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Annotated Bibliography

This bibliography covers ten articles from the current scholarship that is written about the writing of Jin Xuefei, also known as Ha Jin. Jin's literature depicts the Chinese and/or the Chinese-American experience during real moments in history. The scholarship documented in this bibliography dates back no longer than fifteen years, with the oldest article published in 2012. The articles were examined in order to reinforce an upcoming research paper based on Ha Jin's short story "Saboteur." Although there is no direct mention of "Saboteur" within these ten articles, significant patterns as well as an interesting anomaly were discovered that provide useful insight for the upcoming research paper.

Most of the articles examine the dynamics between trauma and power, which are themes prominent in "Saboteur." Traumas from situations like imprisonment, war, and alienation are present alongside powers within government systems, military forces, and personal relationships. Some scholars like Te-hsing Sang, Jodi Kim, and Jerry Varsava expand on the larger State powers that cause trauma, whereas others like Chung-jen Chen, Meiyi Chen, and Lorraine Markotic include more interfamilial and internal dynamics between trauma and power. Themes of collectivism and the fear of removal from a collective seem to appear throughout these articles as well. Several aforementioned authors address collectivism in the State, the PRC, and in general Chinese and American communities. Louis J. Parascandola and Rajul Punjabi analyze fear of removal from a collective due to issues with language in Jin's short stories, and Lu Zhang

delves into Jin's use of language through collective cultural unconsciousness. Language is yet another pattern that runs through these themes of belonging or removal. There are studies of language including Jin's experience as an author writing in a second language, silence as a form of language, and language as a method of control.

Framing these recurring topics with historical facts and periods that correspond with each of Jin's stories is another pattern throughout the articles. As mentioned by authors such as Jerry Varsava, Sunny Xiang, and Meiyi Chen, Jin's literature is created with a realistic, documentary-style of writing that requires some understanding of history related to either China or America. The only article that does not include historical information is also the only article that deviates from the patterns found within the other nine articles. Agatha Frischmuth's article takes a different approach from the other compositions and analyzes silence as a symbol of peace in Jin's novel *Waiting*. The subject deviates from the general trends in the bibliography, but Frischmuth examines silence as a form of communication, tying into Parascandola and Punjabi's and Zhang's articles, and Frischmuth's interpretation of silence has great potential to enhance a scene in the second-half of "Saboteur." That is why this article is included in the bibliography.

Annotations

Chen, Chung-jen. "A portal to transnational communication: problematizing identity politics in Ha Jin's *A Map of Betrayal*." *Textual Practice*, vol. 34, no. 10, 2020, pp. 1671-1689.

Chung-jen Chen's article describes themes of alienation and identity in Jin's novel *A Map of Betrayal*. He analyzes the different forms of otherness experienced by Gary and Lilian—the two main characters. Gary feels alienation both as a naturalized American and a native Chinese citizen. His character experiences an otherness that relates to being out of place on the personal

and collective levels (Chen 1682) in the two nations. Categorization like the model minority in America (Chen 1676) and “Overseas Chinese” (Chen 1679) in China prohibit him from fully belonging to any one collective. Lilian’s character represents the otherness experienced by Americans of Chinese heritage who wish to learn about their culture. She is an outsider who is not to be trusted (Chen 1679), thus juxtaposing her experiences to her father’s experiences. Using the two main characters, Chen emphasizes the negative impacts of categorization from both countries. He concludes by stating that Jin’s novel indicates a potential to rise above categories because “representations do not need to dwell on the marginalised position of being a racial and ethnic minority” (Chen 1685-1686).

Chen, Meiyi. “Research on the Psychological Mechanism of Trauma Writing in Ha Jin’s New Immigrant Novels.” *Revista de Cercetare si Interventie Sociala*, vol. 65, 2019, pp. 131-148.

Meiyi Chen’s article is a focused expedition into the variations of trauma found in Ha Jin’s literature. She begins with a brief overview of critical events in Jin’s life including his participation in the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, service in the military during China’s Cultural Revolution, and the eventual journey as a Chinese immigrant in America. Chen then introduces trauma theory into her article. With Freudian roots, trauma theory in writing gives the recipient of the trauma the opportunity to reinvent themselves and evaluate the past, ultimately achieving the purpose of soothing and healing the wounds of said trauma (Chen 135). With this theory, Chen connects Jin’s own traumas to the traumas depicted in his stories. In one example, Jin’s novel *A Free Life* reflects his shared trauma of immigrating overseas to America. In another example, Jin’s novel *Waiting* reflects the “suffocating power and cultural repression” that he experienced while living in China during his youth (Chen 140-141). Chen continues to apply

trauma theory to further illustrate how Jin uses his own trauma to both create resonating work and heal his own wounds.

Frischmuth, Agatha. "Being Silent, Doing Nothing: Silence as a Symbol of Peace in Ivan

Goncharov's *Oblomov* and Ha Jin's *Waiting*." *Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2017, pp. 99-115.

Agatha Frischmuth uses Ha Jin's *Waiting* and Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov* to illustrate how silence is a literary tool that can depict happiness and peace within a character. Frischmuth first makes the distinction between verbal silence (*tacere*) and natural stillness (*silere*), followed by a comparison of the two in other languages like Chinese (100). She contextualizes *tacere* and *silere* by exemplifying their presence in the actions of Oblomov and Lin, the main characters of their respective stories. Both characters use *tacere* as a means to yield to an oppressive power, but Lin's situation is a more forced *tacere* due to an oppressive government system. However, both use *silere* to find moments of peace within their households and their minds. For example, Lin imagines moments of silence—like reading a book—to evoke *silere*, and by extension an inner calm (Frischmuth 113). Frischmuth concludes by emphasizing the importance of silence for characters in literature. Silent moments for characters can communicate meaning in the same ways as verbal dialogue and have the potential to become symbolic of peace and happiness.

Kim, Jodi. "Settler Modernity's Spatial Exceptions: The US POW Camp, Metapolitical

Authority, and Ha Jin's *War Trash*." *American Quarterly*, vol. 69, no. 3, 2017, pp. 569-587.

Jodi Kim's article exposes some of the deeper meanings and dark realities of imprisonment and war represented in Ha Jin's novel *War Trash*. Using Jin's distinct documentary-style of writing as reinforcement, Kim parallels the experiences of the main character Yu, a Chinese POW (prisoner of war), with real events. In *War Trash*, Yu narrates his experience as a Communist soldier in the Korean war. According to Kim, Yu in the story is imprisoned in POW camp on the same Koje Island that existed during that time. Jin's novel "renders Koje Island as an incubator or laboratory of violence, both physical and psychological, perpetuated at all sides" (Kim 575). She widens the lens by revealing that Jin's novel nestles inside the larger reality of Korea fighting for their own recognition and authority from their former occupiers like the United States. The suffering that Yu endures as a POW under what seems to be legal contexts highlights an important question regarding the relationship between law/state and cause/effect (Kim 580). The article concludes by reminding the audience that temporality is not always possible when one has suffered greatly.

Markotic, Lorraine. "Deleuze's "Masochism" and the Heartbreak of *Waiting*." *Mosaic: an interdisciplinary critical journal*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2016, pp. 21-36.

Lorraine Markotic provides a close examination of how masochism is incorporated in Ha Jin's novel *Waiting*. She supports this article both with Deleuze's specificity of masochism and her own interpretation of sadism existing within masochism. Deleuze positions sadism and masochism as mutually exclusive (Markotic 22), but Markotic believes that a masochist can inflict pain in the same way as a sadist and yield similar results (Markotic 24). In Jin's novel, the main character Lin exhibits both positions throughout his character development. *Waiting* revolves around Lin's love for a woman named Manna and his disdain for his wife Shuyu. Lin

exhibits traditional attributes of masochism such as forced waiting and the need to be bound. These traits are present in both Lin's personal life and the regulations and procedures of China during story's time period. Despite the obvious masochism, Lin also exhibits traits of sadism by inflicting these same circumstances onto his love Manna (Markotic 30) and eventually onto his wife Shuyu. Markotic concludes by emphasizing the vicious cycle of masochism and sadism that Lin positions himself in. Masochism is its own realm, but the realm cannot exist without recourse to sadism (Markotic 35).

Parascandola, Louis J., and Punjabi, Rajul. "Language, Otherness, and Acculturation among Chinese Immigrants in the Short Stories of Ha Jin." *Asian American Literature: Discourses and Pedagogies*, vol. 8, 2017, pp. 43-61.

Louis J. Parascandola and Rajul Punjabi's article covers topics such as alienation and means of power through a collection of Ha Jin's stories. Since these particular stories take place in Flushing, they first provide a brief history of Chinese immigration in NYC, including comparisons between Chinese populations in Flushing and Manhattan. Differences between matters such as general education, English proficiency, and finance result in hierarchies amongst the Chinese-American immigrants. Using this historical background, the authors examine stories such as "An English Professor," where the character Tang is a college professor, but his lack of English proficiency transitions from mild discomfort to eventual paranoia and neuroses (Louis J. Parascandola and Rajul Punjabi 48). His fear of imperfect English is bolstered by the fear of being alienated from the American society he wishes to immerse into. In Jin's short story "A Pension Plan," the character Jufen is a middle-aged woman of a lower income, who barely speaks English. Her lower status and lack of English proficiency lead her to trauma and alienation inflicted upon her within and outside of the Chinese-American community. The article

illustrates how power does not always come from physical armies but can be enforced through psychological and systemic means.

Shan, Te-hsing. "Sublimating History into Literature: Reading Ha Jin's *Nanjing Requiem*."

Amerasia Journal, vol. 38, no. 2, 2012, pp. 25-34.

Te-hsing Shan analyzes Ha Jin's recognition of the often forgotten traumas and abuse of power in his novel *Nanjing Requiem*. Along with the Japanese government's continual denial of the massacre, the world seems to have forgotten the crimes and traumas of the massacre, leading scholars like Iris Chang to subtitle the massacre "The Rape of Nanking" (Shan 26). When Jin decided to write about the massacre, he found very little scholarly information. Therefore, using his documentary-style writing, Jin had to find whatever real details he could uncover, fit them into the proper narration, and create a living mind in his work to fight against this amnesia and injustice (Shan 27). Jin's *Nanjing Requiem* asserts the weaponization of humans and the cruelty of power, but Shan also emphasizes Jin's efforts to "give a voice to the silenced victims, wishing 'those souls may rest in peace'" (Shan 30). Using Butler's argument about human vulnerability and interdependence, Shan purposes that this piece is also a requiem for those who are finally ready to acknowledge and represent the victims.

Varsava, Jerry. "Spheres of Superfluity in Ha Jin's China Fiction." *Literature Interpretation*

Theory, vol. 26, no. 2, 2015, pp. 128-149.

Jerry Vasava's article describes the spheres of power and trauma in Jin's literary work, which leads to a reflection on the need for human rights within countries of authoritative power. Varsava uses Jin's novels *The Crazy* and *Waiting* to expand on the complexities of power and punishment in the early years of "modern China, and how the State's monopolization...gives rise

to traumatized notions of personal and national identity” (Varsava 129). Varsava also includes a wealth of historical background to give context to Jin’s writing. Using his signature document-style, Jin consistently reminds the audience of how any citizen without a high-ranking position in the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) is treated as a problem or worthless. Varsava examines power in characters like Peng, who punishes individuals and their entire families for minuscule missteps (137), and trauma in characters like Wan, who is regularly beaten for his father’s indiscretion (139). Varsava then combines the examples to further explain the brutalities of power systems. He concludes by briefly examining some human rights laws that have passed since those years in China that move toward perceiving *all* citizens as valuable.

Xiang, Sunny. “Race, Tone, and Ha Jin’s ‘Documentary Manner.’” *Comparative literature*, vol. 70. no. 1, 2018, pp. 72-92.

Sunny Xiang’s article utilizes Ha Jin’s novel *War Trash* to closely study the author’s specific themes and writing style. She describes Jin’s documentary manner of writing as a way to include historical facts while maintaining some form of detachment. Xiang further examines this style using the character Yu, who narrates *War Trash*. Although Yu maintains a detachment from the events taking place in the story, he still presents an active, neutral tone. This tone creates a composite fullness that “results from the overlap between anthropomorphic presence and inscriptional device” (Xiang 76). Traumas like brainwashing and reeducation are included to describe how tone and speech can change, and Jin’s documentary-style extends into how his characters document events around the body and mind. Xiang combines these topics with the topic of race, and the how the Asian stereotypes of inexpressiveness and silence have become the bodiless and mechanical qualities expected by others (Xiang 84). She concludes by refuting these

stereotypes using neutral tones because neutral tones hold the potential to represent alternate conceptions of race and politics (Xiang 89).

Zhang, Lu. "Cultural Unconscious And L2 Writer's Identity Construction—A Case Study On Ha Jin." *Comparative Literature: East and West*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2020, pp. 156-170.

In the final article of this bibliography, Lu Zhang analyzes Ha Jin's use of a second language (L2) to display cultural unconsciousness and identity in his literature. Cultural unconsciousness is described as a cultural mental structure that is controlled by an invisible power that influences people's lives (Zhang 158-159). It can be applied to individuals and collectives. Zhang first uses cultural unconsciousness to explain Jin's own life experiences and writing practices as an author who writes L2 literature. In one example, Jin's short story "A Good Fall" represents individual cultural unconsciousness through the character Gan's personal evolution of identity between America and China. In another example, Zhang uses the character Wenli in Jin's short story "A Decade" to express collective cultural unconsciousness. Wenli is sent to labor reformation because she told her students that Mao's words should not be taken literally. Jin adopts the collective narrative "we" to express this form of cultural unconsciousness (Zhang 165). The final section contextualizes the previous sections using linguistic signs. Zhang explains the presence of signs in Jin's work next to metaphor and metonymy. Signs, in combination with L2 writing and cultural unconsciousness, make Jin's literature a flexible and independent example of one who is between two planes.

