

**“All the Guns Must Have the Same Caliber”:  
A Kachruvian Study of Ha Jin’s *Chineseness* in  
“Winds and Clouds over a Funeral”\***

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**Abstract**

This article analyzes Ha Jin’s “Winds and Clouds over a Funeral” within a Kachruvian framework. Firstly, it examines Braj B. Kachru’s concepts of “contact literature” and the “bilingual’s creativity” in that both of these undermine the traditional homogeneity of a monolingual conceptualization of the English language. I then offer an overview of Kachru’s taxonomical model as a means of explaining the cultural, grammatical and linguistic alterations in the creativity of bilinguals, especially that of writers who use English as a second language. In this regard, and bearing in mind Haoming Gong’s concept of “translation literature,” I explore Ha Jin’s “Winds and Clouds over a Funeral” in terms of the linguistic processes and nativization strategies employed by this Chinese-American author in order to transfer cultural aspects from his native language, Chinese. Through this I aim to reveal and describe the hybrid nature of the work of Ha Jin, a writer who I believe is paving the way for a reassessment of Asian-American fiction in the United States.

**Keywords**

Kachruvian framework, bilingual’s creativity, contact literatures, hybridity, Chinese English

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English has become a pluralistic language, one which is used by first, second or foreign speakers on a global scale. Indeed, no other language has ever been spoken by so many people and in so many different places (Crystal, *The English Language*). It began its unprecedented but steady growth in the early years of 1920s, although the rise of the United States as a world superpower following the end of Second World War played a crucial role in the worldwide spread of the language. As might be expected, its rapid growth has also yielded an upsurge of different diasporic varieties of English, which typically differ in their use from those of native speakers. Since the 1980s, the diffusion of English as a globalized language has received the attention of many scholars, among them Braj B. Kachru (“Spread of English”), Manfred Görlach, David Crystal (*English as a Global Language*) and Rakesh Bhatt, who have explored the heterogeneity of these new and emerging linguistic forms. In this regard, of particular note are the studies of Braj B. Kachru on the different Asian varieties of English and their dimensions (acculturation and nativization of the language), and the subsequent Englishization of other languages and literatures (Kachru, “English as an Asian Language” 90). As Tamara Valentine has observed, works such as *The Other Tongue*, *The Indianization of English* and *The Alchemy of English* published by Kachru in the 1980s have explored “the pluricentric nature of English” as well as the notions of “non-native varieties,” “bilingual’s creativity,” “contact literatures,” “multicanonicity,” “nativization,” “Englishization” or “world Englishes” (149). Such concepts serve to account for the richness of this globalized language, whose norms of use often reflect the cultural background of these speakers and what they may bring to English. Bearing this in mind, Kachru challenges the idea of the exclusiveness of a single monolingual conceptualization of English language, literature and culture, and reminds us that these days Asian Englishes continue to be marginalized in the same way that English speakers during the Victorian Era deprecated the English spoken in the US. Moreover, he expresses his rejection of terms such as “commonwealth literature” or “Third World Literature” in that their conceptualization implicitly functions as a way of marginalizing the creativity and multicultural dimensions of those Englishes (Kachru, “Speaking Tree” 18).

This paper aims to explore an example of this variety of English in the writing of Ha Jin, a Chinese-born migrant writer who lives in the United States and produces his works in English, a language he began learning when he left the Red Army at the end of Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution. His literature has drawn the critical attention of a number of scholars, who have referred to it variously as Chinese, American, Asian-American and Sinophone, and who have considered his

narrative as an example of “first-order diaspora” (Kong, “Species of Afterlife” 116). His fiction has been analyzed as illustrative of “bilingual creativity” (Zhang 306) and as “translation literature” (Gong 148), whereas his language, impregnated with lexical terms and Chinese idioms, was the subject to severe criticism from Claire Messud and Nancy Tsai, both of whom objected to its “Chineseness,” and from Zhu Tianwen, a renowned Taiwanese author who accused Ha Jin of “self-exoticism” and “linguistic betrayal” (qtd. in Kong, “Aporetic Square” 122).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, others have praised its seeming “linguistic ingenuity” (Zhang 307) and his willingness to sacrifice accuracy in order to make his work more accessible to his (Western) readership (Oh 422).

Following Kachru’s framework for the bilingual’s creativity, this study will apply the systematization articulated by this Indian linguist to one of Ha Jin’s most best-known tales, “Winds and Clouds over a Funeral,” published in his second collection of short stories, *Under the Red Flag* (1999). My close reading here will focus on cultural and linguistic elements of this story which help us to understand Ha Jin’s literature as an example of the bilingual’s creativity, as described in many of Kachru’s works (“Indianness,” “Bilingual’s Creativity,” *Alchemy*, “Speaking Tree”). Although my analysis follows closely Hang Zhang’s Kachruvian reading of *In the Pond* (2002), it is also my intention to explore the nature of Ha Jin’s fiction and to dwell in particular on what I consider samples of his Chinese English. I will argue that the hybrid nature of Ha Jin’s early fictional works, though full of Chinese transfers and idioms, are nevertheless more attractive to a Western readership precisely because of the seeming exoticism of their themes and the language used by the characters therein.<sup>2</sup>

Today a limited number of scholars would raise an eyebrow at expressions such as “world Englishes,” “non-native” varieties of English, “contact literature” or “bilingual’s creativity.” The very notion of world Englishes has served to accommodate the different variations of English in terms of form and usage. Such a concept, however, also accounts for the pluralistic dimension of this language, and

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<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the negative reaction of Ha Jin’s work, see Rey Chow, Steven G. Yao and Belinda Kong (“Aporetic Square”).

<sup>2</sup> I believe that Ha Jin’s shift in the choice of his themes, leaving China behind to embrace stories of immigrant characters in the U.S., seems to be less appealing to both critics and readers. Unlike stories published in *Under the Red Flag* (1997) or *The Bridegroom* (2000), some of which were anthologized in the volumes of *The Best American Short Stories*, none of the narratives published in *A Good Fall* (2009), his latest collection of short fiction to date, have been anthologized and neither of them have achieved widespread public recognition in subsequent years.

facilitates its global nature and popularity, as well as its cross-cultural function in many fields, including education, business, tourism and literary creativity.

Braj B. Kachru, in his articulation of the notion of world Englishes, sets up a distinction between English as a medium and English as a repertoire of cultural pluralism, the former referring to the form which the language takes, and the latter to its function and content. The medium is the vehicle used by speakers to communicate in a globalized world, whereas the *many* voices which those users employ become the message. In general terms, Kachru contends that in its conception, the English language and literature were born into a Eurocentric, Judeo-Christian and Western paradigm, and that this was eventually challenged by cultural pluralism once the language—the medium—began its global expansion. This vision is also shared by the Indian linguist Rakesh Bhatt, who has noted the growing consensus among scholars that English is no longer one language but one among many, and what is most important, that the majority of these are “disengaged from the language’s early Judeo-Christian tradition” (527).

In order to illustrate what he considers to be “other” varieties of English, Kachru uses the concentric circle model, a graphical representation of the presence of the language in the world which, according to Bhatt, “captures the historical, sociolinguistic, acquisitional, and literary contexts of the spread and diffusion of English” (529). Kachru argues that English speakers belonging to what he refers to as “the Expanding Circle,” which includes those regions where English is used essentially in EFL contexts (i.e., China, Indonesia, South Korea, Egypt, South America or the Caribbean countries), outnumber speakers pertaining to “the Inner Circle”—where English is spoken as a native language (Great Britain, United States, Canada, Australia)—and also those from “the Outer Circle,” speakers in places where English has spread in non-native contexts to become an additional language, including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Kenya and Nigeria.<sup>3</sup>

A restrictive, monocultural perspective can also be seen when we talk about English literature as opposed to other literatures in English, or English language versus world Englishes. As such, Braj B. Kachru rejects a monolingual conceptualization of the English language and literature, encouraging rather an appreciation of the pluralistic dimension of the language:

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<sup>3</sup> Andy Kirkpatrick has noted that Kachru’s model offers advances over other models, in that it accounts for the plurality of English and, as such, its “multicultural identities.” On the other hand, the fact that English in its global use becomes nativized or acculturated makes it possible to argue that no variety is intrinsically better than any other (343).

By looking at English as a pluralistic language, we are actually focusing on its layer after layer of extended processes of convergence with other languages and cultures. And this convergence and contact is unique, since it has altered the traditional resources for contact, for example, French, German, Italian, and Scandinavian. The language has opened up itself, as it were, to convergence with the non-Western world: that part of the world that was traditionally not a resource for English. (Kachru, “Speaking Tree” 8)

When England expanded its empire across the world, the English language came in contact with other civilizations whose languages and cultures came to contribute to its current pluralism. An Indian-born and Kashmiri speaker, Kachru suggests that “culture wars” exist as a result of a campaign by defenders of monolingualism, who believe that the contribution of world Englishes may jeopardize the integrity of their ancestral language. Kachru, for his part, has argued that “native speakers of English abandon the attitude of linguistic chauvinism and replace it with an attitude of linguistic tolerance” (Kachru, *Alchemy* 112). Despite this innovative approach based on the heterogeneity of the English language, Kachru’s framework was subject to acrimonious criticism by Alastair Pennycook, who accused him of promoting nationalism in the Outer Circle, and the implied ethnocentricity of the Inner Circle was also attacked (qtd. in Kilickaya 37). In addition, the concept of world Englishes has led to heated debates not only on political and ideological grounds, but also in the field of language teaching with respect to which kind of English should be taught in the Expanding Circle (Kilickaya 37).

The defense of non-native varieties of English leads Kachru to explore two fundamental concepts, both of which will be addressed in the present study: contact literatures and the bilingual’s creativity. He defines contact literatures as those “literatures in English written by the users of English as a second language to delineate contexts which generally do not form part of what may be labeled the traditions of English language (African, Malaysian, and Indian and so on)” (“Bilingual’s Creativity” 127). Depending on their *contactness*, these literatures may show certain degrees of impact at different linguistic levels; they also have two faces: a national identity and a linguistic realization or distinctiveness (e.g., Indianness, Africanness, Chineseness), and in this regard their historical dimension must extend the underlying thought patterns of the Judeo-Christian tradition to the heritages of Africa and Asia (Kachru, *Alchemy* 161).

The bilingual’s creativity, on the other hand, addresses a natural consequence

of world-wide uses of English, “exhibited by non-monolinguals in all situations” (Kachru, *Alchemy* 171). When the British Empire expanded its influence over Asia and Africa, the ensuing colonial period changed the “situation in the linguistic fabric of the English language, and extended its uses as a medium for ethnic and regional literatures in non-Western world” (160). The results of this extension gave rise to examples of the bilingual’s (literary) creativity in a number of authors—Kachru, for example, cites as nativized thought-processes those of “Sanskritization” and “Kannadaization” in Raja Rao’s English, and the “Yorubaization” of Amos Tutuola and Wole Soyinka—whose texts have exploited different linguistic and cultural backgrounds that do not seem to fit the underlying thought patterns of native speakers of English.<sup>4</sup>

Bearing in mind the cultural and linguistic blends that are present in a bilingual’s creativity, Kachru develops a model which aims to explain the lexical, grammatical and even cultural alterations of a writer’s work, whose texts are situated between two different cultural spheres. As a result, a number of linguistic processes present in a bilingual’s creativity are distinguished, among which Kachru includes “nativization of context,” “nativization of cohesion and cohesiveness” and “nativization of rhetorical strategies” (“Bilingual’s Creativity” 131-33).

The nativization of context (also “transfer of context” in Kachru, “*Indianness*”) implies the transfer of cultural patterns from the writer’s own culture into his adopted language. Kachru attempts to explain that on many occasions, specific cultural presuppositions are different from what has traditionally been expected in the cultural milieu of English literature. A large number of speakers of English share a Eurocentric position, this coinciding with their shared Western

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<sup>4</sup> Of particular interest is the situation of English in China, one of the countries included in Kachru’s Expanding Circle. The rise of Mao Zedong in 1949 meant that English came to be regarded as the language of American imperialism. During the Cultural Revolution, English instruction at all levels was halted for five years, while contact with foreigners was considered dangerous; the main justification for learning a foreign language, most likely English, was, according to Cowan et al, to “serve the revolution” (qtd. in Cheng 162). Later on, in the early 1970s, English began to be taught through textbooks “full of political slogans and articles of a political character” (Pride and Liu 43). In 1992, Chin-Chuan Cheng contended that despite the increasing number of people learning English in China, “there is no English-speaking Chinese community; nor does English serve as an interlanguage among the nation’s fifty-six ethnic groups. In this sense, the functions of English are much different in China than in Africa . . . and in South Asia” and he concludes that “I know of no significant works of literature in English or other foreign languages by Chinese authors living in China” (163). It seems clear, then, that examples of bilingual’s creativity in Chinese authors are likely to be nonexistent in China itself, and are more probable in Chinese speakers living overseas, as in the case of Ha Jin.

Judaic-Christian heritage. Introducing aspects of Eastern religion or culture into this heritage is often difficult for such speakers to accommodate. The nativization of cohesion and cohesiveness, on the other hand, involves the alteration of the native users' concept of *cohesion* and *cohesiveness* and can be seen in types of lexicalization, collocational extension in the use or frequency of certain grammatical forms ("Bilingual's Creativity"; *Alchemy*). Finally, the bilingual's creativity also manifests itself through the nativization of rhetorical strategies, a category whose linguistic realizations include:

(1) The use of *native similes and metaphors* which from a linguistic point of view may result in collocational deviation. Kachru claims that a speaker (or a writer) makes use of similes or metaphors which help establish connections with his/her own cultural background.

(2) Transfer of *rhetorical devices for contextualization and authentication* refer to a kind of transfer very common in African and Asian contexts, frequently seen following Onuora Nzekwu's terminology, as examples of "speech initiators" (*Alchemy* 167).

(3) The *translation of proverbs and idioms* implies the transcreation of ready-made sentences which are translated literally from an African or Asian language into English. In his 1965 study, Kachru described how a writer used this device to nativize speech functions such as abuse, curses, blessings and flattery ("*Indianness*" 399).

(4) The *use of culturally-dependent speech styles* so as to give the narrative and the discourse a "naive tall-tale style" ("Bilingual's Creativity," 133-34).

(5) The *use of syntactic devices* which may consist, in African contexts, of the traditional native village storyteller encouraging audience participation through asking questions (*Alchemy* 167-68).

In what follows, I will apply and adapt Kachru's framework to Ha Jin's short story "Winds and Clouds over a Funeral," looking at the ways that he produces cultural and linguistic transfers from his native Chinese language (nativization) into English, aiming to create a hybrid language, one which falls within the concepts of contact literature and the bilingual's creativity. Prior to the analysis of this story, I will offer a brief overview of Ha Jin's fiction and the critical reception of his oeuvre.

## **Linguistic Accuracy and Cultural Accessibility: A Difficult Balance**

Jin Xuěfēi (金雪飛) who uses Ha Jin as his pen name, can be considered one of the most successful Asian-American writers in the current literary American arena. Praised by reviewers and critics, he received the National Book Award and the 2000 PEN/Faulkner Award for his second novel *Waiting* (1999). He also received this latter literary prize in 2005 for *War Trash*, a novel that has the Korean War as its backdrop. Ha Jin's literary debut came in 1990 with the publication of *Between Silences*, his first book of verse. Public notoriety, however, came with the publication of his first two volumes of short fiction: *Ocean of Words*, based on his experiences in the Chinese army, won the PEN/Hemingway Award in 1996, and *Under the Red Flag*, a book of narratives that draws the reader into rural life in China during the infamous Cultural Revolution, which was awarded the 1997 Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction.

Born in the Chinese province of Liaoning in 1956, Ha Jin arrived in the U.S. in 1985 to pursue a doctorate in American Literature at Brandeis University. The response of Chinese authorities to the demonstrations at Tiananmen Square in June 1989, in his own words, "the source of all the trouble" (Fay 118), led to him decide to remain in the US and never to return to his homeland. Ha Jin resorted to writing in his adopted language knowing that he would not be able to change back to Chinese (Varsava 9). Writing in English thus became a "matter of survival" (Weinberger 46) as he knew that his work would never be published in China (Fay 118). As a migrant writer, which is how Ha Jin sees himself, he professes admiration for Conrad and Nabokov, two authors who, like himself, were accused of betraying their mother tongues after their decision to write in English. "To Nabokov," comments Ha Jin, "the switch from Russian to English was excruciatingly painful" ("In Defence" 462). To be sure, Ha Jin addresses the cases of these two writers as a way of referring to his own situation. As a Chinese émigré in the US, Ha Jin hurriedly responded to the scathing attacks of those who accused him of betraying his country on the grounds of language choice and literary themes. "The worst crime the country commits against the writer" claims Ha Jin, "is to make him unable to write with honesty and artistic integrity" (*The Writer as Migrant* 32). As Haoming Gong has noted, Ha Jin's situation—his idiosyncratic use of English as a way of surviving in an alien linguistic environment—destabilizes



such concepts of exile, diaspora and national identity (148).<sup>5</sup>

His use of English gave rise to ambivalent opinions: a number of critics have focused their attention on his crippled English while others have noted the hybrid nature of his writing. Paula E. Geyh praises his prose for being “remarkable in its clarity, precision, and grace” though, she admits, his literature bears “strong signature traces of the Chinese worldview and its metaphorical structures” (192). More recently, in 2007, John Updike states that *Waiting* “is impeccably written” though further on, he indicates that “Ha Jin’s English in *A Free Life* shows more solecisms than in his Chinese novels.” Regarding the use of solecisms, Haomin Gong determines that they “are meant to make clear the difficulty and awkwardness of the characters’ linguistic as well as ideological transition from one culture to another” (158).

Contrary to this favorable reception, some critics have claimed that such simplicity in Ha Jin’s prose is not intentional but a consequence of his own difficulties in expressing himself correctly in English. That seems to be the position of Peter Brickbank who, in his review of *Under the Red Flag*, observes that Ha Jin’s style is “as plain and stiffly serviceable as a Mao uniform” as it “lacks expressive elegance and leaves the reader wishing for a greater psychological richness, for colors other than red” (14). Claire Messud shared this position in her analysis of *The Bridegroom* stating that Ha Jin “writes spare prose, with a limited vocabulary: his works read as if he had written them in Chinese and merely undertaken the translations himself” (1879).

If we consider the monolingual use of a language as a norm, we would indeed accept that any digressions challenging that norm are to be regarded as imperfections or failures, and hence highly censorable transgressions of the rules of the language. We might well see Nancy Tsai’s criticism of Ha Jin’s language in such a light. Tsai takes pains to carefully pinpoint a good number of (mis)translations in Ha Jin’s best-seller *Waiting*. In her view, the pages of this novel “abound with Chinese expressions, idioms, and clichés directly translated into English and hammered into the sentences like nails” (58). The use of a language packed with stock Chinese phrases, sayings and proverbs creates a foreign quality in the English language and produces a denaturalization of the Chinese characters in that “they sound more ‘un-English’ than Chinese” (Tsai 60).

Despite the precision of Tsai’s analysis, her position can be questioned in

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<sup>5</sup> For further discussion on the nuanced connotations of the terms “migrant,” “exile,” and “diaspora,” see Gong 149-51.

terms of her penchant for correctness in the use of grammatical rules. In fact, what she regards as a disadvantage is the cornerstone of the arguments of those who defend hybridity and the bilingual's creativity. For them, Ha Jin's literature might not only be creating a new type of fiction, but also his literature "may pave the way for the acceptance of other Chinese English-language creative fiction overseas and in China" (Zhang 313). In the same vein, Kachru reminds us that the rigor of a writer's bilingual creativity may be found in that it challenges the validity of a theory of grammar which treats monolingualism as the only valid norm (*Alchemy* 159). In fact, one of the principles of language pluricentricity—as Kachru referred to English—is the need to recognize the convergence of this language with local languages as a natural process of convergence and acculturation ("English as an Asian Language" 97). In the case of Ha Jin, the transfer produced from his mother tongue Chinese into his fiction yields a hybrid linguistic form whose grammatical nature clearly differs from that of standard English. Ha Jin himself referred to this in noting that he considered standard English to be "insufficient in presenting the experiences and ideas that the author describes" ("In Defence" 465).

If we embrace this principle, it is possible to claim that Ha Jin's literature stands out exactly because of its hybridity, which combines his native Chinese language and his adopted language, English. However, unlike postcolonial writers who produce hybrid texts that may challenge and destabilize the homogeneity of language by reinforcing the "difference" of their own aesthetics from those of imperialist authors, Ha Jin does not seem to sit easily within the general rubric of Anglophone postcoloniality. The adoption of English, as he has said, resides in his own survival as a writer, whereas the hybrid character of his writing becomes a distinctive trait that pervades his fictional works which have China as their cultural setting. Ha Jin has observed in interviews that his adoption of English implied a voluntary separation from Chinese state power, and the shift to English can be understood not only as a retreat to a more flexible language than Chinese, but also as a deliberate distancing of himself from a language that contains "a lot of political jargon" (Fay 122). In fact, in some of Ha Jin's imagery, the Chinese language can be seen to have exerted a subjugating role similar to that of English in postcolonial countries. One is reminded here of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's comments on the Indian writer Raja Rao and the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, both of whom were said to have "needed to transform the language, to use it in a different way in its new context and so, as Achebe says, quoting James Baldwin, make it 'bear the burden' of their experience" (11).

Nancy Tsai herself acknowledges that Ha Jin "succeeds in creating a foreign

quality in the English language” though she admits that “the degree to which this foreign quality is actually ‘Chinese’ remains debatable” (60). What Tsai considers debatable,<sup>6</sup> awkward or even foreign to native ears, is perceived as a characteristic of hybrid literature by those critics who contend that Ha Jin’s fiction will open up new fictional (creative) paths, new ways of writing, which will challenge monolingual rules.

For Haomin Gong, who analyzes Ha Jin’s work as a new special form of literature that he refers to as *translation literature*,<sup>7</sup> the uniqueness of Ha Jin’s English may be found in the fact that it “sounds like a direct translation of Chinese and, therefore, seems readily translatable back into Chinese” (148). Gong argues that there is a debate as to exactly how Ha Jin’s work should be categorized—and this is in part due to the difficulty in the amalgamation of the author’s language choice and the subject matter—and that his writing destabilizes his own identity as a migrant writer, a concept that Ha Jin has claimed for himself which “may seem to free him from linguistic and ideological confinements” (151). In this regard, Gong is interested in the way Ha Jin uses English for his own benefit, in that “his use of language turns his linguistic ‘self-crippling’ to literary advantage” (157), while at the same time the use of Chinese linguistic features, such as proverbs or idioms, are intended to become a strategy “to give his prose an unfamiliar flavor” (158). Such a convincing explanation may seem fitting to account for the abundance of solecisms used by the author for his own means: “Many of these solecisms, which ‘feel translated from the Mandarin,’ are in fact intentional on the writer’s part, as they are meant to make clear the difficulty and awkwardness of the characters’ linguistic as well as ideological transition from one culture to another” and, continues Gong, “perhaps the author never intended that his readers overlook them” (158).

Finally, Seiwoong Oh reminds us of the difficulty of representing one’s culture to cultural outsiders, in that popular media usually represent Asian culture “as alien and largely unintelligible” (420). Evidence of the difficult space between languages with distant cultural backgrounds may also be found in Amy Tan’s assertion that in the art of translation “something enormous is always lost” (26).

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<sup>6</sup> Tsai criticizes that what Ha Jin actually does, translating stock Chinese phrases into English, is praised by readers and critics who find such “foreign” touch in his fiction quite exotic. She claims that those readers and critics are often impressed by linguistic features whose “foreign” quality is in fact debatable (60).

<sup>7</sup> Tsai rightly contends that “the act of writing in a non-native language is the act of translation” (58), since someone who positions himself or herself in between two cultural traditions may (un)consciously fall back on the tradition to which he or she feels closer.

According to Oh, Ha Jin sacrifices accuracy in order to offer his readers textual accessibility.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in his attempt to fit his writing “within the confines of the current state of reading in America” (422), Ha Jin does not linger on textual explanations that may interfere with or misdirect the reader’s attention, instead painlessly introduces cultural touches by mixing those cultural connotations with the narrative or with character development.

### **Analysis of “Winds and Clouds over a Funeral” within a Kachruvian Framework**

In her study of *In the Pond*, Hang Zhang broadens the Kachruvian concept of “contact literatures” and adapts it to Ha Jin’s fiction. Though Kachru initially used this term to refer to communities (“users of English as a second language”), Zhang assumes that Ha Jin, who has lived in the United States for over thirty years, may well be regarded as a representative of Chinese culture and literature in contact with the Western world. Zhang contends that Ha Jin’s works “exhibit characteristics similar to such contact literatures in his exploration of cultural norms, text design and organization” (306). In my reading of “Winds and Clouds over a Funeral,” I am indebted to her articulation of Kachru’s concepts of contact languages and the bilingual’s creativity, although I have preferred to focus on linguistic examples that help to illustrate the hybrid nature of Ha Jin’s writing.

“Winds and Clouds over a Funeral” (henceforth “W&C”) appeared in *Indiana Review* in 1994 and was later republished in Ha Jin’s second volume of short stories *Under the Red Flag* (1997). It has been considered to be among his finest stories and probably the best rendering of a faithful representation of Chinese tradition, language and culture. Indeed, as I contend elsewhere, “W&C” illustrates the anxiety of survival of ancient customs in traditional China through the struggle between these and the Maoist values of the New China (“Introducción” 39). The action is set some time during the years of Mao’s Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), although no dates are provided. However, throughout the narrative there are many oblique references to the spread of dogmatic ideals in the New China and the blowing away of customs and traditions from Old China. During that tumultuous

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<sup>8</sup> In this sense, Oh defends Jin’s fiction from the biased attacks made by Professor Liu Yiqing of Beijing University, who accused this writer of portraying an orientalized and exotic vision of China, catering for the literary tastes of his Western readership (Oh 424). Such harsh criticism led Ha Jin’s publisher in China to cancel plans to publish the Chinese translation of his second novel, *Waiting* (Kong, “Aporetic Square” 121).

decade, China remained in isolation and, in the words of Chin-Chuang Cheng, a period typified by an inward-looking mentality evolved (174). During those years, newspapers published politically-loaded articles praising the figure of Mao Zedong and his achievements. His death in 1976 ushered in a period characterized by an outward-searching mentality during which the country opened up to Western influences. These two different mentalities can also be seen in Ha Jin's stories, not only in the way plots are wrought, but also in the usage of the English language by his characters.<sup>9</sup>

"W&C" revolves around the death and burial of the mother of Ding Liang, the chairman of a small commune in rural China. With his mother on her deathbed, Ding Liang promises her that he will never allow her body to be cremated, even though he is aware that the authorities encouraged cremation not only as a proof of loyalty to the party and to the country, but also as a way of preserving arable land for future generations (46). The key element in the story is the dilemma which Ding must face once his mother passes away: ground burying her implies not only respecting her last will, but also abiding by the Confucian ideal of venerating ancestors. Cremation, on the other hand, stands for modernity and the fulfillment of Maoist laws aimed at creating the New China. In "W&C," Ding seeks to honor his own filial love, yet at the same time, as a person of his position, he does not want to act to cause any political upheaval to the members of the commune. In fact, one of his men warns Ding: "You are the head of the commune. Thousands of eyes are staring at you" (49). As Paula E. Geyh has rightly said, Ding will finally find a way out of this conundrum when he decides to put out a story which will make everybody believe—especially the members of the opposite party eager to see Ding fall—that it was the old woman who "volunteered to be cremated in order to preserve 'clean' ground for future generations, thus making himself appear both patriotic and properly filial" (197). In the ensuing pages, I will draw on the Kachruvian framework in an analysis of linguistic devices and cultural aspects of Ha Jin's writing in an attempt to explain the bilingual's creativity here.

### *Nativization of Contexts: Cultural Aspects*

In the majority of Ha Jin's fictional works, the nativization of context is

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<sup>9</sup> In general terms, the stories that take place during the Cultural Revolution contain politically loaded Chinese jargon while those with the US in a backdrop exhibit a much more Westernized version of English.

achieved by means of contextual or lexical devices. As mentioned above, “W&C” is set during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a movement launched in May 1966 by Mao Zedong to reestablish his political stature and position, which had been weakened after the disastrous consequences of the Great Leap Forward, a political and economic campaign that aimed to transform China from an agrarian economy into a socialist society. In its aim to modernize China, the Cultural Revolution set in motion a campaign to wipe out the so-called “Four Olds:” old ideas, old customs, old culture and old habits. Young students, the Red Guards, driven by Mao’s principles, set out to destroy the old vestiges of traditional Chinese culture. Ha Jin, who lived during those years in Liaoning, witnessed at first hand the systematic cultural annihilation and the great upheaval caused by the Red Guards, as his fiction attests. Dismount Fort, the small commune in rural China where the story is set, is made up of peasants and villagers who maintain a set of old-time superstitions and religious beliefs deeply embedded in their mentality and everyday life.

Prior to the burial of Ding’s mother, the villagers in “W&C” are seen practicing ancient customs that the New China aims to do away with. In the story, when everybody is guarding the dead body, children come to steal buns because Ding’s mother had lived a long life and villagers believed that those buns cooked by the Dings and placed at the head of the dead person’s coffin would make the youngsters live longer (“W&C” 48). As a practitioner of translation literature, Ha Jin bridges any cultural misunderstandings that his readership might incur by having a narrator or character provide further explanations on a specific situation. In this case, Yuanmin, the narrator’s mother, explains why the children came around and took the buns away.<sup>10</sup>

Another example of a cultural element nativized by the author is seen when the women attending the funeral use scissors to cut out pieces of the quilt that covers the dead woman: “A young woman was busy cutting the clothes with scissors. He stood up and was about to stop her, but Uncle Wang intervened, ‘Let her take a piece, Sheng. Your grandma was a blessed woman. That’s why they want a piece of her clothes to put into their babies’ quilt, to make the kids easier to raise’” (48). This passage alludes to a Chinese superstitious tradition handed down from generation to generation. Cutting a piece of the quilt that covered the corpse of an aged person was believed to bring good luck and protection against illnesses. Although falling into abeyance, it can still be seen in rural areas of China today,

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<sup>10</sup> This fact had also been pointed out by Nancy Tsai (61).

and was certainly a living tradition at the time of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>11</sup> In this passage, Uncle Wang becomes the cultural interpreter, offering textual accessibility to Ha Jin's readers.

Another example of a context nativization occurs when an old man, mourning over the old woman's body, recalls that thousands of birds were perched on the roof of the house the morning Ding's mother died. This is interpreted by villagers as a sign of the woman's holiness as they believed "that the birds were angels who had come down to fetch the dead, and that the old woman must have done a lot of good work in her life" (48-49). Although angels are holy creatures associated with Western Christianity, Ha Jin opted to choose such a religious symbol to make this passage culturally more digestible and understandable to his readership.

Finally, superstition is also seen when the dead woman is cremated. Chinese traditions have always shown a profound respect toward ancestors. Dismount Fort villagers imbued with a world of religious superstitions and fanaticism, believed that body cremation would affect their lives negatively. This is recalled when the furnace at the crematorium is working at full capacity: "They are burning a body again. That soul will come back and haunt their homes and lure their children into the marshes" (55). As mentioned before, in Ha Jin's story, cremation is related to submission to the Party, whereas traditional burial in the ground represents respect for ancient traditions. In this regard, Paula E. Geyh rightly comments that "[d]espite attempts by the 'New China' to sweep away vestiges of the 'Old China'—among them its Confucian traditions of filial piety, patriarchy, ancestor worship, and its many superstitions, Ha Jin's stories suggest that the Old China still endures" (197).

### *Nativization of Contexts: Proper Names*

The use of certain lexical items in "W&C" is meant to place the reader either in the old pre-communist China or the period after the Cultural Revolution. As such, place names and proper names are lexical markers loaded with cultural meaning. As Hang Zhang suggests, the use of proper names in Ha Jin is subtle but powerful, helping to provide cultural authenticity and historical accuracy to the narration (309). In Ha Jin's fiction, real place names, Beijing, Dalian City, Liaoning, and so on, are combined with fictitious place names, such as Dismount Fort,<sup>12</sup> Gold

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<sup>11</sup> I would like to thank Chén Húng-Kūn for having made me aware that this tradition was still in vogue when she was a baby during the early years of the Cultural Revolution.

<sup>12</sup> Dismount Fort is a direct reference to transfer posts during the expeditions from China to Korea, as the author himself has confirmed in various interviews (GoGwilt and Ha Jin; Ibáñez,

County and Muji City. Other remnants of the Old China include East Wind Inn and Old Folk Road, one of the main streets in Dismount Fort where Shao Bin, head of the Propaganda Department and the main character in Ha Jin's first novel, *In the Pond*, lives. These terms coexist with new ones—Harvest Fertilizer Plant and Commune Guest House—products of the new times in which the economy had been propelled forward by the Great Leap Forward.

### *Nativization of Contexts: Terms of Uniquely Chinese Reference*

Hang Zhang includes in this category lexical items which are loan-translations from Chinese. Though still used in modern Chinese, these words and expressions were widely used during the years of the Cultural Revolution (309). One such term is “propaganda,” a word that in Western societies has a derogatory sense, whereas in the Chinese variety of English, as J. Pride and Liu Ru-Shan have noted, it holds a respectable and favorable meaning (62).

In Ha Jin's fiction, particularly in novels and short stories set in China, propaganda assumes considerable significance. Party members make use of it in order to defend a position or undermine an opposing party's ideas. In this sense, propaganda in newspapers is a powerful weapon in winning the favorable opinion of readers, and thus is seen as being of cardinal importance. In “W&C,” the Dings are moved to publish an article in the county newspaper as a way of advertising that, as good comrades, they have complied with the Party's legislation and thus cremated the old grandmother.<sup>13</sup>

Another term with a uniquely Chinese reference is “fence-sitter,” used as a noun but also reflected in the expression “he always sat on the fence” (“W&C” 50). This politically-loaded expression denotes those individuals who prefer to remain waiting for the right opportunity and avoid taking sides. In “W&C,” Huang Zhi and Zhang Meng are members from the Commune Administration who prefer not to take an active role until they see who the best candidate is. In this case, the author nativizes a Chinese term which, although understandable to English readers, is a calque of the Chinese *qí qiáng* [騎牆], “to sit on the fence.” The expression alludes to a person who would prefer to sit and wait in order to see the outcome of a fight

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“Writing Short Fiction” 84).

<sup>13</sup> In the story, propaganda is officially achieved when a junior clerk in the Propaganda Department visits the crematorium so as to take pictures of the wreaths, the coffin and the people who came to the funeral. Once the cremation is over, he also takes some pictures of the family holding the ash box containing the ashes of the deceased woman (Jin, “W&C” 57).



before taking sides. Sometimes, that person might decide to take both sides in a dispute so as to create a rift between the two contending parties.

### *Nativization of Rhetorical Strategies: Similes and Metaphors*

In “W&C,” Ha Jin consciously or unconsciously transfers Chinese expressions into English as a trademark of his Chineseness. These expressions may sometimes be rendered literally, while at other times, the author himself adapts them to make them a bit more digestible to English ears. Readers unfamiliar with Asian cultures may regard those similes and metaphors as exotic touches used by the author to produce effects of strangeness or remoteness. Thus, when Ding’s mother dies, the narrator claims that “her death was like a ripe nut that falls” (46). This seems to be an adaptation from the Chinese expression *luò yè guī gēn* [落葉歸根], an idiom that makes reference to the leaves that fall from the tree and return to the roots. In this case, the leaves falling from the tree and withering on the soil will eventually become nutritious fertilizer. The expression is also applicable to the emigrant or expatriate who returns home after a long stay abroad, indicating that all things return to where they belonged. Ha Jin thus succeeds in transforming a Chinese calque that might have sounded rather awkward to English ears and provides a more understandable and Westernized version of it.<sup>14</sup>

Once Ding Liang has decided to fulfill his mother’s will and contravene the Party’s position, members of his political faction force Secretary Yang Chen to hold a meeting to discuss Ding’s mother’s funeral. Yang was not on good terms with Ding and the narrator warns us that he would do whatever was in his power to make Ding fall. At the meeting, Secretary Yang’s plan is to set Ding a trap by assuring him that a mother’s funeral was “a private matter, and Chairman Ding has the right to decide on his own” (51). Relieved, Ding Liang unveils his mother’s last will, although he is bewildered to see how his own men do not support Secretary Yang’s position. When the meeting ends, Ding is stopped by his men on his way home and warned about the trap set by Yang and his men: as soon as Ding buries his mother, they will inform the Party and put him in trouble. Ding is suspicious of his own men’s loyalty until one of them, Feng, replies: “Loyal words jar on your ears—[like] bitter medicine is good for your illness” (53). In all probability, this is

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<sup>14</sup> Ha Jin accounts for the use and adaptation of Chinese idioms and calques in that his characters speak Mandarin in a Chinese society. He thus believes that he feels compelled to alter, sometimes drastically, the expressions “to suit the context, the drama and the narrative flow” (Jin, “In Defence” 466).

another simile transferred directly by Ha Jin and nativized into his Chinese English from the expression *zhōng yán nì ěr, liáng yào kǔ kǒu* [忠言逆耳，良藥苦口] literally, “loyal advice jars on the ears [just like] good medicine tastes bitter.” This simile could be interpreted as “frank criticism is hard to swallow, though it may come from your own comrades.” Ha Jin once again partly adapts an expression to his English readership and, though it makes sense in English, the expression is unique and does not correspond directly to any equivalent idiom in English.

When Ding plans his vengeance, he turns to his men by reasserting that “a good man needs three helpers as a pavilion has at least three pillars” (“W&C” 60), a transfer from *yī gè lí bā sān gè zhuāng, yī gè hǎo hàn sān gè bang* [一個籬笆三個樁，一個好漢三個幫], literally translated as “just as a fence needs the support of three stakes, an able fellow needs the help of three other people.” This idiom reveals the importance of friendship in China, a society in which friendship is treasured like gold and where friends have an obligation to other friends when they are in need of help. There is, in this sense, an obligation to be there to support or save—financially and even physically—a friend, even at the risk of one’s own life. The transfer made by Ha Jin yields an adaptation to English in which the author prefers to offer a religious simile instead of referring to the idea of a fence being hoisted by three stakes, which may have sounded odd to Western readers.

Along with similes, metaphors are one of the linguistic devices which appear most frequently in Ha Jin’s narrative. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines a metaphor as a “figure of speech that implies comparison between two unlike entities, as distinguished from simile, an explicit comparison signaled by the words ‘like’ or ‘as’” (“metaphor”). In Ha Jin, metaphors serve not only to set up a connection between two distant ideas but also to bridge two culturally distant concepts. I will highlight two examples from “W&C,” the first of which is used euphemistically to refer to the death of a person. When Ding reads in the newspapers how his mother’s final will and funeral have been twisted and used as a weapon by members of the opposite faction as a means of portraying him as an unfilial son, he cries out in rage: “Let him wait, wait for the day when *his old mother went* [sic] *west*” (“W&C” 59; emphasis added). This phrase, uttered by Ding as a curse, reveals the importance of religion in Eastern cultures. While in English, the verbs frequently used are “pass on” or “pass away,” in both cases implying that the person has passed on from one sphere of existence to another, in Chinese the metaphor “to go west,” *guī xī* [歸西]—the West is the resting place for the deceased—describes the process through which a departed soul (*ling*; 靈) reaches the West, the cardinal point that each day witnesses the “death” of the sun.

This idea of East as the point where the sun rises (“birth”) and West as the point where it sets (“death”) is embedded in the Chinese culture (most likely due to the strong presence of Buddhism in this culture); indeed, the majority of cemeteries face west.

Seiwoong Oh observes that it is very common in Ha Jin’s fiction not to offer explanations to cultural contexts (423). This remark, however, applies to phrases or idioms that are subject to be rendered almost literally in English. Thus, the narrators of his stories tend not to comment on cultural or historical aspects. It is up to the reader to respond actively to such gaps and provide the missing information. An example of this can be seen when Ding exhorts his men to face the lies spread by the local newspaper: “from now on all the guns must have the same caliber” (“W&C” 61). In this case, Ding reinforces the idea that each of them has to adopt a unified approach when dealing with his mother’s funeral, making them aware of the need to adopt the same story, albeit not be a credible one. Once again, this expression is a Chinese calque of *tǒng yī kǒu jìng* [統一口径], literally “one-path track,” that is to say, “to adopt a unified approach to discussing an issue.” Regarding this expression, there is an analogy between the Chinese word for “caliber” and “mouth,” which share the same pictogram—*kǒu* [口] in pinyin. There seems to be a historical reference here dating back to the Second Sino-Japanese wars (1937-1945). At this time, China imported weapons and ammunition from different European countries—mainly Czechoslovakia, Belgium, France and England—which made it impossible to have a unified system of weaponry. Thus, China fought this war with weapons of different calibers, preventing its armies from combining and sharing ammunition stocks.<sup>15</sup> After the triumph of the communist revolution in China, Mao Zedong unified the calibers and furnished his armies with weapons of local manufacture.

### *Nativization of Rhetorical Strategies: Translation or Transcreation of Proverbs and Idioms*

Kachru includes in this category curses and abuses, blessings and flatterings, modes of address and reference, and proverbs and idioms. Some examples of nativization of rhetorical strategies appear in “W&C.” In this study, I will focus on the following:

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<sup>15</sup> I would like to thank Guangwei Zhao for bringing to my attention this historical connection and the possible origin of the phrase used in this story.

**Curses and abuses.** Curse expressions are found in the majority of the stories in *Under the Red Flag* and, as Hang Zhang remarks, their use “reflect the underlying cultural values of a society” (307). Typically, one finds curse words or obscene expressions consisting of a combination of animal names with family names, such as “son of a snake” or “damn their ancestors.” Of special interest here is the use of idiomatic expressions. Thus, for instance, when Ding bursts out in anger against Secretary Yang Chen for having cremated his mother, he shouts: “Now my mother has been burned up, they begin bad-mouthing me. Whatever I do, they want to do me in. This world was not made for both Yang Chen and us, and *he won’t share the same sky with us*” (“W&C” 59; emphasis added). Here again one can find a transcreation of a Chinese calque, an idiom that corresponds to the phrase *bù gòng dài tiān* [不共戴天], that may translate literally as “you cannot live under the same sky.”<sup>16</sup> The use of this expression in English may leave Ha Jin’s readers wondering about the meaning of the phrase, while in Chinese it is an expression used to express the notion that two enemies have such an irreconcilable mutual hatred that it appears that it is impossible that they share the same “dwelling.”

**Modes of address and reference.** As Koshin Paley Ellison has pointed out, in the majority of Western societies aging is stigmatized and the fear of aging and death prevent people from living full lives. On the contrary, the elderly are highly respected in Eastern societies. Caring for one’s parents in their old age is considered one of the highest virtues in China and Korea, deriving from the Confucian tradition of filial piety (Gregoire 2014). Hence, unlike the pejorative connotations in Western cultures, the word “old” (*lǎo*; 老) stands for wisdom and experience, and calling someone “Old” followed by their surnames indicates affection or familiarity. Similarly, Chinese people like to be addressed by their occupation or title together with their surnames.<sup>17</sup> Examples of modes of address and reference are found in “W&C”; the main character, for example, is called “Old Ding” or “Chairman Ding” by friends and party members, and the head of the opposing faction is referred to as “Secretary Yang.”

The use of a familiar word such as “Uncle” (*dà ye*; 大爺)—Uncle Wang is a neighbor of the Dings—is also a term of respect for an older man; on the other hand, one would use “Aunt” (*bó mǔ*; 伯母) to address someone who is about the same

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<sup>16</sup> It should be pointed out that the words “sky” and “ceiling” contain the same Chinese character *tiān* (天).

<sup>17</sup> In their study about the spread of English in China, John B. Pride and Liu Ru-Shan provide a list of social occupations that can be used to address people together with their surnames (62).

age as one's mother, and it is also expected that a daughter-in-law addresses her mother-in-law simply as "mother" as a way of showing that she cares for her. The use of these modes of address somehow conveys a cultural message that may not be easy to understand in English and, as Guo-zhang Xu notes, "such meanings might not be immediately transparent to the general reader in an American context, or would at least require a degree of sensitivity to the cross-cultural context" (qtd. in Zhang 308).

**Proverbs and idioms.** The antiquity of the Chinese language has also made it one of the most elegant and richest languages in the world, as the many proverbs and idioms therein attest. Kachru rightly justifies the use of these parts of speech and argues that it "is through the proverbs and word play that the wit and wisdom of the ancestors is passed on to new generations" (*Alchemy* 168). Through his fiction Ha Jin transfers to his Chinese English some of this rich Chinese cultural background and information. While Nancy Tsai responds negatively when Ha Jin's characters try to imitate in English "the Chinese penchant for spewing out sayings" (60), Haomin Gong believes that the writer's intention here is "to give his prose an unfamiliar flavor" (158).

Some examples of this are notable in "W&C," one of which being the peaceful death of Ding's mother, described as "a happy ascent" ("W&C" 47), an expression devised by Ha Jin to convey that the dying person has lived a long (and joyful) life and has died with no regrets. Here again the author may have preferred a more accessible expression for his English readers by reducing the Chinese phrase *hán xiào rù dì* [含笑入地] (literally, "to wear a smile while dying") into two basic concepts: "happiness" in English symbolized by "to wear a smile" and the westernized and Christian version—"ascent"—as a transformation of the Chinese *rù dì* [入地] (literally, "to enter the earth/ground"). In the story, the funeral of Ding's mother causes great controversy in the family, while at the same time, stirring up the political life of the commune.

People take sides, either defending Ding's position in which he claims a ground-burial for his mother, or Secretary Yang's, which implies submission to the party's new policy: cremation as a way to preserve the land for future generations. However, in the midst of this dispute, others (the "fence-sitters") decided not to risk their position in the hope that they might be able to bet on the winner. Such is the case with Huang Zhi, a vice-chairman of the commune, described as someone who "was not Ding's enemy in the Commune Administration. He always sat on the fence" ("W&C" 50). Such people are considered despicable and, in their game of not risking a position, they would wait and "trim their sails according to the wind"

(“W&C” 50)—in pinyin *suí fēng dǎo duò* [隨風倒舵]—an expression describing how the plan adopted by a person is improved though (s)he is continually changing position or attitude according to the circumstances.

Tian, one of Ding’s men, warns him about the trap set by Secretary Yang and his supporters. He tells Ding that the only thing those scoundrels want to do is “*to see you fall into a well* and then they’ll stone you to death, but we want to stop you before you fall” (52; emphasis added). This is an idiom that needs no translation as English readers understand perfectly that Yang wants Ding to fall into disgrace so that Party authorities will eventually remove him from the position as chairman. However, here again Ha Jin transcribes this expression borrowed from Chinese, as in pinyin *luò jǐng xià shí* [落井下石] means literally “to throw stones at somebody who fell down a well.” In this idiom, the idea of a “well” may be interpreted as a hole dug in the earth, so that the person below the surface is unable to come out, thus being incapable of self defense or of helping themselves.

When at last Liang Ding and his men make a stand against Secretary Yang, they reverse the situation after sending a different version of the burial to county newspapers. The *Liaoning Daily* publishes an article about the funeral entitled “For the Happiness of Ten Thousand Generations,” reporting that in a commune town called Dismount Fort there was an old woman who had volunteered to have her body cremated “even though her family had prepared an expensive coffin for her” (63). By having refused while she was alive to have a ground-burial for herself, she was giving an opportunity for future generations to have clean soil for growing vegetables. The new version attracted the attention of the officials who were pleased at the lady’s decision: Yang and his men would now not dare to challenge Ding’s loyalty to the party or to his mother. However, unaware of his father’s reversed version of the story, Shen reads the papers and feels outraged. He wants to complain about the lies spread by the newspaper, but the experience he gained in the army has taught him that “disaster always comes from the tongue” (64). In this case, this idiom is an adaptation of the Chinese expression *bìng cóng kǒu rù, huò cóng kǒu chū* [病從口入，禍從口出], which can be translated as “illness enters by the mouth, trouble comes out by the mouth.” The expression emphasizes the superstitious Chinese belief that illnesses enter the body through the mouth and also problems, in that having a loose tongue may lead to a lot of trouble for the speaker.

Ha Jin’s decision to write fiction, and to use English as the vehicle for this was, as he has acknowledged in interviews, a matter of survival, a necessity of existence (Varsava; Weich; and Weinberger). Far from being easily pinned down to current literary taxonomies, Ha Jin’s hybrid literature has been categorized as

“Chinese-English,” “Asian-American literature,” “translation literature” or “trans-border fiction,” to name but a few. Nonetheless, it appears that despite the controversial criticism of those who argue for a monolingual use of English, Ha Jin’s work may well be regarded as representative of our current multicultural and globalized times. What he does challenges the accepted monolingual understanding of what standard English is. In a globalized world, English cannot be viewed exclusively from monolingual and Judeo-Christian perspectives, but rather from different angles. If we do abide by a single monolingual understanding of the English language, Kachru reminds us, we will also be depriving ourselves, as teachers and students, of an immense resource of cross-cultural perspectives and strategies arising from the creativity of multilingual speakers and writers (“Speaking Tree” 20). I would like to conclude by turning to the words of the Australian art critic and writer Robert Hughes, who lived in the U.S. from 1963 until his death in August 2012. When he looked at the U.S., he never denied his admiration for its multiculturalism, and claimed that “[i]n society as in farming, monoculture works poorly, it exhausts the soil” (qtd. in Kachru, “English as an Asian Language” 105-06). Ha Jin’s hybrid literature may well be challenging monolingual perspectives of the English language, while at the same time, his bilingual creativity may also be preparing the ground for new forms of literature yet to come.

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