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# INSANIYAT

## Journal of Islam and Humanities



### Ideology, Humanity, and Freedom in Ha Jin's *Waiting*

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#### Abstract

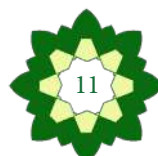
*This paper examines how Ha Jin's Waiting challenges the Maoist communist regime by depicting the protagonist, Lin, as struggling to fight for his rights to live freely. The Maoist regime successfully establishes "normalizing power" in a society to lead the protagonist to believe that the goal of his life is mainly for working hard for the military institution and the regime, instead of establishing his freedom. As a result, Lin loses his senses of humans, such as love and empathy, and lives with selfishness and ignorance as to the way the Maoist discourse teaches him through Mao's red book. By engaging with cultural studies, this paper investigates how Jin's Waiting challenges Maoist ideology by both celebrating and critiquing the idea of capitalism, which likely perpetuates communism. Thus, this paper discovers how Ha Jin's novel challenges communist ideologies and totalitarian rules by illuminating social disorder and loses of sense of humanity. Indeed, individuals live under oppression and they are like a prisoner who is suffering from being judged and punished by totalitarian regimes and dominant society. Hence, the significance of this research is to help to reduce any forms of oppression experienced by many ethnic-Americans who have suffered from the totalitarian rulers that have ruled society, especially in the era of communism, colonialism, and global capital transnationalism.*

**Keywords:** *Ha Jin's waiting, maoist communism, ideology, humanity, freedom, Chinese-American fiction.*

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#### Introduction

Compared to decades ago, such as in 1980s Chinese-American writers are likely excluded in American literature. However nowadays, in 2020s Chinese-American studies have developed well that can be seen through numerous Chinese-American writers who have published their writings, such as Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (Kingston, 1976) and Ha Jin's *Waiting* (1999). Related to these marginal writers, Clayton argues in *The Pleasures of Babel: Contemporary American Literature and Theory*, "Stories provide the strength to live rather than to die... The act of telling a story can be empowering... Minority writers and feminists have made the question of empowerment a major theme of their criticism" (Clayton, 1993, p. 96). Indeed, the role of these minority writers helps readers to understand other communities and cultures, such as Chinese, Arab, and African cultures which are different from mainstream (white) readers' traditions. These kinds of



readers can learn from others' stories and expand their understanding of other people in different parts of the world. Thus, marginal writers have a significant role to widen readers' perspectives by telling their unique stories since the mainstream writers have dominated narrative stories for centuries. The mainstream readers rarely understand stories from outside their world, especially stories used in the minority perspectives, such as Ha Jin's *Waiting*, which is elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Ha Jin's *Waiting* (1999) is set up during the Cultural Revolution in China (1966-1976). During the revolution, Mao Zedong, the chairman of the Communist Party of China and the Chief of the state (the People's Republic of China), re-imposed his authority in China. Maoists attempted to reinforce communist ideology throughout the country and removed capitalist, traditional, and cultural elements from Chinese society. Indeed, During the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese young people and students supported Mao's military through Red Guard groups. The way the Communist Party and the leader of the state tended to control the Chinese people, especially through Mao's little red book, the official handbook for Maoist followers, influenced Chinese society to control individuals. As a result, both Chinese society and the government often observe and regulate individuals based on their criteria, which mainly favor powerful groups, such as courts, prisons, and the military.

*Waiting*, Jin's poignant tale of a doctor forced to wait 18 years "to free himself from an arranged marriage, won both a National Book Award and the PEN/Faulkner Prize, well-deserved recognition of Jin's ability to reveal universal truths about human nature and individual choice in narratives vibrant with the realities of a very foreign land" (Smith, 2007, p.29). Ha Jin uses the Chinese background in his novel, *Waiting*, which offers a good example of how the totalitarian regimes constantly regulate individuals, in this case, Ha Jin's protagonists, the two lovers: Lin Kong and Manna Wu. In doing so, the omniscient narrator depicts these lovers who have to wait for 18 years to unite their love since Lin has a peasant wife, Shuyu, in his hometown, Goose village. Lin was forced by his parents to marry an innocent and bound feet girl, Shuyu, to take care of his old parents as Lin works as a doctor at the military hospital in the army camp. Indeed, the novel is set in "the context of the Cultural Revolution, where the relationship between married military men and unmarried women is strictly controlled" (Moore, 2002, p.124). The protagonists, both Lin who is a doctor and Manna who is a nurse live in the military hospital like prisoners as the army often controls their behaviors and their movements. As a result, living in this "prison" has led Lin to lose his human qualities, such as emotions, passions, and empathy for other people. Instead, he mainly retains his quality and loyalty to the military hospital and the Maoist regime. This is why his passion and his love for both his family and his girlfriend, Manna, are mainly remained on the superficial level as his substantial love only belongs to the regime as this paper seeks to address.

This paper investigates how Ha Jin's novel represents the protagonists, Lin and Manna, who struggle to survive living in the military hospital in the era of the tyrannical regime, Mao Zedong, who ruled China with his Marxist communist ideology. Lin and Manna have become an example of many citizens who suffer and are oppressed by the Chairman who creates numerous rules to strengthen his sovereignty. Working primarily with cultural studies, including Michel Foucault's works, this paper examines the authorial strategies for representing the oppressed lovers and considers how Ha Jin's novel portrays the experience of restricting societal constraints to that representation. In this particular novel, it becomes clear that Lin and Manna have to repress their senses of humanity, such as emotions and hunger to live together; they cannot live freely as the soldiers constantly observe them. This kind of observation can be seen as an example of what Foucault means by "panopticons", a tower building, which always watches prisoners' movements, so prisoners have to discipline

themselves to avoid punishments. Foucault argues that discourse provides “a privileged entry into the poststructuralist mode of analysis precisely because it is the organized and regulated, as well as the regulating and constituting, functions of language that it studies” (Foucault, 2010, p. 3). The Maoist regime uses discourse through its little red book, which teaches Maoist philosophy provoking the Chinese society to behave and to think based on communist ideology, which focuses on social groups rather than celebrating individualism as capitalism suggests. Foucault also argues that discourse aims to describe “the surface linkages between power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, the control of the population, and the modern state as these intersect in the functions of systems of thought” (p. 4). Indeed, power represented by Mao Zedong uses communist ideology spreading throughout his governmentality, government, and rationality, to observe and judge citizens to follow his ideology. Thus, Ha Jin’s novel can be used as an example of how discourse, power, and knowledge work to control society, including Jin’s protagonists, which is elaborated in the following sections.

There are some scholars, such as Seiwoong Oh (Oh, 2006), who investigate Ha Jin’s *Waiting* claiming that Jin’s characters develop their human senses as they love and beloved by their family and friends, especially Lin who is loved and always waited by his family, Shuyu and Hua. Seiwoong Oh argues that “What is particularly refreshing about Jin’s novel is that his characters are so human and so endearing even with all their shortcomings” (Oh, 2006, p.425). Indeed, Ha Jin’s protagonists are so human and so humble as they are so patient to wait to be together for 18 years. However, I argue that Jin’s protagonists, especially Lin and Manna, lose their sense of human beings because of the Maoist regime and the military hospital where they work over-control their movements and lives. This control can be seen through the way Lin has delayed to marry Manna for more than a decade because he is afraid of both being fired by the manager as the regime bans Lin to divorce his wife and being oppressed by Shuyu’s brother who demands Lin to pay him with a lot of money if he divorces Shuyu. In this sense, Lin prefers to obey the regime and to save his money (read: capitalism) rather than to pursue his love, compassion, and freedom.

This control can also be engaged with Foucault’s concept of “normalizing power” (2010), where the totalitarian rulers tend to normalize certain rules and dogmas to force the society to follow their norms by disciplining themselves. Foucault argues that “the activity of judging has increased precisely to the extent that normalizing power has spread” (p.1499). Indeed, governments or regimes tend to categorize populations based on their criteria: “it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based” (p. 1499). The Maoist regime can be associated as a prison as it places individuals into classifications and prohibits various activities, such as banning its people to read foreign books and forcing the populations to mainly read the Maoist red little book or the communist handbook. These are the examples of the negative effect of “the normalizing power,” that the Maoist regime regulates its people based on its communist value, instead of letting them to celebrate their freedom of speech. In this case, Lin and Manna live in a family, society, and working places where establish “the normalizing power”, which works to observe and control them. Thus this novel reveals how the protagonist, Lin, struggles to live under the surveillance of Maoist ideology, which inspires him how to practice communism in his daily life. This struggle is elaborating further in the following sections.

## Method

This paper aims to examine how Ha Jin’s novel critiques Maoist communism by both celebrating and subverting the ideas of capitalism, which has likely the same political ideology as communism: gaining benefits for the powerful groups, in this case, the totalitarian

regimes and the military hospital, by manipulating individuals' bodies and minds through their discourse as Foucault (2010) argues in "discourse and power" that discourse targets to define "the surface linkages between power, knowledge, [and] institutions" (p. 4) to regulate civilians. Thus, in investigating Jin's novel, I use the method of close and critical textual analysis by engaging with other critics who also examine this novel and with cultural studies, such as Michel Foucault's works, especially *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 2010) and *History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1990). For the technique of data analysis, this paper uses close and critical reading analysis by examining the primary text or Jin's novel to search what techniques that the writer uses to challenge any forms of oppression practiced by military regimes and the totalitarian rules, such as Maoist communist ideology. In investigating the data, I not only evaluate other scholar's pieces of literature to participate in debates around the novel and the topic but also respond to cultural studies, which aims to describe Chinese culture in the era of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Finally, in examining the primary text, I refer to the Chinese-American diaspora and the Chinese context, where the novel is set.

### Result and Discussion

This section explores how Ha Jin's *Waiting* questions the ways communist ideologies and the totalitarian rulers often observe and over control the citizens by forcing the people to follow the ideology to strengthen the communist philosophy. As a result, the civilians ignore their rights and their basic needs as human beings to love and to live freely, and they mainly become the prisoners and the slaves of the regime. In the novel, both Lin and Manna are often watched by the soldiers and their employer, the General Ran Su, who often observes his employees like the way the panopticon always watches its prisoners as Foucault's especially *Discipline and Punish* suggests previously. To challenge this restriction, Manna asks Lin to arrange their private meeting in Haiyan's (their friends) sister's house, as Manna states: "Lin, this is a fabulous opportunity. We've never had a place for ourselves" (Jin, 1999, p. 67). Indeed, they live in the military dorms, where men and women are separated, and the bodyguards always stand by at the gates to watch them. This persistent surveillance leads Lin to lose his human senses, but selfishness and ignorance as Maoist philosophy inspires him. Lin often rejects Manna's ideas either to arrange their meeting or their marriage as Lin reminds Manna: "Didn't we promise Ran Su not to break any rule? [...] You know there's no wall without a crack. If we do this, sooner or later people will find out" (p. 68). Here, Lin often refers to what his employer and society judge on them if they break any norms. As a result, he does not have a sense of responsibility both to his wife and to his lover by letting them "waiting" for his love for 18 years. Instead, Lin becomes selfish as his main focus is mainly on how to make the regime and his manager happy, and as the result, he becomes blind to the needs of the people who love him and his desires.

Moreover, this novel reveals how the power of the military can cause the protagonist to lose his logic. Instead, the woman, Shuyu, is free and does not work for the communist military. She can think rationally as she can declare her needs and emotion to Lin, regardless she is uneducated and innocent. Thus, Shuyu has her freedom as she is free to pursue her dreams, while Lin lives like a prisoner or a servant who has no right to do whatever he or she wants but mainly serves the master's needs. Ha Jin illustrates when Shuyu comes to Lin's room and tells him:

I'm not a shameless woman. After Hua was born you never let me share your bed. I would not complain, but these days I'm thinking of giving you a son. Hua's going to be big soon, and she can help me. Don't you want a son? (Jin, 1999, p. 95).



Here, although Shuyu is depicted as an uneducated woman, she knows how to pursue her own need. Hence, Shuyu can use her rational to ask her husband to have another baby as their only daughter is bigger already, but Lin seemingly loses his logic as he just focuses on how to work harder and maintain to receive the award every year, instead of developing his family. Indeed, although Lin provides Shuyu with her physical needs, such as money and food every month, he does not provide her psychological needs. In the novel, when Shuyu asks Lin to sleep together, Lin becomes silent and replies, “No, I don’t need a son. Hua’s good enough for me. My brother has three sons. Let them carry on the family for me. It’s a feudal idea anyway” (Jin, 1999, p. 95). The way Lin rejects his wife’s sense of humanity echoes to the way the military institution, including his employer, Ran Su, rejects Lin’s needs to be together with his lover, Manna. Here, Lin thinks that the only thing, which can make his wife happy is money. This kind of thought is similar to the way the Bourgeois or Capitalism value people and materials mainly based on benefits and money, instead of a sense of humanity. Ironically, in this passage, Lin claims that his wife’s idea to have a son is a practice of a feudal notion. However, Lin himself exercises feudalism as he places the state and the materialism over his own need and family matters.

Thus, in his novel, Jin uses both paradox and irony to question how Mao’s regime can lead the protagonist loses his human senses. Paradoxically, Lin rejects to sleep with Shuyu because he never loves her, but he cannot divorce Shuyu because the judge and his wife’s brother always find some ways to prohibit the divorce happens. Ironically, Lin loves Manna, but he has no courage to challenge the feudal laws of the regime, which bans him to divorce Shuyu and Marry Manna. To compensate for his frustration, Lin mainly focuses on his work until he achieves an appreciation in public life. In doing so, the protagonist has to sacrifice his domestic commitment by dedicating his life to the military hospital until he “always” entitles as a good model in the hospital, instead of in his home. The omniscient narrator describes that “Lin received a model reward every year” (Jin, 1999, p. 50) that makes him feel comfortable to be admired by many nurses and the community. Hence, what is most important for Lin in his life is the public’s appreciation, such as a good doctor and higher salary, but not domestic or human’s recognition, such as being a responsible husband or lover. Thus, this text reveals how the communist regime has the power to transform Lin’s ideology, which believes that having the state or the material awards is more important than having a domestic or the lovers’ reward and appreciation. This is why Lin does not realize how the institution has blinded himself and be patient to wait for 18 years to make their dream come true.

Ha Jin’s *Waiting* can be considered as a historical novel as it illustrates how its protagonists represent Chinese people who live under endless societal and governmental constraints during the 1960s and 1980s because of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. *Waiting* is set at a time in “Chinese history when every utterance had to be supportive of party ideologies, painting a picture of political oppression still at work in present-day China” (Frischmuth, 2017, p.110). Jerry Varsava interviewed Ha Jin who describes the Chinese situation at the time: “like most families, we just went through that period. Books were burned and a lot of people were crazy. Many believed in the correctness of the party and Chairman Mao” (Varsava, 2010, p.5). In this interview, Ha Jin highlights how Chinese society was chaotic and disorder under the rules of Mao Zedong. Ha Jin admits that: “I was too young to become a Red Guard, so I was a kind of small Red Guard... but I was very serious too... as children, we joined it because we didn’t have to go to school” (p. 5). Additionally, another interview with Sarah Fay in 2009, Ha Jin adds that after a while, “I began to feel that it was hopeless to get my books published there, so I gave up. Even with *Waiting*—they published it, but then they suspended publication. And what they published, they edited” (Fay, 2009,

p.122). Indeed, Ha Jin lived in the era of the Cultural Revolution of China, where he was involved in the Red Guard groups, which extended the Mao's military during the revolution. Arguably, Ha Jin's experiences as a Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution contribute to his portrayal of his protagonist, Lin, who dedicates himself to the military hospital until he barely recognizes himself and his family needs, but working hard for the state. The way Lin's surrenders himself by working hard for the military hospital can be related to Marxist's concept of "alienation", which is the estrangement of populations from aspects of their human essence as a consequence of living in a society of arranged social classes. Thus, Ha Jin's novel complicates Chinese culture and history, which are influenced by communism represented by Mao's regime and capitalism represented by the military hospital as they set certain norms to control the lower class represented by Lin and Manna.

Moreover, the way Jin sets his story in Muji, Northern China, and explores the Chinese Cultural Revolution has invited controversy because some Chinese scholars condemn the book as portraying the retrograde nature of China. For example, Moore argues that "In June 2000, a publisher owned by the Chinese government canceled plans to publish the book in Chinese because of its treatment of life in China, claiming that its plot showed China's backwardness and the stupidity of the Chinese people"(Moore, 2002, p.124). Here, we can understand how in 2000, Chinese society still held a traditional philosophy of the Communist Party, where it often banned an individual's expression and freedom of speech. Indeed, in China, Ha Jin's book was prohibited, while in the US, his book was appreciated, which was the 1999 winner of the National Book Award. In this sense, we can compare the two different racial and cultural backgrounds, which adopt different ideologies: communism and democracy, regardless of many racial conflicts and capitalism are rampant in the US.

Ha Jin's novel not only critiques the Communist ruler but also deconstructs the idea of Capitalism, which allows private owners or individuality to control business. Junker argues that Ha Jin's Writing "simultaneously upholds and deconstructs the American dreams by critiquing capitalism and elucidating alternative paths to self-fulfillment" (Junker, 2010, p.228). Simultaneously, this novel supports the idea of capitalism by celebrating the idea of individualism to achieve one's hope and ambition. This celebration can be seen through the way Jin depicts Lin as enjoying reading the works of Walt Whitman, the American father of free verse, which represents how Lin is longing to free himself from the communist regime. After reading Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, Lin concludes: "The grass gathered the essence of heaven and earth, yin and yang, and the material and the spiritual, and that it unified the body and the soul, the living and the dead, celebrating the infinity and abundance of life" (Jin, 1999, p. 154). Ironically, Lin realizes how mankind should live in balanced ways, such as yin and yang, and the body and the soul, but he has no ideas on how to live in harmony Thus, Lin's desires remain in a dream as this novel echoes to the American dream as prosperity is mainly for money groups, and poverty remains stable for lower classes, including minorities and immigrants. In this sense, this novel both supports and challenges the idea of capitalism, which celebrates the idea of individualism and subverts the idea of the American dream, which mainly praises the dominant society, in this case, totalitarian rulers and excludes marginal groups and working class.

Undeniably, Whitman is important in Jin's *Waiting* as Whitman has the same ideology as Jin's novel, which illuminates the important idea of individualism and privacy as argued previously. Robert Sturr argues that Whitman has an influence in *Waiting*, and he appears as an "icon representing the pleasures of both free expression and privacy that were lost under the deadening influence of Maoist philosophy" (Sturr, 2002, p.3). Indeed, the presence of Whitman is connected with the main topic, which opposes the Maoist regime that appears often in Jin's Writings, such as *Ocean of Words* (1996), *Under the Red Flag*

(1997), *Bridegroom* (1999), and *Waiting* (1999). Sturr concludes that *Waiting* “critiques the uniformity of thought and suppression of individuality that typed Chinese society in the 1970s” (p. 2). Ha Jin critiques the majority of Chinese society, which holds a traditional paradigm of Maoist philosophy. Similarly, in the novel, the society just follows and believes in whatever Maoist declared and ruled without questioning and critiquing him. The way Maoist structures its rules in Chinese society is a good example of how an institution or a totalitarian ruler distributes its “normalizing power” within society as the society has no more power to defend their rights to have freedom of speech as argued previously. This is why Foucault is important in this analysis to show how society needs to improve its critical thinking, especially critiquing the “normalizing power” spreading by totalitarian rulers. Instead, in the novel, the community just believes that everything is normal as it has adopted in their everyday life, including banning Lin to be together with Manna as they have no privacy to be together as Ran Su bans them to be together outside their compounds.

By alluding to Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, Lin releases his repression to be able to express his feeling to his lover and to be together with Manna forever. The way Lin is repressed both by the Maoist government and by his military echoes to George Orwell’s *Nineteenth Eighty Four* (1949). Indeed, *Nineteenth Eighty Four* tells a story of how Londoners live under surveillance and are controlled by the Big Brother organization, which is inspired by the Nazi Germany system. Similar to both Lin and Manna who are forced to suppress their love, Orwell’s protagonists, Winston and Julia are prohibited to express their love. As a result, Winston and Julia are arrested when they plan to rebel against, which caused them to be tortured and almost lose their mind wired by the regime. In this sense, Ha Jin is likely inspired by Orwell’s *Nineteenth Eighty Four*, (Parascandola, 2005) which was set in London in the 1980s and published in 1949, while *Waiting* (Jin, 1999) was set in Muji, China, in 1960s-1980s and published in 1999. Although these two novels have a different setting and different times, their topics are the same: challenging the tyrannical regime, which spread their “normalizing power” within their societies. Thus both novels offer a good example of what Foucault means by his fundamental concept of “normalizing power” and “repressive power” in his seminal book, *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 2010).

Moreover, the narrator not only depicts the protagonist, Lin, as longing for Whitman’s idea of privacy, but also renders the other character, Commissar Wei, an investigator for the military hospital, as enjoying reading literature, especially Whitman’s works. By depicting the higher rank of the military as loving Whitman’s poetry, Jin’s *Waiting* reveals how many citizens, including Maoist’s armies, are repressed and want to rebel against the regime, but they are powerless and believe that everything is normal as the rulers have successfully practiced their “normalizing power” for decades. In the novel, Commissar Wei asks the hospital committee to find a new wife for him after he gets divorced. When Commissar Wei meets for the first time with Manna, he asks Manna to respond to Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* to test her knowledge of literature. Indeed, Commissar Wei wants to find a wife who can support him to revolt against the regime. When Manna fails to answer Wei’s questions about Whitman, he seems that he loses interest in Manna, even though Manna rejects him as her love is only for Lin. In this sense, the narrator illuminates how Commissar Wei is longing for his freedom to be free from the Maoist Communist ideology, instead of looking for a wife.

This novel reveals how the Maoist regime successfully transforms individual freedom to become group unity as the way communist’s ideology commands. To show his hopelessness, when reading Whitman, Lin mainly focuses on how working groups are discussed in the poem, instead of how celebrating individual freedom. The narrator illustrates, Lin “decided to avoid dealing with the subjects of sexuality and self-celebration, and instead focus on the symbol of grass and those poems praising the working class” (Jin, 1999, p. 153). Here, Lin

is mainly interested in reading and working, including how the working class is depicted as grass, which represents “all” and “abundance”, thus they need to work together to fight against the higher class by disregarding individualism as the protagonist exercises to his loved ones. Lin has lost his interest in his self-fulfillment; for example, when he asks Manna to find another man for her husband. In this case, Lin helps Manna to find a good future husband by introducing her to his cousin, Liang Meng, a school teacher, and to the higher ranking Commissar Wei as mentioned previously. The narrator describes the reason why Lin decides to let Manna close to Liang Meng: “If this static affair between them continued, both his and her careers would be affected or even ruined” (p. 107). Here, it becomes clear that it is more important for Lin to build his good career than to establish his strong love. Hence, Lin convinces Manna and says, “I don’t mean to upset you, but there’s a good way you can find a boyfriend” (p. 107). In this sense, the passage reveals that the regime has successfully washed Lin’s brain by transforming his thought of his love for Manna to become his love for his profession as he decides it is better to lose a woman than to lose money or job. Thus, this novel critiques Maoist philosophy by celebrating capitalism, which mainly gains profits for individualism or private life, instead of sharing benefits and happiness as Lin drills to Manna.

The idea of celebrating individualism can be seen through the way Jin depicts Lin as losing his passion and his empathy toward Manna who has devoted herself to Lin. Manna is always patiently *waiting* for his divorce every summer, but Lin seemingly neglects to seriously divorce Shuyu. This is how Maoist ideology has imposed Lin’s mind as he mainly uses other people to maintain his selfishness and greediness, but many people are unaware of this misuse of power. For example, Shuyu has been used to take care of Lin’s old parents and Manna has been used to fulfill Lin’s need when he is far away from his family, especially when he is sick. One day, Geng Yang, Lin’s roommate when he is a TBC patient in the hospital, suggests Lin to bribe Binsheng, Shuyu’s brother, so Binsheng will let Lin to divorce Shuyu. However, Lin does not follow Geng Yang’s suggestion, because he neglects to spend a lot of money for Binsheng, and Manna refuses to contribute. The narrator describes Lin’s feeling to Manna after discussing the “money”: Lin “felt ashamed, because by custom it was the man who should pay all the expenses to take his bride home. It was unreasonable for him to ask her [Manna] for help. Perhaps he should never have talked with her about this matter” (Jin, 1999, p. 175). Here, Lin rejects to spend money for others, regardless he receives the award and huge money from the institution, but he rather spend money for himself and for his hobby, such as establishing his private library and collecting books, including Whitman’s works, which promotes the idea of individualism. Ironically, Lin’s freedom is mainly in his imagination as he only fancies for his individuality through literary books that he stores in his private room. Thus, the hidden books represent Lin’s hidden love for Manna, which is never established in public life. This is related to what Junker argued previously that Jin’s *Waiting* echoes to American dreams as powerless groups are mainly dreaming for happiness and prosperity as their dreams only happen in the imagined world, but the dreams accurately happen for powerful groups, such as the regime and dominant society (Junker, 2010).

Moreover, Lin’s novel undermines Maoist philosophy by illuminating the insecurity of Lin and Manna’s relationships echoes to the instability of Chinese society when it was ruled by the Communist regime. Indeed, it is “the surface of normality of [Jin’s] characters that makes the novel so arresting, the sense that ‘normal’ life goes on, despite all the political madness” (Buruma, 2000, p.5). This normality in the political chaos can be seen through the way Manna is depicted as being raped by Geng Yang, Lin’s friend. Tragically, Geng Yang celebrates Manna’s virginity after Manna has kept it for Lin for 18 years. Benjamin Huang argues that “adultery and censorship testified to a certain degree of instability in the social

field” (Benjamin, 2002, p.274). Ironically, Geng Yang gains more success in his career after raping Manna. In this sense, this text illuminates the madness in the society as the institution merely judges its employees based on their good performance at the office regardless of their misbehaviors in society. Another disorder can be seen through the censorship in *Waiting*, where the Maoist dictator banned several foreign books in Lin’s private library. Indeed, this banned book is an “exact parallel to his [Lin] and Manna’s semi-public chaste” (p. 274). Although the hospital library’s foreign books are burned by the Red Guard, Lin’s library keeps continuing the preservation of the banned books, and Ran Su often borrows Lin’s books. Ran Su half supports Lin and Manna’s relationship because Ran Su understands Lin’s love affairs but neglects to help them. The way Ran Su reacts to Lin’s relationship with Manna echoes to Ran Su responds to the banned books in the hospital library as Ran Su also supports Lin’s private library. In this sense, Jin’s novel critiques Mao’s communism as it breaks individual rights for education and love.

Thus, Lin’s *Waiting* critiques the Maoist regime by revealing how it often repressed an individual’s intellectuals and characters’ sexuality, which can be related to Foucault’s History of Sexuality (Foucault, 1990), where governments and society tend to repressed individual sexuality, especially after 19th century. Foucault argues that “Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries to gradually uncover” (Foucault, 1990, p.26). Indeed, power represented by the Maoist regime spreads discourse, which claims that talking about sexuality is abnormal and deviant, so society should avoid to discuss and practice it unless with your wife or husband. Because of this repression in discussing sexuality, social disorder, such as adultery and rapes, often happens rampantly as Geng Yang exercises to Manna. In this sense, this novel engages with Foucault’s ideas of sexuality by revealing how society can be chaotic if the totalitarian rulers often repress individual’s freedom and rights, especially debating around free of speech and sexuality. Another madness, which is discussed in *Waiting* is through the way Jin depicts Geng Yang as achieving a more developing career after raping Manna, while Lin remains repressed living in the “jail” or the military dorm. Here, the social order has been transformed from a place to stabilize society to become a place to destabilize society. In this sense, Jin’s novel offers various paradoxes and ironies to illuminate various stupidity in society when it is ruled by a tyrannical regime, such as Maoist ideology.

Another madness, which is provided in this novel is when eventually Lin can divorce Shuyu, Lin eventually marries Manna since the married laws allow a husband to divorce his wife after being separated for 18 years. However, after they unite in a married life, Lin prefers to work harder by doubling his shift at night times, instead of spending more time with Manna. The narrator illustrates how Manna protests to Lin because he leaves Manna while working extra at night twice a week. Manna asks, “Why do you have to go to the office tonight?” Lin replies, “I can get more work done there,” [...] “I need to concentrate” (Jin, 1999, p. 258). Ironically, before they get married, Lin struggles to live together with Manna, but when they are married, Lin prefers to devote his time to working harder in the dorm. Indeed, Lin is like a prisoner, whose time is only for the military institution, even until his pension, when he loses his passion and creativity. Thus, Jin’s *Waiting* challenges the Maoist regime, which repressed individual’s rights, by illuminating how the regime has successfully poisoned individual’s brain with the communist ideology to make the characters unconsciously obey any doctrines, which the institution drills, so the institution gains as much as benefits from Lin’s sacrifice. In this sense, both communism and capitalism have the same goal, which explores the working class, but in different ways: communism through the totalitarian regimes and capitalism through the bourgeois supremacy. Thus, Jin’s text challenges Maoist communism by both celebrating and critiquing the idea of capitalism.

Hence, capitalism celebrates the idea of individualism but excludes marginal individuals from their bourgeois groups as the Maoist regime exercises to his people in China, including Jin's protagonists, Lin and Manna, who never live peacefully and happily, even though they have united in a married life after waiting for 18 years.

Thus, Jin's novel ends by intersecting the idea of freedom and pain as Lin finally achieves his freedom after sacrificing both himself and his beloved ones. Indeed, Lin is free to live and to love Manna after waiting for 18 years, but he still feels unhappy after being united as he feels Manna over controls his life. In this sense, Jin's novel illuminates how freedom before and after the communist regime is complicated to achieve as the modern man faces identity crisis as he fails to understand and to love himself first before loving others. This identity crisis is also suggested by Zhang who argues that "The freedom promised by modern life puts the modern man in a situation where he is freer; for example, he is able to choose where he lives or whom he marries. But with this freedom comes the sense of an "identity crisis" (Zhang, 2015, p.63). Indeed, Lin's freedom finally comes together with the sense of suffering and heart-breaking as Lin is free to marry Manna, but Manna finally leaves Lin forever as she dies. Indeed, in *Waiting*, "after years and years of striving to be together, the lovers are finally united; yet the story is thoroughly heart-breaking" (Markotic, 2016, p.34). It can be concluded that Ha Jin's *Waiting* complicates the idea of freedom and pain as the modern man actually lives freely but the man often fails to be grateful to what he has. As the result, the modern man often feels unhappy as he feels oppressed and over controlled by others, despite the fact that he fails to understand and to love himself.

### Conclusion

This paper has explored how Ha Jin's *Waiting* challenges the Maoist Communist regime by depicting the protagonist, Lin, as living as a prisoner who has no freedom. In doing so, Lin is depicted as losing his human senses, such as desires, responsibilities, and empathy, but mainly has a passion for the hospital and the communist government, so the institutions gain more benefits from Lin's sacrifice. This research reveals the strategies that the writer uses to challenge the totalitarian rules are by providing some examples of how the protagonists have lost their senses of humanity, such as love and compassion as their loves are mainly shared for the communist regimes, instead of for their freedom. Another strategy that the writer used is by celebrating the ideas of both capitalism and individualism to undermine the Maoist communist ideology. Thus, Jin's *Waiting* suggests that both communism and capitalism tend to exploit populations through their discourses to maintain their supremacy in society as Foucault suggests in discourse and power.

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