

Revolution, Love and Discourse: On Yan Lianke's 'Hard as Water'

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Abstract—This study aims to investigate the relationship between 'Revolution', 'Love' and 'Discourse' in 'Hard as Water' by means of close reading. It is found that 'Hard as Water', different from previous 'Revolution and Love' novels, deconstructed the dualistic framework of 'Revolution' and 'Love' by adding 'Discourse' as a new dominant factor into the novel. Instead of criticizing the 'Cultural Revolution' directly with the method of highlighting the passionate 'Love' as the symbol of humanity liberation, 'Hard as Water' constructed an unstable society under the reign of 'revolution discourse', which exposed the absurdity of revolution discourse and thereby went a step further in introspecting the mistakes made by the 'Cultural Revolution'.

Index Terms—Deconstruction, discourse, love, revolution.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that 'Hard as Water' is a typical 'Revolution and Love' novel, which has been intensively studied from the perspective of 'myth-realism narrative' mode and bold sexual description [1]-[3]. Some scholars also noticed the special discourse pattern of 'Hard as Water' and investigated the 'revolution language' in this novel [4]-[6].

However, little has been done from the perspective of the relationship between the paralleled 'Revolution' and 'Love' and the 'language-predominant' narrative pattern, which will be detailed discussed in the following chapters.

A. The Dualistic Frame of 'Revolution and Love' Novels before 'Hard as Water'

It is well known that there has been a long-standing history for 'Revolution and Love' novels, which originated from the novel <The journey 旅途> [7] first published in 1924 and developed into an unfailling archetype in Chinese modern literature works despite of being fiercely criticized by leftist critics [8]-[11]. However, Novels before 'Hard as Water' were usually limited by the dualistic framework of 'Revolution' and 'Love' by placing them in opposite sides, which take the 'Cultural Revolution' as the dividing line and either put 'Revolution' upon 'Love' or the other way round.

It is found that 'Love' was placed on the secondary position and invariably purified in 'Revolution and Love' novels before the 'Cultural Revolution' by removing the sexual elements concerning body parts and retaining the controllable Platonic features through the usage of super-rational revolution discourse, such as 'Ye Ji 野祭' [12], 'Shi San Bu Qu 蚀 三部曲' [13], 'Hong Dou 红豆' [14] and

'Qing Chun Zhi Ge 青春之歌' [15]. The large-scale emasculation of sexual elements in the description of 'Love' actually reflected the constant expansion of collectivism represented by 'Revolution' as well as the corresponding shrink of individualism expressed by 'Love'. Influenced by this theory, the hero of 'Revolution and Love' novel before 1976 inevitably chose 'Revolution' over 'Love' after an intensive ideological struggle even the 'Love' was the the original reason why he/she joined the revolution, which promoted left-wing literature's ideological transition from individualism to collectivism.

On the contrary, novels after the 'Cultural Revolution' tend to put 'Love' over 'Revolution' due to the reflections on the cultural disaster, such as 'Scars (伤痕)' [16], 'The legend of Tianyun mountain 天云山传奇' [17], 'The transparent carrot 透明的胡萝卜' [18], and 'The golden age 黄金时代' [19]. 'Love' is often treated as the symbol of emancipation of humanity while 'Revolution' is considered as chains that constrain people from individuality liberation in this era. The repressed instinct in love became a good reason that could subvert the narration of revolution history, and sexual passion is exaggerated as the most important factor in the course of human history. It is fair to say that short after the cultural revolution, a world view based on psychoanalysis displaced the traditional world view based on Marxist political economy. Thus, most novels after the 'Cultural Revolution' were 'describing the Cultural Revolution in an ideological defaulted discourse with the same emotion. As a result, the Cultural Revolution in the specific historical context is gone. 在既定的意识形态预设的话语中来叙述文革，在同一种情绪态度中叙述文革，这样一来，作为特定历史情境中的文革反而不见了。' [20]

B. 'Hard as Water' as A Game-Changer

Different from previous 'Revolution and Love' novels, the publication of 'Hard as water' broke the dualistic oppositional aesthetic framework. Contrasting to the previous novels which describe the "Cultural Revolution" in a realistic approach and criticize or condemn this historical event from a humanistic perspective, Yan Lianke focused on the "revolution discourse" in Cheng Gang Town and used it as the predominant method to construct the whole unified spiritual context of "Cultural Revolution".

It is proposed that language is the carrier of ideology, which means that an ideology will always use a certain language and terminology to express their opinions, thus, the nature of different languages is actually different ideologies [21]. As we all know, the spiritual essence of the Cultural Revolution was the "ultra-leftist" ideology, which also had its corresponding language system: Mao style, a special mode of expression based on the book <Quotations from Chairman

Manuscript received January 15, 2020; revised March 17, 2020.

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Mao>. It was considered that Mao style was the epitome of previous revolution discourses, which was extensively applied in the “Cultural Revolution” by forcing people to recite and quote it in daily life so that it had far-reaching influence on Chinese people’s speaking style and values.

Thus, the heavy use of “revolution language” in “Hard as Water” was considered as an innovative attempt that combine the “Revolution” and “Love” features in one fiction instead of placing one of them in the dominant position, which was realized by means of giving up the narration about the realistic violent actions that really happened in cultural revolution but describing the revolution mainly in a linguistic dimension. It is found that “Revolution” and “Love” are two paralleled narrative lines in “Hard as Water” and both of them are under the reign of “revolution discourse”.

II. REVOLUTION IN ‘HARD AS WATER’

There were two kinds of ways to imagine the revolution mentioned in “Hard as Water”: One was the imagination about the violence of realistic revolution, the other was the imagination about revolution’s impact on people’s view about speech and act. Yan Lianke (2001) mainly observed the revolution in the latter way, he described the revolution in Cheng Gang town basically from the linguistic perspective to manifest the power of language, which provided a principled account of how the dualistic framework of “Revolution” and “Love” can be unified in his fiction.

A. *Realistic Revolution and Linguistic Revolution*

The story of this novel is not complicated. The male protagonist Gao Aijun was an ex-serviceman who had an abnormal fascination with power. After being demobilized, his worship of power was inspired by the social enthusiasm about “revolution”, so he was gradually obsessed with the revolution and became out of control. After witnessed the revolution campaign in the county, he decided to return to his hometown—ChengGang, where the revolutionary “spring breeze” had not blew yet, and he wanted to revolutionize the whole town by his own strength, just like the revolution slogan “bombard the headquarters 炮打司令部”. On his way home, he met Xia Hongmei, a young and beautiful woman from his town who inspired the sexual impulses hidden in his body. The two ignored that they both had been married and developed an underground relationship. At that time, their love was just as vigorous as the revolution. After the revolution started in Cheng Gang, their “revolution career” and personal life were both progressing smoothly. But in the end, both of them were shot for “counterrevolutionary adultery” because of a misunderstanding with the secretary of the municipal party committee.

As we could see, the word “revolution” went through the entire life of Gao Aijun. His original impulse to the revolution could be explained from the following three aspects: (1) Owing to the early death of his father as well as the fact that Gao is an outside surname in Cheng Gang town, Gao Aijun and his mother were at the bottom of the local society dominated by the adult male labor force. Thus, Gao Aijun had to be the live-in son-in-law of the village chief as the chief asked even though he was reluctant. Such life experience made him disgusted with the traditional power

order in Chenggang town. (2) The military, as a place that ideology and hierarchy was strictly constrained, encouraged the breeding of Gao Aijun’s abnormal obsession with power, like other soldiers or demobilized soldiers in Yan Lianke’s novels. (3) Revolutions seem to have become a commonplace in the novel due to the unique historical background, which greatly impacted on Gao Aijun’s spirit “This is nothing new to me. It means that the revolution has already risen and surged in the county. 这对我不算啥新鲜事，无非意味着革命在县城也已经风起又云涌。” [22]

Nevertheless, even a “revolution expert” like Gao will also felt “a little panic in heart 心里不免有些慌神儿” [22] when encountering an armed revolution in the county:

These large-character posters with red cross marks, which were affixed to the wall before, was torn apart, fluttering in the wind sorrowfully. There were lots of broken gravels and tiles on the streets paved with ancient bricks. It was in great chaos, like someone turned the world upside down, which made it difficult to identify. The revolutionary floods swept the whole world, and the great river went to the east brushing all dirt. There was a broken hoe or shovel thrown on the mouth of the sewer. A telegraph pole had been snapped and leaned against the wall of the roadside, on which a damaged wire hanged, but the streetlight on the pole was still bright. However, there were few lit lights on those standing telegraph pole, some of which even had no bulbs at all. It seemed that a little red blood dropped on the side of the road. I could smell the blood on the street. (Translated from the novel by myself)

原来贴在墙上划着红叉的大字报，被撕得七零八落，在风中悲悲切切，残喘卷动。那些铺了古砖大街的地面上，扔着许多碎石乱瓦，狼藉得改天换地，没鼻子没眼。革命洪流浪淘尽，大江东去荡尘埃。有一根被打断的锨把还是锄把扔在下水道的口上。有一柱电线杆，被折断后倒靠在路边的院墙上，一根电线断挂着，可线杆上的路灯却还依旧明亮着。而那些依样竖直的路灯杆上，却很少有亮着的灯，或压根就没有电灯泡。似乎路边上还有一滴一滴殷红的血，我闻到街面上的血腥气。 [22]

The paragraph above described a scene after a fierce fighting in the county, which catered all readers’ imagination of the cruel reality during the Cultural Revolution. According to readers’ expectations, Gao Aijun, as a retired man of the national violence machine, should start a more violent and bloody revolution in Cheng Gang. However, in the process of reading, the expectation is failed. The revolution in Cheng Gang was literally bloodless, even real violent actions were rare. The geographically confined area had actually formed a “closed third space” without large-scale criticism or cruel armed confrontation. The only one “battle of the archway 牌坊之战” that may develop into a brawl was also easily resolved.

It is worth noting that Cheng Gang’s revolution was different from the revolutions presented by mainstream literature. The “revolution” here has been fully symbolized as a metaphorical linguistic revolution, manifesting as the competition for discourse power. In this novel, “discourse is not only a record of fighting or controlling system 话语并非

是斗争或控制系统的记录” [23] and the revolution is mainly shown as the “competition for discourse and the competition by discourse 为了话语及用话语而进行的斗争” [23]. The absolute correctness and unquestionableness of revolution discourse made itself become the “the will to Truth”, which tended to exert some kind of pressure and restrictive power on other discourses.

B. Revolution Discourse in Cheng Gang Town

Before the revolution, there were two sets of discourse systems incompatible with the revolution discourse in Cheng Gang town: One was the secular discourse dominating the rural political structure and the other one was the neo-Confucianism discourse controlling the rural cultural thoughts. The “Revolution” in Cheng Gang town was actually a process that the revolution discourse represented by Gao gradually took over the other two discourses until they were completely swallowed up. In the chapter “The beginning of real revolutionary campaign 真正开始的革命斗争”, young people were inspired to devote to the revolution merely by the brief but passionate speech made by Gao Aijun, which indicated the predominant power of revolution language. In contrast, “the local slang spoken by the hero’s father-in-law 丈人那样满口的乡土俚语、骂骂咧咧、啰啰嗦嗦” [22] were described as fragile and vulnerable, implying the collapse of the old order. As we can see, the “Revolution” in Cheng Gang town took place because of the popularity of revolution discourse and the destruction of existing orders of discourse.

Different from the violent revolution in the county, Gao Aijun started the revolution in Cheng Gang town by sweeping the old language system through effective ways of propaganda such as distributing leaflets to spread the new expression and the updates about revolution. The more successful idea was to declare Cheng Guizhi’s guilty as “counterrevolutionary suicide”. In fact, after returning to the hometown, Gao Aijun was busy in starting the revolution, whose aims were to ‘overthrow Cheng Tianqing and destroy the Party branch. 打倒程天青, 摧毁党支部’ [22] Because of the conflict between him and Cheng Tianqing — Cheng Guizhi’s father, head of Cheng Gang, he accidentally or deliberately refused some reasonable requests made by Cheng Guizhi. Such neglect eventually caused that Cheng Guizhi committed suicide and blamed all the things on revolution, which made her destroy the “holy” revolutionary symbols before she died, ‘The plaster statue of Chairman Mao, which was originally placed on the table, was broken in the room, and the portrait of Chairman Mao attached to the front wall was also peeled off and shredded, scrunching into balls. 那原来放在桌子上的毛主席的石膏像被摔碎在了屋子里, 贴在正墙上的毛主席像也被揭下来撕得粉碎, 揉成了一团一团’ [22] Cheng Guizhi’s mad behavior was finally determined as ‘counter revolution’. In revolutionary age, this charge was extremely serious because it meant that this person would be excluded from the mainstream of society for his/her political and moral incorrectness, or in other words, banished from the discourse system. Gao Aijun took this chance to stigmatize Cheng Guizhi and her father. After driving Cheng Tianqing crazy, he finally achieved his goal and became the new leader in Cheng Gang. It was

interesting that an obvious symptom of Cheng Tianqing’s madness was aphasia — he barely could communicate with others. The authority of revolution broke him down and deprived of his right to speak by naming him ‘counterrevolution’. Superficially, naming was an normal utterance act, but according to Bourdieu’s theory of language, naming is a behavior that could transform the symbolic authority in language into a real power recognized by society, so naming is a never-ending battle, whose purpose is to consolidate legitimacy by using symbols, which means naming reveals the different positions in power system. [24] The one being named will be easily shaped, explained and then controlled by that naming discourse. Therefore naming behavior is a metaphorical expression of power, which shows that discourse and power have the homogeneity and interactivity. That is why it was the naming power that God gave Adam first (Genesis 2:19). Such naming things were common in revolutionary age, which was usually called ‘wearing hats 扣帽子’ — labelling and stigmatizing others. It could be read as an extreme discourse and the ideology it represents wishes to re-explain life and world in a new modern way — class viewpoint rather than kinship politics. Since the discourse was closely combined with political power, it was unquestionable. Under this circumstance, the only thing Cheng Tianqing could do was to beg for mercy, so ‘he would suddenly kneel down to you, bow to you, and beg you to spare him. 他还会突然朝你跪下来, 给你磕头、作揖, 请你饶了他’ [22] After Cheng Tianqing withdrawn from the political arena, Gao Aijun took over the rural political power soon. Along with the establishment of this new regime, revolution discourse proliferated and tried to express everything in a revolutionary way, which caused secular discourse was thoroughly replaced by revolution discourse:

The walls of the streets are full of revolutionary slogans. There were revolutionary apples and pears hanging on every elm tree, pagoda tree, locust tree, kiri tree, chinaberry tree and Chinese toon in or out of the village. Zhang met Li and asked, “fight selfishness and criticize revisionism — Have you had your meal?” Li answered: “make the revolution in a frugal way — I have had my meal.” Zhang asked: “To overcome selfishness and foster public spirit — what did you eat?” Li answered: “There’s no making without breaking — sweet potato soup, same as usual.”

大街小巷的墙上都写满了革命的标语和口号, 村里村外的榆树、槐树、皂角树、泡桐树、楝树、椿树上都挂满了革命的苹果革命的梨……姓张的见了姓李的, 说“斗私批修 — 你喝没有?” 答: “节约闹革命 — 我喝过饭了。” 问: “要破私立公 — 你喝啥饭?” 答: “不破不立 — 老样儿, 红薯汤。” [22]

With the rapid development of revolution, revolution discourse tended to challenge the neo-Confucianism — a thousand-year-old ethic discourse. In the novel, Cheng Gang was described as the hometown of Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi — originators of neo-Confucianism, so the traditional ethic took deep root here. As a set of moral principles that were widely accepted by country folks, neo-Confucianism constructed people’s values whose central tenet was a kind of mutual aid, different from class struggle advocated by

revolution discourse. Meanwhile, neo-Confucianism was closely related to the ‘cannibalistic ethics of feudal society 吃人的封建礼教’ which was severely criticized by the culture pioneers of May fourth, and ‘May fourth’ was one of the most important resources of discourse to revolution. Therefore, the cultural revolution in Cheng Gang was inevitable. But it was exactly the process of breaking old culture that revealed the modern aspect of revolution and then offered legitimate reasons for it. Obviously, the old culture and customs bothered Gao Aijun most because they could not fit in with the modernity represented by revolution, and still extremely stubborn :

I thought the first thing I had to do when I went back home was to smash the “ hometown of two Cheng” stone plaque. The old archway was set up by a feudal dynasty, but now, hundreds of years later, if there was a wedding, or funeral, when passing there, people of Cheng Gang still had to get off the vehicles, and stopped playing the music. Even the long-distance buses, when passing by the archway, had to hoot their horns three times, to show their respect and admiration for Chengfucius. I did not expect that when the revolution had swept over all corners of the country, these bus drivers from JiuDu still hooted the fucking horns under the plaque as etiquette.

我想我回到家的第一件事就是要首先砸掉“两程故里”石牌坊。封建王朝立下的老牌坊，几百年后程岗人民的婚丧与嫁娶，路过那儿还要人下车，息鼓乐，连长途客车从牌坊下面经过时，也要三鸣喇叭，以示对程夫子的尊重和敬仰。我没想到革命已经席卷中国大地五湖四海了，从九都来的客车司机还在牌坊下鸣他娘的礼仪喇叭声。[22]

In this situation, Gao Aijun had to revolutionize the way people thought in order to seize power. It was difficult to proceed because the political and ethical thoughts in neo-Confucianism had constituted a particular knowledge structure. Thus, the revolution was largely a campaign of replacing the Confucian knowledge with the revolution knowledge, like Gao Aijun said: ‘The red sun is rising from east sea and the globe is lighted. Numerous mountains and rivers are cheering, wishing Cheng Gang could enter a new era of Mao Zedong Thought 红日出东海，环球放光彩。万水千山齐欢呼，渴盼我们程岗进入毛泽东思想新时代’ [22]. In Foucault’s theory, knowledge has to be shaped and expressed by discourse, so it can be seen as a kind of discourse practice [25]. That is why conflicts between different kinds of knowledge or ideology tend to be shown as the confrontations between distinct discourses. In <Hard As Water>, even though the relations between revolution and tradition were exceptionally strained, there were few acts of violence taking place in Cheng Gang. At the beginning of the novel, Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei mobilized those positive youths in the village to pull down the plaque and archway of Cheng temple, but meanwhile Cheng Tianqing organized the old villagers to protect this cultural heritage. Both sides were armed, so it seemed there would be a brutal fight. However, the potentially violent situation was easily defused by a few words, and became a battle of discourse:

‘Xianqing — go home with your grandpa, you are not

making a revolution, you are hammering ancestors’s heads’

‘Qinglin, I — your grandpa, beg you. just go home. we don’t earn these working credits by pulling down ancestors’ archway.’

‘Qingju, Qinghua, go home with your nanny. If you are going to pull down the archway, you have to bury me under it first.’

With the elders’ calling and crying, mothers and fathers flooded into our procession. They called their kids’ names, saying the same things. In the blink of an eye, the procession of revolution was dismissed. They took away the hammers, rods and shovels in their children’s hands.

‘贤清 — 快和爷一块回家去，你这不是革命哩，你是朝祖宗头上砸锤的呀。’

‘庆林，爷求你了，回家去吧，咱再穷也不能挣这扒祖宗牌坊的工分呢。’

‘庆菊、庆华，跟奶奶回家呀，你们要扒牌坊就先把奶奶埋在牌坊下。’

随着一片老人哭凄凄的唤，紧跟着，那些做爹做娘的都倾泻过来了，他们叫着自己孩娃们的名，口里说着和老人们一个意思的话，转眼间就把革命的队伍冲垮了，就把他们儿孙们手里的铁锤、钢钎、铁锹夺去了。[22]

Although Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei tried to keep the procession in order by shouting revolution slogans, the battle was doomed to failure, because revolution discourse hadn’t been widely accepted by villagers then. The language they spoke was still representing the values of neo-Confucianism.

Afterwards when the revolution discourse had bigger impact on people’s daily life, Gao Aijun launched a new attack on Cheng temple and achieved success, but this ‘battle’ wasn’t violent either. Yan Lianke described the victory as one discourse totally defeated another:

The classics depository has been filled with works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Zedong.

藏经楼上现在藏的全是马、恩、列、斯、毛的著作了。[22] The most feudal and central place has already been a treasure-house of revolutionary ideas and proletarian theories in Cheng Gang.

最封建、最心脏的地方，已经是程岗镇革命思想和无产阶级理论的宝库了。[22]

In fact, most of the revolutionary actions in Cheng Gang are portrayed as such kind of linguistic symbols. The symbolic revolution went through the whole novel, even in the most violent action. At the end of the novel, Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei escaped from jail with purpose of dynamiting the Cheng temple. It was the only violent revolution in Cheng Gang, which caused the death of Cheng Tianmin—the housekeeper of Cheng temple. But in the chapter ‘Triumph 凯旋’, Yan Lianke’s narration was still discourse-oriented, which produced the most imaginative plot of the novel. Before they blew Cheng temple up, Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei, two adulterers in Cheng Gang, had sex on the bed covered with writings of Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi. This crazy behavior could be explained as the dramatic and disruptive usage of neo-Confucianism discourse. It was in the constant process of stigmatizing and

suppressing neo-Confucianism discourse, Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei completed the revolution by changing the old power structure and ideologies.

The reason why Gao Aijun was so keen on the spread of revolution discourse could be explained from two aspects: on one hand, all his life and thoughts had been constructed and regulated by revolution discourse; on the other hand, only under the circumstance that the revolutionary ideology took deep root in rural area, could his assumption of power be possible. Meanwhile, it could be easily found that the legitimacy of Gao Aijun's regime was demonstrated by the revolution discourse and the ideological authority it represented. When Alan Sheridan explained Foucault's theory, he argued that knowledge and power are mutually contained. Without the establishment of the associated knowledge system, there will be no relationships of power [26]. Thus, the proliferation of revolution discourse and the expansion of Gao Aijun's power complement each other until they eventually occupied every corner of Cheng Gang.

III. 'LOVE' IN 'HARD AS WATER'

Love, especially sexual love, played an important role in <Hard As Water>, and it was very likely to be misread. According to Yan Lianke's statement in the preface to second edition, this novel triggered off extensive disputes, and 'the central issue lied in two parts — the language and sexuality 争议的焦点集中在小说的语言和性欲两方面.' In fact, under the influence of revolution language or discourse, the love between Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei was complicated and twisted, so it required presenting in a totally different way.

A. "Love" and "Revolution"

It is easily to find that the writing of love in "Hard as water" is in accordance with the new tradition formed in the 1980s: on one hand, the rigid mainstream ideology represented by "revolution" was no longer authoritative and became an object to be reflected or criticized; On the other hand, the value of "love" was re-evaluated and love itself gradually turned into a new ideology which was in possession of legitimacy naturally. From this perspective, it could be concluded that, in the context of the 1980s, love was endowed with some kind of ontological meanings such as individualism and humanitarianism to compete against the world view like collectivism or class antagonism that attached to revolution ideology. However, this imagination of love was ideal and narrow, since 'from the very beginning, modern narrations of love were not 'pure' love itself, but were absorbed in the social/political symbolic system of significance. 从一开始, 现代的爱情叙述就不曾是 '纯粹' 的爱情本身, 而是被纳入社会/政治的意义象征系统.' [27] The prime example was <Chen Lun 沉沦> [28], a typical love story in May Fourth period, where Yu Dafu combined erotic impulse with the hope for national prosperity and renewal, suggesting that love was influenced and restricted by a bigger context. But the literary establishment after cultural revolution didn't have enough time to sort out these complex problems about culture and politics. The novels of new period (1980s, 1990s) were eager

to be liberated from the spiritual bondage to revolution, class struggle or vulgar sociology by the way of describing the primitive and wild instinct. This love-oriented writing encouraged the authors to focus on the irrational and unconscious parts of human feelings, such as sex, carnal desires and sensory experiences.

Generally speaking, any emphasis on the body, especially those parts concerned with sexual desires would be considered as "counter revolutionary" in revolution discourse, which could partly explain why so many contemporary writers tend to focus on the description of bodies in their works. There was a famous saying in the revolutionary age: Bodies are the capital of revolution 身体是革命的本钱. Indeed, revolution is a tough campaign that demands actual physical strength, which requires revolutionaries to have a good body. But in the age of post revolution, bodies are also used to be the capital against revolution.

The opposition has profound and plentiful meanings about history and culture. As we know, the revolution was born in the May Fourth Movement, which meant it was a product of modernity, and one of the most striking aspects of this modernity was freedom of marriage and love. Without doubt, such freedom was closely related to the freedom of sex. In fact, after the May Fourth Movement, the society's view about sex had been quite open. There was a book named <Sex History 性史> published in 1926, written by Zhang Jingsheng, a professor of philosophy at Peking University, whose contents included different sex experiences, such as masturbation, affairs, peeping and whoring. [29] Though the book seems to be a little unacceptable even nowadays, it was particularly popular then, which could be seen from the newspaper <Republic Daily Guangzhou 广州民国日报>:

Recently, there was an epidemic of reading in Guangzhou. No matter when and where, pupils and undergraduates were always with a book in their hand. Do you know what kind of book were they reading? They were reading <Sex History> written by Zhang Jingsheng, the famous professor in Beijing.

近来广州市内有一种看书的流行病。无论大学生小学生, 无论何时何地, 均手不释卷。你道他们所看的是什么书呢? 他们所看的是北京鼎鼎大名的教授张竞生所著的《性史》。[30]

Interestingly, It was these pupils and undergraduates that became the main force of revolution afterwards, therefore, thoughts about sexual liberation seemed to be contained in revolution discourse at least at first.

In fact, Mao Zedong also considered sexual liberation as a progressive democracy in early years. In his work <The survey on Xunwu 寻乌调查> written in 1930, he said that when the revolution started in Xunwu, dozens of women asked for divorces, all of which were approved by the new government organ. Furthermore 'at the same time, it was declared that catching adultery was forbidden as a supplement to the law 同时在法律外, 申明禁止捉奸.' [31] Hence, women's bodies were completely liberated, which brought tremendous impacts to rural traditional culture: young women in both towns organized women's associations... Meanwhile, most of them had gradually built relationships with their young male friends, which made

them openly practice the freedom of love in groups on the mountain.

两乡的青年妇女都组织了妇女协会……同时和她们的男性青年朋友恋爱的行为逐渐有了许多，在山上公然成群地‘自由’起来。[31]

Later, under the pressure of husbands, the new government organ posted a notice declaring that such behaviors were ‘inappropriate不伦不类’. But Mao endowed this revolution of love with positive meanings:

This notice apparently voiced the concerns of adult husbands. But the ‘inappropriate’ trend—the trend that democracy overthrew feudalism, was unstoppable after all.

这篇告示，明显的描画了成年老公的呼声。不过这种“不伦不类”的潮流——民主制度代替封建制度的潮流，是到底无法制止的了。[31]

Judging by this, it is proper to say that the freedom of sex or liberations of bodies were inextricably bound up with the revolution discourse once, in other words, these values were strongly supported by revolution discourse in history. But soon after, the revolutionary situation in China has changed dramatically. Strategies like ‘encircling the cities from the countryside 农村包围城市’ and ‘united front 统一战线’ proposed by Mao Zedong became the new revolution ideology, which demanded to reach a compromise between May Fourth spirit and rural traditional culture. And what was more, traditions even developed into the more powerful aspect in revolution discourse. When analyzing Yan'an literature, Meng Yue pointed that ‘the stableness of folk ethical order laid the foundation of the legitimacy of political discourse 民间伦理秩序的稳定是政治话语合法性的前提’. [32] In this condition, the liberation of bodies was gradually rejected and forbidden by folk morality. Thus, the liberation of bodies was one of the important thoughts contained in revolution discourse, which had been stifled by others for a long time, so it was natural for writers to use resources in revolution discourse against the revolution which had been proved wrong.

At the same time, the contradictory formulations about the relationship between revolution and bodies also results from the ambiguity of the word “body”. In Chinese, ‘body’ could either generally refer to physical parts or specifically to sexual organs. Such ambiguity provides possibilities of different interpretations and raised uncertainties to all discourse orders. This is exactly how deconstructionism understands ‘language/discourse’: the language is both clear and ambiguous, uncovering and covering at the same time, which always leaves traces though the significance is unstable. In the process of rediscovering language and discourse, many novels in the 1980s use different languages to indicate the conflicts between different ideologies. For example, In “The Red Sorghum Family 红高粱家族” [33], the latent contradiction between the revolution language spoken by Jiang Xiaojiao and the dialect of northeast GaoMi implied that the primitive vitality could deconstruct the revolution. This narrative mode can also be seen in Wang Xiaobo’s a series of novels reflecting the Cultural Revolution.[19]

There was no doubt that Yan Lianke (2001) also highlighted the sexual parts in “Love” description, however, he didn’t consider it as a key to directly deconstruct “Revolution”. Although in <Hard As Water>, the “Love” between Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei seemed to be earth-shattering, it was still controlled by a greater order — revolution discourse, just like Gao Aijun’s words:

Everything is aimed at starting the revolution. Everything must obey the necessities of the revolution. Love must be contained in the revolution. Revolution is the foundation, and love is a house based on it; Revolution is the root, and love is a flower blooming on it. Without her (Xia Hongmei), I will be a man of revolution as well. Without her, I will ignite the revolution like a raging fire in Cheng Gang as well.

一切都是为了发动革命。一切都必须服从革命的需要。爱必须蕴含在革命之中。革命是基础，爱是基础上一间房；革命是根本，爱是根本上一枝花。没有她（夏红梅）我也要革命，没有她我也要把革命在程岗如火如荼地点燃和发动。[22]

It could be seen that in Gao Aijun’s eyes, “Love” and the passionate sex it represented was far less important than revolution. More interestingly, revolution discourse not only exerted its influence on Gao Aijun’s spirit, but also regulated his physical actions. For example, Gao Aijun’s ‘hardness’ must be stimulated by revolutionary songs.

I can't figure this out. Why those hot songs and scarlet music could ignite the desires in my blood, could wake the thing which seemed to be dead in the tomb up in no time, like awakening a sleeping lion, and made it straighten up, resembling to the firm pines and cypresses that won't fall, or the solid steel.

我弄不明白为啥会这样，为啥那些热烫的歌曲和鲜红的音乐能把我的欲念的血液燃起来，能使那在墓里如死如息的物突然间睡狮一般醒过来，像不倒的松柏，坚强的钢铁一样挺起来。[22]

Actually, It was not unimaginable that revolution discourse could have such great power in the context of revolution. The saying of Lenin ‘There will be no revolutionary movements without the leadership of the revolutionary theory 没有革命的理论，就没有革命的运动。’ was frequently quoted in revolutionary age, from which it could be seen that there was a language worship in the revolution ideology, and this worship got more white-hot in the Cultural revolution. The newspaper <People’s daily 人民日报> even published an article declaring that psychosis could be cured with Mao Zedong Thought.

The same worship also existed in <Hard As Water>. It was clear that Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei tended to bring themselves into revolution discourse. All the events in which they got involved were shaped and expressed by the revolution language. The boundaries between public life and private life were obscured and it was hard to distinguish between revolution and sex. Everything was dominated by symbolic revolution discourses which was unified and single. Even in the nuptial chamber underground — a completely private room for rendezvous, the ghost of revolution discourse was still haunting them. They were “completely

drown in the dark game of the revolution words 完全淹没在昏天地暗的革命文字的游戏中。” [22] All kinds of revolution discourses showed up in this confined space: the revolutionary poems, articles, logion, philosophies, and grandiloquence created in the tunnel as well as those revolution- concerning conversations, arguments, singing and swearing. It seemed there was no other way but the revolution language that can express their feelings and love. Meanwhile, they were also quite rejoicing in such ways of expression.

B. “Discourse” and “Deconstruction”

Unlike previous “Revolution and Love” novels, <Hard as Water> added “Discourse” as a new factor into the dualistic frame of “Revolution” and “Love” and placed “discourse” on the absolute predominant position, ruling “Love” and “Revolution”. Furthermore, paradoxes in the discourse were exposed constantly, resulting in the deconstruction of revolution discourse itself.

It is proposed that the alienation of language beneath the Cultural Revolution were expressed in <Hard as Water> through the dramatic usage of the revolution language. All the ways of speaking were replaced by Mao style, a particular representation of the revolution discourse, which created a spectacle in language. Mao style was a way of expression based on the book <Quotations from Chairman Mao>. As the only language system in the Cultural Revolution, these limited words were filled with paradoxes, since they tried to express infinite significance by using finite signifiers while the significance were likely to be contradictory. So the discourse was poor in vocabularies and rich in metaphorical meanings simultaneously.

Yan Lianke captured the essence of revolution discourse and revealed its paradoxes in <Hard as Water> by repeatedly using those ‘both socialist-minded and professionally competent 又红又专’ sentences, where the political meanings and the sexual meanings were entangled and indistinguishable, producing a great ironic effect through the combination of revolution and sex. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, love and sex were incompatible with revolution ideology, so the symbolic order formed by revolution discourse was clearly unable to construct “gestalt” characters, because there were too much contents in Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei that could not put into words. Some of these unspeakable desires were transformed as the motivation of revolution while others were still seeking the “impossible” ways to express, which could only be done in the form of inappropriate overstatements and understatement. The limited discourse and the incompetence of expression constrained the souls of Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei, which explained why they always seemed to have a symptom like hysteria in the novel.

The revolution discourse that had swallowed all kinds of discourses looks like a long “gluttonous snake” with a danger of biting its own tail. Different or even contradictory ideologies co-existed in the same symbolic system at the same time, which resulted in the deconstruction of revolution discourse though the discourse seemed to be complete and all-encompassing. In fact, there were several contradictions in the novel that could mutually transform, leading to the instability of revolution discourse and the novel itself.

1) True/False

If we regard <Hard as Water> as a novel reflecting the real history of the Cultural Revolution, it will face many accusations of untruth. Chen Sihe(2002) pointed that ‘it was a big omission in Yan Lianke's work that Gao Aijun did not make the same mistake for his arrogance like Xerxes after wresting power from village cadres, because it was a time spirit that the new ruling faction in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution used to destroy the natural ecology in order to enjoy great success.高爱军夺取村干部的权力后没有重犯塞尔克塞斯的狂妄错误是阎连科犯下的一大疏忽，因为文革时期农村的新掌权派为了好大喜功而破坏自然生态正是一大时代精神.’ [34] From this perspective, the Cultural Revolution in <Hard As Water > was mostly “false”. Since conflicts and confrontations in that historical period mainly occurred among masses, there were various forms of mass struggle during the Cultural Revolution, such as class division (rich peasant, middle peasant, poor peasant etc.), meetings for denunciations批斗会, reform through labor, confiscation of property and so on, but none of these “actual events” appeared in this novel, from which it showed that such a narration couldn’t be an inadvertent mistake made by the author, considering that Yan Lianke was a witness to the Cultural Revolution .

Moreover, some plots in this novel, while looking impressive, did not stand up under close scrutiny. For example, in the chapter <New revolution 新革命>, Yan Lianke told readers that Gao Aijun spent three years digging the “love tunnel” at night, but it was unthinkable that the village, as a closed acquaintance society, would be totally unaware of a big civil engineering project like this. If readers employ realism or naturalism as criteria for evaluating novels, <Hard As Water> won’t be good at all. However, it must be noted that in New criticism, literature has nothing to do with the real world, just as Nabokov said ‘We should always remember that the work of arts is invariably the creation of a new world, so that the first thing we should do is to study that new world as closely as possible, approaching it as something brand new, having no obvious connection with the world we already know.’ [35] So readers may find it dramatic or ridiculous for Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei to do the things about ‘revolution’, but these characters’ actions, at least most of them, were still understandable to all readers. That’s because they were logical in the context created by Yan Lianke. It is inappropriate to equate the social context in <Hard As Water> with the Cultural Revolution that happened in real history, since the context in the novel was actually a delusion constructed by unstable revolution discourse, just as the spring of Prague in Milan Kundera’s <The book of laughter and forgetting>, “is not described in its politico-historico-social aspect but as a fundamental existential situation.” [36] In a sense, man’s feelings and dilemmas could be manifested more profoundly in such a context or existential situation, like Aristotle’s dictum ‘poems are more real than history.’ Thus, history and context relatively stand for true/false in different meanings, forming a main contradiction in the novel.

2) Clarity/Ambiguity

According to deconstruction theory, all languages are both

clear and ambiguous. Clarity and accuracy has ever been the aim of scientific, political, and legislative language while literal language are in pursuit of ambiguity. Generally speaking, revolution discourse belongs to the field of political language, but in <Hard As Water>, though enforced by political authority, revolution discourse didn't merely serve the power. It tended to be distorted by various context easily and obtained new semantics through this process.

In the novel, before Gao Aijun blew Cheng temple up, he found some 'counterrevolutionary' books and articles disguised by revolution discourse:

I handed the <Complete works of Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi> which was covered by the paper with words 'Selected Works of Mao Zedong' to Hongmei, then shook the pillow on the bedside. Everything was as expected. I shook two piles of paper out from the pillow. The paper was letter paper with small words in regular script written by writing brushes on it. Each pages' header was printed with the words "Serving the People". But under the headers, it was all Cheng Tianmin's work in the past ten years.

我把那几本写着《毛泽东选集》字样的《二程全书》递给红梅，又把床头的枕头抖了抖，一切都不出我的所料，从枕头中我抖出了用小楷毛笔横写的厚厚两打纸，叠在一起足有一拃厚，那纸是横格双线信纸，信纸的天上印着“为人民服务”几个字，下面却是程天民近十年的著述。[22]

Here, revolution discourse was used as signifier to signify the traditional Confucian ethics, which made the significance of revolution discourse ambiguous. This ambiguity constructed an ironic structure of language, which deconstructed the whole revolution discourse system and the ideology included in it.

Thereby, some uncanny plots in the novel could be partly explained from this perspective.

Apparently, the main locale Cheng Gang was deliberately shaped as the hometown of neo-Confucianism. As a philosophical theory of traditional Confucian morality, neo-Confucianism was also considered to be a heterodox factor against revolution. However, revolution discourse, in a sense, shared common principles with neo-Confucianism, which blurred the line between revolution and counterrevolution. At the end of the novel, Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei were eventually executed by shooting for "counterrevolutionary adultery". But in fact, "adultery" and "revolution" are literally concepts from different fields, or to be more exact, "adultery" belongs to the conventional moral judgment in ethics which was bound up with the proposal of neo-Confucianism "preserving the natural laws and eliminating human desires 存天理，灭人欲". As is known to all, in the ethical discourse of neo-Confucianism, remarriage is worse than starvation, let alone adultery. Therefore, it can be concluded that "adultery" is not counter-revolutionary but counter-neo-Confucianism. Gao Aijun smashed the den of "counter-revolution" — Cheng temple in the name of revolution, however, the revolution killed the "counter-revolutionary" Gao Aijun in the name of neo-Confucianism, which meant there were no differences between revolution and counterrevolution. The connotation of 'revolutionary' was emptied, and the significance was also

permanently delayed. By using such a paradox, Yan Lianke profoundly exposed the ambiguity, absurdity, contradictoriness and pointlessness of revolution discourse. As a result, "revolution" has become a self-contradictory proposition in the semantic system.

The more interesting plot appeared in chapter <particular jail 特别拘留室>. After Gao Aijun and Xia Hongmei were arrested, they got into a particular jail, whose particularity lay in that there were no guards watching them and the gate was unlocked. A riddle consisting of revolution discourse (Mao Zedong's Poem), portraits and plaster casts of Mao Zedong imprisoned them in place of a real lock. According to general understanding of the word 'revolution', it means an attempt to change the government of a country in order to be liberated from unreasonable control, but in this context, revolution discourse also turned into its opposite, becoming a signifier that was ambiguous as well as pointless.

There were many other paradoxes existing in the text. Clearly, the title <Hard as Water>, was indicating a contradictory relationship between hardness and softness which can trace back to <Tao Te Ching · Chapter 78 道德经 · 78章>: "there are no things softer than water in the world, but there are no other better things that can defeat hardness than water 天下莫柔弱于水，而攻坚强者莫之能胜。" The ancient Chinese dialectic metaphorically reveals the conflicts and paradoxes that are difficult to distinguish but still easy to discover in the semantic field.

Through the contradictory writing of revolution discourse, Yan Lianke showed the core idea about language in deconstructionism theory — there is no ultimate truth that is stable and eternal. Though the revolution discourse seemed powerful and authoritative, it was also a language of self-doubt, self-criticism, and self-deconstruction. The author used novel to broke the delusion of the stability in Mao style, but at the mean time, revolution discourse, especially Mao style, served as the major narrative language in the novel, which made his work lack of the linguistic stability as well, in other words, the novel was filled with contradictions and paradoxes as revolution discourse itself. Certainly, Yan Lianke was totally aware of that, otherwise he would be criticized for attempting to displace one delusive stability with another. Therefore, he didn't try to write a completely reasonable story but left many cracks of significance in the novel, such as those 'false' parts mentioned above, through which Yan Lianke made the novel itself turn into a text of self-deconstruction too.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that as a novel describing revolution, <Hard As Water> achieved breakthroughs in two aspects, and showed some qualities of modern novels. In regard to the content, Yan Lianke spent much effort on erotic description and treated love as the agent of the revolution, which reinvented our whole perception over this social campaigns. As for the form of the novel, <Hard as Water> gave up the dualistic frame of "Revolution" and "Love" by adding "Discourse" as a new dominant factor. The whole novel used Mao style—a typical figure of speech during the Cultural Revolution, as main narrative language, and profoundly

revealed the ambiguity and paradox in the revolution discourse. But at the same time, Yan Lianke had a deep distrust of all discourse, including his novel language. So he deliberately constructed an unstable story in an unstable language, making the novel become a discourse system of self-deconstruction. By this way, Yan Lianke completely deconstructed the revolution discourse and revolution actions itself.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Yifan Cao provides us with the whole concept of this article. Tianqi He collected all Chinese examples from <Hard as Water> and other Yan Lianke's fictions and translated them into English. Yifan Cao and Tianqi He wrote the manuscript and Yi Wang edited the manuscript. All authors had approved the final version.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Yifan Cao, Tianqi He and Yi Wang are thankful to our colleagues [Junfeng Zhou] who provided expertise that greatly assisted the research, although they may not agree with all of the interpretations provided in this paper. We are also immensely grateful to [Xizhang He] and [Shouxi Chen] for their comments on an earlier versions of the manuscript, although any errors are our own and should not tarnish the reputations of these esteemed professionals.

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