

Repression, Permeation, and Circulation: Retracing and Reframing *Danmei* Culture Online in Mainland China

Longlong Ge ^{1*}

Published: September 1, 2024

ABSTRACT

Danmei (耽美), which is also called ‘boy’s love’ (abbreviated as BL), refers to fantasy textual stories depicting gay male romantic relationships (McLelland and Aoyama, 2015). The rapid proliferation of this popular culture has triggered scholars to reflect on the ‘queer culture’ in which it is represented. This article aims to explore the intrinsic connection between Chinese *danmei* culture and Chinese queer culture in digital media. By adopting the research method of media archaeology and culture materialism, I will map the development of *danmei* culture in mainland China into three periods: repression period (1994-2003) when the state authority compelled *danmei* and queer culture to find shelter in virtual cyberspace; permeation period (2003-2016) when queer culture reshaped *danmei* culture, and the former two generate multiple forms of expression on the internet; and circulation period (2016-2021) when digital media industrialised *danmei* culture. Then, a cultural framework, ‘queer-*danmei*-media’ will be proposed, in reference to the interaction of ‘affect-body-world’ described by Melissa Gregg, Gregory J. Seigworth, and Lisa Blackman, to reinforce the social and political functions of *danmei* and transfer it from generalised pop culture towards the cultural representation and campaign position of queerness and feminism.

Keywords: queer, digital media, feminism, danmei, Chinese culture

INTRODUCTION

Danmei (耽美, an established translation for boy’s love or BL for short, referring to Dan 耽 as addiction and Mei 美 as beauty) is an overarching term for women’s fantasies depicting gay and lesbian romantic relationships (Jacobs, 2015). As early as the end of the last century, novels on this theme were transmitted to mainland China from Hong Kong and Taiwan through pirate publishing (Yang and Xu, 2017). Given the early blowback from mainstream politics and culture, BL fans borrowed Japanese words, たんび (tanbi) to avoid strict publishing censorship (Chen, 2023), as its Chinese translation ‘being addicted to beauty’ (Feng, 2009: 1) aligns with the fandom for ‘pretty boys’ as protagonists and their romantic homosexual affections. TV series adapted from *danmei* novels are known as *dangai* series (耽改, referring to Dan 耽 as *danmei* and Gai 改 as adaptation). In contrast to *danmei* series, the *dangai* series is filmed in a way that downplays or cuts out the same-sex sentiments of the original novel, to meet the censorship requirements of mainland China’s National Radio and Television Administration [NRTA]. Some of the *dangai* series even can be said to enhance heterosexual normativity and reduce homosexual affections between male characters in the original fiction by adding female protagonists or turning heroes into heroines, such as *Forward Forever* (热血同行) and *Immortality* (皓衣行).

Though the *dangai* industry is cautious and discreet, *dangai* series and even the whole *danmei* culture have been suppressed by the state authorities in recent years. On 30 January 2023, the TV series *A League of Nobleman* (君子盟), adapted from a *danmei* novel written by Dafeng Guaguo (大风刮过), was broadcast on v.qq.com. Two months later, another series with the same theme, *Justice in the Dark* (光·渊) was tentatively released on youku.com, but was suspended airing after eight episodes. This seems to indicate that the return of the *dangai* series remains unknown. Since the SARFT issued a ‘ban on *danmei*’ (禁耽令) on 16 September 2021, announcing an authoritative boycott on the film and television adaptation of *danmei* works (China Xinhua News Network Corporation, 2021), various anxious voices have arisen on the Internet: should *danmei* series be forbidden entirely in mainland China or not; does the ban on *danmei* hint at a crackdown on queer culture by the authorities; how will *danmei* and queer culture

¹ University of Nottingham, UNITED KINGDOM

*Corresponding Author: Longlong.Ge@nottingham.ac.uk

be present in mainland China afterwards? The underlying concern is the development of the queer culture presented by *danmei* in heteronormatised mainland China, rather than merely the productive ecology and the financial value of *danmei* works.

To prospect the development after the ban of Mainland China's *danmei* and queer culture, it is worthwhile to review the past, and investigate the impetus and resistance, the forms and settings, and the sense and impact of *danmei* in history. The first section of this article will retrace the development of *danmei* in digital media from the moment when it emerged in mainland China until the enactment of the ban. In this part, I will adopt the research approaches of media archaeology and culture materialism, searching for media resources about *danmei* works, including *yuandan*, *tongren*, and *dangai* series, scrutinising how *danmei* develops on major creative and interactive websites of *danmei* such as *lucifer-club.com* (露西弗俱乐部), *jjwxc.net* (晋江文学城), and *lofter.com* (乐乎), so as to explore the process of indigenisation of *danmei* in mainland China, its dynamic movement on the Internet, as well as intertwining, coupling, and articulation between *danmei* and queer culture. This article does not conduct a case study or textual analysis of specific *danmei* novels, so authorship, reader feedback and reviews, and engagement metrics will not be emphasised. Based on the data, I will organise the trajectory of *danmei* culture in China into three periods: the first repression period (1994-2003) when the state authority oppressed *danmei* and queer culture, compelling them to find shelter in virtual cyberspace; the second permeation period (2003-2016) when *danmei*, queer and digital media are in symbiosis, as queer culture reshaped *danmei* culture, and the former two generate multiple forms of expression on the internet; and the third circulation period (2016-2021) when online media industrialised *danmei* culture.

Before the ban was issued, the evolution of *danmei* culture was expanding, yet why were *danmei* works suddenly halted, what kinds of political and ideological inclination did the ban reveal, what are the new dynamics in the development of *danmei* after the ban, and how did *danmei* culture come out of the dilemma of the chaotic, commercialised internet subcultures, and become a new alternative for women and queers to express their rebellion against the normative? To address these issues following the enactment of the ban, the second section of this article will first analyse the conflict between *danmei* and state authority, including the entanglement of the fandom as a trigger for the ban (Harville, 2022; Wang and Ge, 2022), the chaotic publishing market and creative ecosystem (Feng, 2009), and the cultural connotation of non-reproductive sexuality (Zhao 2022), among others. Subsequently, a cultural framework, 'queer-*danmei*-media' will be proposed, in reference to the interaction of 'affect-body-world', pointed out in Melissa Gregg, and Gregory J. Seigworth's *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010)¹, in order to reinforce the social and political functions of *danmei* and transfer it from a generalised pop culture towards the cultural representation and campaigning position of queerness and feminism.

RETRACING DANMEI ONLINE IN MAINLAND CHINA

Repression: The First Stage (1994-2003)

The development of Chinese *danmei* culture in the digital media era is characterised by the following three stages. The first stage was the repression period, from 1994, the first year of the Internet in China, to 2003. This period coincided with China's substantive negotiations with the Western world for the World Trade Organization [WTO], namely bilateral market access negotiations and multilateral negotiations around drafting China's legal instruments for WTO accession (Zhong, 2009). Accession to the WTO was key to China's openness to the outside world, for the infiltration of market economy awareness into the country, followed by capitalist multiculturalism. It was at this point that Internet culture entered China. After the Internet launch in China, the fourth type of media, then often called the 'new media', was born, distinct from the three traditional media, namely print, radio, and television (Wu, 2001: 43).

Before the emergence of the Internet in mainland China, Japanese *danmei* works, including novels, mangas, animations, and video games, had already landed in the mainland via Taiwan and Hong Kong through piracy channels (Yang and Xu, 2017). However, as the fan community of *danmei* expanded and the circulation of pirated publications became unstable, *danmei* works, which struggled to pass publishing censorship, moved to the emerging, unclear, and extensive cyberspace (Feng, 2009). Initially, *danmei* served as a niche exotic literary subject, and *danmei* fans only shared slash fiction² and original creations surreptitiously and grudgingly in salon-style online fora. For example, an early *danmei* fiction creation website in mainland China, Lucifer Club, set up a restrictive

¹ See also Lisa Blackman's *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (2012), and *The Body Theory: The Key Concept* (2021).

² The characters in the early *danmei* fiction are not drawn from reality but from published works of mass culture. This genre of creation is professionally labelled as 'fan culture' or 'slash'. Henry Jenkins (1988) first proposes the fans who participate in the creation and recreation of the original works as 'textual poachers', and explains this phrase further in his monograph, 'Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture' (1992). Since *danmei* creators use slash to label adaptations and characters, *danmei* works are also referred to 'slash'.

membership system where users had to correctly answer all five questions related to *danmei* culture before registering an account (*Membership Code 201012 Edition*, 2010). This measure prevented non-*danmei* fans from disrupting the creation-reading-communication ecology. In 1998, mainland China established ‘The Great Firewall of China’, a keyword filter for overseas information (Li, 2006). *Danmei* fiction involving erotic depictions and same-sex love was partially blocked from then onwards. *Danmei* fans in mainland China who wanted to access the full range of *danmei* fiction from overseas had to ‘climb over the wall’, they needed to bypass the state’s corresponding IP blocking, content filtering, domain hijacking, and traffic restrictions, to access the web content.

Two conjectures have been put forward by academics around the reasons for the repression of *danmei* and queer culture by the state authorities in mainland China. On the one hand, the mainland Chinese government reinforces its ideology by opposing queer cultural production: *danmei*, as *danmei* and queer culture are considered as the output of ‘the hegemonic Euro-American notion of modernity’ (Ong, 1999: 31) and ‘the colonial discourse of... western “civilisation”’ (Stychin, 1998: 200, seen in Zhao, 2017: 71). On the other hand, the authorities believed that *danmei* and queerness have the potential to lead to a decline in fertility by challenging the basic societal assumptions and dominant values about marriage, procreation, and ethical relationships thus, reducing the labour force, triggering the ageing issue, and ultimately impacting economic development (Zhao, 2020). Indeed, these two speculations are able to merge into one fundamental fear, precisely that *danmei* and queer culture have the potential to destabilise power structure and state discourse in the eyes of the authorities. Although gay love is proven not to be unique to Western culture, as same-sex relationships and *danmei*-like literary works known at the time as *nanfeng* (男风, male practice)³ had already existed in antiquity. Ancient Chinese *danmei* and queer culture have not escaped the spectre of heterosexual structure, *danmei* novels in the Ming and Qing dynasties distinguish between ‘*uke*’, who acts as a woman and wife in sexual relations, and ‘*seme*’, who functions as a man and husband. The essential marriage and reproduction, patriarchal and class relations were not destabilised, and thus it can be supposed why *danmei* was not repressed by the dominant culture.

Permeation: The Second Stage (2003-2016)

Admittedly, such repression continues to the present day, but given that *danmei* has found a path of compromise since 2003, that is to say that *danmei* has moved from being an underground pirate that was absolutely repressed, to an Internet platform that was ‘acquiesced’ to exist, the political repression by the state has turned into a potential development. This stage is regarded as the period of permeation, from the year when ‘Jinjiang Literature City’⁴ (晋江文学城) opened to 2016. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, the term ‘permeate’ refers to ‘spreading through something and be[ing] present in every part of it’ (2023). The application of this meaning not only emphasises the wide dissemination of *danmei* on the Internet, but also points out that *danmei* culture in mainland China has become more diversified in terms of both content and expression, such as creating original *danmei* works that are different from slash fiction, as well as generating various media works relying on online platforms.

Different from Taiwan’s ‘myfreshnet’ (鲜网)⁵ and ‘Haitang Culture’ (海棠文化)⁶ which is full of erotically depicted *danmei* novels as well as mainland China’s first Lucifer Club, which is operated by volunteer *danmei* fans who are not majoring in computer science, Jinjiang Literary City is the most influential commercialised *danmei* creation and interaction platform in mainland China, ‘covering a large variety of literary genres, such as original heterosexual romance, BL (boy’s love), GL (girl’s love), and all types of fan fiction, but it is mostly known for its high-quality original *danmei* works’ (Yang and Xu, 2017: 5).

For the time, Chinese *danmei* fiction could get rid of the spectre of imported North American and Japanese culture, it transitioned from fan fiction/slash to original works and developed rapidly. Taking Jinjiang Literature City as the main site of BL as an example, statistically, the number of original *danmei* fiction on this website grew from 330 to 618,309 between 2003 and 2023. **Table 1** is a chart ranking readers’ preferences for Chinese original *danmei* fiction, taken from the statistics of Jinjiang Literature City. It seems to demonstrate that Chinese original

³ During the pre-Qin period, there were allusions to homosexual affairs, such as ‘the cut sleeve’ (断袖). ‘the love of the split peach (余桃之爱)’, ‘the interest of the Longyang (龙阳之兴)’, and ‘the joy of a back rub (抱背之欢)’; the first collection of poetry in China, *The Book of Songs* (诗经), also contains poems describing gay love between comrades and classmates, such as ‘Beating the Drum (邶风·击鼓)’ and ‘My Robe (郑风·子衿)’, and modern *danmei* fictions took shape in the Ming and Qing dynasties, such as *Yichun Xiangzhi* (宜春香质) and *Cap and Hairpin* (弁而钗).

⁴ Jinjiang Literature City (www.jjwxc.net) is a popular Chinese online platform known for its vast collection of user-generated web novels and literature, particularly in genres like romance, *danmei*, and fantasy.

⁵ Myfreshnet (www.myfresh.net) was established in 2000. It was the earliest and largest literary website in the Chinese community and the first website in the world to have structured interactive content. It was closed in 2016.

⁶ Haitang Culture (ebook.longmabook.com), is a website under Taiwan’s Longma Culture Publishing House, covering a variety of literary genres, especially in the fields of romance and fantasy, and has a wealth of resources. After myfreshnet was blocked, Haitang Culture gained a large number of writers and readers from mainland China because of its relatively loose censorship.

Table 1. Readers' preference ranking of Chinese original *Danmei* fictions (Reference data from Jinjiang Literature City)

Reader's preference ranking	Background	Writing style	Ending	Relationship (sex behaviour)	Personality	Others
1	Modern time	Comic	Happy ending	1 vs. 1	Handsome	Younger seme
2	Fictional time	Tragi-comical	Bad ending	1 vs. N	Powerful	Quarrelsome lovers
3	Ancient time	Tragic			Humorous	Mythical realm

danmei fictions, also known as *yuandan* (原耽, referring to *Yuan* 原 as the original and *Dan* 耽 as *danmei* for short), are diverse in background, writing style, theme, plots, and characters.

In terms of textual background, signs of ancient Chinese culture distinguish Chinese original *danmei* fiction from other countries. The theme of time travel, martial arts, and dynasty history is prevalent. Different endings correspond to different writing styles, including recreation, seriousness, sorrow, and so on.

The rise of Chinese *yuandan* between 2013 and 2016 stems from three aspects. First, in terms of the broader cultural and political environment, the Chinese mainstream during this period advocated 'fostering stronger confidence in the culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics' (Guo, 2017). Cultural confidence is manifested in China's long history of cultural accumulation, the engagement and network of Chinese culture with the rest of the world, and China's strong economy (Zhou, 2012). The wave of cultural self-confidence has also blown into the *danmei* literary world, therefore creators and audiences are no longer satisfied with the imitation and rewriting of European and American popular culture, such as *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars*, and Japanese and Korean popular cultures, such as Japanese manga comics and Korean dramas. Chinese *danmei* fans are committed to writing original *danmei* works that are based on modern Chinese society, including real-life regions and industries; classical history, especially the Three Kingdoms period (220-280 AD) with confusing character relationships and the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) that was one of the world's most powerful kingdoms at that time; and the third fictional setting that mixes such fictional histories with modernity, reality and fantasy⁷.

Secondly, the rapid development of the Chinese original *danmei* culture can be attributed to the increasing normalisation and systematisation of Chinese online sphere. China's public cyberspace is divided into regions according to different functions and affiliations. In particular, Jinjiang Literature City assembles online literature, where writers and readers rely on the Internet to form an interactive community for sharing their works; while WeChat Subscription Account, Sina Weibo, and QZone as social media provide spaces for *danmei* fans to create fragmented and instantaneous literature (Ge *et al.*, 2020). The former focuses on the audience of online literature, whereas the latter has a broader user base. *Danmei* fans travel on multiple platforms, thus sharing *danmei* extends to all corners on the Internet in popularising *danmei* culture. Thirdly, the improvement of network technology has also provided *danmei* on the Internet with more ways to create, interact, and produce income. For example, *danmei* writers who transfer from Lucifer Club to Jinjiang Literature City or other literature websites can earn 'bonuses' from their readers. Although these bonuses are not regular or lucrative compared to the copyright income of other genres, the writers believe that they can produce a larger and more stable income by maintaining an efficient output, producing quality work, and achieving higher rankings on the site. This point also sets the stage for the third phase of *danmei* to sell copyrights and thus further commercialisation.

Circulation: The Third Stage (2016-2021)

The third stage constitutes the circulation period, from 2016 until now, in which the *danmei* culture is no longer satisfied with the production of purely textual forms and limited publishing profits. This stage intends to expand from simple literary works to proliferation of various media forms such as radio dramas and online drama series. The year 2016 is dubbed 'The Year of *Danmei* Series' because of the sheer number of *danmei* series and their significant impact (Deng and Han, 2021: 96). Except for 2022, each year has seen one or two prevalent TV series adapted from *danmei* fiction. *Danmei* culture has circulated from a niche subcultural salon to a vast online commercial market. Capital has expanded the market for *danmei* culture to further boost interests by selling a wide range of fancy commercial derivatives, such as theme songs, albums, and signed photos of actors. As **Figure 1** below shows, the typical communication process of *danmei* culture in the past was 'author-work-publication-reader', while after digital media dominated the circulation of *danmei*, the communication process transformed into 'author-textual work-film and television-derivative-consumer'. It is fair to say that the accumulation of capital has continuously consumed *danmei* culture and its underlying queer culture in order to create this mature proliferating space of integrated media. In addition, some creators and producers of non-*danmei* culture are tempted by the substantial economic profits of *danmei* culture, and then they add the performance of queer and *fujoshi* elements to

⁷ Data is collected from Jinjiang Literature City.

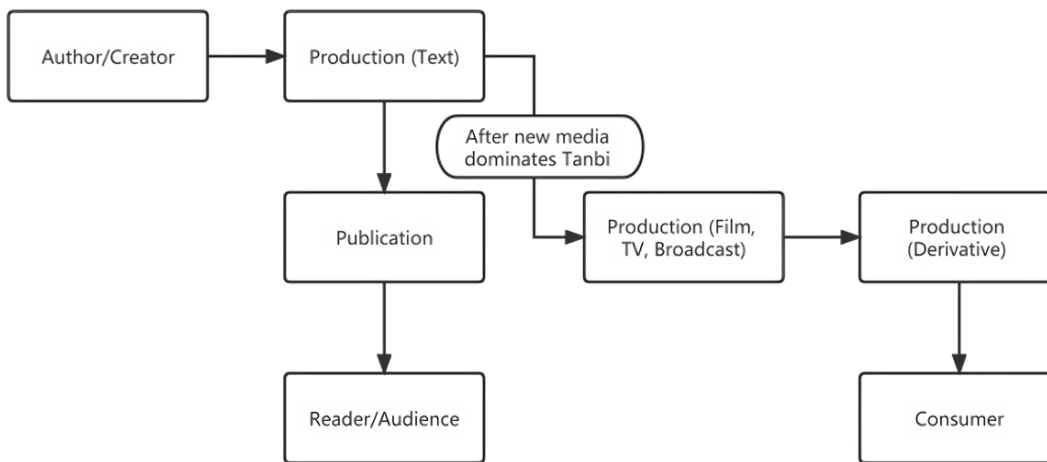


Figure 1. The process of publication and adaptation of *danmei* literature

heterosexual characters, to cater to the television market demand. This adaptation arguably results in a superficial *danmei* culture that does not allow for a deeper exploration of the reality of queer.

Owing to the uproar among ‘fan groups’ (饭圈) caused by the proliferation of *danmei* culture, China’s National Radio and Television Administration [NRTA] held a meeting in Beijing on 16 September 2021. NRTA required the market ‘to strengthen the positive guidance of TV drama creation and production, and resolutely resist the trend of ‘*danmei* adaptation’ and other pan-entertainment phenomena’ (China Xinhua News Network Corporation, 2021). Up to now, 57 *danmei* series have been banned in mainland China.

The reason this article ends with the first round of *danmei* development in 2021 is that in September of that year, China’s National Radio and Television Administration made it clear that *dangai* was banned from release. Zhu Yonglei, deputy director of State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (China) [SARFT], explicitly raised a proposal in the television drama industry conference, the ‘Symposium on Implementing the Deployment of Comprehensive Governance in the Field of Culture and Entertainment and Promoting the High-Quality Development of TV Drama Industry’, stating that it is necessary to ‘strengthen the positive guidance of TV drama creation and production, and resolutely resist pan-entertainment phenomena such as the supremacy of online celebrity, the chaotic phenomenon of the fandom, and the trend of *dangai*’ (NRTA, 2021). Although Zhu did not explicitly prohibit the production and release of *dangai* on behalf of the state at this symposium, the ‘fan conflicts’ (Wang and Ge, 2023: 355) Zhu criticised erupted between fan groups of the leading actors in two famous *dangai* television series, *The Untamed* (陈情令) and *Word of Honour* (山河令). Therefore, Zhu’s speech was considered by the public to be the state’s blockade against *danmei* and queer culture in the media.

There was state disapproval and denial of *danmei* and queer culture in the persistent attitudes and initiatives of the state and mainstream discourse towards *danmei* and queer culture, even before the ban was issued. On 30 June 2017, the China Netcasting Services Association (CNSA) held an executive council meeting in Beijing to approve the ‘General Rules for Netcasting Programme Content Audit’, in which homosexuality is explicitly defined as ‘abnormal sexual relations’, which are ‘obscene pornography and vulgar vulgarity’ (CNSA, 2017). On 13 April 2018, Sina Weibo, which is a Chinese social media platform with 586 million monthly active users (Yang, 2023), announced that it would launch a three-month intensive ‘clean-up campaign’ against images, texts, and clips on multiple topics, homosexuality included. Weibo users then used the hashtag #IAmGay# to run an influential LGBTQ socio-political protest on the Internet (Liao, 2019) to fight against the mainstream media’s banning and discrimination of homosexuality. Two days later, the official microblog of *People Daily* published an article, “‘Different Fireworks’, Can Bloom Just the Same | Essays’ (Yinuo, 2018), pointing out that ‘homosexuals in terms of sexual orientation are a minority group, and protecting the rights of minorities is also a necessity for social justice’ (Yinuo, 2018). On 16 April, Sina Weibo administrators added that the game and animation clean-up was no longer targeting queer content, since they are distinguishable from pornography and violence. This series of rules and declarations not only reflects a more flexible attitude of the authority towards the queer community and culture, but also demonstrates the intervening function of the Internet public opinion on political decisions.

However, this does not mean that netizens have won an absolute victory, since the dominant discourse neither bans *danmei* and queer culture nor encourages its development. The *dangai* was manufactured by the market and fans to circumvent the suppression of *danmei* by the motion of *jingwang* (净网, referring to ‘purifying the Internet’), and the ban in 2021 signalled a further non-indulgence and sequestration of the last public expression of *danmei* by mainstream culture. Though the current situation is that *danmei* novels can still be published on the Internet, film, television, radio dramas, mangas, and games adapted from *danmei* novels are restricted from release, and *danmei*

novels have returned to the salon-style model of the end of the last century, where the core fanbase creates and exchanges ideas internally as a subculture, and engages with the public to a lesser extent.

Conjecture: The Second Round (To Be Continued)

However, these phenomena do not mean that *danmei*'s development has to come to a halt. Rather, *danmei* appears currently more like a repetition and regression of its previous history. That is to say, *danmei* is currently entering into another round of repression-permeation-circulation. Yet the development of the new round of *danmei*, that is to say the development after the ban to date, is not entirely consistent with the process of the previous round (1999-2021). For one, compared to the first round, the second round has significantly accelerated in production. The oppression in the first round continued into the second round, but unlike the previous time when it was absolutely suppressed, by this time the *danmei* culture had acquired experience in coping with it and responded accordingly. In addition to shifting the platform of publishing from Jinjiang to the overseas archiveofourown.org and the mainland's Lofter.com, *danmei* fans also transferred the form and passion for creation from *yuandan* back to *tongren*/slash, in the literary works that 'often lifts characters and settings from existing works but also adds portrayals of homoerotic relationships that do not exist in the canon universe' (Feng, 2013: 123). For example, *The Knockout*, which aired on Chinese state television CCTV in January 2023, sparked an online debate about the same-sex couplings surrounding the two male protagonists, An Xin (安欣) and Gao Qiqiang (高启强), and a large number of *tongren* works featuring same-sex couplings appeared on Lofter.com and Bilibili.com. By July 2023, there were nearly 1,000 videos uploaded to social media that were related to *The Knockout* male coupling on Bilibili.com. *Danmei/dangai* audiences' fondness for *tongren* can be seen as empathy and compromise. Under the heterosexual matrix, *tongren* can escape strict censorship because it does not involve commercialisation, plus both the original producer and the secondary creation platform are interested in facilitating free promotion. Despite the low market value of *tongren* compared to *yuandan*, the creative ecology is vibrant. The popular *tongren* works are often adapted from or derived from strong genre films with rich, logical plots and fully developed characters, rather than purely romantic dramas, because such works not only provide a reliable basis for the creation of *tongren* in terms of plots and character relationships, but also satisfy the rebellious audience's assumptions about the same-sex ambiguous relationships of heterosexual characters (Zhou and Zhang, 2022). Progressively, *danmei* has changed from a novelistic theme to 'a way of watching' (A Po, 2023) and a mode of thinking, including the appreciation of same-sex relationships and emotions. From the first round of *danmei*'s development, it is possible that *tongren* will take over from *yuandan* as a consumer product in the future; however, there is an ongoing concern that *tongren* will be censored due to the generalisation of their creations, and that *danmei* fans' field of activity will then be further reduced.

REINTEGRATING DANMEI WITH QUEER AND ONLINE MEDIA

At present, there are multiple reasons for the decline and even stagnation in the development of *danmei*. Externally, there are growing conflicts between *danmei* and mainstream culture. These conflicts fundamentally stem from the contradiction between the same-sex relationships depicted in *danmei* and traditional Chinese marriage and fertility culture. But with the prevalence of *danmei* works, *danmei* gradually has transformed from a minor literary theme to a more widespread popular culture. The disadvantages of popular culture and consumerism have also appeared in *danmei* culture afterwards. For instance, the commercialisation of *danmei* has catalysed intellectual property rights violations such as copying, plagiarism, and piracy. There are cases of *danmei* novelists *ronggeng* (融梗, blending some of the common motifs in *danmei* works as original) and plagiarising each other. One of the most discussed cases is that Tangqi Gongzi's romance novel *Eternal Love* (唐七公子, 三生三世十里桃花, 2009) plagiarised the *danmei* novel *The Peach Blossom Debt* (桃花债) published by Dafeng Guaguo (大风刮过) in 2007. Except for the different gender of one of the main characters, there are overlaps in their plots, character relationships, character identities and descriptions. The former was also originally serialised in Jinjiang Literature City but was moved to 17k.com due to a copyright dispute. However, because of the suppression of *danmei*'s novels by the mainstream publishing industry over a decade ago, *The Peach Blossom Debt* not only failed to sue *Eternal Love* for plagiarism and copyright infringement, but it was also instead published seven years after *Eternal Love* was published.

Another problem is the fan conflict that *danmei* and *dangai* have caused in the entertainment industry. The sensational '227 incident' (Wang and Ge, 2023: 356) and the ban of *dangai* (Huang, 2022) were considered to be caused by fans of the main actors of two famous *dangai* television series, *The Untamed* (陈情令) and *Word of Honour* (山河令). Remarkably, although these issues are not closely linked to *danmei* and queer culture *per se*, the state has been able to take the opportunity to compress the creative environment for *danmei*, as demonstrated by the difficulty in publishing physical books of *danmei* (Yang and Xu, 2017), the stringent censorship of online content

involving elements of *danmei* and *dangai* (Wang, 2020), and the downplaying of queer elements by *dangai* (Nim, 2022), among other things.

In response to the situation of state repression and censorship of *danmei* by the government, some scholars have put forward suggestions for the future development of *danmei* and *dangai*. Shana Ye argues that it is important to develop *danmei* works with Chinese characteristics, not only:

‘fostering properly gendered consumer-subjects and heteronormative social harmony for national building’ by establishing the perfect male who meets the desires of female *danmei* fans, but also allowing ‘the militant masculinity to be ‘homonationalised’ in service of rebranding Chinese nationalism in a time when Chinese global expansion is fiercely criticized on the global stage’ and resulting in united and loyal people (2022: 1).

Ye presents active suggestions for the development of *danmei* and *dangai* from the point of view of the authorities. Similarly, Eve Ng and Xiaomeng Li believe that *guofeng*-infused (Chinese-style) *dangai* reinforces what they call ‘brand nohomonationalism’, which means that ‘the queerness of *dangai* is downplayed or disavowed, while elements identified as showcasing Chinese cultural power are highlighted in nationalist terms’ (2022: 626). Admittedly, these scholars have actively engaged in public discourse and have offered the prospect of dialogue and cooperation between mainstream culture and *danmei*, but their proposal is based on the idea that *danmei* should be included as a constructive element of Chinese mainstream discourse and patriarchal culture, which seems to be inconsistent with the aspirations of *danmei* fans and the LGBTQ community. Rather, I will argue in the following paragraphs how *danmei* can be reshaped in terms of its connections to queer culture and online media, specifically to tackle issues of internal chaos, burnout, and pan-entertainment within *danmei*.

Theoretical Framework: The Relationship of Affect, Body, and World

With reference to the ‘affect-body-world’ model (Truran, 2019: 21) in body theory and affect theory, I propose a structure, ‘queer-*danmei*-online media’, to express the intervention and articulation of these three elements. That is to say, queer, *danmei*, and online media will constitute an integrated analytical concept which confronts the dominant discourse, and each part can function both independently and in conjunction with the other two parts.

Before exploring the way that ‘queer-*danmei*-online media’ structure operates, we need to figure out the sense and relationship of affect, body, and world. In the light of Baruch Spinoza’s *Ethics* (1677), LeBuffe explains the concept of ‘affect’ as referring to ‘as any affection “by which the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections”’ (LeBuffe, 2023: 149). Instead of concentrating on an individual’s feeling, affect focuses more on the flowing and altering emotions that arise between the bodies of different individuals as a result of their interactions. Therefore, as Lisa Blackman argues, affect is a ‘relational, intersubjective, co-produced, co-constituted’ process of the becoming of bodies (2021: 51). In the structure of ‘affect-body-world’, affect highlights the inseparable connection between the body and the mind. Emotional experiences are not solely limited to mental processes but are embodied in physical sensations and responses. Affect enables individuals to communicate and express their emotions to others. Through affective expressions, such as body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions, individuals can convey their emotional states and inner experiences. Then, affect enables individuals to communicate and express their emotions to others. That is to say, affect makes the body as what Martin Heidegger calls ‘being-in-the-world’ (Heidegger, 2001: 200). Nevertheless, the body ‘being-in-the-world’ here does not mean that the body is fixed and sealed, rather the worldly body only emphasises the relationship between the material body and the world. As for how the body exists in the world, affect will navigate individuals in making choices, determining preferences, and initiating behavioural responses, by stimulating individuals to construct their identity and influencing individuals to interact with others. Since affect is fluid, the body being in the world is also changing.

If the body is subservient to affect, it will eventually become hollow flesh for the flow of feelings around the world. However, the body has agency and subjectivity. According to Lisa Blackman, this agency is regarded as ‘emergent and produced from the compossibility’ (Venn, 2018, seen in Blackman, 2019: 130), which results in the dissolution of binary structure and ontology of mind in nature and culture (Alldred and Fox, 2017), since it has the ‘capacities to resist, negotiate or refuse the workings of disciplinary power’ (Blackman, 2019: 37). The agency of the body ties the body to an individual’s subjective experience. It is not only an object, but also a subject that shapes personal thoughts, emotions, and consciousness. The body plays a role in the formation of personal identity and the subjective experience of embodiment, as it is the instrument through which individuals navigate and interact with the world.

If there is only affect-body or mind-body, it is less possible to see the interaction between multiple subjects in the structure. Therefore, the structure of ‘affect-body-world’ emphasises affect-body in the world, which indicates that both affect and body connect to the world by being influenced by culture, society and power. Affect is intertwined with cultural context, power dynamics, and social relations. Emotional expressions, norms, and

responses vary across different backgrounds, as the awareness of class distinctions, cultural differences, power structures are enacted through the dynamics of feelings (Charlesworth, 2000). Whereas the aggregated force of individuals' affect can in turn influence social and cultural constructs. As for the body, it is also socially and culturally constructed, meaning its meanings and interpretations are influenced by cultural norms, values, and beliefs (Blackman, 2019). The way in which culture constructs the body is it enables the performative body to express meaning and communicate messages through gestures, movements, and bodily practices. It participates in cultural rituals, social interactions, and symbolic performances that convey societal norms, identities, and power dynamics (Gil, 1998). Therefore, one can see that the body is shaped by societal expectations, in standards of beauty, gender roles, and other cultural factors, which vary across different contexts and historical periods.

A Proposed Structure Articulating Queer, Danmei, and Online Media

The structure I propose, 'queer-danmei-online media', draws on the integrity of the 'affect-body-world' structure, the interrelationships between three parts, and the attributes of each component. One can view the connection and relevance between these two models as follows: queer can be the affect impetus which is embodied in *danmei* works; *danmei* is the material, tangible subject of expression which enables fans to engage in activities and make choices and play a role in the formation of queer and woman identity; and online and digital media are the setting in which *danmei* and queer culture can survive state repression, which in turn influences the development of *danmei* and queer culture.

Regarding the development of *danmei* and queer culture, the environment of digital and online media is essential. On the one hand, as mentioned earlier, from the second phase onwards, when the state suppresses queer culture with the suppression of *danmei* and *dangai*, such media can provide as much space for them to survive as possible under limited conditions, reserving them from losing discourse. On the other hand, these media offer a new alternative for both queer and *danmei* to establish subjectivity: a peripheral culture transforms qualitatively through quantity accumulation. Michel Foucault (1982) argues that subjectivity is established by two forms: the power to expel the heterogeneous, and the knowledge to shape the subject. At present, in this highly globalised world, the internet can constantly and repeatedly deliver homogeneous content to every corner, and then 'information cocoons' come into being. This phenomenon indicates that the more frequently and widely homogeneous content is promoted, the more convincing it becomes. With the push of online and digital media, people can be extensively exposed to queer representations through the ubiquitous *danmei* fiction. Queers can access their 'comrades' (referring to Chinese queer) on the Internet, orient themselves in the characters of *danmei* fiction, and discover their ethical relationships with others in society from *danmei* audiences. In the third stage, online media reforms the promotion of *danmei* culture from large print volumes to multiple digital formats, such as producing IP games and selling derivatives online.

From the perspective of artistic styles and cultural thought and practice, most contemporary queer literature/gay literature can be categorised as realistic literature because queer literature reflects the plight of queer people in the patriarchal world. Queer literature highlights the strong spirit of realism with 'authentic writing'. In comparison, *danmei* fiction is inherited from 19th-century romanticism, but it then eschews the magnificent narrative of traditional literature and focuses on popular stories of love and entertainment. The primary audience for *danmei* fiction is *fujoshi* (ふじょし), who are generally heterosexual women engaging with the creation, recreation, and dissemination of *danmei* fiction (Tanaka and Ishida, 2015), and as such, *danmei* mainly describes boy's love rather than girl's love and the protagonists are usually written as gays rather than lesbians. Their underlying appeal is the ideal romantic relationship, the liberation of repressed sexuality and eroticism, and the domination of men who are dominant in love and sexual relationships in the 'RL' patriarchal society. *Fujoshis* seek alternative mechanisms for 'loving and being loved' in fiction, which they do not have in real life. Therefore, *danmei* fiction can create a space of pure love and a utopia of gender equality constructed by female writers, a 'secret garden' for women's thoughts and imagination (Wang, 2015), rather than a panoramic literature of queerness.

Some queer literature is even autobiographical, whereas gay protagonists in *danmei* fiction are fantasised by the authors, and most of these characters taken from previous works aggregating the realistic desires of *fujoshis*, such as beauty, wealth, high-class extraction, superpowers, and good virtue. As a result, these fictional images do not entirely resemble real queers in many specific ways. *Fujoshis* attribute aesthetics and beauty to their characters, reshaping the already existing characters as they wish, to become masculine or feminine, alpha or omega, dominant or dominated. The bodies of male characters in *danmei* fiction become objects of desire for women, including women authors and women readers. The desire of *fujoshi* is not a female sexual desire for the male body, but a desire for an unconsciously heterosexual-like romantic relationship between boys. As Yanyan Zhou, Bryant Paul, and Ryland Sherman argue, 'BL stories typically paired a masculine character with a feminine character... [so] heteronormative gender stereotypes exist in BL stories, even if these stories depict gay male characters and romantic relationships' (2017: 107). Actually, except for their biology, which is judged to be male, uke/omega are closer to women in terms of appearance, psychology, ability, and responsibility.

The major difference between *danmei* and queer literature is in the division between the subject of narration and the object of depiction, with the subject of writing in the former being a woman, and the object of depiction being a heterosexualised variant of gay men; in the latter, the subject of writing and the object of depiction overlap, as both can be read as queer. However, in order for this body of writing to be more directly relevant to queer people in China, the body of *danmei*'s writing should be transformed from an imaginary protagonist with heteronormative affections and social relationships, arguably to depict more of the real queer community, so as to reflect on the plight of the real Asian queerness, including such ongoing stressors as the lack of legal protection for same-sex marital relationships (Han, 2013), the contradiction between coming out of the closet and the requirement of transmission of the family lineage in the East Asian family (Bui, 2014), as well as the discrimination and bullying in schools, workplaces, and society, among other things (Rider *et al.*, 2023). It would be sensible to incorporate queer culture into the creation of *danmei*, as queer culture can play a transformative and enriching role in both the contents and expressions of *danmei*. In terms of content, queer culture can bring diverse representation to *danmei* literature by introducing a wide range of LGBTQ+ identities, experiences, and relationships. It allows for the exploration of various sexual orientations, gender identities, and non-normative expressions of love and desire, providing a more inclusive and authentic portrayal of queer lives. By infusing *danmei* literature with queer themes, authors could address important societal topics and spark meaningful discussions among readers. Incorporating queer culture in *danmei* literature could empower LGBTQ+ individuals by providing them with visibility and representation. Queer readers can find solace, validation, and a sense of belonging in stories that reflect their own experiences and emotions. As for non-queer *danmei* fans, *danmei* fiction representing queer culture on the Internet could arouse social and political commentary on issues such as discrimination, prejudice, and social injustice, encouraging the public to reflect on the real world and learn how to respect queer people. More and more people could engage with queer community and culture, and 'decriminalisation and depathologisation of LGBT' (Wang, Y., *et al.*, 2019) can be reemphasised. By infusing *danmei* literature with queer themes, authors can also address important societal topics and spark meaningful discussions among readers, which allows *danmei* fiction to move perhaps from pure fantasy to incorporate some realism in the form, as it moves from traditional print media to online proliferation, in its many narrative dimensions.

CONCLUSION

I have emphasised the need for *danmei* on the Internet to both seek the intervention of queer culture over the creative bottom line and to retain the function of *danmei* where female fans are also able to express their discourse. However, this study is founded on the assumption that *danmei*'s current audience is predominantly female, downplaying the contributions of a few queer producers and audiences, which requires concrete case studies to support

There are two dimensions of aesthetics in the context of Chinese *danmei*: the external aesthetic refers to its beautiful appearance, since most *danmei* protagonists are adorable and stereotypically attractive men. The internal aesthetic derives from a Confucius virtue, 'fearlessness' (Legge, 2011). Fearlessness of *danmei* characters refers to the courage to transcend the secular demand for 'a patriarchal and hypermasculine male image, complete with a heteronormative and reproductive family' (Bao, 2020: 21) and the search for self-identity occurs beyond the construction of the traditional heterosexual matrix and core socialist values. The bravery is not confined to the gay characters in *danmei* fiction, but also exists outside the text among *danmei* fans. Many also desire to confront the patriarchal culture and liberate themselves from normative and traditional forms of marriage and reproduction. Hence, *danmei* already takes on gender issues and is against patriarchal organisation. To review and explore this literary genre, this article begins with an overview of the development of *danmei* in three terms: the period of repression, indicating how *danmei* was scrutinised; the period of permeation, suggesting the way that *danmei* flourished on the Internet; and the period of circulation, referring to the commercialisation of *danmei* on the Internet. This structure reflects the extensive presence of queer culture on the Internet in the form of the *danmei*, which also has a subjectivity that hybridises and embraces feminism, queerness, and other anti-patriarchal forces, while the diversity of representations on the Internet provides a shelter for the *danmei* and queer cultures to exist and perpetuate.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the support of Department of Cultural, Media, and Visual Studies, University of Nottingham. I am particularly indebted to Dr Hongwei Bao, Director of the Centre for Contemporary East Asian Cultural Studies (CEACS), and Dr Andrew Goffey, Researcher Academy Faculty of Arts Leads (RAFL), who have supervised my research and guided my career goals. I am grateful to our Managing

Editor Rose Richards and Editor in Chief Sally Munt. Their informative comments and meticulous revisions will lead me to go further on the academic path. And nobody has been more significant to me in the pursuit of this work than the members of my family during the pandemic. I would like to thank my parents, whose love and patience are with me wherever I go.

REFERENCES

- A Po. (2023). Dangai series no longer exists, but the way to watch danmei could change the industry. Available at: https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzUyNjk4NDc3Ng&mid=2247501536&idx=1&sn=2e012ea73d51e71f1b38f87a9d319138&chksm=fa04f5c7cd737cd1918c2dfb1e797fd46d0d0324aa977f71e702c950d923ffabab1fae18444c#rd. (Accessed 14 May 2024).
- Allred, P. and Fox, N. J. (2017). Materialism and micropolitics in sexualities education research, in L. Allen and M. L. Rasmussen (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Sexuality Education* (pp. 655–672). London: Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-40033-8_32
- Bao, H. (2020). Introduction: Queer China, postsocialist metamorphosis, in H. Bao (ed), *Queer China: Lesbian and gay literature and visual culture under postsocialism* (pp. 11–12). New York, NY: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003027898>
- Blackman, L. (2012). *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, embodiment, mediation*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446288153>
- Blackman, L. (2021). *The Body: The key concepts*. New York, NY: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003087892>
- Bui, L. T. (2014). Breaking into the closet: Negotiating the queer boundaries of Asian American masculinity and domesticity. *Culture, Society and Masculinities*, 6(2), 129–149.
- Charlesworth, S. (2000). *A Phenomenology of Working-Class Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511489419>
- Chen, X. (2023). Reframing queer pop through media paratexts: Translation of Chinese TV drama *Word of Honor* in cyberspace. *Translation Studies*, 16(3), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2023.2219264>
- China Xinhua News Network Corporation. (2021). Resolutely resist the trend of ‘delaying and changing’ and other pan-entertainment phenomena, *National Radio and Television Administration*. Available at: http://www.news.cn/2021-09/17/c_1127870884.htm. (Accessed 23 May 2022).
- cnsa.cn. (2017, June 30). China Netcasting Services Association Releases General Rules for Netcasting Programme Content Audit, *China Netcasting Services Association*. Available at: http://www.cnsa.cn/art/2017/6/30/art_1505_26038.html.
- Deng, N. and Han, M. (2021). Outstanding *danmei*: An overview of the development of *danmei* culture in China. *Journal of Chongqing University of Science and Technology* (Social Science Edition), (01), 94–98,120.
- Department of Television Drama. (2021). Zhu Yonglei Attended the Symposium on Implementing the Deployment of Comprehensive Governance in the Field of Culture and Entertainment and Promoting the High-Quality Development of the Drama Industry, *nrtta.gov.cn*. Available at: http://www.nrtta.gov.cn/art/2021/9/17/art_112_57928.html. (Accessed 23 May 2022).
- Feng, J. (2009). ‘Addicted to beauty’: Consuming and producing web-based Chinese ‘*danmei*’ fiction at Jinjiang. *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, 21(2), 1–41. <https://doi.org/10.3366/mclc.2020.0014>
- Feng, J. (2013). *Romancing the Internet: Producing and consuming Chinese web romance* (Vol. 5). Leiden (Netherlands): Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004259720>
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), 777–795. <https://doi.org/10.1086/448181>
- Ge, L., Yang, L. and Li, Z. (2020). On the transcendence and feedback of literature in the new media era. *World Literature Studies*, 8, 1. <https://doi.org/10.12677/WLS.2020.81001>
- Gil, J. (1998). *Metamorphoses of the Body* (Vol. 12). Stillwater, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gregg, M. and Seigworth, G. J. (2010). *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822393047>
- Guo, K. (2017). Full text of Xi Jinping’s report at 19th CPC National congress, *ChinaDaily.com.cn*. Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-11/04/content_34115212.htm. (Accessed 13 May 2024).
- Han, C. W. (2013). Darker shades of queer: Race and sexuality at the margins, in S. Tarrant (ed), *Men Speak Out* (pp. 94–101). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Harville, E. J. (2022). *Subtle storytelling methods: The boy’s love danmei novel adaptation process versus PRC censorship restrictions* [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas at San Antonio].
- Heidegger, M. (2001). *Zollikon seminars: Protocols, conversations, letters*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

- Huang, L. (2022). Approaches to making a popular IP of *dangai* drama: Case studies of *The Untamed* and *Word of Honor*. *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research*, 5(3), 338–342.
- Jacobs, K. (2015). The art of failure as seen in Chinese women's boys' love fantasies, in K. Jacobs (ed), *The Afterglow of Women's Pornography in Post-Digital China*. (pp. 107–136). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137479143_5
- Jenkins III, H. (1988). *Star Trek* rerun, reread, rewritten: Fan writing as textual poaching. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 5(2), 85–107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295038809366691>
- LeBuffe, M. (2023). *Spinoza's Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197629307.001.0001>
- Legge, J. (trans.) (2011). *Confucian Analects*. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 225.
- Li, Y. (2006). Action logic of internet content regulation in China -- a preliminary analytical framework. *China Study*, (2), 98–101.
- Liao, S. (2019). '# IAmGay# What about you?': Storytelling, discursive politics, and the affective dimension of social media activism against censorship in China. *International Journal of Communication*, 13, 21.
- McLelland, M. J. and Aoyama, T. (2015). *Boys Love Manga and Beyond: History, culture, and community in Japan*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi. <https://doi.org/10.14325/mississippi/9781628461190.001.0001>
- Membership Code 201012 Edition*. (2010). *Lucifer Club*. Available at: <http://www.lucifer-club.net>. (Accessed 20 July 2023).
- Ng, E. and Li, X. (2022). Brand nohomonationalism: Guofeng ('national style') framings of boys' love television series in China. *Asian Studies Review*, 47(3), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2022.2142933>
- Nim, E. G. (2022). Bromance as a masquerade: Adaptation and reception of Chinese *Danmei* fantasy. *Nauka Televideniya—The Art and Science of Television*, 18(3), 105–143. <https://doi.org/10.30628/1994-9529-2022-18.3-105-143>
- Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible Citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Permeate verb - definition, pictures, pronunciation and usage notes: *Oxford Advanced American Dictionary at Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com*. Oxford English Dictionary. (n.d.). Available at: https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/permeate. (Accessed 13 May 2024).
- Rider, G. N., Gower, A. L., Lee, H., McCurdy, A. L., Russell, S. T. and Eisenberg, M. E. (2023). Bias-based bullying and elevated depressive symptoms among sexual and gender-diverse Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Adolescents. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 177(9), 975–977. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2023.2388>
- Search: The Knockout Male-Male*. (n.d.). *bilibili.com*. Available at: https://search.bilibili.com/all?keyword=%E7%8B%82%E9%A3%99%2B%E7%94%B7%E7%94%B7&from_source=webtop_search&spm_id_from=333.1007&search_source=5. (Accessed 31 July 2023).
- Spinoza, Benedictus de, and Elwes, R. H. M. (1955). *On the Improvement of the Understanding: The Ethics; Correspondence*. New York City: Dove.
- Stychin, C. F. (1998). *A Nation by Rights: National cultures, sexual identity politics, and the discourse of rights* (Vol. 16). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Tanaka, H. and Ishida, S. (2015). Enjoying manga as *fujoshi*: Exploring its innovation and potential for social change from a gender perspective. *The Journal of Behavioral Science*, 10(1), 77–85.
- Truran, W. J. (2019). *The phantom of joy: Emotion, affect, and the problem of persistence in modernist literature* [PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign].
- Venn, C. (2018). *After Capital*. London: SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529714548>
- Wang, A. (2020). Censorship and circumvention in China: How *danmei* writers 'drive a car' on Jinjiang. *International Journal of Media Culture and Literature*, 6(2), 137–168. https://doi.org/10.17932/IAU.IJMCL.2015.014/ijmcl_v06i2003
- Wang, E. N. and Ge, L. (2023). Fan conflicts and state power in China: Internalised heteronormativity, censorship sensibilities, and fandom police. *Asian Studies Review*, 47(2), 355–373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2022.2112655>
- Wang, X. (2015). *The beauty of yaoi: A study on yaoi fans' gender view* [Master's thesis, Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Beijing, China].
- Wang, Y., Hu, Z., Peng, K., Xin, Y., Yang, Y., Drescher, J. and Chen, R. (2019). Discrimination against LGBT populations in China. *The Lancet Public Health*, 4(9), e440–e441. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(19\)30153-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(19)30153-7)
- Wu, F. (2001). 1995-2000: Report on the development of internet media in China. *Modern Communication*, (3), 43–48.
- Yang, J. (2023). Sina Weibo's Total Revenue of \$12.37 Billion in 2022, *cs.com.cn*. Available at: https://www.cs.com.cn/ssgs/gsxw/202303/t20230302_6326520.html. (Accessed 1 August 2023).

- Yang, L. and Xu, Y. (2017). Chinese *danmei* fandom and cultural globalization from below, in M. Lavin, L. Yang and J. J. Zhou (eds), *Boys' Love, Cosplay, and Androgynous Idols: Queer fan cultures in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan* (pp. 3–19). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5790/hongkong/9789888390809.003.0002>
- Ye, S. (2022). *Word of Honor* and brand homonationalism with 'Chinese characteristics': The *dangai* industry, queer masculinity and the 'opacity' of the State. *Feminist Media Studies*, 23(4), 1593–1609. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2022.2037007>
- Yinuo. (2018, April 15). 'Different Fireworks', Can Bloom Just the Same | Essays, *people.com.cn*. Available at: <https://weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404229113077434315>. (Accessed 1 August 2023).
- Zhao, J. J. (2017). Queering the post-L *Word* Shane in the 'Garden of Eden': Chinese fans' gossip about Katherine Moennig, in M Lavin, L. Yang and J. J. Zhao (eds), *Boys' Love, Cosplay, and Androgynous Idols: Queer fan cultures in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan* (pp. 63–90). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5790/hongkong/9789888390809.003.0005>
- Zhao, J. J. (2020). It has never been 'normal': Queer pop in post-2000 China. *Feminist Media Studies*, 20(4), 463–478. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2020.1754626>
- Zhao, J. J. (2022). Queer Chinese media and pop culture. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.1213>
- Zhong, Y. (2009). China's entry into WTO, in *Encyclopedia of China* (2nd ed.). Beijing: Encyclopedia of China Publishing House.
- Zhou, G. (2012). On ups and downs of Chinese cultural confidence. *Asian Culture and History*, 4(2), 140. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ach.v4n2p140>
- Zhou, O. T. and Zhang, M. (2022). Watching *National Treasure*, creating *danmei tongren*: Stories of power and the power of stories. *Feminist Media Studies*, 23(7), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2022.2126871>
-

Citation: Ge, L. (2024). Repression, Permeation, and Circulation: Retracing and Reframing *Danmei* Culture Online in Mainland China. *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics*, 8(2), 34. <https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc/14946>

Copyright © 2024 by Author/s and Licensed by Lectito Publications, Netherlands. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.