong ideas. I don't want to see you marry an American girl. Neither would I want to see Elsie marrying an Oriental. And all decent people are like that. It is not as the Lord intended."¹⁰⁹

Using religion as an argument against interracial relationships was common yet completely unjustifiable. As several times before in the novel, the Asian characters are accepted on certain conditions only, and whenever they abandon the societal expectations, Americans promptly let them know they have crossed the line and are not being good immigrants anymore.

The protagonist's compatriot Kim was facing family disapproval as well. In his case, it sadly ended in tragedy. The writer Chung-Hei Yun compares the relationship to

¹⁰⁷ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 144.

¹⁰⁸ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 145.

¹⁰⁹ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 146.

one ray of light.¹¹⁰ Kim, usually pessimistic and joyless, found delight in Helen, a white woman from a rich Bostonian family, describing her poetically as sunshine on gray mountain slopes.¹¹¹ This blossoming romance was disrupted by Helen's relatives who did not wish to see her with an Asian man. In order to separate them, she was sent off on a cruise and Kim was instructed not to write her letters. This heartbreak resolved in losing the temporary happiness and when Chungpa met him again, he was barely recognizable. Kim not only found out Helen died in a sanatory, but also his father in Korea passed away. Chungpa seemed to be terrified by the state of his close friend: "[i] left him heartsick, intending to come back soon. But a kind of horror was upon me, too. Almost I did dread the effect of Kim upon myself [...]"¹¹² Unfortunately, later on Chungpa received the news that his comrade committed suicide. He was deeply saddened, contemplating that Kim never felt peace in American and lived without a sense of home. Death seemed to be his only consolation.

Chungpa was persistent and more committed to attaining the dream than the frivolous George and skeptical Kim. Yet he felt envious of George for he thought he belonged in America more than himself, not only being a guest in the house.¹¹³ However, George eventually formed a long-lasting relationship with a woman who was in his words "much better looking by back than by front"¹¹⁴ and no longer persuaded fickle affairs. His obsession with chasing beautiful women had ended for good and he felt ambiguous about it: "[...] i have not failed. I have only not succeeded."¹¹⁵ Kim's assimilation ended with him taking his own life. He never found fulfillment in the West and remained cynical about the American culture. He admitted that he could never truly make the USA his home: "I have given up one world and cannot accept another."¹¹⁶ The short-lasting romance gave him hope, but the loss of Helen only added to his discontent and therefore death was the only solution in his eyes.

The ending of the novel is ambiguous, emphasizing the disillusion. Chungpa was offered to write for a magazine *Justice* but finds out that for unknown reasons it never came out again. This is perhaps a metaphor for the lack of justice in the USA, considering

¹¹⁰ Chung-Hei Yun, *Reading the Literatures of Asian America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 85.

¹¹¹ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 219.

¹¹² Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 352.

¹¹³ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 276.

¹¹⁴ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 49.

¹¹⁵ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 361.

¹¹⁶ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 207.

the name of the magazine. Another sign of disillusion can be seen when Chungpa at the very end describes his dream in which money, keys to his American car and business contracts were falling out of his pocket. Suddenly he was in a cellar with terrified black men, for it was to be set on fire by a crowd of white people. Then he woke up. The protagonist believed death in a dream symbolizes rebirth and a happier reincarnation.¹¹⁷ There is a vast contrast between the optimistic and hopeful opening and the haunting closing of the book. Even though Chungpa graduated from college, obtained a relatively prestigious job and had the possibility of a relationship, which can be seen as successful achievements of an immigrant, he was still a man without a country. There was no future in Korea and disappointment in America. Kang uses the symbolism of a cellar several times in the book, it is always somehow connected to Asian Americans. One example can be the Korean Institute in New York with its dining room in the basement. According to Lee, the cellar represents the division of the American society where citizens of color are at the bottom.¹¹⁸ In the final dream the Chungpa was there together with African Americans, both oppressed races. This highlights his identification with black people and the injustice that was present. Choi in her dissertation states that Chungpa, despite the hopes he had for America, he still finds himself at the bottom of the society.¹¹⁹ This can be interpreted as a pressing call for American to change and live up to the dream.

¹¹⁷ Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, 362.

¹¹⁸ Kun Jong Lee. 2014. "The African-American Presence in Younghill Kang's *East Goes West*." *CLA Journal* 57 (3): 233.

¹¹⁹ Ha Young Choi. 2008. "Korean-American Literature as Autobiographical Metafiction: Focusing on the Protagonist's "Writer" Identity in *East Goes West*, *Dictée* and *Native Speaker*." Published PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, 53.

CONCLUSION

The American Dream is a gleaming promise of success for those who start at the bottom and with enough determination they will eventually be rewarded with victory. Its origins can be traced into the 17th century when Puritans started flocking to America. However, very often it truly only stays a promise, especially for people of color. At the beginning of *East Goes West*, the protagonist landed in New York City, the place he dreamed of, with high hopes of achieving his goals and getting a more fulfilling life than he could have had in Korea, his homeland that was brutally colonized by Japan. Unfortunately, his excitement did not last long when a series of locked doors became the norm. No matter his intellect, education and willingness to fully assimilate, he never felt like he actually belonged in the American society and there was a disparity between how he saw himself and how he was seen by the society. Out of the three main characters, none of them truly assimilated and succeeded at achieving the dream. Chungpa did receive his college education, which was his main goal, and was working for Encyclopedia Britannica, but kept searching for his place in the world, staying a wanderer, as it was predicted in the Four Pillars of Destiny when he was a child. George gave up on dedicating his life to women's beauty and settled down with a Korean American lady that was not his usual type. Kim committed suicide because he was unable to find peace in America and a failed romance with his girlfriend Helen broke him completely.

The main premise of the story is that the dream is so elusive and fleeting that it seems impossible to attain it at times. Especially for those who stand out in a way from the rest, just like Chungpa did in the 1920-s and 1930-s. The immigrants had to compromise on the kinds of jobs they were offered, the choice of a partner and knowing their place in the society in general. There was a vast difference between who they were, who they wanted to be and who they were allowed to be. Reaching success came at the expense of giving up their Asian origin and identity and shaping themselves into a more acceptable and tolerated version. Despite the heroic nature of the poem at the Statue of Liberty, the USA often did not fulfill the expectations of immigrants who were searching for a better life. They remained, in the words of the American philosopher Cornel West, prisoners of hope, ceaselessly waiting to be embraced by the society they used to look up to and still wanted to be a part of despite all the disappointment.

RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem amerického snu a deziluze v románech *Drnová střecha* a o šest let později vydaným *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, jejichž autorem je korejsko-americký spisovatel Younghill Kang. Ten je literárními kritiky považován za otce korejsko-americké literatury a asijsko-americké literatury jako takové. Kang má mnoho společného s hlavní postavou, mladým korejským imigrantem Chungpou, který je Kangovým alter egem. Kritici ale varují před tendencí pohlížet na díla asijsko-amerických autorů jako pouze autobiografická, jelikož tato domněnka naznačuje, že psát o svém vlastním životě je to jediné, čeho jsou schopni.

První teoretická kapitola pojednává o americkém snu, jeho povaze a historickém vývoji. Ačkoliv toto slovní spojení bylo poprvé použito americkým spisovatelem Jamesem T. Adamsem, kořeny snu sahají do 17. století, kdy Puritéři začali připlouvat z Evropy do Ameriky, země zaslíbené, s nadějí na lepší a svobodnější život. Vzhledem k náročným klimatickým podmínkám museli pracovat velmi tvrdě. Proto jejich hlavními hodnotami byly zbožnost, píle a svoboda. Povahu amerického snu taktéž vykresluje Deklarace nezávislosti Spojených států amerických z roku 1776, která hovoří o rovnosti a hledání štěstí. Benjamin Franklin, americký vynálezce a státník, je mnohými považován za prvního člověka, jež dosáhl tohoto snu. Dokázal se svou odhodlaností a pracovitostí opustit střední třídu a stát se jedním z nejznámějších Američanů. Tento sen je ale poněkud problematický, o čemž také pojednává román *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*. I přes vzletné sliby rovnosti zdaleka všichni neměli (a stále mnohdy nemají) v Americe stejné příležitosti. V minulosti to byly především ženy, taktéž lidé odlišné rasy či sexuální orientace. Dalším důvodem, proč by se sen neměl idealizovat, je honba za materialismem. Autoři se shodují, že hmotné statky jsou bohužel mnohdy důležitější než spokojenost člověka.

Druhá teoretická část se soustředí na imigraci do USA a modelovou menšinu. Ačkoliv byli asijské přistěhovalci diskriminováni skrze různé zákony (např. Chinese Exclusion Act v roce 1882) a nebylo jim po určitou dobu dovoleno vstoupit do země, v šedesátých letech dvacátého století začali být dávani za vzor ostatním menšinám, především Afro-Američanům, kterým byl předkládán úspěch Asiatů v USA. Těm byly přisuzovány kladné kvality jako je inteligence, pracovitost a vstřícnost. Realita úspěchu je ale poněkud jiná, jelikož více než 12% asijsko-amerických obyvatel žije pod hranicí

chudoby. Modelová menšina je mýtus, který vytváří napětí mezi rasami a klade vysoké nároky na ty, jichž se týká.

Třetí teoretická část se zaměřuje na život Youghilla Kanga, který roku 1921 opustil Japonskem okupovanou Koreu a doufal v to, že Amerika mu poskytne nový domov. Jak je možné vidět v románech, jeho velká očekávání se zcela nenaplnila a Kang musel čelit rasismu a předsudkům. Jeho manželka Frances Keely ztratila americké občanství kvůli sňatku s asijským imigrantem. Rasově smíšená manželství nebyla legalizována do roku 1967, nakonec Keely občanství bylo navráčeno. Younghill Kang je považován za jednoho z průkopníků asijsko-americké literatury, jeho první román s názvem *Drnová střecha* byl publikován roku 1931. Spisovatel měl vliv na další autory, například Carlose Bulosana, který proslul svým dílem *America Is in the Heart*.

První analytická kapitola této bakalářské práce zkoumá román *Drnová střecha*, jehož děj se odehrává v Koreji a Japonsku. Jelikož se ale kniha tolik nedotýká tématu amerického snu, je tato kapitola kratší. Román má za úkol přiblížit Asii západnímu čtenáři. Analýza se soustředí převážně na postoj hlavní postavy k západní kultuře, jeho dětství v rodné zemi a jeho charakter. Chungpa vyrůstal v poměrně idylickém prostředí, které bylo občas narušeno záplavami či nedostatkem jídla. Rodina Hanů byla na vysoké intelektuální úrovni, podněcovala chlapcovu touhu po vzdělání, ovšem pouze tehdy, když se dotýká tradičního učení východních filozofů a náboženství. Fascinaci západem v Chungpovi probudil jeho strýc, který pomáhal chlapci přiblížit se literárním dílům velkých evropských spisovatelů. Jelikož jeho vášeň pro vědomosti neustále narůstala, v pouhých dvanácti letech se rozhodl ujít tři sta mil do Soulu, aby mohl studovat na prestižnější škole. Po mnoha peripetiích, věznění a tříměsíčnímu mučení za účast na nenásilném protestu proti Japonsku se nakonec díky pomoci misionáře Luthera dostává na loď do Ameriky. Země byla jeho nadějí na radostnější život, a ačkoliv opouštěl Korea jako zlomený muž, nepřestával věřit, že v nové zemi najde štěstí.

Druhá analytická kapitola rozebírá román *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*, který vydalo nakladatelství Scribner's Sons roku 1937. Hlavním tématem je, jak je patrné z názvu práce, americký sen. Analýza se soustředí na to, co si pod ním tři hlavní postavy Chungpa, George a Kim (všichni jsou korejskými imigranty) představují a zdali jej v průběhu příběhu dosáhli. Je zde definována deziluze, což je zklamání ze zjištění nepříjemné pravdy o něčem, o čem měl člověk dobré mínění. Tento pojem je klíčový, jelikož deziluze prochází celým románem.

Chungpa měl velká očekávání od Ameriky, dalo by se říci až naivní. Postupně své ideály nenávratně ztrácí, když jako výborný pozorovatel začíná zjišťovat, jak je americká společnost vybudována na kastovním systému ras. Tento mladík přišel do USA prohlubovat svou lásku k literatuře, což se mu povedlo, jelikož odpromoval na bostonské univerzitě. Taktéž si našel americkou přítelkyni, která ale byla, stejně jako sen, nestálá. Chungpa si brzy uvědomil, že aby byl společností přijímán, musí se prezentovat určitým způsobem. Nikdy tedy nedával najevo svoji nespokojenost, když byl mezi bílými Američanami, pouze nad tímto tématem debatoval s dalšími imigranty.

Čtenář má možnost sledovat proces amerikanizace hlavní postavy a jeho interakci s krajany, kteří se stali jeho přáteli. George je velký extrovert milující přepych a krásu. Chungpa k němu vzhlíží, jelikož je pro něj vzorem někoho, kdo se plně asimiloval. Na konci se ale George vzdá své touhy obdivovat americké ženy a vezme si za manželku dívku korejského původu. Příběh skeptického Kima, který nikdy nenašel v nové zemi štěstí, skončil tragicky. Ačkoliv navázal vztah s běloškou Helen, kvůli nesouhlasu její rodiny byli donuceni se odloučit a Helen na konci umírá v sanatoriu. Kim se s touto ztrátou nemohl smířit a spáchal sebevraždu, která pro něj byla jediným vysvobozením z bolesti. Ani on tedy amerického snu nedosáhl. Co se týče Chungpy, měl více šancí snu dosáhnout než svobodomyšlný George a cynický Kim, ale ke konci knihy je zřejmé, že ačkoliv se může považovat za úspěšného, Amerika se nestala jeho domovem. Stále si v ní připadá jako host, který je posuzován na základě původu.

Celá práce tedy poukazuje na skutečnost, že americký sen zdaleka není dosažitelný pro všechny a ti, kteří se jakkoliv odlišují, stále čekají na to, až budou přijati společností, v níž jedenkrát vkládali tolik naděje.

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