



Research Article

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Queer Bodies, Queer Lives in China English Contact Literature

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Abstract: Ha Jin and his works have contributed significantly to world Englishes knowledge, both through direct scholarly engagement with contact literatures and through the linguistic creativity exhibited in his works of fiction (Jin 2010). His fiction writing also acts as a site of scholarly inquiry (e.g., Zhang 2002). Underexplored, however, are how local varieties of English as used to create queer identities. This paper will seek to address this gap by exploring how Ha Jin created queer spaces in his short story “The Bridegroom.” This investigation will utilize a Kachruvian world Englishes approach to analyzing contact literatures (B. Kachru 1985, 1990, Y. Kachru & Nelson 2006, Thumboo 2006). This analysis will be supported by interfacing it with perspectives from the fields of queer theory and queer linguistics (Jagose 1996, Leap & Motschenbacher 2012), which will allow for a contextually sensitive understanding of queer experiences in China. This approach will enable us to examine how Ha Jin utilized the rhetorical and linguistic markers of China English to explore historical attitudes towards queerness during the post-Cultural Revolution period. These markers include the use of local idioms and culturally-localized rhetorical moves to render a uniquely Chinese queer identity.

Keywords: World Englishes, Contact Literatures, LGBTQ+

1 Introduction

Queer identities have traditionally been treated as outliers and abnormalities in Chinese society, especially when positioned relative to the normative forces of the traditional cultural expectations tied to notions of family and filial piety and to conservative political forces. This paper will investigate how Ha Jin, a prolific author of contact literatures, has constructed queer identities and identity positions through the use of China English.¹ Please note that this paper will attempt to maintain its polyvocal properties throughout, acknowledging each author’s unique voice and perspective on the topic under examination.

1.1 Resisting Normative Forces: From English to Englishes, From Gay/Straight to Queer

The world Englishes Paradigm, as conceptualized by B. Kachru (1985, 1990), and further articulated by Y. Kachru and Nelson (2006), can be seen as speaking back to, and in some cases, pushing against the

¹ We acknowledge that even in the field of World Englishes there is some debate over whether ‘China English’ or ‘Chinese English’ should be the preferred term (e.g., Li 2017). However, we will use ‘China English’ as we agree with scholars like He & Li (2009). He & Li point to the negative attitudes connected to terms like ‘chinglish’, ‘Chinese English,’ and ‘Sinicized English’, each of which is often cast as deficient or stigmatized sub-varieties (see also, Chen & Hu 2006, Jiang 2002; and Jiang & Du 2003).

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normative forces of inner circles varieties of English. That is, this framework allows speakers of expanding and outer circle varieties to resist the notion that inner circle varieties are norm providing—that they are the gatekeepers of “good” English. This stance of resistance creates space from which to embrace linguistic variation and creativity. Moreover, it allows the users of world varieties of Englishes to better speak about their culturally situated experiences. Likewise, queer theory responds to normative and clinicalized notions of human sexuality and of hetero/homosexuality as existing as diametrically opposed, either/or identity options (see Foucault 1990, Jagose 1996, Liu 2015, and Sullivan 2003). That is, queer theory advocates for moving away from the gay/straight dichotomy and towards a more nuanced view of how sexualities are discursively created, maintained, and performed (Bucholtz & Hall 2004, Motschenbacher 2010). A key performative site of these resistances to normative discourses appears in contact literatures (Thumboo 2006), and more specifically in the growing body of queer contact literatures (Liu 2015).

1.2 Contact Literature

We will begin by defining contact literatures. For our purposes, *contact literatures* are works that arise out of the pluricentric linguistic environments of a postcolonial, postmodern world. We include in this definition works of Chinese contact literatures because of its semi-colonized past and because of the steady emergence of a China English variety (see Qiong 2004). According to B. Kachru (1990), contact literatures are written “in English ... by users of English as a second language to delineate contexts which generally do not form part of what may be labeled as the traditions of English literature” (p. 161). Often cited examples of contact literatures include the work of Chinese professor Ha Jin, who we will explore in this paper, Sri Lankan novelist Shyam Selvadurai, and the Indian philosopher Raja Rao. Contact literatures, representing work outside of the western canon, are sites of considerable and purposeful linguistic creativity.

Contact literatures and the use of local varieties of English provide writers with powerful semiotic tools, as well as with alternative rhetorical platforms from which to advance their narratives. As Thumboo (2006) pointed out, contact literatures allow multilingual individuals an opportunity to create an authorial identity that addresses unique social contexts in a language that has spread around the globe. He maintained that despite the potential usefulness of inner-circle varieties of English, certain challenges exist for authors from outer and expanding circle contexts; namely, they need to, “create... suitable English-language semiotic system[s] in...non-English social realities (p. 409).” This need to reconcile English with non-western social contexts leads to the need for linguistic creativity on the part of contact literature authors. This creativity can take many forms, including but not limited to: lexical borrowing and semantic extension, nativization of rhetorical structures and of genre conventions, the importing and challenging of local sociocultural and socio-historical concerns, code-switching/code-blending, and syntactic transfer from local languages to the nativized, local variety of English (see, B. Kachru 1990, Y. Kachru and Nelson 2006, and Thumboo 2006).

Contact literatures have become sites for global authors to confront issues unique to their sociocultural and historical contexts. For example, in *In the Pond*, Ha Jin (1998) wrote in English and explored the struggles of a lower-class family in post-Cultural Revolution China. The use of English allowed Ha Jin to explore themes arising from the tumultuous time that helped to give birth to modern China in a more distanced, objective manner than using Chinese would have permitted. Simultaneously, using “[English] with Chinese characteristics” (Deng 1984) allowed Jin to create and maintain a uniquely Chinese cultural identity (e.g., Zhang 2002). Contact literatures provide a potent place for tackling potentially exigent issues, such as LGBTQ+ identities/regulation, religious tension, gender inequity, and so on. We will now discuss the major theoretical sources that have informed our exploration of how Ha Jin used China English to discursively produce queer lives and bodies in “The Bridegroom.” Please note that the selected source text for analysis focuses on male homosexuality; as this is the case, it limits our abilities to speak about lesbian and transgender identities in China English contact literatures.

2 Theoretical Framework

World Englishes and queer theory have guided our analysis of queer lives in Jin's (2000) "The Bridegroom." By interfacing work from these two areas, we are better able to provide an account of queer identities and how they are discursively constructed and given life in contact literatures. We will begin by discussing the world Englishes paradigm as it relates to this project.

2.1 World Englishes

The world Englishes (WE) paradigm provides a unique tool for examining the linguistic practices and attitudes of individuals across the globe who speak a variety of English, whether that being Swingle (Swedish English), China English, Nigerian English, Indian English, or any one of a number of other varieties. WE argues for a pluricentric worldview, one where there is no longer a stable center, or centers, of English ownership (e.g., the UK or Canada (B. Kachru 1990, Y. Kachru and Nelson 2006)). Instead, there are numerous sites where English is used and has been adopted and modified by local users. As English spread during the colonial and post-colonial periods, it was adopted, and in some cases co-opted, by the colonized—providing a powerful semiotic and rhetorical tool to speak back to and push against the foreign occupiers. As the colonizer withdrew, however, English would remain. Over time and through contact with local languages, explicit and implicit language policies, and global economic forces, English would change, morph, and adapt to fit the needs and demands of the local context. This process would lead to the birth of a new, national variety of English.

The genesis of local varieties of English would often bring about changes from the colonial source variety, usually a direct importation of an inner circle one. This change would often come about through linguistic processes such as lexical borrowing and extension, as well as through the interaction of the local language(s) and English language semantics. Lexical borrowing and extension would often occur when a word from the substrate language would be added to the lexicon of the local variety of English, perhaps to fill a gap. An example of this is *cancellera* in Swedish English, meaning to cancel an action while using a computer. This token filled a lexical gap in Swedish as there was no widely used word for this action. Moreover, the dominance of English in the technology sector in Sweden led to the nativization of the English term, as opposed to the creation of a new, Swedish token (Sharp 2007). Lexical extension of a local token may occur to expand the meaning of a word to better fit a local need—see the example of the use of *comrade*/同志 (tóngzhì) in China English later in this paper. The interaction of different semantic systems, for example, can be seen in the meaning imparted by the reduplication of Chinese names in Singaporean and China English, as well as in the use of *old* (老) and *academician* (院士) as titles of respect in Sino cultural contexts (Wong 2003). At the level of lexis, there may also be the use of direct translation and adoption of terms from the local language. From the world Englishes perspective, however, this is more than merely direct translation, as the use of translated tokens is used to create a nuance of meaning that crystallizes and reconstructs local orientations to societal issues such as gender, sex, and justice (see, for example, our discussion on 'hooliganism' (流氓罪) vs. 'sodomy', below).

Moreover, local varieties of English may be marked by differing syntactic patterns and rhetorical strategies. For example, reduplication of terms in South Asian Englishes (e.g., Indian English and Sri Lankan English) can carry additional meaning in the local context. So, when Selvadurai (1994) discusses 'bride bride,' the game his children protagonist play, this reduplication serves to both mirror the colloquial speech styles of Sinhalese speakers and to carry affiliative meaning (B. Kachru 1990). Furthermore, at the discourse level, local varieties of English may favor differing patterns of thematic information, choosing to front shift elements that would appear later in the utterance of inner circle English speakers (see Y. Kachru and Nelson 2006). Finally, local varieties of English, such as China English, will often use rhetorical patterns and devices common in the local language in their English language writing. For example, Ha Jin (2011) makes ready use of Mandarin language metaphors and idioms rendered in English that may carry little or different meaning for readers that are not highly communicative in Mandarin. For example, in

Nanjing Requiem, he refers to the yellow soil of China (Jin 2011: 21). This is a translation of the term 黃土 (huángtǔ (lit. yellow soil)), which carries additional meaning for Mandarin Chinese speaker by invoking a sense of the homeland and a potentially patriotic nostalgia.

Contact literatures, as discussed in the section above, provide one place where we see varieties of English outside of so-called inner circle varieties (e.g., US, Canadian, Australian Englishes) being used, crystallized, and even exported. All of which suggests that contact literatures are prime grounds for investigating how local varieties of English allow authors to explore queer themes and to construct and enact queer identities. This potential is made even more salient when one considers that contact literatures provide their authors with the ability to use alternative semiotic systems to explore locally relevant, but perhaps culturally sensitive, issues.

2.2 Queer Identities and World Englishes

Before continuing, it is essential to define a key term that will be used in this investigation, namely the term queer. While queer issues have been explored in both sociolinguistics and WE literature, in the WE community, it has received relatively little attention outside of a 1998 *World Englishes* symposium section and a handful of other articles (e.g., French 1998, Jones 2013, and Valentine 2006). In the *World Englishes* symposium issue, many of the pieces focused on so-called *queer English*; limited, however, was the scope of the articles, as many of them focused on queer English in North American contexts (Jacobs 1998, Leap 1998, Queen 1998, and White 1998).

Further limitations in this body of work related to how the authors chose to define queer/queerness. Many of these pieces used definitions that have been predicated on the object of an individual's sexual desire. For example, Queen's (1998) "Stay Queer!" 'Never Fear!': Building Queer Social Networks" defined *queer community* using the community of practice framework advanced by Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (1992). The queer community was defined as individuals who shared common traits; and, in the case of Queen's participants, all were either gay men or lesbians, all but one of whom was part of a committed, monogamous relationship. So, for Queen, as for so many others, queer was based almost solely on the object of sexual attraction and action. Using the object of sexual desire to construct a queer identity position appears again in Bacon's (1998) "Getting the Story Straight: Coming Out Narratives and the Possibility of a Cultural Rhetoric." It is best to quote Bacon directly and at length to emphasize this operationalization:

Queer identities are funny that way too. It is really not enough to have the possibility of 'telling' people. To really be 'out' as a queer, we must deny *straight people* [emphasis ours] the possibility of assuming we are *straight*, we have to challenge heteronormative assumptions with our very 'being' so that we aren't constantly involved in a rhetorical exchange on the topic. (Bacon 1998: 250)

Here, Bacon sets up queer in opposition to straight, while leaving straight as the unmarked form. By leaving straight unmarked, Bacon relied heavily on the readers tacit understanding of what straightness entails. While many queer theorists might see gay, straight, and queer as problematic terms (c.f., Jagose 1996 and Sullivan 2003), many readers not familiar with the work done in gender and sexuality studies might define straight as an individual that is sexually attracted to a member of the opposite sex. Since queer is often cast in opposition to this, LGBTQ+ individuals may be defined as those persons attracted to members of the same sex. We begin to see this position problematized if we tease out the definitions of hetero- and homonormativity, which have been defined as the presentation of only certain hetero-/homosexualities as normal or acceptable ways of life (e.g., Meyer 2007, Milani 2013, Motschenbacher 2014). Moreover, it is important to understand that LGBTQ+ identities are discursively (re)constructed in communicative events, such as in the writing of a contact literatures novel; and, this is true of all identities (Bucholtz & Hall 2004).

Simply put, the above operationalizations of queer identities are somewhat problematic, as they can reinforce hegemonic discourses that only specific forms of straightness are valued and are, therefore, the *only* natural or acceptable sexual identity. The heavy focus on object(s) of sexual desire adds an additional

layer of complexity when seeking to define queer and queerness. Sedgwick (2008 [1990]) suggested that defining queer based on the object of one's sexual desire is allowing heteronormative world-views to remain dominant as opposed to challenging them in any meaningful and critical way (see also, Motschenbacher & Stegu 2013, Sullivan 2003). This has led some LGBTQ+ studies scholars/queer theorists to argue that we *should not* define the term queer, as to pin down a meaning would necessarily unqueer it (Jagose 1996, Sullivan 2003). However, in refusing to define a term, we maintain that it is difficult, if not impossible, to use that term to carry our reasonable, responsible, and potentially replicable inquiry. We, as a field, must have terms that have, at the very least, semi-stable definitions. Our foundational definitions, however, must also include some global perspective when working with contact literatures.

This need for perspective means that merely applying the advances from western queer theory to an example of China English contact literature, written about Chinese life experiences, is further rendered problematic. The problem arises because western notions of queer and queerness do not necessarily travel well. Liu (2015) argued that the unproblematised concept of queer used by some international and Asian LGBTQ+ advocates is one that has largely been imported from western queer theory, and that has focused on assimilation—that is, we queers are the same as all you straights (p. 15)! He argued that assimilationist rhetoric has overtaken queer identity politics, and it is centered around queerness as a normal part of the social order—We only want to find love, get married, spend our Saturday afternoons antiquing, and our Sunday mornings at brunch. It is important to note that the situation to which Liu is referring to has been used to advance gay marriage agendas in places like the United States and Taiwan. However, this is not an unproblematic approach as it then recreates a situation where only preferred ways of being queer are privileged in society (i.e., homonormativity (see Duggan 2002, Motschenbacher 2014)). Liu (2015) further argued that this assimilationist version of queer identities was often seen as foreign, as a western import, in pre-1990s China. The idea of a uniquely Chinese queer identity position is, he argued, evident in the unique lexical tokens that are used in the Chinese queer community (e.g., 同志/tóngzhì, 同性恋/tóngxìngliàn, 大同/dàtóng, etc.). 同志/tóngzhì is of particular importance because of how it is further implicated in political culture and dialogue in Mainland China (Chou 2000, Leap 2013). Following the rise of the Chinese communist party (CCP), 同志/tóngzhì was used as a form of address for members of the party's various organs to show they were oriented to the same will or purpose, based on the word's literal meaning (Chou 2000). 同志/tóngzhì remains a significant term in the CCP, with Beijing recently encouraging others to continue in the spirit of Chairman Mao by referring to each other, without exception, as 同志/tóngzhì (Luo 2014). However, 同志/tóngzhì later came to be co-opted by the homosexual community in Mainland China and Taiwan as a marker of queer identity, likely a play on the more clinical term 同性恋/tóngxìngliàn (Leap 2013). Liu (2015) argued for a queer Marxist informed approach to understanding queer identity positions in Mainland China and Taiwan. Lui's (2015) queer Marxist approach called for acknowledging the disruptive history of queer bodies and lives—where the disruption was a one of the dominant social order, as opposed to the natural order of the world. Further evidence of this division can be seen in the criminal prosecution of homosexuality not under sodomy laws as in the west (a crime against nature/god), but under hooliganism (a crime against the social order), which also included over consumption of alcohol, causing a public disturbance, and gambling (Li 2007, Liu 2015).

For this paper, *queer* is defined as pertaining to identities, identifications, and actions of individuals that are counter to the norm and what typically may have deemed as acceptable in a given socio-cultural context; this often includes some connections to sex, gender, or sexuality. As it relates to gender and sexuality, queer, here will also serve as an analytical lens that allows for an understanding queer identities as a part of what Seidman (1995) referred to as a “power/knowledge regime that shapes the ordering of desires, behaviors, social institutions and social relationships (p. 128, see also Motschenbacher 2010).”

2.3 Queer Contact Literatures

Queer contact literature is being defined here as those literatures that would fit the traditional definition for a contact literature (see above); however, they also address queer issues through the presence of

queer characters in roles vital to the integrity of the narrative or through a direct engagement with queer issues in the societal context in which the narrative is set. Queer contact literatures, along with their local counterparts, form an essential part of national literary traditions that can crystallize the various identity positions available to members of the LGBTQ+ community and how they are positioned in broader society (Liu 2015).

Queer contact literatures have received some attention in WE. Tawake (2006), for example, examined the work of Witi Ihimaera. Ihimaera is a gay, Māori author who occasionally writes on queer themes. In Tawake's (2006) study of *The Uncle's Story*, a novel dealing with coming-out as a homosexual man in Māori society, she examined how the uncle's war-time journal entries and the main character's coming out journeys reify rhetorical practices of their local Māori community. What Tawake (2006) found was that through the use of first-person narration and a story-within-a-story device, Witi Ihimaera was able to construct identities for his characters that speak to the complicated reality of being both a gay man and a member of mainstream Māori society. This positioning was made even more significant for the reader of *The Uncle's Story* through Ihimaera's contrasts between the marginalization of the Māori community in New Zealand and how many conservative cultures tend to marginalize queer identities.

While works like Tawake (2006) have added much to our understanding, there is still room for further investigation. What has not been sufficiently investigated in WE is how global authors use local varieties of English to construct queer identities and how they explore queer identity issues through queer contact literatures. Nor has WE adequately queried how this work may be done in locally relevant ways that may not fit western queer narratives and notions of queer identity. This paper will begin to fill in this gap by examining how this work is carried out in China English through a close examination of queer bodies and lives in Ha Jin's short story "The Bridegroom."

Ha Jin's work, as exemplified in "The Bridegroom," is a powerful literary representation of China English, an expanding circle variety of English. Thinking of Ha Jin's work as an example of contact literature grants us a useful theoretical construct that both aligns this paper more firmly with the WE tradition. Additionally, it also provides a pathway to analyze how multilingual creativity and local varieties of English can be used to speak to and about the locally relevant ways in which sexual identities are constructed, performed, and rendered understandable. Finally, and this applies especially to "The Bridegroom," Ha Jin is writing not just at a literary contact zone, but also a sexual one, exploring queer lives and bodies in post-Cultural Revolution China. This act is one that Liu (2015) argued creates a body of queer literature that further underscores the differences between queer expression in Mainland China and Taiwan and that in the west.

3 Queer Bodies, Queer Lives in Ha Jin's "The Bridegroom"

"The Bridegroom" is part of Ha Jin's collection of short stories about life in China during and after the Cultural Revolution. In it, Ha Jin recounts the tale of Baowen, a strapping young man who many admire for his skill in *gōngfu* (功夫). Baowen is married to Old Cheng's (the narrator) daughter. One night, Baowen is arrested when he is found among a group of men who enjoy each other's company a bit too much, at least as far as the local authorities are concerned. The majority of the narrative focuses on Old Cheng as he attempts to secure his son-in-law's release from, or at least preferential treatment in, the county hospital where he is being held in administrative detention.

One of the most identifiable features of China English in Ha Jin's body of work, including "The Bridegroom," is the mass usage of new lexical tokens originating from Mandarin Chinese. The ideology adopted in China in the 1980s is very different from what Jin's English-speaking readers might be familiar with because it was not only unique to China, but it was also specific to that period. The 1980s mark the end of the Cultural Revolution, and it was a time where the country was seeking rapid economic growth. However, post-Cultural Revolution China was still deeply influenced by communist and socialist ideologies. It was around the twin pillars of communism and socialism that social norm-enforcing values were created. These values placed individual responsibility to the group and the family over the maintenance of individual freedom and expression. To help recreate this cultural milieu in his texts, Ha Jin used many English words

whose core meaning are heavily rooted in this socio-historical point. Terms like *cadre* (干部) to refer to an individual's political standing in the party, or the expletive *(grand)son of a turtle* (龟孙子/龟儿子) may require either background knowledge of Chinese language and culture or further explanation by the author to be fully understood by some inner circle English readers.

Apart from the large-scale deployment of unique or co-opted lexical items, there are also distinct pragmatic and discursal systems represented in Ha Jin's work. The use of these strategies helped to demonstrate how people communicated and conveyed meanings using different registers and speech codes while talking to a variety of interlocutors. In the case of "The Bridegroom," this can be seen in the contrasts between Old Cheng's straightforward, almost terse, approach to speaking with his daughter, Beina, and his more distanced yet polite tone with the hospital administrator, who is in a position of social authority over him. For example, when speaking with Beina after Baowen's arrest, Old Cheng's turns mirror that of an interrogation. He asks a string of questions about Beina's and Baowen's marriage and sexual history (e.g., "Why do you say that?" immediately followed by "But he can't be a good husband can he?" (Jin 2000, 100-101)). Over the fourteen turns of the conversation, six of Old Cheng's seven turns are direct questions. Compare this to his conversation with the hospital administrator, which he opens with a gift of two cartons of cigarettes as, "a small token of ... gratitude, for the new year (p. 111)." These purposeful constructions in the narrative reflect the local social and cultural background of post-Cultural Revolution China. In the following sections, we will explore how Ha Jin uses China English to construct a queer narrative.

3.1 The Regulation and Clinicalization of Sexual Desire

Foucault (1990) discussed how State entities use a variety of means to regulate the lives of their citizens, including their sex lives. In this case, *regulation* is the act of using legislative methods to exert control over a populace. For example, sodomy laws in the west were one way that governments sought a legal means to control sexual activity by defining acceptable and deviant sexual activity. This regulation included a system of punishments and remediations for aberrant sexual activity. Foucault (1990) also argued that this regulation and remediation led to a history of clinicalizing sexual behavior in the west. This *clinicalization* occurred through the codifying of so-called deviant sexual behaviors as diseased states to be cured through medical intervention. The regulation and clinicalization of sex was also a feature of post-Cultural Revolution China and was one of the themes explored in Ha Jin's "The Bridegroom."

In "The Bridegroom," it is after Baowen is caught in the homosexual gentlemen's club that the reader begins to see the regulation and clinicalization of sexual desire in post-Cultural Revolution China, which is presented to the reader in ways that are both uniquely Chinese and in some that might be considered universal. The first appears in how Baowen is charged. He is not accused of buggery, sodomy, or some other moral crime. Buggery and sodomy have historically been common laws in western nations to criminalize homosexuality and same-sex relations, which were often interpreted as crimes against nature or god. Rather, Baowen is charged with hooliganism (流氓罪 liúmáng zuì). According to Liu (2015), hooliganism was used as a catch-all charge for anything that disrupted, or that threatened to disrupt, social order and stability (see also, Li 2007). It is through this classification of homosexuality as a social crime that we begin to see a uniquely Chinese approach to rendering queer lives and bodies subject to the State. That is, the foundation of the judicial code in Mainland China at the time was not predicated on religious virtue, but on what was deemed to be good for the society and cultural continuity. The post-Cultural Revolution State sought to use Confucian values to help maintain its control over the populace. This decision was due to Confucianism's appeal to the populace and despite State ambivalence towards Confucian thought. Given the importance of maintaining social order, crimes against society needed to be remediated with extreme prejudice. As homosexuality disrupted traditional family roles, it rendered problematic traditional Confucian views of family and filial piety and, by extension, State authority over the individual. This can also be tied to the way in which State apparatuses co-opted Confucian values to impose structure on society—one where an individual was required to place themselves lower in the social order than country and family. Baowen being charged with hooliganism (流氓罪) is one way that Ha Jin uses China English to create a uniquely

Chinese queer identity, one that Baowen does not immediately proclaim for himself. Rather, it is an identity position that is imposed on him in the context of State-run Confucianism.²

The charge of hooliganism, however, is not only the legal path through which homosexuality was regulated in post-Cultural Revolution China. The legal code also provided options for clinicalization and remediation. How homosexuality came to be governed under the criminal code in Mainland China is an interesting and fraught topic to investigate. It is helpful to consider the possible sources of homosexuality and how it could be seen to threaten the State and its control. As suggested by B. Kachru (1986), “[lexical extensions] provide the English language with extended contexts of situation within which such literatures may be interpreted and understood. (p.161).” In the case of Ha Jin’s text, the use of the charge of hooliganism helps to highlight how Chinese societal norms have been influenced by mainstream Confucianism, which proposes fealty towards the state as being of high importance.

Key to understanding the State’s drive to regulate sexuality is the argument that homosexuality is unnatural or undesirable because of its links to foreignness and being *un-Chinese* (see also Boellstorff 2004, Leap 2004). Because of this perceived foreignness, Old Cheng, Baowen’s father-in-law, struggles to render his son-in-law’s crimes as understandable to his worldview. In an attempt to do so, he comes up with the following formula that tries to make the homosexual subject knowable in relation to State-controlled discourses: homosexual equals foreign, which equals bad. This belief is predicated on the fact that foreigners had oppressed China and therefore, as an expression of foreignness, homosexuality merits punishment and rejection by those who experience “genuine” Chinese-ness (e.g., Liu 2015).

However, just pages later we see Old Cheng, who is crafted as a good Chinese citizen and father, contemplating the power of the State in outlining and policing identity options. He does not do so by retracting his negative feelings towards homosexuality, nor does he speak up in defense of his son-in-law, as those sympathetic to the queer cause today might hope. Instead, he explores the power structure (a) with his actions and (b) with his thoughts in the form of self-criticism, a standard tool of the ruling party in China when remediating one of their political cadres. This self-reflective, self-critical assessment of his understanding and his relationship with the State is one more way that Ha Jin uses China English rhetorical moves to create a uniquely Chinese queer narrative.

First, Old Cheng attempts to use direct action to render the queer subject knowable and locatable in dominant, State-controlled discourses. To do this, Old Cheng wants to lay eyes on Baowen’s body—now a symbol of an object acting outside his perceived notions of propriety and Chineseness. During Baowen’s electro-bath therapy, Old Cheng’s curiosity grows, and he uses his non-understanding of the queer subject as an excuse to gaze upon Baowen’s naked body. Old Cheng justifies this by stating that he, “...wanted to find out whether Baowen was a normal man. The rumors in our factory had gotten on my nerves, particularly that he had no penis” (Jin 2000: 105). Ironically, in believing homosexuality to be wrong and a disease, Old Cheng finds himself desiring to look at another man in his nakedness.

We are not suggesting that this act proves any sexual curiosity or attraction by Old Cheng towards men or the male form. Nevertheless, Jin (2000) reveals Old Cheng’s state of mind by showing the reader how dismayed he was when “Baowen came out in a clean pair of shorts” (p. 105) and very clearly had normal male genitalia, which showed Old Cheng that homosexual bodies are no different from heterosexual ones. This whole encounter does, however, highlight the trouble that Old Cheng is having in rendering queer bodies and lives understandable. And, in his attempts to do so, he finds himself in a queer position. Because if Baowen *did not* have a penis, Old Cheng would have witnessed something that defied the traditional male body and gender role he previously associated with his son-in-law; and if Baowen *did* have a penis, Old Cheng would have found himself in the position of deliberately seeking to glance at another man’s genitals. Though not disrupted totally, the forbidden act of men looking at other men is already breached because of the investigative rationale for Old Cheng’s gaze. Moreover, this provides him a proverbial out when it comes to a potential breach of propriety by its taking place during a State-sanctioned attempt to remediate the

² Admittedly, Chairman Mao Zedong vehemently opposed the dominance of Confucian ideology in the Chinese State. The extent to which thousands of years of Confucianism endured after the fall of the Qing dynasty and went on to affect the Communist Party of China (CCP) is still being debated (see Kai 2014).

queer subject through medical intervention. Despite the fact-finding reasons for Old Cheng's desire to gaze at Baowen's naked body, the sexual power structure imposed by State regulation of sex is not only broken by Baowen's relations with men; it is now also broken by Old Cheng's experience of the situation.

Of course, Old Cheng does not realize the irony of this action and the position in which it places him. Although he remains unforgiving, Old Cheng becomes sympathetic toward his son-in-law. He laments, "My heart was full of pity for Baowen. He was such a fine young man that he ought to be able to love a woman, have a family, and enjoy a normal life (Jin 2000: 107)." Old Cheng then finds out from a doctor that homosexuality is *not* a disease as State officials have claimed. This revelation ruptures his vision of the world and makes him question the nature of gender and sexuality. Moreover, it once again makes the physical body very salient. He ponders this aspect through a self-criticism:

If homosexuality is a natural thing, then why are there men and women? Why can't two men get married and make a baby? Why didn't nature give men another hole? I was beset by doubts. If only I could have seen a trustworthy doctor for a second opinion. If only I had a knowledgeable, honest friend to talk with. (113)

Seidman's (1995) queer theory allows us to argue that Old Cheng is not seeking to explain the repression of his gay son-in-law, but is instead attempting to analyze it, albeit to a potentially superficial extent, to lay bare the power/knowledge regime of heterosexuality. He does this in the context of his Chineseness, through which he has been socialized to believe that homosexuality is inherently "foreign." It is through Old Cheng's self-criticism that he uses his State-sponsored sense of Chineseness to better make sense of his sexuality and that of his son-in-law.

For Old Cheng, Boawen's homosexuality is a problem that could cause him, the *paterfamilias*, to lose face (丢面子/ diūmiànzi) with his superiors because of traditional society's rejection of homosexual identities. The concern about not being a good Chinese father and party member are evident in Old Cheng's worries about what Baowen's crimes mean for the future of the family (see Boellstorff 2004; Leap 2004). When he first heard of his son-in-law's legal troubles, he thought, "[o]nce he became a criminal, he'd be marked forever as an enemy of society, no longer redeemable. Even his children would suffer. I ought to save him (Jin 2000: 99)." Again Jin (2000) uses a unique phrase, *an enemy of society* (人民公敌/rénmín gōngdí). As stated in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, the PRC adopts "the people's democratic dictatorship" as its State system (PRC Const. art. 1). That is, the country is democratic within its people, but uses dictatorship to treat its enemies, and one distinction between a *member* of the people and an *enemy* of the people is whether said person has committed a crime that threatens the social order. So, the lexical string "an enemy of society" takes on additional layers of meaning in the China English context, and can serve as an essential tool-for-thought in understanding the motivations of Ha Jin's characters as they react to the potential loss of face represented by Baowen's homosexuality and the charge of hooliganism. For Old Cheng, there is a potential loss of face when others read the situation as one where he could not discharge his duties as patriarch. That is, he could not protect his daughter from being wooed by a social miscreant. Because of this failure, Old Cheng's family line will come to an inglorious end with his plain daughter trapped in a sexless marriage.

Queer theory can be put into dialogue with world Englishes to help better understand how Ha Jin is making sense of queer lives in his tale of "The Bridegroom." Sullivan (2003) posited that heterosexual relations lead to procreation (life), while homosexual relations serve no procreative purpose (unlife); that is, sexuality is a tale of life versus unlife (52). Counter to what the title of Jin's story suggests, the narrative focus was never on the sad reality of the tall, slim, and muscular Baowen. It was about the macro-level filial and societal expectations that bind families together and that police antisocial behaviors, both of which are bigger than any one individual: continuing the bloodline, getting married, respecting one's elders, and so on.

The validity of this argument can be picked apart from a number of angles. As certain lines of queer theory propose, heterosexuals are just as limited by normative discourses as homosexuals. However, the extent to which participants in Chinese society see themselves as limited depends on the person. What to do about this dilemma has been long debated in queer theory. For example:

liberationists believed that in order to achieve sexual, and political freedom it was necessary to revolutionize society in and through the eradication of traditional notions of gender and sexuality and the kinds of institutions that informed them and were informed by them. (Sullivan 2003: 31)

This is in opposition to assimilationist views, mentioned earlier in this paper, that posit queers are just like straights in their desire to find love and to pursue a stable family life (see Duggan 2002). The question of which is correct is not entirely relevant to our argument here. What is relevant, however, is that the traditional non-acceptance of homosexuality is widespread. This social fact may drive the authors of contact literatures, like “The Bridegroom,” to attempt to affect change through their literary works. In the context of world Englishes, the fear that queerness will eradicate tradition might also be linked back to the power structure of the colonizer—English and its institutions that have been used to impose a notion of *proper, educated* speech. Here, again, queer is rendered as dangerous because of its ties to foreignness in the post-Cultural Revolution context. The fact that Ha Jin chose to write this book in English suggests that he has embraced foreignness to some extent, and at the same time has embraced acceptance of homosexuality, which the majority of the Chinese characters in the book seemingly abhor.

3.1.1 Traditional Chinese Medicine and Remediating the Queer

Given its ties to western capitalism and foreignness, it’s not surprising to see Baowen’s queer behavior regarded as criminal. However, beyond being seen as a social issue, his queer identity is also clinicalized as a social disease. An identity position that Baowen took on, even if it created internal tension, as shown in the excerpt, below.

To my surprise, [Baowen] said, “So, I’m a sick man. You think I don’t know that?”

I was bewildered. He went on, “Years ago I tried everything to cure myself. I took a lot of herbs and boluses, and even ate baked scorpions, lizards, and toads. Nothing helped me. Still I’m fond of men. I don’t know why I’m not interested in women. Whenever I’m with a woman my heart is as calm as a stone.” (Jin 2000: 125)

Through society’s positioning of queerness as diseased, Baowen engaged medical interventions—both traditional and modern, voluntary and involuntary—to diligently try to rid himself of his homosexuality. It is the manner in which his sexuality is clinicalized and treated that highlights how Baowen’s queerness is a unique, Chinese queerness. Specifically, individuals in China, can’t protect their individual sexual rights because of the relationship of the individual to relevant social groups. That is, they will think queerness might be “wrong” and “bad” based on how socially significant superiors position non-conforming sexualities (e.g., family, medical practitioners, government agents (see, Chou 2000)). The importance of the government’s positioning of queer lives is evidenced in the tension created between legislation and the opinions of medical professionals. Baowen’s attending physician at the government-run hospital is a good example of this. Even though the doctor in charge of Baowen’s treatment knows that homosexuality is not an illness, he has to give Baowen the electro-bath to “cure” him because it is the State-sanctioned remediation. This means that the response of others to queerness, even that of trained medical experts, is constrained to fit into the State discourse of homosexuality as a social disease.

Another aspect of the clinicalization of sexuality is the methodologies used by the State and by the individual in attempts to treat homosexuality. State medical apparatuses attempt to use modern, *western* medicine to treat a *western* social disease, specifically through electroshock therapy. In contrast, Baowen chose to turn to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), seeking a Chinese solution to grant him access to an identity position recognized as a good Chinese citizen. The above quote shows how he turned to TCM treatments to heal his queer body. Namely, the appearance of herbs, boluses, and baked animals here is a typical representation of TCM, which is known for using natural ingredients as cures. Also, by stating that Baowen had tried so many different remedies and voluntarily increased the voltage of the electro-bath, Jin (2000) shows the reader the extent to which Baowen is willing to go to be “cured.” Being cured would allow him to fit the model for good son and good citizen better.

3.2 Marriage and Family

“The Bridegroom” also provides a site for Ha Jin to use China English to explore issues of marriage and family in the larger context of post-Cultural Revolution China. For example, one of Old Cheng’s response to his son-in-law’s sexuality can be closely tied to Confucian notions of the importance of family and its role in larger society. When Old Cheng was uncertain as to why Baowen was arrested, his first thought was of the danger that this posed to the family. Seeking to assuage his concerns, Old Cheng considered ways to ensure Baowen’s loyalty to his wife and family, thinking to himself that “If [the marriage] survived the first two years, it might last decades—once Baowen became a father, it would be difficult for him to break loose (Jin 2000: 92).” The word “survive” here sets the foundation for the marriage, and preventing it from breaking down may be difficult but crucial to discharging notions of filial piety and maintaining societal stability. Love itself is not the primary reason for sustaining a marriage; instead, it is a responsibility to family and society through the adherence to custom. This focus on discharging filial obligations and maintaining societal order may be tied to the fact that parents arranged most marriages at the time, and a failure in the union could reflect poorly on the parents, causing them also to lose face.

Likewise, Baowen’s wife, Beina, is also implicated in this understanding of power, but differently from Old Cheng. Before they married, Baowen tells Beina that he is not attracted to women and may not be able to produce a child. She responds without disapproval saying she just wanted a husband and a home. Baowen later reflects that this was a way for her to ‘save face,’ as no one else would have married her given her looks. It is this notion of saving face, or 爱面子 (ài miánzi), that adds a uniquely Chinese concern to Jin’s narrative. The desire to maintain the standing of the extended family contributes to both Baowen’s motivation to stay closeted and to Beina’s to stay in her marriage despite the fact that it is not one that will lead to procreation; rather, her marriage is a 同妻 (tóngqì) marriage (Li 2009). 同妻 (tóngqì) marriages are those that involve a homosexual man and heterosexual women, and it is one that is often driven by social pressures in the initial coupling. Moreover, it is typically maintained by either worry about losing face (失面子/shīmiànzi or 丢脸/diūliǎn) or concerns on the wife’s part about losing financial security (Li 2009). 同妻 (tóngqì) is a new lexical token in Mandarin that is formed by combining the first character of the word typically used to refer to a male homosexual (同志) with the first character of the word for wife (妻子). Given the relative invisibility of lesbian populations in China, an analogous term for homosexual female/heterosexual male marriages is not available, nor is there a similar term for homosexual mixed gender marriages (Li 2009, Yangwawa de xin 2012). Rather, they are both often referred to as sham marriages (假结婚/骗婚, lit. fake marriage/deceptive marriage), perhaps speaking to dominant patriarchal discourses (see also Cao & Lu 2014, Wan 2001).

Beina is aware of the pressures put on her to marry, have a husband, and a home (in keeping with State-sponsored Confucian morals), but she is also blind to the pressures put on her gay husband. Both Beina and Baowen exist in a relationship that is bound up in heterosexual, reproductive, and monogamous dominant social discourses. Despite this, Beina sees Baowen’s homosexual desires as an advantage to her relationship. An opposite-sex affair would likely cause Beina to lose face in her community, a fate that she has been socialized to avoid.

In the social setting of post-Cultural Revolution China, “western capitalism” and a “bourgeois lifestyle” are used to describe conduct that favor pleasure over hard work, luxury over frugality, and money over spiritual wealth. When such words are applied to homosexual identity positions, and when it is compared to other social ills like gambling and prostitution, they further reify how queer lives and bodies are inscribed and regulated by State agents. Namely, homosexuals are people who are so obsessed with the pleasure brought by same-sex sexual activities that they have abandoned their responsibility to maintain a peaceful and harmonious society. That is, they are willing to forgo traditional marriage—specifically procreative marriage—to pursue what the State has deemed to be deviant sexual desire. It is through the skillful deployment of a culturally localized narrative and the use of China English that Ha Jin can vividly impart this meaning to the reader.

The importance of family and maintaining the integrity of the family unit is further explored through Beina’s attitude towards her husband’s homosexual identity.

[m]ost men can't stay away from pretty women, but Baowen just likes to have a few buddies. What's wrong with that? It's better this way, 'cause I don't have to worry about those shameless bitches in our factory. He doesn't bother to give them a look. He'll never have a lifestyle problem." (Jin 2000: 102)

While most viewed Baowen's homosexual identity as a problem to be solved, Beina regarded it as an advantage, a sort of shield that protects her family from "those shameless bitches (Jin 2000: 102)" that work in the factory with her. The fact that Beina, an otherwise plain and proper young woman, uses such a severe term is telling and again highlights a place where Jin uses localized cultural and rhetorical expectations to add culturally-grounded nuance to his work.

Additionally, Beina turns to received wisdom about the practice of martial arts in China to further scaffold her acceptance of her husband's queer sexual practices, stating that "he can't [sleep with me] because he practices kung fu. He said if he slept with a woman, all his many years' work would be gone. From the very beginning his master told him to avoid women (Jin 2000: 101)." Certain circles of Chinese martial arts practitioners believe that particular types of kung fu requires the practitioner to maintain their virginity to cultivate 精/jīng, a kind of energy derived from the kidneys and thought to fuel human activity in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM (Maciocia 1986)). By falling back on the Chinese cultural and rhetorical trope of the knowledgeable and respectable master, Jin provides Beina with a feasible excuse to pardon Baowen's same-sex desires and actions, thereby accepting her own queered marriage (同妻). By carefully deploying not only China English lexical tokens, but also rhetorical tropes and cultural metaphors, Jin is able to use China English as a linguistic tool to highlight the unique nature of queerness and LGBTQ+ identities in mainland China during the 1980s.

Ha Jin (2000) also highlighted how Baowen's sexual identity impacted his local community. This is evidenced by the lengths that his social superiors were willing to go to mitigate the potential loss of face for the family. For example, his boss, Secretary Zhu, and many of his colleagues liked his kungfu. This led many of them to surreptitiously collude to lessen his sentence on the charge of hooliganism: "[i]n the men's room inside our office building, he said to me, 'Old Cheng, we must not let Baowen end up in prison' (Jin 2000: 99)." This statement, from Secretary Zhu, represents an interesting discoursal turn. For a typical conversation between people from different ranks, many tokens of honorific address and reference need to be used; but here, Secretary Zhu talks to Old Cheng as if speaking with a close friend, a collaborator, or a co-conspirator. Through this turn, we can see that Secretary Zhu cares for Baowen's situation and the potential loss of face that the family—and perhaps by extension the factory—might endure. To prevent any loss of face for the workplace, this high-ranking leader of Baowen's work unit (单位/dānwèi) was willing to help Old Cheng as he sought to move Boawen's charge out of criminal prosecution and into medical treatment. The fact that they talked in the men's restroom instead of an office or a meeting room suggests that it might not be appropriate for people of differing ranks and of good social standing to talk in such familiar terms, using lexical and discoursal markers that are beyond their social status. As a literary device, the bathroom as a place of privacy allows for Secretary Zhu and Old Cheng to engage with taboo topics. This exchange between Old Cheng and his factory boss redraws the relationship between Old Cheng and his son-in-law, Baowen.

This refiguring of the familial relationship is made more apparent when Old Cheng goes to visit Baowen in the hospital. That is, the relationship that is highlighted as important isn't the familial one, rather it is the relationship between Old Cheng and State agents as represented by the local government officials and the managers of the factory at which he and Baowen work. During this visit, driven by the concerns of his social superiors, Old Cheng happens to see Baowen undergo electroshock therapy and witnesses Baowen's seeming dedication to the treatment. On seeing this, Old Cheng tells Baowen, "I'll tell our leaders how sincere your attitude is and how cooperative you are (Jin 2000: 109)." This is usually how people talk to their leaders, bosses, or to government officials. Rarely, however, is this kind of language used in a conversation between family, where a comforting turn such as "I feel so sorry for you" or "I hope you will get better soon" might be expected. However, Jin chooses to highlight the changing nature of their relationship by skillfully meshing the English language and Chinese conversational expectations and roles through the localized variety that is China English. He does this to show that Old Cheng's priority is to the factory leadership that

has helped him to save face. Here, Old Cheng views his connection with Baowen not as a family tie, but as a responsibility he holds to the factory's leaders. The relationship of Old Cheng to Baowen can be seen as reflecting the social order of the day, one where loyalty to government/societal leaders is greater than that expressed towards family members, overpowering even familial love.

3.3 Confucian Colloquialism and Making Sense of the Queer

Confucian proverbs also form a critical aspect of the linguistic and rhetorical repertoire for China English. Their importance is because of the conflicted-yet-central role that Confucian values had regarding State control of the population in post-Cultural Revolution China. In some instances, these proverbs have transformed to serve a more colloquial purpose, often being rendered as a metaphoric expression. Confucian metaphors as a marker of China English, therefore, make an appearance in "The Bridegroom" to help Ha Jin create uniquely Chinese queer identity positions. For instance, their frequent appearance contributed to constructing idealized identities for Baowen and preconfiguring how others would read those identity performances. This is apparent in a passage where the author discusses how others reacted to the unexpected marriage between the rather plain Beina and very strapping Baowen.

...But to many young women in our sewing machine factory, Beina's marriage was a slap in the face. They'd say, "A hen cooped up a peacock"³ Or, "A fool also lands in the arms of fortune."⁴ True, Baowen had been one of the most handsome, unmarried men in the factory, and nobody had expected that Beina, stocky and stout, would win him. (Jin 2000: 115)

The above provides a typical example of Ha Jin's deploying of Confucian colloquialism, translated into English, in a way that is perhaps more accessible to non-Chinese speakers. This move allows Jin to create characters that are locally relevant to his narratives. His use of Chinese proverbs, metaphors, and colloquialisms also contribute to the emergence of China English as a fully formed and recognizable variety of English. Its deployment in his work helps him to construct a work of contact literature that uses local lexical, discursal, and rhetorical tools that allow authors to explore local responses to issues brought about by a post-colonial, globalized world (Thumboo 2006).

The usage of proverbs and metaphors, such as the ones above, also helps to demarcate a text that has China English speakers as one of its primary audiences. This means that the China English speaker gains additional contextual information about the narrative and the nature of Beina and Baowen's marriage. The personification of animals is often used in China English; Baowen, before coming to be viewed as an ill person and a sexual deviant, was praised as "peacock" and "fortune" before his outing. This particular linguistic trait also reflects Chinese discursal patterns that favor indirect, face-saving ways of expressing opinions through the use of proverbs (see Wei and Li 2013). While these strategies may not be unique to China English, their purpose is in line with the avenues of multilingual creativity exhibit in many works of contact literature (see Jin 2010, Y. Kachru and Nelson, 2006).

4 Conclusion

This paper has examined how Ha Jin has used China English in his text, "The Bridegroom," to create a uniquely Chinese queer identity. In doing so, he highlights the fact that queerness is not a universal identity position. Instead, there are culturally localized queer identity positions that are responded to and regulated in locally relevant ways. To truly capture and discuss these queer identity positions often requires the deployment of localized lexical tokens and discursal/rhetorical strategies—that is, it often involves the deployment of local varieties of English.

³ 肥母鸡攀上了金孔雀

⁴ 傻人有傻福

The analysis reported on in this paper also highlights the need to expand how world Englishes scholars engage with LGBTQ+ identities in their research and theorizing. While we do not advocate for eschewing western queer theory, it is essential to consider how it may not address queer identities in global contexts. It is important to recognize local theories of queerness and sexuality to understand the queer experience in those cultural locales better. In doing so, we can also understand how queer bodies and lives are talked about in expanding and outer circle varieties of English. This can be achieved, more specifically, by focusing on how queer identities are positioned relative to local values and perceptions of sexuality.

4.1 Future Directions

Future research in world Englishes may look at specific examples of lexical tokens/strings from Chinese languages about queer individuals that surface in China English and how these construct distinct identity positions for individuals in these contexts. One example might be the effect of saying *he's a gay*, which many speakers of Chinese often utter because of the Mandarin string 同性恋者 (*tóngxìngliànzhe*) —者 (*zhě*) signifying a person. This is opposed to the more typical form in inner circle American English, *he's gay*. One might even examine the archaic wording—*he's a homosexual*—and attempt to link this back to the medicalization of homosexuality. Dimensionality could be added to this possible investigation through a consideration of how sexualities are regulated in the cultural context under investigation and the foundations for this regulation. An example of this approach is presented above when we discussed the connection of the State's regulation of sexuality to issues of social order and resisting western influences.

Additionally, world Englishes researchers may be interested in exploring the way that local language tokens have been transplanted into English and how they form a sort of coded queer speech that serves gatekeeping and identification functions in local queer communities. It may be particularly interesting to explore how localized tokens get co-opted by non-native speakers of the local language when engaging in intercultural romantic/sexual relationships. For example, how does the non-native Chinese speaker come to understand and co-opt terms like *monkey* (from the Chinese 猴子) when crafting an online dating profile on apps like Blued, Grindr, and Aloha?

Finally, queer contact literatures, and a more thorough examination of them from the world Englishes (WE) perspective, may also allow for additional representation of lesbian, bisexual, and transgender lives and ways of being to appear in disciplinary literatures. As it now stands, explorations of how lesbian identities are constructed in contact literatures are mostly absent. While queer linguistics has undoubtedly done much to address non-normative sexual identities, the world Englishes literature has not kept pace (see Boellstorff & Leap2004; Motschenbocher, 2014; Motschenbacher & Stegu, 2013). Moreover, explorations in this vein could also have useful pedagogical implications that could increase the representation of non-Western lesbian, bisexual, and transgender lives in humanities classrooms by providing both a repository of texts for teachers to deploy in their classes, as well as a useful framework for analysis.

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