

# Chasing and Plundering: Realistic interpretation of Guo Qiangsheng's novel called Duandai

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**Abstract.** Duandai is a novel about homosexuality by Taiwan writer Guo Qiangsheng. By describing the current state and memories of three male homosexuals, Lin Guoxiong, Zhong Shuyuan and Ding Chongguang, the work presents the survival situation of those old, sick and poor marginal individuals, and shows the survival plight of homosexuals as a social marginal group, and the continuous alienation of values among the same group, providing readers with a window to understand the complex situation of this group.

**Keywords:** Guo Qiangsheng; Gay literature; realism.

## 1. Introduction

The narration of Duandai just like a detective novel, the bar owner Lin Guoxiong fell to the ground and could not stand up was the start point of this novel, so from there the narration pursues the real murder. In the advance of writing, the memories of Ding, Zhong and Lin are gradually connected by the same point, and this point is also the "culprit" who brings the misfortune of love to all the important characters: Yao Ruifeng. Under the narration of the author's multiple clues, the tortuous life of a generation of homosexuals in Taiwan over the past 30 years has been revealed, and these characters have been experienced separation and reunion, up and downs. Now they have lived half of their lives and no longer in their prime. It gradually contradicts with the mainstream image of youth, health and superior appearance that has always been popular in the gay community, so they become the edge of the edge. They have their own pursuits but they also unconsciously influenced by others, then reshape the values of themselves. The novel is about the changes in the values and self-identity of the gay community in the continuous transform of the times.

## 2. To be meat on his chopping block in emotional world:

During the long years of life, the three important characters in this book, the lives of Ding Chongguang, Zhong Shuyuan and Lin Guoxiong were all left with a strong color by Yao. Yao was the only "college student lover" that Lin acknowledged and was proud of in his life. Yao was also Zhong's first love object. Before Zhong died, in order to let himself die without regret, he also wanted to see Yao again. However, over the years, even though Zhong is so affectionate, he still can't get Yao's favor. Yao Ruifeng was originally a weak person with a broken original family, however, through packaging himself with false words and using means, he constantly exerts his charm. In the end, he succeeded in becoming the dominant person, and he can deal with many men with ease. At the same time, under the protection of heterosexual marriage, both his career and family have been successful.

Even though the miserable lives of the three leading actors are more or less related to Yao Ruifeng, but it is too arbitrary to simply blame others for the misfortunes of life. Researchers should look for the causal relationship between subjective and objective factors according to the situation. Even though Zhong and Lin allowed Yao to take something from them, they also aware Yao's changeful and crafty. Because men know men too well, so after Yao satisfies their love fantasy, they are closely connected with each other, it is impossible to leave each other. Even if they worry about gain and loss, they would rather choose to deceive themselves. However, there is always a bit of fragmentation in these self-deceiving behaviors, the status which is temporarily intact and calm,

may also disintegrate in an instant. When Lin Guoxiong recall the details of his last sex with Yao Ruifeng, all the romantic and charming colors suddenly disappear, the cruel truth that there was no love between them completely destroyed him. For Lin Guoxiong, long term self deception and willingness to beautify Yao Ruifeng have excluded him from accepting other people (for example, brother Tang, the cross dressing queen who has been a good friend for many years), indulge in the world of love that he created through imagination.

In Guo Qiangsheng's works, gay men are careful in love, but due to the legal factors their purpose is not marry their lovers and get married. For this reason, the only hope of some gays is "true love" between them. And in order to get the true love, they struggled in the dark corner of being forgotten. In this book, after becoming a college student, Zhong met Yao again. At this time, the latter was accompanied by Ding Chongguang, a "good friend". However, when three people are together, Zhong Shuyuan always tells himself not to be moved and not to be sad, and he is afraid that Ding Chongguang will see what is on his mind, he deliberately brought the topic to the third year of senior high school that he and Ding Chongguang had experienced together. However, when seeing Yao Ruifeng and Ding Chongguang have intimate actions or share topics, Zhong Shuyuan's heart was achor. Fearing to lose contact with Yao Ruifeng, Zhong Shuyuan was willing to stay with Yao as "his friend". Even Zhong Shuyuan admitted that he was "lurking in the name of a friend around his sexual fantasy object".

### 3. Chasing in the marginal population

Unlike the handsome and charming protagonist in the popular gay literature, Yao Ruifeng, as the main clue and main character in duandai, is not outstanding in appearance. In junior high school, he was only a repeat student who has little more life experience than other students. However, he was good at verbal provocation and physical seduction. In the evening after class, he made Zhong Shuyuan understand the sexual love between the same sex, which changed Zhong Shuyuan's life. Ding Chongguang is also one of Yao's prey. Even though Ding's family is superior, he still enters the sweet cage created by Yao in ignorance and worries about his gains and losses. For example, in the folk song restaurant, Ding angrily left the scene after seeing Yao Ruifeng flirt with a singer. As a bystander, Zhong can only cover up his inner pain with his expressionless face.

Ding Chongguang and Zhong Shuyuan both had a good life when they were young, but the unpredictable part of their stable years was the appearance of Yao Ruifeng. Yao Ruifeng only needs a provocative look to summon a new admirer. Ding and Zhong were secretly jealous. Ding left angrily, while Zhong kept thinking about what the charm and appearance of the person Yao would adore, and then mocked himself: "I'm boring and mediocre, and I've never been Yao's favorite type." Although their behaviors and inner expressions are both free and easy, it is precisely because of their infatuation with Yao, these behaviors and persuasions that seem to be their excuses.

The emotions and values of young gays who have entered the homosexual group are inevitably controlled by some skilled gays. Even though the advantages of these skilled gays are only superficial and their inner quality is unknown, these young men still start to adore them unconsciously. As described in the book, Yao Ruifeng can swing his sleeves to bid farewell to their old lovers and join new social groups, but Zhong Shuyuan has been chasing him.

There is also a bisexual character Wang Minglong in the book. He had an ambiguous feeling with a man and later lived with a woman. However, when he took care of Lin Guoxiong when Lin was in coma, he gradually moved his love to Lin. Because of the limitations of the times and values, and because Lin's image did not conform to the mainstream aesthetics at that time, Wang dared not to declare his feelings. When the young and magnificent image becomes the benchmark pursued by a group, the "existence" and "image" of homosexuality will be measured by the secular world. It seems that those decrepit homosexuals should be forgotten and exiled by this group or even the society. As decrepit gays, they have stayed in this group for too long. Because they are sick or no longer young, they are fascinated by the healthy and young body and life, so they pursue young and healthy young

partners, constantly seek true love through grievances, and constantly pursue in the fear of gain and loss and self deception.

In this way, some young, handsome and wantonly flying homosexuals in this group will be pursued, and those who are not popular and not have vivacious characters will be continuously marginalized. Young people will become like fish in water in this circle, and even make waves. Those middle-aged or old-fashioned gays will be "pushed" to the edge of this group. Homosexuality is a relatively marginalized group in society, and where should those marginal groups go? When the rights and interests of homosexuals in Taiwan were recognized by the society and the young generation of homosexuals hailed freedom and liberation, the old and sick members such as Zhong Shuyuan and Lin Guoxiong were forgotten. Their original pain and grief were not remembered by anyone except themselves. Between the new and old generations, it seems that the only choice for the old generation of homosexuals is to go to destruction.

#### 4. "Who is the real me?"

In an interview, the author Guo Qiangsheng mentioned that he tried to use the novel to provide a hypothesis: apart from the absence of God, the relationships based on sex, marriage and family that people have been relying on may also collapse, what kind of state will people face? Although this question goes to the essence, in that case homosexuality and heterosexuality are the same, but there are more answers to the question of "who am I" in the marginalized group of homosexuality. What is the essence of "I" in addition to what people think of themselves or the status given by society[1]?

In the gay population, the essence of the question "who am I" is how homosexuals view their own identity. Some scholars believe that homosexual identity is divided into two parts: self identity and social identity. Self identity emphasizes self psychological and physical experience, with self as the core, in the other words, homosexuals' own understanding of their own homosexual identity; Social identity emphasizes the social attribute of people, that is to say the identity of other individuals to homosexuals[2].

In the process of finding the answer to the question "who am I", the self-identity of homosexuality is relatively simple for some people, but for others, it is full of difficulties and hardships and inner pain, which is thrilling[3]. Some people know they're the homosexuality without others' guidance, while others need some guidance from others. Ding Chongguang belongs to the former, he always has a very high degree of recognition of his homosexuality's identity, even if he suffered from great social pressure later, he still chose to face his own identity bravely. And Zhong Shuyuan joined the gay group was guided by Yao Ruifeng, those he contact with the same sex ignorant feelings have become that he is a powerful evidence of homosexuality, but Zhong Shuyuan has been in deep self-doubt, even "let me also afraid of myself", and become paranoid and weak, good at camouflage, unwilling to face himself as a homosexuality.

In the final of the campus folk song competition, Chen Wei, who was most supported before the competition and considered to be the most likely champion, was criticized by the judges on the spot and lost his qualification for award because he dared to express his feelings to a boy in the performance. Chen Wei's public provocation was clearly warned by the mainstream society and the mainstream groups at that time, and the three protagonists present also felt oppression. However, when Zhong Shuyuan was depressed about this matter. However, Yao Ruifeng encouraged him to face "our future road" bravely and confidently with the eyes of "worry is also struggle" and the voice of "rare excitement". It is this sentence "our future road" that makes Zhong Shuyuan unable and dare not forget the scene at that time for many years, because at that time, the word "we" can make Zhong Shuyuan have a certain illusion of a community of young homosexuals.

However, the circumstances change with the passage of time, Zhong's self-examination after several decades is very rational and objective. As a middle-aged man who bravely admitted that he was gay but suffered from AIDS, he was more marginalized than other individuals in the gay group, after his illness, he has been experiencing loneliness, so that he prepared for his death in advance

without any lingering. His memories are calm and objective, and like an outsider, he analyzes the joys and sorrows of the mainstream and the fringe, the individual and the group. All of Zhong Shuyuan's memories are actually a posthumous letter written to the world. In Zhong Shuyuan's understanding, "it is the times, not me, that made mistakes".

As mentioned above, when we explore the essence of the question "who am I", homosexuals and heterosexuals are the same, the best evidence is the appearance of Wang Minglong in the book. Wang was once loved by his dance partner who has the same sex with him. But his partner was used by politicians and attacked by public opinion. Under great pressure, his partner chose to committed suicide. He later cohabited with his secret girlfriend and had emotional experiences with both the men and women. Wang's sexual orientation is still in the process of change and development. He loves the opposite sex, but he is ashamed of his girlfriend who is a prostitute. However, for homosexuals, he doesn't like young and handsome boys, but he likes Lin Guoxiong, a middle-aged man who is much older than him. He is more confused about the question of "who am I". After admitting that he is gay, he will become a more marginal person in the marginal world, which may cause his doubts about self-identity and social identity.

In the gay world, everyone plays the role of either self imagination or social recognition. In this world full of performances and even lies, the two sides can not know what the other side thinks even face to face. Yao Ruifeng is the person who has this characteristic most in the book. When he is successfully re-elected as a "legislator" for three terms, he has the opportunity to become a more dominant and socially recognized role, but he has doubts about his own identity, admits he is an ordinary person reluctantly. He has no strong ability to separate himself from human experience, and he has no way to know his true self. Yao is a dominant person in emotion, but he also has unspeakable sensitivity in his heart. Yao likes a common gay, it is difficult to say goodbye to the past. He is also looking for the most intense and even extremely distorted way to reconcile with the past.

At the end of the story, Wang Minglong set fire to the bar named melody, which Lin Guoxiong had guarded for many years. The souls of many gays who had stayed here for many years also disappeared with the smoke and were completely destroyed by the flames. But this may be an opportunity for them to get into a new life. Camus once said: "I can still remember all kinds of things in this life when I live. That is the afterlife I hope for." It coincides with the idea that the souls of the old generation of gays still hope to be gay in their next life and gain the double recognition of themselves and society. "I must reincarnate from generation to generation to see which year we can finally stop suffering. We must live that life before we are willing to the other world...[4]"

## 5. Conclusion

The book is called duandai, which may mean that the relationship between the new generation and the old generation in the gay group is separated. At the same time, it also echoed the feelings of the gay world. The young people who used to be are now middle-aged people. Their unspeakable past has been witnessed one by one under the author's dramatic multi line narrative. There is an inseparable relationship between love, sex, lies and the pursuit of social recognition among homosexuals. As Helen mentioned in her paper, the pain and feelings that cannot be loved; That series of unnoticed and unnoticed love experiences. The sad fate of those who are lonely and old, sick and disabled, shy and silent; Guarding the two-sided life of the dark kingdom as a secret base... The collective memory and sentimental past of various gays are deeply unfolded under the author's macro and micro narration. The realistic interpretation of this article is not only to understand their joys and sorrows, but also to enter their inner world and understand the crisis of their values. This is the significance of analyzing the realism of the book duandai.

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