

‘Paradise Lost’ of Language Decoding Li Guo-Hua's Linguistic Manipulation in Fang Si-Chi's First Love Paradise with the Foucauldian Discourse

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Abstract: This study investigates the power dynamics in *Fang Si-Chi's First Love Paradise*, a work by the late Taiwanese author Lin Yi-Han, using the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis method. Specifically, it focuses on the linguistic interactions between the main characters to uncover the power structures at play. The analysis reveals that Li Guo-Hua's manipulation of language, within the context of classic Chinese literature, plays a pivotal role in establishing and perpetuating his power. Throughout the narrative, Li Guo-Hua subjects Fang Si-Chi to prolonged sexual and psychological abuse, thereby creating a power dynamic characteristic of Foucauldian discourse. He positions himself as her teacher, exerting control through the distortion of truthful knowledge, linguistic manipulation, and the denial of Fang's agency. This research sheds light on how power can be intricately woven into language and discourse, enabling the exploitation of individuals within intimate relationships. The findings underscore the importance of critically examining linguistic power dynamics in literary works, as they reflect broader societal constructs and behaviors.

Keywords: Michel Foucault, knowledge and language, power, textual analysis, discourse analysis

1. Introduction

The collision between *Fang Si-Chi's First Love Paradise* and the Me-too movement has ignited fervent discussions surrounding gender inequality not only in modern Taiwan but also in broader contexts. This novel has evolved into a cultural phenomenon, transcending its literary origins and acquiring contemporary significance.

At its core, the narrative of *Fang Si-Chi's First Love Paradise* delves into the harsh realities of a harrowing rape, shedding light on the prolonged sexual and psychological torment endured by the teenage protagonist, Fang Si-Chi. The perpetrator of these heinous acts is Li Guo-Hua, a respected figure within the local community. Notably, the novel bears a unique authorial signature characterized by Lin's adept use of sharp irony, symbolism, and a stream-of-consciousness narrative style, inviting interpretations that delve into similes, analogies, and various literary devices [1].

This work has garnered attention from diverse perspectives, with some focusing on its literary craftsmanship, particularly Lin's skillful incorporation of Classical Chinese literature into Li's

deceptive discourse throughout the narrative. Others have adopted feminist viewpoints, highlighting Fang's perpetual subjugation under Li's male gaze during her formative years. Consequently, the novel has become a subject of interest for both the popular media and academia, captivating critics and scholars from various vantage points [2].

The narrative's power structures have also emerged as significant objects of inquiry [3]. Post-colonial readings draw parallels between the central relationship in the story and Taiwan's colonial history, emphasizing that the same colonial ideology pervades the minds of both the abusers and enablers, forming the underlying cause of the tragedy [4]. Some have astutely observed how Li, leveraging his privileged position as a teacher, actively constructs a Foucauldian power hierarchy by exploiting his authoritative role and manipulating knowledge during his interactions with Fang throughout the abuse [3]. Surprisingly, however, the language employed by Li has not received sufficient analytical attention.

Previous research has extensively explored the power dynamics within the narrative and analyzed the language used by both the author and the characters. Yet, there remains a dearth of material examining how these two elements intricately interweave to establish the power dynamic between Li and Fang in the novel.

Viewing the story through the lens of gender-based power imbalances exposes the thematic core, which seeks to illuminate such imbalances in the extreme context of rape. Understanding the behaviors of perpetrators and abusers in positions of power holds the potential to inform our perspectives and approaches beyond the realm of literary fiction. Furthermore, a deeper examination of the language patterns permeated by abusive ideologies could enable us to identify similar tactics in future contexts, whether within literature or the real world, particularly those concealed in deceptive ways akin to those portrayed in the novel.

This paper endeavors to evaluate the language employed by Li Guo-Hua throughout his abusive relationship with Fang Si-Chi, elucidating how he utilizes language to forge and perpetuate his dominant position over Fang, offering a more intricate and detailed analysis of this aspect.

2. Theoretical Framework

Michele Foucault's significant contribution to the 20th century lies in his development of the power and knowledge theory, a revolutionary framework that challenged traditional perspectives on pedagogy dating back to the Enlightenment movement [5]. Within this theory, knowledge is contextualized within a historical framework [6]. Foucault's Deconstructivist models reshaped how the contemporary world perceived power structures by portraying humans as subjects who are shaped by these structures [7]. Many fundamental concepts in modern politics and philosophy emerged from his ideas, laying the foundation for subsequent post-structuralist movements, including those related to gender identity politics. He argues that we inhabit a world in which modes of objectification transform human beings into subjects, emphasizing that language and discourse are human constructs molded by power dynamics that have existed since the inception of language itself [5].

In his work "Archaeology of Knowledge," Foucault delves into the concept of language as a form of 'uncertainty,' underlying which one can discern various threats, dangers, conflicts, power struggles, and even horrors [6]. Through his discourse, he explores how power relations can be analyzed in the context of everyday life, placing these evaluations on equal footing with those on a social and political scale. Foucauldian discourse analysis transcends conventional boundaries in this manner.

It is within this context that this paper asserts the effectiveness of Foucauldian discourse analysis in uncovering hidden power dynamics within everyday dialogue, specifically those found in Fang Si-Chi's "First Love Paradise." This analysis reveals how Li Guo-Hua manipulates language as a tool to perpetuate his power and conceal his criminal actions, which include distorting meaning in old Chinese Classic literature. The ensuing discussion will unveil how Li insidiously distorts Fang's

perception of reality by portraying his violence and abuse as genuine love, distorting the truth that his role as a teacher should uphold.

This paper aims to demonstrate how Li employs these tactics in subtle ways, utilizing Foucault's framework of prohibitions outlined in his writings on the "Discourse on Language" [8]. The subsequent chapter will provide a detailed elaboration of this framework.

3. Textual Analysis

In Archaeology of knowledge, Foucault introduces three types of prohibitions and exclusions commonly observed in the development and implementation of modern languages where power dynamics are influential [8]. Li Guo-Hua's manipulative techniques can be categorized within all three of these prohibitions. The forthcoming passages will be examined through the lens of Foucault's proposed qualifiers.

3.1. Covering Objects

Li Guo-Hua's abusive relationship with Fang has been characterized by a persistent effort to conceal and rationalize his own desires and actions right from the outset of his mistreatment of her. He skillfully transforms his reprehensible conduct into beautiful literary metaphors, effectively masking his transgressions. For instance, he compares his sexual assault on Fang to that of a lion marking its territory, thereby framing his violence in a distorted sense of dominance. Furthermore, he romanticizes his lust for Fang, portraying it as an intensely passionate love that transports him to a paradise where "platinum maned horses kiss in pairs, and the air steams with the smell of the earth." In doing so, he adeptly creates an idyllic, naturalistic atmosphere, as though erasing the stain of his sinful acts.

Li Guo-Hua's manipulation extends to his distortion of a traditional poem, specifically the line "Wu's strands flapping in the wind, Cao's clothes from the water" (p29). By appropriating and misrepresenting this poem, he obscured the reality of his actions and removed the element of truth from the equation. In doing so, he effectively replaced the heroic figures of these literary works with himself, constructing a fabricated narrative that facilitated his evasion of accountability for his reprehensible deeds.

Moreover, Li Guo-Hua took on the role of a victim by claiming that his talents in love were somehow obstructed (p30). This self-pitying stance further contributed to his cover-up efforts. By portraying himself as a thwarted lover, he managed to deflect attention away from his abusive behavior and redirect it toward a supposed injustice he had suffered. In this manner, he created an illusion of innocence and justified his actions, allowing him to continue his abusive behavior with impunity.

To sum up, Li Guo-Hua's ability to disguise and rationalize his abusive conduct through literary manipulation and self-victimization has been a recurring and disturbing aspect of his relationship with Fang. By distorting poetry, romanticizing his actions, and portraying himself as a victim, he has succeeded in constructing a narrative that shields him from the consequences of his crimes. This insidious manipulation of language and perception underscores the complexity of abusive relationships and the urgent need for awareness and intervention.

3.2. Presence of a Ritualistic Scenario

At every rape is when Li's deceitful language is at show the most and intensified. The narrative in literature serves a dual purpose in this context. Firstly, it serves as the backdrop against which these assaults unfolded, namely, the tutoring centers where the incidents took place. Secondly, it acts as a linguistic tool wielded by Li to exert control over the children. His identity as a highly regarded

middle school Chinese tutor further solidifies his position, garnering trust from both parents and educators. This trust, in turn, provides him with the opportunity to repeatedly employ his language classes as a guise for his ongoing abuse. By orchestrating regular private meetings with Fang, Li manages to operate without arousing suspicion or second thoughts among parents and other adults. This situation is indicative of the power dynamics at play in this scenario.

3.3. Right to Excursion

The third aspect to consider is the privilege one party holds regarding a specific subject—in this context, sex. This privilege can reveal the existence of a power dynamic manifested through language. In the book, this phenomenon is exemplified by Li's misappropriation of the phrase "Often the breath came in gentle gasps" (p66), which originally describes a maiden character in the *Story of the Stone*. Li repurposes this phrase when describing Fang's gasps during their sexual encounters. This misuse of literary reference serves the dual purpose of distorting Fang's perception of reality and subjecting her to humiliation.

Li's self-validation of his actions is reinforced by his privileged position as the teacher in the relationship. While Fang naturally assumes a more vulnerable and submissive role, Li perpetuates this power imbalance by exploiting his authority as her tutor. He repeatedly emphasizes Fang's status as a "well-read student" who should shoulder the responsibility for his immoral actions towards her. He justifies his lust by attributing it to Fang's extraordinary beauty, ultimately normalizing his behavior [9].

Within this framework, Li constructs a semantic field centered around the teacher-student relationship. He underscores his superior authority in the relationship by consistently employing terms such as "reading" and "lecturing." Phrases like "this is the way I love you as your teacher" and his declaration that Fang is his "best Teachers' Day present" all serve to reinforce his belief system, where knowledge, his position as an authority figure, and his self-justification all converge to perpetuate his power [10].

3.4. Come-back from the Oppressed

In examining Li's escalating abuse and linguistic manipulation of Fang throughout their relationship, we can gain insights into the dynamics at play. Li constructs a discourse of authority as a teacher, reinforcing his control and consolidating the power structure. However, it's worth noting that this power discourse can sometimes serve as a means of resistance for the oppressed, as observed in this case with Fang Si-Chi's actions [11].

From the outset of the novel, the author establishes Fang's position as the weaker party in this power dynamic, describing her as "a child who can only grow up in the democracy of language." Despite the distress caused by Li's verbal attacks, which compelled her to conjure mental defenses, Fang never yielded in her struggle for agency. She made valiant efforts to reclaim her sovereignty through clever comebacks.

In one of her final confrontations with Li, just before her mental breakdown, Fang attempted to mirror his language when he accused her of being "impolite to the teacher." She countered him directly, asserting, "You are being impolite to your student." This exposed the true nature of his actions, rupturing his deceptive language and challenging his position in the power discourse. Although most of her accounts in her secret journal expressed helplessness and despair, questioning the cruelty of her experience, Fang's determination to fight back remained evident.

To gain a deeper understanding of this dynamic, we can analyze it through the lens of scholars influenced by Michel Foucault, such as Judith Butler, who has extended Foucault's theories to encompass modern perspectives, particularly in the context of gender dynamics. Fang's experiences

serve as a poignant illustration of how, within the framework of speech institutions, exemplified here by Li Guo-Hua, women are systematically stripped of their agency. Moreover, they are continuously subjected to a trajectory of harm, a trajectory that becomes especially pronounced through Li's acts of rape and abuse [12].

4. Conclusion

Foucault theory posed power as diffuse, productive, and disciplinary, and in Fang Si-Chi's first love paradise, the very construct helps assign power to the language used by Li, allowing for the possibility of assessing the power dynamic between Li Guo-Hua and Fang Si-Chi as a micro-structure of power construct of its own. It allows for a character study into the person-hood of Li Guo-Hua at a more intricate lens, showing how power control and language manipulation can be achieved at such a nuanced level. It also gives rise to the attention on portraying the dark corners of society that are protected by the long-standing patriarchal power structure. The opposing stance shown by Fang Si-Chi in the novel also provides a valuable example when considering the role of the female protagonist, in her heroic defense actions.

In the timely climate where gender politics penetrate the awareness of the youth, more tensions in the gender dynamic also beg for more nuanced interpretations and operations in the daily giving and receiving in interpersonal exchanges. The Foucauldian discourse analysis approach provides us with an approach that sees through the veneer of the linguistic maze, shines light on areas of language construct, context(scene), as well as identification of roles in a relationship, identifying the once thought common interactions within a power category, peeling off the disguises power institutions and authorities once could place on their really oppressive actions.

The novel depicts a chiaroscuro of characters, each belonging to different discourses of power. Perhaps in prospect, the power discourse theory may be further applied on the analysis on other relationships which also construed similar power struggles in the novels as well.

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