

# A Silhouette of Dangai's Cyber-representation

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**Abstract:** As a distinctive subculture phenomenon, Dangai drama has been under the spotlight for its portrayal of homoeroticism deviating from hetero-normative ideology and potential implications for films and television industry in China in which neoliberalism is exerting profound influence on multifarious domains. Hinging upon the transitivity structure in SFG and social actors theory, the paper exercises linguistic modus operandi to set in motion the discourse analysis apropos of this entrancing but contentious series genre for the sake of casting light on its sociologically diversified representation in alignment with culturally and politically memetic epitome in heterogeneous cyber-media.

**Keywords:** Discourse Analysis; Dangai; Cyber-representation; Censorship; Boy's Love; Danmei.

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## 1. Introduction

In February 2021 when the festivity of spring festival had yet to melt away, a web drama commenced its online streaming unnoticably which quickly rose to prominence and unexpectedly caused sensation in the pandemic-stricken entertainment industry. The show titled *Word of Honor* gaining 100 million views within days after its debut on exclusively streaming platform Youku dominated social media trends and attained a rating of 8.6 on Douban, China's prevalent online rating website. Its sensationalness proved to be indubitable with its overseas popularity. Since it began streaming on YouTube on February 23, the show had garnered 80 million views in total and has been translated into six languages to cater for fans and audiences from a variety of countries. The smash hit's exceptionality consist in not only its popularity but also its non-mainstream genre—Dangai, an adaption from Danmei, a subculture reveling in portraying male homoeroticism that is sharply contrasting to the hetero-normative ideology predominant in a patriarchal society. Compared with its original Danmei novels, Dangai has made considerable alteration to the contents that embrace no explicit depiction of homosexuality. The success of *Word of Honor* unquestionably injected a shot of adrenaline into capital market and entertainment industry that suffer a lot from the pandemic. When many are expecting the prospect of Dangai genre, a storm was brewing up. One of leading actors of WHO was found to take photos in Yasukuni Shrine where war criminals of Japanese War of aggression into China from 1931 to 1945 in WWII are among the enshrined war-dead, which agitated nationalist sentiment. The authority that often keeps a critical and vigilant stand on Dangai drama eventually intervened and started taking a tough position on this genre. In September 2021, China's National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA) urged television industry to boycott adaptation of Danmei novels amid China's drive for comprehensive regulation of entertainment sector. Branded as transgressive and deleterious to public esthetics and child health, accompanied by the speedy removal of WOH from Youku, Dangai was from then on deferred ad infinitum.

The vicissitudes of Dangai is ascribable to the invisible contest among politics, capital, society and culture. They can achieve a subtle equilibrium in negotiation when nothing treacherous transpires. Otherwise, the emergence of risks would impair the balance, which renders the legitimacy of this

unconventional genre dubious. This paper sets out its analysis of the subcultural phenomenon of Dangai from a linguistic perspective. By dint of the theories of discourse analysis, it indicates the discursive representation of Dangai in cyber-media and makes a tentative inquiry as regards its implications and motivations in this particular social milieu.

## 2. The Development of Danmei and Dangai

The word 'danmei', whose Japanese orthography is represented as 'tanbi' literally the status of being entranced by aesthetics, was at the outset employed in a particular writing ethos framed to counterbalance naturalism in Japanese contemporary literature. In 1907, some Japanese authors established the magazine *maoxing*, which is regarded as the inception of the literary genre of tanbi. Inspired by European aestheticism during the nineteenth century, the Japanese tanbi literature came into being in order to take issue with naturalism, asserting that literature ought to be unfettered by the secular and to pursue so-called pure beauty detached from material world. 1960s has been a witness to a shift of tanbi whose meaning transitioned from its primitive reference to specific literary school to the novel one that exclusively refers to a newly derived manga genre which afterwards exercises edifying bearing on the genesis and development of Chinese danmei literature.

Reborrowed from the Japanese word tanbi, the male same-sex romance of boys' love abbr. BL, danmei, a Chinese genre of Internet literature and other fictional media, features romantic relationships between male characters (Wong, 2020). Literally rendered as indulgence in beauty, danmei is customarily created by and targeted towards heterosexual female audience who often refer to themselves as *funv*, lit. rotten woman, which is anew borrowed from a Japanese term *fujoshi*. Due to the constant increase in danmei's audience, this exceptional literary genre has gradually expand its leverage and forms its own subculture community. As one of the non-mainstream culture, danmei in mainland China is traceable back to the early 1990s (Xu and Yang, 2016) when at that time the most part of danmei literature and culture prevalent among people in mainland China is mainly Japanese tanbi manga and novels introduced, translated and circulated through illegal outlets (Zhang, 2017). Given the sensitivity of danmei and underdevelopment of interaction

methods, the circulation and communication with respect to this indecent genre were confined to a minority of amateur fans in a less overt fashion. The dawn of twentieth century accompanied the dynamic advancement of Internet and permeation of mobile terminal that not only made provision both the burgeoning of commercialized website and prevalence of Internet literature with material prerequisite but also offer an unprecedented opportunity for danmei literature in mainland China, which in turn renders promising its cultural influence flowing from marginalized audience to mainstream culture market.

In 1999, a number of online danmei forums emerged, initially serving as communities for Chinese enthusiasts of Japanese BL. With the passage of time, these forums soon evolved into platforms and venues for hosting fanworks and original danmei stories, predominantly authored by young Chinese women. Concurrently, the inaugural print magazine dedicated to danmei, *Danmei Season*, was established in the same year. In spite of being destitute of an official sanction, the magazine was published continuously until 2013. Although early online danmei communities were primarily administered by amateur enthusiasts of the genre, these websites were gradually supplanted by a plethora of commercial online fiction platforms that emerged in the early 2000s. The most prominent of these platforms, *Jinjiang Literature City*, was established in 2003 and has since garnered over 7 million registered users and more than 500,000 titles. The content published on *Jinjiang Literature City* encompasses a diverse range of genres, including heterosexual, gay, and lesbian romance, as well as other literary forms, but the platform is best renowned for its original danmei novels.

The media performance of danmei displays a kind of diversification with its sprawling progression (Yang, 2017). The majority of popular danmei forms originate as web novels, which are serialized on websites such as *Jinjiang Literature City*, *Liancheng Read*, and *Danmei Chinese Web*. Readers pay for new chapters as they are released, contributing to the financial success of these websites. In addition to online serialization, complete danmei novels may also be published as physical editions in China, either through self-publishing or via Taiwan, as well as in other countries. Fan translations of Chinese web novels, particularly danmei, are widespread. Danmei novels are frequently adapted into *manhua* (comics), *donghua* (animation), audio dramas, and live-action television series. These adaptations may or may not retain the original queer elements of the text. Live-action web series adaptations of danmei have achieved significant commercial success, with producers and audiences navigating the demands of Chinese government censorship and broader consumer culture. Compared to Japanese BL, where manga is the dominant medium, original comics remain relatively uncommon in danmei, which may be due to the stringent censorship outlawing the licentious visualized portrayal of homoerotic desires.

As mentioned in the end part of foregoing section, danmei literature branches out into a variety of media forms among which the adapted series or dramas in the recent years attract most attention from general people, film and television industry and the authority that demonstrate divergent attitudes towards the emergent, lucrative but meanwhile presumably insidious drama genre. The serialized danmei-adapted media form is known as *dangai* drama or *dangai* series whose Chinese characters respectively means danmei (*dan*) and

adjustment (*gai*). *Dangai* drama usually are produced by and streamed in online video website and platforms.

Despite the fact that the first danmei work emerged in the late 1990s, it was not until 2014 that the first danmei web drama transpired. Compared to self-published online danmei fictions, the adapted web drama appear to be capital-intensive in different degree. The first BL adaptation, *Like Love* (2014), was aired in 2014. Adapted from danmei writer Angelina's novel *I Love You as a Man*, it relates the story of two college students. In a sense, this drama makes an avant-garde bid to render the danmei adaptation visible, even though its producing quality is far poorer than its succeeding danmei drama. 2015 and 2016 proves to be a blossoming time for danmei web drama. During this period of time, an increasing number of danmei dramas were released on online video platforms, some of which gained attention and popularity, including *Falling in Love with a Rival* (2015), *Irresistible Love 1 & 2* (2016), and *Addicted* (2016). A majority of danmei dramas in this period were realistic romantic series. *Falling in Love with a Rival* (2015) is writer-turned-producer Chai Jidan's first danmei adaptation, co-produced by her studio and *Like Love*' director Chen Peng's production company. Based on Chai Jidan's novel *Counterattack*, the short drama consists of eight episodes, each about 20 minutes long. In late 2015, Chai set in motion a new series which afterwards caused a sensation and came out as a smash hit in its online broadcasting. The web drama titled *Addicted* began with a sweeping seizure of 10 million views on the debut day. Within a month, the number of views reached 100 million, making it the second most-watched show on the prevalent video platform *iQiyi*, which signaled heyday of danmei web drama. Nevertheless, the subversive portrayal of two high school boys' developing romantic feelings for each other renders the show ill-omened, ultimately making the viral drama prematurely end up being abruptly pulled offline from all video platforms by the order of the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) with three episodes unaired before the season finale. The unprecedented visibility to the BL subculture induced by *Addicted* unnerved the establishment, which provokes the tightening of censorship upon this genre.

Under the stringent regulations and scrutiny, readjustment to the plot and character of this unorthodox genre must be made to cater for the new milieu befalling it. The representative strategy utilized by *Dangai* is bromance as masquerade, picturing male-male romance under the guise of socialist bromance to pass censorship and engage with the mainstream platform (Hu and Wang, 2021). Most of the subsequent Danmei web drama to different degree transformed the original fiction's story line and character setting in order to accommodate themselves to the neo ecology reshaped by virtue of censorship. The Danmei drama producing company had circumspcctly attempted to circumvent the corresponding regulations with the agency of playing down or dispensing with affective bond between male characters while accentuating other dramatic elements such as crime, action, mystery, fantasy and history. Practitioners in Danmei serialization industry from then on started learning to mediate between an insidious but remunerative venture penetrating into mainstream market and the censorious state censor vigilantly detecting and bowdlerizing forbidden 'dissoluteness'.

*Like love*' director Chen Peng directed two another Danmei dramas in late 2016 and early 2017, *Love Is More than a Word*

(2016) and *Till Death Tear Us Apart* (2017), both adapted from the works of Jinjiang writers. Out of tune with their ostensibly amorous titles, the two series were virtually cleansed and reserved little picturing of unequivocal homoeroticism displayed in original fictions, putting more focus on how the protagonists are in collaboration with each other to battle with villains. Danmei dramas in that time were in a clumsy quandary due to the fact that Danmei's quintessential charisma featuring male characters' chemistry are gradually overshadowed and corroded by targeted censorship. The very nature of danmei was sacrificed and yielded to mere cost recovery, which makes it less inviting to capital market pivoting on money-spinning. The turning point surfaced in 2018. A web drama named *Guardian* rose to prominence unexpectedly. The series was adapted from the work of online danmei writer Priest from Jing Jiang. Its popularity and zealous fandom again bring the danmei into the sight of mainstream public, which also let capital witness the pecuniary and commercial potential of danmei drama. The unveiling of *Guardian* marks the inception of dangai drama proper. The influx of capital brought another even bigger success in 2019 when the untamed reached the prime of dangai genre. The commercial value of the untamed keeps high even after its ending, which further catalyzes the development of Dangai industry.

Within a short time span, the copyrights of numerous danmei works were purchased and the relevant application for production license and recruiting of actors were similarly carried out frantically and swiftly. Dangai dramas are either in ardent shooting or in arranging opportune airing. In 2021, suffering from the remorseless pandemic, stagnant web drama market was kindled by a phenomenal dangai drama. *Word of honor* the underdog among the fierce competition of dangai drama turned out to be a black horse suddenly. The drama attained massive attention and views both at home and abroad. *Word of honor* dubbed as dangai 3.0 is therefore joked about firing the first shot of dangai 101 that appears to be a teasing expression referring to the contending phenomenon concerning dangai dramas in consumer market of web series. The 101 is derived from a South Korean reality talent competition which later developed and expanded to other East Asian countries, China and Japan. As contemporarily widespread subculture in entertainment industry, dangai and Chinese versions of 101 talent show both came under the spotlight of public and authorities. When the capital planned to succeed in replicating success brought by dangai 1.0-3.0, it stumbled in this ephemeral revel. The sensation caused by word of honor not only desirably drew extensive reaction from miscellaneous audiences but also unfavorably get heeded by authority. At first the authority took a wait and see attitude and from time to time lend its discreet stand on dangai that is suggested to be keep a low profile. The successful drama seemed to be safe and to have passed the test of authority and censorship during its six month. When fans are celebrating its decent ending without noticeable trouble, one of its leading actors got implicated in a politically sensitive scandal that triggered the speedy removal from *Word of Honor's* exclusive streaming platform Youku. This event made authority to take a tough stance on dangai dramas. The following series of articles from official media branded dangai as societally prejudicial, which sentenced it to indefinite termination portending a stark prospect for those stranded half-done dangai dramas.

### 3. Materials and Methods

The paper is intended to deliver the general picture apropos of Dangai drama in Chinese cyberspace from the perspective of discourse analysis. It is linguistically probed and sociologically related from which angles the diversified representations with regard to Dangai, the intriguing but meanwhile risky drama genre surfacing from the Internet in 2014, are couched. The materials selected for discursive study come from the Internet media paragraphs concerning Dangai including a major of news reports from state-affiliated media outlets such as China daily, Global times and CGTN whose stand is representative of government, as well as other non-mainstream news agency who displays a divergent tendency to cast light on the heterogeneous opinions and attitudes towards Dangai drama. The relevant reporting websites are available in mainland China without recourse to virtual private network(VPN).The generalization and classification as regard Dangai' image representation on cyberspace are based on either the overt manifestation of the words 'Dangai' or 'Dangai drama' or the allusion to this series genre that gets implicated its targeted audience, social influence and economic effects.

The analytic frameworks germane to the study is composed of Halliday' transitivity structure in SFG and Van Leeuwen's social actor theory. According to Halliday (1994), people's inner and outer experiences of the real world fall mainly into six types of process: material process (doing), mental process (sensing), relational process (being), behavioral process (behaving), verbal process (saying), and existential process (existing). Any process can be further broken down into "the process itself," "participants in the process," and optional "circumstances" pertaining to the process" (Halliday, 1994: 107). The social actors used in this paper consist of activation & passivation, association & disassociation, differentiation & indifferentiation, functionalization & identification and aggregation (van Leeuwen, 2008) . These strategies collaborate with transitivity to facilitate the process of discourse analysis.

### 4. Analysis and Discussion

Ensuing is the ad rem analysis apropos Dangai's media silhouette against cyberspace in which five sketchy images--troublemaker, cultural transmitter, money-spinner, exploiter and silver lining, whose abstraction, outlining and instantiation figure prominently in unveiling its realistically and essentialistically existential significance that is extendable and ergo rarefied from at best an utopian idealization or at worst a chimerical apotheosization of aficionado who contingently one day becomes detached in a disenchanting fashion into a form of reification whose dynamics would manifest itself in the intangible and taciturn tussle pivoting upon culture, economy and politics are represented, albeit to some extent in such a pigeonholing which are subject to subjectivity.

Although Dangai dramas are initially aimed for heterosexual females, they are still likely to be watched by a variety of audience including those innocent and immature juveniles who are predisposed to be coaxed into delinquency or immorality in such an information exploded media times. The insidious impact of Dangai upon these underage is one of the major concerns that keep haunting the society and government.

**Example 1:** A survey of female audiences aged 15 to 23

indicates that animation, film and television, and variety shows are the channels for them to get in touch with Danmei-themed works. In order to attract attention, some Dangai dramas highlight the ambiguous provocation of male body language on the screen, showing a vulgar tendency. The prevalence of Dangai dramas will undoubtedly cause confusion and loss to young people who are in the critical shaping period of their outlook on life and values<sup>1</sup>.

In example 1, the identifying relational process of the subordinate clause in first sentence identifies 'animation, film and television, and variety shows' as Value and 'the channels' as Token. Here, 'them' are classified according to their ages, which is echoed with the identification strategy in contextualizing social actors or participants in social practices. In second sentence fulfilling the experiential metafunction by dint of material process betokened by 'highlight' and 'show', dangai is functionalized for its 'vulgar tendency' that is relevant to its provocative activity. The identified 'young people' who are susceptible to external influence undergo the passivated process that put them in 'confusion and loss'. Chinese government keeps a watchful eye on the precarious elements that may distort the worldview of underage. Considering the non-existence of Grading system as regard film and television, the baseline for media publications are actually set for immature children. As a result, the inadequacy of dangai's massive circulation is justified for safeguarding 'national future'.

**Example 2:** The appearance of Dangai drama made the leading actors quickly gain both fame and fortune, so many actors are rushing to appear in Dangai drama. With the shortcut of being a traffic star, actors don't want to settle down to hone their acting skills<sup>1</sup>.

**Example 3:** In order to maximize profits, the producer not only increased investment to upgrade the creation, but also hyped "male male CP" by bundling the protagonist in marketing, occupying the topic rankings of social platforms, which has actually commercialized Dangai drama and disrupted the network environment and order<sup>1</sup>.

Sentences in example2&3 encompass material process and mental process. The considerable traffic flow and attention offered by dangai genre render it beneficial for actors longing for prestige and visibility. These aspirational actors are functionalized in terms of their stampeding into the current of dangai. This behavior is deemed as unrighteous for its obvious speculativeness that is what under severe criticism by authority. The utilitarianism underlying dangai bandwagon is likely to undermine the film and television industry that is in nature easily led astray by pied piers named capital and vanity, which is viewed by authority venomous to the industry.

**Example 4:** Danmei-adapted web series are essentially a self-contained subculture. However, because of the great success of certain works, creators of danmei-adapted web dramas become unwilling to locate in their own circles.... If not well controlled, such cultural works will definitely cause damage to the mainstream culture and mainstream values, lead the public aesthetics astray<sup>1</sup>.

In example 4, the carrier 'Danmei-adapted web series' in relational process is attributed with a noun phrase 'a self-contained subculture'. Those engaging in creating dangai drama out of ambition in more interests are functionalized by their penetration into mainstream. The dangai above described are therefore hinted by author that this genre is virtually disassociated with mainstream drama genres in orthodox market of film and television industry. As a

differentiated minority in this circle, dangai that trespasses out of its previous field turns out to be intimidating and thus boycotted by government that fathoms out the normative ideology it proactively advocates and disseminates proves to be defied by dangai drama which takes an avid interest in depicting male effeminacy against the virile masculinity indoctrinated by the establishment.

**Example 5:** The untamed incorporates a lot of national style elements and traditional etiquette, and also conveys the values of youthful chivalry and family-country worldview to young people. Its rooting in traditional culture is valuable, and it shows the confidence and love of Chinese people for traditional culture. It conveys cultural confidence and establishes positive energy values by writing the beauty of the national style, and brings a core, profound and valuable boutique drama series to the audience<sup>2</sup>.

**Example 6:** Chinese web drama Winter Begonia, an adaptation of a popular Boys' Love (BL) web novel, has earned high marks among TV viewers in China for its efforts to promote the traditional culture of Peking Opera. "I decided to watch the drama because I was touched by the original BL story, but after watching it, I learned a lot about the charm of our country's splendid traditional opera culture," a 26-year-old viewer living in Beijing told the Global Times<sup>3</sup>.

**Example 7:** One of the most-talked about TV series in China, Word of Honor, will debut on South Korean TV on May 26th with Korean subtitles. Since it began streaming on YouKu on February 23rd, the show has gained over 80 million views and counting and has been translated into six languages: English, Spanish, Thai, Vietnamese, Indonesian and Arabic<sup>4</sup>.

**Example 8:** A fan of the show, who also happens to be a restaurant owner in New York City, offered discounts to fellow fans, cctv.com reported on Saturday. "I think it's really a great way for people like me who Chinese wasn't their first language to be able to really enjoy and appreciate the show and culture," she said, adding she likes Chinese culture, food and kung fu. She even began learning Chinese in order to better understand the drama."<sup>5</sup>

Different from the negative images of trouble makers, this sort of representation as cultural transmitter exhibit the positivity of dangai. In example 5, the dangai drama the untamed is portrayed as an active narrator of Chinese traditional values and a devoted promulgator of positive energy that are appropriate to youthful people. This time dangai is not disassociated with mainstream vales. On the contrary, it becomes an integral part of constructive social practice in which dangai's functionalized categorization shows compatibility with identified youthful people who is able to attain the knowledge concerning traditional culture. The role of spreading traditional culture is also presented in example 6 where a young audience interview to drama Winter Begonia in its verbal process foregrounds the intermediary function of dangai when attracting youngsters to traditional culture. The profound influence manifested in dangai is not only in home but also overseas. The aggregation strategy instantiated by 80 million and six identifies with van Leeuwen's viewpoint that aggregation tends to be adopted to regulate practice and manufacture consensus. By virtue with these concrete numbers, the recognition that Word of honor gains popularity abroad is reached and its capability to export Chinese culture to foreigners seems to be conceivable and reasonable. The interview with an oversea fan of WOH in example 8 whose verbal process embraces a mental process which conveys a subjectively conceptual perception of Word

of Honor's cultural significance alludes to a transform of personal behavior and social practice. The initial passive viewer of the show turns out to be an active and voluntary disseminator of the show, during which the soft cultural power underlying the traditional elements in the drama is advertised by audiences.

This productive image of dangai in promoting traditional culture domestically and abroad forms an ostensibly preposterous but practically plausible contrast to its perilous impression with regard to troublemaking. The lurking logic lies in that despite the authority's trepidation with reference to dangai's erosive effect on orthodox ideology, the genre's prospect of both commercial operation and cultural transmission along with the positive demonstration of an inclusive and open national image render the two seemingly paradoxical media representation coincident and justifiable.

**Example 9:** Due to the recent licensing and shooting of Dangai dramas, people in the industry use "swarming" to describe the phenomenon that streaming platforms, production companies, and actors all want to enter the show to get a share. Almost all the IPs of well-known Danmei novels on Jinjiang Original Online were sold, and the highest price for a single IP reached 40 million yuan. More than 60 Danmei novels are in or have completed preparations for filming<sup>6</sup>.

**Example 10:** Different from other themes, Dangai dramas focus on women as the main audience. Almost all of the popular Dangai dramas accounted for more than 60% of the female audience, and the highest one accounted for nearly 90%. Statistics show that China has a huge base of female consumer groups. At present, there are about 400 million female consumers aged 20 to 60, supporting a 10 trillion consumer market. Among them, post-80s and post-90s women have become the main consumers<sup>7</sup>.

**Example 11:** At least eight shows adapted from novels with boys' love romances are expected to premiere this year across China's major streaming platforms, including Alibaba's Youku, Tencent Video, Mango TV, and iQIYI<sup>8</sup>.

The sensation triggered by dangai is soon captured by responsive captical market. Given the gigantic economic benefits derived from the unexceptional drama genre, the producing source including video platform and production firms is competing for the intellectual property of Danmei novels. The 'Danmei novels' in example 9 is syntactically activated as sentential subject, but semantically it is passive patient of the social practice 'sell'. This activation indicates that danmei novel are factual beneficiary of seemingly spontaneous purchasing that are actually induce by danmei's profitability. 'She economy' proves to be boast huge potential and commercial values in recent years (Li, 2020). The aggregation represented by concrete numbers in example 10 shows that she economy may be more powerful in dangai drama consumer market due to the majority targeted audience of dangai are female whose consumptive capability is astonishing when they are genuinely indulged in something inviting and appetizing. The main video platforms listed in example 11 associated with each other to reflect the functionalized identity that is interest-driven speculator who would dive into whatever lucrative venture. However, due to the ubiquitous censorship symbolizing governmental power, the practitioners of films and television industry have to be on their guard so shrewdly that they can outfox the rigid regulator without traversing the subtle red line. Making and showing dangai dramas in China come out as a cat-and-mouse

game between the profit-driven entertainment industry that is in insatiable demand for golden goose and the homophobic censorship regime who are , when caught up in LGBTQ issues, in relentlessly condescending taciturnity that keeps marginalizing LGBTQ people in media and voiding them in reality.

**Example 12:** Gay people in China have pointed out how different boys' love stories are from their real-life experiences - these characters in dramas are often depicted as young, urbanized, handsome, and wealthy, and rarely come across the hostility that gay people actually face.

Daniel Hsu, a 31-year-old gay man working as a teacher in Beijing, said while many people enjoy watching boys' love dramas, they may not be interested in the problems confronting gay people in the real world<sup>8</sup>.

**Example 13:** "By hinting at male homoerotic love, the directors and actors are appropriating the interest of funü and gay life, trying to turn these into cash and traffic," said Ge Liang, a researcher at King's College London who studies boys' love literature in China. "But instead of speaking up for the LGBTQ community, they stay in line with China's official policy on gay people: keep silent and keep them sinful."<sup>8</sup>

By depicting those unrealistically charming attributes of fictional characters in dangai in example 12 whose verbal process mirrors the impartation of an aura of cynical stance on Dangai and its audience, the author is utilizing disassociation method to detach them from the gay in actuality whose real images are incongruous with those in dangai. The authentic representation of real gay's suffering seems to be unceremoniously disregarded and superseded by grandiose and illusory portrayal of artificial homoeroticism. In example 13, the directors and actors who are activated and functionalized, are accused of exploiting gay elements for monetary advantage while keeping reticent about rights of gay people and acquiescing to legitimacy of official state censorship. This appropriative and exploitative practice of queerbaiting is entrenched in the projecting, producing and releasing processes of industrial chains apropos of dangai, which demonstrates that this genre does not bring valuable progress to rights of gay people desperately confronted with realistic predicament.

**Example 14:** However, some members of the gay community see boys' love dramas as a precious platform for queer stories. Considering the dismal visibility of the LGBTQ community in Chinese media, some think that any LGBTQ representation is good representation right now<sup>8</sup>.

In spite of the denying attitude towards dangai drama, there still exists some sanguine stance on this subversive genre. In example 14 where a contrasting point of view is reflected upon the corresponding verbal and mental process, partial members from gay community offer a positive response to this subculture phenomenon. Rather than make disconnection with dangai, they forge a bond with it by the technique of association and treat any representation of LGBT as favorable to visualizing themselves. Where Chinese state media often portrays gay men as victims of crime, enemies to traditional values, and sources of social instability, subtle boys' love dramas have perhaps become the best form of queer representation in China's state-sanctioned pop culture. Boys' love dramas, as subtle as their homoerotic undertones may be, could lead to wider public acceptance of the LGBTQ community. These dramas also offer gay people in China a silver lining for seeing their sexuality represented in a hetero-normative environment.

## 5. Conclusion

With the agency of transitivity and social actors, the study presents a generic representation of Dangai drama in Chinese cyberspace. Five disparate images have been identified which is comprised of trouble maker, cultural transmitter, money spinner, exploiter and silver lining. The positive and negative representation coexist in media reporting whose stances on Dangai varies from polarized propositions sourced from a monolithic structure of state media to a miscellany of standpoints advanced by independent media agency that shows more autonomy in coverage. The diverse depictions of Dangai drama prove to be motivated by corresponding intention and standpoint, which reflects the subtle balance kept under the multilateral negotiation and compromise in the fields of politics, commerce, industry and society. The past, present and future of Dangai are bound to be under the sway of seemingly precarious but actually sustainable interaction.

## 6. Notes

- 1) [https://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2021-08/26/nw.D110000gmrb\\_20210826\\_4-02.htm](https://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2021-08/26/nw.D110000gmrb_20210826_4-02.htm)
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