Male-male marriage in Sinophone and Anglophone Harry Potter danmei and slash

*Anna Madill, PhD., School of Psychology, Lifton Place, University of Leeds, LS2 9JT, UK

a.l.madill@leeds.ac.uk 0113 343 5750   https://twitter.com/UKFujoshi

https://www.facebook.com/UKFujoshi/   https://leeds.academia.edu/AnnaMadill

*Corresponding author for English language inquiries

Biographical note: Anna Madill is Chair of Qualitative Inquiry in the School of Psychology, University of Leeds, UK. She is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and of the Academy of Social Sciences. She co-founded and chaired (2008-11) the BPS Qualitative Methods in Psychology Section. Anna's projects include research funded by the British Academy on Boys*' Love* manga. She tweets @UKFujoshi and her work can be found at https://leeds.academia.edu/AnnaMadill.

Yao Zhao, School of Psychology, Lifton Place, University of Leeds, LS2 9JT, UK

ps13yz@leeds.ac.uk

Biographical note: Yao Zhao is a doctoral student in the School of Psychology, University of Leeds, UK. Her thesis is titled 'Understanding Yaoi/Boys' Love Chinese Fandom' and she is supervised by Professor Anna Madill. Yao was born in Kunming in Yannan Province, South West China, and obtained her Bachelor of Science in Psychology at the Australia National University.

*Liheng Fan, PhD., Department of Psychology, Henan University, JinMing Street, Kaifeng

City, Henan Provence, P. R. China, 475004

fanliheng@163.com

*Corresponding author for Chinese language inquiries

Biographical note: Liheng Fan is a Professor in the Department of Psychology, Henan

University, China. She is a committee member of the Chinese Association of Social

Psychology. Professor Fan was a Visiting Scholar at Purdue University, USA 2011-2012 and

Visiting Professor at the University of Leeds, UK 2015-2016. Her research interests include

gender differences and teenagers' internet life and, as well as numerous academic articles,

she is the single author of two books: Teacher Expectation Effects (2008) and Teenagers'

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Geolocation Information

This research was conducted in the United Kingdom. It compares material – fan fiction –

created in the United States, Canada and possible other Anglophone countries with that

created in Mainland China.

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https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/blfandomsurvey and in Chinese at

http://www.sojump.com/m/3989081.aspx

Abstract

The aim of this study is to compare Sinophone and Anglophone fan fiction consisting of

female-oriented male-male romance: danmei and slash, respectively. To increase

comparability, we analysed Harry Potter fan fiction in which the characters Harry and Draco

are married. Male-male marriage was selected because our online Sinophone and

Anglophone BL fandom surveys indicate this to be the most popular story element of the nine

options we provided. We analysed five stories originally written in Chinese and five

originally written in English which subsequently had been fan-translated into Chinese. Using

Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) we found some robust patterns. In contrast to the

Anglophone fiction, the Sinophone tended to: stress the importance of family approval for the

marriage; incorporate a wedding ceremony; employ clearly gendered roles between partners;

utilise extended, as opposed to nuclear, families; and showed the couple to produce children,

particularly boys. Hence, the stories mirror the relative social conservatism and social

liberalism of their cultures of origin. However, in reading and writing such danmei young

Chinese women are still pushing at the boundaries of the traditional family.

Keywords: BL, *Boys' Love*, danmei, fan fiction, Harry Potter, slash, yaoi

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Fan fiction can be defined as unauthorised, derivative or transformative stories that are created usually for pleasure, rather than for profit, and are based on a source text such as a book or film. The internet has enabled the flow of information and commodities as never before and, as a consequence, facilitated mass engagement with fan fiction across national, geographical, and cultural boundaries. In the 21st century, cyber-literature has flourished in Sinophone regions such as Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (Chen, 2017).

One of the largest of such genres is male-male romance or erotica known as danmei (Tian, 2015; Wei, 2014). Although they are not always derivative, Zheng (2016) argues that danmei, as a whole, are an important feature of fan community because the stories are all similarly marginalised by their content and form. Interestingly, danmei exist in a commercial grey zone where, although many works are free, the more popular may become pay-to-read. Membership of danmei sites is staggeringly high and consists, predominately, of urban, educated, women aged between about 18-35 years old (Zheng, 2016). For example, Xu and Yang (2013) report that Jinjiang, founded in 2003 and from which we sourced material for our study, claims to be the largest female-oriented cyber-literature platform in the world with 93% of over 7 million registered users women.

In its core themes danmei echoes two older, now global, phenomena: slash and yaoi, and all three engage a similar demographic. Slash is a female-oriented genre of fan fiction developed in the Anglophone West which portrays romantic and/or sexual relationships between male characters which are not an explicit aspect of the original text. The television series Star Trek provided material on which the first slashed couple – Kirk/Spock – were based in the early 1970s. Co-temporaneously, a female-oriented genre of manga called shonen-ai developed in Japan which portrayed love between beautiful boys. In the 1980s, shonen-ai spawned mass production of commercial and amateur erotica called yaoi in the

form of manga, light novels, anime and games, and yaoi, or *Boys' Love* (BL), has become the umbrella term for Japanese, and Japanese-influenced, male-male romance for and by women. The first danmei appeared in about 1998 (Xu & Yang, 2013) and, via Taiwan and Hong Kong, has been influenced particularly by Japanese ACG culture ('Anime, Comics, and Games'). Hence, although like slash, danmei takes a predominantly literary form it has such strong resonances with Japanese visual culture that it is readable through the lens of yaoi fandom.

While slash and yaoi have attracted much research interest, Xu and Yang (2013) argue that danmei deserve more academic scrutiny and Gong (2017) states that 'Western scholars have largely ignored the transnational influences of slash and Boy-Love communities in China' (p. 167). One of the few exceptions is Wei's (2014) exploration of how the North American icon Iron Man has been subject to re-interpretation in danmei. In the present article we undertake a delimited, but relatively direct, comparison between Sinophone and Anglophone female-oriented, male-male, fan fiction and, to the best of our knowledge, no previous such study exists. These are wide linguistic regions, so we focus predominantly on the, admittedly still complex and diverse, cultural contexts of Mainland China and North America/UK given that, as far as we are aware, it is from these countries that the texts we examine originate.

In order to make a meaningful comparison we selected Harry Potter as one of the most popular canon texts with regard to which we could be assured to find many thousands of slash and danmei fan fiction from which to select for the purpose of comparison. A very small research literature has explored Harry Potter yaoi (e.g., 'twincest': Cuntz-Leng, 2014) and the difference between Anglophone and Japanese yaoi fan fiction (e.g., Noppe, 2010, see below). Moreover, Chin and Morimoto (2013) argue that such fandom activities require a transcultural as opposed to a transnational understanding citing the example that "Harry

Potter yaoi dōjinshi is less an Anglophilic fetishisation of public school tropes than a mélange of texts ranging from the European art cinematic to the Japanese feminine popular culture that, together, form the backdrop against which the Harry Potter novels resonate with Japanese fans" (p.103).

Although the British author - J. K. Rowling - has brought copyright infringement claims in relation to allegedly derivative commercial works, she has been moderately supportive of Harry Potter fan fiction, less so Warner Bros. who own the rights to the film franchise. However, on the world stage, copyright laws are notoriously complex (Schwabach, 2009) and perhaps more pressing concerns in relation to slash and danmei are legal restrictions on sexually explicit material. Depending on content, male-male erotica can be illegal in some Anglophone jurisdictions, although the most problematic tends to be visual material with young-looking protagonists (Madill, 2015). In Mainland China, while the law remains mute on the subject, homosexuality is frowned-upon socially and often censored in mainstream media. It is also illegal, however, to create or disseminate pornographic material and such content is often deleted by the Chinese Website Supervision Department (Zhou, Paul & Sherman, 2017). In fact, in 2011, 32 female danmei authors and a website owner were arrested and charged with obscenity, with further arrests, content deletions, and site closures in the 'Internet Purge' of 2014 (Wei, 2014). Even so, Wei (2017) notes increasing social awareness of, and tolerance for, same-sex relationships in Mainland China and attributes this to the rise of both gay activism and danmei subculture. Moreover, increasingly, the less sexually explicit danmei can be published legally through standard official channels, probably because the censorship system is highly ambiguous (Zheng, 2016).

To increase the comparability of the Harry Potter fan fiction selected for analysis, we decided to focus on the theme of male-male marriage. This theme was selected because our online Sinophone (n=1084) and Anglophone BL fandom surveys (first language English:

n=1615) indicate male-male marriage to be the most popular story element of the nine

options we provided (48% and 60% endorsement respectively). In relation to the Sinophone

context, this interest is somewhat confirmed by Zhou et al. (2017) who report that, of their

relatively randomly selected sample of 87 danmei, 24 (28%) portrayed the central male-male

couple as married. Again, to increase comparability, we selected material which paired Harry

and Draco. Chin and Morimoto (2013) note Harry/Draco as the most popular pairing in

English language Harry Potter slash – with over 13,000 stories on Archives of Our Own 3 in

2016 (Callis, 2016)[i].

Same sex marriage is also a controversial issue of contemporary significance which

may reveal interesting differences between Sinophone and Anglophone fan fiction given that

legal recognition of such partnerships is limited currently to countries in Europe, the

Americas, Australasia (Borderless News Online, 2016), and South Africa (Pew Research

Center, 2015). There is some evidence that slash does, in general, reflect changes in culture.

For example, Callis (2016) demonstrates that, echoing social trends, Kirk/Spock stories

written in the US 1978-1987, as compared to those written 2005-2014, were three times more

likely to contain homophobic content and twice as likely to contain heteronormative content.

However, a more specific, and contentious, assumption behind most research on female-

oriented male-male romance is that it provides a commentary on women under patriarchy

(Zheng, 2016): moreover that it offers means of resistance to hegemonic norms (Lilja &

Wasshede, 2016). The danmei generation consists predominantly of women born in the 1980s

and 1990s when the One Child Policy was in place. These are daughters who have benefited

from a focus of parental attention, educational resources, and who may not have suffered

particular gender bias, at least until they enter the workplace: they might, however,

experience a unique pressure to produce grandchildren (Xu, 2017). The danmei generation is

also the first to grow-up in a post-socialist Chinese society in which the internet provides a

comparatively open mode of expression outside traditional nationalised literary institutions (Zheng, 2016).

In summary, our study aims to compare Sinophone and Anglophone female-oriented male-male romance through providing a thematic analysis of a small sample of each, in which the characters Harry and Draco from the canon text Harry Potter are portrayed as married. Our interest is to explore if thematic differences can be identified between these slash and danmei stories and, if so, to consider how these differences might be understood.

Method

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, University of Leeds. Conditions of approval include that no personal information about the authors of the slash or danmei material selected for analysis will be reported in the dissemination of the research, and that if it is clear that material has been posted by somebody below the age of 16 years then we will not include it in the research.

Harry Potter fan fiction was selected in which: the central couple was Harry and Draco; there was direct mention or indirect implication that the couple are married; and the stories were, as an indication of popularity, relatively long and complete given that fan fiction writers often maintain momentum due to positive reader feedback. We considered 10 stories to be the maximum number that could be analysed in the detail required and our analysis demonstrates that this was sufficient to identify interesting differences between the Sinophone and Anglophone stories.

We selected for comparison five Harry Potter stories originally written in Chinese and five originally written in English which subsequently had been fan-translated into Chinese and were available on popular Chinese fan fiction websites. The reasons for selecting from translated English fan fiction were twofold. First, pragmatically, the analysis was conducted by two native Chinese speakers (LF and YZ) under the guidance of a native

English speaker (AM). Second, more theoretically, this created an interestingly challenging test of differences between the samples because the English language stories fan selected for translation may have been those with the strongest appeal to a Chinese audience. We assume that all five original Sinophone stories originated in Mainland China because they were written in simplified Chinese characteristic of fan fiction from this region. Author profiles lead us to believe that, of the original Anglophone stories, three originated in the USA, one in Canada, but no author information could be found on the fifth (Table 1).

The webmasters of three relevant and popular Chinese websites (Table 1) were contacted in writing to inform them of our research and to let them know that we would desist from selecting material hosted on their site if this was their wish. We also informed webmasters that in order to help people assess our research, and if their interest has been sparked to read the original work, we would identify fiction titles and the host website. Moreover, we let webmasters know that it was necessary to include quotes from the material in reports of the research and that extracts would be translated into English by members of the research team. Of the webmasters contacted, only one did not want us to use material from their site. Fan fiction analysed in this article were selected between November 2015 and May 2016.

The selected material was analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA: Braun & Clarke, 2006). TA provides a theoretically-neutral procedure for qualitative analysis of textual material. Guidelines outline three dialectical categories with regard to what counts as a theme in any particular analysis. This allows TA to be adapted in a flexible manner depending on specific research question and idiosyncrasies of the data. Hence, in the current study: (1) we provide a detailed account of a particular aspect of the data (male-male marriage) as opposed to a rich description of the complete data set, which is very large; (2) we conducted a predominantly inductive ('bottom-up') as opposed to theoretical ('top-down') analysis,

although the selection of material on male-male marriage meant that we were alert to aspects of the data resonant with theories of kinship and of gender; and (3) we created a mixture of semantic and latent themes. Semantic themes are derived relatively directly from content (e.g., gender of children), while latent themes involve more interpretative work (e.g., role in marriage).

Each story was read several times by LF and notes made of features of potential analytic interest with regard to the portrayal of male-male marriage in each story. The stories and notes were then discussed between all three authors and agreement negotiated as to content of particular relevance to our comparison between the original Sinophone and Anglophone stories and how this content might be conceptualised through linking to extant research and theory. Over several iterations of reading, note-taking, and discussion, theme labels were developed and agreed. Each story was then mapped with regard to each theme and Table 1 produced which provides an overview from which patterns across the material could be identified. LF then selected extracts from each story which provided evidence of the patterns identified as well as of exceptions to these patterns demonstrating sensitivity to both similarities and differences between the stories.

Analysis

Five themes were identified as of particular interest in understanding theoretically important differences in the way in which male-male marriage was portrayed between the Sinophone and the Anglophone Harry Potter fan fiction selected for analysis. These are: family approval, wedding and style of marriage, role in marriage (seme/uke[ii]), family type, and gender of children.

Theme 1: Family approval

In the original Sinophone fiction, it seems important that there is family approval for the marriage from parents, grandparents, and/or other senior (quasi-)familial figures. For

example, in Not Far Away, Draco's parents are dead but it is mentioned that his godfather – Snape - actively condones the marriage: '"So we decided to get married and we had it." Draco said briskly […]ⁱⁱⁱ Snape didn't care how they achieved this but only felt happy for them. He stopped his venomous voice and said sincerely "Congratulations!"' (Chapter 19). In *I'm In Charge* and in Soulmate, Draco's parents and Harry's godfather all accept their marriage: 'Lucius and Narcissi have even started to consider these two children's engagement' (Soulmate, Chapter 69). And in Return to the Past, although at first Lucius Malfoy – Draco's father - is against the marriage, eventually he comes into line with the rest of the two families so that they can, at last, hold the ceremony: 'You have passed my test. I trust this is Merlin's gift and agree that you are the next hostess of the Malfoy family' (Chapter 44). The only exception is Lost Decade in which both Harry and Draco's parents are dead at the time of their marriage.

In the Sinophone fiction, if the family at first disapproves the marriage at first, the change to a more positive attitude is indicated. In contrast, in the original Anglophone fiction, family approval appears less important. That is, if the couple marries against their wishes, family members do not change their mind but decide to respect the couple's decision nonetheless or, on the other hand, the couple go ahead despite continuing family conflict. So, in Thief Known as Time, although Draco's father did not agree their marriage, he loves his son and comes to respect his choice: '"I am pregnant." Draco said. Lucius Malfoy is shocked so much that he cannot say one word […] "I see. Congratulations." Lucius said finally without any emotion' (Chapter 57). Similarly, in Oath Breaker, Lucius demonstrates resignation: 'He [Draco] knew he'd never be able to give anyone a reason beyond—"I love him" - which didn't impress Lucius in the slightest, but at least he merely sighed like a martyr and didn't ask again' (Chapter 27). In Veela Enigma, although Draco's father was unhappy with the relationship at the start, he comes around to the idea of this partnership enough to

warn Harry to look after his son: "'You be good to my gay veela son, or I'll come after you and everyone you care about and shred them into tiny,bloody pieces"' (Chapter 12).

In the remaining original Anglophone fiction we studied, the marriage goes ahead despite continuing family conflict. So, in Saving Draco, Lucius's alternative plan for his son is sneered at: "'I'd planned on being the grandfather of the next dark lord not some mud blooded brat." Well, that made it through Draco's fatalistic haze. "Your what?" "When the Dark Lord found out about your 'uniqueness' he wanted to give you the honor of bearing his progeny." "You expected me to cop-copulate with that—that—" Draco sputtered, utterly outraged."' (Chapter 37). And in Bond Draco's father disagrees with their relationship so much that he disowned him: "'Draco, I have never been as ashamed of you as I am now. You are a disgrace to our name and family […] I have just concluded a meeting with our family solicitor to legally disown you […]"' (Chapter 18).

Theme 2: Wedding and style of marriage

In the Sinophone fiction, the cermemonial procedures of marriage are important, such as informing and including relatives and close friends, and employing a traditional wedding format. For example, in Return to the Past we are told that 'Harry and Draco held a grand wedding in Malfoy manor' (Chapter 350), in Soulmate that '(t)he engagement was so grand that almost half of the wizards were invited' (Chapter 138), in Lost Decade that 'Harry and Draco read the oath and exchange the rings' (Chapter 93), and in *I'm in* Charge that '(i)n their wedding ceremony […] Draco was surrounded by their family and friends […] after finishing the oath, some guests asked them to kiss' (Chapter 7). Interestingly, in Not far Away it is noted that '(a)lthough the magic bond is enough to admit their partner status in magic, some registration procedures after marriage is still necessary for the Ministry of Magic to control household status' (Chapter 13).

In the Anglophone fiction, ceremonies and social acknowledgements of marriage appear less important. For example, in Thief Known as Time there is only very brief mention of the marriage: 'In the past 18 months, Harry has attended three weddings, one of them his own' (Epilogue). Moreover, in Oath Breaker, although two ceremonies are held, while that with the Light Wizards is quite traditional, that with the Dark Wizards is very different: 'Unlike during the Ministry's wedding, however, the Dark Wizards now stood straight, their hoods framing their faces'" (Chapter 27). In fact, where there is a ceremony, it is less likely to be in a 'real world' traditional format but can include some kind of magical procedure or bonding through sexual contact. So, in Bond, it is magical practices that lead to bonding, first accidentally and then by design: '"Boys", Dumbledore said slowly, "I'm afraid you've been ……well, bonded."' (Chapter 1); ' "you don't have to say anything, the bond's already become active again"' (Chapter 21). And in Saving Draco, the marital bond is undertaken through an idiosyncratic form of magical ceremony: 'They and Dumbledore ascended a small dais. In the center of the platform was a pedestal holding an orb of light with a coil of golden rope in its center. The rope writhed as if it was a living thing and Harry shivered' (Chapter 20).

Finally, typifying identified differences, a particularly interesting comparison is between the two stories in which Draco is a veela which means that he is sexually attractive to anyone: *I'm in Charge* (Sinophone) and Veela Enigma (Anglophone). In the former, as a veela, Draco's first kiss decides his partner: 'He angrily pulled his collar exposing the neck to Lucius. "I was marked by the damn, damn stupid bastard Potter!!!"' (Chapter 1). However, as described above, a wedding ceremony and social recognition is still important. In contrast, in the Anglophone fiction, Veela Enigma, it is sex itself that inaugurates marriage: '"The first time a veela and their mate combined just keep saying bond so I don't have to say shag"' (Chapter 22).

Theme 3: Role in marriage (seme/uke)

In the original Sinophone fiction, the seme and uke roles are distinct and mirror that of the traditional husband and wife respectively. Moreover, the separate roles are assigned clearly and consistently to the partners within each story. Three are D/H fiction, in which Draco is the seme and Harry is the uke (Soulmate, Not Far Away, Return to the Past) and two are H/D fiction in which Harry is the seme and Draco is the uke (Lost Decade, *I'm in* Charge).

In D/H fiction, Harry is portrayed in the traditionally feminine role. For example in Soulmate is he referred to as 'the future mistress of the Malfoy family' (Chapter 74) and takes the passive role in sexual matters: 'He allowed himself to be undressed, taking off Draco's by the way, and then resigned to let Draco dominate his body' (Soulmate Chapter 77). In Not Far Away, Harry is referred to as 'wife': 'Draco stopped for two seconds, looked at Harry, and then looked at Snape. "Oh, I brought my wife and son to make a family visit"' (Chapter 19) and, again, Harry takes the passive sexual role: 'Draco kissed his belly and moved on top of Harry, gave him a kiss and asked,"Can you? I think I've waited long enough"' (Chapter 25). Finally, it is a similar pattern in Return to the Past: 'before Harry had time to react, he was pressed by Draco on the carpet, his clothes were torn into pieces by Draco's magic' (Chapter 66); '"On the Malfoy family genealogy you indeed are decorated in Draco's wife field […] Draco is in your husband column"' (Chapter 155).

In H/D fiction it is Draco who is portrayed in the traditionally female role. For example, in Lost Decade, it is Harry who is sexually dominant: 'Harry pulled Draco's waist into his arm, and then kissed his lips softly, but without loss of toughness, cool and bitter. And Draco didn't resist, he let Harry kiss him, let Harry bring him to the bedroom while pulling off his clothes' (Chapter 10). It is the same in I*'m in* Charge: 'Draco was severely pressed under his body […]. He could do nothing but groan and wheezing to tell Harry his excitement and pleasure' (Chapter 61), while Draco is also the partner who has the capacity

to become pregnant: 'he made the initial determination that Draco's fetus had been four months' (Epilogue 1).

In the Anglophone fiction, it is often more ambiguous in relation to seme and uke roles and, consequently, which partner might be considered the husband or the wife. For example, in Oath Breaker love scenes are not clear about the role played during sex and, as in in the following extract, Harry sometimes appears more of a seme, although this is not clear or consistent: '"What about you?" Harry asked, coming up behind him and nuzzling the back of his neck. "Can I underestimate you? You wouldn't cook me, would you?"Draco smiled and tipped his head to the side, giving Harry better access."Mm, I don't know. I've had a taste and I rather liked it." (Chapter 28). Similarly, although in Thief Known as Time it is Harry who becomes pregnant, his role is not clearly or consistently that of uke or wife.

In Bond and Saving Draco, the role of uke and seme switches. Hence, in Bond, Harry can be the seme or the uke as in the following extracts respectively: 'Potter sat up and pulled Draco onto his lap with almost bruising strength, Draco's thighs gripping his hips as they moved together urgently' (Chapter 12); 'Harry sighed and lay back, letting Malfoy lead, arousal slowly growing as they touched' (Chapter 15). Similarly, in Saving Draco, Draco can be the seme or the uke as in the following extracts respectively: '"Draco?" "Yes, Harry?" "Fuck me."And being the obedient bondmate that he was, Draco did just that' (Chapter 29); 'The third time, he entered Draco maybe an inch before a kiss revealed the salty tears running down Draco's face' (Chapter 31). In two of the Anglophone fiction the seme and uke roles are not clear. Finally, in the story categorised H/D - Veela Enigma - Draco is an uke because, as a veela, he needs his lover to control him: '"I'll shag you through the ground right here" Harry muttered, forcing open Draco's cloak. "I'll shag you till you can't walk."' (Chapter 28). However, this story differs from the Sinophone fiction in that the traditional marital roles of husband and wife are, even so, not clearly allocated.

Theme 4: Family type

In the original Sinophone fiction, the only type of family portrayed is the extended family. This means that Harry and Draco live together, not only with their children if they have them, but with parents and/or other relatives. Hence, in Soulmate and Return to the Past, Harry and Draco live with Draco's parents Lucius and Narcissa: 'Harry moved into the Malfoy manor' (Soulmate, Chapter 118); '"Mom, I and Draco will graduate soon," his voice was very soft, with a hint of comfort. "At that time the house will be more lively yet."' （Return to the Past, Chapter 304). In Not far Away, the couple live with Draco's godfather, Snape: 'Draco tightened their hands and said,"And you are almost like another father, Snape […] I can only beg you to be the child's godfather and stay with us?"' (Chapter 20). And in *I'm in* Charge, they live with Draco's father, Lucius, and his partner, Draco's godfather Snape: 'Draco lifted his head, "Would you like to live in the Malfoy home?" Harry blinked,"If you and Lucius like this idea, then we don't need to move out after we get married"' (Chapter 42). In Lost Decade both Harry's and Draco's parents are no longer alive but the couple live with their children and Draco's godfather Snape.

In the Anglophone fiction, the only type of family portrayed is the nuclear family in which Harry and Draco live together as a couple and with their children, if they have them. Hence, in Bond, Harry and Draco live together in their dormitory: 'they would be going back to classes tomorrow and moving into their own rooms after school' (Chapter 1). In Veela Enigma Harry and Draco live in Draco's room: 'Harry and Draco could be found in Draco's room, sprawled amicably on Draco's bed' (Chapter 26). In Thief Known as Time, they have their own room and live with their son: '"After marriage, we need to find a house, and to discuss how to decorate it"' (Chapter 59). And, in Saving Draco, the couple live with their four children. In Oath Breaker, Harry and Draco live with Draco's parents and his godfather Snape at the end of the story, but only on a temporary basis out of necessity: 'Until they

rebuilt the Manor, this was home. Comfortable, of course, and formal enough to receive visitors in a manner befitting Malfoys' (Chapter 28).

Theme 5: Gender of children

In all the stories, when the couple have children, the first child is a boy. Moreover, in the original Sinophone fiction, when the couple do become parents they only have boys, and do so in four of the five stories. So, in *I'm in* Charge, Draco gives birth to a son: 'In the mid-October after their wedding, when the Malfoy manor was surrounded by bright red maple leaf, a new member of the Malfoy-Potter family, Scorpius Draco Malfoy-Potter, reported on time' (Epilogue 8). In Lost Decade, Draco gives birth to one boy before and another boy after their wedding. And in Not Far Away and Return to the Past it is Harry who gives birth to a son: '"Hey boy, I'm Daddy. How are you?" The baby's head softly crooked, he blinked his big green eyes, after looking at Draco' (Not Far Away Chapter 53). The only counter example is Soulmate which, like the Anglophone fiction, pay more attention to the couple's relationship and children do not feature in the story.

In the Anglophone fiction, having children appears less important and, as mentioned, the story focuses more on the couple's relationship, as in Oath Breaker, Bond, and the Veela Enigma in which the couple do not have children. Thief Known as Time is similar to the Sinophone fiction in that the couple have one son: 'when their son was born they named him Gabriel Ian' (Epilogue). Whilst in Saving Draco Malfoy the first child is male, it differs from the other fiction in that it also includes two daughters in a relatively large family of four offspring: 'Four-year-old Daphne Lily was just as Slytherin as her namesake, slyly getting her eleven-year-old brother Jamie to slow down in the forward motion he was always in. And then there was eight-year-old Thisala Molly who, in her heroic Gryffindor nature, had tried to make peace by offering Daphne a ride on her back. Finally, there was Sirius Albus who was

currently still in utero, but kicking his legs valiantly in an effort to keep up with his siblings'
(Epilogue).

Discussion

The aim of this study is to compare Sinophone and Anglophone female-oriented male-male
romance - in which the characters Harry and Draco from Harry Potter are portrayed as
married - to explore if thematic differences can be identified. We found some robust patterns.
In contrast to the Anglophone fiction, the Sinophone tended to: stress the importance of
family approval for the marriage; incorporate a wedding ceremony; employ clearly gendered
roles between partners; utilise extended, as opposed to nuclear, families; and showed the
couple to produce children, particularly boys. We now consider how these differences might
be understood, focusing predominantly on the cultural contexts of Mainland China and North
America (the origin of the Anglophone stories) and the UK (the cultural context of the first
author and in which the English-language stories will also be read).

The differences between family approval, wedding, and family type are discussed
together. The pattern found in our Anglophone stories is commensurate with the increasing
social liberalism demonstrated in marital trends and legislation in the UK, US (Pew Research
Center, 2013), and Canada (Historica Canada, 2016). In these regions, since about the 1980s,
marriage rates have decreased, cohabitation before marriage increased, and, in the UK, there
has been a decline in religious marriage ceremonies (Office for National Statistics, 2017).
Civil partnerships have been available for same-sex couples in the UK since 2004 - and
marriage in Canada since 2004 and England and Wales since 2014 - whilst in 2015 the US
Supreme Court ruled that gay marriage is a legal right (BBC News, 2014). Furthermore,
Baunach (2012) reports that the US National Attitudes to Marriage Survey evidences a liberal
shift in that, while only 13% approved same-sex marriage in 1988 this increased to 47% in
2010. Of particular relevance to the current study, this trend towards social liberalism is

mirrored in Star Trek slash. Specifically, Callis (2016) reports reduced concern in Kirk/Spock

stories over the acceptability of their relationship to their families (40% of the sample 1978-

1987 to only 11% of the sample 2005-2014). Moreover, in case study of the influential

Harry/Draco slash, Underwater Light (first online 2002), Duggan (2017) states that the

couple "do not reference any worry over what friends, family, or society more generally will

think" (p.42).

In contrast, our results suggest a relative social conservatism in the Sinophone danmei

analysed. This parallels Chen and Li's (2014) observation that Confucius family values

provide the foundation of everyday life in Chinese society. This involves a traditional

patriarchal kinship system stressing filial piety and, while Chinese women have excellent

access to education, they are still expected to marry before their thirties. Moreover, young

Chinese women of the One Child Policy shoulder particularly high family control and

expectations associated with obligations to the extended family (Xu & Yang, 2013). Hence,

social and familial approval of a marriage is highly important and a public wedding ceremony

is a way of signalling this recognition.

Zheng (2016) suggests that, maybe unsurprisingly, regional values and traditions are

echoed in its popular culture such that "Chinese family melodrama is based on ethically

defined social and kinship roles while the European family melodrama has a subjectivity

based on psychology and its expression" (p.253). More surprisingly perhaps, but in-line with

our findings, Zheng notes the importance of family values even in Chinese queer cinema, but

demonstrates also the way in which tensions between the patriarchal extended family and the

Westernised nuclear family are explored in this work. Similarly, studying father-son incest

stories, Xu and Yang (2013) suggest that danmei can critique the traditional authoritarian

style of parenting arguing that they "showcase a feminine attempt to resolve the generational

conflict and re-order the power structure in the family by means of eros and passion" (p.31).

Hence, although the Anglophone and Sinophone stories analysed here mirror their cultures of origin in terms of relative liberalism and conservatism, all were available in Chinese and could be considered, as a body of work, to facilitate a similar exploration of family models through queer kinship.

In terms of role in marriage, the traditional Chinese family has strongly distinct and codified positions for men and women, although educational and occupational opportunities, and migration to urban areas, are contributing to a modernisation of women's roles (Hu, 2016). However, Zhou et al. (2017) found that, while both partners in danmei had masculine and feminine traits, a pair tended to consist of a more masculine seme with a more feminine uke portrayed like lovers in heterosexual romantic fiction: the less masculine partner more likely to work in a subordinate role, be supported financially and protected by his partner, and less likely to initiate sexual contact. Xu and Yang (2013) remind us of the variety of weak/strong uke/seme pairings utilised, but there may be a limit to how much femininity is acceptable in a male character. For example, Li's (2009) survey of 32 Chinese-speaking, female fans indicated preference for both seme and uke to be more masculine than feminine.

On the other hand, Chinese fans often critique Anglophone slash for not making the distinction between seme and uke clear enough (Zheng, 2016), and, like us, Duggan (2017) found Harry/Draco in the slash fiction Underwater Light to constitute largely undifferentiated roles. English-language research does tend to argue that a female readership's attraction/investment in male-male romance fiction rests on its portrayal of a relatively equal partnership (e.g., Lilja & Wasshede, 2016; Pagliassotti, 2008). However, feminist interpretations of slash and yaoi are controversial, even in relation to Anglophone fandom (e.g., Brennan, 2014), although, interestingly, from interviews with 16 female Taiwanese fans, Chou (2010) suggests that this demographic may sometimes read danmei as resistance to notions of female weakness, lack of gender reciprocity, and sexual objectification of

women. It may be that exploration of role flexibility depends on the freedom to take risks in

the creation of male-male romance, with Wood (2013; see also Sihombing, 2011) arguing

that, although rare in the commercial product, "a much higher percentage of non-commercial

fan-created fiction and art contain depictions of reversible *Boys' Love* couples" (p.53).

In understanding how the male-male couple's role in marriage might be understood in

the two cultural contexts, it must be remembered that Chinese and Euro-American ideals of

masculinity are complex and in many ways contrasting. In particular, Louie (2014) explains

that, with reference to the traditional wen-wu ('mind-body') model of Chinese masculinity,

the Chinese prioritise 'brain over brawn' more than most Western cultures. Louie also notes

the influence of Japanese and Korean women's popular culture - most notably manga series

Boys over Flowers (Kamio, 1992-2003) – for creating a new wen ideal associated with male

elegance. Hence, what may seem from an Anglophone point-of-view to be male effeminacy

is more likely in a Chinese context to be understood as an ancient and socially-privileged

form of masculinity, if in contemporary guise.

Birth rates tend to drop with modernisation, as is the case in the UK (Office for

National Statistics, 2015), US (National Center for Health Statistics, 2015), and Canada

(Statistics Canada, 2009). In parallel, Callis (2016) demonstrates a reduction in the

characterisation of sex for procreation in Kirk/Spock slash between 1978-1987 (11%) and

2005-2014 (3%). This supports Valenti's (2005) suggestion that women enjoy slash, at least

in part, to be entertained by sex without the anxiety of pregnancy. In China, rapid

modernisation has been facilitated by the One Child Policy while, at the same time,

traditional values place great emphasis on children (Zheng, 2016). These contexts are

reflected in our sample. In four of the five danmei the male couple produce children – in three

stories, only the one child – whereas children are produced in only two of the slash fiction.

Interestingly, the only female children in our sample are the middle two from the Anglophone

story Saving Draco. In China, sons are essential to propagate the family name (Chen & Li, 2014), but are important also because of their earning power to support elderly family. Xu and Yang (2013) argue that "(t)he scene of female infanticide in [danmei] Unfilial Sons clearly alludes to the deep-rooted misogyny in Chinese society" (p.38), but sons are emphasised also in the Anglophone stories we studied and research highlights a profound ambivalence with regard to female characters in the genre (Blair, 2008).

An originator of BL, Hagio Moto, created a series Marginal (1985-1987) in which some male characters could give birth, however male pregnancy is argued to be one of the most controversial motifs in danmei (Huang, 2013) and yaoi (Bauwens-Sugimoto, 2011). While the theme is explored in the popular yaoi manga series Love Pistols (Kotobuki, 2004-onwards), pregnancy has only a transitory feminising effect on a male character and gender roles remain fluid (Bauwens-Sugimoto, 2011). Similarly, feminisation is often bracketed in the 'ABO' sub-genre[iv] in which 'Omegas', who can become pregnant, may be only nominally male (Zheng, 2016). Tian (2015) observes that 'childbirth writing', which features male pregnancy and child-rearing, is a minority interest in the danmei, Three Kingdoms, while Zhou et al. (2017) report that only 25 (28.7%) of the 87 danmei they studied mentioned housework or raising children. And our Sinophone and Anglophone BL fandom surveys confirm its middling-to-low appeal in that male pregnancy is only 5th (31% endorsement) and 7th (21% endorsement) most popular story element respectively of the nine options we provided, while mirroring the relatively greater popularity of 'Mpreg' ('male pregnancy') in Chinese fandom we found in the analysis presented in this article.

Although as Huang (2013) points out it is monstrous pregnancy, Mpreg may be a way of heteronormalising male-male relationships: that is, situating them within a socially-normative trajectory of family life and kinship ties based on the differential rights and roles of men and women. Growing scholarship suggests that danmei (Zhao et al., this volume;

Zhou et al., 2017) may invoke a heterosexual framework. In the West, too, popular culture presents a heteronormative view of gay male relationships (e.g., Avila-Saavedra, 2009). Rosa and Kamers (2014) argue that this is rooted in discourses and fantasies that idealise the heterosexual family in which we "want to find the child that we were not and that family that we did not have, but which we were supposed to have" (p.258). Callis (2016) demonstrates a reduction in assumptions of the naturalness of heterosexuality in Kirk/Spock slash from 47% of older (1978-1987) to 22% of newer (2005-2014) stories. And while Zheng (2016) acknowledges that danmei can portray relationships highly similar to that of women within patriarchy, she also suggests that polysemic readings are available (see also Sihombing, 2011).

Our analysis is based on a small sample: only five original Sinophone and five original Anglophone stories. It is therefore possible that some of the patterns we found are spurious and that we may have missed some important differences. One possible bias is that only one of the Anglophone stories – Thief - is set after defeating arch-enemy Lord Voldemort in the canon text while three of the Sinophone stories explore this era. This may have influenced family type (i.e., nuclear or extended family). However, the patterns found are surprisingly consistent and make sense within the cultural context within which each story was produced. A further possible bias is that, for pragmatic reasons given that the detailed analysis was conducted by native Chinese speakers, we selected Anglophone stories that had been fan-translated into Chinese. These stories may have been selected for such translation because they were compatible with a Chinese sensibility. However, if true, we would expect differences to be particularly difficult to find between our two samples. Likewise, the evidence would not be as robust in the patterns we found.

In selecting original Sinophone and Anglophone Harry Potter danmei and slash for comparison, we focused on the theme of male-male marriage because our surveys indicated

this to be the most popular story element of the nine options we provided. Our main finding is that, despite the small sample of texts that were analysed, we found stories to mirror the relative social conservatism and social liberalism of their cultures of origin in some interesting ways. However, as a literature portraying male-male sexuality, in reading and writing such danmei young Chinese women can still be understood to be exploring, and pushing at, the boundaries of the traditional family.

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Table 1. Comparison of themes across the selected fan fiction

Culture		Anglophone slash					Sinophone danmei				
Fiction title		Bond	Oath Breaker	Saving Draco	Thief Known as Time	Veela Enigma	*I'm in* Charge	Lost Decade	Not Far Away	Return to the Past	Soulmate
Presumed origin		Canada	USA	USA	?	USA	Mainland China				
Year first online in English		2005	2005	2006	2008	2005	/	/	/	/	/
Year first online in Chinese		2009	2009	2008	2009	2009	2012	2012	2012	2011	2013
Anglophone website		4	4	4	4	5	/	/	/	/	/
Chinese website		1, 2, 3	1, 2	2	1, 2, 3	1, 2	1	1, 3	1	1, 3	1
Word count (Chinese)		339350	301582	189002	213176	348947	282082	323031	231455	1327877	352543
Theme	Family approval	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	parents dead	Y	Y	Y
	Wedding/ style of marriage	N bond	Y wedding	N bond	Y wedding	N sex	N kiss	Y wedding	Y wedding	Y engagement /wedding	Y engagement
	Role in marriage (seme/uke)	switch	not clear	switch	not clear	H/D	H/D	H/D	D/H	D/H	D/H
	Family type	nuclear	nuclear	nuclear	nuclear	nuclear	extended	extended	extended	extended	extended
	Gender of children	/	/	boy, girl, girl, boy	boy	/	boy	boy, boy	boy	boy	/

Website sources: (1) Jinjiang Wenxue Cheng (www.jjwxc.net); (2) Shuxiangmeidi (www.txtnovel.org); (3) Shubaowang (www.bookbao.me); (4) Fanfiction (www.fanfiction.net); (5) Skyehawke (www.archive.skyehawke.com)

Endnotes

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[i] Interestingly, in terms of cultural preferences, while James/Snape is almost absent in the Anglophone fandom it is popular with Japanese fans (Noppe, 2010)

[ii] Terms from Japanese yaoi designating the penetrating partner or 'top' (seme) and penetrated partner or 'bottom' (uke) which resonates with characteristics indicated in slash fiction by the position of the name of the partner before or after the / , that is seme/uke

[iii] Short amount of text omitted from the original material

[iv] Alpha/Beta/Omega: a fanwork kink trope in which, amongst other characteristics themes, Alphas are dominant and can impregnate Omegas, while Betas are subordinate to Alphas