# Boys' Love for the Love of it: Progressive Prosumers and the Proliferation of Queer Culture through Manga

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Image courtesy of Carolina Reyes (2017)

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution. In addition, I confirm that the fieldwork conducted for the purpose of this thesis was approved by the Human Ethics Committee at Murdoch University. Permit Number: 2013/133. Permit Title: Dōjin and Fujoshi Culture.

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# ABSTRACT

Boys' love (BL) manga (as a genre of Japanese comics) with either homoerotic or homosocial graphics and content, is largely produced by and for female readers. Much like the audacious women writers in Victorian Britain, these amateur female BL artists (*dōjin*) and their respective consumers in Japan have arguably empowered themselves as a subcultural community, as well as the represented LGBT community, through progressive and often radical means. Although much scholarly attention has focused on the readers' gratifications and why BL has such a large female readership, little attention has been given to how, or the extent to which, the popularity of BL manga has potentially fostered LGBT visibility; or to the illustrators who have continued to independently publish such content at their own expense. Essenitally, I analyse the positive socio-economic effects and greater significance which lie in autonomous authorship, exclusive fan rituals, and their potential by-product of progression towards equality in terms of gender and sexuality. By comparing content, readership and fandom practices from the Victorian era and modern-day Japan, I demonstrate that the dissemination and consumption of cultural products which cater for and stem from a disempowered gender group may foster an explicitly queer space and its wider tolerance in the community. Determining if and how this phenomenon has fostered the empowerment of traditionally disenfranchised groups in Japan can provide insight into the subtle social and ideological shifts currently underway in Japan—shifts in which gender and sexuality are enmeshed, and occur in a contemporary context of an ageing population which is clinging onto the security found in traditions and conventions, albeit while adapting to the effects of globalisation.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**NOTE:**

All personal names, including the author's, are written in given-name-first order. Macrons are placed on Japanese words to indicate long vowels except in common place names such as Tokyo. Japanese words are italicised except when they are so well-known that they can be found in a comprehensive English dictionary (such as anime, karaoke, manga, et cetera.), or when they are the proper names of places, people, companies, and established organisations. Although occasionally unnatural, most quotations from research participants have been presented in their original form to maintain authenticity.

# Introduction

> For women who had no rights, no individual existence or identity, the
> very act of writing—particularly for a public audience—was in
> essence an assertion of individuality and autonomy, and often an act
> of defiance. To write was to be; it was to create and to exist. It was to
> construct and control a worldview without interference from the
> 'masters.' (Spender, 1986, p.3)

Whether taking up the pen or living by the pen, vicariously living through fiction or living for fiction, women's engagement in the production and consumption of fiction throughout history has been variously criticised or celebrated, discussed and dismissed, invited or ignored. As George Eliot argued in her essay "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," "No sooner does a woman show that she has genius or effective talent, than she receives the tribute of being moderately praised and severely criticised" (Eliot, 2009, p.178). Despite such circumstances, fiction, Eliot concedes,

> is a department of literature in which women can, after their kind,
> fully equal men. A cluster of great names, both living and dead, rush
> to our memories in evidence that women can produce novels not only
> fine, but among the very finest; […] No educational restrictions can
> shut women out from the materials of fiction, and there is no species
> of art which is free from rigid requirements. (2009, p.178)

Although published over 130 years ago, Eliot's arguments are nonetheless relevant in a current context of hyper-connectivity, virtual omnipresence, and the expansion of e-books, where anyone and everyone may publish provided they have a certain level of technological literacy, access to the pertaining technology and various avenues, programs and applications for publishing. In any case, whether in the Industrial Age or the Information Age, with rapid technological advances and innovation comes not only the development of new types of literacies but also greater, more expansive (and now instantaneous) platforms for self-expression. Wherever there

have been ideological, legislative, or constitutional restrictions on certain forms of expression or the voices of certain marginalised groups have been gagged, the imposed silence has often been broken by means of fiction. Indeed, before suffrage, before the Married Women's Property Act, before women's rights to enter university or to be legally recognised as same-sex partners, the very act of taking up the pen was (and has been) a right in itself. As Spender and Eliot have indicated, to write was a means of self-expression or self-subsistence, and in some cases, a means of resistance or social commentary, or a vehicle for social reform. In a similar vein, this thesis considers the phenomenon whereby women in oppressive sociohistorical contexts regarding gender equality and social rights have prolifically produced subversive or progressive fiction which has preceded, if not incited, social reforms or greater social empowerment for women and other minority groups. While the rise of the "the Lady Novelist" of the Victorian era will also be taken into account, this thesis is primarily concerned with and is primarily based on my ethnographic research involving Japanese women's immense production and consumption of boys' love (BL) manga.

Loosely defined as a genre of "manga (comics) and fan art whose subject matter is erotic and romantic relationships between males" (Zanghellini, 2009, p.279), what is now generally referred to as boys' love manga initially began with several budding young female illustrators' (collaboratively known as the Year 24 Group) mutual interest in portrayals of homosexuality in print media, European literature and film (Welker, 2011, pp.211-228). Their interest spawned the publication of several *shōnen'ai* (boys' love) manga which encompassed similar homosocial/-sexual themes and undertone and appeared in regular *shōjo* (girls') manga in the 1970s (Fujimoto, 2015, p.77). The 1980s heralded the birth of the amateur-produced and mostly parodic and more sexually explicit genre "*yaoi*," while in the early 1990s, BL made its debut as a commercial genre of manga and prose fiction centring on male-male romance (Fujimoto, 2015, p.78). However, the global expansion of BL and *yaoi* has not necessarily been a smooth operation, as Aleardo Zanghellini notes in his research on underage sex in manga:

> Yaoi and BL cover not only man–man, but also boy–boy, and man–
> boy love […] The prevalence of underage characters in yaoi/BL work,
> coupled with its erotic and even sexually explicit subject matter,

makes yaoi/BL work a possible (and indeed obvious) target for

censorship in some Western countries. (Zanghellini, 2009, p.290)


Indeed, although censorship has posed a threat to the global dissemination of boys' love and *yaoi* manga, local sales in Japan indicate the resilience of the artists and the local market. With estimated annual sales of 22 billion yen in Japan (Yano Research Institute, 2016), the sales data indicates the extent to which BL and *yaoi* is produced and consumed. In regards to BL reader demographics, e-book rental site Renta! found that 99% of BL readers were female in their 2012 survey with over 800 respondents (upppi, 2017). Given these statistics, it is little wonder that scholars such as BL research forerunner Tomoko Aoyama now say that after centuries of "derision and even demonization of female readers, 'culture girls' (*bunkakei joshi*) are [also] 'taking over the Humanities' and increasingly dominating literary magazines" (Aoyama, 2013, p.64). One of the most rapidly growing topics in popular and scholarly discourse, she adds, is *shōnen'ai* manga (2013, p.64). Although *Boys Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture, and Community in Japan* (2015) sought to expand on and clarify certain aspects of BL which were unclear in earlier research publications, much of the BL research before this focused on the subject of gender and female sexuality. Examples include research publications from Fusami Ōgi (2009), Mark McHarry (2011), Kumiko Saito (2011), Akiko Mizoguchi (2008), and James Welker (2011). Ōgi argues, for example, that once homosexuality was introduced as a subject in manga in the 1970s, the male characters explored a new vision of sexuality by giving female readers a "vantage point through which to explore female desires without overtly acknowledging them" (Ōgi, 2009, p.244). Saito and McHarry argue in a similar vein, with McHarry maintaining that *yaoi* "not only troubles the culturally dominant notions of identity and gender, it also empowers people—notably youth, who have little power—to resist them" (McHarry, 2010, p.192).

On the other hand, Mizoguchi and Welker have explored the potential lesbian readings of BL manga. In addition to the ongoing research dedicated to BL manga in terms of sexuality and gender, scholarly attention in the field of fandom and manga studies has also examined user gratifications and motivations associated with the predominantly female readership's consumption of BL manga. Mark McLelland (2006/2007), Zanghellini (2009), and Dru Pagliassotti (2008) are a few of the notable scholars who have engaged in field work concerning BL manga fans in Japan as well as

in the United States and Europe. For example, Pagliassotti's extensive research in the "West" found that the third most important feature of BL manga (according to 11% of the respondents) was "explicit sexual illustrations" (Pagliassotti, 2008, p.65). Furthermore, half of her respondents reported that rape, explicit sex, sad endings, physical torture, ordinariness, bed-hopping, cruel heroes, and weak heroes were all acceptable in BL manga (Pagliassotti, 2008, p.67). The vast range of topics found in BL manga highlighted by Pagliassotti and the findings by other scholars are both insightful and impressive, However, the artists who have produced such "explicit," torturous or simply ordinary manga, as well as the LGBT community reflected within BL manga, has been largely overlooked in scholarship. One of the exceptions is Mark Isola's 2010 investigation of female producers of slash fiction and *yaoi* ("an umbrella category that can encompass various Japanese subgenres of male-male erotic romance fiction by and for women" [Suzuki, 2015, p.94]). Other salient publications are Aoyama's work on representations of homosexuality (1988), Akiko Hori's research on anti-gay discrimination in manga (2013), and Wim Lunsing's discussion of depictions of male homosexuality in Japanese girls' manga, gay manga and gay pornography (2006). BL fans' uses and gratifications of BL, as well as representations of gender within BL manga, continue to remain important unexplored subjects in academic discourse and activity. In this light, my research contributes to the recently established disciplinary field of manga studies (as well as Japanese and/or queer studies) by considering the potential influence which the dissemination and consumption of BL manga has had on attitudes towards gender roles and social equality in Japan.

The primary aims of this thesis are to demonstrate to what extent amateur female BL artists (*dōjin*) and the largely female BL readership in Japan have empowered themselves as a subcultural community, as well as the wider LGBT community in Japan. However, I also wish to demonstrate that Japanese women's investment and production of BL manga is comparable to the pre-suffrage fiction produced in Britain during the Victorian era. The significance in illustrating the parallels between pre-suffrage fiction and Japanese women's production of BL manga lies in several common factors. Firstly, both sociohistorical contexts experienced significant technological shifts in their respective publishing industries. More precisely, the steam press in Britain and the growth of the manga publishing industry in postwar Japan both drove development and expansion of popular fiction and greater inclusion of women as they produced their own original fiction. Secondly, Victorian ideology—

in particular, the conservative and restricted attitudes towards love, marriage, sex, gender and the family unit as controllable and distinct institutions—was deeply embedded in not only Victorian culture and life, but also in Japan's Shōwa period (1926-1989). The Victorian ideology was introduced to Japan by missionaries during the Meiji period (1868-1912) and still held relevance in the Shōwa period (Lublin, 2010, p.1850). It was also in these contexts that themes and tropes in Gothic and romance fiction were being explored and appropriated both in mainstream and subversive fiction in Britain. Furthermore, both the periodicals in Britain and the girls' magazines and manga magazines encouraged the anonymous masses of their respective female readerships to submit artwork or fiction. For instance, in their work on Victorian periodicals, Fraser, Green and Johnston note that in contributing to periodicals such as *Girl's Own Paper*, girls sought visible entry into the community of the periodicals' readers (2003, p.75). Similarly, the young female readers of *Shōjo no tomo* (the Girls' Friend) in Japan's early Shōwa period actively contributed works of prose, poetry, calligraphy and art to the readers' columns (Imada, 2002, p.187). Aside from these factors, I argue that the most striking correlation between the two cultures was that the greater proliferation of both professional and amateur female illustrators and authors preceded or occurred during major women's rights movements. In Britain, this proliferation preceded the women's suffrage movement; in Japan, the Women's Liberation movement.

I will first provide an overview of the literature about the subject area and outline my research design and methodology. The following two chapters will seek to draw out the notable comparisons between the exponential growth of women producing and consuming pre-suffrage fiction in Britain, and BL manga in Japan. These chapters will clarify and contextualise the various means and methods which have been available for both professional and amateur female artists or writers to publish original, derivative, or subversive works under relatively rigid social constraints. These chapters will provide the groundwork for the subsequent chapters, where I introduce and analyse my ethnographic research and findings in Japan, tracing the evolution of certain trends and readership patterns in women's progressive publishing. Chapter Three will examine the extent to which *dōjin* BL artists and their readers in Japan have empowered themselves as individuals and as a subcultural community. Chapter Four will then discuss research findings associated with BL manga's potential impact on Japan's LGBT community, as well as the community's reaction towards BL subculture

and representations of same-sex relationships in BL manga. The data and findings in chapters three and four are based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Japan from 2014 to 2015. The fieldwork involved a number of different methods including surveys, follow-up semi-structured interviews, cultural observations, email correspondence, and data collection of *dōjin*-produced BL manga only available for purchase at *dōjin* manga events. Further details of the research methodology will be specified in the methodology chapter and the chapters about my fieldwork.

Although sales of mainstream manga and manga magazines have been declining, digital platforms and applications allowing manga to be read or purchased on smartphones, tablets or PCs are on the rise through major e-book distributors such as eBook Japan and Papyless (Denison, Furukawa and Joo, 2013, p.13). While *dōjin* manga creators have also distributed their work through digital means, *dōjin* bookstores and mail order methods, conventionally-distributed paperback manga nevertheless remain a crucial part of *dōjin* and *fujoshi* (an "inclusive term for the female fandom of *yaoi/*BL" [Hester, 2015, p.169]) subculture. Their independence from the mainstream publishing industry is reinforced in Joo, Denison, and Furukawa's collaborative research on Japan's contemporary manga, anime and film industries, which suggests that "creative copyright infringing amateurs [*dōjin*] are left relatively unmolested within Japan, to the extent that they have their own fan followings and congregate en masse at events like Comiket" (2013, p.13). Irrespective of industry concerns and a downward trend in conventional publishing, *dōjinshi* prosumers (both producers/*dōjin* and consumers/fans) and their dedicated *fujoshi* followers have created sustainable spaces exclusively for those sufficiently interested in creating or collecting self-published BL works. These spaces are accessible to those willing and able to travel to a designated site, then pay for a table to display their work or purchase the obligatory catalogue to gain entry. The lengths to which fans and creators of BL manga (as well as other manga genres) will go to revel in their shared enjoyment of self-published BL works is illustrated by the success of the *dōjin* convention Comiket, one of the major bi-annual manga pilgrimages of BL fandom.Comiket 84 in 2013, for instance, welcomed about 590, 000 attendees at Comic Market 84 (Mainichi Shimbun Digital, 2013).

Although the wider dissemination of BL manga is of concern in this thesis, it is the shared experience of these progressive prosumers and *fujoshi/*BL enthusiasts as members of a fringe culture that can be said to reveal the extent to which it may be

empowering for women and Japan's LGBT community. It is on this shared experience that this thesis will focus.

# Literature Review

Women's production and consumption of popular romance fiction has often been dismissed as passive, narcissistic, or even "lacking in social substance" (Aoyama, 2010, p.2). Similarly, the privilege to perform in the theatre was long restricted to men not only in classical Roman or Greek theatre traditions, but also in Britain until the English Restoration, and even to this day in all-male Japanese *kabuki* theatre. However, despite the restrictions they experienced throughout history (whether legal, technological, due to illiteracy, or simply to the stigma attached to women's cultural participation in the public sphere), women have found and developed means to express themselves and engage in the production and consumption of popular culture. In light of past and present constraints, this thesis primarily concerns itself with the phenomenon of Japanese women's production and consumption of homosocial and homoerotic manga, namely, boys' love manga. This cultural production, I believe, is comparable to the women's literary movement during the eighteenth to the nineteenth century in Britain. Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates how amateur female BL artists (*dōjin*) and their readers in Japan might have empowered themselves as a subcultural community, as well as the represented LGBT community. By "empower," I am primarily referring to social empowerment. Thus, when discussing *dōjin* and their productions, I adopt cultural theorist John Fiske's notion of social empowerment—whereby the consumption and reproduction of popular culture forms part of the struggle of groups against the hegemonic culture of the powerful (Fiske, 1989, p.47). Although I frame the discussions on "empowerment" based on Fiske's work, I must also stress that gratification from fan activities cannot be constructed as something that works purely in opposition to a dominant power system. It is debatable whether "subversive" fan activities and the pleasures derived from them either challenge or sustain power relations. Whether they have the power to shift cultural values and attitudes is also questionable, but I nevertheless argue that their influence cannot be discounted.

Whilst much research and literary discourse has recognised the significance of the British women's literary movement in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, it has only been in the last two to three decades that manga, let alone BL manga, has entered

Anglophone academic discourse. Tomoko Aoyama's "Male Homosexuality as Treated by Japanese Women Writers" (Aoyama, 1988, pp.186-204) is one of the significant contributions to the field. This thesis necessarily encompasses a broad range of disciplines and research fields such as manga studies, Asian queer studies, fandom/fan studies, gender studies, Japanese literary and art history, and the well-established body of research concerning British women's contribution to literature. Therefore, I will critically consider only key texts pertinent to my thesis. With regard to BL manga and Japanese women's associated subcultural engagement in manga production, I will primarily draw upon concepts from relevant research in the field of BL manga studies by theorists such as Mark McLelland (2000, 2015), James Welker (2006, 2015), Tomoko Aoyama (1988, 2010), Aleardo Zanghellini (2009), Dru Pagliassotti (2008), Akiko Mizoguchi (2008), Sharalyn Orbaugh (2009), Kazumi Nagaike (2003, 2010) and Sharon Kinsella (2000). Most of these theorists have examined the supposedly heterosexual female reader's responses, the gratifications "she" derives from reading of same-sex manga, censorship, BL themes, tropes and stylistic aspects, and global BL fandom. However, very few have closely investigated the participatory nature of "prosumer" (producer-consumer) activities, or the wider influence these activities have on women and the LGBT community in Japan. This thesis will attempt to address these gaps in scholarship by expanding on pre-existing theoretical work, as well as analysing the results from fieldwork involving qualitative interviews. Other notable theorists in the field and their respective works will be mentioned where necessary throughout the following discussion.

Some background on the history of sexuality in Japan and the genealogy of cultural portrayals of same-sex relations is needed to understand the subject. Gregory Pflugfelder's (1999), Gary Leupp (1995), Wim Lunsing (2001, 2006) and Joshua S. Mostow's (2003) work on gender and sexuality in Japan, Deborah Michelle Shamoon's extensive research on the aesthetics of girls' culture in Japan (2012), and Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall's *Recreating Japanese Men* (2011) provide thoroughly detailed accounts of the history of male sexuality and masculinities in Japan. I will also acknowledge and draw on the plethora of available theoretical work on gender and sexuality, Asian queer studies, and fan studies. Notable texts and theorists that deserve a brief mention are John Fiske's *Understanding Popular Culture* (1989), Henry Jenkins' *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* (2006) and *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (2007), Paul Booth's *Digital*

*Fandom: New Media Studies* (2012), *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World* (2012), and *Manga Girl Seeks Herbivore Boy: Studying Japanese Gender at Cambridge* (2013). Before reviewing the abovementioned works on homosexuality in Japan and its relative cultural manifestations, I will present an overview of the established concepts and discourse surrounding BL and contemporary manga studies.

**Manga Studies**

The origins of BL lie in the subgenre of girls' manga known as *shōnen'ai* (literally, "boys' love"), which emerged in the 1970s, which is commonly acknowledged to have originated in the 1970s with artists Moto Hagio and Keiko Takemiya. Hagio and Takemiya, said to be inspired by the work of Hermann Hesse (Welker, 2015, p.50), are best known for their attempts to explore the physical and psychological dynamics of same-sex bonds in their respective iconic titles *Tooma no shinzō* (The Heart of Thomas) (1974) and *Kaze to ki no uta* (Poem of Wind and Trees) (1976-1984). Although BL is now well and truly an established subgenre of manga both in Japan and globally, much of the discourse and research around it has been primarily focused upon demystifying heterosexual women's infatuation with a genre of manga that portrays the emotional and erotic ordeals of homosexual male youths.

In his research on the BL phenomenon, "Beautiful, Borrowed, and Bent: 'Boys' Love' as Girls' Love in *Shōjo* Manga," James Welker examines and problematises the academic discourse that claims manga "helped to liberate writers and readers to work within and against the local heteronormative paradigm in the exploration of alternatives" (Welker, 2006, p.841). Welker also problematises the notion that readers can construct their sense of sexual subjectivity and identity based on their identification with "beautiful boy" (*bishōnen*) characters in BL narratives. Although Welker is not the first to challenge the assumption that BL manga has liberated and encouraged writers and readers to deconstruct gender and heteronormativity, his work highlights the necessity of thorough qualitative research to test the validity of the popular assumptions regarding reader responses to BL manga. Nevertheless, I suggest that visual borrowing (or, to use Henry Jenkins' concept, "cultural poaching") from traditional manga has helped to liberate BL writers and readers. Amateur BL artists (*dōjin*) publish *dōjinshi,* "a self-published genre of original and parody manga" (McLelland, 2015, p. 257) that feature mainstream manga and anime characters taken

from iconic series such as *One Piece, Naruto* or *Attack on Titan*. They use these characters to create subversive homoerotic narratives which may also attract fans of those characters and entice them to explore the world of BL. Considering that the BL market was estimated to be worth 22 billion yen in 2015 (Yano, 2016), it is also reasonable to suggest that the exposure and proliferation of the genre has seen the empowerment of its creators—through the sales of their manga, the accompanying praise from fans at events, and sometimes proposals from publishing agents. However, Welker's claim that fans' feelings of empowerment stem from their sexual or gender exploration (2006, p.841) is nonetheless a fair one to make, provided there is substantial qualitative evidence. I demonstrate this in Chapter 3.7.

Another significant aspect of Welker's BL research, which Shamoon also takes into account, is the genealogy of same-sex narratives within *shōjo bunka* (girls' culture). Welker goes back to the modern, pre-war girls' magazines which, in a similar manner to BL manga, depicted same-sex homosocial bonds between girls (as opposed to boys). However, as the Japanese Empire's re-/productive gender agenda was established before and during World War II, it was no longer appropriate to encourage passionate friendships between girls. At the same time, there was an arguably lesser stigma attached to portraying heterosexual love within girls' magazines. Welker notes that "Takemiya took the world pioneered by early twentieth-century writer Nobuko Yoshiya—a narrative world that has been reclaimed by contemporary Japanese lesbians—and brought it to *shōjo* manga" (Welker, 2006, pp.852-853). The significance of Shamoon and Welker's work on the genealogy of same-sex representations in girls' culture is that it can be construed as demonstrating that, rather than being a fetish with homoerotic narratives, girls' investment in BL fiction might well be a nostalgic revival of the earlier *shōjo* culture. Thus, the application of such historical evidence may actually refute the idea of women's transgressive gender or sexual exploration, instead suggesting that perhaps the popularity of BL manga was (and is) simply a longing for the past.

Nevertheless, theorists such as Naoko Mori maintain that BL and *yaoi* is a form of female-oriented pornography (2010). Welker also acknowledges that BL potentially fosters a space for sexual exploration but suggests, as does Kazumi Nagaike (2003), that women's exploration of sexuality and gender is more likely to be an exploration of power dynamics. Welker argues that the ambiguous form of the beautiful boy in BL

manga "shows readers that neither the body nor the psyche need be shackled by norms" (2006, p.866). He and further cites Robertson's observation that in Japan, "androgyny has been used in both dominant and marginalised discourses of sex, gender, and sexuality to camouflage 'unconventional' female sexual practices by creating the illusion of an asexual—in effect, a disembodied—identity" (Robertson, 1998, p.48). In this sense, we could interpret the salience of androgynous figures in BL as a means of challenging gender norms and, more importantly, power.

Regarding explicit sexual depictions and the possible gratifications for readers, Mark McLelland (2007), Dru Pagliassotti (2008), and Aleardo Zanghellini's (2009) research on global BL and *yaoi* trends, readership and sexual identification, as well as issues associated with censorship, *shōta* (manga involving minors), and the impact of global Internet policy provide greater insight into the BL manga's ripple effect and its implications on a global scale. The significance of studying BL manga's global readership trends and demographics is that it reinforces the idea that women's consumption of same-sex themes in romance fiction (slash fiction, for instance) is not simply a "big in Japan" phenomenon.

While Pagliassotti and Antonia Levi (2008), among a number of scholars, have investigated BL and *yaoi* readership trends and gratifications in North America, Zanghellini and, notably, Paul M. Malone conducted research in Europe. Papers concerning fandom in Korea (Noh, 2008), Taiwan (Martin, 2012), Indonesia (Abraham, 2008), and China (Yi, 2013) also reflect the genre's presence in Asia. However, I suggest that its prominence in powerful post-industrial nation states (namely, Japan, France, Germany and the United States) either reflects an increase in tastes towards sexuality and queer media as a global phenomenon, or else an underlying dissatisfaction with romance fiction produced in the West. For example, in Paglissotti's 2005 study, not only did the largest group of her respondents consider "slowly but developing love between the couple" as the overarching factor in enjoying BL; around a third of her respondents agreed with the statement "I wish I had a romance like the ones in boy's love manga" (Pagliassotti, 2008, p.59). Given these findings, one could infer that BL provides something for its Western readers that is lacking in Western romance fiction. Consider also Pagliassotti's observation that BL manga resemble standard Western romance novels, that many narratives are set in exotic locations and the distant past, and that they often feature sexual violence (2008,

pp.61-67). One could argue that BL artists create a fantasy-like landscape for readers to temporarily relocate to, safe in the knowledge that it is not their immediate reality but rather an inviting and enticing refuge/retreat for a temporary flight of fancy, comparable to the Gothic romances of the late Victorian era or modern Harlequin romance fiction.

Regarding sexual violence, as previously noted, Pagliassotti's research found that half of the respondents thought that "rape, explicit sex, sad endings, physical torture, ordinariness, bed-hopping, cruel heroes, and weak heroes were all acceptable in BL manga" (2008, p.67). BL manga enthusiasts' general acceptance of sexual "deviancy" and flawed characters arguably highlights their tolerance of a range of sexual "deviancies." However, Pagliassotti fails to elaborate on her respondents' tolerance of rape or torture, which in itself is worth investigating considering that slowly but consistently developing love (as opposed to sexual violence) was given as the overarching factor in enjoying BL. Although Pagliassotti offers no bold or solid argument as to why women globally have taken a strong liking to homoerotic manga, she nevertheless cites a number of claims made by previous scholars in the field of manga studies. Like others, however, Pagliassotti also makes the safe assumption that "Romance novels and BL manga have both been characterised as creating a female centred space that resists patriarchal pressure or demands" (2008, p.77). In light of this, I suggest that power, in the guise of sex and sexuality, is the principal driving force behind global BL fandom.

Similarly, in his studies in central Europe, Zanghellini suggests that one of the primary motivations for European fans' consumption of BL manga is associated with the readers' dissatisfaction with representations of female protagonists in romance fiction (Zanghellini, 2009, p.290). Zanghellini takes into account his own research online and the findings from Pagliassotti's 2005 survey with 478 "Western" BL enthusiasts (coming from the U.S., Canada, the UK, Australia, South America, Europe, and other countries [Pagliassotti, 2008]), as well as Pagliassotti's 2006-2007 study with 313 Italian respondents. Zanghellini notes that although Pagliassotti's sample was largely female, it included a fair amount of male readers (11% in the United States, 13% in Italy). Furthermore, although most readers in Pagliassotti's sample declared themselves heterosexual, the proportion of bisexual readers was also relatively sizeable (25% and 18%) compared to the proportion of gay (4% and 6%) and lesbian (3% and

2%) readers. Also, most of these individuals were "overwhelmingly supportive of gay rights" (2009, p.280). The fact that most of the sample were heterosexual women supportive of gay rights and dissatisfied with representations of women in popular culture again suggests that equality regarding power relations, gender, or other matters, is arguably one of the key factors in their investment in BL manga. Also, Zanghellini's consideration of the respondents' sexual orientations, as well as their values and attitudes towards gay rights, is very valuable because it may help determine whether consumption of BL manga has played a part in encouraging greater LGBT visibility and fostering the exploration of gender and sexuality amongst readers. In Europe, however, mixed demographics, stricter international media policies than those found in Japan, and content control have turned censorship into an issue of interest for many BL manga researchers, including Zanghellini. He notes that *yaoi* and BL cover "not only man–man, but also boy–boy, and man–boy love," adding that the prevalence of underage characters in such manga makes *yaoi*/BL manga an obvious target for censorship in some Western countries (2009, p.160). Zanghellini raises the fact that Japanese manga artists have been able to avoid prosecution from censorship bodies within Japan, and that they can distribute manga containing depictions of indecent or obscene sex largely as a result of Japan's vaguely defined censorship laws. This vagueness contrasts with Australian, Canadian and American censorship policies, which are clearly defined. Furthermore, Zanghellini suggests that,

> the infrequency of obscenity cases [in Japan] is in line with Japan's
> general pattern of low levels of court litigation. This, in turn, is in
> accordance with a social preference for informal methods of
> regulation and conflict resolution, rooted in a cultural emphasis on
> social harmony and consensus, the abhorrence of public displays of
> conflict and the importance of avoiding face-loss. (2009, p.161)

Thus, it is in this context of lax censorship and low levels of court litigation, that one potentially has greater access and exposure to sexually explicit, indecent, or sometimes, "obscene" media content. Lyombe Eko reinforces this idea by noting that "violent, sex-themed material involving minors is common in Japan, despite laws against its production" (Eko, 2016, p.72). However, rather than condoning this kind of media climate, Zanghellini agrees with cultural anthropologist Anne Allison's (2000) argument that the consumption of indecent or "obscene" images is integral to the

maintenance of national values and stability. Readers can consume depictions of adult genitalia and heterosexual intercourse, which are symbolically connected to reproduction, motherhood, family life and normative citizenship. It is this consumption that is instrumental to national productivity as it provides an escape from, and makes tolerable, an everydayness that hinges upon long work hours, a strong work ethic, and long commuting times (2009, pp.165-166). Although some might consider Allison's argument highly contentious, it holds some validity. After all, the institution of the family unit and conservative values and attitudes towards reproduction and sexuality persist in many quarters of contemporary Japanese society. As Junko Ashida argued in the *Asia Times*:

> Today, many Japanese women leave the workforce to raise a family, and struggle to return to work in the face of rigid gender roles and social expectations that women should be responsible for a family while working. A lack of available daycare facilities, aging parents' care, and the absence of support from their husbands are further road blocks for women who desire career options in their lives. (Ashida, 2016)

In any case, however harmful or negative certain depictions of non-normative sexual practices in manga may seem to countries with more conservative attitudes towards sex and sexuality (such as Russia, Indonesia or Malaysia), perhaps the consumption of these images does serve as a means of escape or stress relief. As Michel Foucault reminds us, the repression of sex has given rise to its greater resurgence in discourse (Foucault, 1978, p.34), and it seems that both major and minor publishing houses in the Japanese manga industry employ this argument to justify the production and consumption of non-normative texts. Nevertheless, the subject remains a global concern and Zanghellini, as well as McLelland, make up the few theorists who have thoroughly researched manga censorship and the complications incurred by the expansion of IT and digital manga.

In contrast to Zanghellini (who takes a relatively neutral stance towards the depiction of minors or obscene material), McLelland shrinks neither from emphasising the futility of Internet censorship, nor from stressing the opinion that depictions of

sexual exploration among adolescents are necessary in spite of "draconic" censorship laws. Furthermore, he condones depictions of male genitalia in *yaoi* manga on the basis that, rather than being represented as stand-ins for the male character as a whole (as commonly represented in men's manga), the penis in women's comics is a "means to bring together and unite two bodies, to make them one flesh during the act of love" (McLelland, 2000, p.282). McLelland's defence for condoning the consumption of explicit *yaoi* manga is the positivity of the proactive fan behaviour which fans have exhibited internationally. He notes that *yaoi* has proven to be widely popular among women, who "use the Internet both to visit amateur *yaoi* websites and to purchase and trade in printed *yaoi* material," and that these fans "have been proactive in creating global on- and offline communities for sharing, selling, and swapping their *yaoi* manga, animations, and stories" (McLelland 2007, p.97).

These female fans accessing *yaoi* manga titles involving minors or other sexually-explicit material on a day-to-day basis, he argues, are "rarely identified as potential child-sex abusers" (2007, p.98). While conventional ideas about virtual child pornography, its association with the sexual abuse of children, or its pathological nature persist, female *yaoi* fans and artists alike have found means to consume highly explicit and/or illegal material without the threat of condemnation or imprisonment. Furthermore, rather than being viewed in a negative light and such practices are perceived by some as proactive or empowering. McLelland draws upon Kazumi Nagaike's work (2003) on Japan, in which she claims that *yaoi* narratives provide female readers with access to the phallus, that readers identify with the male characters, and that they perhaps delight in characters' performance of anal sex, oral sex, S/M, rape, or use of sexual apparatuses (Nagaike, 2003, p.85). Some of Nagaike's subjects explained that they identify with the penis of the male characters due to the sexual agency this gives them in fantasy, which helps them feel "freed from the position of always being the 'done to'" (2003, p.85). Indeed, these findings may justify the consumption of BL and *yaoi* in spite of the broad sweep of censorship legislation. Furthermore, McLelland's claim that sexual fantasy and experimentation are important aspects of adolescents' sexual development and the development of their sexual identities (2007, p.100) is significant. What McLelland's work on global *yaoi* consumption reveals is the complex paradoxes associated with child pornography, women's progressive fan practices, and the prohibition of access to *yaoi* websites for teenagers who might otherwise produce *yaoi* manga or go to *yaoi* manga conventions.

Media policy needs to address these issues in such a way as to protect minors from being harmed while still providing women and young adults with a means of accessing material that allows them to explore their sexual agency safely and without the threat of legal consequences or condemnation. McLelland's study of international IT and media content policy is pertinent to this thesis, as it demonstrates that, although the graphic material produced in Japan is very controversial, it is still permitted under the country's laws. Whether or not such material is "obscene" according to Japanese censorship laws remains debatable. However, as McLelland has demonstrated, *yaoi* provides a space for adult women (and perhaps teenagers, to some extent) to practice sexual agency. This, I will argue, is a positive attribute despite the stigma attached to the consumption of what Western media watchdogs might consider child pornography. Therefore, in the surveys I prepared for Japanese producers and major publishers of *yaoi*, issues associated with censorship are addressed . My findings somewhat reinforce McLelland's claims (see Chapter Three).

Compared to many non-Japanese scholars, Japanese scholars of BL manga have greater access to a diverse range of both older and newly-released primary sources on BL manga and girls' culture in the original context and language. They also may have greater insight into the changing values and attitudes in Japanese society. Two of the most renowned and frequently-cited manga, gender and cultural theorists within the field of manga studies are Tomoko Aoyama (2010) and Akiko Mizoguchi (2010). In their recent research and writings, they provide detailed studies of aspects such as fan and artist practices, the history of BL manga, concepts of taste, conventions, trends, stylistics, character dynamics and gender subversion. As an authority on the evolving nature of BL in Japan, Mizoguchi has established two different eras of BL culture: pre- and post-2004. It is during the second era (post 2004) that she notes that the term *fujoshi* ("rotten girl") was picked up by the mass media, and that coverage of BL and *yaoi* manga fans "increased their visibility" (Mizoguchi, 2010, pp.144-145). While the labelling of a particular subcultural group or community may be for the simple purpose of identification, I suggest that their being recognised as a subcultural group spurred a greater sense of unity in the fan community. As Patrick Galbraith notes,

Symbolically, the term "*fujoshi*" is a pun that transforms the Japanese
term "women and girls" into a homonym meaning "rotten girls."

While obviously an example of labeling and negative identity politics,
we should not forget that the word "*fujoshi*" is used among yaoi fans
themselves. This can be a form of self-deprecating humor, but also
something more. Some women embrace being "rotten girls,"
announcing themselves as *fujoshi* and performing this identification
when among friends and fellow fans." (Galbraith, 2015, p.155)

However, regardless of whether one labels oneself is or labelled, what are the
implications of being recognised as a fan of BL or *yaoi* manga? Can it be empowering?
My survey was designed to determine these implications. However, Mizoguchi has
already suggested that *yaoi* fans have "mixed feelings of pride and shame about being
abnormal and special, as opposed to normal yet simply ordinary non-fans [...] *yaoi* fans
share the identity of the minority sexuality (sexual orientation) of *yaoi*" (2010, p.155).
Whether or not this is true, and whether the *fujoshi* label is empowering, embarrassing
or derogatory (according to the fans), is another issue that I attempted to address in the
surveys, follow-up interviews, and qualitative research discussed in Chapter 3.2.

Regarding the evolution of BL manga over the last four decades, Mizoguchi
suggests that although the graphic styles, settings, and storylines have become more
diversified in the second era, most *yaoi* or BL narratives continue to assign fixed
gender roles to characters such as the aggressor (*seme*) and the passive partner (*uke*)
(2010, pp.144-145). According to Mizoguchi, these character dynamics continue to
function on the level of both romantic and buddy narratives. What this indicates is that
discussions on the ever-present and long-established archetypes in narratology,
character theory and psychology not only hold some truth, but that in an ironic twist,
these archetypes also reinforce pre-existing heteronormative gender roles. This, in
particular, is a phenomenon worth addressing with fans. Questions that remain to be
addressed include whether or not fans prefer such character dynamics, with whom they
identify with when reading (either the *seme* or the *uke*) and why, as well as whether
they consider such fixed power dynamics realistic portrayals of equal relationships.
Mizoguchi indicates no evidence of the sort, but instead demonstrates fans' liberal
views towards gender role assignments through the popularity of Tarako Kotobuki's
*Love Pistols* (2008-). She elaborates on its subversive nature, stating that *Love Pistols*
"both subverts and enforces heteronormative assumptions concerning love, sex,

reproduction, and family. On one level, the fact that male-male couples and even a female-female couple get married and have children seems to subvert the heteronormative system" (2010, p.161).

In all her discussions concerning fandom, trends, and sexuality and gender, Mizoguchi's consideration of not only individual reader gratifications but also participatory and communal gratifications is particularly relevant to my area of research. Gratifications, needless to say, vary from reader to reader, but communal gratifications can be pinned down. In doing so, much can be revealed about the nature of BL and *yaoi* fans. For instance, Mizoguchi has observed that at fanzine conventions and comic events,

> one feels equal to one another in the *yaoi* community. The fact that
> the famous author is basically indistinguishable from her friends and
> assistants actually enhances the sense of community to which all the
> *yaoi* fans, including the popular commercial authors, equally belong.
> (2010, p.150)

Furthermore, Mizoguchi suggests that the authors' personal mini-comments (as well as side comments throughout the narrative) and postscripts are strategies which bridge the psychological gap between authors and fans (2010, p.150). These techniques have been employed in girls' magazines and novels in Japan for over a century, but they certainly indicates the value placed on one's sense of belonging. Lastly, and intriguingly, Mizoguchi claims that *yaoi* women fans need each other, "not switches and batteries" (2010, p.158). That is, sexual fantasies are created and exchanged among *yaoi* readers. Their unique way of bonding is based upon mutually shared fantasies and can be explored on a virtual, physical, platonic or erotic level.

Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley's *Girl Reading Girl in Japan* (2010) covers similar topics and themes concerning BL manga, women's readership practices and girls' culture, tracing the history of girls' and women's active readership practices in Japa. Aoyama's influential piece "Male Homosexuality as Treated by Japanese Women Writers" (1988) was one of the first works to cover gender, sexuality, and the gratifications associated with women's BL manga consumption. However, her early

claim that the beautiful (and often androgynous) boys are no more than projections of the largely female audience's femininity is too narrow a perspective for a critical study on fandom. The idea that these young, effeminate protagonists simply serve as characters with whom female readers can identify and explore sexuality (without the feeling of being condemned for reading erotic manga of a heterosexual nature) overlooks the complexity of reading practices which Jacques Derrida (1978) and other key figures in post-structuralist theory have long argued. However, in her more recent publications, Aoyama sheds greater light on the "literary girl" by examining female authorship and readership in Japan. As noted in the introduction, Aoyama suggests that the literary girl has been constructed as "lightweight, narcissistic, consumer-oriented and lacking in social substance" (Aoyama, 2010, p.2). She adds, "this dismissal, which targets both the individual and her cultural production, not only denies the worth of the writers, but also repudiates the cultural preferences of the many girl readers who see value in the text of these girl authors" (2010, p.2).

Although a seemingly obvious claim to make regarding the taken-for-granted female authorship and reading practices of romance fiction, it should nonetheless be recalled that such practices continue to be overlooked in the West with the dismissive labelling of certain texts as "chick lit" or "chick flicks." This dismissive attitude, I suggest, is also prevalent in Japan, as evidenced by the wider social disregard of women's production and consumption of BL manga. However, Aoyama regards the processes of producing and consuming certain genres of girls' fiction as "crucial in challenging normative and restrictive notions of female sexuality" (2010, p.7). Moreover, she argues that the accusations of narcissism and self-indulgence directed at the literary girl have partly been a reaction to her "refusal to allow masculine structures to suppress her sensuous self-expression and by her willingness to create ways of fulfilling her desires that humiliate normative masculinity" (2010, p.7). This may be the case for both professional and amateur producers of BL fiction and goods. However, the lack of supportive evidence somewhat undermines Aoyama's claim. Nevertheless, this "revenge on patriarchy" motivation which Aoyama suggests is a claim worthy of debate and investigation through further research.

Other theorists who are prominent in the field of manga studies and Japanese cultural studies and relevant to further discussions on *dōjin* practices are Sharon Kinsella and Sharalyn Orbaugh. Firstly, in her elaborate study on adult manga in Japan,

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Kinsella discusses hurdles in the manga industry which artists have faced in publishing their content. She concentrates on the impact of manga censorship during the Pacific War, the original distinctions between manga (originally intended for children) and *gekiga* (comics with content either for professional adults or radical political content in the 1950s and 1960s), and the gradual development of adult manga in the mid-1980s with adult-marketed manga magazines such as *Morning*. These are all major aspects of manga history that are central to any discussion on adult or explicit manga. However, it is Kinsella's thorough research on the history of Comic Market (Japan's longest enduring and most visited fanzine event), substantiated with quantitative data in the form of statistics and graphs, that is particularly valuable for researchers in the field of manga studies concerned with *dōjin* practices. Kinsella also takes into account the common *dōjin* practice of "parody" manga (derivative and often *yaoi* manga involving popular mainstream anime or manga characters) and its associated issues regarding copyright, as well as its potential to build communities of fans who share a mutual love of certain characters. It is through these fan communities and *dōjin sākuru* (circles of amateur artists) that the greater networks of *otaku* and *fujoshi* were arguably born. Kinsella does them the justice of outlining their history and their experiences of media ostracism, as well as acknowledging their fandom practices as a means of empowerment. The independence and all-embracing nature of *dōjin* publishing have fostered a community of fans who create and consume what they want while bonding through their communal love of a space which fosters the completely unregulated production of unique, creative, or derivative works. As Kinsella notes:

> In the amateur manga world no alternative system of valuation, artistic discipline, or quality control, replaced that carried out by publishing companies. Artists who could not get their work published in manga magazines took advantage of this unregulated sphere to produce and distribute their work in amateur form. (Kinsella, 2000, p.134)

It is within this space, I suggest, that the predominantly female community of *fujoshi* flourished and fostered the growth of the BL industry. It is at these events where those artists who take the trouble to sell original publications come to network and bond with their fan communities. Although Kinsella recognises the significance of these prosumers and their dedication to their community, her research lacks significant

qualitative data on *dōjin* practices and their potentially empowering effects, as well as impacts on the wider community. Thus, with more elaborate and qualitative research in addition to Kinsella's data, greater insight into the *fujoshi* community may be gained.

Although also lacking in rich qualitative data, Orbaugh's research on *dōjin* practices (2009) provides a valuable source of information on the past and current amateur artist scene in Japan. For example, even though Comic Market is arguably the ideal social event for fans and prosumers at which to sell and interact, Orbaugh concedes that most of the contemporary *dōjin* circles are virtual, adding that virtual circles allow "for ever-increasing participation by people situated in any part of Japan in groups that are increasingly defined by niche interests" (Orbaugh, 2009, p.175). Naturally, the advantage of such virtual interaction is that fans with specific tastes can easily locate, bond and feel a sense of belonging with other like-minded fans across the nation. However, the social or participatory level of their fan activities is limited. This, I argue, potentially hinders the sustainability of the community but this is only verifiable through further research. Regarding enduring past and present fan-artist interaction, Orbaugh draws upon evidence from reader feedback systems employed in modern *shōjo* magazines and *June* (the first commercial magazine to specialise in BL-like narratives), which has been known for its editors' willingness to review and occasionally publish manuscripts from amateurs. Although these feedback or art submission systems are now predominantly conducted online, the system, as opposed to the transmission, remains the same. In this way, as Orbaugh argues, "throughout the history of feminine readership in Japan, interactivity and feedback seem to have been important, even across 'high culture' and popular lines in various media" (2010, p.175).

With respect to all the various practices that fans and artists have used to interact and bond, Orbaugh argues, like others, that these phenomena have fostered an atmosphere "that favors permeable boundaries between the producers and consumers of narratives in Japan, and between commercial and amateur production communities" (2009, p.177). One result of the establishment of the Comic Market as one of the major events for fan and artist interaction, she observes, was that a number of talented *dōjin* were discovered and recruited by professional manga publishers in a predominantly male-managed manga industry. Furthermore, such events also provide a space for professional artists with content too taboo for regular publishers. Again, all these facets of Comic Market and *dōjin*-fan interaction reinforce Orbaugh's suggestion that within

such events or atmospheres, "to embrace the 'hive mind' as a counter-culture identity produces a communal, empowered space that is not only open to that which is queer in the eyes of the mainstream, but actually enables the production and dissemination of queerness" (2009, p.184). Orbaugh, like Kinsella, makes some claims which would benefit from further substantiation. On the other hand, this provides an opportunity for further investigation via in-depth ethnographic studies, discourse and content analysis, or otherwise.

**Sexuality and Gender in Japan**

Having covered the relevant, primary works of research and theory in the field of manga studies, I will now outline Frühstück and Walthall's work on contemporary depictions and manifestations of mascunility in Japan, as well as Pflugfelder and Shamoon's research on the social and cultural history of sexuality and gender in Japan. This will allow me to provide a comprehensive background on homosexuality in Japan. Although Shamoon primarily covers the representation of girls' and women's homosocial bonds both culturally and socially from the Meiji period and onwards, Pflugfelder's research covers homosexuality in Japan from the pre-modern to post-World War II period in Japanese history. While Pflugfelder's work does not cover sexuality in Japan in the latter half of the twentieth century, McLelland and Frühstück, among others, have considered homosexuality and masculinity in post-World War II and contemporary contexts.

While secular European states embraced Christian ideals and thus condemned homosexuality and the practice of sodomy, in Japan, male-male sexual relations were neither condemned in the Shinto canon nor in Buddhism, where erotic relations between men were considered less evil than those with women (Pflugfelder, 1999, pp.99-101). In this context, sexual relations between monks and their acolytes as well as samurai *wakashudō* practices (senior-junior sexual relations among samurai) were of no public or political concern. It was not until the Meiji period, when Western visitors were startled at Japan's lax attitudes towards sodomy, that those homosexual practices which had persevered gradually came to be policed through reforms which were in line with so-called "Victorian sensibilities" (1999, p.147). According to Pflugfelder, however, the penal codes concerning sodomy were soon dropped in place of the "obscene acts" reform. This reform, strictly speaking, only considered sexual incidents

involving minors or coercion as punishable. Although Pflugfelder covers the social and legal traditions of pederasty and homosexual relations in Japan in greater detail, a basic overview of his work is sufficient to contextualise attitudes towards sexuality in modern Japan. What is of greater interest and relevance to my research in Pflugfelder's work are his discussions about the entry of the term *bishōnen* (beautiful boy) into popular discourse in the Edo period (1603-1868), and about censorship of erotic material and *senryū* (a form of comic and satiric expression which emerged in the periodical press during the Meiji period).

Although homoerotic motifs were not uncommon in *shunga* (erotic art) forms such as *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints) or pillow books, Pflugfelder observes that representations of homosexuality were also common in *senryū* publications. He uses the medium as a basis to track transitions in discourse surrounding and representations of same-sex relations in Japan. Comical *senryū* pieces involving stock characters such as male prostitutes, for instance, were the most commonly featured representations of male-male homosexuality in the early Meiji period. As Meiji policy makers tightened censorship laws between the late 1870s and early 1880s, *senryū* were suddenly subject to greater scrutiny. However, "boys' love" persists to this day (1999, p.199). The significance of Pflugfelder's particular method of inquiry, namely tracking transitions in content in popular culture, lies in the applicability of that method to a similar investigation of homosocial themes in early pre-war girls' magazines through to contemporary BL and *yaoi* manga. Although the censorship acts have been amended, the ongoing presence of homosocial or homosexual themes reveals much about general attitudes towards sexually explicit imagery in popular culture. The age-old tradition of socially accepted pederasty (as detailed by Pflugfelder), combined with the blatant demand in contemporary Japanese society for graphic content which is often indiscriminate in nature, highlights the greater need to question the public's attitude (as opposed to that of policy makers) towards same-sex content in popular culture. Why (and to what extent) is graphic content appealing or harmful in the eyes of media consumers? Although Pflugfelder's meticulous offering of legal and anecdotal evidence of male homosexuality in Japan is useful for further research into Japanese sexuality, female sexuality is rarely mentioned. In addition, women's interest in male-male relations is also overlooked. However, given that Pflugfelder's central concern is male-male sexuality, this is understandable, and it offers opportunities for theorists

such as Deborah Shamoon to trace the origins and changing nature of passionate friendships within girls' culture.

Shamoon's inquiry into the transition from representations of homosocial bonds between girls to boys is, like Pflugfelder's research, similarly rich with historical, anecdotal and cultural evidence from a diverse range of primary sources. Essentially, her interest lies in tracing the development of *shōjo* manga through the investigation of its cultural history in Japan. Shamoon's concern with the development of the *shōjo* (girl/schoolgirl), her accounts of the transitions between depictions of same-sex relations between girls in *shōjo shōsetsu* (girls' novels) to depictions of same-sex relations between boys (in *shōjo* manga in the late 1970s) are of significant value to my research. Regarding representations of same-sex relations in *shōjo bunka* (culture), Shamoon credits Nobuko Yoshiya with the formation of girls' novels, which in the "private world of girls' magazines […] encouraged girls to express themselves and to form close relationships with other girls" (Shamoon, 2012, p.70). Shamoon argues that since Yoshiya's novels celebrated female bonds over heterosexual marriage, they may have reflected similar relationships and bonds among its schoolgirl readership at that time. Nevertheless, her genealogy of *shōjo* manga stems from pre-war *jojōga* (Kashō Takabatake in the 1920s and Jun'ichi Nakahara in the 1930s) to Macoto Takahashi in the 1950s and Moto Hagio and Riyoko Ikeda in the 1970s. She claims that the development of both the salient visual storytelling features of *shōjo* manga and the tendency toward homogender pairings are traceable in the works of the aforementioned artists (2012, pp.89-90). However, what kind of content did these artists and writers offer as an alternative to narratives involving heterosexual romance? Shamoon takes several social and cultural factors into account. Firstly, she notes that in pre-war sexual discourse, "homosexual desires were part of the transitory state of adolescence and not indicative of lesbian identity in the contemporary sense of the word" (2012, p.35). Furthermore, she adds that as a result of the prohibition on narratives featuring male-female romance of any kind, the pages of pre-war girls' magazines were "filled with novels and letters about the passionate friendships between girls" (2012, p.39). Another contributing factor Shamoon considers is the lack of agency of female protagonists in romance fiction. Since most narratives involved a girl who "sees herself as unpopular, clumsy and unattractive, [yet] eventually achieves happiness by completely subsuming her desires into her relationship with the one boy who loves her despite her defects" (2012, p.39), a number of readers possibly sought alternative characters with whom to

identify. Yet another aspect associated with the preference for same-sex relations was the shame or stigma attached to both reading and writing about girls involved in intimate relations with the opposite sex. Essentially, what Shamoon's assumption and contextual evidence arguably indicates, yet again, is a general dissatisfaction with female protagonists marked by a lack of agency or intelligence. Whether or not the readers of pre- and postwar girls' magazines and manga were particularly dissatisfied with these passive and foolish female protagonists is difficult to determine. However, as noted, female readers' consumption of same-sex themed romance fiction has thrived. This, once again, reinforces the value of qualitatively assessing their motivations.

Shamoon's discussion of *shōjo* artists' radical and unique artistry will be detailed in later chapters that focus on artists (and their relative means of empowerment). Therefore, the final aspect of Shamoon's research that I wish to discuss here is her supportive evidence for the positive participatory nature of girls' fandom. For instance, Shamoon argues that pre-war magazines such as *Shōjo no tomo* (the Girls' Friend), rather than *Shōjo Club*, fostered the creation of girls' culture and the passionate devotion of its readers through its calls for readers' amateur art submissions, its forum for letter exchange between fans (as well as artists), and its regular meetings for fans nationwide (2012, pp.48-50). Given that these practices have continued to this day, it can be assumed that there are certain merits associated with them that require further investigation. Shamoon believes that the sense of intimacy these practices create between artists and fans, and the fact that readers were encouraged to become artists, may explain how the genre came to be dominated by female artists. It is in this sense, Shamoon argues, that the participatory nature of *shōjo* culture "can seem like a female-only space" (2012, p.83). Interesting too is the ongoing discursive phenomenon of codified or secret language, originally marked in part by references to particular flowers and loan words from English, now marked by Google search-friendly *fujoshi* terminology (2012, p.32). Granted, this is not an atypical subcultural practice, but it nonetheless reflects the power of discourse and its relative methods of exclusion. Although the use of codified/secret language might create the illusion of a counter-public sphere—based on both on the notion of a "hive mind" community as well as methods of exclusion—the extent to which they might do so in a contemporary context of information inundation is questionable.

As the final relevant text concerned with Japanese sexuality to be considered, Frühstück and Walthall's *Recreating Japanese Men* (2011) provides more recent insight on gender and sexuality in the twenty-first century. Frühstück and Walthall's fundamental argument is that "contemporary modes of masculinity in Japan, perhaps more radically than anywhere else in the post-industrial world, have diversified and shifted away from the most straightforward examples of modern hegemonic masculinity, namely those associated with the top levels of business, the military, and government" (Frühstück & Walthall, 2011, p.10). One example of such, in particular, is the *otaku* as discussed in Susan Napier's "Where Have All the Salarymen Gone?" Napier argues that both *fujoshi* and *otaku* as subcultural groups raise questions of sexuality. That is, both subcultures are marked by a sense of unreality when it comes to sexual matters. She suggests that the *shōjo* world is "essentially a fantasy or dream world in which the physical demands of desire are subsumed in airy romances […] the *otaku*, rather than deal with flesh-and-blood human beings or the mutual physicality of lovemaking, may prefer the less threatening space of the Internet, or the bloodless give-and-take of video games" (2011, pp.157-158). While Frühstück and Walthall's previous claim regarding diversified masculinities is arguably difficult to refute (accepting the argument that notions of "masculinity" shift throughout time), Napier's argument, requires hard evidence to support its validity. Nevertheless, considering that both subcultural groups (*fujoshi* and *otaku*) are fervent consumers of manga, anime, and games, it might indicate that they are avoiding one thing or another by being primarily preoccupied with their subcultural activities. What intrigues me, personally, is whether or not their intention is to escape to that aforementioned fantasy or dream world where desire, physical demands or human beings can be avoided. The various motivations for these fans' extreme devotion to their fandom practices is arguably worth investigating since the issue is intertwined closely with sexuality, intimacy, and more obviously, gender and social roles. With thorough research into *fujoshi* and *otaku*'s overarching motivations to engage in fandom activities, such sweeping claims about their "sense of unreality" may be justified or refuted.

Having considered both the key works of research and theory concerned with both BL manga and Japanese sexuality and gender, it is crucial to recall that those areas of research and disciplines relevant to my research, although only briefly mentioned in the literature review, will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters. However, regarding the sum of theory and research covered in this literature review, it

is prudent to briefly revisit and encapsulate their central arguments, relative flaws, and value to my enquiry here. Whereas the majority of these theorists have largely (and often meticulously) examined and detailed the history and trends of BL manga, as well as fandom practices and the impact of technology and legislation on the dissemination of sexually explicit manga, the extent of the prosumers' and fans' sense of empowerment through their subcultural practices, though often suggested, has sometimes been overlooked. Furthermore, the extent (if any) of BL manga's influence on LGBT communities has yet to be determined. These are subject areas, I suggest, that need to be addressed by means of cultural, historical, or ethnographic research combined with a sound theoretical basis and extensive background knowledge.

# Methodology

Having critically examined the relevant literature with regards to manga, sexuality and fandom, I will now clarify my overall aims, basic research design, and methodological approach. I will contextualise the nature of my research involving data collection from secondary sources, and my fieldwork in Japan. As established in the introduction, this thesis is an attempt to determine any positive social and economic effects, as well as the greater significance, of autonomous authorship, exclusive fan participatory rituals, and the potential by-product of progression towards practised equality (regarding gender and sexuality in Japan). To do this, I have divided my research into two areas of investigation. The first attempts to draw parallels between women's participation in the production and consumption of periodicals and popular print media before and during the Victorian era with Japanese women's active production and consumption of girls' magazines and BL manga over a century later. Given the historical contexts, this area of research will source data such as sales statistics, publishing and distribution methods, and quantitative and qualitative research findings concerning content, readership, and "fannish" or participatory activities from secondary source materials. In terms of significance, this first area of research will attempt to demonstrate that since the invention of the printing press and subsequent technological advancements and the expansion of the publishing industry, the dissemination and consumption of cultural products that cater to and are made by a disempowered gender group (in this case, women) may have in turn fostered an exclusive space for that group and its wider tolerance in the community.

The second area of investigation examines the possible influences that contemporary amateur manga publishing practices in Japan have had on attitudes towards gender roles and social equality (regarding non-normative representations of relationships). While the associated findings and discussions are primarily based on fieldwork conducted in Japan, some data was collected by online and digital means (such as e-manga and email correspondence, for instance). Although some of the data has been reproduced as quantitative findings, my research design was primarily qualitative in the sense that my intentions were to determine to what extent the production and dissemination of *dōjin*-produced BL manga have empowered their

producers and consumers, as well as the LGBT community in Japan at large. I suggest that determining and revealing the overall extent to which the BL subculture has done so could provide impetus for independent artists from a diverse range of minority groups to employ manga as progressive and subversive means to foster greater visibility and tolerance of their relative communities in wider society.

**Method and Approach: Secondary Sources Research**

Having thus far addressed the general concerns and nature of my research, I will provide a concise yet comprehensive outline of my chosen methodological approach. Given that the nature of this research addresses how three distinct yet inter-related minority groups in Japan (the female *fujoshi*/BL-enthusiast fan-base, the predominantly female network of artists, and the LGBT community in Japan) have been influenced and potentially empowered by the consumption and production of BL manga, those specific groups were approached and examined as individual subject groups in the fieldwork detailed below. However, prior to elaborating on the specific methodological approaches that were taken in the course of the fieldwork, as noted, the first two chapters covering the first area of research draw parallels between women's progressive production and consumption of popular periodicals (as well as Romantic and Gothic novels) in the late Victorian era to those subcultural practices akin in nature in the contemporary BL manga scene in Japan. Therefore, the methodological approaches to these first two chapters shall precede my detailing of the research strategies I used for fieldwork in Japan. By examining qualitative data such as sales report and various publishing and distribution methods, alongside quantitative and qualitative data concerning content, readership and fan practices both during the Victorian era in Britain and in modern Japan, the first two chapters aim to determine:

- If (and to what extent) the production and consumption of cultural products catering to and made by women, as a traditionally disempowered gender group, may have fostered the social empowerment of women in the respective historical contexts in both Britain and Japan, and,
- Whether the production and consumption of BL manga has developed an explicitly queer space, and encouraged greater tolerance towards the LGBT community in Japan.

As noted, the data required to validate the aims of these two chapters were largely drawn from secondary sources and pre-existing research publications. Given that Chapter One encompasses a body of literature, popular fiction, and publishing practices from the Victorian era, sourcing original texts involved obtaining a reading pass for both the British Library and the London School of Economics' (LSE) Women's Library. While both venues maintain digital archives, they are only accessible on site. The London School of Economics' Women's Library also boasts a print collection of "over 60,000 books and pamphlets and 3,000 periodical titles" (The Women's Library@LSE, 2013). Visiting both venues and identifying material relevant to my thesis within the vast amount of material available was not only time-consuming but a research project in itself. In any case, given the circumstances, accessing several periodicals marketed towards a female readership or relevant to girls' culture (such as *The Lady's*, *The Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, *Girl's Own Paper*, and *The English Woman's Journal*) proved more fruitful than perusing through the thousands of works in the archives. For this reason, the filtered, focused, and concentrated presentation of information in secondary source materials was a more efficient and insightful means of gathering relevant historical and cultural data. Some of the more relevant texts include Kathryn Ledbetter's *British Women's Victorian Periodicals* (2003), Hilary Fraser and Judith Johnston's *Gender and the Victorian Periodical* (2003)*, Harriet Devine's *Women's Writing of the Victorian Period, 1837-1901: An Anthology* (1999), Ardel Haefele-Thomas' *Queer Others in Victorian Gothic: Transgressing Monstrosity* (2012), as well as Barbara Fuchs' *Romance* (2004), Sarah Waters' *Wolfskins and Togas: Lesbian and Gay Historical Fictions, 1870 to the Present* (1995), and Cheryl Turner's *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (1992).

In contrast to the limited accessibility of archived items from Victorian women's periodicals and fiction, there are several well-maintained collections of Japanese pre-war magazines and *dōjin*-produced texts in numerous libraries and museums across Japan, the most prominent of which are held at Kyoto's Manga Museum, the associated International Manga Research Centre (IMRC) of Kyoto Seika University, the Kitakyushu Manga Museum, and the Yonezawa Memorial Library of Manga and Subculture (later refurbished and re-opened as Tokyo International Manga Library). Like the collections of Victorian print archives in the British Library and LSE's Women's Library, the items from these Japanese collections are only accessible on site and for a small admission fee. To provide a historical overview of manga in

Japan and the Comic Market phenomenon, most of these venues and several others had sufficient resource items. However, not all venues had thorough information in English. Given these circumstances, I visited the IMRC to access general research publications on manga and arranged to speak to one of the affiliated members and specialists in *shōjo* manga for more specific information and analytical insight into the phenomenon.

Besides primary and secondary research materials available at libraries and museums, I also used findings from the aforementioned BL and fandom-focused research by Kinsella, Orbaugh, Pagliassotti, Shamoon, Welker, and Zanghellini. Additionallly, I found a significant amount of quantitative data in fanzine event "after reports" (such as Comic Market's biannual reports, COMITIA's after reports, Comic City's regular reports) as well as in telecommunication corporation NTT's nationwide survey of manga (2012) and in research reports by major media research corporations. Regarding quantitative data, popular *fujoshi* fan sites such as fujyoshi.jp (which regularly posts "real BL experiences") provided quite a diverse range of expository and sometimes confessional anecdotes concerning the users' interactions with LGBT culture and their related experiences. SURPARA Bulletin Board's website (SURPARA, 2013), a platform for *dōjin* to post and respond to classified project advertisements, was a valuable source of both qualitative and quantitative data on, for instance, the frequency of themes, genres of manga, remarks on age and sex, as well as personal creative ambitions or BL content-related comments. These and several other relevant sites of secondary source materials will be outlined more comprehensively in Chapter Two.

Chapters one and two will take a multi-methodological approach. That is, I adopt methods of content analysis from cultural and media studies, yet take a comparative historical approach in the analyses of historical data and statistics, as well as media content analysis. Since I use both quantitative data (including published research reports, sales figures and market-based findings) and qualitative data (published personal accounts or anecdotes based on the experiences of authors, artists, fans, publishers, and members of particular disempowered social groups in Victorian Britain and modern Japan), one cannot say that this research model is entirely based on either empirical findings or qualitative socio-cultural phenomena. Hence, the nature of the research itself could be characterized as a cultural anthropological study. For the following two chapters based on fieldwork in Japan, I collected quantitative and

qualitative data on three specific groups: *dōjin* prosumers and *fujoshi*/BL enthusiasts, the LGBT community within Japan, and manga industry professionals.

**Data Collection from Primary Sources: Cultural Ephemera and Ethnographic Research Methods**

I gained non-invasive insights into fandom practices and consumption patterns through secondary sources, but also by gathering cultural ephemera (such as copies of *dōjin*-produced BL manga and other related items) and conducting observations of fans and prosumers at *sokubaikai* (*dōjin* fanzine events), such observations also took place at popular independent BL bookstores in Tokyo's famed anime districts of Ikebukuro, Akihabara, and Nakano, and in similar manga hubs in other major cities. These areas were chosen because they are both commercial and cultural hubs for manga and anime enthusiasts. In fact, the districts are so famed for anime and manga that Tokyo's Temple University's "Manga and Anime in Japanese Popular Culture" topical course involves a tour of the three locations (Temple University, 2013). The names of the venues will only be detailed where necessary to respect the privacy of the staff and clientele.

Although periods of observation did not involve the collection of private data, taking note of commonly produced or purchased items at events or bookstores provided a non-intrusive means by which to observe patterns in both content and of fannish consumer behaviour. No photographs or audio and visual recordings were taken or made at any of these venues.

**Primary Source Data: Surveys and Interviews**

For each of the three aforementioned groups, I prepared anonymous questionnaires with a combination of open and closed questions. These were approved by Murdoch University's Human Research Ethics Committee before I began fieldwork in Japan (refer to Appendix 1 and 2). The questionnaire intended for the latter of the three groups (the manga industry professionals) was designed so as to gain greater commercial insight and determine what drives the industry to publish and promote BL

manga.

Regarding approaching fans and prosumers during my fieldwork at Comic Market, COMITIA, and other conventions across Japan, the process involved acquiring permission from organisers before the event or on site. In cases where this was not possible, I simply explained my research aims and the nature of the questionnaire to potential respondents, gave them my business card (with a link to an online questionnaire), and continued communicating with circles on site. The questionnaire package itself included an information letter, a consent form, a list of instructions on the cover, and the questionnaire. While most of the responses were saved into a spreadsheet for future analysis, some responses prompted further questioning. For this reason, semi-structured follow-up interviews (based on certain responses given in the original questionnaire) were organised and either conducted in person at a mutually agreed location or via email if preferred. There was no relationship between the researcher and any of the respondents.

My approach to the LGBT community was similar to the approach which I used to contact prosumers and fans, in the sense that the LGBT-specific questionnaires were left (with prior consent) at LGBT-friendly venues or community centres in Japan (where they could be obtained, completed and returned to the provided email address). The only difference was that the questionnaires were offered in both English and Japanese to maximise the response rate. Once again, to protect and maintain the respondents' privacy, the specific venues visited and relevant websites will only be detailed where appropriate in Chapter Four. The flier (refer to Appendix 2) and questionnaire were also posted as "LGBT Ankēto Chōsa" and promoted on NPO community websites such as MFnote (MFnote, 2013), as well as on a research feedback page specifically constructed for respondents (BL Manga Kenkyū no Fīdobakku Pēji, 2014). By accessing the feedback page (namely, boyslove kenkyū.wordpress.com) respondents could download the questionnaires, submit them, comment, and follow up on the progress of the research.

According to Wim Lunsing, gay bars are central to the gay world separate from the rest of society in Japan. Tokyo's largest concentrations of gay bars are located in Shinjuku, Ueno and Asakusa, while Osaka's gay venues are concentrated in Doyamachō in Umeda and Nanba (Lunsing, 2001, p.58). I therefore based much of my

LGBT fieldwork in Tokyo on the assumption that it is not only Japan's largest city and capital, but also boasts the most concentrated LGBT or LGBT-friendly districts in the country. Another unforeseen and indirect method of recruiting respondents occurred trhough word-of-mouth in the relatively small and close-knit community.

For the questionnaire aimed at industry professionals, most of the respondents were involved in publishing either professional or *dōjin* manga in Tokyo. Given that the Japan Book Publishers' Association estimates that 80% of publishers are based in Tokyo (JBPA, 2013), conducting the fieldwork involving manga industry respondents in Tokyo ensured that a sufficient number of responses would be acquired along with greater insight into the commercial investments in BL manga. Questionnaires were sent directly to potential respondents' email addresses, while the follow-up interviews/questionnaires were conducted in the same fashion as those for fan-, prosumer-, and LGBT-identified respondents. That is, they were either conducted in person, online, or through an alternative follow-up questionnaire that was completed via email. As opposed to the anonymous questionnaires used for the former two groups, the questionnaires and interviews associated with publishers were not entirely anonymous, since the companies' names were mentioned or professional artists explicitly agreed to reveal their names. While individual respondents' anonymity was assured in the consent letter, the affiliated names, websites or locations of their respective organisations, companies or corporations will either be directly referred to or alluded to or in the chapters below.

**Data Protection and Analysis**

On a final note, I will detail the oft-overlooked methods of privacy and data protection, as well as the treatment and analysis of data. According to the Japan Professional Photographers Society (JPS), permission should be obtained from all subjects before capturing video footage or taking photographs of subjects in public (JPS, 2013). To avoid any possible problems, I refrained from filming or taking photographs. However, for follow-up interviews, both online and face-to-face responses were captured and stored as data with the respondents' prior consent (the aforementioned consent form). Interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder for transcription. Once transcribed, the records were deleted from both the device and all other means of data storage. As stressed, respondents belonging to the professional

manga industry are either identified by their affiliated organisations or names (with consent) in the thesis, thus only their respective organisations were noted in the recordings. Regarding emailed responses to the questionnaire, the scanned information sheets, consent forms, and questionnaires were stored on an external hard drive, as well as in online storage applications such as Google Drive and iCloud. As a general rule, all hard copies of questionnaires were destroyed after being converted into digital data and securely stored via the outlined methods of data storage. This data will be kept according to Murdoch University's five-year storage policy.

Both the qualitative and quantitative sets of data, which were based on responses to the questionnaires and interviews, were translated and entered into a Google spreadsheet in which the quantitative data could be easily summarised and viewed, while qualitative answers could be accessed and analysed from remote computers. The analysis of qualitative data involved examining responses to specific questions to trace patterns of discursive frequency as well as highlighting unique or unanticipated responses, although not necessarily to the same degree of discourse analysis practised in corpus linguistics. Significant responses and findings uncovered by this process of data analysis contributed to support arguments raised in the chapters about the fieldwork in Japan. Quantitative data was examined in the same vein as qualitative data. Responses were analysed for patterns and thus reinterpreted as graphs or charts, to provide evidence of sales and trends amongst fans and creators of BL manga. Quantitative data, for example, encompasses a range of subjects from the total number of participants to similar responses to specific questions. This may include similar genres of avidly read manga, similar reasons to create manga, and so on. Regardless of whether the findings are presented as qualitative or quantitative data in the thesis, no names or personal information which may identify individual respondents are disclosed, except where permission has been granted

**Feedback and Research Outcomes**

In terms of providing feedback and research outcomes to respondents and affiliated parties, the final draft of the thesis or email feedback regarding the utilised data/statistics was available to participants upon request, provided that they disclosed their email addresses for future contact. Several participants wanted me to inform them when the thesis was published, while others preferred to be "followed" or to "follow"

my profile on social networks such as Twitter or Pixiv. Issues that arose in regard to the personal information disclosed in the draft were considered, and requests for omission of details which might reveal one's identity were respected. Furthermore, the aforementioned feedback page (boyslovekenkyu.wordpress.com) functioned as an effective ongoing means to communicate the progress of the research and its general findings.

**Overview**

In summary, the quantitative and qualitative research data gathered from primary and secondary sources, combined with the fieldwork (questionnaires, interviews, and observations), formed the bulk of the research data used in the following chapters. Also, a multi-methodological and interdisciplinary approach was adopted to ensure a balanced combination of credible factual or statistical data with qualitative insights into the potentially empowering practices of BL manga production, participatory culture, and the wider impacts of BL manga on Japan's LGBT community. Regarding ethics and research integrity, I followed the guidelines set by Murdoch University's Responsible Conduct of Research Policy (Human Research Ethics Committee, 2013) as well as the Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007).

In my attempt to shed greater light on the wider social and cultural impacts of the BL manga phenomenon, I want to stress that rather than the content of the BL *dōjin* manga, it is the associated individuals' practices, experiences, and values and attitudes towards the BL phenomenon, which deserve greater academic consideration.

# Chapter 1: On British Women's Engagement in the Publishing Industry

In response to the growing number of single women in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, in his article "Why Are Women Redundant?" (*National Review*, April 1862), conservative W.R. Greg wrote:

> There are hundreds of thousands of women—not to speak more largely still—scattered through all ranks, but proportionally most numerous in the middle and upper classes—who have to earn their own living, instead of spending and husbanding the earnings of men; who, not having the natural duties and labours of wives and mothers, have to carve our artificial and painfully-sought occupations for themselves; who in place of completing, sweetening, and embellishing the existence of others, are compelled to lead an independent and incomplete existence of their own. (W.R., 1862, p.436)

Evidently, from domesticity to productivity, and from stage to page, women's engagement in theatre and the production of fiction was both controversial and monumental in the nineteenth century. While one cannot overlook novelist and playwright Aphra Behn's contribution to English literature in the seventeenth century, as Mary A. Waters notes, the rapid expansion of literacy, the periodical press and the phenomenal proliferation of novels in the eighteenth century saw paid writing take on "new importance for women in the face of economic and social instabilities that marked the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (2004, p.3). The extent to which publishing practices in the Victorian era revolutionised the social and economic lives of women is hard to gauge. However, Kathryn Ledbetter suggests that through writing, the lives of women who had little legal power "were filled with opportunities to engage the public world," and women's periodicals, in particular, helped to "promote these resources for women, regardless of their domestic relations" (2009, p.67). Hence, this chapter will explore the key social and technological factors which may have influenced and inspired both the so-called "Lady Authoress" of middle or upper ranks

and the women who undertook publishing either for economic or political means or both. It is debatable whether publishing played a significant role in assisting or inspiring the increased presence of the New Woman in the late nineteenth century, or even the social reforms concerning women's rights. However, as a means of self-empowerment for some female writers, publishing cannot be overlooked as medium of self-expression and social change. In this regard, I argue that women's publishing and readership practices of the late Victorian era were a vehicle for social commentary and self-expression. Furthermore, these practices arguably served as means to form imagined communities amongst female readers and writers. These imagined communities, according to Benedict Anderson, are imagined on the premise that the members are unlikely to meet face-to-face yet "in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (2006, p.6). It is this communion of thoughts and ideas enabled through fiction, which arguably mobilised some of the more progressive Victorian women. Furthermore, it is this significant investment in fiction exemplified by female readers and budding writers in the late Victorian era which I consider comparable to Japan's *bunkakei onna no ko* (the so-called "literary girl"), but more pertinently, contemporary *fujoshi* subculture.

This chapter will first consider the sociohistorical context in which the significant growth of female writers in the Victorian era was realised, in order to illustrate how fiction served as an avenue for the various social and individual needs of Victorian women. I will then provide an overview of the advances in print technology and the publishing industry which both eased the publication process and made publishing more accessible to women. The final section will consider the readership practices and various themes covered in novels and periodicals produced by female writers in the Victorian era. While this chapter primarily centres on the expansion of female writers and progressive fiction which occurred in tandem with great social changes in Britain, it also serves as a means of comparison with the phenomenal prosumption of boys' love manga in modern-day Japan. However, I must stress that the phenomenon in Britain was by no means a template for Japanese amateur writers and manga artists. The parallels between the two contexts merely illustrate that, provided there is appropriate technology and available avenues for production and distribution, budding female writers or artists can produce creative and sometimes progressive works of fiction and art. Regardless of whether the content is considered progressive,

pornographic, critical or criminal, such works may have the potential to instigate social change or reforms.

## 1.1. Women Writers, Women's Rights: The Life and Times of Victorian Women Writers

The escalation in the number of female writers in Britain can be accounted for by a number of factors. However, amongst these factors, the establishment of periodicals in the 1700s, the popularity of romance fiction, and advances in print technology were particularly significant. According to social historian David Vincent, by the 1790s the publication of new books "was running at four times the level at the beginning of the century" (Vincent, 1989, p.11). However, in her work on Victorian women's writers, Cheryl Turner argues that the rise of organised philanthropy was also integral to the surge of female writers in the late nineteenth century. She notes:

> [T]he public authority that late eighteenth-century women had begun
> to acquire in particular areas has been identified by both literary and
> social historians: the rise of a confident didactic tone in women's
> writing ran parallel with the entrance of women into the public of
> arena of organised philanthropy. (1992, p.13)

Philanthropy and notions of sentimentality were significant themes in nineteenth-century conduct novels—namely, narratives that blend "behavioural advice with fiction" (Newton, 1990 p.140)—and also played a major role in women's lives. Furthermore, the practice of organised philanthropy may have been a means of justifying a career in the creative arts for some women. Indeed, philanthropy, as F. K. Prochaska reinforces, "was seen as the leisured woman's most obvious outlet for self-expression" (Prochaska 1980, p.5). Leisure itself was not a privilege for all social ranks, however. The impact of industrial production on domestic tasks, as well as growing affluence and employment of servants, saw the roles of middle-class women shifting from domesticity to leisure or philanthropy as a means perhaps to contribute to the "greater good." It is perhaps ironic that those philanthropic projects of self-expression, in turn, were pitched towards the lower ranks as a means of romantic escapism and moral guidance (Turner, 1992, p.15). In any case, middle- or upper-class

women were producing works of fiction not just as a means of self-expression, but also to provide moral guidance for others. However, the rise in periodicals, literacy rates, and greater demand for fiction also provided ripe conditions for some of the more educated lower- and middle-class women to seek alternative sources of income. Publishers, too, were actively calling for amateur submissions. Magazines like *The Lady's Magazine*, for instance, were eager to boost their output of the kind of fiction which was demanded 'as a regular and necessary supply.' On the basis of their semi-official exemption from copyright, such magazines "made it simple for amateur contributors to conflate composing and copying and to submit as their own fictions that had long since been published elsewhere" (Lynch, 2009, p.458). With motivations ranging from philanthropic pursuits to providing a source of income for themselves or their family, it would only be scratching the surface of the phenomenon to assume that the majority of these writers' intentions were purely philanthropic or based on some kind of noble social agenda. Granted, as Turner reminds us,

> [T]he legitimising of women's voices in didactic literature facilitated a simultaneous expansion of their literary professionalism. It helped to define certain genres (such as children's books, educational texts, and of course the novel), in which they could hope to be successful and, importantly, earn money. (1992, p.57)

Once the place of female authors was legitimised, there was arguably little stopping them from producing potentially subversive texts in addition to the didactic genres mentioned by Turner. In spite of this, however, a large proportion of women continued to publish anonymously due to the potentially detrimental impact public knowledge of their sex might have had on the earning power of their writing. This detrimental impact might have come about through "premature rejection and ridicule, or through over-indulgence and condescension; and because the stigma of 'unfeminine' behaviour remained attached to authorship throughout the period" (1992, p.95).

One of the more iconic, if ironic, examples of such ridicule was expressed by the future husband of George Eliot (George Henry Lewes), who suggested, "My idea of a perfect woman is one who can write but won't" (Lewes, 1850, p.189). In what sense were writing women considered a threat? Was it related to the greater recognition and

increased presence of female writers in the industry, or was it associated with the thematic content of their texts? Although disputed, figures based on book-length publications listed in the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* indicate that of the total number of practising writers in the nineteenth century, as few as 20% were reported to have been women (Devine, 1999, xi). However, as Devine Jump observes, this calculation does not take into account the overwhelming number of women who were contributing articles and reviews to the rapidly-expanding market of periodicals (Jump, 1999, xi). In her research on *The Lady's Magazine* between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Lisa O'Connell reports that it "appropriated amateurishness to an unprecedented degree: it has been estimated that, between 1775 and 1815, as much as half of its content was written by non-professionals" (O'Connell, 2004). Given that quite a number of submissions were anonymous, it is difficult to determine the exact amount or full extent of women's contributions to such periodicals. However, compared to their "Lady Authoress" counterparts, contributors to periodicals made a lasting impact on both the lower-class readers and the broader audience of middle- and upper-class readers. Some of the more notable contributors who relied (at least) on periodicals as a source of income were the aforementioned George Eliot, Margaret Oliphant, Frances Power Cobbe, and Eliza Lynn Linton (Devine, 1999, xii). With their wide-reaching nature, popularity and constant demand for amateur contributors, periodicals had the potential to challenge the status quo and incite social change by providing a focus and outlet for the activities of "writing women." However, given the large volume of anonymous contributions, perhaps the threat posed by "writing women" was not related to the sheer number of practising writers. Rather, I argue that the "threat" lay in the nature of the content itself.

Before concern began to grow about the "New Woman" towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Victorian era saw a number of other social reforms and debates concerning sex, gender, and sexuality. Notable incidents and social and legislative changes included the passing and repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act; the admission of women into lectures at the University of Oxford as well as into the University of Cambridge's honours examinations; the Married Women's Property Act's extension of rights to women in marriage; the trial of Annie Besant and Henry Bradlaugh for their book on birth control; the imprisonment of Oscar Wilde; the presentation to Parliament by John Stuart Mill of the Women's Suffrage Petition; and the foundation of the Women's Education Union. Many of these incidents revolved around women's rights

to education, to practise birth control, to vote, or to be entitled to land. However, issues of sex, gender and sexuality were intrinsically linked to the majority, if not all, of these events. Given that both women and a select number of men were challenging the patriarchal paradigm in which Victorian society then operated, and the very segregation of the sexes through which discrimination was somewhat legitimised and practised, it is perhaps little wonder that writers addressing these issues were perceived as a threat by male critics such as Lewes.

Regardless of such criticism, writers who could afford to defy the status quo through writing continued to do so. Prominent writers such as Josephine Butler were largely concerned with the welfare of working-class women and prostitutes, or with marital violence (Cobbe). Other writers who brought to the fore issues ranging from dress and behaviour to sexual mores, the use of birth control, and the rejection of motherhood, for example, did so through the proliferation of journal articles, pamphlets and books. Pamphlets, theoretically accessible to all levels of society, were an ideal means of raising awareness in the public sphere, though there was the risk of being arrested and charged depending on their content (such as in the aforementioned case of Besant and Bradlaugh). Books, in contrast, were primarily available to those with an income to allow for the purchase of long reading material, or were otherwise accessed at circulating libraries. Periodicals, on the other hand, were affordable to most, and not limited to any specific class, time, or place. It has been argued, for instance, that:

> [It was the Victorian periodical's] multiple and mostly anonymous authorship, its imperative of diversity, that provided a very particular space, both fluid and dynamic, in which women could negotiate a writing identity or writing identities. The periodical's very refusal of a single authorial voice, the calculated diversity of genres, and modes both within the cover and between journals, encouraged experimentation, creating a medium of interpellation but also a cultural space in which interpellation might be resisted, a place in which gender was made and remade. (Fraser, Johnston & Green, 2003, p.44)

Thus, the periodical was a prime space for women to publish poetry, articles, and other types of fiction. It provided the sense of security associated with publishing anonymously, as well as the opportunity to publish a diverse range of texts, whether experimental or radical. In a sense, the periodical was perhaps a loudspeaker for the silenced, marginalised, faceless, and nameless. This growing attention to the issue of women's rights from both male and female writers, as Fraser, Johnston and Green note, suggests the importance of the press, both as a space for the contestation and elaboration of gendered discourses and as a vehicle for social change (2003, p.145). To thoroughly investigate the extent to which Victorian women's writings may have played a role in inspiring or accomplishing social change is, however, not the aim of this chapter. I argue that certain events and works of fiction correlate historically, with fiction sometimes preceding change, and change sometimes preceding fiction. Sometimes it is also the case that social change and fiction occur concurrently, with texts reflecting current social changes, or vice versa. In any case, whether inciting or reflecting social reforms or shifts in ideology, I argue that fiction, with its mass appeal and in its various manifestations, has played a crucial role in conveying information and ideas to the wider reading public. In this respect, it is worth considering several notable incidents which revolutionised the lives of Victorian women, and the works of fiction and debates that surrounded these events.

Although the aforementioned New Woman phenomenon perhaps does not relate directly to a single social reform which took place in the Victorian era and the early twentieth century, I propose that the very presence and recognition of a shift in attitudes towards gender and sexuality marked an ideological shift which, in itself, was monumental. Elizabeth MacLeod Walls reinforces the idea of a somewhat indirect correlation between the New Woman phenomenon and social change in the following excerpt:

> By exploring the possibility of enacting change within the domestic
> space, New Woman novels generated a rhetoric of resistance within
> Victorian society that with some exceptions promoted change
> without enacting or demanding feminist revolution. Because of their
> daring portrayals of women's experiences, New Woman narratives

have in the last decade been described as the ideological seeds of

English modernism. (MacLeod Walls, 2002, pp.229-30)


According to Ledbetter, the rise of the New Woman was a response to more employment opportunities and the relaxation of legislative restraints on divorce for women. It signified a more liberal acceptance of women's personal behaviour choices in which women were doing anything from riding bicycles, living alone, or gaining university degrees, to choosing careers by the end of the nineteenth century (2009, p.134). However, for most of the century, the lives of women echoed Coventry Patmore's iconic poem, 'Angel in the House' (1854). Patmore's angels, per se, were essentially responsible for maintaining the happy hearth. Women were "told to remember the needs of 'world weary men' and to pray, think, strive to make a home something like a bright, serene, restful, joyful nook of heaven in an unheavenly world" (Houghton, 1963, p.345).


Considering that British women's lives shifted from the docile, domestic ideal encapsulated in Patmore's 'Angel in the House' to the harshly criticised yet liberated New Woman within half a century, the role that the press and periodicals played in providing a platform for debate cannot be underestimated. Travel writing, for instance, was a common feature in periodicals such as *The Ladies' Pocket Magazine* or *The Girl's Own Paper*. McKenzie and Bird argue that the venturesome female travel writers of the latter half of the nineteenth century provided British women who were "confined to the domestic sphere" with new ways of being women. While their writings empowered some, others felt threatened by the New Woman's self-confidence and determination (McKenzie & Bird, 2012, p.127). Although many female travel writers' works featured trips to nearby European metropolises, those who travelled to Asia and distant colonies also reported back about their travels, misadventures and discoveries. According to McKenzie and Bird, middle-class women devoured such books about travel and adventure, as well as texts which emphasised ways to improve women's health through exercise (2012, p.3). Whether this temporary departure from the private sphere, domesticity, and the relatively routine and sheltered life of the mother, wife and housekeeper directly inspired middle-class women's active participation in sports in the latter half of the century is questionable. Even so, given that women's sudden avid interest in croquet, cycling and lawn tennis was perceived as a social revolution

(Kennard, 1974, p.109), these periodicals filled with reports of women's travels and sporting activities cannot be dismissed as merely self-indulgent or insignificant pieces of journalism. Indeed, as Ledbetter suggests, some women involved in the publication of periodicals were also "active participants in movements to radically change laws and social customs, often serving as authors, owners, or editors of periodicals designed to promote reform and marketed toward women engaged in radical causes" (2009, p.33).

As noted, two of the major concerns for such women in the nineteenth century included the health and social welfare of lower-class women such as factory workers and prostitutes, and women's right to education. Regarding the former, before the dramatic changes that the Industrial Revolution wrought, lower-class women were no strangers to mill work or cottage labour. However, for most of the early nineteenth century, most women were regarded solely as potential mothers. To some extent, "[t]he worker with her earnings was, accordingly, an affront against nature and the protective instincts of man" (Neff, 2013, p.37). In the midst of the Industrial Revolution, an era of both hope and dismay, the lives and roles of women were also optimistic yet dreary. Transitions in technology, industry, and the expansion of the British Empire meant that women started to form a significant part of the workforce. Although mill work was common, conditions were far from satisfactory. Before the factory legislation of 1847, "women were employed in large numbers at wages much cheaper than those paid to men and for a stretch of hours that would have been exhausting to strong men" (Neff, 2013, p.36). In this regard, Neff argues that the factory girl never attained the popularity of other wage-earning women as a heroine in fiction, and one factor contributing to this was that amongst all working women, the factory girl was the most remote from the experience of both most authors and the reading public. The mill girl "smoked, drank, swore, had the adventures in sex the Victorians reserved for men, and cheerfully slaved to support the almost inevitable babies" (2013, p.85). In her analysis of Victorian literature, Neff found no evidence of a mill-girl-turned-author. On a more positive note, there were women who wrote about the issues and concerns of less fortunate groups of women outside of their own social class. For example, Eliza Cook addressed the toils of women in domestic service in her *Our Women Servants* (1849), while Butler tackled those of women in other sectors of the workforce in her *The Education and Employment of Women* (1868) and *An Appeal...on...Prostitution* (1869). Harriet Martineau, as well as Cobbe and others, wrote fervently of the opportunities

that lay in journalism and publishing. In her autobiography, Martineau intimately discloses:

> I am, in truth, very thankful for not having married at all [...] My subsequent literary life in London was clear from all difficulty and embarrassment [...] If I had had a husband dependent on me for his happiness, the responsibility would have made me wretched. (Martineau, 2007, p.119)

By the end of the century, articles and critical pieces concerning women's education, employment and independence were not uncommon in more radical or avant-garde publications such as *Shafts'*, a self-proclaimed "magazine of progressive thought". Examples of such pieces were the anonymously written "Hard-worked girls" (Vol. 1, Iss. 6, 1892, p.95) and "A warning to independent unmarried women" (Vol.1, Iss. 14, 1893, p.220). Women's right to education had somewhat improved with the founding of the Women's Education Union in 1871; London University also started offering degrees to women from 1878; colleges for women were established at the University of Oxford in 1879; and compulsory elementary education was introduced in 1880. However, women's suffrage and women's rights, or "the cause" as it was also known, was arguably still in its infancy. Without constant petitions to parliament and publication of pamphlets, essays, articles or opinion pieces in periodicals, women's suffrage might have ended up a "lost cause." Still, not all women saw themselves as ardent suffragettes. As Barbara Caine observes,

> Women who declined to see themselves as women's rights advocates often worked to further the interests of their sex alongside others who proudly laid claim to such political identity; while individuals not necessarily motivated by specifically feminist aims may have still contributed or been important to a feminist tradition. (Caine, 1997, p.3)

For this reason, an examination of women's attitudes towards education as reflected in mainstream fiction and print media (rather than simple reliance on records

of actual reforms to women's education throughout the Victorian era) may provide insight into the general state of women's education in the Victorian era. As one of the first such periodicals to campaign about suffrage and women's legal rights, *The English Woman's Journal* (1858-1864) also considered women's education a critical issue. According to Laura Schwartz, theories of women's education—both written and discussed by major critics—emerged out of wider discussions of the 'woman question,' and were shaped by feminists' rethinking of gender roles, sexual difference, and the family (Schwartz, 2011, p.679).

Whether arguments for women's education were made on religious grounds (in the sense that the ability to read and interpret the Bible would properly equip one to preach its teachings), on legal grounds in the name of labour rights and the improvement of women's working conditions, or simply in the name of "the cause" in general, the matter of women's education was widely addressed in essays, journals and, eventually, boards of education. Resistance to women's education was particularly strong at the more traditional universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, into which women were finally admitted to read for degrees in 1920 and 1947, respectively. However, the establishment of women's colleges and the Women's Education Union in the 1870s indicate that women's writings on education produced around the mid-nineteenth century may have spurred the greater acceptance of women into higher education in the latter half of the nineteenth century and further into the twentieth century. With greater access to education, combined with increased rates of literacy, women at the *fin de siècle* were able to further their employment opportunities and conditions. They were also able to establish writing and publishing itself as a means of sustainable employment, paving the way for the modern female novelists in the twentieth century.

Though suffrage was not realised until the twentieth century, it has been argued that the periodical press in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the "crucial vehicle through which women's movements debated and disseminated ideas" (Delap, DiCenzo and Ryan, 2006, xxvii). Thus, I argue that the ongoing efforts of the suffragettes and the New Women at the turn of the century might not have been feasible without the proliferation of women's periodicals and women's participation in the press. However, before suffrage, the constraints associated with marriage itself

were yet to be overcome. As reflected in barrister Leone Levi's observations on international commercial law in the mid-nineteenth century,

> [b]y marriage, the personal identity of the woman is lost. Her person is completely sunk in that of her husband, and he acquires an absolute mastery over her person and effects. Hence her complete disability to contract legal obligations; and except in the event of separation by divorce, or other causes, a married woman in the United Kingdom cannot engage in trade. (International Commercial Law, 1863)

In such a context, it was scant wonder that writers either subtly or overtly challenged the matter of marriage, gender and sex. In any given regular issue of *The Lady's Pocket Magazine,* for example, titles such as "On Giving up Wearing a Seal Ring" (1830, 2: 187) or "An Inhuman Husband" (1825, 1: 13) were not uncommon. From stories of coquettes to devious mistresses in Gothic romances and subversive fallen-woman narratives, "novelists of Victorian Britain were as invested in deconstructing the ideal of domestic female sexuality as they were in constructing it" (Dever, 2005, p.169). Described as "an early kind of thriller" (Baldick, 2015), the sensation novel was a genre which also embodied and explored women's sexual and gender anxiety (Pykett, 1992, x). The question is, were writers concerned with these themes simply reflecting and reproducing the prevailing hegemonic cultural ideals of Victorian femininity and attitudes towards marriage? To assume that a significant proportion of professional writers and contributors to periodicals were motivated to write by some feminist agenda would ignore the fact that quite a number of writers were living by their pen and thus in all likelihood simply writing what would sell. In this sense, it cannot be stressed enough that the motivations of professional or amateur female writers varied. Nevertheless, the effect of the wider reading public's constant exposure to texts encompassing transgressional depictions of themes of marriage, sex, and gender may not have been inconsequential.

As Levi's remarks above indicate, in 1863, women were still legal non-persons, with a "complete disability to contract legal obligations." And yet, many successive legal reforms were achieved in the latter half of the century, including the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act (1857), which denied a husband the earnings of a wife he had

abandoned, and returned property rights to newly-divorced or legally-separated women; the Married Woman's Property Act (1870), which allowed women to keep earnings or property acquired after marriage; and the Married Woman's Property Act (1882), which allowed women to retain what they owned at the time of marriage. Thus, it is evident that, over the course of thirty years, significant changes to women's rights were achieved in tandem with the advent of the sensation novel and the diversification of periodicals. Given that some of the aforementioned texts closely preceded or followed some of the above-mentioned major reforms to marriage laws in the nineteenth century, to assume that women's writing and women's rights were two distinct phenomena would disregard the extent to which cultural texts influenced Victorian society as well as the other way round.

### 1.2. Women in Print, Women's Imprints: Methods and Means of Publishing in the Victorian era

As Turner argues, the prominence of female writers towards the end of the nineteenth century and throughout the Victorian era is partly due to the "sheer quantity of their published work" and the "seemingly limitless flow of material from the female pen" (1992, p.31). However, I argue that the state of the publishing industry is also worthy of analysis in order to gain some insight into how this phenomenon was facilitated. For instance, in her research on the economics of Victorian publishing, Alexis Wheedon notes that population growth and improving literacy rates combined to increase the potential market for books faster than the output of the industry (Wheedon, 2003, p.157). Thus, there was a ready-made market niche for women writers to fill. In a similar vein, to overlook the developments in print technology, changes in copyright law, and enormous growth of periodicals of all kinds would be to ignore the significant impact that developments in technology, commerce and publishing had on the lives of writers in the Victorian era. In this light, the following discussion will consider the changes in technology regarding the production and distribution of texts, the various avenues and royalties available for women in the creative industries, changes in taxes and copyright laws, and issues regarding censorship in a radically changing yet still secular society. Although there existed a diverse range of influences within and associated with nineteenth-century publishing practices, I maintain that discussion of the selected facets of the publishing industry which I will address is adequate for a concise overview of the Victorian era's "women in print."

Technology, with its promises of progress, speed, convenience and facility, has inspired the best and worst in many great authors, innovators and consumers. Whether Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1839), Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854-1855) or Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849), the dismal themes and attitudes towards technology depicted in Victorian and modern fiction reflect the ongoing love-hate relationship with technology prevalent in modern industrialised societies. However, despite the dismal, often dystopian realities depicted by Dickens and Disraeli (amongst others) in their novels of the mid-nineteenth century, the rapid industrialisation of Britain also witnessed radical improvements within the publishing industry and greater rates of literacy amongst lower-class readers. Since cost-efficiency and productivity were of paramount importance in the industrialisation of Britain, faster and more efficient printing devices were sought and thus developed. Although Gutenberg's movable type printing technology had been the standard printing device in Europe for several centuries, the introduction of mechanised papermaking, the steam-powered press, and stereotype printing contributed greatly to the mass production of print and image in the nineteenth century (Anderson & Rose, 1991, pp.1-3). The wider use of stereotype printing meant that multiple exact copies of a text could be printed at the same time on different presses. This dramatically decreased the cost of publishing periodicals and books of all kinds from the 1820s in the United States and from the 1850s in Britain. However, as Aileen Fyfe notes in her research on publishing in the Victorian era, although stereotype plates, edition bindings and new techniques for reproducing illustrations were certainly useful, "the most striking symbol of the new world of abundant cheap print for the Victorians was the steam-powered printing press" (Fyfe, 2012, p.5). Given Fyfe's argument that such machines were the only way of substantially increasing circulations (2012, p.7), one can acknowledge that such technology at least partially accounted for the growth of the periodical press and the greater distribution of novels and other forms of fiction in the nineteenth century. Whether or not the Victorian era was indeed the "Age of the Novel" is open to argument. However, it is worth considering statistics which indicate that 40,000 to 50,000 novels were published between 1830 and 1900. While only an average of 100 novels were published per year in the 1830s, anywhere between 1,000 to 2,000 books were published per year by the end of the century (Baker, 2002, p.29). As for the number of periodicals, a major publisher, Charles Knight, reported that the number of periodicals had risen from 177 to 362 from 1828 to 1853. However, historians estimate

that the numbers were even higher than Knight's estimate (Fyfe, 2012, p.4). On the economics of publication, Eric Glasgow suggests that the bulk of publishing in Victorian England involved periodicals, perhaps to an even greater extent than full-length books. In either case, both these sectors of the publishing field were part of a rapidly emerging capitalist model of business in the publishing industry. As Glasgow notes,

> [i]n both fields, of course, business was conducted on a basis of capitalist risk and enterprise, or in other words private investment, on what was hopefully a profit-making venture. The risks were always great, but so also were the potential profits. Fortunes were readily made and lost in the fickle climate of book publishing in Victorian London. (Glasgow, 1998)

Thanks to the advent of more efficient, sustainable, and profitable publishing methods, publishing houses were enabled to disseminate vast amounts of published material in diverse genres and publications to an expanding market of readers and consumers at cheaper prices. For example, Fyfe indicates that literary reviews in the 1850s were filled with headlines boasting "Cheap Literature," "New and Cheap Forms of Popular Literature," and "Reading for the Millions" (Fyfe, 2012, p.1). Despite such somewhat tasteless marketing, "Cheap print," as Fyfe argues, influenced people's minds, not merely the material conditions of their daily lives. Indeed, it represented a "potential force for true social improvement" (2012, p.4). "Potential," as Fyfe suggests, is arguably a fair evaluation of the situation. With little evidence of any direct correlation between "social improvement" and mass-produced works of fiction or journalism, one can only suspect a connection between the two. One can, however, assume that more employment opportunities for women writers arose with the development of technology and, in turn, the greater dissemination of texts. The main motivation for some writers was not supplementing their income or forming the basis of their livelihood, but rather publishing as a means of self-expression, communication, and dissemination of ideas. In particular, the very women who increasingly took to writing pamphlets and articles were in a sense directly defending their rights to social and legal equality. They may have paved the way for the feminist movement to a greater extent than female writers of other forms of literature. Despite the rigid gender

roles in nineteenth-century Britain, which emphasised that a woman's "proper" place was in the domestic sphere, British women of all walks of life took up the pen for some reason or another. Whether it was to write poetry, prose or social commentary, children's fiction or political pamphlets, women took advantage of the Victorian advances in print production. Indeed, even before the steam press and suffrage, in her 1818 novel *Persuasion* Jane Austen arguably heralded the arrival of a more confident female literary force. In a conversation between the characters of Anne Elliot and Captain Harville about women's "inconstancy" and "fickleness," Anne defends her sex against prevailing literary stereotypes:

> No reference to examples in books. Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove any thing. (Austen & Shapard, 2012, p.448)

Anne's comment is only too accurate; nevertheless, women did not allow their lack of education to prevent them seizing the opportunities offered by writing and publishing. Perhaps Austen's books, too, form a persuasive example of this phenomenon. Provided they were sufficiently literate, women in the Victorian era took advantage of the greater demand for fiction, took up the pen, and took to the streets. While women may not have yet had access to certain rights and privileges, they did have the advantage of access to technology; sometimes that is enough to bring about a revolution. Provided a woman had a sound command of language and an opinion or idea which was marketable, publishing anonymously (with a pen name or, if sufficiently well-respected or talented, with her full name) became feasible as steam technology made printing and distribution easier. Although the avenues for women to publish varied according to class, content, publisher, and editor, they are worth investigating to illustrate how women negotiated their positions with industry regulations and demands to break into the male-dominated domain of publishing.

Before considering how women of the nineteenth century explored and entertained various methods of publishing and distributing anything from creative to political works, it is important to acknowledge Aphra Behn's contribution to theatre, as well as the sentimental poets, novelists and contributors to journals in the nineteenth

century. As John Brewer suggests in his work on sentiment and sentimentality, women who were "writing verses and reading novels, contributing essays to reviews, recording their thoughts and feelings in journals with one eye to publication, and gaining literary sustenance through networks of familiar correspondence" ironically acquired a national reputation and audience, thanks to the metropolitan literary system against which they often defined themselves against (Brewer, 2009, p.37). With Behn, Burney, Wollstonecraft and a league of literary women as their predecessors, resistance against the idea of women writing was at least one hurdle that the women of the nineteenth century did not have to struggle as hard as their predecessors to overcome. The sudden emergence of the novel as a woman's genre "testified that women had a grasp of quotidian reality every bit as detailed as men's" (Curran, 1993, p.173), which perhaps helped legitimise women's greater participation in publishing in the Victorian era. As women's journals had been established and plays, poetry and novels written by women were becoming somewhat commonplace, there was a demand for women's writing as well as avenues for Victorian women to publish. Poetry in particular, with its brevity and digestibility, proved to be a popular form of writing, either published as collected works or submitted to journals. According to Stuart Curran, the term "poetess" had gained common cultural currency and poetry had become a woman's genre by the 1820s (1993, p.173).

Thus, under the pretext of simply publishing poetry, women were able to address issues which concerned them in a subtle fashion. Because periodicals were open to contributions from writers of all ranks and content of all sorts, they proved to be a perfect avenue for expression for the progressive poetesses of the Victorian era. Furthermore, periodicals, as demonstrated thus far, were open to amateur contributions. Naturally, the economic logic behind accepting amateur contributions was a major influence, but it meant that numerous periodicals were primarily written by 'the people' and for 'the people.' In this sense, periodicals were the social networks of their day. Like social networks, periodicals were also popular as they offered readers a hitherto unseen "product" which both invited and celebrated "miscellany." As O'Connell suggests, writing about one such particular periodical,

> The *Lady's Magazine* was also successful because it offered the
> reading public a new kind of product […] it was a miscellany. This
> meant that it was open to all kinds of content, all kinds of tone, and

all kinds of ideological positions. (2004)

O'Connell adds that while the *Lady's Magazine's* focus on fashion and amateurism fluctuated, its dedication to fiction held steady, and although it was not the first magazine to exploit the popularity of serialised fiction, it nevertheless familiarised new readerships with this fictional mode. As opposed to other magazines which stressed the importance of serious-minded literary content such as essays, chronicles, or sermons, the *Lady's Magazine* "embraced fiction wholeheartedly on the traditional grounds that it would edify and delight its readers" (O'Connell, 2004). For the most part, amateur contributions were submitted on a voluntary basis, but later into the nineteenth century, women were making small fortunes through their pens (Turner, 1992, p.30).

Whether paid or voluntary, depending on the publication, calls for contributions were open to both women and girls. For example, as part of its open calls to *Our Sisters*, a monthly magazine boasting of its devotion to the interests of women of every class and creed, had a regular feature for its younger readership, namely the "School Girls' Composition Club." The submission regulations called for essays, poems and short stories no longer than 350 words in length, written by any schoolgirl anywhere in the world who was under the age of nineteen. The best compositions, as outlined in the rules, were rewarded with cash prizes (*Our Sisters*, 1898, Vol. 3, Issue 32: 629). The intent of the feature was largely educational, given that the "Lady Principal" of a girl's school needed to sign the work prior to submission. However, entries from several 1898 issues included a wide range of themes and subject matter, from essays on liberty and criticism of the plot in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to ghost stories and summer holiday plans. Provided with cash incentives and a range of textual formats (but limited by a certain task or subject matter), these young women, who were generally published under their full names, were given a voice, a name, and a place to compose, compete and contribute to the ever-expanding cultural phenomenon of female writers in Britain.

On the other hand, quite a number of writers who were submitting to periodicals or publishing novels adopted pseudonyms or published anonymously. Although this figure should not be taken as representative, in a single issue of the *Ladies' Pocket Magazine* (Issue 2, 1830), 18 of the 83 submissions were published anonymously.

While a large proportion appropriated initials such as MLB, JRP, P or EC, many of the contributors adopted gender ambiguous or male pen names (such as Thomas H Ford, William L*** or Robert Bydel). The remainder of the names, though far and few between, were either fictitious or real women's names. One can only assume the actual gender ratio of either the seemingly male or female contributors, but the proportion of anonymous contributors is certain at almost 20%. Furthermore, the use of gender-ambiguous initial names suggests that one of the major attractions of contributing to popular periodicals was perhaps their openness to anonymity or at least ambiguity. As suggested by Fraser, Johnston and Green in *Gender and the Victorian Periodical,*

> Both the convention of anonymity and the practice of stylistic
> assimilation made the discourse of journalism more inclusive than
> forms of writing in which authorship was more commonly announced.
> These factors plus the opportunities for regular remuneration opened
> up journalism as a profession not only to star contributors […] but
> also to women and men from more modest social backgrounds. (1992,
> p.12)

Besides contributing to journals or magazines, there were also opportunities for women to undertake roles in the editorial department and even to establish their own journals tailored toward a particular audience or cause. Titles ranged from politically progressive journals such as *Eliza Cook's Journal* (1849-1854), *English Woman's Journal* (later succeeded by the *Englishwoman's Review* and *Victorian Magazine*), or *Shafts* (1892-1900), to more conservative titles such as *Aunt Judy's Magazine* (1866-1885). Needless to say, diversity in print media not only made for good balance, but also created a space for women supporting various causes to appeal to various readerships. The running dialogues between an editor and her contributors revealed the editor's crucial role as a "mentor or teacher for a large crowd of aspiring subscriber poets", besides her role as someone tasked with "cultivating fledgling poets" and instructing budding female writers about the "civilizing mission" of poetry or other fictions (Ledbetter, 2009, p.17). According to Ledbetter, editors of women's magazines and their readers and contributors "felt that poets were specially gifted by God" (2009, p.168). In this sense, at the risk of exaggeration, one could argue that the editor was

somewhat of a spiritual guide for poets, budding writers, and to a greater extent, women needing to pluck up the courage to express themselves in the public sphere.

In addition, Ledbetter suggests that the correspondence columns created a "special sense of bonding with readers, whether or not the readers become contributors" (2009, p.157). I argue that correspondence columns were also a forum for debate and criticism, particularly in the more politically conscious periodicals. Furthermore, as Ledbetter suggests, "the readers' bonding enhanced sales for the periodical while promoting authorship as a worthy pursuit for women" (2009, p.158). The correspondence columns thus could be said to have created both a strong sense of community as well as opportunities for women to engage in meaningful and remunerable ventures or employment. The extent to which editors both shaped their respective periodicals and responded to the changing needs and desires of its contributors and readership cannot be overlooked as a significant factor in fostering the talent and proliferation of women writers in the nineteenth century.

Although periodicals became a popular and effective way to produce and market serialised novels, self-publishing, on the other hand, remained a privileged means predominantly for the upper and middle classes. Women from these classes could publish and distribute their own works however they pleased and without the need for thorough external evaluation. Self-publishing, as argued by Bette Lynn London, allowed authors like the Brontës to "stand outside" the literary marketplace and engaged them "more seriously than their predecessors in the knowledge of trade— the practice of bookmaking" (London, 1999, p.100). Thus, with almost total control over their work, such self-published fiction allowed writers not only to have free rein, but also eliminated the process of submission, criticism, and revision. However, there were some cases of lower-class self-published writers, such as Louisa and Georgiana Macdonald, who published stories at home as young women who grew up in a small, self-sustaining artistic community (London, 1999, p.105). Cobbe too, while living under the agreement that she would serve as a housekeeper for her widowed father, wrote in secret after her domestic duties were fulfilled. According to Barbara Caine, when Charles Cobbe discovered her manuscript, he promised to publish it "anonymously to avoid any public embarrassment he might suffer" (1992, p.119). After his death, left with as little as two hundred pounds per annum, Cobbe supplemented her income with her writing on wife torture, domestic disharmony, and essentially,

women's rights. Whether privileged enough to have a free rein on one's work or fortunate enough to have access to means of publishing, I suggest that through self-publishing, female writers emphasised their autonomy as well as their world views more so than their counterparts publishing via periodicals. Irrespective of subject matter, self-publishing arguably reflected one's greater independence as an individual and as a woman. By standing outside the literary marketplace and the constraints and regulations within a largely male-run industry, self-publishing provided young women a platform to express views of their own and paved the way for the New Woman.

Whereas periodicals, novels, plays and self-publishing served as avenues for greater creative self-expression, pamphlets, though not exclusively reserved for political means, arguably served as powerful means for women to convey political messages in the public sphere. Chris Makepeace differentiates pamphlets from ephemera based on their particular formal properties. To be precise, Makepeace suggests ephemera are constructed from a single sheet of paper and usually disappear after an event, whereas a pamphlet can have many pages and is available for a certain amount of time after it is made. In addition, where ephemera are generally a primary source of information, a pamphlet is generally a secondary piece of information presenting the author's viewpoint on established facts (Makepeace, 1985, p.23). Harvey Chisick similarly suggests that pamphlets focus on specific issues and are predominantly concerned with influencing public opinion, especially in the field of politics (Chisick, 1988, p.626). Given the pamphlet's political nature, its association with women's suffrage is worth noting.

In her research on the literature of women's suffrage, Carolyn Christensen Nelson claims that the "first essays, pamphlets, and tracts presenting a case for the enfranchisement of women began to appear in England in the mid-nineteenth century" (Christensen Nelson, 2004, p.3). From a simple collection of *Suffrage Stories* (a series of pamphlets edited by Caroline Ashurst Biggs in 1882) to Caroline Norton's treatise on custody rights *Observations on the Natural Claim of a Mother to the Custody of Her Children as Affected by the Common Law Right of the Father* (1838), women espousing suffrage had a means to disseminate their political views relatively cheaply. While it is difficult to gauge how effective each individual pamphlet may have been in raising awareness towards any particular cause or instigating social change, Laura E.Nym Mayhall suggests that suffrage newspapers and pamphlets "circulated key ideas

regarding women's position before the law" and provided suffragists with "the bare outlines for women's legal disabilities for use in making the case for the parliamentary enfranchisement of women" (Mayhall, 2003, p.71). Furthermore, pamphlets addressed women's status at each stage in the life cycle (girl; single woman; married woman; wife; widow) and thereby shaped the arguments suffragists made before judges, to crowds, in drawing room meetings, and in conversations with friends and family members (2003, p.71). In terms of format, the pamphlet was a means to exercise democracy on the basis that it was distributed freely, available to the masses, and easily digestible in terms of brevity. Although postcards, placards, sashes, and other diverse forms of suffrage memorabilia were influential, the written word, once preserved and copied, was detailed, profound, powerful and of course, cherished by the Victorians. It has been argued that the expansion of a diverse range of pamphlets (such as news pamphlets, sermons, moralising pamphlets, and anti-feminist pamphlets) may have reflected the "developing taste, godly and middlebrow, of a growing reading public" (Raymond, 2006, p.91). Thus, the very fact that there was a diverse range of pamphlets being produced and distributed to a diverse range of readers arguably reflects the pamphlet's power as an advocate of democracy.

In support of the pamphlet's power of persuasion, it must also be acknowledged that one could publish anything and everything without taking into account the risk of violating censorship laws, amongst others. The influence of religion, politics and notions of morality on theatre and print media in England has endured since at least the Middle Ages. With Puritanism in Victorian England as a general guide for moral standards, censorship was arguably essential to preserve traditional values of moral decency in rapidly changing, and hence, unstable social circumstances. As a means of self-protection, authors and editors practised self-censorship, but there were several forms of censorship depending on the type of publication. In this light, it is little wonder that there were few prominent censorship trials. In her work on censorship in late Victorian England, Barbara Leckie notes that censorship was practised with the following approaches: self-censorship (exercised by both authors and readers), family-based censorship (typically exercised by the father), extra-legal institutional censorship (exercised by circulating libraries, public libraries, publishers, and booksellers), and legal censorship (Leckie, 2013, pp.168-169).

From page to stage or press, censorship was pervasive and evidently practised on both individual and institutional levels. Irrespective of genre or format, texts were screened for "obscene" material. According to the Obscene Publications Act (1857) and the Hicklin Standard (1868), the audience was key to evaluation of censorship (Leckie, 2013, p.169). That is, the Obscene Publications Act focused on material that was distributed in "low thoroughfares to the young, the ignorant, and the vicious," and the Hicklin Standard judged the obscenity of a text on the basis of its potential to "deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort might fall" (Leckie, 2013, pp.169-170). In this context, it can be argued that on a scale of censorship scrutiny from high to low, perhaps plays, novels, essays, and journal contributions will have ranked above self-published or distributed fictions or pamphlets. In any case, there were several means of self-protection, if not self-censorship. While often taken for granted, the preface within novels and other major forms of fictional works served as a disclaimer or warning about the contents. In this sense, editors, concerned fathers, and readers knew what they were to expect. However, there were indeed cases where the preface sparked controversy, such as Oscar Wilde's preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which stressed that "There is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all" (Wilde, 1998, p.41). Subtly suggestive, Wilde's preface neither states that the novel is immoral, nor that it is not. That very shadow of doubt was perhaps provocative enough to draw the greater attention of censors.

Another method of self-protection which crossed all formats was publishing anonymously or adopting pen names. While these were means of safeguarding oneself from public outing, as well as enhancing one's chances of getting published, these practices may have served as methods of self-protection from censorship bodies as well. For instance, if a discarded, potentially obscene, and anonymously published pamphlet on self-induced abortion were found, determining and locating the potential defendant (being the party who had produced the text) would have proved very difficult. On the other hand, publishing anonymously within a periodical involved censorship on part of the editor, and if, for any given reason, that particular submission were deemed obscene post-release, there was no incentive for the publishers and editors to protect the identity of the contributor (provided they possessed the necessary information). In spite of these circumstances and the critics who suggest that the Obscenity Publications Act heralded an age of "prudery, hysteria, and repression"

(Heath, 2010, p.49), Leckie argues that the 1880s saw greater print freedom being exercised in the press, whereby novelists began to "take risks and also to thematise the restrictions they confronted" (2013, p.170). However, that is not to suggest that this new era of publication was entirely free of either controversy or censorship scrutiny. In 1877, for example, Annie Besant and Henry Bradlaugh went on trial for publishing Henry Knowleton's *The Fruits of Philosophy* (Rappaport, 2001, p.72). For those willing to take the risk and intentionally publish potentially controversial or obscene content without concealing their identities or practicing self-censorship, there were indeed consequences. However, the publicity gained from such trials, I suggest, ironically drew greater public attention, and therefore roused interest in the particular causes or thematic content which had been deemed inappropriate for publication. Perhaps the old adage that any publicity is good publicity held true for Victorian publishers in the latter half of the century who were willing to take risks. For others, as outlined above, there were means of self-protection to allow for secure self-expression.

Whether or not women published works because they wanted to raise awareness about a particular cause or because they simply wanted to exercise creativity through self-expression, royalties or remuneration were inextricably involved. Furthermore, as stressed above, for some writers, remuneration was the driving motivation to contribute to journals or produce works of fiction. According to British census records, the literacy rate for females in England was 54.9% in 1851, but had risen to 96.8% by 1900 (Lea, 1998, p.116). Given these statistics, one can deduce that the rise in the literacy rates coincided with an increase in the demand for fiction, even if the two did not occur in tandem. With a "fourfold increase in production and a halving of book prices" from 1846 to 1916 (Weedon, 2003, p.57), one can assume that there was also an increase in both revenue and remuneration for publishers and authors. At the same time copyright laws "changed the nature of literary property and gave rise to a profession of authorship which lobbied for greater remuneration for writers" (Weedon, 2003, p.89). In his extensive research on the economics of the Victorian publishing industry, Alexis Weedon reports that in terms of returns, "the author's percentage increased in a gradated scale for sales from 10% rising to 12.5% for sales over 5,000, and 15% for sales over 10,000" (2003, p.96). However, she notes that this gradual increase failed to match the considerably greater rate of return the publisher received, and that in such cases, half-profit agreements were more profitable for the author, (2003, p.96).

However, to what extent were the contributors to journals remunerated? The benefits varied depending on whether a publication relied on submissions on a voluntary basis or the patronage of advertisers. The reduction of the advertisement tax in 1833, stamp duty in 1836, and paper tax in 1837 expanded the availability of cheap periodicals, and greater demand for a new kind of middle-class author who made an independent living writing miscellaneous reviews and essays emerged (Heyck, 1992, pp.24-26). If making an independent living was feasible in the early Victorian era through writing miscellany, then by turn of the century, as suggested within the *Atlantic Monthly*, the short story was considered a form of literature easy to read and write for which the "author is often paid as much for a story as he earns from the copyrights of a novel, and it costs him one tenth of the labor" (Perry, 1902, p.250).

In any case, one can surmise that the status of women and *fin de siècle* female authors had changed dramatically due to a number of factors such as those outlined above. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the rapid industrialisation of Britain and developments in technology fostered the growth of the publishing industry, with more efficient production rates, lower costs, and a greater demand for texts occurring in tandem with the rise in the literacy rate. From novels and poetry collections to periodical contributions and pamphlets, women were both keenly producing and consuming works of all formats and genres for a diverse range of reasons and causes. Whether submitting to journals anonymously, publishing under their full name, or editing women's journals, women were assuming both creative and bureaucratic roles in the publishing industry with greater ease and enthusiasm. Aside from overcoming the hurdles associated with women entering the public sphere and challenging the preservation of Victorian puritan ideals, censorship laws and royalty or copyright agreements with publishers were some of the legal and financial factors which either fostered or impeded the careers of women writing, women seeking rights, and the New Woman at the *fin de siècle.*

Having covered the sociohistorical circumstances, means and methods of publishing, and associated publishing trends that surrounded the proliferation of, as Alexis Easely has dubbed them, "first person anonymous" writers (2004), I will now consider the commonly explored themes, genres and visual aesthetics within women's writings and publications, as well as the readership practices that fostered the growth of the demand and market for women's writings. Since the desire for certain types of

content and reading practices are more or less intertwined, content and readership practices, I argue, are central to understanding this phenomenon. While the eighteenth century witnessed the infiltration of women in theatre, the greater presence of the female poet or novelist, as well as the development of women's periodicals, the nineteenth century was host to an impressive growth in the number of women with personal, social or career aspirations or concerns. The shift from Romantic and sentimental literature that flourished in the eighteenth century to grim and realist social novels or outrageous sensation novels cannot be explained as a mere change in taste. As suggested earlier in this chapter, the rapid industrialisation of Britain witnessed a growing concern with the welfare of workers and the impoverished. While a number of publications were philanthropic or religious in nature, more socially and politically-conscious writing began to emerge. In any case, among these, discourse on the "Woman Question" and the associated concerns of gender, class, and to some extent, sexuality, permeated a vast range of genres and textual formats. While sentimental fiction reached its peak in the 1770s and 1780s, in her work on Romantic literature, Deidre Lynch suggests that in the 1790s "fictions of all stripes seem to discover new modes of desiring: moving beyond the exploration of desire in relation to prohibitions that are removed or satisfactions that are obtained, they engage desire as perversity, self-torment and a secret to be extracted" (Lynch, 2009, p.461).

Perversity, self-torment, and subjectivity were themes explored in the Gothic romance and to some extent, the emphasis on the psychological was also explored in modern fiction but the growth in popularity of such themes in the late nineteenth century is worth acknowledging. Lynch adds,

> Gothic fictions—through their representation of the staying power of things (heirlooms and houses) and through the resistance to continuous narration that they manifest at a formal level—present a past that is something more malign than a mere prologue to the enlightened present [...] Audiences came to this form for more of the strange delights of artificial grief provided by sentimental fiction. They also came for the pleasures of regression: to be enthralled by the superstitions discouraged by an age of reason. (2009, p.466)

This nostalgic and curious fascination with the macabre, the distant past, strange delights and the pleasures of regression, arguably tapped into certain unaddressed issues concerning the readership, a population somewhat overwhelmed and stricken with anxiety about the rapidly changing society in which they found themselves. In other words, perhaps the Gothic romance, in its exploration of repressed desires and the uncanny, was a means of escape for those Victorians yearning for a temporary and affordable flight of fancy from the daily grind, the drudgery and self-restraint associated with the early decades of the Victorian era. Much like the discourse surrounding the uses and gratifications of reading BL manga, in her research on Victorian sexuality, Sharon Marcus suggests,

[F]iction was often seen as a dangerous goad to masturbation, not only because its content could arouse readers but also because it had the formal power to promote fantasy by allowing them to occupy multiple positions in a given story or scene. (Marcus, 2012, p.436)

In spite of such criticism, Gothic romances and related literary genres (such as sensation fiction), which challenged Victorian discourse on love, marriage and the institution of family, remained a staple for readers of popular periodicals and novels. On the other hand, other works of fiction concerning sexuality—which were considered didactic or appropriate for women—reinforced Victorian discourse on love and marriage while emphasising class alliance. Marcus notes that this notion of class alliance was expressed in the following ways:

First, sexual self-control defined membership in the middle class; second, fictional narratives aimed at middle-class readers rarely depicted happy marriages across class lines [...] most Victorian literature expressed more simply the idea that sexuality should maintain class lines by uniting in marriage only people belonging to the same class. (2012, p.427)

Despite the terror and inappropriate desire aroused by Gothic romances and sensation fiction, the "fallen women," victims of abuse, and the occasional femme

fatale that were prevalent in such fiction sometimes redeemed themselves, while others were punished in line with the notion of poetic justice. It has been argued that this channelling of anxiety into women's sexuality was "prevalent in Europe in the context of the nineteenth-century industrialization" (Fidelis, 2010, p.125). Moreover, society perceived lower-class women working outside the household as "immoral and sexually disordered because they abandoned women's 'natural calling' of caring for the family and home" (Fidelis, 2010, p.125). If we assume that the unstable social conditions in the nineteenth century threatened the stability of the home and the family, and further, that the wife and mother was essentially responsible for maintaining the stability of such institutions, then it is little wonder that female sexuality became a central concern in nineteenth-century fiction. Kate Ferguson Ellis reinforces this argument in *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* when she suggests that Gothic novels can be "distinguished by the presence of houses in which people are locked in and locked out. They are concerned with violence done to familial bonds that is frequently directed against women" (Ferguson Ellis, 1989, p.3). Given that both male and female writers were producing Gothic and sensational works of fiction, Ellis' argument that violence was particularly "directed against women" needs to be reexamined. For instance, could we consider this violence against women depicted in women's fiction employing the Gothic mode as form of subtle social criticism? If we acknowledge that women were predominantly victimised in eighteenth-century and Victorian Gothic fiction, then perhaps we could also argue that this was in part a reflection of women's status in society at the time. One could argue that as a result of greater depictions of violence against women in fiction, greater awareness about (or at least exposure to) domestic violence, cruelty against women, or at least the marginalisation of women was raised. Perhaps this is also comparable to the expansion of *yaoi* as a reaction to *seinen* manga (typically male-marketed manga) with sexual violence towards women. In any case, I argue that irrespective of authorial intention or context, authors or *mangaka* (manga artists) who depict atrocities committed against girls and women seem to inadvertently acknowledge that violence, if not violent crimes, are being committed against them.

However, according to Winifred Hughes, what distinguished sensation novels from other genres was "the violent yoking of romance and realism, traditionally the two contradictory modes of literary perception" (Hughes, 1980, p.16). What Hughes particularly draws to attention here are the crucial elements of romance and realism.

While romance had been a staple in women's fiction, Gothic romances were arguably not to every class or individual's liking due to their perceived excessiveness and lack of didactic or moral worth. However, appropriating the element of realism perhaps eliminated the excess of the Gothic novel and made violent or graphic content more accessible, if not potentially uncomfortable, for the general reading public.

The expansion of the periodical press and cost-efficient printing technology allowed publishers to facilitate the general public's access to content which was previously limited to those who could afford novels or the time to take a trip to the library. Publishers serialised larger textual formats (such as social or sensation novels) and packaged them into easily digestible formats. The serialisation of novels into family magazines or periodicals provided pages of tantalising terror demanded and enjoyed by not only middle-class, but also working-class readers. That is not to say that the popularity of the Gothic novel declined. Consider, for example, Jerrod E. Hogle's definition of the Gothic tale as something that "usually takes place (at least some of the time) in an antiquated or seemingly antiquated space (…) within this space, or a combination of such spaces, are hidden some secrets from the past (sometimes the recent past) that haunt the characters, psychologically, physically, or otherwise" (Hogle, 2002, p.2). As a fairly broad definition based primarily on settings and the exploration of the psychological, Hogle's definition allows for greater malleability of the genre, which is perhaps the reason why its popularity has endured through to the twenty-first century. Thus, the various manifestations of the Gothic mode and its significant place in Victorian fiction must not be underestimated. As Hogle notes,

> [T]he Gothic scattered its ingredients into different modes […] Yet it
> reasserted itself across the nineteenth century in flamboyant plays
> and scattered operas, short stories or fantastic tales for magazines and
> newspapers, "Sensation" novels for women and the literate working
> class, portions of poetry or painting, and substantial resurgences of
> full-fledged Gothic novels—all of which were satirised for their
> excesses. (2002, p.1)

Though possibly the most notable Gothic parody is Austen's *Northhanger Abbey* (1817), periodicals also adopted the mode on account of its popularity and

marketability. O'Connell notes that as a result of the success of Ann Radcliffe's Gothic romances of the late eighteenth century, the contingencies of the mode were taken to an extreme by *The Lady's Magazine's* own version of the Gothic. Although the *Lady's* Gothic parody, *Monks and Robbers* (1794, 1798-1805) ran for eight years, it was published in a pre-Victorian context. However, O'Connell suggests that this trend of appropriating and satirising of popular genres and modes persisted throughout the nineteenth century:

> [T]he magazine followed fictional fashions—after the Gothic it
> offered an imitation of Sir Walter Scott—exaggerating each genre's
> essential traits to a degree that verged on satire. This strategy allowed
> the magazine to string out and dilute its stories, to turn them into
> something like soap operas, and also allowed them to respond to
> changes in the real world. (O'Connell, 2004)

Although O'Connell stresses the cultural significance of satirised texts and the popular serialised form, she fails to detail the extent to which popular parodic fiction may have had a social or cultural impact. While often dismissed as derivative, derisive or cheap, the intertextual nature of parodies relies on the readers' recognition of the cultural references therein and occasionally demands a certain degree of cultural capital. Readers familiar with the source material form a community in which they may exclusively and collectively enjoy, despise, or criticise a certain text. However, unlike the cliquey and exclusive nature of an in-joke, in its appropriation of popular texts, the parody attracts a larger range of readers. Readers familiar with the source text are thus able to see the appropriated text in a new and sometimes subversive light, exploring a range of themes that remained untouched in the original. Linda Hutcheon questions the subversive nature of the parody, arguing that "[o]ne of the difficulties in recuperating parody as a potentially subversive practice is this symbiotic, or pejoratively speaking, parasitic, 'relationship' to the original; it is paradoxical, both incorporating and challenging the object of the parody" (Hutcheon, 1988, p.9).

I would argue that Hutcheon's "parasitic" rhetoric and hence her argument against the subversive nature of the parody needs further consideration, if not revision. Granted, without the host, the parody cannot exist. Parasitism is generally considered

non-mutually symbiotic relationship between two subjects. According to this definition, while it is advantageous for the parody to feed off the original text, the original text itself gains no benefit whatsoever from its appropriation. In some cases, however, this is not the case. For example, readers of parodies unacquainted with the source text may turn to the source text after discovering and enjoying the parody. The same can be argued for film adaptations of canonical works. In this sense, parodies offer benefits to the source tex. Mutualism, as opposed to parasitism, might be a more open rhetorical approach regarding the subversive potential of parodic texts. I argue that the Gothic and other parodies that were filling pages of Victorian journals contributed to the formation of imagined or real communities of women with mutual cultural interests, tastes, and ideas. In their appropriation of texts produced by renowned authors, women were able to make a name for themselves while both exploiting and promoting the works of others. While it is difficult to determine the authorial intentions of parodic writers in the Victorian era, these new-fashioned texts had the potential to be subversive, or at least, to question and disseminate alternative attitudes towards literary and social phenomena. For this and a number of commercial and cultural reasons, satirising popular texts has been practised for centuries. Given the increase in the number of literate and literary women in the Victorian era, the popularity and production of fiction appropriating the Gothic mode ought to be considered as a significant cultural phenomenon reflecting both the anxieties of the era, as well as bringing to the fore notions of women's sexual agency, sexual deviance, and the underlying psychological concerns of repression and regression.

While suffrage pamphlets and the more politically-oriented women's journals were concerned with sexual health, contraception, and rights concerning property, education and employment, fiction veered more towards the subjects of sex and sexuality. In her work on the femme fatale in Victorian fiction, Jennifer Hedgecock argues,

> [t]he femme fatale embodies the cruel conditions of modern life in
> which poverty, sickness, disease, slum dwelling, and prostitution
> echo the moral turpitude of the nineteenth century, and she mirrors
> social anxieties that conflict with prudish and often unrealistic

ideological standards of modern Victorian life. (Hedgecock, 2008, p.4)

Although she fails to substantiate her claim, Hedgecock further suggests that the femme fatale's pervasiveness in Victorian fiction and the subversive images of such women, "may have led young Victorian female readers to believe that rebelling against social codes [was] not a moral crime" (2008, p.5). Deviance, however, did not only concern issues of morality and sexual vice. Other forms of sexual "deviance" were also explored and depicted in Victorian literature in the guise of same-sex relations. According to Carolyn Oulton, some of the better-known texts that "present intense responsiveness, physical and emotional, between female characters" (Oulton, 2007, p.16) are Dickens' *The Battle of Life* (1846), Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1859) and Christina Rossetti's poem *Goblin Market* (1862). More intriguingly, however, Oulton's research demonstrates a pattern in Victorian narratives encompassing themes of romantic friendship. Oulton suggests that in the majority of such narratives "intense feeling is celebrated, provided it is kept within safe limits; subversive sexuality is not contained or sublimated within the narrative, but where it appears, it is summarily expelled and the dissident figure destroyed" (2007, p.26).

While the element of restraint is exercised (in the sense that intense feelings are kept within safe limits), the implied homosocial relations are nevertheless suggestive of excessive or passionate friendships which have the potential to defy the boundaries of the Victorian heteronormative paradigm. As demonstrated and perhaps epitomised by Austen, the employment of irony, wit and other forms of subtle rhetoric or literary devices, enabled authors to create suggestive, if not subversive texts. On the other hand, the death or destruction of dissident figures within narratives which overtly explore subversive sexuality indicates not only the dire consequences of subversive sexual relations, but the tragic circumstances arguably evoke a greater emotive reader response, and hence sympathy for the central characters. In this regard, the exploration of repressed desires and forbidden love—inevitably followed by the tragic demise of one or both of the subjects in question—was a powerful, provocative and evocative tool for romance and sensation writers. As Oulton argues, while these themes were explored, it was towards the end of the century that the nature of romantic friendship itself came under increasingly severe scrutiny. The possibility of a sexual element, she

adds, "was increasingly likely to be acknowledged in treatments of romantic friendship that, coupled with its social implications, rendered it doubly suspect to its more sceptical commentators" (Oulton, 2007, p.129). Despite this, New Woman fiction, she notes, was characterised by its attention to the intensities of same-sex friendship (2007, p.129). These themes, among others, were both explored and brought into question in *fin de siècle* fiction and society. Whether centring on the fallen woman, the femme fatale, the frivolous friend, phantoms, or the psychologically disturbed, women's progressive (and often parodic) fiction was an avenue and market for women to explore, express, revel and rebel.

Having covered some of the more progressive genres, themes and tropes of the fictions produced by and for women in the Victorian era, I feel it is worth exploring the visual aesthetics and aspects of formatting which provide some insight into women's reading practices of the Victorian era (without suggesting that formalism is the only means of extracting meaning from cultural phenomena). Having briefly mentioned the significance of the serialised novel, the segmented and thus easily digestible nature of the periodical press, and the wide-reaching potential of pamphlets, I will illustrate concisely how the visual aesthetics of several prevalent textual formats may have altered or enhanced the reading practices of such texts.

As discussed above, the periodical was produced on cheap paper and carefully and strategically structured into segments and columns which rendered it ideal for readers with scattered or limited periods of leisure time. In a similar vein, Fraser, Johnston and Green argue that even periodicals which aimed to appeal to a fairly broad audience managed to carefully "address themselves to particular groups within that wider readership. They typically carve[d] up their pages into sections directed at specific sub-categories of readers" (2003, p.59). The meaningful and strategic division of pages into easily-digestible panels, columns or sections not only distinguishes one story, piece or narrative incident from another, but also reflects the greater need for a variety of information, brevity, and ease of reading. This can be seen in most press publications, and, as will later be demonstrated, in comics and manga. As a result, texts can be abandoned at any point and re-read at one's convenience. Also, I argue that the briefer and more segmented texts are, the wider their reach. Given that levels of literacy and attention spans differ from person to person, the more straightforward and simple a text is regarding format and content, the greater its readability.

In his research on Victorian publishing and the materiality of the book, David Finkelstein asserts that "the reign of Queen Victoria saw an important shift in the relationship between text and image: images in books became central to shaping the Victorian cultural imagination, embellishing, illuminating, and expanding storylines and themes. Illustrators and authors were acutely aware of the impact of visual accompaniments on the reception of fiction" (Finkelstein, 2012, p.18). Finkelstein further suggests that illustrated books and journals "provided spaces for readers to populate with their imagination and in which to discover and contextualize their cultural understanding of contemporary society" (Finkelstein, 2012, p.19). Given these circumstances and the technical advances that were occurring, one might argue that the wide-reaching potential of imagery surpassed any other form of print-based material in its ability to convey information with less effort required on the reader's part. This did not come without a cost, however. Despite the development of colour printing and the plethora of new illustrative techniques which "enriched the *mise-en-page*," the use and quantity of illustrative matter had implications for cost production (Weedon, 2003, p.80). While a range of techniques such as wood-engraving, woodcuts, linocuts and photographic illustration were utilised, illustrations for books "could make a large proportion of the production cost"; at the same time, however, they were a major selling point when they were displayed at railway bookstalls, for example (Weedon, 2003, p.81). Ledbetter, too, maintains that illustration in the nineteenth century was a requirement for popular periodicals, and magazines such as *The Lady's Treasury* (in which the preface boasted "upwards of 100" illustrations) marketed themselves to meet these demands (2009, p.127). Whether they were images of architecture, historical figures, or those accompanying stories of fancy-work patterns, the images that appeared in illustrated newspapers and journals both helped construct and debunk notions of femininity towards the end of the nineteenth century, when depictions of women engaging in sports or other activities in the public sphere started to gain currency, albeit often sparking controversy. Irrespective of the overall purpose of including imagery in a publication, I suggest that the visual aesthetics and formatting of any given text not only reveal as much about its producers as its consumers but also the cultural and ideological shifts occurring in the context of its publication.

### 1.3 Circulating in Libraries: Consumption and Reading Practices of Victorian Women

Intrinsically tied to the formatting and content of a text is its readership and relative consumption and reading practices. While I have thus far mentioned the expansion of circulating libraries, and the affordability of journals, papers and serialised novels which occurred in tandem with the development of print technology and industry trends, I will conclude by briefly highlighting the significance of women's reading practices in the Victorian era. Before the serialisation of novels and the gradual reduction in the cost and retail price of periodicals in the nineteenth century, circulating libraries had been operating and providing the reading public with texts on a regular basis since the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century, it has been suggested, there were twenty-six circulating libraries in London alone (Jacobs, 1995, p.5). While Mudie's Select Library operated largely out of London, W.H. Smith began running circulating libraries within railway stations, catering for the increasingly mobile public (Jacobs, 1995, p.8). More importantly, according to Jacobs, is that circulating libraries were "over two times more likely than other publishers to publish fiction by women, and circulating library publishers 'discovered' many important female novelists, including Frances Burney and Ann Radcliffe" (1995, p.8). Thus, circulating libraries were not only a place for women of all walks to life to interact with and access books and other texts for a small fee, but in some cases, women were able to supplement their income on account of the publishers. From its humble beginnings in the eighteenth century, the circulating library was to some extent a gateway to the public sphere for women. It offered access to knowledge for those who sought it, leisure for those who were previously unable to afford it, and an avenue for creative expression for those who craved it.

The prices of books also declined, enabling, for example, W.H. Smith's railway bookstores to offer a growing number of books to passengers in transit. This meant that women's access to literature was no longer a matter of class. Weedon notes that by 1896, over three-quarters of books were in the low-price categories (2006, p.107). Naturally, however, this reduction of prices did not come without consequences. The debates over the "evils of cheap literature" and notions of the cultural value of texts were redefined by the price of a particular text. For example, women who could not afford to purchase a novel in its entirety were able to purchase it in its serialised form; that is, within journals. Of all the textual formats available during Victoria's reign, the

periodicals, in their celebration of miscellany and acceptance of submissions in diverse genres from contributors of all walks of life, allowed women to read and produce a variety of content, and in turn, to feel a sense of belonging. Katharine Glover similarly argues that since periodicals combined international and domestic news, advertisements, literary reviews, poetry and other writing, and even informed their readers of upcoming charity balls and where to buy freshly imported lemons, "they helped to create a sense of belonging to a community at both local and national levels" (2011, p.62). I argue that much like an open forum, it was through the editorials, letters, and calls for contributions that the formation of an imagined community among like-minded women may have been realised. Conscious of their still-restricted gender roles and their limited social and political rights, female writers both celebrated and challenged femininity within the pages of the periodicals. This is perhaps most aptly evidenced in periodicals such as *Shafts*. Periodicals catered to a wide range of niche readerships based on age, class, occupation, hobbies, or religious and political leanings. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the target market for many of the periodicals was seemingly gender-specific. However, while the target market of periodicals such as *The Lady's Magazine*, *Lady's Newspaper*, *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, or *Girl's Own Paper* was clearly gendered, reading practices suggested otherwise. For instance, Fraser, Johnston and Green note that since the correspondence pages of both *Girl's Own Paper* and *Boy's Own Paper* included letters and responses from the opposite sex, they may indicate that readership practices were occasionally transgressive. As a response to this trend and girls' growing demand for the adventure stories that littered boys' magazines, *Girl's Own Paper* also introduced tales of regendered heroes such as 'Robina Crusoe, and her Lonely Island Home' (Fraser, Johnston & Green, 2003, pp.64-65). I argue that these inclusive reading practices, as well as the aforementioned imagined communities which the circulating library and women's journals perhaps may have helped to facilitate, were ways for women to challenge the existing gender norms and socio-sexual mores within Victorian society.

As I have illustrated in this overview of the historical context, thanks to the advances in print technology and the publishing industry, as well as the readership practices and various themes covered in novels and periodicals produced and consumed by women in the Victorian era, women both responded to and incited social change. While technology and the industrialisation of Britain is sometimes portrayed in a negative light, industrial and technological developments not only enriched the lives of

women whose access to literature had been previously hindered, but also opened up available employment opportunities and avenues for women to express themselves and interact in the public sphere. For many anonymous or amateur contributors to periodicals, writing may have been a simple means of supplementing their income, preaching, or otherwise being heard. On the other hand, some women utilised writing as a vehicle for political change and social reforms, particularly concerning women's rights. Others who were exceptionally talented or gained critical acclaim attained their financial independence and literary professionalism. However, any one of these women, in one way or another, stood in contrast to the idealised "angel in the house." Although they may not have been considered angels within a house, these were the women who found a room of their own, a voice of their own, and others with whom to share it with.

# Chapter 2: From Cultural Legacy to Industry: The Former Manifestations and Current Appropriations of Beautiful Boys in *Dōjin* Subculture

> Fandom, by its very nature, suggests an indulgence in fantasies or 'dreams,' and an obsessive enthusiasm which functions as an attempt to address an incompleteness or dissatisfaction in the fan's own self or life […] fantasy enables fans to transcend the boundaries of gender, sexuality or other potentially problematical or taboo areas, as a means of striving for wholeness. (Stickland, 2007, pp.140-141)

While one could argue that art, literature and other forms of culture produced by British women did not flourish until the late modern era, that is not to say that women did not zealously produce and consume cultural textst before that. As pointed out in the previous chapter, Aphra Behn's significant contribution to theatre and the proliferation of women writers from the mid-eighteenth century signalled the stirrings of women's social and cultural emancipation in Britain. Whether professional or amateur, women had begun to adopt the pen as a means of self-satisfaction, social commentary, or a means to an end. However, can the same be said about female *mangaka* in Japan from the 1970s onwards? Although it is crucial to also acknowledge their predecessors' contributions to Japanese women's literature in the early modern period, this thesis focuses on the professional female illustrators and *dōjin* who began producing original and parodic homoerotic fiction in the 1970s—a period of great social change for women in Japan. To trace the origins of this phenomenon and the traditions of homosocial/-erotic storytelling and imagery in Japanese culture, this chapter will first look back on the social traditions and cultural representations of same-sex relations in Japanese history. To trace the evolution of women's production and consumption of same-sex narratives in a postmodern context, I will also consider the formation of *shōjo bunka* (girls' culture) towards the end of Japan's Meiji period, as well as the subsequent development of the manga publishing industry and *dōjin* manga practices in the twentieth century. After that, I will briefly outline a number of frequently employed themes, genres, motifs, and trends characteristic of both *dōjin* and professionally

published BL and *yaoi* texts. I will then provide an overview of readership and fandom practices of same-sex narratives from pre-war girls' magazines of the early twentieth century through to contemporary mainstream and *dōjin*-produced BL and *yaoi* fiction. While thoroughly covering any one of the above-mentioned aspects associated with women's avid production and consumption of same-sex narratives in Japan would be possible, for the purpose of grasping the phenomenon in a general sense, a comprehensive, yet brief overview will suffice.

### 2.1 From *Shunga* and *Bijinga* to Boys' Love Manga: A Brief History of Homosocial/-sexual Representations in Japanese Culture

While the prevalence and often explicit nature of homoerotic imagery in boys' love manga may at first be startling to the unaccustomed reader, Japanese art history reveals a long-established tradition of overtly erotic depictions of diverse sexual behaviours regardless of sexual orientation. As Gary Leupp's research on the representation of homosexuality in Japan reveals, the first truly "unequivocal reference to male-male sex in Japan dates from as late as 985" (Leupp, 1995, p.22). However, according to James Smalls in his research on homosexuality in art, the earliest surviving visual depiction of erotic same-sex relations was *The Acolyte Scroll* (*chigo no sōshi*) dating back to 1321. In a similar vein to the early Buddhist texts indicating sexual relations between young acolytes and their masters, *The Acolyte Scroll* depicts acolytes attempting to sexually please their masters (Smalls, 2012, p.125). While these religious texts indicate the origins and early cultural representations of homosexuality in Japan, it was during Tokugawa's reign (1603-1868) that, as Leupp suggests, "sex between males was not only widely tolerated but positively celebrated in popular art and literature" (1995, p.1). Indeed, the surge in popularity of *kabuki* theatre during the Tokugawa period and increased demand for *shunga* (a popular form of erotic woodblock prints) perhaps highlight the greater accessibility and acceptability of unabashed erotic expression and consumption at that time. In his analyses of *shunga* produced in this era, Joshua S. Mostow found what he claims to be one of the earliest homoerotic *ukiyo-e* and "an important example of a self-proclaimed early *shudō* [Way of Youngmen] text"—the *Wakashu-asobi kyara no makura* (Mostow, 2003, p.52). In this text, the term "*wakashu*" (young man) is "generally defined as a male from the ages of eleven to twenty-two or twenty three" (2003, p.53). Although Mostow

describes the text as misogynistic, he adds that it is far from "exclusively homosexual" in that it "presupposes both 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual'—or 'bisexual'—desires on the part of its readers" (2003, p.65). In this respect, Mostow argues that "*wakashu* should be understood as a gender: both men and *wakashu* are assumed to have bisexual desires […] but there is seen to be an explicit structuring competition between men and women for the third gender, *wakashu* (2003, p.65). What is significant here is the emphasis on the *wakashu's* youth, desires and desirability, and the fluidity of gender and sexuality.

Leupp also suggests that erotic images dealing with male-male sexual intercourse generally depicted anal intercourse between an adult male on the one hand and a youth, boy, or actor on the other. The only exception to this rule, he adds, was the depiction of the god of thunder being [penetrated] by the illness-preventing god (1995, p.113). According to Leupp, in this period homosexual behaviour was to some extent "normative" in urban areas (1995, p.3). Furthermore, and as previously noted by Gregory Pflugfelder, there is no "explicit condemnation of male-male sexuality in the Shinto [a religion indigenous to Japan] canon" (Pflugfelder, 1999, p.99). The depictions of homosexual practices were not just limited to anal intercourse. Homosexual kissing, too, was prevalent in Japanese literature and erotic art. Since (according to Leupp) kissing was viewed as an extremely intimate act throughout East Asia, depictions of kissing were viewed "not as heterosexual foreplay but an expression of passion during the height of heterosexual intercourse" (1995, pp.118-119). Leupp further reinforces this in noting that "*shunga* show men kissing each other both before and during sex" (1995, p.119). This emphasis on pederasty, age discrepancies between sexual partners, and kissing in *shunga* seems to reinforce not only ideals of youth, innocence, intimacy and passion, but it also indicates that there is an uneven distribution of power between partners. As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, these motifs have endured to this day in depictions of either sexual relations or relationships in boys' love manga.

Described as manga narratives featuring "male protagonists same-sex romantic and sometimes overtly sexual relationships" (Welker, 2015, p.44), *shōnen'ai* (literally, "boys' love") developed in the 1970s. As evidenced above, this development followed a long-established tradition of graphic depictions of same-sex relations in Japanese art. In fact, even when Western values and ideas of morality were introduced to Japan during the Meiji period, these motifs or portrayals of same-sex relations thrived within

novels and *senryū* (a short form of Japanese poetry). In fact, Pflugfelder argues that one way of "gauging change in the popular representation of male-male sexuality is by examining the *senryū* genre" (1999, p.194). While *senryū* was a widely practised satiric expression during the Meiji period, in the late 1870s and 1880s when two legal codes in publication law took shape, namely, the *Shinbunshi jōrei* (governing periodicals) and the *Shuppan jōrei* (covering book publishing), male-male erotic themes became subject to greater scrutiny. The sale of texts or images which were potentially harmful to "public morals," such as the representations of male-male sexuality within *shunga*, merited criminal punishment (Pflugfelder, 1999, pp.201-202). In his research on *bishōnen* culture in modernist Japanese literature, Jeffrey Angles also notes that the "amorous inclinations and erotic habits of adolescents" had become a subject of great concern so "educators, psychologists, and sexologists wrote about the need to police the sexual practices of students so that any indulgence in a 'perverse' desire for the same sex could be stopped" (Angles, 2011, p.175).

In spite of the legal constraints on textual representations of same-sex relations, the turn of the twentieth century in Japan witnessed a revival of the appreciation of the *bishōnen* (beautiful youths). Like the monk-serving acolyte "*chigo*" practices and pedagogic and pederastic "*wakashudō*" practices amongst samurai and later soldiers, the well-groomed and dutiful schoolboy—which debuted and gained currency in the Meiji period—revived Edo notions of the *bishōnen*, albeit at the same time sparking controversy as cases of sexual practice among adolescent schoolboys spread (Pflugfelder, 1999, p.212). In this light and as European thought on sexual deviancy and the related fears of degeneracy were introduced to Japan, male-male sexual practices could no longer be perceived as "normative" (1999, p.286). As reinforced and outlined in Pflugfelder's research,

> While sexology elevated sexual desire between male and female to the status of a biological instinct, it labelled erotic desires experienced or acted upon by one male for another […] as 'unnatural' and 'perverse,' symptomatic of an aberrant physiology and psychology. (1999, p.21)

In any case, what happened and has continued to happen behind closed doors and beyond the control of authorities is quite another matter. However, what is essential to note here is the origin and perseverance of the socio-cultural phenomenon of the *bishōnen*. As Pflugfelder's research suggests, the term itself was first coined in the Meiji period (1868-1912), when it was used to describe these especially beautiful pre-/adolescent boys, who were often engaged in homosexual practices (1999, pp.221-234). Irrespective of the etymology of the word, this tradition of *bishōnen* aesthetics manifested both within art and as a social phenomenon has persevered to this day. Today it is perhaps most visible not only in boys' love manga but also within contemporary men's fashion magazines and amongst the "Johnny's" music label's male pop idols such as Sexy Zone, Arashi and Kat-Tun. Given the significance and the long-established traditions of *bishōnen* aesthetics or appreciation, it is prudent to briefly discuss and define the term itself.

In a contemporary context *bishōnen* and *bishōjo* (beautiful girl) connote slender, doe-eyed and often eroticised adolescent or pre-adolescent anime or manga characters. However, it is critical to stress that originally, both *shōjo* (girl) and *shōnen* (boy) as social constructs and age categories made their discursive debuts and became more firmly established in the late nineteenth century as compulsory education was introduced and schools grew in number around Tokyo and other major cities. In her research on *shōjo bunka*, Tomoko Aoyama also reinforces that the "*shōjo* first emerged as a social entity in the closing years of the nineteenth century [...] the popular boys' magazine *Shōnen sekai* (*Boys' World*, 1895-1934) responded to this development by segregating girls from boys with the introduction of a special column for its *shōjo* readers in September 1895" (Aoyama, 2010, p.2). Whether reflected culturally or socially, this segregation also saw the dissemination of gender-specific codes of conduct appropriate for boys and girls. For instance, in her research on pedagogy during the Meiji and Taishō periods, Mariko Tajima Bohn draws attention to the differences between appropriate behavior for both girls' and boys' from Iwaji Shinbō's *Joshi nihon tokuhon 3* (*Japanese Reader for Girls,* Volume 3, 1895). As well as being obedient and dutiful to one's parents, Shinbō suggests that "boys must be strong inside and out, while girls must be gentle and compliant and submit to their male counterparts in order to build a happy home" (Tajima Bohn, 2008, pp.108). While Shinbō's modern constructs of the *shōjo* and *shōnen* reveal much about Japan's patriarchal pre-war nationalist discourse, I argue that retaining the samurai-like sense of duty and essence

of strength associated with Shinbō's *shōnen* is essential to comprehend as well as deconstruct his counterpart, the *bishōnen*.

However, what are the origins of, and how can one account for the beautification (indicated by the adding of the 'bi' prefix, meaning beautiful) of both the *shōnen* and *shōjo* which occurred with the greater expansion of print media and invention of manga in the twentieth century? Before defining either *bishōnen* or *bishōjo* in a contemporary context, it is therefore essential to consider the *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints) of the Edo period and the concept of *bijin* (beautiful woman) which flourished at the time, as well as the development of the term over time. In his historical overview of representations of *bishōnen* in Japanese culture, Asahiko Sunaga notes that although the concept was originally Chinese, the Japanese equivalent is most likely a recent phenomenon. Nevertheless, commonly used expressions were *shōjin* (small person) or *shōdō* (small child), which were later appropriated in the Muromachi period to form *bishō* (beautiful and small) and *bidō* (beautiful child). Thereafter, *chigo* (the aforementioned "acolyte") and *wakashū* (young person) appeared during the Sengoku period, and *shōnen* as well as *chiisakami* (little god) and *osanakami* (young god) made their discursive debuts in tandem with the growing popularity of *yarō-kabuki* during the Edo period (Sunaga, 2002, pp.5-11). In general, what these terms seem to indicate is a celebration of youth, smallness or physical (as well as emotional) immaturity, and a certain god-like quality. These connotations of youth, innocence, and purity associated with the *bishōnen* have arguably been preserved, reflected and celebrated not only in *shunga* and Japanese literature, but as I will later demonstrate, also in a wide range of media from *shōjo* manga through to boys' love manga and contemporary Japanese pop culture.

First and foremost, it is useful to briefly consider the various aesthetic manifestations of "*bi*" (beauty) in *shunga*. According to Yōko Nagakubo, the *shunga* of the Edo period commonly featured images of both men and women whose faces and figures were first and foremost, beautiful (Nagakubo, 2005, p.216). She adds that those images of men then fell into two categories: either *binan* (beautiful or handsome man) or *akusō* (evil or menacing-faced) (2005, p.218). Those depictions of men falling into the former category were known as "*yasaotoko*" (gentle or delicate men) (2005, p.216). While a delicate or gentle disposition is not directly suggested, Sunaga argues that the common attributes of the *bishōnen* which flourished in the Edo period and thereafter

were "*sumimaegami*" (long forelocks which were shaven as part of the *genpuku* coming-of-age ritual in the Edo period) and a certain sense of androgyny (2002, pp.5-11). Interestingly however, in regards to the *genpuku* ritual, Pflugfelder notes that while it rendered the youth no longer a suitable object for "the erotic attentions of other males," the ceremony itself did not have a fixed age at which it was carried out (1999, p.33). As a result, by manipulating tonsorial and sartorial markings of manhood, some youths were able to prolong this status of "boyhood" and practice prostitution for as long as possible (Pflugfelder 1999, p.34). As a consequence, I argue that the *bishōnen* as a social and cultural category based primarily on age was not only problematised, but thrown into question. Needless to say, whether subversive or exploitative in a social context, as cultural phenomena, beautiful young boys such as *bishōnen*, *kagema* (young male prostitutes often posing as apprentice *yarō-kabuki* actors), or practising *yarō-kabuki* actors were often depicted as androgynous youths with characteristically unkempt or long forelocks. They appeared in *shunga* and picture book and boys' magazine illustrations in the early twentieth century (Figures 1, 2 and 3).

**Figure 1: Kashō Takabatake. Uchū no jūsei**



Source: Nihon Shōnen, June 1930.

**Figure 2: Hikosō Itō. Unmei no ken**



伊藤彦造・画／吉川延・作「運命の剣」挿絵
『少年倶楽部』昭和4年3月号（個人蔵）

Source: Shōnen kurabu, March 1929.

**Figure 3: Shōkichirō Yamaguchi. *Shinshūtenmakyō***



挿絵：山口将吉郎『吉川英治全集別巻1　神州天馬俠』（講談社、昭和40年）

Source: Kōdansha, 1965.

While *bishōnen* and *binan* have generally referred to and been depicted as beautiful youths or men in a general sense, the term *bijin* (literally, beautiful person) has predominantly been associated with women despite the technically gender-neutral

suffix of "person." Nagakubo, however, suggests that the three attributes of beauty associated with *bijin*—namely, femininity, beauty and a "cute" face—can also be applied to the *bishōnen* and the *binan* who appear in *yaoi* texts. In this respect, and in light of the social and cultural representations of both *bishōnen* and *binan* throughout Japanese history, I suggest that a more flexible definition of both *bishōnen* and *binan* is necessary to account for the diverse manifestations of quintessentially beautiful protagonists within boys' love and *yaoi* narratives. Nevertheless, I consider valid Pflugfelder's suggestion that the literary tropes of youthful male beauty—namely, "snowy white skin," "lustrous black hair," and "flowery red cheeks"—set the young male as aesthetically distinct from both women and men and "represented both the antithesis and the antecedent of adult masculinity" in the sense that he shared "certain qualities of form and temperament with women" but "was set apart from them due to his 'potential manhood'" (1999, p.228). The ambiguity regarding age, gender and sexuality of the *bishōnen* which Pflugfelder indicates here cannot be stressed enough. However, I must outline certain fundamental if not consistent characteristics of the *bishōnen* trope and tradition.

If, as Nagakubo has indicated, *bijin* indeed generally connotes femininity, beauty and a cute face, what exactly is the essence or are the characteristics of the *bishōnen*? As established above, in terms of basic character identification, the *bishōnen* might signify boyhood or youth, smallness or physical (as well as emotional) immaturity, and a certain god-like quality. However, as James Welker demonstrates, these characteristics do not apply to all narratives, nor do they take into account the progressive facet of *bishōnen* characters. While discussing the growing debate about the role of reader gratifications associated with the *bishōnen* characters of boys' love manga, Welker suggests that "the beautiful boy can be read as a lesbian. Like the lesbian, the beautiful boy is a 'narrative outlaw' (Roof, 1996, p.97), inviting, indeed seducing, readers to violate patriarchal law with regard to love, gender, sex, and sexuality" (Welker, 2006, p.865). As noted above, Welker argues that the *bishōnen's* ambiguous form "shows readers that neither the body nor the psyche need be shackled by norms" (2006, p.866). In a similar manner, feminist scholar Chizuko Ueno has argued that boys' love narratives produce a "genderless world" of love in which the threat, dangers, and consequences of heterosexual intercourse for female readers are removed, allowing them to "fly." The love shared between males, though homosocial/-sexual in essence, is thus framed in a positive light regarding the gratifications for

female readers (Ueno, 1989, p.154). The boys in boys' love, according to Ueno, are thus neither male nor female but belong to (if not reflect) another gender (1989, p.133). Although illustrators like Takemiya and Hagio were inspired by and carefully studied the male form in art books and gay magazines, film critic and scholar Minori Ishida similarly argues that the depictions of boys in *shōnen'ai* were idealised, "beautified" and sensual to appeal to *shōjo* manga readers (Ishida, 2008, p.153). Olga Antononoka also focused on the fluidity of gender representation. In her research report on the four elements of the *bishōnen*, she refers to *bishōnen* as an "umbrella term for the symbolically charged protagonist of BL manga […] constructed through the juxtaposition and exploitation of elements of youth, beauty, same-sex relationship and objectifying the penis" (Antononoka, 2011, p.9). As well as reinforcing the importance of the aforementioned attributes of youth, beauty and same-sex relationships associated with the *bishōnen*, Antononoka further suggests that the *bishōnen* is a parody of both femininity and masculinity:

> He draws attention to the artificiality of the very notion of gender by means of juxtaposed stereotypical gender traits that represent androgyny through 'multiple gender variations,' for example a feminine-looking face combined with manly demeanour, a manly face with a feminine demeanour, a feminine face and feminine behaviour of a character which is defined as male through the depiction of a male-sexed body and penile pleasures. (2011, p.3)

While Antononoka stresses the fluidity of gender and identity that representations of *bishōnen* reproduce and reflect, she also challenges the view in *bishōnen* discourse which has placed more emphasis on the "femininity" rather than on "masculinity" as a key trait that seems to appeal to the female reader. McLelland, for example, has argued that the *bishōnen*, "although sexually active, tend not to display characteristically male sexual characteristics, but are much more like women are supposed to be: emotional, nurturing, and nice" (2000, p.283). In contrast to this prevailing and long-established discursive stance towards *bishōnen* aesthetics, Antononoka holds that it is the "mixture of socially-stapled gender behaviour traits that create the specific androgyny of the *bishōnen*" (2011, p.2). Admittedly, assuming that the *bishōnen* leans towards one gender more than another has its flaws, undermining

the very complexity of a narrative figure and the fluidity of gender and identity, but that does not mean that some texts do not employ prevailing traditions in *bishōnen* characterisation and aesthetics. To adequately define the *bishōnen* for further discussion, it is essential to both incorporate and challenge pre-existing notions of the *bishōnen* to account for narrative figures who appear more flexible and fluid in terms of gender- and sexuality-associated character attributes. Therefore, in this dissertation, the term *bishōnen* and the related term *biseinen* will refer to any characters who are predominantly, if not exclusively, addressed or regarded as males within a narrative. With regard to the aforementioned *biseinen*, it can be differentiated from *bishōnen* in terms of age. For instance, McLelland notes that *bishōnen* generally refers to beautiful boys from a prepubescent stage (ten years old or even younger to about twenty-five), while *biseinen* refers to beautiful young men, "but the way in which they are drawn makes them look like teenagers" (2000, p.279). Regardless of age differentiation, we can acknowledge that a certain beauty ascribed to youth, as well as actual or apparent physical immaturity, are central characteristics of both the *bishōnen* and *biseinen*. This is not to say that such characters are neotenic or non-reproductive, but the emphasis on the ambivalent and limbo-like state of adolescence is often and arguably a means to glorify the carefree-like nature of both youth and youths.

However, based on diverse factors such as styles of illustration, prevailing representations of gender, characterization, or even consumer demand, methods of portraying this almost permanent state of pubescence and the essentially youthful and "beautiful" nature of the *bishōnen/biseinen* differ wildly. While body shapes and builds of *bishōnen/-seinen* vary, I argue that the exposure of flesh (particularly the bare, hairless chests and upper torsos of sexualised characters) is a commonly employed motif. In addition, I argue that the "cute face" attribute associated with *bijin* and an emphasis on hands are also commonly employed motifs, though not strictly essential. What continues to remain essential, as has been demonstrated and argued, is the aspect of androgyny. Incorporating and exploring both physical and behavioural aspects, androgyny is relative to the observer, the context, the culture and ideology. However, for simplicity's sake, this thesis will use Jennifer Robertson's extension of Judith Butler's argument that androgyny is a "surface politics of the body" (Butler, 1990, p.136) as its definition of androgyny. To acknowledge androgyny in a Japanese context, Robertson adds to Butler's argument that androgyny involves "the scrambling of gender markers" (such as clothes, cosmetics, gestures, speech patterns, and so on) in

a way that both challenges the stability of a sex-gender system premised on a male (masculine)/female (feminine) dichotomy and also retains the components of that dichotomy, now juxtaposed or combined (Roberston, 1998, pp.47-48). Robertson's emphasis on the juxtaposition or combination of components is particularly critical. That is, the androgynous *bishōnen*/*biseinen* freely, and potentially frequently, appropriate components of either gender in whichever fashion they please, but they are never strictly or perpetually bound to one gender more than the other. Moreover, on the basis of the *bishōnen*/*biseinen*'s androgyny, youth and beauty, whether openly, discreetly or inadvertently, such characters also engage in homosocial or homosexual relations at some point in the narrative, as Antononoka suggests. In this way, the fluid, playful and androgynous characteristics of the *bishōnen*/*biseinen* trope serve to reinforce the values of the carelessness of youth and challenge the restraints of gender.

It must be stressed, however, that the set of characteristics I have associated with *bishōnen*/*biseinen* are by no means a universal set of standards—they are both open to interpretation and subject to change based on a number of factors. Nevertheless, the characteristics outlined thus far will serve as a point of reference when considering early traditions of *bishōnen* aesthetics and cultural representations as well as social practices of same-sex relations in the historical periods surrounding and influencing the development of *shōnen'ai* in the 1970s through to the late 1980s, when BL as both a genre and an umbrella term was developed.

In spite of the greater visibility of *bishōnen* aesthetics in the Edo period and the body of literature concerning same-sex relations dating from as early as the Heian period, the transitionary period from the Meiji period to the Taishō (and later Shōwa) period was host to several fundamental cultural phenomena both on stage and in print that would help shape, if not significantly account for, the development of boys' love manga. In an attempt to encapsulate the crux of the origins of boys' love manga, in their collaborative work on boys' love manga scholarship, Antonia Levi *et al* suggest that the element of gender play established in the all-female Takarazuka theatre in the early Taishō period, as well as depictions of *bishōnen* in boys' illustrated magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, influenced the early postwar manga of the 1960s (Levi, McHarry, & Pagliasotti, 2008, p.2). Levi argues:

Some elements were apparent even before female artists became

dominant in writing stories […] Tezuka Osamu's *Ribon no kishi*

(*Princess Knight*, 1953), about a cross-dressing princess with a male

soul and the male friend who falls in love with her without realizing

she is female, was not exactly boys' love, but it did introduce many

of the gender-bending issues that would become standard in the boys'

love tradition. (Levi, 2008, p.2)


While the influence of Takarazuka is acknowledged by manga scholars and historians alike, to suggest that Takarazuka's celebration of gender play and its associated influence on Tezuka's early work primarily fostered the ongoing appreciation of the *bishōnen* and the development of *shōnen'ai* manga is problematic. I consider not only representations of same-sex relations and traditions of gender play in theatre, but also those in print media, a more mainstream and perhaps more accessible (in terms of cost) and decentralised (in terms of location) medium. Pflugfelder, for instance, has demonstrated how Meiji era literature such as Masafumi Inanoka's 1900 novel *Bishōnen* often paid homage to young male beauty. The end of the Meiji period, according to Pflugfelder, saw the rise of boys' literature and depictions of the *bishōnen* which were "most likely to evoke the figure of a young student decked out in a (*haikarā*) Western-style school uniform" (1999, p.227). In contrast to Hikosō Itō and Shōkichirō Yamaguchi's tall, youthful, white-skinned, long-nosed, Edo-inspired samurai, which filled the pages of both *Shōnen kurabu* and *Shōjo kurabu* magazines, Kashō Takabatake's illustrations encapsulated the emerging schoolboy image. For Barbara Hartley, Takabatake is a key figure in the genealogy of the love for boys' love (Hartley, 2015, p.24). She adds that his ideal Japanese boys in the pre-war era were eroticised on account of their seemingly "ambivalent passivity, fragility, empherality and softness" (2015, p.22). Takabatake's schoolboys engaged in a wide range of activities from camping, sports, hunting, or being hunted or bound. They could be found within the pages of *Nihon shōnen*, where they neatly encapsulated the transitions in *bishōnen* aesthetics (see Figures 4, 5 6). Furthermore, these magazines' greater emphasis on exoticism, in terms of the appeal of Western motifs, stock characters and settings such as cowboys and Indians or adventures in the Amazon jungle, were very much characteristic of and perhaps influenced the pioneering boys' love manga of the 1970s.

**Figure 4: Kashō Takabatake.** *Saraba furusato!*



Source: Nihon Shōnen, March 1929.

**Figure 5:** *Kyanpingu raifu*



Source: Nihon Shōnen, September 1925.

**Figure 6: *Akibare***



Source: Nihon Shōnen, Vol. 24 1929.


In addition to exotic *bishōnen*, such magazines also featured varying degrees of homoerotic imagery. This was perhaps only natural, given the strict segregation by sex institutionally (school, for example) and taboos associated with depicting heterosexual relations in print media directed at children and young adults. As Keiko Nakamura indicates in her work on *bishōnen* and schoolboy culture in the Shōwa era, as a consequence of these restrictions on the depictions of heterosexual relations in early Shōwa print media, depictions of same-sex relations were both charming and attractive to young readers (Nakamura, 2003, p.6). Needless to say, this cultural phenomenon was not only characteristic of boys' magazines at the time, but also girls' magazines. Given the development of compulsory education in the latter years of the Meiji period, which marked a shift towards greater education opportunities for girls, as well as the steady rise in the number of female students graduating from high school, publishers also began to tap into a growing market of young female readers. According to Barbara Satō, the overwhelming popularity of *Jogaku sekai* was an indication that "young, unmarried, financially secure women able to enroll in higher schools constituted the staying power behind women's magazines," and this was indeed impetus for other publishers to follow suit (Satō, 2003, p.91). In spite of this, statistics reveal that not only was the number of schools open to girls limited, but the costs of tuition and the

respective socio-economic pressures on young women to perform household duties were major factors hindering the further growth in numbers of young girls graduating from high school at the time (Uchida, 2005, p.19).

Such conditions could be seen as significant factors restricting women's access to higher education, economic independence and, arguably, an enjoyable experience of childhood and adolescence. It has also been argued that under these circumstances, the novels, poems, gag manga, illustrations and miscellany within pre-war girls' magazines were a means of consolation and a fanciful temporary distraction from the reality and rigid gender expectations of young women in an ever-developing post-Meiji and pre-World War II context in Japan. For instance, Hiromi Tsuchiya-Dollase reinforces that the goal of magazine publishers during the "embryonic years of *shōjo* culture was to educate girls about their social roles and future responsibilities […] Despite this intention, however, readers took advantage of their new access to magazine space to recreate and express voices long suppressed by society" (Tsuchiya-Dollase, 2009, p.81). She explains,

> Since a girl knows that the period during which she can pretend to be a *shōjo* will not last forever, she indulgently rhapsodizes the emotive feelings that characterize this time of her life. Flowery and sentimental language [...] was considered by the girls who read magazines to be a secret code. These ciphers of language and feeling brought readers together, strengthening the "imagined community" of *shōjo* and *shōjo bunka* (girls' culture). (2009, p.81)

Similarly, Shamoon also maintains that the culture which developed in girls' schools, the Takarazuka Revue, and girls' magazines from the 1910s through to the 1930s "was far more concerned with homosocial relationships rather than heterosexual romance or marriage" (2011, p.57). Both Shamoon and art historian and curator Shizue Uchida acknowledge novelist Nobuko Yoshiya's central role in the formation of this culture. While Uchida refers to Yoshiya's *Flower Tales* (1916-1924) as a "maiden's bible" in pre-war Japan (Uchida, 2005, p.4), Shamoon stresses that "within the private world of girls' magazines, which encouraged girls to express themselves and to form close relationships with other girls, Yoshiya's novels celebrate female bonds over

heterosexual marriage" (2011, p.70). Thus, while it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of boys' literature and culture as well as Pflugfelder (1999), Leupp (1995), McLelland (2004; 2007) and Lunsing's (2001) extensive research on the social and cultural manifestations of predominantly male homosexuality and gender in Japan, Shamoon's (among others') work on the girls' culture which developed in the latter years of the Meiji period and flourished in pre-war girls' magazines provides specific insight into transitions in cultural representations of same-sex relations preceding the development of *shōnen'ai* manga in the 1970s.

In contrast to the homosexual activity that was practised between men and youths well into the Meiji period in schools, colleges, military academies, and within literature, Shamoon suggests that girls appearing in the fiction and illustrations in pre-war girls' magazines were pure, virginal and channeled their romantic desires into homosocial relationships with other girls (2011, p.11). These relationships were known as "S *kankei*" (S relationships). They were described by Uchida as "relations between girls, most often involving a senior and younger student who affectionately exchange letters, brush each others' hair, and get along a little more passionately than good friends" (2005, p.14), and they were as much of a cultural as a social phenomenon. In any case, according to Shamoon, although S relationships had a homoerotic element, they should not be read as lesbian in the twenty-first-century sense of a fixed sexual identity (2011, p.11). To elaborate, S relationships were "tolerated, even encouraged by educators and other authority figures, as a way to channel girls' desire away from heterosexual activity" and as a result, the love between two girls was understood as "chaste" and an "ideal expression of spiritual love" (2011, p.11). Although female homosexuality was by no means non-existent, Kanako Akaeda notes that "lesbian" as a marker of identity only made its discursive debut after World War II (Akaeda, 2011, p.38). Thus, any manifestations of female same-sex relations were viewed in a very different light. For instance, despite the influence Western medical discourse about homosexual pathology in the latter years of the Meiji period, some sexologists considered S relationships "healthy and normal as long as these relationships did not go 'too far'" (Shamoon, 2011, p.35). This acceptance, if not celebration, of intimate friendships between girls has endured to the present day, and is perhaps most visible in the genre of manga known as *yuri*—a "particular subgenre of Japanese *manga* (comic books) [that] depicts female-female relationships" (Nagaike, 2010).

Can this acceptance of intimate friendships within pre-war girls' magazines be connected to the development of narratives involving experimentation with gender and sexuality in other genres of manga later into the twentieth century? Regarding the ongoing same-sex motifs depicted within *shōjo bunka* (girls' culture) throughout the twentieth century, Shamoon posits a similar argument and genealogy of *shōjo* manga which demonstrates the consistent motif of homosociality in both pre- and postwar girls' culture. In pre-war girls' culture, for instance, she writes that homosocial romance in girls' novels became an ideal expression of spiritual love. However, by the late 1930s, the tone and nature of magazines such as *Shōjo no tomo* had changed, and its popularity declined. The *shōjo* was non-productive by nature, and non-reproductive as well. The total war effort could not afford to allow any citizen (even the formerly protected female students) to be idle, and "what had once seemed an innocent way to prevent girls from becoming sexually active prematurely now interfered with the government's total war strategy" (Shamoon, 2011, p.56). Like boys' magazines of the time, in which boys were shown how to make origami fighter planes, girls' magazines were implicitly or often overtly patriotic in tone. In spite of these circumstances, homosocial themes in girls' magazines were somewhat revived in postwar Japan, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. Stories of orphaned or abandoned children continued to avoid heterosexual romance and allowed for the "exploration of love in a spiritual and melodramatic register, without the threat of sexual activity among teenage girls" (Shamoon, 2011, p.92). In his research on S relationships, Pflugfelder further suggests that the practice of actual S relationships lingered into the 1950s and 1960s in coeducational high schools in Japan, while also appearing in fiction (2005, p.174). Osamu Tezuka's Takarazuka-inspired cross-dressing tale of a princess knight (*Ribon no kishi*) is often cited as being one of the first landmark gender-bending or "genderless" (Fujimoto, 2008, p.180) *shōjo* manga of the 1950s. However, I argue that it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s, under the influence of the somewhat gender-ambiguous characters within rock music and "counter-culture" manga such as Hideko Mizuno's *Fire*! (1969), that the *bishōnen* was culturally revived and soon incorporated into same-sex narratives that showed relationships that were more than simply "homosocial."

Although the original *shōnen'ai* manga title is debatable, some theorists (such as Shamoon or Fujimoto) consider a selection of titles as the basis of the genre. For Fujimoto, homosexual themes within manga, or at least the world of *shōnen'ai* manga,

were most aptly reflected in Moto Hagio's *Tōma no shinzō* (1974), Keiko Takemiya's *Kaze to ki no uta* (1976) and Ryōko Yamagishi's *Hi izuru tokoro no tenshi* (1980) (2008, p.180). Shamoon, on the other hand, considers Hagio's *Tōma no shinzō* and Takemiya's *Sunrūmu nite* (1970) as the more salient founding titles of the genre (2011, pp.104-104). For the sake of simplicity, we can say that *shōnen'ai* more or less made its debut as a genre of manga in the 1970s with the aforementioned "Year 24 Group" of young female manga artists including the likes of Moto Hagio, Keiko Takemiya, Ryōko Yamagishi and Riyoko Ikeda. One of the key figures who perhaps propelled the publication of Hagio and Takemiya's groundbreaking *shōnen'ai* works was their neighbour and muse, Norie Masuyama. From an early stage in their careers, Masuyama praised their artwork and suggested that it was going to change the world of *shōjo* manga (Takemiya, 2016, p.36), which, she argued needed to be more progressive (2016, p.37). Indeed, according to Takemiya's accounts, at that time *shōjo* manga was full of nothing but boy meets girl tropes, which lacked any depictions of physical intimacy beyond kissing (2016, p.87). There was simply no place for other depictions. The appeal and possibility of love and intimacy between boys, however, was an avenue of storytelling that Masuyama, Yamagishi, Hagio and Takemiya were particularly passionate about (2016, pp.99-100). However, it was perhaps Takemiya who was the most adamant about realising the potential of *shōnen'ai* (boys' love) narratives and defying requests from the editors of the then rather conventional *shōjo* manga magazines. In any case, it can be said that as a term in popular discourse as well as a genre of *shōjo* manga, *shōnen'ai* made its debut in the 1970; there is no need to meticulously outline a chronological genealogy of *shōnen'ai* manga or nominate an individual who sparked the creation of the genre, or whose work was the most characteristic of *shōnen'ai*. Before I consider the defining characteristics of the genre, it is useful to also briefly draw attention to its more overtly sexual variation, *yaoi*, and its commercial-oriented and slightly more homoerotic form, BL.

Welker describes *yaoi* as a "truly global label for male homoerotic manga and anime," which was originally used among amateur artists to refer to homoerotic works in the 1980s (2015, p.55). *Yaoi* is essentially a clever acronym of "*yama nashi, ochi nashi, imi nashi*" (no climax, no point, no meaning), which, according to Sharon Kinsella, actually refers primarily to the decentring of plot within its stories (Kinsella, 2000, p.113). For Zanghellini, *yaoi* refers to a "genre of anime (cartoons), manga (comics) and fan art whose subject matter is erotic and romantic relationships between

males" with the producers and consumers of both *yaoi* and BL being predominantly women (2009, p.279). *Yaoi* could indicate works of fan fiction, fan art, or other fan-produced works of a homoerotic nature between males (irrespective of plot) which are often subject to censorship and regulation. However, *yaoi* need not only be fan-produced, despite its fannish origins in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, although the bulk of *yaoi* fiction is derivative or what might be referred to as "slash" in Western discourse concerning fan studies, I posit that although *yaoi* is essentially derivative, the existence of some degree of originality and creativity should not be dismissed. Furthermore, *yaoi* works include not only manga and anime (animation) but also novels, illustrations and other creative works produced by fans, amateur artists, and occasionally professional writers. As I have observed on site and discovered from several of my research respondents, some manga artists and writers vending at *dōjinshi* events/markets also publish professionally via major *dōjinshi* booksellers such as K-Books, Comic Tora no ana, DLsite (an online *dōjinshi* bookstore) or elsewhere. Central to *yaoi* narratives in particular is what is referred to as *kappuringu* (the "coupling" or pairing of two characters in a homoerotic fashion) and the dynamics between the respective *uke* ("receiver" or more passive character) and *seme* (aggressor, penetrator). Zanghellini also stresses *yaoi's* reliance on "well-established romance scripts" in regards to character dynamics:

> The theme of the pursuer and pursued in which the pursued puts up a resistance that will eventually be overcome by the pursuer seems to resonate powerfully with some of the fans […] The typical *yaoi* /BL relationship resembles the Greek love familiar to Western scholars of sexuality studies not only in the mode of romancing but also in its structure and role division. Like Greek love—centred on an *erastes* (lover) and the *eromenos* (beloved)—*yaoi* /BL involves an older male actively making love to a younger one. The *seme* does: he pursues, romances and penetrates; the *uke* predominantly *is*: he is younger, somewhat more vulnerable, and a beautiful boy (*bishōnen*)—qualities that taken together make him a suitable object of both the *seme's* erotic interest and his vows to protect him. (2009, pp.284-285)

Zanghellini's description nicely encapsulates the essence of *uke/seme* power

dynamics and its analogous nature to Greek love. More specific details about the characterisation and representations of both archetypes will be provided below. Given the characteristics of *yaoi* fiction that have been outlined thus far, its distinction from *shōnen'ai* is fairly obvious through its focus on: making love rather than being in love; penetration rather than adoration; parody rather than ingenuity; and explicit imagery over poetry and flowery imagery. However, this still leaves BL as a somewhat ambiguous category. In spite of Mizoguchi's claim that "in the 'boys' love' genre, virtually all the protagonists engage in anal intercourse" (2003, p.65), by encompassing both narratives explicitly depicting anal penetration and somewhat less erotic (though not entirely platonic) narratives, BL has often been considered a blanket term for all forms of homosocial/-erotic works of manga or other fictions, or simply a direct translation of *shōnen'ai* (boys' love). However, according to Paul Gravett,

> Although the sex scenes in *shōnen'ai* comics during the 1970s and early 1980s were somewhat candid and romantic in tone, more recent women's comics have included more graphic sex in their narratives. The early emphasis on boys' love gradually morphed into an interest in love between men in general, including "beautiful youths" (*biseinen*) and even "beautiful (adult) men" (*binan*). (Gravett, 2004, p.87)

Based on these observations and the changing nature of consumption and production trends, I suggest that BL takes into account both professionally- and amateur-produced homosocial and homoerotic narratives featuring protagonists belonging to various age groups. Furthermore, compared to *yaoi*, BL leans more towards original or parodic works of fiction which do not fall into the R18+ classification within Japan. Although the criteria for R18+ content vary in each prefecture and city in Japan, according to major fanzine event organizer Akaboo, texts featuring the following subjects and items require a R18+ label: sex scenes with explicit depictions of actual genitalia, child prostitution, prostitution, incest, rape, etc.; cruel violence such as corpse mutilation, lynching, or abuse; suicide; and drug abuse (Akaboo, 2016).

BL works are, in short, less parodic, less "obscene" or erotic (do not require an

R18+label), and are usually (although not necessarily) produced on a more professional or commercial level than *yaoi* works. Once again, more precise details about the distinguishing features of BL and *yaoi* will be outlined below. The overview of historical and cultural representations of same-sex themes provided thus far has been in some ways brief and selective (for instance, cultural representations of lesbian, bisexual or transgender individuals have been largely overlooked). However, the crux of this thesis concerns the manga and other works of fiction depicting same-sex relations between males which are predominantly produced and consumed by females. I also recognise and indeed argue that the various social phenomena and cultural representations related to diverse gender and sexual identities have influenced (and in turn, have been influenced) by the boys' love manga phenomenon. However, rather than meticulously detailing these factors and digressing from the core subject matter of this thesis, I intend to focus specifically on male-male sexuality as reflected and reproduced in BL manga and the various subgenres which have developed in the latter half of the twentieth century.

### 2.2 Same-sex but Different: Transitions in Themes, Genres and Motifs of BL Manga and Associated Fiction

#### 2.2.1 On Themes

Having attempted to concisely outline the historical phenomena and aesthetic traditions of male-male sexuality which have often been associated with (if not seen as wholly accounting for) the development of boys' love manga, I will now briefly outline a number of frequently employed themes, genres, motifs, and trends characteristic of both *dōjin* and professionally published BL and *yaoi* texts.

Although I have already discussed the more salient events in the transition from "S relationship" fiction to boys' love manga above, I will recap certain aspects which have had a significant impact on, and continue to thrive in, BL manga. Homosociality, as noted, was thought to be central to girls' emotional development and was considered a relatively healthy transitory phase unless it went "too far." These homosocial themes and bittersweet tales of orphans, abandoned or kidnapped children in search of affection, compassion, a parental figure, or at least a role model, prevailed in postwar manga from the 1950s through to the *shōnen'ai* manga of the 1970s. While Erich in *Tōma no shinzō*, or Gilbert and Serge in *Kaze to ki no uta* are obvious examples of

early BL protagonists suffering from fear of abandonment or attachment due to the loss of a parent, other prime examples of BL protagonists in the same vein include the kidnapped and traumatised Keisuke in Fumi Yoshinaga's *Antique Bakery* (1999-2002), and motherless Ash in Akimi Yoshida's *Banana Fish* (1985-1994). Although one might easily characterise this pattern of characters or narratives as being fraught with imagery of abandonment, I suggest that these characters' same-sex tendencies need not necessarily be seen as related to some latent childhood trauma. Rather, the tendency of these characters to yearn for the affection of an older companion of the same sex reflects Japan's long-established mentor system of seniority-based relationships (platonic or otherwise), as well as the custom of age disparity between among couples. Regardless of their life experience or age, emotionally immature protagonists seek or require an emotional guide who is perhaps similar in personality, gender orientation, or sexual orientation but older or more emotionally mature than themselves. In regard to this enduring theme of emotional immaturity and the question of subjectivity and identity-formation characteristic of BL narratives, Shamoon emphasises that narratives such as *Tōma no shinzō* are Bildungsromans in the sense that they centre on the "identity formation of the adolescent characters and their difficulties in transitioning from childhood to adulthood" (2011, p.105). However, she adds that in contrast to many other boys' love stories, even in the 1970s, there is little explicit sexual activity among the boys in *Tōma no shinzō* (2011, p.105). In this sense, one can trace the perpetuation of themes of homosociality and self-growth from the early S relationship narratives of the early twentieth century through to the 1970s. Whether considered a coming-of-age story or simply incorporating aspects of Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Path" (1968), I argue that boys' love narratives which concern the blurry transitory phase between childhood and adulthood have persevered to this day. Given that for some time in Japanese culture coming-of-age merely involved the physical cutting of one's hair (the aforementioned *genpuku* rite), I suggest that that the heroic journey of a boys' love protagonist involves either significant physical or psychological rites of passage. This may take the form of one's first sexual encounter or significant emotional or psychological growth. As Gravett asserts,

> *Shōnen* manga typically follow the pattern of the heroic journey. The
> hero cycle, described by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a*
> *Thousand Faces*, is analogous to the rites of passage or coming of

age, separation, initiation, and return. The hero leaves a place of
familiarity to cross a threshold or barrier into a world of unfamiliarity
[…] The hero will likely suffer some kind of nadir and atonement
that will be followed by gaining a boon, wisdom, power, or a magical
item that can be brought back upon the return to benefit the world.
(2004, p.70)


Needless to say, not all boys' love protagonists gain a "boon, wisdom or experience to benefit the world." While the crossing of the "threshold" or unfamiliar world Gravett and Campbell refer to might generally connote a male character's transition into "manhood," I suggest rather, that by the end of an average BL narrative, most protagonists have experienced some degree of emotional or physical development through homosocial/-erotic interactions with other narrative figures.

Whether this transition takes place in geographically, psychologically, or sexually unfamiliar territory varies from text to text, but in the case of boys' love manga, I suggest that more often than not, it refers to the protagonist's first significant sexual or emotional encounter with a member of the same sex. For quite a number of *dōjin* manga artists and theorists alike, this passage into unfamiliar homosexual territory is part of the integral element of fantasy, or what is referred to as *akogare* (a sense of yearning or longing). In contrast to Jennifer Robertson, who has primarily considered *akogare* in terms of sexual longing (or lust), Ian Buruma holds that *akogare* refers to a yearning associated with "people, places and ideals that seem impossibly far away" (Buruma, 1984, p.121). However, as Eiri Takahara has demonstrated in his work on pre-war boys' literature, although the ideal (if innocent) form of *akogare* within homosocial/-sexual narratives involves an admiration of and identification with the other through which the boy can affirm himself, *akogare* does not exclude physicality (2003, p.19). I also maintain that *akogare* involves an emotional or physical sense of longing for a seemingly impossible person, place, object or ideal. Furthermore, I argue that this *akogare* remains a staple element in both *shōjo* manga and especially boys' love manga.


To elaborate, historians commenting on pre-war magazine *Shōjo no tomo* have noted that its readership yearned for anything from the West, from items and accessories such as brooches or watches to Western literature, classical music notes,

photo stories from abroad, and information pieces about various traditions and customs practised worldwide. These appeared in a column known as *Sekai no me to mimi* (The Eyes and Ears of the World) (Ishino, 2009, p.192; pp.213-214). More importantly, this emphasis on and longing for Western culture and fashion, bittersweet stories of pure, platonic, yet everlasting love, and later the unfamiliar world of boys is arguably what became the paradigm for girls' fiction even to this day. Early examples include Yoshiya's early passionate yet platonic accounts of forbidden love in *Flower Tales,* Ikeda's groundbreaking manga *The Rose of Versailles* (a gender-bending tale of valour and romance set in the French Revolution) and Takemiya's and Hagio's boys' boarding school romances set in Europe. More contemporary manga titles include Kyoto Seika University graduate est em's tales of talented lovers and artists worldwide in *Seduce Me After the Show* (2006) and *Red Blinds the Foolish* (2008), Fumi Yoshinaga's France-based *Gerard and Jacques* (2004), and *Shitsuji no bunzai* (The Social Standing of a Butler, 2005). These are only several examples of BL manga with somewhat distant geographic and temporal settings, but given their local and global acclaim, it is reasonable to argue that exoticism remains a vitally appealing facet of BL narratives as well as a successful ongoing marketing strategy.

It is also important to stress that despite the blatant Othering in terms of sex, sexuality, and nationality which occurs in such narratives, the exoticism need not be perceived in a negative light. That is, despite the stereotypes and clichés associated with their depictions of not only male-male sexuality but also exotic Othered identities and cultures, BL narratives are often considered by readers (based on my respondents' attitudes) or marketed by sellers as "fantasy" fiction. As Tsuchiya-Dollase suggests, the function of exoticism was and is to "transport audiences away from reality" (2009, p.83). Rather than authenticity, the emphasis is on fantasy. This important element of fantasy may account for the subversive appropriation of mainstream manga and anime characters (as well as celebrities, musicians, historical figures and so on) in *dōjin*-produced BL manga.

For instance, some of my respondents explained that, due to limitations in the source text, they were forced to create derivative BL works. Such works typically appropriate characters or actual figures from television series, films, theatre productions, J-pop groups, or bands and depict them in homoerotic situations or settings not included in the source text. When asked why, many replied that homoerotic

depictions of such figures were unavailable and seeing them in new and subversive forms was fun or just a "fantasy." Hiroki Azuma refers to this devotion of fans to particular characters and their "alluring characteristics" as "*chara-moe*" (also "*kyara moe*," and the spelling which this thesis will adopt) (Azuma, 2009, p.67). In a sense, the intense admiration for the characters/*akogare* is so great that it actually takes precedence over the original narrative. Thus, even when characters are taken out of context, such as in derivative works, the derivative texts are respected just the same as the originals and provide emotional satisfaction for the consumers/fans (2009, pp. 84-85). The same can be said about both producers and consumers of *dōjin* BL manga. That is, by placing one's beloved real or fictional figures into unfamiliar, exotic, romantic or erotic scenarios, one can incorporate various levels of *akogare* into a narrative, potentially enhancing its affective potential. Not only does one incorporate the pre-existing appeal of the Other (homosexual and male character), but the narrative is also a source of *akogare* based on exotic temporal or geographic settings since it is usually set in a different setting than the source text. Furthermore, the appropriated characters, as the subjects of one's *kyara moe*/character-based *akogare*, satisfy several other forms of *akogare*. In this sense, *dōjin*-produced manga can be considered an ideal mechanism for satisfying as well as providing *akogare*, given that fans and amateur artists dictate, consume, and create/recreate what they long for irrespective of authenticity or notions of value-based judgment.

Besides this emphasis on "longing" as a central aspect of both *shōjo* manga and BL narratives, and the aforementioned themes of self-growth or coming of age associated with emotional and physical same-sex relations, the most prominent and pervasive theme is arguably "love." From as early as the short stories within pre-war magazines through to contemporary *yaoi* and BL manga, love has more or less conquered all genres. Given the centrality of the theme of love in BL manga combined with the importance of the notion of *akogare*, it is reasonable to suggest that love (in whichever sense one considers it) is the most distinct or perhaps most defining characteristic of BL manga and its subgenres. To be more precise, the term for love most pertinent to boys' love manga as well as *shōjo bunka* is the Western-inspired term for romantic love (*ren'ai*). According to Michiko Suzuki, the term *rabu* was introduced to Japan in the early Meiji period as a "new Western ideal rooted in Christianity" and "juxtaposed as superior to *iro* and *koi*" as traditional notions which emphasised sensuality and carnal desire over emotion (Suzuki, 2010, p.8). Along the lines of

Suzuki's argument, I suggest that in contrast to the oft-used term *kindai ren'ai ideorogī* (modern romantic love ideology) to refer to the modern emphasis on love as an ideal or "promotion of marrying for love," in the discourse of manga studies and specifically BL manga, *ren'ai* is used to refer to the "notion that true love is an amalgamation of spiritual and sexual love, and that this love is the basis for female development" (2010, p.13). I also stress that as a theme central to BL narratives, *ren'ai* applies to narratives which are homosocial or homoerotic. That is, *ren'ai* also covers texts in which sexual activity is not explicitly depicted but is nonetheless suggested. I acknowledge that not all texts incorporate *ren'ai* as a theme, but if a range of expressions of love, from spiritual to sexual, is considered flexibly, then one could apply *ren'ai* to a wider range of texts. For instance, like Mizoguchi (2000), Suzuki (1998), and Nagaike (2003), Orbaugh has noted that rape, as a common feature of *yaoi* manga, "is always motivated by the aggressor's extreme love and desire for the victim," so much so that the victim accepts and reciprocates the aggressor's love. Thus, despite its violence, rape is considered an expression of love (2010, pp.179-180). As she further indicates, these themes and plot devices are somewhat analogous to the Gothic and Harlequin romances in which,

> the heroine is often intimidated, threatened, or even harmed by the handsome and passionate but cruel male character […] The originally antagonistic relationship between heroine and "villain" is slowly but surely resolved, as she comes to realize that what motivates his harsh treatment is his unspoken passion for her, often combined with some kind of tragic secret of his own. […] The reader of Gothics is assumed to be female, and is supposed to identify closely with the heroine, sharing her terror regarding the threat of violation at the hands of the male persecutor, and then sharing her growing understanding of and love for him as the story reaches its climax. (2010, p.179)

While these themes and plot devices seem analogous to Victorian Gothic romances, they are by no means a universal standard for all BL or *yaoi* narratives. However, given the global success of titles such as Guilt|Pleasure's suspense thriller *In these Words* (2012) and the fact that the second largest amount of titles available in any

category on major online manga store DLsite (May 2014) was *shōta* (a subgenre of BL manga involving male minors), the prevalence of these themes and plot devices cannot be denied. *Yaoi*, and particularly *shōta*, are often accused of promoting sexual violence, including against minors, and are even considered child pornography by legislators and critics in countries like Canada and Australia (Hampton, 2016, p.236). However, Zanghellini reminds us that while male-to-male intimacy is obviously what distinguishes *yaoi*/BL from other forms of manga or anime which also appropriate cuteness to varying degrees, it is also the ways in which male same-sex intimacy is treated that makes the genre more appealing to its audience than other gay-themed material (2009, pp.290-291). Thus, despite the harsh criticism of narratives incorporating rape or abuse scenes, the simultaneous inclusion of redeeming attributes of cuteness, romance, and intimacy may serve to "legitimise" the harshness of some BL and *yaoi* narratives on the basis that the violent sexual acts are performed as an expression of love. Love, in its diverse narrative representations, not only remains a major theme, but also drives the plot as well as the characters' motivations and actions. Although other themes vary across subgenres, love has endured as the central theme in the majority of subgenres in both BL and *yaoi* manga.

On the subject of genre, I have thus far argued for the ongoing significance of the appropriation of aspects of the Bildungsroman in the early *shōnen'ai* titles. Similarly to Orbaugh, I have also illustrated that as well as featuring exotic temporal and geographic settings, BL and *yaoi* manga narratives involving psychological and/or sexual trauma (or at least exploring the psychological ordeals of characters with complex sexuality issues or sexual relations) bear much in common with Gothic romances. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, sensation fiction, in its uneasy combination of frivolous romantic escapades or forbidden love with potentially realistic circumstances involving adultery, abuse, drugs, or love triangles, is a hybrid form in which "the Gothic is brought up to date with and so mixed with the conventions of realism as to make its events sound possible if not exactly probable" (Brantlinger, 1998, p.147). In this light, we may also suggest that some BL and *yaoi* manga also appropriate aspects of the sensation novel. Tarako Kotobuki's *Sex Pistols* or Kano Miyamoto's *Flowers* (2005), for example, both feature scenarios involving adultery and love triangles. Furthermore, given that in the sensation novel there is greater emphasis on realism and the idea that plot events are to some extent realistic (as opposed to emphasis on excess and the uncanny in Gothic fiction), it is within reason to

further argue that BL and *yaoi* in fact have more in common thematically and in terms of narrative presentation with sensation novels than Gothic romances. However, irrespective of which genre of literary fiction BL and *yaoi* bear most resemblance to, the many subgenres of BL and *yaoi* that have developed over time vary wildly and hence deserve greater attention.

### 2.2.2 On Genre/s

The obvious distinction between BL and *yaoi* is not only the ratio of sexually explicit depictions of male-male romance, but the fact that *yaoi* is mostly associated with *dōjin*-produced fan manga. However, I maintain that BL manga can be produced either on an amateur or professional level. Among the non-original *dōjin*-produced works, considered as transformative or derivative creations by Jaqueline Berndt (2014) but often confused or understood as the Eastern equivalent of "slash" fiction, there are generally two streams of storytelling: *nijigen* and *sanjigen* works. *Nijigen* generally refers to *dōjin*-produced manga or other works based on original anime or manga series such as the Masashi Kishimoto's immensely popular *Naruto* (1999-2014) or Eiichiro Oda's *One Piece* (1997-). *Sanjigen* works can be based on figures from films, television, theatre, sports, history and so on. In the *dōjin* community, these figures are often referred to as *namamono* (literally "live/living things"). Essentially, though, *sanjigen* works can be considered as works of fan fiction based on human figures as opposed to fabricated and animated figures. During my fieldwork at major and minor *sokubaikai* (fanzine-like events where *dōjin* circles can sell their creative works), I encountered *sanjigen* works based on historical or contemporary figures from Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Natsume Sōseki to bands such as Kiss and Radiohead. In any case, for efficiency and ease of navigation at *sokubaikai, dōjin* works are divided into several categories. After being allocated to either *joseimuke* or *danseimuke* (with a readership or intended for women or men respectively), *dōjin* works are divided into *orijinaru* (original), *nijigen* or *sanjigen* works. They are then further categorised into: 1) their specific genres (for example, sports manga); followed by 2) if derivative, their relative series or source (for example, in sports manga, basketball-centred examples might be based on Takehiko Inoue's *Slam Dunk* (1990-1996) or Tadatoshi Fujimaki's *Kuroko no basuke* (2008-2014)); and finally 3) their *kappuringu*, literally "coupling" or character

pairing, (for example, in the case of *Kuroko no basuke* the pairing of the two major players Ryōta Kise and Tetsuya Kuroko).

Prior to considering the dynamics and patterns of coupling practices as well as other frequently employed motifs across various subgenres, it is worthwhile to consider some of the most salient of subgenres in which they appear. While outlining every possible subgenre of BL and *yaoi* might indicate the diversity of their subgenres and the scale of BL and *yaoi* production and consumption trends, for the purpose of concise discussion, I will focus on the most prevalent and consistently popular subgenres. Though dates and opinions may vary, the greater commercialisation of manga and the growth in comics and manga magazines essentially occurred in the postwar context. Major publications marketed at a male readership include Shūeisha's *Shōnen Jump*, Kōdansha's *Morning*, and Shōgakukan's *Sunday*, while major publications for a female readership include Kōdansha's *Nakayoshi* and Shūeisha's *Ribon* and *Margaret*. In effect, popular genres which appealed to the playful and imagination-starved young readerships often centred on or featured elements of school life (*gakuen*), sports, fantasy, action, adventure and what the Japanese refer to as "SF" (science fiction). Leading historians and critics Matt Thorn, Yoshihiro Yonezawa, Yukari Fujimoto, Jaqueline Berndt and Deborah Shamoon all acknowledge Osamu Tezuka's creation of story manga and the profound impact that Tezuka had on the subsequent expansion of manga. They have also recognised the contributions of other influential artists to the development of manga aesthetics and the proliferation of manga itself. Notable artists such as Fujiko Fujio, Macoto Takahashi, Jun'ichi Nakahara, Masako Watanabe, and Hideko Mizuno are just some of the many figures who have been recognised as particularly influential in both academic and popular discourse on manga. However, since the 1950s heralded the widespread popularity of SF both in Japan and the West, Tezuka also happened to be "in the right place at the right time" (Thorn, 2012). His emphasis on action, adventure, and particularly science fiction drew greater interest in the genre. Though not single-handedly, Tezuka's work inspired and influenced a number of original and parodic *dōjin* works that were produced within university manga circles or were sold at Comic Market during its early days in the 1970s. In an interview with Tezuka, Hagio suggested not only that girls like SF, but also that in any given *dōjinshi* produced by female students, there is at least one SF piece (Tezuka, 2013, p.29). While it would seem that science fiction parodies and BL or *yaoi* manga would have very little (if anything) in common, an analysis of data about participating

circles, content, and attendance at Comic Market over a span of thirty years led Yonezawa to state that Comic Market itself grew out of SF fandom (Schodt, 2014, p.40).

Perhaps on account of the popularity of SF and fantasy-inspired *dōjin* parodies, successful mainstream BL titles have also incorporated elements of either genre, for instance by pushing the boundaries of human physiology with narratives featuring male childbirth. Aside from Kotobuki's notorious *Sex Pistols*, more recent titles include Sakigaki Lee's *Osu mama ninshin dekichatta kimi* in late 2013 ("You, the Male Mummy Who Got Knocked Up") and Emi Lee Itō's *Ninshindō 24 jikan: kyōsei tanetsuke gasshuku* ("The Road to Twenty-four Hour Pregnancy: Forced Copulation Camp") in 2014. Fundamentally absurd, light-humoured and lacking in scientific logic, these titles have in turn spawned a new subgenre of BL "fantasy" generally referred to as "*ikuji mono*" (child rearing things/matters). Evidently, whether produced professionally or by amateurs, SF or fantasy have remained popular through to the twenty-first century as subgenres of BL and *yaoi* manga. Nevertheless, two of the most prevalent genres amongst *dōjin* circles in the late twentieth century and through to works sold at present day *sokubaikai* have been based on *shōnen* manga action adventure or sports titles. *Dragonball* (action adventure) and *Captain Tsubasa* (sports) were major subjects of parodies in the 1980s, while *Naruto* (action adventure), and *Slam Dunk* (sports) dominated in the 1990s. After the millennium, *One Piece* (action adventure), *Gintama* (action adventure), *Prince of Tennis* (sports), *Free!* (sports), and *Kuroko no basuke* (sports), as well as a number of major fantasy hits such as *Neon Genesis Evangelion* or *Attack on Titan* were popular. One of the central reasons why mainstream sports and action adventure manga, which typically target a male readership, have been consistently popular among female *dōjin* circles is that *shōnen* (boys') manga quite simply feature a lot of boys. Furthermore, given that sports and action adventure stories feature a number of male characters to select from, such as entire close-knit sports teams, they encourage or at least enable the production of parodic fiction by rendering the process of creating couplings (*kappuringu*) both easier and more entertaining.

In spite of being accused of being derivative, provided there is a range of coupling possibilities, this variety fosters an extra degree of creativity in addition to the refashioning of the source texts' narratives. However, I stress that rather than the

ongoing narratives and to some extent the genres of the source texts, it is the *kyara moe* that ultimately determines contemporary genres of BL and *yaoi* manga. As mentioned earlier, Azuma's original concept of "*chara-moe*" (*kyara moe*) could simply refer to one's passionate devotion to a particular character and his/her unique and attractive attributes (or *moe*-elements) such as personality traits, mannerisms, voice, appearance, and so on. Azuma further argues that although fans may exhibit a "blind obsession" with characters, there is also a "cool, detached" dimension to their behaviour that "takes apart the object into *moe*-elements and objectifies them" (Azuma, 2009, p.53). That is, while one may adore a character as a single entity, its attractive features or components (*moe*-elements) are sometimes valued more on the premise that they can be refashioned and manipulated to one's heart's desires. Naturally, the degree to which a *moe* consumer is obsessed or devoted to a character or its particular *moe*-elements varies, but the value placed on *moe*-elements cannot be denied. In fact, some genres, as I will demonstrate, are based primarily on settings, stock characters and their physical attributes (known as *kei*).

Based on the genre listings from e-book rental site *Renta!* (2014), the following are some of the "genres" found under the "*bōizu rabu*" (BL) category: office workers, Japan's so-called "salarymen," foreigners, butlers, princes, brides, *bishōnen*, brothers, classmates, seniors and juniors, teachers, *gakuen* (set in schools/academies), boys' dormitories, couples with age discrepancies, younger *seme* narratives, cross-dressers, white coats, dogs, and so on. Aside from the large number of cross-genre short stories and anthologies available, the genres with the largest number of titles (as of May 15, 2014) in order of popularity are as follows: fantasy, younger *seme* narratives, childhood friends, businessmen, university students, salarymen, classmates, full-time employees, *gakuen* and teachers. Similarly, DLsite's major genres in order of popularity (also as of May 15, 2014) are as follows: *shōta*, homosexual/same-sex, *gakuen*, muscular characters, couples with age discrepancies, historical or period pieces, younger *seme* narratives, characters with a female form/effeminate characters, crossdressers, and discipline.

At J-Garden 36, a major BL event which I attended as part of my fieldwork, the top five subgenres with the greatest number of participating circles were: narratives centred on university students, everyday life, science fiction or fantasy, office workers and salarymen, and couples with age discrepancies. At niche or minor BL events, the

same system of categorisation based on settings or stock characters is often used. For instance, at "Shōta Scratch", a regular Tokyo-based *shōta* event, the event's pamphlet includes a map displaying a colour-coded classification of genres including stock characters ranging from chubby, *kemono* (usually anthropomorphic hairy or furry-like characters), brothers, *shōta-uke*, and so forth. In contrast, major bookstores and large events do not organise the titles available in such a fashion. Rather, BL and *yaoi* titles are commonly classified according to their publishers or source texts. In any case, the prevalence of effeminate or cross-dressing characters, hairy or muscular characters, school or office-set narratives involving hierarchies or senior/junior dynamics, and fantasy or historical pieces is reflected both in e-book website listings and in smaller event catalogues. What is consistent across many of these niche BL and *yaoi* subgenres, however, is the emphasis on *seme* and *uke* individual character attributes and power dynamics. Although this is subject to debate, critics such as Hori (2009), Mizoguchi (2000), Nagakubo (2005) and Sihombing (2011) have argued that *uke/seme* dynamics reflect or mimic heterosexual gender and sexual norms. Febriani Sihombing, for instance, argues that *seme* and *uke* figures in BL texts are "modelled on heterosexual relationships," adding that "*seme* and *uke* can be compared to both the male and female in a heterosexual relationship" (Sihombing, 2011, pp.150-151). Hori similarly argues that as well as being the point-of-view character in *yaoi*, the *uke* essentially occupies a feminised position in relation to the *seme* (Hori, 2009, p 185). Given the above-mentioned categories of popular stock characters and subgenres, Sihombing's argument is relatively convincing, albeit contestable. That is, not all narratives strictly feature *uke/seme* pairings. Also, even if a narrative features an *uke* and a *seme*, they do not necessarily behave in a prescribed manner, nor are their roles fixed throughout a narrative. In any case, it is Nagakubo's thorough analysis of *uke* and *seme* dynamics in over 380 works of *yaoi* fiction that provides greater insight into the representations of power dynamics between couples, as well as providing solid quantitative data to substantiate her argument. Her findings will be integral to the discussion on motifs in the following section.

### 2.2.3 On Trends and Motifs

Although Nagakubo's research acknowledges that *uke* figures carry an essence of feminine beauty which is often accompanied by an effeminate demeanour, this is not to say that this generalisation of *uke* characteristics is a standard by any means. Of

particular interest are her findings on specific physical attributes of *seme* and *uke* partners. Firstly, according to her data, in 93% of the total narratives, *seme* figures were reported as being taller than their *uke* counterparts (Nagakubo, 2005, p.149). Furthermore, regarding the difference in age between *uke* their *seme* counterparts, text with narratives featuring characters with a ten year age difference (213 texts) were the most common, followed by couples with a twenty year age difference (125 texts). However, Nagakubo notes that the significant number of couples with only a ten year age difference can be explained by the fact that over a third of her total sample belonged to the *gakuen* genre (2005, p.153). Regardless of the genre, *seme* characters were reported to be older than their *uke* partners in 175 of the texts, meaning that younger *uke*-themed texts made up 46% of the total body of texts (Nagakubo, 2005, p.155). Evidently, differentiating *uke* partners from their *seme* counterparts frequently happens by varying the age and height of characters, with the *seme* often being depicted as older and taller than his *uke* partner. Nevertheless, one cannot rule out the possibility that there are exceptions—that is, narratives featuring characters in the same grade at school, entry-level employees of the same age or instances of *uke* characters being taller or physically larger than their *seme* partners. Discussing the balance of power between central characters in *shōnen'ai* manga, Fujimoto has suggested that the more masculine figures were often distinguished from their feminine counterparts by their darker hair and more serious nature, whereas their often blonde, effeminate and "decorative" partners were often "separated from reality" (1999, p.25). Although this motif may have applied to the early *shōnen'ai* featured in *Shōjo Comic* or the BL-centric manga magazine *June* in the 1970s and early 1980s, these tone-based differences are arguably no longer a valid gauge to determine the balance of power between couples, given that a vast number of illustration styles and coupling variations have developed since the mid-1970s. To assume that a narrative featuring an *uke/seme* coupling is based on the premise that the *seme* is taller, older, more experienced or mature, and possibly darker in colouring, would be to ignore the diverse range of character depictions and dynamics which have developed spanning over decades of BL and *yaoi* production. Thus, rather than a set standard of characteristics, such features can be utilised as simply a general gauge to analyse the power dynamics between a couple.

Regarding depictions of the *uke/seme* copulation (often euphemistically referred to as "bed scenes"), several scholars have suggested that the roles and power dynamics

exhibited by couples are not strictly limited to those of penetrator and penetrated (who is often depicted as being penetrated from the front) (Nagaike, 2012, p.195; Tanaka, 2008, p.24). Perhaps the most obvious example of this are the so-called "*riba*" characters (literally, "reversible") who are neither *uke* or seme, but switch between the two roles. Aside from *riba* characters, there is a diversity of graphic sexual depictions that also problematise the *uke/seme* trope and the relative generalisations about each figure's physical attributes or personality traits. Having said that, Tanaka does, however, suggest that there are relatively fewer narratives featuring *riba* figures than the standard *uke/seme* couplings (2008, p.25). Thus, even if the depictions of sex scenes differ (based on the general appearance of genitalia, acts of foreplay, fellatio, penetration, ejaculation and post-coital behaviour), given these perpetuating *uke/seme* tropes, I argue that in most texts there is invariably some degree of initial resistance from the *uke* and sexual agency often allocated to the *seme* figure. More often than not this physical or psychological resistance requires either foreplay, verbal persuasion, or in extreme cases rape to overcome. Whether and to what extent these depictions are coercive is subject to both moral and value based judgment, but their potentially coercive nature possibly accounts for the lack of depictions of safe sex practices and the gratifications apparently derived from deviant, reckless, irresponsible and libido-driven behaviour which I believe is associated with *bishōnen*. Aside from the threat of contracting STDs, one could consider the risk associated with conception in BL and *yaoi* narratives, which is are very rare. This might indicate a number of things. As observed, it possibly reflects the value placed on the recklessness of youth and carnal instincts. Additionally, and subject to debate, it may indicate that the risks and aggression associated with coercive sex are tolerated since the act is motivated by and justified as an expression of love. In any case, I maintain that while the power dynamics between partners may shift and the level of sexual depictions can range from fondling to foreplay to fornication, the *uke/seme* trope is a device both playful and intended to be played with, and such play/fulness has arguably been practised by producers as well as consumers even prior to the debut of *uke/seme* dynamics in popular discourse.

Aside from these observations and findings based on trends in character attributes and sexual depictions, some useful observations can also be made regarding the outward visual appearance of BL texts. For example, in her study of front covers from 2001 to 2003 inclusive, Nagakubo found that most of the covers depicted both

*uke* and *seme* characters together (2005, p.275). In a similar fashion to the front covers of the girls' and boys' pre-war and postwar magazines, the central characters' faces or figures generally comprise most of the space on the covers of BL and *yaoi* texts, as well as on *sokubaikai* catalogues which are generally received upon entry at such events. At the aforementioned J-Garden 36 *sokubaikai,* for example, the pamphlet I received upon entry contained promotional/ID designs of the 474 participating circles. Of these designs, 339 featured images of the faces or figures of two male counterparts. While other images such as other figures, animals, or other objects are also included, the fact that the cover of the catalogue prominently features a young prince with an older male suitor gazing up at him admiringly while placing a pink slipper onto his foot, reinforces the significance of clearly visually marking or identifying the two central figures, most commonly a narrative's *uke* and *seme*. In addition, it also reflects not only the central function of the two figures in the narrative; by emphasising facial features rather than full body shots, the images also perhaps indicate that characterisation and the emotional interplay of the figures take precedence over the eroticism or sexually explicit imagery and scenes within the narrative. While there is a popular misconception that sexual gratifications are the primary reasons for consuming BL or *yaoi* manga, one could argue that many readers place greater value on the interplay of characters, the coupling, and the story itself rather than the varying degrees of homoerotic imagery, which includes anything from intimate embraces or kissing scenes to anal penetration and rape.

As will be detailed in the discussion of the findings from my fieldwork, the ratio of respondents who preferred stories with or without graphic sexual depictions was more or less equal. Many of the respondents who were undecided as to which type of narrative they preferred explained that they enjoyed both erotic and platonic depictions of characters, quite often adding that whether they liked a text or not depended on the story. In contrast, Zanghellini suggests that in *yaoi*, sex is given more primacy over plot since the symbolic appearance of parodied characters and readers' emotions attached to them have become more significant (2009, p.169). Granted, while the story in parodic texts may hold less significance, I argue that their appeal lies in the value assigned by readers to the aforementioned "coupling" and "interplay of characters" rather than the gratuitous sex scenes. The balance between these two aspects naturally varies according to each text, and can most readily be determined by conducting a detailed reading of the relevant texts. However, I maintain that the two-

shot cover designs, reminiscent of bodice-ripper novels, reflect the importance of coupling and character interplay. Upon closer inspection of any given *sokubakai* catalogue, as well as online catalogues or book store shelves, it is apparent that the tone, illustration style, framing, and build of the two protagonists, like their power dynamics, can vary. Nevertheless, some visual markers of identification are often employed to distinguish *uke* from *seme* characters. Frequent motifs include one figure with dominant or markedly larger facial features, scenes with the assumed *uke* looking towards the intended reader, and particularly, variations in hairstyles.

Fujimoto has indicated that the symbolic darkness of a protagonist's hair generally denotes his nature and possibly the extent of his power over his counterpart. I suggest that cranial diameter as well as hair length and style can also be employed as gauges to measure the general balance of power between the couple in question, regardless of coupling possibilities which might include any combination of *uke*, *seme* and *riba*. For instance, in her research on transitions in *bishōnen* aesthetics, Nakamura finds that the cranial shape and diameter of male faces in Japanese art and manga shifted throughout history, from Mongoloid-faced figures in the Heian period to oval-shaped faces in the Edo period. The Meiji period ushered in more "Western" and rounded faces, with greater emphasis on pronounced and even sharp chins during the Taishō and Shōwa periods, respectively. The Shōwa period perhaps witnessed the faces of the figures in boys' manga magazines at their roundest and most neotenic. This was followed by a transition to elongated faces, smaller (if not more proportionate or realistic) cranial structures, and a revival of the sharp chins of the late Taishō and early Shōwa period (Nakamura, 2003, p.115). Interestingly too, Nagakubo adds that the small, button-like noses of the Heian period were revived in images of boys in postwar manga during the Shōwa period, while high-bridged Western noses which appeared in the Meiji and early Taishō period were revived in the latter years of the Shōwa period through to the present day (2003, p.112). In any case, the rounded, neotenic faces and button noses characteristic of Shōwa manga were preserved in the early *shōnen'ai* manga of the 1970s and are arguably still visible in present day BL and *yaoi* manga. For instance, infantilised and often comical *chibi* styles of illustration and *shōta* manga commonly use these motifs. However, more pertinently, quite a number of contemporary *uke* and *bishōnen* figures have been depicted in a similar fashion. To illustrate, a sample of covers published by prolific mainstream BL manga publisher Libre from May 2013 to May 2014 (Libre, 2014) revealed several patterns in *uke/seme*

facial features. For instance, Fujimoto's statement concerning light and dark hair contrasts was reinforced by the fact that 94 of the total 112 titles in the sample featured one darker haired figure and his lighter counterpart on the cover. Furthermore, in 67 and 70 cases respectively, the taller or more dominant figures (regardless of hair colour) had comparatively longer or higher bridged noses and larger or more elongated faces. Evidently, there were also a number of titles in which the characters had similar sized facial features. However, given that in the vast majority of the images the *seme* figures were physically larger and/or possessed longer or sharper facial features, these motifs can be considered a general means by which to identify or distinguish *seme* from *uke* figures in mainstream BL manga.

On the subject of hair, although colour can demarcate a character and his relative power, Sunaga's suggestion of the association of "*sumimaegami*" (long forelocks) with *bishōnen* is also worth considering in terms of depictions of *uke* and *seme* figures. Furthermore, Nakamura's research also reveals that many late Meiji and postwar (early Shōwa) images of boys lacked the long forelocks which were especially characteristic of Heian and Edo period artworks. On the other hand, the *shōnen* of pre-war (Taishō period) boys' magazines were often illustrated with forelocks. Whether this trend was due to sociohistorical contextual factors such as the rise of nationalism prior to the Pacific War and the relative resurgence of past traditions is questionable. However, the revival of *sumimaegami* as an aesthetic motif in the 1970s onwards arguably signifies its centrality to *bishōnen* aesthetics in BL manga illustration (for instance, in Mizuno Hideko's aforementioned *Fire!*). Although acknowledging that hairstyles are also significantly influenced by changing trends in pop culture and fashion, *sumimaegami* (and by extension characters with flowing locks, long or unkempt hair) as an ongoing aesthetic motif reinforces and reflects the importance of the reckless and careless nature of youth, of which the *bishōnen* is representative. Thus, rather than changes in tonsorial trends over time, I argue that it is the long-established association of *sumimaegami* (or at least flowing or unkempt longer hair) with *bishōnen* which has developed as a primary motif in BL manga.

In order to test this claim, I examined of a sample of BL manga or manga magazines from each year from 1978 through to 2003 (sourced from *June*, a selection of BiBLOS and Libre's publications) and annual Comic Market catalogues from 1982 to 2003. The results revealed that out of a total of 56 BL manga and novel magazine

covers as well as *tankōbon* (stand-alone manga titles), 47 titles featured at least one character with long forelocks or unkempt hair on its cover. Of the Comic Market catalogues, I randomly selected pages from the sections featuring circles belonging to the *June* (primarily BL manga) and FC (fan comics, usually *yaoi)* listings. The results revealed that of the total of 804 circles included in the sample, the number of circles with poster images featuring at least one character with long forelocks or unkempt hair amounted to 533 titles. Granted, this number of texts in the sample range may not suffice to make any solid claims. However, it would arguably be excessive to consider the entire vast range of mainstream and *dōjin* texts over a span of almost thirty years simply to illustrate the prevalence of characters with forelocks in both BL and *yaoi* narratives. Despite this limited sample, I can at least surmise that the prevalence of figures with forelocks (or unkempt hair) in both BL and *yaoi* texts over a span of thirty years is not incidental. What it suggests is the value placed on the youthful looks, playful deviance, and recklessness often associated with the *bishōnen*. In addition, any "deviant behaviour" on part of the *bishōnen* can thus be accounted for on the basis that he is old enough to know better but perhaps too young to care. This arguably reflects the assumed female readers' *akogare*-associated desire to vicariously prolong a similar stage in their lives when they may indulge in reckless behaviour or at least be free from responsibility.

In addition to stressing the significance of tonsorial attributes, I also argue (following Uli Meyer and Tsuchiya-Dollase) that flowers, as a salient motif in both *shōnen'ai* manga and contemporary BL and *yaoi* fiction, also reflect the value placed on the fragility yet beauty of youth, physical immaturity, and tenderness. Based on her research on girls' culture and pre-war magazines, Tsuchiya-Dollase concluded that "since a girl knows that the period during which she can pretend to be a shoujo will not last forever, she indulgently rhapsodizes the emotive feelings that characterize this time of her life" (2009, p.81). She further argues that the girls who read such magazines considered the flowery and sentimental language a "secret code," which in turn brought readers together (2009, p.81). Similarly, Meyer has suggested that flowers occupy an important place in *shōjo* manga because they interpret a character, as well as indicating a character's gender or sexuality (Meyer, 2008, p.239). Acknowledging that the motif most likely originated in the early twentieth century with Nobuko Yoshiya's *Flower Tales* and its various flower-named protagonists, Meyer adds that this motif was later employed in Takemiya's *Kaze to ki no uta* and Ikeda's *The Rose of Versailles*. Meyer

suggests that while the rose is characteristic of traditional European floral language in the nineteenth century and symbolised love, in manga and gay discourse it became the symbol of male homosexuality (an example of which is the founding of Japan's first gay magazine *Barazoku* [The Rose Tribe] in 1971) (2008, p.239). Acknowledging that flowers played a significant cultural and symbolic role in both *shōjo bunka* and manga, as well as being the title of the genre of male-marketed girls' love manga known as *yuri* (lily), one can further stress that flowers are also an integral aesthetic motif in BL and *yaoi*.

To probe its currency in contemporary works, I examined the circle images, circle names and, if applicable, names of works featured in the previously discussed J-Garden 36 catalogue (2014). Of the 474 participating circles, 73 (about 15.4%) featured either an image of a flower or a lexical reference to flowers or a particular species of flower. The sample range is limited to *dōjin*-produced works at a single event, but I argue that this result somewhat demonstrates the importance of flowers as a symbolic motif and discursive subject amongst BL and *yaoi* producers and consumers. In greater consideration of the cultural significance of flowers in BL and *yaoi* fiction, irrespective of their contemporary gay connotations, it is reasonable to suggest that flowers are connected to the notion of the impermanence, and hence beauty, of youth. Furthermore, flowers also incorporate the Japanese cultural and aesthetic appreciation of cuteness. The flower, naturally delicate, relatively small and often aesthetically pleasing, encapsulates the innocence and beauty of youth which requires nurturing, maintenance, and most importantly, the presumed desire for attention. Thus, rather than simply connoting homosexuality, I suggest that flowers are, to some extent, a symbol of the *bishōnen*'s small, delicate form and impermanent nature.

However, as Antonia Levi notes, as "impossibly beautiful" and androgynous a *bishōnen* may appear, the defining attribute of his assumed masculinity is always his bare chest (2008, p.1). Illustrated with or without nipples or hair, the exposure of chests in the panels of BL and *yaoi* supersedes depictions of male genitalia and buttocks. Although this may be due to any number of factors including artistic choices or censorship, I argue that the prevalence of bare chests within bed scenes or other scenes confirms to some degree the *bishōnen's* masculinity without oversexualizing him. Japanese censorship legislation prohibits representations of genitalia and pubic hair (McLelland, 2015, p.119), but there also exists an idea that illustrated male genitalia

may prove offensive to the assumed *shōjo* reader. A bare chest, then, is subtly suggestive, a potentially sexual but mostly sensual device in the depiction of romantically involved members of the same sex. A bare chest is somewhat suggestive of sexual activity, in a relatively less offensive fashion than full frontal genitalia, and also has the potential to appeal to a larger audience reach. It indicates a certain value placed on intimate and affectionate embraces and romance, rather than gratuitous depictions of promiscuous sexual relations. Taken together, the bare chest, long forelocks, and flowers generally indicate innocence, youth, beauty and a sense of openness or "potential." That is, the *bishōnen* and gender-ambiguous figures of BL and *yaoi* manga are potentially boys or girls, men or underdeveloped women, sexually active or simply overly affectionate. They are potentially friends or lovers, but nonetheless open to a wide range of reader interpretations.

Besides trends in prevalent objects and physical and character attributes, patterns in the geographic and temporal settings of BL and *yaoi* narratives also provide insight into readers' interests and values. Nagakubo's research revealed that in her sample  of 381 texts, 357 narratives were set in the present day, while 13 texts were set in the future and the remaining texts were temporally set in specific eras in Japanese history such as the Sengoku era, Edo, Meiji periods and so on (2005, p.160). The purview of Nagakubo's research is somewhat limited since it was based on a sample of BL novels from just one year, namely 1996. Nevertheless, it arguably indicates not so much a shift away from exotic or historical settings in Japanese BL, but rather a shift towards realism which perhaps parallels the shift from Gothic romances to sensation fiction in England in the Victorian era. While I have noted that historical and fantasy subgenres of BL manga remain popular on online distributors' catalogues, the significant number of *gakuen*, salarymen and office-set romances underscores a greater trend towards realism. Furthermore, the recent success and popularity of such genres is perhaps also due to the gratifications derived from their depictions of challenging interpersonal relationships in rigid, restricted and often hierarchical institutions (such as within schools or offices), where the threat of one's sexuality being uncovered could jeopardise one's privacy, one's relations with others, or even one's career. In contrast to the mostly positive reception to a celebrity's "coming-out" statement in Western media, in East Asian cultures such as Japan and Korea (in which Confucian thought is both relatively ingrained and impermeable on both social and institutional levels), scandals involving sex or sexuality (even heterosexual ones) can jeopardise a

celebrity's career beyond repair and have even been known to trigger suicides. For instance, in 2009 alone, it was reported that three of the seven celebrity suicides which occurred in South Korea were associated with scandals over sexuality (McCurry, 2009). On this premise, the allure and *akogare* of recent BL texts may well lie in their emphasis on realistic narratives in which love is either forbidden or restricted, and the pleasure or gratifications derived from such narratives are largely associated with the characters' process of overcoming various external and internal obstacles.

Hitherto I have only scratched the surface and explored the recurring themes and motifs among the vast number of such trends in both mainstream and *dōjin*-produced BL and *yaoi* fiction. Nevertheless, I have attempted to illustrate the means by which the *bishōnen* and BL narratives have reflected some of the prevailing values and attitudes of their assumed female readership and producers over a span of 30 to 40 years. Whether set in a European context, the distant past, or a future in which men are able to conceive and bear children, readers are exposed to contexts they can only long for, and they can live vicariously through the male figures within the narratives. My research suggests that readers identify with familiar and unfamiliar characters and produce and reproduce fictional worlds with which they are familiar yet unfamiliar, employing any combination of *uke*, *seme* or *riba* characters, as well as favourite male characters derived from various real or fictional origins. While the precise gratifications for producing and consuming BL and *yaoi* fiction vary, one cannot overlook the importance of those trends which have been consistently popular. These are trends which are both playful and play on the currency of *akogare*, trends which reflect the cultural value and appreciation of the *bishōnen* as a stock character who can be as profound as he can be promiscuous, and trends which demonstrate that love has no geographical, temporal, physiological, psychological, and above all, ideological boundaries. As the stock character or emblematic poster boy of this love, the *bishōnen*, like love, can be reckless, impulsive, fluid, impermanently beautiful, and both possess and exercise freedoms that the assumed *shōjo* reader can only long for, living and loving through them vicariously. Although this is just one of the many possible reader gratifications derived from consuming and producing BL and *yaoi* fiction, an overview of the development of Japan's mainstream and *dōjin* manga publishing practices, as well as women's associated consumption of such manga in the following two subchapters will provide greater insight into the enduring commercial and consumer investment in the phenomenon.

## 2.3. From Pictures to Pages and Panels to Print: On Mainstream Manga and *Dōjin* Manga Publishing Practices

Detailing or attempting to provide a complete chronological account of the development and evolution of manga from its formative years through to the era of digital manga is a project too broad to be thoroughly and sufficiently covered in the scope of my research, and I will bypass consideration of the etymology of the term. Furthermore, I will avoid getting bogged down in lengthy explorations of the precise origins of manga, such as claims that it is the successor of any distinct traditions or amalgamations of various textual and/or artistic forms (what Will Eisner and Scott McCloud have referred to as "sequential art"). Rather than devoting considerable time to consideration or debate as to what manga is, I stress that greater importance should be placed on how and why it has been employed and institutionalised to such a great extent by female *mangaka* in the twentieth and twenty-first century.

First, I will briefly consider the sociohistorical context which fostered the growth of the manga publishing industry in Japan. In 2014, The All Japan Magazine and Book Publishers' and Editors' Association (AJPEA) reported that the total revenue gained from the sales of manga, manga magazines, and digital manga in the fiscal year from 2013 to 2014 was an estimated 370 billion yen (AJPEA, 2014). The same year saw sales of single-titled paperback manga (*tankōbon*) rise to 223 billion yen, but the sale of manga magazines dropped to 144 billion yen. Interestingly, the growth of digital manga also somewhat stagnated (AJPEA, 2014). Although it is estimated that sales of manga account for a steady 20% to 30% of Japan's total annual publishing sales, each year and decade, the arrival of new publishing methods and reading formats can significantly affect the industry. In 2010, for example, manga occupied 20% of the total Japanese book market and 33% of the worldwide graphic novel market (Woojeong Joo, Rayna Denison, and Hiroko Furukawa, 2013). According to Woojeong, Denison and Furukawa, a year later, the domestic manga market in Japan was estimated to be worth 390 billion yen in sales, of which *tankōbon* accounted for 57.7% and manga anthology magazines for 42.3% of sales (Woojeong Joo, Rayna Denison, and Hiroko Furukawa, 2013). However, Frederick Schodt has maintained that such statistics do not indicate the enormous extent to which manga influences Japanese society. Schodt argues that manga are a "type of 'meta media' at the core of a giant fantasy machine, and that,

given that manga are read by nearly all ages and classes of people, they permeate Japanese intellectual life at the highest levels,and increasingly influence 'serious art and literature,'" saying that it is "no exaggeration to say that one cannot understand modern Japan today without having some understanding of the role that manga play in society" (Schodt, 1996, pp.20-21). One of the key figures in manga studies in Japan, Fusanosuke Natsume, has also suggested that there is "no other country in which manga or comics hold such a large market share," adding that if the manga industry falls into a crisis "the entire industry suffers" (Natsume, 2003, p.3). As well as illustrating the extent to which manga has infiltrated and dominated the publishing industry in Japan, like Schodt, Natsume also suggests that it is natural to consider the cultural background of manga, Japan's greater lenience towards manga than other countries, and the close relationship that East Asian cultures have with picture-to-language relationship (2003, p.3). While Natsume considers *emakimono* (painted scrolls originating in the twelfth century) and *kibyōshi* (cheap, yellow-backed picture books from the Edo period) early forms of sequential art in Japan, like manga historian and theorist Jaqueline Berndt, he maintains that the style of manga as we know it today "was influenced by American newspaper comics, with multiple frames, dialogue in balloons, and narration" which were created at the beginning of the twentieth century and in the early Shōwa period (2003, p.3).

Jean-Marie Bouissou's work can be used to highlight some key resemblances between *kibyōshi* and Victorian penny dreadfuls. *Kibyōshi*, in a similar fashion to the penny dreadfuls, penny papers or cheap periodicals of the Victorian era, or cheaply published *akabon* manga magazines in postwar Japan, were "illustrated, cheap 'yellow-backed' or 'blue-backed' novels" sometimes selling up to ten thousand copies each (Bouissou, 2010, p.20). Much like the Gothic romances and sensation fiction which littered the pages of Victorian periodicals, *kibyōshi* narratives often "mixed drama, sex, fantasy, romance, and humor" (Bouissou, 2010, p.20). However, and more pertinent to the formatting and narrative presentation of manga, *kibyōshi* interwove text and images, as opposed to Western illustrated books, which placed the text either beside or under the pictures (Bouissou, 2010, p.20). These similarities regarding production costs, formatting and content indicate that there was perhaps a growing demand for popular, affordable and entertaining (if not necessarily sensational) fiction amongst the general populace in both Victorian Britain and Japan. It also suggests that the images in early Western manifestations of image-text oriented sequential art were perhaps more

decorative than demonstrative. That is, as opposed to complementing the text and thereby playing a crucial role in narrative presentation, the images within Victorian illustrated tales were separated from the text and mainly had aesthetic or decorative purposes. Whether a preference for image-based literacy is particularly characteristic of Japanese culture is subject to opinion. Moreover, whether this played an influential role in fostering the development and popular reception of manga is also contestable. The genealogy of manga, needless to say, is debatable. However, I would nevertheless stress that the following factors should be taken into account: methods of narrative presentation in *kibyōshi*, the illustrated or photo stories within boys' and girls' pre-war magazines, the animated nature of *kabuki* and Takarazuka theatre, as well as the aforementioned uptake of American comics. Taken together as an evolutionary whole, these factors, I believe, were instrumental in the development of manga as a significant means of mass communication and entertainment.

If the genealogy of manga is highly debatable, then the secret to its appeal is even more so. Did manga draw readers as a predominantly visual form of communication? Did its appeal lie in its cinematic quality or resemblance to the placard-based oral storytelling practice of *kamishibai*? Was the rise in the popularity of manga in Japan due to its accessibility, or simply to the fact the images can be interpreted and understood by readers of all age groups, classes and varying degrees of literacy? Any number of factors may have contributed to manga's expansion, but I propose that some of the major influences are associated with low production costs (compared to film, radio or television programs) and the fact that higher education was not necessarily required to become a manga artist—meaning that voluntary submissions from amateurs or even children could be published and distributed. Given that in postwar Japan the number of televisions or radios per capita paled in comparison to the United States, purchasing, borrowing or sharing manga amongst others (*mawashi-yomi*) was an affordable means of entertainment. In 1951, for example, there were a reported seven million television sets and 100 million radios in the United States. In contrast, Japan's national television station (NHK) did not commence broadcasting until early 1953 and the price of equipment was prohibitive for many, if not most, people. For example, it would take six weeks for a Matsushita Electric factory worker to purchase a radio, whereas a General Electric worker earned enough to buy a radio in two days (Kohama, 2007, p.98). As in pre-Industrial Britain, in postwar Japan, access to literature and technology was limited, and it was just such a context which arguably

provided a fertile breeding ground for the popularity of manga.

As Bouissou notes, during the Taishō era, manga was already "recognised as a genre worthy of learned criticism and academic analysis" with not only daily newspapers but sophisticated cultural magazines such as *Asahi Gurafu* (1923-2000) publishing manga "side by side with pictures, illustrations, and reporting" (2010, p.23). Although Bouissou notes that manga was still used as a tool for political expression by pioneer illustrators Rakuten Kitazawa (Yasuji) and Ippei Okamoto, it was at this point in time that manga also developed as form of mass entertainment, with major publisher Kōdansha launching the boys' magazine *Shōnen kurabu* in 1914, followed by the aforementioned *Shōjo kurabu* in 1923. According to Bouissou,

> Magazines for youngsters—sometimes of two hundred pages or more—published literary texts, reporting, and manga series, the most popular of which were published afterward in paperback book form. Unlike France and the United States, where BD [*Bande dessinée*] and comics were mostly the domain of small or middle-sized specialised publishers, the large mainstream Japanese publishing powerhouses entered the manga business from the beginning. (2010, p.23)

Given this climate—in which manga in the early twentieth century had the potential to be political and/or a means of mass entertainment—it is reasonable to argue that the publishing practices as well as the political and entertaining nature of the content of manga in early twentieth century Japan resembled those of periodical publishers in Victorian England. Furthermore, this climate permitted subversive, sensational, entertaining and educational works to be published and distributed. Although manga did not comprise the majority of the content in newspapers, Yonezawa's research suggests that in the mid-1950s, the proportion of manga in girls' magazines such as *Nakayoshi* and *Ribon* gradually increased until manga became the main feature (Yonezawa, 2007, p.55). Yonezawa adds that the demand for cheap fiction, and especially manga magazines, was reported to be so great in 1955 that there were some 30,000 *kashihonya* (book rental stores) across Japan, and that any given manga title available was said to be read by at least 50 people (2007, p.67). While most of these *kashihon* manga illustrators (including the likes of Nakahara, Yamaguchi,

Takabatake, Tezuka, Takahashi) were male, according to Yonezawa, there was a greater demand for female artists, since it was supposed that they could more aptly or authentically appeal to and represent the sentimental and increasingly fashion-conscious *shōjo* in postwar Japan. For Yonezawa, *mangaka* such as Masako Watanabe and Hideko Mizuno encapsulated the cute, chic, and sensitive essence of the postwar *shōjo* (2007, p.160). In particular, one of the all-consuming attributes which has remained a staple in *shōjo bunka* since the turn of the twentieth century has been a longing for love, to love, and to be loved. In *Watashi no ibasho wa doko ni aru no*? (Trans. *Where do I belong*?) Fujimoto maintains that finding one's sense of belonging or place is one of the core functions and appeals of *shōjo* manga. Whether this involved and intertwined notions of identity formation, emotional and financial stability, sexual confidence, identity politics, or otherwise is debatable, but finding this sense of belonging was certainly a theme characteristic of much fiction produced by Victorian women writers and pioneering authors of modern fiction. Whether or not male writers and illustrators could represent and reflect the *shōjo* experience as effectively as their female counterparts is open to question. However, the assumption that women could more effectively encapsulate the hopes and dreams of young girls in Japan perhaps played a role in fostering the growth of female illustrators. Although the 1960s were host to some prominent and influential female illustrators, Bouissou reinforces the idea that at the very beginning of the 1970s, the prevalence of males in the industry of *shōjo* manga production was challenged by the Year 24 Group, who "invented a completely new aesthetics for the genre, offered a feminine vision of love and sex and dealt with problems such as pregnancy and rape" (2010, p.27). She argues that in "macho Japanese society, teenage girls were unable to figure themselves out in a love relationship with a boy on an equal footing," but the manga produced by this group of artists allowed readers to identify with any one of the often gender ambiguous figures within the narratives (2010, p.27).

While access to the publishing industry is considered easier for female *mangaka* now than it was 50 years ago, magazines have remained a primary platform for artists to debut in Japan. It is no coincidence that a sizeable amount of female *mangaka* debuted within the pages of girls' manga magazines such as *Ribon, Margaret, Nakayoshi* or *June*. This can be explained by multiple factors related to the nature of the publishing industry in Japan. For instance, although in many countries book and magazine publishers are separate entities, in Japan most medium-sized and large

publishers produce both books and magazines. Japanese wholesalers and bookstores usually handle both of these types of publications. Thus, thanks to the preservation of these traditions, the Japan Book Publisher's Association (JBPA) maintains that magazines have been an important part of the publishing business in Japan. As a result, magazines have provided "both a regular source of income and advertising revenues," and even despite the expansion of mobile devices and digital content, even today, manga and weekly magazines are "main staples of the publishing trade in Japan" (JBPA, 2014, p.9). Due to this unusual context, in Japan, the transition from an amateur artist submitting content to a magazine to a contracted creative artist has been facilitated by this efficient and supportive publishing environment.

Based on responses from my fieldwork and interviews with quite a number of hopeful illustrators, a main drive to create manga for most creators (whether *dōjin*, assistant illustrators, or acclaimed artists) was their love of drawing from an early age. Motivations vary, but regardless of an artist's gender, there is arguably little or no prestige in becoming a manga or anime artist, let alone one who specifically produces homoerotic works. That means one's love of drawing could easily be the chief motivating factor. Although debatable, money, acclaim and fame have rarely acted as incentives to pursue a career in the manga industry. At least in the context of Japan, for some, it was either shameful or simply nothing to brag about. For example, in an interview with Thorn, Moto Hagio explained that even her parents did not accept or support her decision to become a professional illustrator. Thorn proceeded with the following questions:

> **Thorn:** Is that so? When you were in your 30s? And had received the [Shōgakukan Comics] Award?
>
> **Hagio:** Oh, that made no difference at all.
>
> **Thorn:** That didn't matter?
>
> **Hagio:** Not at all. Oh, when I won that award, she bragged to all her neighbors that her daughter had won an award. But then she turned around and told me to quit. (Thorn, 2005)

To give another example: in an open dialogue at Meiji University, acclaimed manga artist Mari Yamazaki explained that she was rather surprised that she was awarded Japan's annual manga award, the "Manga Taishō" (not to mention the short story award at the 14th Tezuka Osamu Cultural Prize) for her successful *Thermae Romae* series (Yamazaki, 2014). In any case, some of these experiences demonstrate that despite wider society's somewhat blasé attitude towards female artists, the publishing industry, and in particular girls' magazines with their calls for submissions and competitions, have often sponsored and propelled the careers of young female illustrators. Furthermore, prizes like those awarded to Hagio and Yamazaki have also aided the careers of many female manga artists. Some other recent examples are Shūeisha's Tiara Award and Betsuma Manga Grand Prix (see Figures 7, 8) with prizes ranging from 50, 000 to five million yen (as of June, 2014).

**Figure 7: Shūeisha's Tiara Award**



Source: http://www.Shūeisha.co.jp/tiara-award/point/ (accessed June 22, 2014)

**Figure 8: Betsuma Manga Grand Prix**

2014年度中期作品募集中！

「別マ MANGA GP ザ★デビュー」とは？

毎月行っている「別マ まんがスクール」は規定枚数が16Pですが、こちらは少し長めの話でチャレンジできます。
一般部門と中高生部門の2部門にわけて受付中です♪初めて漫画を描く人、漫画を描きはじめたばかりの人も、どんどん挑戦してね！

★一般部門
毎月行っている「まんがスクール」よりも長いページです。
16ページではちょっと短いと感じていたみなさんは是非応募してみてくださいね！

★中高生部門
「投稿してみたいけど自信がない…」「自分の実力を試してみたい！」そんな中学生や高校生の方にビッグチャンス!!
ベスト賞作品はなんと別マの増刊に掲載!! 初投稿の方も大歓迎です！今すぐチャレンジ!!

審査員

南 塔子先生　　　オザキアキラ先生

賞と賞金
（一般部門）　※30Pの作品でも投稿OK！ 佳作以上の作品は全てデビュー！
★ グランプリ　賞金100万円　副賞/パソコン＋記念盾
★ 準グランプリ　賞金50万円　副賞/パソコン＋記念盾
★ 佳作　賞金30万円　副賞/デジタルカメラ
★ 奨励賞　賞金10万円　＆担当編集者がつきます！
★ 激励賞　賞金5万円

サイドナビ:
作品&作家紹介
★ 別マ今月号目次
★ 別マ次号予告
★ 連載作品紹介
★ 作家プロフィール
★ ザ マーガレット今号
★ ザ マーガレット予告
★ 別マ増刊 sister
★ 別マ・ニュース
コミックス新刊ほか
★ 新刊コミックス
★ 既刊コミックス
★ ノベライズ
★ アニメ・DVD
まんが投稿
★ 別マまんがスクール
★ MANGA GP ザ★デビュー
★ 金のティアラ大賞
★ まんがの描き方スタジオ
★ アシスタント情報
壁紙・ふろく
★ オリジナル壁紙
★ ふろくアーカイブス
★ まるごと読み！
★ 君届新聞
読者コーナー
★ ベツマカルチャークラブ
★ 別魔の占い
★ 応援メール
★ 投稿コーナー
★ メルマガ登録
★ よくある質問とその答え
★ お問い合わせ総合案内
★ リンク
サイトマップ
★ サイトマップ

Source: http://betsuma.Shūeisha.co.jp/corner/manga_grandprix.html (accessed June 22, 2014)

Two other key factors which have facilitated the wider production and consumption of texts concerning sexuality or laden with graphic sexual depictions are the relatively lax censorship laws and the sales and distribution flow of the publishing industry in Japan. Firstly, from an economic perspective, bookstores can take risks in terms of the books and content they provide, given that almost all publications are distributed on a returnable basis (JBPA, 2014, p.14). According to the JBPA, the distributor more or less selects stock on behalf of the bookstores so that even bookstore owners with little experience "can easily have the right books on their shelves and return unsold stock. Basically, anyone with enough capital can open a bookstore" (JBPA, 2014, p.14). Thus, if there is a market for BL-related texts, merchandise, or magazines wholly dedicated to the genre, bookstores predominantly specialising in both mainstream and *dōjin*-produced BL manga and goods are not only economically viable but also profitable. Well-known BL and *dōjinshi* bookstore K-Books, for instance, jumped from profits of 350 million yen in 1995 to 2.3 billion yen in 2005, which then doubled in 2013 with profits of 5.4 billion yen (K-Books, 2014). Regardless of an owner's particular personal tastes, interests, or attitude towards same-sex fiction, if there is a market for it, there is little to lose with the returnable stock system.

However, irrespective of what type of system is in place at the point of vending, the matter of censorship according to national law logically precedes the production, distribution and possession of any potentially harmful material.

Although I have already briefly illustrated the extent to which the state prohibited publications and other media showing male-male erotic scenes during the Edo and Meiji periods, censoring of this type of material more or less ceased after the Pacific War (Pflugfelder, 1999, p.200). In addition to the relaxed attitude towards publishing of same-sex material in postwar Japan, there is also the Censorship Act, which protects the right of citizens to freely publish and access a greater range of content. Article 21, Paragraph 1, of the original 1946 Constitution of Japan still maintains that freedom of "speech, press and all forms of expression are guaranteed" (JBPA, 2014, p.26). Given these favourable conditions for writers and illustrators, whereby the production, distribution, and possession of material containing same-sex themes and scenes was (and remains) permissible, both pioneer illustrators of BL or *yaoi* manga and popular illustrators today have not only enjoyed what might be regarded in the West as lax censorship, but also some creative control over their content and, most importantly, the opportunity to create a community, market, and highly profitable industry predominantly supporting the works of women and catering mostly to women.

The JBPA adds that publishing in Japan today nevertheless "is not completely unfettered," since there are legal restrictions on defamation of character and obscenity and there is interference from pressure groups (2014, p.26). However, I argue that in the current context, the realm of BL and *yaoi* publishing is relatively immune to these restrictions. Firstly, as K-Books' net profits indicate, the industry has demonstrated exponential growth since the late 1990s. While this indicates steady growth in profits, given the volume of titles, it may also suggest that the industry may be becoming more difficult to regulate. Secondly, given McLelland's aforementioned claim that the producers and consumers of BL and *yaoi* are predominantly women "who are rarely identified as potential child sex-abusers" (2007, p.98), the probability of pressure groups successfully bringing to a halt women's production of BL and *yaoi* fiction is unlikely. Also, regulating content has become increasingly difficult, which is particularly problematic in the current context of mass digitisation of creative content and growing numbers of *dōjin* circles publishing content online or independently. For

this reason, and in a similar vein to female writers who produced risqué content in the Victorian era, self-censorship is commonly practised. For instance, when I joined a novelist at his sales space at Shōta Scratch Special 2 (May 5, 2014) as part of my fieldwork, it turned out that after the formal registration for participation in Shōta Scratch Special 2, participants had to provide samples of their work as a means of censorship regulation. Although the staff member responsible for content regulation seemed to be paying little attention to detail and was not reading the novels word-for-word while flipping through each circle's work, I did notice that one of the circles had taped over the genitalia of a young boy on their display poster. Perhaps it was only a gesture, but it seems that only major or blatantly explicit details are noticed in a context where a greater amount of content is being produced and less time is available to inspect the material.

In effect, what such postwar censorship and publishing practices in Japan have fostered is the growth of one of Cool Japan's most profitable niche markets, as well as a platform for expression and source of employment for women in the creative industries. It is also important to note that these conditions have also allowed female readers to exercise a gaze-like fetishisation of the male body. One could argue that through their production and consumption of sexually explicit manga, they are now on an equal footing with their male counterparts who consume *yuri*. Given too that this tradition of depicting homoerotic/-social relations has spanned four decades with very little interference from the authorities, it is difficult to argue that the reading public's attitudes towards the LGBT community will not have been influenced by the constant exposure to representations of same-sex relationships. However, that does not imply that this over-exposure to homoerotic/-social fiction has necessarily had an astoundingly positive effect either. What I do suggest, however, and what I will attempt to illustrate in the following chapters, is that the overwhelming volume and accessibility of BL manga, in combination with an industry that supports it and censorship which permits it, has inadvertently brought greater attention to the presence of the LGBT community in Japan. However, the production of this overwhelming volume of BL and *yaoi* cannot be solely attributed to the labour of mainstream artists and their respective magazines or publishers. It goes without saying that the consistent and passionate efforts of the members of the hundreds upon thousands of *dōjin* circles—budding young illustrators and veteran enthusiasts alike—have also had a profound impact on the BL and *yaoi* manga boom. For this reason, the following

overview of Japan's *dōjinshi* publishing practices will reveal the range of conditions that have allowed for the ongoing proliferation of female illustrators and BL and *yaoi* enthusiasts for almost half a century.

## 2.4. From Sketches to Circles and Amateurs to Artists: An Overview of Recent Traditions and Trends in *Dōjin* Publishing and Consumption Practices

当時私は純な高校生なりたてで、その時から、ホモに興味を
もっていてそんな自分をちょっと異常だと思っていたので、
友達につれられて初めてコミケに来た時は「ああ！あたしと
同じくらい異常な女がいっぱいいる!!」と感動したものです.
(Trans. At the time, I was just an innocent high school student, and it was then that I started getting into 'homos' [homosexuals]. I thought I was a bit abnormal. However, when a friend took me along to Comiket (Comic Market) for the first time, I was excited, thinking: "Wow! There are heaps of girls here as abnormal as I am!"
(Komikku Māketto Junbikai, 2007, p.117)

As derogatory as this comment may initially appear, when taking into account its context, it may be considered an innocent recollection from a young *yaoi* enthusiast in the 1990s. The comment was made in the mid-1990s in the midst of Japan's "gay boom" (the infatuation with gay culture in Japanese media), the global anime boom, and in a time that saw escalating numbers of attendees at Comic Market, and it highlights the extent to which the growth of BL or *yaoi* enthusiasts had gained momentum towards the end of the twentieth century. More significantly, the comment also reinforces the sentiment among many members of *dōjin* circles that despite their "abnormal" tastes and hobbies, artists and fans are on an equal footing, and there is a forum and place where anything and everything goes. While it is not necessary to provide a comprehensive history of *dōjin* traditions and trends, I will concentrate on the key movements and enduring traditions to contextualise the environment which allowed for the amateur manga market to develop into a sustainable and profitable industry, as well as a thriving subcultural community.

Before outlining major movements in *dōjin* publishing practices, it is necessary to briefly consider and clarify the meaning of the term *dōjin*. While a literal translation of the compound 「同人」 (*dōjin*) is simply "same" + "person/people," in common usage and according to the Sanseidō dictionary, *dōjin* refers to individuals sharing the same hobbies, aims or intentions (Sanseidō, 2014). In a sense, this definition holds true and applies to *dōjin* circles from the Meiji period through to those who publish and distribute their work hand-to-hand to this day. That is, broadly speaking, *dōjin* has more or less continued to refer to individuals and groups connected through mutual hobbies or interests. Thus, while in a contemporary context, and particularly in the discourse of manga studies, *dōjinshi* might refer more narrowly to "amateur coterie magazines, which often parody the characters in popular *shōnen* (boys') manga and animations, pairing them in homosexual relationships" or the Western equivalent of "slash" (Nagaike, 2012, p.104), I suggest that the linguistic variations and definitions of its meaning need be clarified. To elaborate, in her research on *dōjinshi*, Nele Noppe considers *dōjin*-produced creations as fanworks which explicitly appropriate characters or settings from copyrighted material including manga (*dōjinshi*), fanfic (*shōsetsu*), fan art (*ichimai irasuto*), individual pictorial depictions, musical pieces (*dōjin ongaku*), and many other media (Noppe, 2010, p.123). Although relatively comprehensive, Noppe's definition fails to acknowledge *dōjin* who produce original works. Also, as opposed to referring to manga alone, the term *dōjinshi* may also refer to works produced collaboratively by amateur writers and illustrators. For this reason, and if we are to take into account *dōjin* who, rather than producing derivative works, only produce original work, slight alterations to Noppe's definition are required. As an alternative to Noppe's definition, I consider works produced by *dōjin*, using *dōjin* as an adjective in non-hyphenated compound words (such as *dōjin* manga or *dōjin* CDs). Etymology and usage of the word aside, what is of greater concern are the practices and traditions which characterise *dōjin*.

### 2.4.1 On Traditions and Trends

According to Yonezawa (writing under the pen name of Shun Ajima), the proletariat movement during the Taishō period saw the publication of a number of political *dōjinshi* and the proliferation of *dōjin* sections in bookstores (Ajima, 2004, p.12). However, it was in 1951 following the success of Tezuka's *Janguru taitei* (Jungle Emperor) that *dōjin* manga circles started to form, or at least become more

visible. One of the first nationwide *dōjin* manga circles to form at this time was "Manga Sekai," with their respective magazine going by the same name (Ajima, 2004, p.12). Although there were only 30 members upon its founding in 1951, it nevertheless indicates that even in postwar Japan when resources were few and transportation and means of communication were limited, sheer enthusiasm for manga drew individuals nationwide to collaborate, create and celebrate their love of manga. 1954 saw the arrival of university circles at major universities such as Meiji University and Waseda University, followed in 1966 by the first volume of Tezuka's Mushi-production specialist magazine COM, which was marketed at "manga elites" (Ajima, 2004, p.14). Yonezawa notes that by 1970 there were about 1,000 members nationwide belonging to COM, most of whom hoped to become professional *mangaka* (2004, p.15). In 1975 the *shōjo* manga boom signalled greater interest in *shōnen'ai* manga, and Shōjo Manga Festival, an event specifically catering for *shōjo* manga enthusiasts, was held in Yokohama (Ajima, 2004, p.16), later followed by the arrival of the event that would revolutionise *dōjin* subculture—Comic Market.

Founded in the early 1970s, Comic Market set out to distinguish itself from other *sokubaikai* in that it would be a casual and fun event catering mostly for those who were producing fanzines (Komikku Māketto Junbikai, 2007, p.28). As described by one fan, it was a "fan event" intended for fans. The first Comic Market held in December 1975 had a mere 32 circles and 700 attendees, and it was dubbed a space for "fandom" as well as a "*shōjo* manga fan show" (Komikku Māketto Junbikai 2007, p.32). Given that fans, fandom and *shōjo* manga (predominantly the *shōnen'ai* narratives produced by the Year 24 Group) were recognised as the staples of Comic Market from the very beginning, it is perhaps little wonder that to this day the event continues to be well attended by women producing *nijigen* and *sanjigen dōjinshi*. According to the data collected by Yonezawa and the Comic Market Committee, the success of Comic Market and the growth of *dōjinshi* subculture in its formative years was largely due to the influence that successful industry-produced texts such as the works of the Year 24 Group, anime, rock and SF manga, *June* and *peke* magazine, and others had on female consumers who were beginning to produce "homo parodies" (Ajima, 2004, p.90). By illustrating both the extent to which attendance at Comic Market has escalated and the ratio of female to male participants over three decades, the two graphs made by the organising committee that are reproduced below indicate the female-dominated nature of Comic Market in particular, and imply the female-

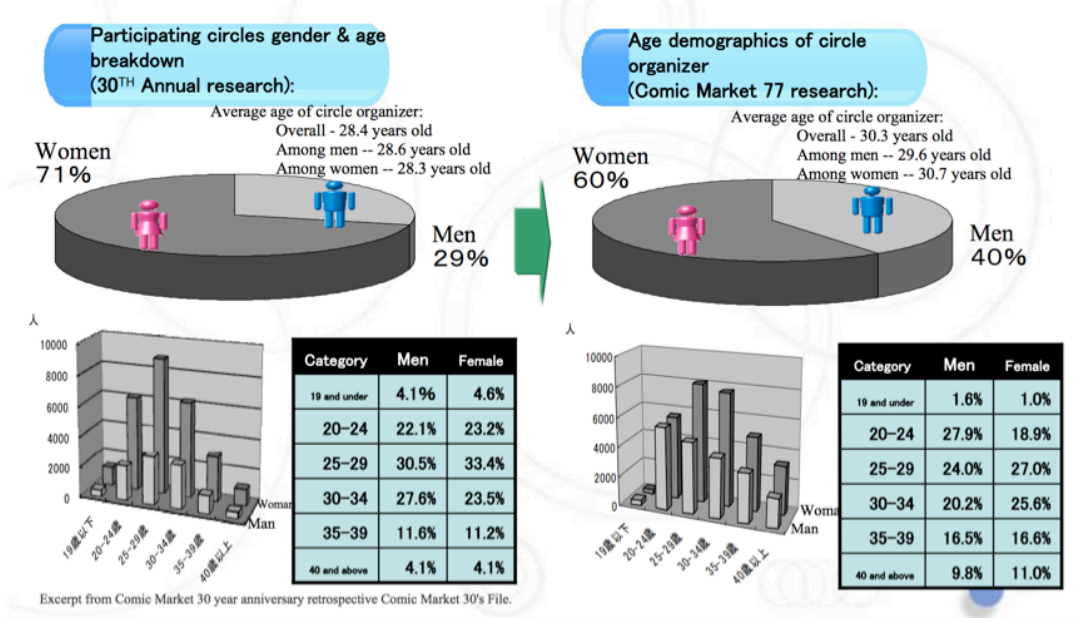dominated nature of of *dōjin* subculture in general (Figures 9, 10).

**Figure 9: Participant and Circle Attendance at Comic Market (Ichikawa, 2009)**
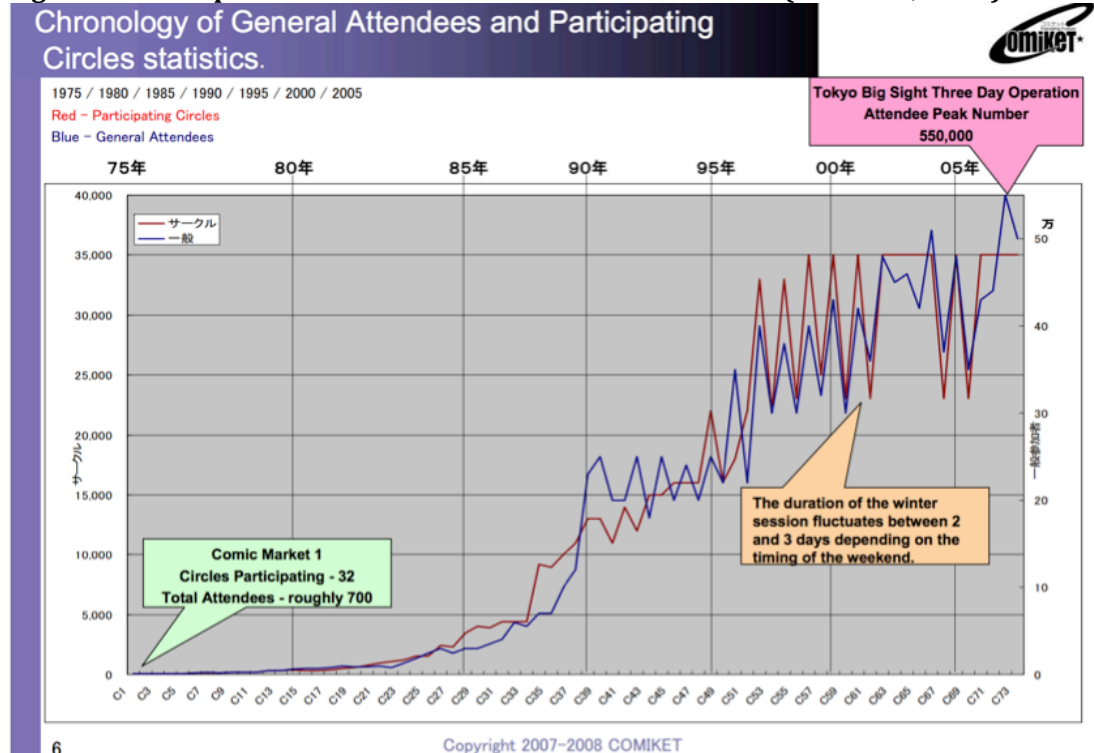


Source: Ichikawa, 2009.

**Figure 10: Gender and Age Statistics**



Source: Ichikawa, 2009.

The graphs are relatively clear, but I will give a brief explanation. It is apparent that from the 32 circles and 700 attendees in 1975, the event has seen exponential

growth to over 35,000 circles and an attendance of over 560,000 in 2005. Since around 2005, the number of circles and attendees has more or less plateaued, fluctuating only slightly each year. For instance, the attendance at Comic Market 85 in 2013 peaked at about 500,000 with 35,000 registered circles (Comic Market, 2013). Attendance has mainly fluctuated due to the space and time restrictions of the venue. That is, there are simply too many people in attendance over too few days. What is of greater significance, however, is the number of female participants who have persistently attended over the decades (especially during the first two days of the event which do not feature as much male-oriented genres and items). Two factors which might account for this are the atmosphere that Comic Market boasts and the principles on which it was founded. Based on Yonezawa's founding principles, and the Comic Market Committee's statement,

> The Comic Market (Comiket) is a marketplace where individuals can offer their own self-produced creations to a community that appreciates and supports such creative personal activities […] One goal of Comic Market is aiding creative efforts conducted outside the established commercial realms, and thereby encourage innovation and interaction within the overall community revolving around manga, anime and games. Comiket places emphasis on community building that empowers individual creativity, initiative, freedom, and to that end we strive our best to accommodate a large and diverse collection of *dōjinshi* […] Comiket is neither a commercial enterprise, nor a governmental operation […] Comiket is an event of the fans, by the fans, for the fans of manga in general and other mediums of self expression […] For most *dōjinshi* circles, earning profits is not the goal of their activities, but instead they aim to interact with their fellow participants through their own creations. (Comic Market Catalogue 85, 2013, pp.35-36)

Given Comic Market's creative yet non-commercial bias in combination with an emphasis on community, interaction, and production of diverse alternative content or fanworks without profit incentives, one can surmise that its enduring popularity amongst female attendees is partly thanks to the space that it fosters for non-

competitive self-expression. Rather, Comic Market stresses sharing, freedom, and self-expression. In a sense, this is exactly what the pre-war girls' magazines emphasised and furthermore emulates and celebrates this atmosphere at school culture festivals and the sense of community that forms a crucial part of school life (within club activities, for instance). This festival-like atmosphere is also hinted at by some of the data collected by the Comic Market Committee about participants' motivations for attending. According to the Committee's survey in 2005, the "festival-like atmosphere" was the greatest mutually favoured response amongst members of both groups (specifically, 21.3% of circle members and 26.3% of the attendees respectively) (Komikku Māketto Junbikai, 2007, pp.293-294). However, for circle members, the greatest motivation was the chance to have their work seen by others (41.5%), while for attendees the fact that they could find items which are exclusively available at Comic Market was chosen by 29.6% of respondents (Komikku Māketto Junbikai, 2007, pp.293-294). Having one's unique items seen, as well as seeing or having access to these exclusive items in a festival-like venue is, in essence, the heart of Comic Market. Whether this suggests a form of latent exhibitionism or need for recognition on the part of the circle members is debatable, but in any case, Comic Market caters for all these needs.

Riding the coattails of Comic Market's success, similar *sokubaikai* which cater for niche markets or *dōjinshi* enthusiasts residing outside of the greater Kantō region have been established as alternatives to Comic Market. Although I have mentioned J-Garden (BL-oriented) and Shōta Scratch (*shōta*-oriented) as niche market *sokubaikai*, there are also Akaboo's "Comic City" and COMITIA's nationwide *sokubaikai*. While COMITIA and Comic City both started operating in the late 1980s, they differ slightly in their approach. Whereas COMITIA stresses original work rather than parodies and encourages the production of a variety of items (including accessories, postcards, leather craft, and so on), Comic City is held over 20 times annually across Japan and seems to cater more for *nijigen* and *sanjigen* works. On its official English press page, Akaboo (affiliated to Kei Corporation) states that Comic City operates "under the theme of 'Create Books. Sell Books. Buy Books'" and "maintains a supply of coterie magazines which does not have much opportunities for distribution, and helps creators to deepen interaction among them. Every time a venue is used like a flea market and broken into separate genres of magazines" (Kei Corporation, 2014). Furthermore, similar to Comic Market, Akaboo states that for its participating artists and creators,

Comic City "serves not only as a place to display and sell their works but also as a place to deepen interaction between creators and coterie magazine fan[s]" (Kei Corporation, 2014). While Comic City boasts that it fosters creativity, the commercial aspects of "buying" and "selling" are also implied, and while Akaboo boasts that their events are intended to "deepen interaction" between creators and *dōjinshi* fans, its rigid genre based layout and occasional "Only" events (namely, *sokubaikai* based on one manga or anime series, coupling, theme, and so on) reinforce, on the contrary, that in spite of the supposed participatory nature of their events, Comic City is also somewhat exclusionary because of its rigid categorisation of events and creators by genre.

After all, if fans and creators of manga and other items based on XYZ source text are sectioned off into their specific quarters, the chances of attendees stumbling across new genres and critically or amiably interacting with artists whose work may not appeal to them are markedly smaller. For logistic purposes, it makes sense to categorise especially large-scale events in such a fashion, but the flea markets that Akaboo alludes to are rarely organised this way. COMITIA and Comic Market, on the other hand, though still categorised to some extent, seem to emulate the atmosphere of a flea market. One can turn a corner and unintentionally find a nostalgic or intriguing new item amongst the rows of generic items. Needless to say, different events and organisers emphasise different qualities, but in the current climate, where up to 500,000 enthusiasts attend such events, the commercial nature of events cannot be overlooked. Although Yonezawa and the founders of such events had not initially intended or anticipated that events like Comic Market would reach such a scale or even be profitable, the current climate indicates otherwise. In defence of the fair and all-embracing atmosphere that Comic Market strives to maintain, professor and researcher on Japanese pop culture and architecture Kaiichirō Morikawa argues that unlike regular conventions where leading companies or vendors usually occupy the central area and are allocated a bigger space, Comic Market practices the opposite (Morikawa, 2004, pp.12-15). That is, at Comic Market, the established circles (known officially as "*itaku*" circles but sometimes referred to as *kabe sākuru*) are allocated to the peripheral areas, while the remaining circles are allocated more or less the same amount of space in the inner areas of the venue. While the idealistic intention might be to put each circle on equal footing, that may not necessarily be the case as there are other factors to take into account. Firstly, many attendees usually plan out their visit to Comic Market strategically, so they do not walk around aimlessly or need to be guided to a "central

area." Essentially, seasoned attendees will visit the *itaku* circles if they have planned to. Secondly, the peripheral areas allow for greater flow of human traffic than the congested inner areas of the venue. This means that more attendees can walk by and purchase items from the major circles, thereby causing the fairness aspect/circle space allotment tactic to backfire.

In contrast to the *dōjin sokubaikai* of yesteryear, profit cannot be ignored as a major factor for all parties involved, including the organisers, publishing firms, catering staff, express delivery service providers, popular circles, and so on. However, some aspects remain constant and go beyond the idea that *sokubaikai* simply provide creative young individuals with the opportunity and freedom to express themselves and have their work acknowledged. For instance, the fact that females dominate such events as attendees, cosplayers and circle members demonstrates that the participatory nature of such events indeed provides a forum for female fans to network and strengthen their subcultural communities. Furthermore, the fact that original *June*/BL and *yaoi* works have remained staples at female-dominated events like Comic Market perhaps indicates that such events not only allow female attendees to bond and network, but also provide a common space to exhibit explicit works of fiction that might otherwise be difficult to come across in regular bookstores.

### 2.4.2 Form

Given the fluctuations in the Japanese economy and the steady growth in attendance at *sokubaikai* over a span of four decades, the attendance, locations, expenditure, and prices of items sold at such events have inevitably changed. Similarly, due to rapid developments in technology (in particular computers, IT and mobile devices), formats have also changed. For instance, the production of digital texts such as games, cosplay videos, and photo CDs was facilitated by the arrival and greater availability of computers from the 1980s on. With the commercialisation and growth of anime- and manga-related accessories in the mainstream market, an increase in the number of circles producing similar yet entirely unique items of their own has also followed. Manga, novels, and short stories, though analogue in appearance and prone to material damage if unprotected, have nevertheless remained staples amongst fans and circles alike. One of my informants who produces "*raito noberu*" (literally, light novels

but perhaps best considered as serialised novella) for events like J-Garden or Shōta Scratch explained that for some reason, women seem to buy more novels than men. It seems as if the mercantile hand-to-hand exchange of fictional works calls for organic and tactile methods of exchange just as much as other physical products. Just like a market where one can sample a strawberry, then purchase a punnet only to consume most of it on the way home, the tactile process of flipping through a *mihon* (sample text) at a *sokubaikai*, purchasing it and then proceeding to read it immediately on the train home or on a bench near the venue is arguably part of the organic charm of directly purchasing and consuming someone's unique creation.

While reading practices vary and some people are more attracted to visual narratives than novels and vice versa, regardless of the content, the key factors to consider regarding printed and bound texts are that they are mobile and do not require computer literacy or costly compatible devices, or have any other system requirements. Also, there is no risk of losing or accidentally deleting data, and no need to sign up for services or upgrade applications when reading hard copies. In regard to Japanese attitudes towards digital content and statistics, Yoshiyuki Oshita (Chief Director of the Center for Art Policy and Management at Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting) revealed that Japan's e-book market is growing less quickly than in the United States. He suggested that Japan's long culture of reading printed material was one of the major factors hindering market growth for e-books: "just because technologies made it possible to read e-books, it won't change the culture that easily and quickly" (Nagata, 2013). Perhaps more significant than some of these factors is that hard copies potentially facilitate the aforementioned practice of *mawashi-yomi* (sharing books amongst friends, co-workers and so on). Although there are obvious economic factors behind this practice, I suggest that some of the social functions of *mawashi-yomi* are deeply connected to community building (by bonding through mutual interests), as well as promoting a sense of trust (in that the item will be protected and returned in due time and in good condition). For fans of *dōjinshi*, who initially bond through their interests in the same texts or genres, *mawashi-yomi* encourages the sharing of recently discovered works and artists, and provides common topics of conversation. This, however, is not facilitated with digital texts, given that copying or sharing digital texts is relatively troublesome or often impossible, and generally considered disrespectful to the original artists.

As for the format of *dōjin* manga and novels, the vast majority are relatively short, sometimes serialised (such as *nijigen* or *sanjigen* works based on episodes or particular seasons of anime), easy to conceal and consume, and completely unique and exclusive pieces of work. In this sense, *dōjin* works are just as easy to dispose of as they are to treasure. However, considering that Japanese generally prefer the tactile nature of printed works over data, one could further argue that the material possession of physical copies of such fictional works is perhaps valued more than data amongst *dōjin* enthusiasts, who both read to collect and collect to read. Whether stickers or baseball cards, capsule toys or cell phone straps, collectable trains or train time tables, magazines or *dōjin* manga, in Japanese culture, the culture of collecting does not stop at childhood. As cartoonist and author Phoenix Woodrow suggests in his cultural investigation into Japanese toys,

> The impulse to collect toys makes sense when you see many examples of the same character together, or an array of similar characters that are variations on a theme. Multiples reinforce each other and create a contextual universe. One action figure is just a toy; ten figures are a collection. A hundred can be another world. (Woodrow, 2006, p.9)

Although toys and *dōjin*-produced BL fiction are two very different categories of collector's items, I argue that they are analogous in the sense that like toys, *dōjin*-produced BL fiction works possess the power to create what Woodrow calls a contextual universe. Once a narrative is segmented, the remaining segments are necessary to complete the contextual universe, and thus the fulfilling yet ongoing consumer cycle begins. In addition to the serialisation of some BL narratives, with the division of pages into panels, the segmented format of manga complements this fragmented pattern of textual consumption. What this arguably indicates is a preoccupation with collecting—through creating, consuming and recreating a potentially never-ending narrative concerning love, youth and beautiful boys to live through vicariously.

Aside from brevity and serialisation, aspects such as size, paper density, binding, colour, font, and page and panel layout are certainly significant factors to consider when discussing the format of manga, in particular *dōjin*-produced manga. However, when it comes to format, there are several other features which are perhaps

more pertinent to *dōjin*-produced BL manga and *yaoi*. I suggest that the following aspects function as a means to bridge the gap between artists and fans/readers: introductions (sometimes signalled by "*maegaki*," "*hajime ni*" or "*arasuji*"); *atogaki* (similar to an afterword); *okuzuke* (a colophon including the artist's and the publisher's contact details); *chibi yon-koma* (cute four-panelled gags featuring infantilised versions of the characters) or *chibi*-like self-caricatures; *shinario nōto* (captions featuring details of the scenario); and "*serifukome*" (what I refer to as uncaptioned or captioned personal comments from the artist). While these aspects might seem commonsensical or even arbitrary, there are certain appropriations of these aspects which have been recognised as conventions amongst members the *dōjin* community. Though contestable, I suggest that the existence of such conventions, as well as their general acceptance and practice, are not merely arbitrary. Naturally, conventions are made and exist for various reasons, but I would argue that many conventions function to facilitate social harmony and conventions used amongst BL/*June* manga and *yaoi dōjin* circles are no exception.

Hence, it is appropriate to proceed by considering the presentation and function of introductions. Much like the preface in Victorian fiction, the introductions within *dōjin*-produced texts sometimes disclose the details of the text and its inspiration or production. However, in contrast to traditional introductions, derivative and original *dōjin* works often provide details of the content, and thus combine elements of a preface, as well as an introduction. Furthermore, in contrast to mainstream-produced manga, which sometimes include a decorative cover page for the first chapter or launch straight into the narrative, *nijigen* works, particularly if serialised, may divulge crucial details of the narrative. This might include anything from the basic premise of the story, where the previously published story left off, where the current narrative is heading, or greetings, or comments about the weather or the event, and even the nature of the coupling combination (Figure 11). Not only does this serve as an "ice-breaker" through the combination of cultural references to the source text and self-reflexive comments, but when exposed to sometimes quite revealing views, or self-deprecating comments about the artist from the artist, readers may even learn more about the artist than the text itself. For instance, in a sample of 101 *dōjin*-produced texts I collected at various events between December 2013 and August 2014 inclusive, 39 titles featured introductions. Of these 39 titles featuring introductions, 21 titles included comments about the plot; 25 titles mentioned the characters or the coupling combination; 14 titles featured personal information or comments written by the artist; nine titles addressed or

expressed gratitude towards fans; and six titles included general comments about the weather. Acknowledging that it is difficult to form any solid concluding statements about these findings due to the limitations of the sample (in terms of the location and the time frame), the data nevertheless reveals that as well as general greetings and personal comments made by the artist, the coupling and the plot are the primary means by which circles connect with their readers. The probability that these findings are a coincidence cannot be ignored, but I would argue that these results stress the importance of adding a personal touch and revealing one's tastes in the introductions of *dōjin*-produced BL and *yaoi* works.

**Figure 11: Introduction**



Source: Anonymous, 2014.

**Figure 12: Web profile**



ハイキュー！！アニメ化おめでとうございます。
オリジナル部分も挟みつつ、原作の空気をしっかり取り込んだ描写に、
本誌で読んでいたころの記憶を、揺さぶられて毎週泣きながら見ています。
はじめの頃のゆらゆらした菅原さんが、
少しずつ変わっていく姿をテレビでも見られるのがとても楽しみ。

Hi-Q!! fanzine : 07

11.May 2014
ID＿＿＿ER 6

mail to : ca＿＿＿＿jp
http://pixiv.n＿＿＿＿）

＊二次創作を知らない方、好まない方の目につかないよう、この本の保管・処分にあ
　たっては、十分にご配慮ください。
＊オークションを含むネットへのアップロードや、原作者・公式関係者の目に付くよ
　うな取扱は固くお断りします。
＊処分は、同人誌に知識のある専門古書店または、焼却・細断による廃棄など、人目
　につきにくい形でお願いします。

Source: Anonymous, 2014.

**Figure 13: *Attack on Titan* Atogaki**
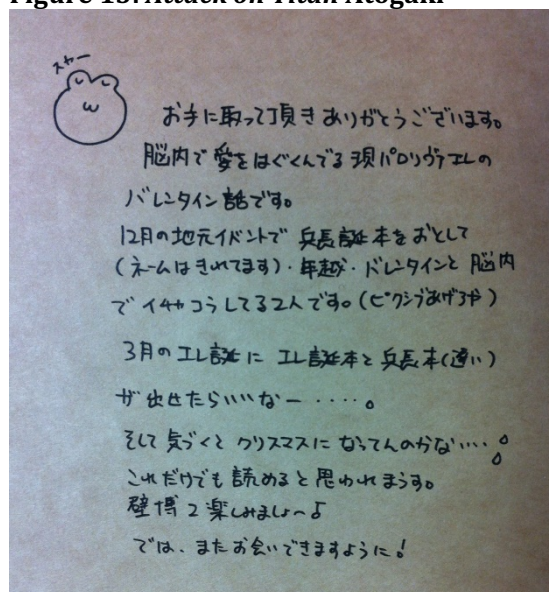


Source: Anonymous, 2014.

In a similar fashion to introductions, one might consider *atogaki* as yet another means by which circles can connect with their fans or reinforce pre-existing bonds with them. Like the conventional afterword, the *atogaki* page is fundamentally a space for reflection and closure. Although the use of afterwords is deeply rooted in book publishing, the functions and style of presentation differ between mainstream produced

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fiction and amateur works, and further between mainstream BL and *dōjin*-produced BL. *Dōjin*-produced *atogaki*, for instance, sometimes signal that the series will continue, and much like a trailer, rather than providing closure, they often promise future works or often foreshadow certain plot events to come. To some extent, this practice also assumes there is either an established or ongoing relationship with the readers or that there should or will be. For instance, in an *atogaki* taken from an *Attack on Titan* fan book, not only does the author mention upcoming events in December, but also hopes to produce works for Valentine's Day and for events in March (Figure 13 Much like the serialised novel in Victorian periodicals or serialised manga within *Jump* and *Morning* magazines, each instalment has a provisional conclusion (to some extent), but through the segmentation of the text and conventions like *atogaki*, one can nevertheless anticipate the next instalment.

Furthermore, with the occasional addition of an *okuzuke* (impressum) including links to home pages or relevant social media accounts (such as Facebook, Twitter or Japan's art sharing social media application, Pixiv), the readers are invited to check an artist's various public profiles, comment, send private messages, and "like", "share", "retweet" or "favourite" posts. In many respects, this differs from the chances to praise or give feedback directly at events, but examining web-enabled interaction between fans and artists, as reinforced by Noppe, "could help manga scholars avoid dismissing *dōjinshi* with the same arguments that were employed for decades to keep manga and comics marginalized as academic subjects" (Noppe, 2010, p.138). That is, although the arrival of new technologies and means of interaction and entertainment are not always embraced immediately, once accepted and commonly practised, they become both legitimate avenues for both communication and research. To gauge the extent to which websites and social media are employed by *dōjin*, I analysed a sample of 101 titles collected over a period of nine months. From this analysis, it was found that 62 titles included an email address, 27 titles included a Twitter account, and 54 a home page, while 37 included a Pixiv profile (see Figure 12) While mentioning one's social network profiles could be considered as blatant self-promotion, I argue that the social function of connecting with fans and revealing one's work and personal data online is both commonplace and meaningful among the young and tech-savvy *dōjin* community. Where the avid readers of the pre-war girls' magazines would exchange or disclose their home postal addresses (which is arguably a rare, if not dangerous practice in a contemporary context), the modern-day practice of sharing web-related links and

addresses provides a safe, instantaneous, yet still personal means for young women to share material and interact.

Some final items to consider in terms of form, although they are inherently associated with narrative presentation and design, are *chibi* illustrations, scenario notes and *serifukome* (rather overt authorial/personal comments or "side notes"). *Chibi* characters, though usually associated with Momoko Sakura's *Chibi Maruko-chan* (1986-1996), most often refer to subjects, either real or fictional, in *shōjo* manga and anime series which are characteristically tiny, infantile, and cute. These disproportionately large-headed figures are generally extremely flat, extremely small, and lacking in fine lining, contrast, and dimensionality. Former Eisner Award judge, Robin E. Brenner argues that when a character is "given over to a strong emotion, particularly anger, fear, begging, or romantic swooning, their entire form will shrink and be represented by what is called a super-deformed, or *chibi*, form" (Brenner, 2007, p.56). The possibility that this practice developed as a means to reinforce that public displays of extreme emotion are considered childish in Japanese culture is certainly worth considering. However, I argue that *chibi* characters are primarily used in a light or humorous context, or to tone down serious scenes or controversial subject matter. Examples of manga titles using *chibi* figures in such a fashion are Satoru Hiura's essay manga for expecting mothers in their forties, *Hige no ninshin* (2011); Jun'ichi Inoue's diary-style manga illustrating the challenges of his Chinese wife's life in Japan, *Chūgoku yome nikki* (2011); or Yūichi Okano's story of a family's struggle with their mother's descent into senility, *Pecco rosso no haha ni ai ni iku* (2012). Given that these narratives handle relatively sensitive subject matters in Japan, by adopting a *chibi* style of illustration, artists and authors can ensure that the matter is presented in a light and non-authoritative fashion and that the subject matter therefore reaches and appeals to a wider reading public than it might otherwise. It is this wider appeal and endearing nature of *chibi* characters which also makes them applicable and appealing to *dōjin*.

Although some mainstream manga (and as I have observed, quite a number of *nijigen* titles) are entirely illustrated in *chibi* form, the *chibi* characters which I wish to highlight are the caricatures of the artists, either placed in the *atogaki* or in the introductory pages. In fact, a simple glance at Yonezawa's Memorial Library of Manga and Subculture's signed self-portraits suffices to reinforce that use of endearing *chibi* caricatures amongst mainstream as well as *dōjin* artists is very much an established

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convention.

**Figure 14: Yonezawa Memorial Library of Manga and Subculture**



大森望様 　　　北原尚彦様 　　　新井素子様 　　　とりみき様

漫研QEEN
高森様 北川様 芳村様 　　竹宮恵子様 　　竹熊健太郎様 　　JMブイス一様

千樹りおん様 　　フレデリック・ショット様 　　みなもと太郎様 　　Dr.モロー様

Source: Yonezawa Memorial Library of Manga and Subculture Website, May 2014.

Though artistic decisions may vary, one of the major functions of *chibi*-fied self-portraits of *dōjin* is that they break down the authorial tone of the text and thus the barrier between fans and artists. It was perhaps unsurprising for *dōjin* to follow suit and appropriate *chibi* styles of illustration, given that some of the venue maps in the Comic Market catalogues of the late 1970s were filled with creative doodles and the occasional "How-to Comic Market" instructional strips featuring *chibi*-fied images of the organisers. For instance, consider Figure 17s (Komikku Māketto Junbikai 30s, 2007, p.222) round-table discussion with several circles. Not only are the circle images included, but several of the artists' self-portraits are indeed *chibi*-fied. Other artists might include an *omake yon-koma* (similar to a "bonus" or "freebie" gag strip) as

opposed to images of themselves (Figure 15.

**Figure 15: *Omake yon-koma***



Source: Anonymous, 2014.

Reader-responses to *chibi* images and reasons for appropriating them vary. However, I maintain that one of the major affective responses or functions of adopting a *chibi* style of illustration is to evoke sympathy or amiable affection towards a particular figure or artist. Given that 58 of 101 *dōjinshi* I accumulated over a period of six months featured *chibi* figures, it appears to be a style of illustration which has proven to be one of many methods to reach out to readers effectively regardless of content.

Two slightly less direct means of appealing to or connecting with one's readers, which nonetheless reflect aspects of an artist's personality and intentions, are scenario notes and *serifukome*. Although scenario notes may seem irrelevant to artist-reader relations, I argue that the frequent usage of scenario notes in *nijigen* works not only provides background information necessary for the continuity of the story, but also plays on the knowledge of its readers. That is, in a similar manner to *atogaki* or *arasuji* (introductions), *dōjin* scenario notes occasionally call or rely upon readers' databases of knowledge, based on a particular manga or anime's recent episodes, scenes or

characters, to provide common ground on which to communicate and connect with their readers. For instance, in a *nijigen* title I purchased based on the game and series *Uta no prinsu sama* (2010)*,* not only were the settings disclosed as part of the introduction, but a transition page explained the nature of the following sub-section's simulation game (including the premise of the plot and the characters involved). I argue that compared to the standard captioned or uncaptioned omniscient descriptions of settings in mainstream manga, the scenario notes of *dōjin* works tend to be more tongue-in-cheek and have perhaps a more self-conscious style of narration. Much like the covert, self-aware style of narration practised by Victorian writers, this unobtrusive device in *dōjin* fiction reminds readers that not only are they consuming a text, but they are also consuming a text written from a particular perspective and by a particular artist.

While this may interrupt the flow of the plot, the often covert style of commentary assists in the greater comprehension of plot events and calls upon the reader's knowledge. More often than not, the comments paint the author as somewhat of a Shakespearean fool rather than an authoritative source of information. Indeed, just as *chibi* illustrations or tongue-in-cheek comments have the potential to tone down serious matters, in his work on Renaissance drama, Richard Levin argued that the clowns in Shakespeare's plays were intended as an "emotional vacation from the more serious business of the main action" (Levin, 1971, p.142). Granted, the seriousness of subject matter in *nijigen yaoi* or BL manga is questionable, but as a non-authoritative source of critical information or reflective thoughts, the clown-like *dōjin*'s scenario notes and *serifukome* serve to covertly convey information in a humorous manner, and thereby create a bond between the readers and the creators.

Perhaps to a greater extent than scenario notes and in contrast to *naigo* (interior monologues), the highly subjective *serifukome* within mainstream and *dōjin* manga provide more personal notes on anything from particular aspects of the narrative to the roughness of one's sketches, or even preferences in men. Usually uncaptioned or handwritten, if not employing indicative arrows, *serifukome* range from self-deprecating comments and snide or crude remarks about certain characters or scenes to entirely unrelated matters. In any case, whether scrawly, illegible, unobtrusive or overt, *serifukome* can either be overlooked or draw the reader's immediate attention. While on the one hand, one could argue that these *serifukome* are self-gratifying for the

author, on the other hand, they may also play a significant role in gaining new fans or solidifying bonds with pre-existing fans. That is, whether recycling running jokes related to a particular series or making self-deprecating comments about oneself, *dōjin* employing *serifukome* are both victims and perpetrators of ridicule. I argue that this ability to "give and take" ridicule, commentary or otherwise, is very much a part of *dōjin katsudō* (activity) and contributes to the creation of a space for freedom of expression and harmony. If we consider *serifukome* in terms of narrative voice, then depending on the nature of the commentary and consistency of use, they can enable authors to employ several different categories of narrative voice within a single text. However, I hold that the majority of *dōjin*'s *serifukome* take the form of what Gérard Genette conceived as an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator (that is, external to/uninvolved in the narrative) addressing their implied narratees (the BL or *yaoi* "fan" readership).

Unlike early Victorian fiction which placed emphasis on verisimilitude, *dōjin* use of an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrative voice may be relatively unauthoritative, unreliable yet endearing through its wit, or purely playful or crude commentary. For instance, consider the comments made in the following anonymous excerpts taken from several *dōjin* titles collected between late 2013 and mid 2014. One the first page of a *dōjin's* "fan book" entitled *Iroiro,* for instance, in a handwritten *serifukome* at the bottom of the last panel, the artist apologises that the character Takasaki has been depicted as an idiot ("*Takasaki ga aho de suimasen*") (Anonymous, 2014). Further into the narrative and underneath a panel in which a fight is about to start between two figures, the artist's *serifkome* reads: "Isn't it great when they're cruel?" (Anonymous, 2014). In fact, the entire text is littered with side comments and facts about the railway lines that are the focus of the series, as well as the coupling dynamics. Furthermore, most of these comments are written with softeners or presented as tag questions. Thus, without sounding too authoritative, the artist playfully draws attention to details necessary for narrative comprehension with extra-diegetic in-jokes. The result is a warm, sometimes trivial, yet friendly manner of address which arguably abolishes the distance between artists and fans. Another example of this is evident in a fanbook about the series *Toriko* (2008-2016). Although the series revolves around a "gourmet hunter" named Toriko, the artist calls on the readership's pre-existing knowledge about the other characters in comments such as: "Isn't it strange that even in shy monologues Zebra still seems cool?" (Anonymous 2014). Once again, tag questions or softeners are

employed for an amiable and non-authoritative style of artist-to-fan means of address. Although the examples given are hardly representative of the countless variations of *serifukome*, they suffice to exemplify this form of excessive yet playful extradiegetic dialogue between *dōjin* and their readers.

As I have attempted to demonstrate, any combination or variation of *serifukome*, *atogaki* and their complementary *okuzuke, maegaki, chibi omake-koma,* self-caricatures, and *shinario nōto* are not by definition conventional means to address readers. However, through reading of and exposure to even a limited range and number of *dōjin*-produced texts, I suggest that these extradiegetic formalistic elements have been commonly used to the extent that they could be considered common practice as a minor yet effective means for artists to address, interact, and reinforce bonds with both pre-existing and potential fans. Furthermore, although trends in form tend to change as new technologies develop, the fact that very little has changed in terms of form and conventions in narrative presentation indicates both the existence of established methods of formatting and publishing *dōjinshi*, and a community that readily accepts and actively perpetuates such practices in the *dōjin* BL and *yaoi* subcultural habitus.

Like consistencies when it comes to form, certain themes and subgenres of BL and *yaoi* have also remained stable. For instance, the parodic *yaoi* fan comics (FC) and *June*/BL *dōjin* works continue to feature at *sokubaikai* to this day. Despite changes in the source texts of FC titles over the decades (from *Captain Tsubasa* to *Slam Dunk* in the late 1980s and 1990s, followed by *One Piece* to *Attack on Titan* in more recent years), the majority of these source texts have been derived from *shōnen* manga. Furthermore, although I acknowledge that certain aesthetic motifs (such as the *bishōnen* trope, androgyny, and flowers) as well as coupling dynamics and the general characterisation of *uke* and *seme* figures may have changed, I suggest that the changes in trends have only been marginal and mostly superficial in nature. Without needlessly reviewing these former discussions in detail, I simply wish to stress that certain trends concerning motifs, genre and form have remained remarkably constant. And, as I shall demonstrate in the following discussions on trading methods and consumption practices, in spite of developments in IT, *dōjin* BL/*June* and *yaoi* have also retained some of the original means and methods of production, consumption and trade since the 1970s.

### 2.4.3 Methods of Publishing

Similar to Russian *samizdat* (self-produced and distributed writings by dissidents in Soviet Russia) or political pamphlets and other ephemera drawn and distributed by Victorian women, the publishing of *dōjinshi* has retained the basic fundamentals of self-produced and distributed works—they are essentially handmade works distributed hand-to-hand. However, as simple as such processes appear, various factors in production have to be taken into account. There are invariably costs involved in the decision-making progress, whether someone chooses to print and bind using their own resources, print on-site, use offset printing, or take advantage of the variety of packages offered exclusively to *dōjin* by opportunistic printing companies. As much as the event organisers and PR and marketing staff attempt to stress the creative and harmonious atmosphere that *sokubaikai* boast, for the printers, art suppliers, railway companies, hotels, logistics firms as well as the venue owners and caterers, *dōjin* events and their associated production practices are indisputably a regular and predictable source of revenue.

For instance, consider the Nomura Research Institute's (NRI) report on the value and nature of the *otaku* market in 2005, 30 years after the first Comic Market was held. According to their findings, the NRI estimated that the *otaku* market was worth 411 billion yen, with over half of the revenue coming from "comics" (Okada, 2005). In addition to these findings, 36% of the NRI's sample of over 10,000 respondents fell into the "psychologically" *otaku* category (that is, wanting to both spread their hobbies amongst others around them and engage in creative activity), while only 11% were classified as "consumptive" *otaku* (spending their leisure time and income on *otaku* related goods and activities) (Okada, 2005). Based on NRI's research and the fact that the *dōjinshi* market was estimated to be worth 775 billion yen in 2015 (Yano, 2016), these findings indicate the extent to which both manga and creative *otaku*—who, for instance, are likely to be engaged in creating *dōjin* manga—dominate a relatively large section of the leisure market in Japan. For this reason, considering the various avenues and methods of publishing available to *dōjin* might provide insight into how their works facilitate the development of a niche network of fans into a subcultural community of significant proportions.

According to Yonezawa, a substantial number of *dōjinshi* in the mid-1970s were reproduced as *burū kopī* (blue copies). In fact, some of the best-selling items at Comic Market in 1975 were in fact blue copies, which were produced using an older ammonia-based (diazotype) copying equipment (Ajima, 2004, p.19). According to Comic Market veteran and key staff member Tsuguo Iwada, it was not until convenience stores started increasing in number in the late 1980s and early 1990s that printing became much easier (Iwada, 2005, p.58). In contrast to the early 1980s (when colour printing was still unavailable) and the mid-1980s (when offset printing was more affordable but perhaps unavailable in regional areas), convenience stores were accessible to almost everyone (Iwada, 2005, pp.51-57). Unlike the PC- and software-facilitated methods of creating manga available in present day Japan, most of the *dōjin* manga produced by the pioneering circles of Comic Market in the 1970s were produced without the accessibility and affordability of modern print technology. Works were hand-written, typed, traced, sketched, drawn, coloured, or monochrome. I maintain that this emphasis on producing one's work with minimal assistance has persisted to this day and is deeply embedded in *dōjin* culture.

In Japanese, certain customs or philosophies are stressed in activities by including the suffix *–dō* (literally, "the way of"). Examples include *sadō* (tea ceremony), *budō* (martial arts), *shodō* (calligraphy), or the aforementioned *wakashudō*. We could consider *dōjin*'s willingness to or insistence on producing everything themselves and within own resources a major facet of what I refer to as "*dōjindō*" (the way of *dōjin*). Given that the essence of the term *dōjin* and the ethos of many *sokubaikai* stress harmony amongs peers and an egalitarian environment, to publish using the cheapest and most accessible publishing means keeping publishing accessible even to peers coming from lower economic backgrounds, ensuring that all circles are on the same level. In fact, irrespective of how shabby, rough, or more amateur a text appears, the creativity of the content, as well as the amount of time and effort one puts into one's works, are arguably valued more than production values and aesthetics. At a number of "only" event (that is, events based on one manga or anime series) and several smaller scale events I attended, circles sometimes prepared a single-paged *furī pēpā* or *muryō haifu* (free and collectible flier-sized manga based on a particular motif, coupling or theme). While these *furī pēpā* are generally distributed at "only" events and "*puchi ibento*" (tiny and often coupling-specific events), both circles and attendees are encouraged to create, share and collect the works of others. Not only does this practice

encourage circles to work on a similar subject or coupling; it also facilitates circle-to-circle interaction (on top of the usual fan-to-fan or circle-to-fan dynamics). Comparable to collectible and often cherished trading cards or stickers from girls' magazines, the free and collectible nature of *furī pēpā* provides an egalitarian forum for consumption and interaction based on mutual interests. The formula is: simple illustrations or little artistic merit + budget or bulk printing = fairness in terms of circles' expenses, artistic skills, or talent. What this practice implies or ensures is that all circles and attendees are quintessentially *dō+jin* (equal people).

Although I hold that analogue methods of producing texts such as copying and offset printing are still practised, as I have noted, a number of other options have become readily available to circles in tandem with developments in IT and print technology and the expansion of printing services specifically catering to *dōjin*. DLsite and DiGiket, for example, are some of the major online services for *dōjin* wishing to publish e-manga. However, since my research involves ephemeral print-based material, I will only outline some representative print services designed for such events.

Based on a number of print shop catalogues I collected in the course of my fieldwork and the Japan Doujin-shi Printing Union's list of participating printers in 2014, quite a range of packages and prices are offered to emerging artists. What is generally required is a digital file (either using Adobe Illustrator or Photoshop, Comic Studio, Microsoft-produced files) to be sent to the service provider, as well as an offset or on-demand order to be placed. The order is printed, bound, packed, and either delivered or collected from the premises. The process is relatively streamlined, fast, systematic, and based on pure and simple economic logic. That is, regardless of the size, colour, cover design, paper quality and so on, the price depends largely on the number of pages, the number of copies, the net weight of the order, and the deadline. Provided that circles can predict their sales, based on the economic logic of buying in bulk and in advance, these circles can save on expenses if they print a large number of items. For instance, according to major *dōjinshi* printing service PICO's prices as of 2014, the price difference between printing one week in advance as opposed to 48 hours in advance is almost double (PICO, 2014). Surely, printing in advance is the wiser option for some of the larger circles. My correspondence with another major *dōjin* publisher, Neko no shippo (literally, "cat's tail"), reinforced the economic logic of publishing in bulk. My informant at Neko no shippo revealed that the most popular

package amongst their 60% male to 40% female clientele was their offset "*chibi neko pakku*" (little cat package). When asked why, my informant added that such offset packages were simply cheaper than on-demand packages. Furthermore, given that most of Neko no shippo's clients publish manga (70%) and light novels (20%) for *sokubaikai* rather than *dōjin* bookstores, the bare minimum of a basic and affordable printing service seems to be what prolific circles demand (Neko no shippo, 2014). Similarly, Ryokuyō (which caters for a 90% female clientele) noted that most of their clients produce manga (80%) and light novels/novels (20%) for *sokubaikai*. For Ryokuyō, however, their offset "colour set" service is the most popular amongst their largely female clientele. While the insight provided by these two service providers is not necessarily indicative of general trends, what it might illustrate is that although female clients tend to favour a more decorative or colourful cover design for their items, the majority of both male and female clients still decide on cheap offset packages for the purpose of *sokubaikai*.

However, for most *kojin sākuru* (single-member circles)*,* I argue that this is not the case. Given the short and serialised nature of *nijigen* manga, last-minute "on-demand" printing deals for standard B5-sized works that start from a minimum order of 30 or 50 items seem to be the first choice available for novice or low-frequency circles. In contrast to the bulk orders placed by larger or more prolific circles, this pattern of rather uneconomical printing practices both defeats the common logic of market economics and stresses the exclusivity of *dōjin*-produced texts. Although unsold copies might be given away or sold at other events, online, or at participating *dōjin* bookstores, printing and distributing only a limited number of copies at any given event somewhat increases the value of the items. Limited and ephemeral in their nature, *dōjin*-produced BL/*June* and *yaoi* works are thus almost exclusively available only to event attendees, who either choose to treat the items as treasure or trash. In either case, if a circle produces serialised and therefore collectable items, there is a greater probability that fans will return to collect the next instalments at future events. Limited, localised, serialised and bite-sized *kojin sākuru* publishing practices reinforce that neither cost nor production values are as significant as supplying dedicated fans with constant instalments of new, creative material, and maintaining a sustainable, satisfied and niche subcultural community.

Convenient and potentially cost-effective as they may be, *dōjin* print services are not utilised by all. The alternative to these systematic and neatly packaged commercial methods is the DIY method of creating, printing, copying, and binding from the comfort of one's home. Several possible incentives to do so are lower production expenses, the rewarding and fun aspects (in the sense that one is self-publishing to the fullest extent), a sense of pride in autonomous publishing, or even self-protection/privacy protection (given that Neko no shippo as well as Ryokuyō not only record one's personal details, but as a rule, perform content checks). In any case, when considering the cost of hiring a "space" at *sokubaikai*, transportation expenses, one's personal purchases from the event, as well as the obligatory sweets or gifts for friends, self-publishing seems to be the most likely reason to cut costs. However, given the long-established enthusiasm towards art and craft production evident in girls' culture, I suggest that circles who practice unassisted publishing largely do so because as well as being cost-effective, it is also creative and gratifying. While it is not my intention to validate this claim quantitatively, to explore the extent to which it might be valid, I asked several circles as well as one of my own respondents at Shōta Scratch (Special 2) why they published their items using limited resources and how long the process generally took. Irrespective of their levels of income and experience, two respondents argued that for them, self-publishing was easier (or perhaps a less troublesome process) and that they enjoyed the fact that they could work at their own pace since there was no deadline-related pressure. Furthermore, they agreed that it was fun to create something from scratch. The more experienced of the respondents emphasised that cost was not a major factor. Rather, the fun involved in using limited resources creatively, as well as a simple love of "working with one's hands," were the major motivations to practice unassisted publishing. Clearly, further research is necessary to validate the suggestion that some of the primary reasons to practice unassisted publishing are associated with the pride in one's self-sufficiency and creative efforts. Although I do not intend to explore the full extent to which unassisted publishing is practised and why, I nevertheless maintain that it continues to be practised on account of its affordability, as well as the personal gratifications gained from publishing completely independently.

Having covered both unassisted and assisted means of publishing manga for *sokubaikai* or otherwise, let us now consider distribution methods. As Media Create's extensive report on the *otaku* industry in recent years notes, there are three major ways

in which *dōjin* can distribute their work: via digital platforms, via *dōjinshi* specialist bookstores, and of course via *sokubaikai* (Murakami, 2007, p.62). Although based on data collected in 2006 and 2007, Tatsuhiko Murakami's findings revealed annual growth in *dōjin*-related revenue between 2006 and 2007, with the greatest revenue coming from bookstores, followed closely by *sokubaikai* and trailed by digital distributors (2007, p.62). Naturally, the distribution method might affect or determine the method of publishing (as well as sales) but there are rules and costs involved in production regardless of one's avenue of choice. In any case, however, one thing perhaps remains constant: the desire to express oneself creatively with minimal intervention, restrictions, and costs but maximum energy and enthusiasm.

### 2.4.4 Methods of Trading and Consumption

Having considered the methods of publishing, examining the common means of distribution will now provide greater insight into the profound participatory and interactive nature of the BL/*June* and *yaoi* prosumer and fan community. In recent manga and fan studies scholarship, a number of theorists have acknowledged and reinforced that the zeal and festivity surrounding both general and BL/*June* and *yaoi*-oriented *sokubaikai* fosters a space for creative expression, interaction, and the exchange of ideas and thus the sustainability of its fan community (Shamoon, 2011; Kinsella, 1998; Orbaugh, 2009; Galbraith, 2011). For this reason, rather than analysing vending practices online and via participating *dōjin* bookstores (*shoten itaku*), I have chosen to consider only the commercial, cultural, and social exchanges which occur at *sokubaikai*. As demonstrated previously, and further reinforced by Sihombing, booths at *sokubaikai* are organised according to couplings and their respective source texts (namely, the mainstream manga or anime series) (Sihombing, 2011, pp.162-163). She adds,

> [T]his organisation then became the map for like-minded fans to find one another. This growth of fan activities also shows the expansion of BL as a sub-culture, helped by proactive participations of consumers. It has become a phenomenon in which the motivations of consumers tend not to be justified nor questioned anymore. (2011, pp.162-163)

Although Sihombing is largely referring to the layout of derivative *nijigen* and *sanjigen* works, the argument made about like-minded fans finding one another and the idea that the motivations of consumers are no longer questioned are partly valid. Based on my experience of attending a number of events and interacting with circles and consumers alike, I have noticed that the strategic layout tends to ensure that strangers and friends alike can interact based on their mutual love of a series, a specific coupling, or even a circle. Moreover, the motivations, which I suggest are mostly ignored by the general public and as an overwhelming number of my research respondents have noted, are more or less associated with "*moe*," which can be roughly interpreted as a "euphoric response to fantasy characters or representations of them" (Galbraith, 2009). Mutually shared feelings of *moe* towards a character or series both bring fans together and deter the attention of anyone partial or indifferent to *otaku* culture. In this context, one is respected no more or less for their particular tastes.

However, before exhibiting at any event and before one is placed in their designated row, as I have observed, web-related self-promotion seems to be commonplace. Whether announcing details about their circle space, latest offerings, or progress on their latest work on Pixiv, Twitter, or their respective websites, *dōjin* circles ensure their readers are updated and informed with a little taste of things to come. Although these means of self-promotion were unavailable during the mid-1970s, 1980s and to some extent, the 1990s, word-of-mouth communication (*kuchi komi*) as well as fliers have been the more ephemeral, if traditional means of reaching out to one's readership. As well as the aforementioned *furī pēpā* (Figure 18 available at certain events, fliers, postcards and even the circle's table banner or advertisements within event catalogues can all display information about upcoming events (Figure 16 Figure 17. Ironically, not only do the costs involved in printing these freely distributed fliers and full-colour postcards in bulk add onto the circle's total expenses, but as means of advertising, they are not guaranteed to be fully effective. However, rather than viewing such postcards and ephemeral notices as a means of self-promotion or even as a drain on investments or expenses, I would suggest that their importance lies in the fact that quite a number of circles consider such conventions as commonplace as greeting anyone who comes to their space. Whether left on one's table with a note reading "*muryō*" (free of charge), personally handed out, or inserted as a gift into one's purchased item, these postcards and fliers are much like tissues, product samples and

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other forms of promotional *omake* (freebies) which are commonly distributed and considered as necessary niceties by Japanese businesses.

Much like the pamphlets, fliers and political tracts that women produced in the Victorian era, fliers at *sokubaikai* are easily consumed and discarded. However, postcards seem to have a more practical application. Since some *dōjin*-produced postcards contain specific information about the circle and future events, I suggest that they are not intended to be utilised as a conventional postcard. Rather, they seem to resemble *nengajō* (a traditional form of greeting card sent over the New Year to give tidings to one's friends and relatives). That is, they communicate the recent activities of each circle with their fans/readership in a more personal or exclusive fashion than Tweets or blog entries. Postcards are ephemeral in nature, since they are bound to the events and circle space in which they are distributed and limited in number. This means that only those who physically attend *sokubaikai*, arrive in good time, and take the time to personally visit a particular circle's space are able to receive such tidings. To some extent, they call for the greater participation of the attendee or fan, given that instead of being delivered, they must be collected in person. Such "promotional" material, therefore, can be considered as an indirect means for circles to communicate their dedication and appreciation to their fans, as well as a means for fans to mutually express their interest in or dedication to the circle.

**Figure 16: Postcard**



Source: Anonymous, 2014

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**Figure 17: Banner**



Source: Anonymous, 2014.

**Figure 18:** *Furī pēpā*



Sources: Anonymous, 2014.

Other forms of non-verbal promotion are circle banners, circle names, and designs within the catalogues (known as "circle cuts"). A banner is a form of insignia, serving to draw attention to a particular circle. However, given that the high ratio of *yaoi* or FC circles to BL/*June* circles at events means that genre- or series-based genres need to distinguish themselves from others based on their particular coupling dynamics as well as their unique take on that particular coupling combination, the banner itself says as much about the circle as it does about its niche audience. Simply put, it reflects the curious taste of the circle as well as the recognition of its curious fan base. Since at least the Edo period, *kanban* (shop signs or curtains) have been used by merchants and stallholders alike at festivals to attract customers and distinguish their shop, stall or space from others. The circle banner, I argue, is not dissimilar. With hundreds to thousands of attendees wandering through the halls of any given *sokubaikai*, and in a culture which relies heavily on visual cues, circle banners speak volumes to fans, communicating with them using images rather than words.

The aforementioned circle cuts within the hard copy catalogues or online event catalogues have a similar function, but on a smaller and less overt scale. While at first glance it would seem that banners might communicate to fans more effectively, I argue that this is not the case, and in fact the opposite is true. Based on my experience of attending events, although diehard fans, veterans or savvy enthusiasts might get regular updates about their favourite circles via social media or purchase the Comic Market catalogues before the event to make their "plan of attack," quite a number of catalogues are still purchased on the day of the event. Thus, irrespective of the length of the waiting period prior to entry, the novice participants generally have time to browse through the catalogue, check off circles they want to visit, and make notes or compose a strategic itinerary on the map provided in the catalogue. This waiting period thus becomes a crucial period in which circles can use circle cuts to indirectly appeal to or communicate with novice attendees. This is also where coupling dynamics and the effectiveness of two-shot images come into play. Depending on one's readership, the general rule seems to be that one has a greater chance of appealing to attendees if images are wittier or more playful, more up-to-date or season-specific, and most of all, have more subtle sex appeal. In principle, catalogue advertisements function in the same fashion as book covers in that they are quick to be judged. Despite this, the fact that circles create and have the final say on the appearance of their catalogue images allows their particular personalities to shine through. For instance, the deployment of

*nekomimi* (cat ears) or glasses as motifs may indicate to attendees that the circles responsible for these images have a particular taste for such "*moe yōso*" (moe elements). In a sense, such images convey messages of assertion and reassurance.

On the other hand, circle names can either reveal very little or quite a lot about circles. Whereas some circles fell under the name of their affiliate universities' manga clubs in the early *sokubaikai* of the 1970s, contemporary circles can start from as few as one member. Nevertheless, regardless of the size, the adoption of a circle name is necessary for event registration, and hence the reason why many *dōjin* adopt circle names as their pen names. It is quite rare to find *dōjin* using their given names. Historically, names have often appropriated loan words (quite often from English, German or French) or cultural references, wordplays, or otherwise. For instance, in a simple overview of the catalogue names of Comic City 133, 1158 of the 1455 circles names (around 79%) featured either letters from the Roman alphabet or Romanised circle names. While one could interpret the popularity of loan words in circle names as a coincidence, arbitrary, or based on ideas of exoticism or "coolness," I suggest that it also reflects an ongoing practice of adopting unique pen or stage names (as commonly practised in pre-war girls' magazine culture and, as a rule, by Takarazuka Revue performers). Whether they are created for bureaucratic purposes, self-protection (that is, privacy and anonymity from authorities and the general public), self-promotion, or for one's personal amusement, circle names and pen names are nonetheless reflections of one's personality. Whereas some circle names reflect much about their taste in manga or anime, others are laden with cultural references or loan words and thus arguably have greater potential to reach a broader audience of like-minded readers/fans.

In contrast to circle names, postcards, banners and other material means of self-promotion and communication with attendees, such as circle names, postcards, banners and so on, there is another more overt method, namely cosplay. While some circles practice cosplay (costume play) and thereby seem more colourful and conspicuous amongst the rows of plainly clad circles, I suggest that their intention is not necessarily to attract consumer attention. I suggest that cosplaying *dōjin* ought not to be considered in the same light as *reiyā* (self-proclaimed cosplayers). In contrast to *reiyā*, who tend "clothe themselves in signs, take on new ways of being and performing their bodies, and fill their mouths with the words and voices of the fantastic Other" (Hale, 2014, p.27), I argue that a number of cosplaying *dōjin* wear costumes simply because it is

fun. Whether cosplaying *dōjin* realise it or not, they could be considered the social lubricants of *sokubaikai*. Whereas at *sokubaikai* cosplayers and content-producing *dōjin* are usually physically segregated in terms of their allocated activity space, cosplaying *dōjin* challenge these conventions and bring fans of both or either activities together by physically transgressing the imagined boundaries between them. Although some of the more conservative circles might not appreciate the hybridity of cosplaying *dōjin*, slightly less overt or self-gratifying means of social interaction between circles remain. Thus, to gain greater insight into *dōjin*-fan interaction, I will provide a brief overview of my observations of circle dynamics and manners, as well as certain established social practices at *sokubaikai*.

### 2.4.5 Circle Dynamics, Manners, and Localised Interaction Practices

In contrast to the market or flea market-like atmosphere conceived by Yonezawa in the early years of Comic Market, according to one of my older respondents with whom I conversed, the Comic Markets and other *sokubaikai* in recent years have been relatively "quiet." She added that in recent years, circles tend to keep to themselves and wait to be called on rather than calling out in a lively and welcoming merchant-like manner. Perhaps an equivalent to help conjure up the former lively atmosphere are *bunkasai* (annual festivals usually held at schools or universities) or local festivals in which circles or stallholders directly and openly invite attendees to visit their stalls. Why the transition? Unlike Takarazuka, which in contrast to the past now prohibits its audience members from calling out to cast members on stage, Comic Market has no specific rules outlined in the catalogue which prevent circles or attendees from doing so. Needless to say, reasons for the transitions in behaviour or manners at recent Comic Market are likely based on a number of factors. When taking into account the fact that the number of attendees as well as the number of single-member circles increased (Iwada, 2005, p.31), it seems that it may have become somewhat obligatory to refrain from calling out in order to maintain a relatively harmonious environment and so as to not disturb other circles or attendees. Iwada suggests that the decline in larger circles and rise in single-member circles is partly due to the significant reduction in production costs and a greater demand for material by the escalating number of attendees (2005, pp.31-32). In this context, where the number of members per circle has decreased yet the number of competing single-member circles has increased, one would expect that circles would require a more aggressive edge to

win the attention of passers-by. However, in practice and based on my observations, this does not seem to be the case. What might be the reasons?

One factor which might account for this surprising lack of competitive behaviour is perhaps based on the principle that Comic Market is indeed a market and not a competition. That is, there is no desperate need to shout over or outdo one's peers. It is a forum in which interests are shared and mutual respect is encouraged. This is also the climate in which transitions in circle dynamics and inter-circle communication have occurred. For instance, as opposed to larger circles in which members interact or interacted primarily with each other and with fans passing by, I have observed that smaller or single-member circles have begun to interact with their "neighbouring" circles. These circles include not only circles occupying the spaces directly next to one's own, but also circles one purchases from, or circles frequently appearing at similar events. While it might seem unlikely that some single-member circles would want to interact with circles in the vicinity, given that circle allocation has been strategised in such a way as to ensure that circles with similar coupling dynamics are placed together, and therefore physically neighbouring circles are technically economic competitors and rivals, it is perhaps inevitable that some circles will nonetheless interact to some extent. However, I argue that the non-economic benefits of interaction with supposed "rivals" outweigh any mercantile motivations. For instance, Naoto Misaki reinforces the importance and the joys of inter-circle and circle-fan interaction at *sokubaikai*. He suggests that, as opposed to professional *mangaka*, *dōjin* can exercise and enjoy "real" face-to-face communication in the process of directly selling items to and talking to fans (Misaki, 2008, p.150). Misaki further stresses that *dōjin* also enjoy the fact that they are able to meet up with and talk to friends and acquaintances at such events (2008, p.150). As Misaki mentions, given the hybrid nature of *dōjin* as both producers and consumers, it is often the case that inter-circle communication occurs specifically during purchases of items. Therefore, in this context, in which *dōjin* communicate through the acts of trading, purchasing, and frequent interaction with friends and acquaintances, certain conventions have been established to ease the process of bonding, namely exchanges of gifts and the role of the *urikko* (sales assistant).

In my conversations with circles, I have often come across what I affectionately called *futari sākuru* (two member circles). However, more often than not, these two

member circles turned out to be simply a case of a *dōjin* who had brought along an assistant (the aforementioned *urikko*) to help with sales while they dashed off in a frenzy to purchase a number of items and greet a number of circles they had hoped to visit. In any case, the added presence of the *urikko*, it seemed, made circles more approachable. For instance, while some *dōjin* sketched requests for fans, *urikko* were available to greet, welcome, and serve fans and interested parties at their allocated space. In cases of bulk purchases of items or sudden visits by acquaintances, the *urikko* would give pre-prepared gifts, usually wrapped and decorated, for example items such as sweets, a complimentary copy of one's work, hand-made accessories, or *furī peepā*. Much like the time-consuming process of producing one's work as independently as possible, the preparation of gifts has become an obligatory yet delightful means for *dōjin* to express their appreciation to fans. In a sense, competitive success at *sokubaikai* thus rests upon being able to outdo others as the most flattering or most generous *dōjin*. The significance of gift giving in Japan, as noted by Takie Sugiyama-Lebra, "lies in the creation or maintenance of a social relationship rather than in the transfer of goods from hand to hand" (Sugiyama-Lebra, 1976, p.101). This is also true of *dōjin* gift exchange practices in the sense that the meaning of the transfer lies not in the monetary value of the goods exchanged, but in the aspect of being seen to be giving or receiving gifts, which could be indicative of one's popularity. As a means to express gratitude, maintain social relationships, and communicate with occasional strangers, acquaintances, or good friends, gift-giving is arguably ideal for circles and fans regardless of their communicative ability.

Aside from the pleasantries, gifts, and general fannish chatter, there is of course the matter of monetary exchange. While NRI and Media Create's reports have illustrated the extent to which both the *dōjin* publishing and the *otaku* industry are profitable, this is not necessarily the case on an individual level. As a number of my respondents have stressed, in spite of sporadic sales, they are still "in the red." For instance, in a sample of 30 responses from Comic Market 85, not only did an overwhelming 26 of 30 respondents consider their *dōjin* practices and BL works a "hobby" but 11 claimed to be "in debt" with one quite honestly stating, '*Dai-akaji*!' (dead broke) (R5). Although nine reported to have made a little to quite a lot of profit from their sales, one of the more prominent and professional artists in the sample noted that it was still not enough to make ends meet: "It differs according to genre and timing (surges [in popularity] of genres), but it is not enough to live on" (R40). What these

statistics generally indicate is that there are little or no major economic incentives or associated motivations to publish BL/*June* and *yaoi* works. Money is inevitably involved from the process of production through to consumption, but I argue that its importance is often deemphasised. For instance, at "only" events, the profit motive is deemphasised even from before the point one enters the event halls. Since entrance to the event only requires that attendees display their pre-purchased event catalogue, as opposed to tickets which are discarded after events, the catalogue fulfils multiple roles. That is, it functions as a guide to the event's contents beforehand, it replaces a ticket at the point of entrance, and it is often retained as a souvenir afterwards. One simply enters with a book and leaves with several more. In addition, there are no ISBNs, no tax on the items and, more significantly, no price printed anywhere on or within the texts. Before the increase in consumption tax in April 2014 from 5% to 8%, I asked some circles whether they also intended to increase the price of their items. Unsurprisingly, not a single circle admitted they would. Some respondents said they might reduce certain production costs (for example, using cheaper paper or shopping around for the best print shop packages) in an attempt to offset the negative effect of the tax hike, while others outright stressed that they published for their readers, not for economic gain, and therefore did not intend to increase their prices. Although the prices of items are displayed beside items or on sample texts, the lack of prices and barcodes on the texts themselves reinforce that *dōjinshi* are neither commercial publications nor intended for resale.

Monetary transactions, it seems, are a neutral means to express one's interest or gratitude for those who do not or cannot trade their own publications or offer gifts. In this sense, Comic Market is neither a market nor the "flea market" envisioned by its committee. If anything, it is perhaps a swap meet. That is, not only can items be bought and sold, but they can also be exchanged. Exchanges, in essence, are what the entire BL fan and *dōjin* community thrive on. As the NRI summarised from its findings, the six "desires" associated with *otaku* culture are as follows: a desire for sympathy, a desire to collect, a desire for recognition and to spread one's ideas, a desire for autonomy, a creative desire, and a desire to belong (Nomura Research Institute, 2005). Crucially, all of these desires are based on social, creative or consumptive exchanges— all of which *sokubaikai* foster as I have discussed until now. In this regard, perhaps the NRI's 3 C's of *otaku* marketing (namely, collection, creativity and community) not only apply to marketing or *sokubaikai,* but actually encapsulate the nature of *shōjo*

*bunka* as a whole. If we accept that part of the sense of place or belonging that the *shōjo* yearns for is spatially bound, then perhaps a simple *sokubaikai* is that place.

# Chapter 3: Findings and Discussions: On the Evolution of Fandom-based Friendships to Making Boys' Love for the Love of it

As discussed in the literature review, the majority of scholars outside Japan have examined and detailed the genealogy of BL manga (Welker, 2015), fandom practices (Kinsella, 2000; Orbaugh, 2009), and the impact of technology and legislation on the dissemination of sexually explicit manga (McLelland, 2016), among other topics. Furthermore, much media attention in Japan and recent scholarship has centred on *fujoshi* and *fudanshi* (the male equivalent of *fujoshi*) fan practices. Although fans are unquestionably active in their fan practices and consumption of BL and *yaoi* texts, my research has attempted to cover some of the subcultural practices of *dōjin,* who in contrast to general fans or enthusiasts, both produce and consume. As Nicolle Lamerichs has suggested, "Doujinshi grants artists a certain liberty to create what they want and at the same time, prestige as fan artists. These derivative texts are seldom framed in a discourse of amateurism but are perceived to be art in their own right" (Lamerichs, 2013, p.160). Thus, given their hybrid status as prosumers, I argue that *dōjin* exercise more autonomous forms of self-expression and could be considered more productive than a community of fans with a desire to "collect" and interact, or those who collect to interact.

While Shamoon's research (2012) concisely encapsulated the essence of *shōjo bunka* and the prevalence of same-sex narratives within girls' magazines and BL manga, it is difficult to gauge the extent to which both girls and women alike might have been empowered through the production and consumption of same-sex narratives without some degree of ethnographic research, collection of historical accounts, and thorough textual analysis. In an attempt to illustrate the physiological, social, cognitive and aesthetic uses and gratifications associated with BL and *yaoi* consumption, Björn-Ole Kamm's fieldwork (2010) on *fujoshi* and *fudanshi* utilised an empirical approach, but his sample was limited to self-proclaimed *fujoshi* and *fudanshi*. Japanese scholars such as Yumiko Suginuma generally balance and incorporate empirical data, media reports, and theory. Sugiura's prolific work on *otaku joshi*, cosplayers, and in particular her major contribution *Fujoshika suru sekai* (2006) provide comprehensive information and insight into the world of *fujoshi* as a social phenomenon and its wider implications.

Before discussing my own findings on the hybrid nature of the *dōjin*-fan community, highlighting some of Sugiura's more relevant arguments will provide a framework with which to initially compare and contrast some of my own findings.

The first of Sugiura's claims I consider is based on the commonly-cited idea that reading BL and *yaoi* fiction is not necessarily associated with a desire to "escape from reality" in the general sense, but rather with a desire to escape from oneself. Rather than trying to identify with female protagonists in so-called ladies' comics (a genre of manga featuring depictions of heterosexual intercourse and occasionally rape), the "fantasy" or escape from oneself is facilitated through reading/watching male-male sex scenes (Sugiura, 2006, p.98). Similarly, Mizoguchi notes that aside from relating to the *uke* or *seme* in a BL/*yaoi* narrative, readers can also engage with the text from a third-person omniscient view beyond the narrative universe—*kami no shiten* (Mizoguchi, 2015, p.82). In doing so, readers seem to "watch over" the couple as they argue, hurt one another, make love, and so on (2015, p.82).

The second and perhaps obvious observation Sugiura has made concerns cross-reading and parodies. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, this kind of cross-reading may have occurred in the late Victorian era, given that the correspondence pages of both *Girl's Own Paper* and *Boy's Own Paper* included letters and responses from the opposite sex—thus indicating that readership practices were occasionally transgressive. Also, as Beate Müller argues, Victorians were preoccupied with the parody (Müller, 1997, p.130). The same might be said for readers of manga magazines in Japan and creators of *parodī*. According to Sugiura and many others, there are quite a number of female readers who not only prefer *Shōnen Jump* (a major manga magazine with a male target audience) to female-marketed manga magazines, but avidly create and sell parodic *nijigen* works based on *Shōnen Jump* content at Comic Market. The reason for this, Sugiura suggests, is that if there is a series or story out there in the world which *fujoshi* particularly like, they inevitably "want to read more." In this regard, if there just so happens to be a spin-off manga that someone has drawn, they will certainly read it (2006, pp.26-27). This demand for more and more material, Sugiura adds, accounts for the large number of women actively creating subversive *nijigen* manga (2006, pp.26-27).

Regarding the aforementioned notion of finding one's place or a sense of belonging, Sugiura suggests that *fujoshi* who produce BL or *yaoi* fiction do not need to "find themselves." She explains that since *fujoshi* who produce texts are already acknowledged by their circles of friends who share the same interests, read their texts, and directly respond to them, they are not necessarily in search of a sense of self. Thus, *fujoshi* are not particularly concerned with whether or not society accepts them (2006, p.126). However, Sugiura's various views on *fujoshi* visibility are rather contradictory to this idea. For instance, she claims that despite the record levels of female attendees at Comic Market, there are two main reasons why *fujoshi* do not "stand out." Firstly, they conceal their *fujoshi* tendencies. That is, as Erving Goffman's work on stigma suggests, they attempt to "pass" as ordinary by internalising any stigma associated with their identity (Goffman, 1963). In addition, *fujoshi* look different or do not have the same "hot" image that the general public associate with *joshi* (female) *otaku* (2006, p.30). Sugiura posits that *fujoshi* are motivated to conceal their *otaku* tendencies, since being recognised as an *otaku* in Japan can sometimes have quite negative connotations. Since they have already found acceptance through their peers, it might be supposed that *fujoshi* would not care whether or not society accepts them, but it seems that they nevertheless prefer not to run the risk of being judged and thus attempt to conceal their identities as such. In this sense, much like members of a minority group might behave, it seems that while *fujoshi* find their place amongst their peers, they also do not want to be judged or marginalised by society at large. However, the difference between *fujoshi* and most other subcultural communities, as Sugiura suggests, is that they can enjoy living dual lives with a "normal face" and "other face" (2006, p.36). Needless to say, there are individuals belonging to minority groups or subcultural communities who, under restricted or difficult circumstances, practice the same behaviour of passing in order to live more comfortably. Based on these particular circumstances surrounding *fujoshi* lifestyles, and Sugiura's various arguments which have been outlined, I will proceed to demonstrate the extent to which *dōjin* (as a unique hybrid identity rather than a subcategory of *fujoshi*) are empowered as either individuals or members of the wider community of BL and *yaoi* enthusiasts.

### 3.1 Ethnographic Approach and Findings

My ethnographic research involved over a year of attending *sokubaikai* with a media pass or as an *urikko* (Shōta Scratch Special 2), with the primary research method

of requesting circles selected at random to fill out a questionnaire (See Appendix I) related to their production and consumption of BL or *yaoi* manga and other fictions, as well as their attitudes towards the LGBT community in Japan. Major events included Comic Market 85 and 86, Comic Live in Nagoya, J-Garden 36, Super Comic City 23, Haru Comic City 19, Comitia 107 and several others. Minor events included "only" events, as well as Shōta Scratch Special 2. In addition, some respondents replied to questionnaires left at participating venues (refer to Appendix 4). Regardless of the scale of the event, circles and respondents were selected at random to ensure variety in subgenres, couplings, circle dynamics, and age range. All questionnaires were completed with the consent of the respondents, obtained via a consent form that assured that the researcher would not disclose their personal details or any information which might reveal their identities. Some individuals were happy to provide their given names, but the vast majority used their pen names or preferred to remain anonymous. In addition to collecting responses, I adopted a researcher-consumer approach which also involved purchasing *dōjin*-produced texts and gathering ephemeral material. As primary source material, these items provided insight into the content, design and format of *dōjin*-produced fiction, as has already been discussed. Naturally, being socially and physically immersed in my fieldwork, it was imperative to be self-critical and reflexive while remaining enthusiastic and respecting each circle or *dōjin* as individuals and artists. In this process of purchasing, engaging in fan or *dōjin*-related conversations was inevitable but ultimately beneficial, in that it not only allowed me to establish rapport with circles but also provided additional information which was beyond the scope of the questionnaire.

On a more personal level, and provided it was either welcomed or initiated by certain circles, maintaining contact via email correspondence or adding and interacting with respondents via Pixiv and Twitter was a means of expressing gratitude and interest. In early 2014, I also adopted a gift giving approach whereby I offered respondents "*kansha choko*" (pre-packaged chocolate as a means of appreciation). In many cases, the gifts were reciprocated. Most gifts were of equal or less value, but some of the more sentimental items seemed to suggest significant levels of mutual respect and appreciation. That is, reciprocation with such elaborate gifts implied that some of the respondents at least admired the fact that a researcher from abroad appreciated or took an interest in *dōjin* practices. Some of the memorable items I received in this manner included free publications, originally designed character mugs,

badges. On one particular visit, I was even offered the circle's last remaining precious sablé biscuit, which was lavishly decorated with an erect penis and had been purchased at a regional fertility festival. While these exchanges of gifts and purchases between participants are commonplace at *sokubaikai*, by adopting a researcher-consumer approach, I was also able to observe firsthand the sales etiquette. Based on my personal observations, it seemed that at the point of transaction, quite a number of circle members would make an effort to stand up and utilise honorific speech (*keigo*), echoing the somewhat obsequious-sounding forms of address commonly used by service sector workers such as shop assistants and hotel staff towards customers. By employing a standard service industry-level of etiquette, rather than the colloquial expressions often heard at markets or festivals, *dōjin* demonstrate respect for their peers. Similarly, the exchange of elaborately packaged or thoughtful gifts somewhat reflects the custom of "*giri*"-based (obligation) gift giving in Japanese business culture, in which the receiver of a gift has the obligation of returning one of equal value (Befu, 1986, p.165). Although *giri*-based gift giving has been described as an "empty formality" or an "unpleasant obligation" (Befu, 1986, p.164), I suggest that it can also indicate more intimate social relations in simulated business contexts such as *sokubaikai*. To some extent, therefore, my professional, yet socially intimate, approach to social interaction complemented an immersive yet reflexive ethnographic approach. Although a stranger in the most basic sense of the word, I was no stranger by helping "set up shop" or packing up after events—always participating with the consent of other participants, and never invasive.

Before discussing my experiences and interpretations of the data in greater detail, it is useful to outline the fundamental findings of the quantitative data. The following charts and graphs indicate the findings based on questionnaire responses collected from December 2013 to August 2014.

**Age Range of Respondents**



**Age of Considering Oneself a *Fujoshi***
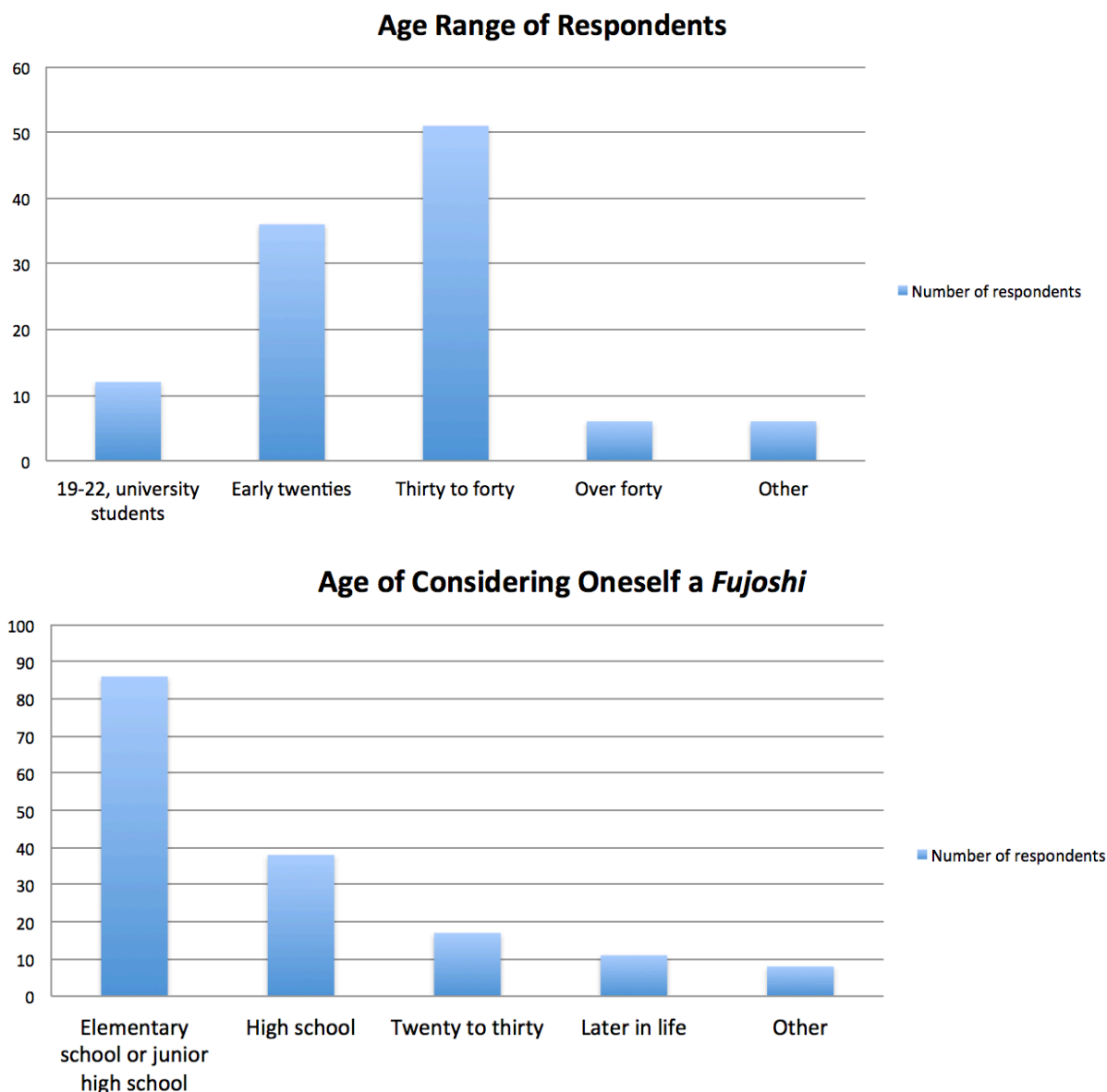


If we begin by considering the age range (Figure 19, upper), the largest age group was comprised of women in their thirties, followed by women in their early twenties. Needless to say, this demographic of women in Japan might be employed, unemployed, or students, but in any case, they cannot be assumed to be entirely free from social responsibilities. For example, some might have families or, as several respondents revealed in conversations, demanding jobs that require social drinks, dinners, or other social obligations. Thus, if we assume that a number of these respondents are most likely engaged in further education, employment, or otherwise, then we can also surmise that some degree of formal or informal social interaction is sometimes required during or after working hours. It is such a context, I believe, that accounts for the NRI's largest category of *otaku*, namely, those who mask their *otaku*

tendencies from others, yet secretly enjoy their hobbies in the privacy of their homes"
(NRI, 2005). While this masking or passing, as a form of *tatemae* (a Japanese custom
of projecting a respectable and appropriate image of oneself), is not a strictly enforced
social custom, it is usually practised by those who either do so unconsciously or by
those who have something at stake and do not want to jeopardise the current state of
their lives. As Stockwin notes, "making people feel uncomfortable (or, to vary the
vocabulary, making people 'lose face') is avoided wherever possible" (Stockwin, 2003,
p. 240). An anecdote from my research will suffice as an example of fans' desire to
avoid "making people feel uncomfortable" by concealing their hobby in public. Upon
purchasing an R18+ item, I thanked the circle members and jokingly added that I
would enjoy reading it on the train ride home. One of the circle members cried out
"*Zettai muri! Muri, muri, muri!*" (Absolutely impossible! No way! No way! No way!).
Both the NRI's findings and my statistics arguably indicate that some of the *dōjin* in
my sample, as Sugiura suggested, might have to mask their "other face" depending on
social contexts such as commuting, working, during meetings or social events, and so
on.

In addition to this category of *otaku* who practice masking, the second largest
group of *otaku* according to the NRI were "legacy *otaku*" (NRI, 2005). As opposed to
*otaku* who "mask," legacy *otaku* characteristically "go their own way." As individuals
who are not necessarily concerned with belonging to mainstream society and have
perhaps given up on "passing," I argue that legacy *otaku* reflect Sugiura's category of
*fujoshi* who simply disregard what others think of them, yet do not want to be judged.
Ishida has referred to this as their "so-what" attitude when they are criticised or
attacked (Ishida, 2015, p.214). In many ways, these *otaku* who either "mask"
themselves or go their own way are not dissimilar to members of the LGBT community
who are either "out" or are closeted. Given that there are pages and online communities
providing a forum for *fujoshi* and *fudanshi* to reveal their "*kamingu auto*" stories (Chill
Chill, 2013), such an analogy can be reasonably made.

In addition to the general age demographics, my questionnaire required
respondents to disclose the age at which they realised they might be *fujoshi,* or at least
enthusiastic about BL or *yaoi* (Figure 19, lower). As the statistics indicate, the vast
majority of respondents reported to have considered themselves as *fujoshi* or BL or
*yaoi* enthusiasts since elementary school or junior high school. 36 respondents

suggested it was since during high school. A further 16 respondents realised their interest in their early twenties, and the remainder of the respondents realised it later in life. These statistics reinforce that during an age of sexual curiosity and identity formation, it is almost inevitable that one might encounter or consume some form of texts with sexual themes. These statistics may also reinforce Sugiura's claim that *fujoshi* want to escape "from themselves" rather than reality. Take, for example, the younger respondents who might be uncertain of their own sexuality or sexual agency. Rather than feeling that they ought to identify with female figures in scenes involving heterosexual sexual intercourse, as third party voyeurs or creators of BL or *yaoi* texts, there is no pressure to identify with any of the characters—thus the escape from oneself is potentially enabled. As a *dōjin* who can manipulate the story at will, there is also a sense of absolute power in that one is free to determine who does what and in what fashion within the narrative. For the older demographic of *fujoshi* in their twenties or thirties, who may be preparing for prospective employment, employed, or in between jobs, the need to escape from oneself arguably peaks again. Sociologist Hideko Matsuo's research on employment and motherhood in Japan can shed some light on this phenomenon. Matsuo argues that since "work and family are not combinable and that marriage is increasingly unattractive," the goal for Japanese women in their twenties is to "have sufficient financial means at their disposal so that they are able to enjoy, consume and travel" (Matsuo, 2003, p.128). In effect, Matsuo suggests that by living with their parents and working on a part- or full-time basis, this demographic of women can keep all their earnings to spend on themselves (Matsuo, 2003, p.128). In contrast to female writers in the Victorian era who were often writing as a supplementary source of income, some of the women belonging to this particular demographic are arguably using their income to produce and consume *dōjin* works. At any rate, the desire to produce fiction remains the same, and I believe that this overall phenomenon among Japanese women may indeed account for the large number of my respondents in their twenties to thirties who were engaged in *dōjin* activities. Since a fair number of women both engage in BL *dōjin* practices and are aware that they belong to a subculture of BL enthusiasts during these periods of transition and insecurity in life, it perhaps indicates that anxiety prompts them to seek an affordable "no strings" escape in the form of consumption of BL (or a support network or peers who understand and acknowledge their desires, social needs, and perhaps even their *raison d'être*).

In contrast, when asked if they felt empowered as members of the *dōjin* community, 41 respondents agreed, while 74 respondents reported that they did not feel especially empowered. Notably, 24 of these particular respondents simply stated, "*toku ni nai*" (not particularly). Although some responses suggest an indifferent or blasé attitude towards the general community of BL and *yaoi* enthusiasts, other respondents clearly expressed positive attitudes towards being a member of the community. In particular, one respondent (R) noted, "I attend events every month so it costs a lot of money, but since Twitter has spread, I feel more empowered interacting with others in real time" (R123), while R17 suggested she was empowered as an individual (rather than a member of the community), stating, "*hitori de mori agatteru jōtai*" (I get kicks out of it on my own). As I have stressed before, levels of social interaction and gratifications differ on an individual level, but the fact that over half of the respondents also agreed that belonging to a circle was "not particularly necessary" underlines the significance of independence, of the individual as part of a subculture, rather than a community. However, that is not to say that being part of the community is not valued at all. In any case, of the several respondents who succinctly summarised the appeal of working independently, R141 stated, "Pursuing my activities as an individual suits me because I can make decisions on my own and work at my own pace," while R69 suggested that "Basically, I think of my creative pursuits as a battle with myself." This trend perhaps reflects the phenomenon of self-publishing among female writers in the Victorian era who were privileged enough to have creative control of their work or fortunate enough to engage in self-publishing. That is, by self-publishing, writers or artists can emphasise both their autonomy and their world views more so than their contemporaries who publish via traditional avenues (and are subject to review and censorship).

Despite this emphasis on independence, when asked whether fans were important, 120 respondents agreed, while 16 had no comment and six disagreed. Those who disagreed reinforced the prevailing attitude towards independence and self-satisfaction among many *dōjin*. One stressed that she was the kind of *dōjin* who draws what she wants and further argued that "it is commercial to fulfil the needs of others" (R63). On the other hand, comments such as "If I didn't have any friends and was lonely, if someone read my books, it would make my life worth living" (R28), "Nothing makes me happier [than fans]. They're more important than selling anything" (R3), or "During tough times, I think to myself 'hang in there for them'" (R20)

arguably reinforce that a sense of belonging or being acknowledged by one's peers was nonetheless valued by a large proportion of individuals in my sample. While readership was generally accepted as important for the majority of *dōjin*, accepting fan requests or ideas was another matter altogether. If we acknowledge that *dōjin* are generally under no pressure to produce material that will sell or appeal to a specific target market (assuming too that they produce fiction for their own pleasure), then there is no obligation for them to respond to fan requests or practice fan service. To sum up, although belonging to a community is not generally valued, having fans or having one's work read is. What is valued is not belonging, but rather being acknowledged, and producing rather than "servicing." One could therefore argue that rather than the NRI's aforementioned 3 C's, it is 3 A's: (A)utonomy, (A)cquaintances, and (A)cknowledgment which drive the *dōjin* community.

According to the data and arguments presented thus far, it would seem that *dōjin* are somewhat self-dependent, self-serving, and secretive. Whether this secrecy is due to a fear of being judged is debatable, but if these self-serving and self-dependent characteristics are considered in a positive light, then one can at least infer that such characteristics (along with the above-mentioned longing for autonomy and acknowledgement) may be the primary sources of empowerment for the respondents in my sample. I will proceed by presenting my findings about their overall sense of empowerment and attitudes towards sex, sexuality, and the BL and *yaoi* phenomenon in the following subject areas: 'On General Views,' 'On Income' (economics), 'On Interactions' (social factors), 'On Inspiration' (creativity), 'On Interests' (content), 'On Gender Relations,' and 'On Sex and Sexuality.'

### 3.2 On General Views

Regardless of the culture or context, questions which require the respondent to query what seems ordinary or commonplace or some degree of self-reflection can be both intellectually and psychologically demanding. For instance, during my experience as an English tutor to Japanese undergraduates, to encourage fluency and elicit long responses, I often asked students to ask their peers "Why?" As simple as it seems, quite a number of students have difficulties in articulating reasons for one thing or another or justifying their preferences. Given that a number of respondents in my sample were also in their early twenties, it is perhaps no coincidence that I encountered similar

situations and responses in my fieldwork. Two questions which particularly caused difficulties asked the respondents how popular they thought BL, *yaoi*, and *dōjin* subculture was both within Japan and worldwide, and why they thought BL and *yaoi* was so popular amongst many Japanese women. Half of the respondents to the first question either left the answer space blank or had no comment. 40 respondents acknowledged that it was popular, but often suggested that it was still a "minor" genre or "underground." Of the more positive respondents, one suggested that 60% of Japanese women have come across or tried their hand at creating *dōjinshi* (R4), while another explained, "I don't really know to what extent [BL and *yaoi dōjinshi* are popular] but when foreigners come to look around at events, it makes me happy to think they are interested in Japanese *dōjinshi*" (R79).

In terms of worldwide popularity, some respondents acknowledged the popularity of cosplay, such as America's annual YaoiCon event, as well as BL in Spain, France or Taiwan (R68). However, when contrasting the popularity of BL and *yaoi* abroad and within Japan, one respondent succinctly evaluated the situation in the following fashion: "Abroad → Low visibility. Japan → High visibility" (R66). The 30 respondents who contested that it was neither popular within Japan nor worldwide explained that, "Ordinary women don't really know about it" (R1), "Ordinary women have a bad image of *dōjinshi*" (R114), "Normal women don't really read *dōjinshi*" (R65) or "Those who know of BL, don't understand [tolerate] it" (R119). In short, while the majority of respondents did not respond to this question, those who did seemed to be divided into those who clearly disagreed that BL and *yaoi dōjinshi* were popular locally or abroad and those who acknowledged that although there is a visible community of BL and *yaoi* enthusiasts within Japan, they are neither "normal" nor "ordinary." Rather, these individuals perceive themselves and their subcultural activities as "minor," "underground," or worse still, not accepted by the general public. Evidently, there is a sense of shame associated with belonging to the community, which Midori Suzuki has argued stems from its central act of "reading as homosexual those male characters whose heterosexuality or sexual orientation had never been explicitly stated in the source works" (Suzuki, 2013). However, given the ambiguity in answers, *fujoshi* "passing" practices, as well as the out-versus-closeted nature of the BL enthusiast community (which is comparable to that of the LGBT community), I suggest that a pride-shame complex exists amongst members of the community. Rather than being a complex in the strictest psychological sense of the word, I argue that it means

that some members of the community are aware of the supposed "deviant" nature of their hobbies, but at the same time also feel a sense of pride in carrying out their activities. There is also a sentiment of pride in the sense that the community has grown to the extent that it could be considered mainstream, but at the same time, there is a resistance to or denial of any kind of associations with the mainstream. Admittedly, this argument is based on a limited sample of respondents. However, the following findings to Question 17, which concerns the community's attitudes towards their avid consumption and production of BL or *yaoi* fiction, reinforce certain speculations which have been made thus far.

Once again, a fairly large number of respondents (37) answered this question with no comment or clearly expressed that they did not know. Since self-reflection and generalisations about one's peers' individual experiences, desires, and subcultural activities are both complex and personal, the lack of responses in itself might reflect the difficulty of the question or an antagonistic or resistant stance on the part of *fujoshi* to outside parties questioning their private interests and pastimes. If this is the case, the findings can be considered in keeping with Sugiura's claim that *fujoshi,* among other forms of BL or *yaoi* enthusiasts, do not want to be judged. Aside from these respondents, another 31 suggested that consuming or producing BL was a "fantasy" or "escape from reality." Many of these respondents explained their motivation to consume BL as "*Jibun no nai mono o motomeru*" (one seeks that which one does not have). Others explained the element of fantasy or escapism in the following fashion: "Times are tough, so realistic fantasies are sought" (R7), or "Escaping from the so-called gender category 'woman' is part of what makes it popular" (R1). In a similar vein, some respondents suggested that the appeal of homosocial/-sexual relations is associated with gender and the gender expectations of women in Japan. One respondent elaborated by arguing the following:

> BL distracts you from thinking about the pains of being a woman and
> the various problems that come with it (which cannot just stop at love,
> but [also include] marriage, pregnancy, raising children, etc…).
> Unlike other stories, BL is a fantasy—that's why I enjoy reading it.
> I've had my share of experiences of real romance, so I don't want to
> read about it in stories. I've had enough of those kind of stories. As

for heterosexual romance fiction, of course, there are some really
good works, but the stories are shallow and I can't really get into
them. There are many aspects to BL that are appealing precisely
because it's BL. (R117)

Others suggested that same-sex love is appealing since one can "similarly
achieve an ideal image of men and an ideal image of romantic love" (R134) or because
one does not feel jealous of any of the male characters and can enjoy the easy
voyeuristic feeling as an outsider, "like a houseplant" (R68). Indeed, such responses
reflect Mizoguchi's reference to *kami no shiten* readings BL/*yaoi*. Whether it is society,
womanhood, responsibilities, or daily life that one is escaping from, if we accept the
validity of this respondent's claim that readers step out of themselves when consuming
BL texts, then we can also accept Sugiura's claim that readers' desire to escape from
themselves is valid for at least a number of respondents. Thus, if "escaping from
oneself" or fantasies are valued by respondents, and the fact that the majority of BL and
*yaoi* narratives centre on romantic relations between males, then the results indicating
that the fourth largest group of respondents (15) enjoyed BL since it depicts "ideal love"
or "love overcoming all barriers" not only explains the prevalence of homosexual
themes, but also the fantasy-like nature and significance of *akogare*. Although the
notion of love overcoming all barriers could be depicted in any number of ways,
Mizoguchi notes that it has been an easy plot device for BL writers to appropriate the
"forbidden love" trope at the expense of the gay community (2015, p.59). In contrast to
this argument, 11 respondents suggested that the popularity of its depiction in
contemporary BL is based either on the genre's roots in the 1970s, the history of
homosexual/-social themes in art and literature, and the social history of homosexuality
in Japan. As one respondent suggested,

Relationships between men in Japan have existed since a whole 1000
years ago in the distant past, and, moreover, it seems that it was not
unusual for women to feel '*moe*' towards those relationships. Some
people even say that it cannot be helped, because it's inscribed in our
DNA. (R68)

Another 10 respondents noted that due expansion of the Internet, social networks, and coverage of *otaku* and *fujoshi* as social and cultural phenomena in mass media reports, the general public has heard of BL but still know very little about it. In this regard, mental connections with traditions in Japanese cultural history and increased coverage in the mass media may have played a significant role in encouraging greater visibility of BL and *yaoi* as subcultural phenomena and their associated popularity amongst Japanese women. In fact, quite a proportion of respondents highlighted the axiomatic nature of BL. That is, BL as a *fait accompli,* a social and cultural phenomenon which has been passed down from generation to generation. In this sense, one could even argue that there is no need to question or analyse its origins or meaning in depth, provided one simply accepts that there has always been "boys' love" and women's love of it. Accepting this argument for the inevitable or universal nature of women's feelings toward BL may also account for the eight respondents who explicitly indicated that BL's popularity amongst Japanese women is based on affect such as feelings of *kōfun* (excitement) or *moe*. More significant, however, is the fact that the three most common reactions or responses to Question 17 seem to reinforce Sugiura's claims concerning the value *fujoshi* place on escaping from themselves, and their resistance against judgment from mainstream critics. The largest percentage of respondents either avoided answering the question or explicitly stated that they did not know, followed by those who emphasised the element of fantasy, and then those who suggested that it was just one of many hobbies (28 respondents). Responses ranged from "It's good to have a hobby" (R84) or "I think having a hobby is a good thing. It's also a good thing not to be prejudiced about the same-sex aspects" (R133) to "If you like it, read it. If you hate it, don't make a fuss about it or judge it" (R70). Furthermore, respondents who either failed to answer Question 17 or else emphasised that women's BL subcultural practices are simply a hobby reinforce Sugiura's claim that the practice of "passing" and *fujoshi's* continued "so-what"-like resistance to the mainstream does indeed exist through their collective and indirect message: do not ask, do not judge.

The value placed on fantasy, in which producer-consumers can privately or intimately indulge in romantic or erotic narratives beyond those of everyday life and mainstream media, also arguably reinforces the idea that the production and consumption of BL or *yaoi* fiction is carried out essentially independently of the community. In this respect, one might suggest that the community merely functions as

a forum in which to validate one's "deviant" hobbies by confirming the existence of similar individuals, and a space that facilitates the exchange or circulation of individual works. The fact that only five respondents considered friends or making friends as a major appeal associated with their BL subcultural practices refutes any claims that a sense of community is what is valued by members of the collective community of BL producer-consumers and enthusiasts. In this light, we can consider these members' investment in the BL community as a predominantly self-dependent, self-assertive, and self-gratifying experience—essentially, boys' love for the love of it.


### 3.3. On Income

Having briefly examined the producer-consumer community's general attitudes towards BL as a global and gender-associated subcultural phenomenon, I have demonstrated that for many of my respondents, their investment in the phenomenon is more or less considered a hobby. Examining the findings associated with social and economic factors may suffice to substantiate that claim. Although I have mentioned that some respondents justified women's investment or interest in BL on the basis that their activities are a hobby, when asked what initially triggered their engagement in BL production practices (Question 20), the responses indicated other factors. The greatest number of respondents (51) suggested that a love of drawing, writing, or creating something, wanting to express oneself, or trying something on one's own were the main motivations driving their initial *dōjin* ventures. These creative urges can be referred to as "output"-related values, and they will be discussed later. Another 26 respondents indicated that they were either invited to events by friends or encouraged by fans to produce, while 24 respondents had no comment, claimed that it "just happened," stated that there was no particular reason, or said that they liked it "just because." However, contrary to the findings illustrating that having a hobby is valued by a fair proportion of the community, only one respondent to Question 20 explicitly stated that wanting to have a hobby sparked her initial attempt at creating *dōjinshi*. To some extent then, the considerable number of responses associated with "output" might indicate a desire for financial gain or return. After all, why attend a market as a stallholder if one does not intend to sell anything? Thus, to determine if and to what extent income or financial gain motivated any of my respondents, it was prudent to consider if and how much profit the respondents generally made (Question 27) and whether they produced a limited amount of items or in bulk (Question 26).

In response to Question 27, 31 respondents noted that they profited from the sales of their work, while 47 either claimed that they broke even, did not answer the question or were not sure. However, given that the vast majority of respondents (64) revealed that they received little to no return, were in deficit, or had no profit incentives, it is reasonable to argue that any kind of financial gain associated with *dōjin* output is neither prioritised nor a primary motive for many *dōjin*. In contrast, the profit incentive was one of the appealing factors of publishing for female writers in the Victorian era. Several respondents confirmed this claim by asserting, "I don't want to make a profit" (R4) or "It's a hobby so I'm what you call the kind of *dōjin* who thinks profit is unnecessary" (R141). While certain respondents reported that they broke even, they admitted that their revenue was just enough to cover the costs of their own purchases (R52), and those who did make a profit often did not reveal the exact amount or suggested that it was not enough to get by or live on (R40). Moreover, in justifying the number of copies to print, 61 respondents indicated that producing a limited number of copies for the purpose of distributing at events was preferable to producing in bulk. For instance, one respondent justified publishing a limited amount of copies by arguing that communicating with people who come to buy one's books at *sokubaikai* is fun, thus selling a limited number of items is preferable to "making money from selling a lot of books" (R77). She added that while engaging in *dōjin* activities means being "in the red," it is nonetheless fun (R77).

Although 38 respondents also suggested that there were merits in both producing a limited number of texts and in bulk, the fact that a further 24 respondents had no comment or stated otherwise and another seven respondents distinctly stated that printing in bulk was ideal, signifies that economic logic is not necessarily highly valued amongst *dōjin*. While I acknowledge that the majority of my respondents did not belong to *kabe* or *itaku sākuru* (the major circles along the walls at *sokubaikai*), the results nevertheless reveal that for the majority of circles situated within the centre of the premises of an event, there is no profit incentive associated with producing BL, *yaoi*, or other *dōjin* works. Despite the cost-related deficit for many circles, the desire to communicate and trade face-to-face, as well as the oft-noted gratifications associated with recognising familiar faces, suggest that perhaps communication and social (rather than financial) acknowledgement is deeply connected to *dōjin* activity. Given the statistics indicating that for many circles producing *dōjinshi* is "just a hobby," I suggest

that motivations associated with "output" are not concerned with return or reward but rather with creativity and expression. In this sense, the self-sufficiency, self-expression, and self-serving nature of *dōjin* activity are reinforced. Despite the claims that *dōjin* works are largely produced by oneself and for oneself, since being acknowledged for one's work requires a third party, it is reasonable to suggest that there is likely a range of social gratifications enmeshed in the process of trading which need to be duly considered.

### 3.4 On Interaction

To determine to what extent social interaction is valued by circles, interpreting indirect questions associated with social interaction provided the necessary insight into what circles particularly valued. Question 25, for instance, concerned the respondents' preferred methods of distribution, that is, digital- or paper-based methods (at events or *dōjin* bookstores). Of the total number of respondents, 57 indicated that they only sold items hand-to-hand at *sokubaikai* or through bookstores. A further 37 individuals reported that they sold items at events and through participating *dōjin* bookstores (K-Books and Tora no ana being the most frequently mentioned) or online (through DLsite or DiGiket). More interesting, however, is the fact that no respondents indicated that they distributed solely online. There are obvious economic advantages of distributing one's work online, but evidently, such economic advantages were of little interest to the respondents in my sample. This further underscores that profit is not a prime motivation for them. Also, very few respondents explained why they did or did not distribute online. Granted, the question did not explicitly call for respondents to explain or justify their reasons. Nevertheless, the statistics indicating that the number of respondents who only sold via events or bookstores was almost double the number of respondents who sold items both on- and offline suggests that there is a certain element of social interaction to selling in person that *dōjin* find charming or appealing. Those who did expand on their answers, for instance, stated that they refused to sell online on the basis that since their activities were "just a hobby," they "ignore the profit" incentive (R10). Another respondent explained that a foreigner had requested a digital copy of her work, leading her to consider distributing internationally. However, she confessed that she soon abandoned the idea due to the complicated process of international money transfers and continued to provide her items to fans in Japan instead (R77).

What seems to be valued here is the ephemerality of distributing at events. In a sense, fans' dedication of their time and effort to attend *sokubaikai* with the intention of purchasing a specific circle's items is a confirmation for circle members that their work is genuinely appreciated. Whether or not the direct, physical experience of this confirmation is one of the primary reasons for circles to base their distribution at *sokubaikai* is subject to debate. However, given that vending online is more cost-effective and decentralised, such results indicate that the majority of my respondents still prefer the tactile process of distributing face-to-face. This suggests that there is some desire for social interaction, or at least direct recognition. In fact, the vast majority of my sample (130 respondents) answered Question 4 (which considers the respondents' experience at Comic Market) by stating that they had at least attended Comic Market as general attendees or as members of a circle. This not only reflects the sheer popularity and scale of such events but also their significance in the *dōjin* calendar, or perhaps as a coming-of-age ritual in the *dōjin* life cycle. One can infer that, like most Shinto festivals, sharing a communal space with other members of the community is both a traditional and integral part of the *dōjin* experience. Furthermore, one can also surmise that a ritualistic *dōjin* pilgrimage to Comic Market is seen as essential, considering the emphasis placed on physical attendance at *sokubaikai*. However, as I have suggested, some degree of social gratification also cannot be overlooked.

To further explore general attitudes towards online activities and the respective degree of respondents' social interactions online, I examined the results from Question 8 (respondents' browsing-related content and level of interaction on BL sites) and Question 14 (the subjects discussed in conversations with *fujoshi* friends or fellow BL and/or *yaoi* enthusiasts). In regard to Question 8, unsurprisingly, the largest number of respondents searched for manga (114) followed by novels (91) illustrations (90) *moe*-related content (41) erotic/explicit content (41), and to a lesser degree, stories concerning everyday life (34) and stories of romantic love (33) Only one respondent indicated that they checked noticeboards or sought friendly exchanges with others, and furthermore, no one reported engaging in chats. Whether or not this reflects a general preference for more organic forms of social interaction is contestable. One way to interpret the data is to consider preferences for form and content. Given that manga and novels are the most commonly sought texts online and that sexually explicit content is

favoured over romantic content, one might assume that the online activities of *dōjin* (or at least the majority of my sample) are relatively input-oriented and private, in contrast to the interactive and output-centred nature of their offline activities. Their online consumption of predominantly explicit and romantic texts, and perhaps their indifference to social exchanges and chatting, reinforces the notion of the kind of self-gratifying behaviour and escape from oneself which Sugiura has stressed. In a sense, the offline *dōjin* is technologically connected yet socially disconnected. Offline time thus becomes leisure and private time, in which one is disconnected from the active and interactive role one has to perform at events. While little more than a conjecture at this stage, based on the findings, one can at least infer that the offline activities of *dōjin* involve less social interaction than their output and offline-based circle participation. While it seems that certain social gratifications associated with *dōjin* activities are primarily location-based, that does not mean that online activities on content sharing applications such as Pixiv or social networks such as Twitter are similarly gratifying.

While Question 8 considered the respondents' online activities, Question 14 asked for more explicit information about the common subjects of conversation among my respondents and their friends who are similarly enthusiastic about BL. As anticipated, Question 14 yielded similar responses to Question 8. With manga and anime (24%), as well as BL and *moe*-oriented conversations (23%) dominating most topics of discussion, one could argue that BL is perhaps the foundation of most of my respondents' friendships with other BL fans. Given that these topics of conversation are largely hobby-based, the level of intimacy between the individuals concerned is questionable. However, considering that a further 22% of conversations concerned "everyday life" topics, one can infer that BL-based social interactions are at least not entirely limited to endless conversations about their passionate devotion to manga and anime. On the other hand, conversations may not go much beyond everyday life, given that conversations in which respondents joked around or spoke about sweets and *gurume* (foodie) topics (18%) were reported to be more common than discussions concerning more personal subjects such as one's current partners or love interests (12%). Given that such subject matter can be quite personal regardless of cultural context, the findings may be fairly representative of conversations between friends bound by mutual interests. However, the tendency to prioritise the aforementioned discussion topics over of love and relationships in conversations between BL fans may also reflect the importance placed on escaping reality and maintaining the element of

fantasy or *akogare*. Simply put, as a number of scholars and my respondents have reinforced, the element of fantasy is intrinsically tied to consumption and production of BL and *yaoi*. Since there is a desire to escape or to indulge in fantasies, to hear and discuss one's real romantic relations (or lack thereof) would be relatively inappropriate, if not a betrayal to the present parties. The same principle could be said to operate in Takarazuka or J-pop idol fandom. That is, regardless of what may come in one's actual relationships, talk of the love or admiration for one's favourite stars, performers or narrative figures holds a special place, if not takes priority, over discussion of one's personal relationships.

To summarise, the question of the general nature of social interaction and the extent to which it might be empowering for my respondents can perhaps be best approached through more in-depth forms of ethnographic fieldwork such as focus groups. However, considering that the overwhelming majority of my respondents preferred to distribute offline, evidently, the ephemeral and organic nature of sharing one's work personally at *sokubaikai* is not only a means of shoring up tradition, but also of being directly and genuinely acknowledged. Whether being acknowledged for one's work or interacting with others is the primary motivation for the majority of circles to attend *sokubaikai* is debatable, but the potential gratifications related to the very act of being seen, approached, and publically recognised cannot be denied.

With respect to online activity and interaction, my respondents showed little interest in chatting online over in person, echoing their preference for event-based over online distribution. Furthermore, given that both erotica and generic love stories were favoured in their consumption of online texts, it seems that online activities are reserved for private leisure, thus indicating a preference for interaction with data rather than more organic life forms. By designating time specifically for output and input, *dōjin* seem to carry an air of professionalism and simultaneously resist intimate or close friendships or relationships with others. That is, by reserving on-/offline conversations and interaction for discussion of manga or anime, BL, or *moe*-related subject matter, the potential for more personal and perhaps profound communication is arguably inhibited, which in a sense reinforces the significance placed on autonomy, as one of the aforementioned "As" driving the *dōjin* community. Regardless of changes and upheavals in relationships with one's friends, acquaintances or relationships, which can sometimes prove to be fickle, there is security in knowing that one can always find both

pleasure and autonomy in producing and privately consuming BL or *yaoi* fiction. Essentially hybrid in nature and constantly shifting between the positions of consumer and producer, both online and offline, the *dōjin* remains nonetheless self-sufficient and self-serving.

### 3.5 On Inspiration

Regardless of the context, the consumption of fictional texts and the very act of purchasing fiction as a part of the consumption process can be gratifying in many respects. As I have noted, a number of scholars have researched the reader- or user-gratifications of consuming BL or *yaoi* texts. However, as I have illustrated with the proliferation of female writers in nineteenth-century Britain, there is certainly something empowering about expressing oneself or producing works. Thus, in order to determine the extent to which *dōjin* might feel empowered as producers, I surveyed and analysed the respondents' initial impetus to produce BL or *yaoi* works of fiction, their ongoing sources of motivation, and the content they generally produce.

➢ Impetus

If we recap what might have triggered the respondents' initial interest in producing creative works as *dōjin* (Question 20), it may be easier to identify certain social or creative needs which respondents generally needed to address. As the findings revealed, the main motivations which triggered their initial *dōjin* ventures according to 37 respondents were: a love of drawing, writing or creating something, wanting to express oneself, or trying something on one's own. A further 27 respondents indicated that they were either invited to events by friends or encouraged by fans to produce. Rather interestingly, 25 respondents either had no comment, explained that it "just happened," there was no particular reason, "just because," or they started producing simply because they felt they liked it. Only one respondent explicitly stated that having a hobby sparked her initial attempt at creating *dōjinshi*. As I have additionally noted, neither profit motives nor financial incentives were related to the majority of responses associated with "output" (52 respondents). Given that distributing content on-site was favoured over the more cost-efficient online method, we can surmise that my respondents' production motivations are linked to social or creative yearnings more than financial or mercantile ones. Either social or creative in nature, the external (or

public) distribution of one's output (creative works) arguably indicates a desire for autonomy and acknowledgment from acquaintances or anonymous consumers.

Generally speaking and based on the inferences I have made thus far, I suggest that the impetus for *dōjin* output stems mostly from a need or desire to produce original texts relatively independently, to have a platform to display these texts, and to receive appraisal or acknowledgement from friends, fans, or acquaintances. Although there are both *dōjin* and professional *mangaka* who produce works catering for their fans or publishers, there seems to be a lingering desire amongst artists, amateur and professional alike, to have free rein in their work and draw what they please. In an interview concerning her debut as a professional *mangaka,* est em expressed similar sentiments, explaining that soon after debuting as a professional she was troubled at times when her own desire to draw what she wanted clashed with requests to draw a certain way (TORJA, 2006). Regardless of whether one's creative works are profitable for publishers or pleasurable for others, there is arguably a strong emphasis on self-serving self-expression among both professional *mangaka* and *dōjin*.

➢ Motivation

Despite findings and anecdotes which seem to suggest that creating BL or *yaoi* texts is more or less a self-serving venture, there are a plethora of other motivations which inspire some to continue producing manga, from the doodling days of their youth to *dōjin* circle participation well into their forties or fifties. To determine any additional triggers for creative output, Question 21 asked respondents to discuss their constant sources of motivation and inspiration. Although this question was open-ended, I filtered similar responses into several categories. The most common categorised response to this question was "*moe*" (29%), followed by reception and interaction with readers/fans (18%), a love of characters or the original works (18%), no comment/no particular reason (14%), a love of drawing or engaging in *dōjin* activities (13%), and "Other" (8%).

Firstly, although not the most common response, the 20 respondents (14%) who had no particular reason might indeed reinforce the claim that *dōjin* create "boys' love for the love of it." That is, there is sometimes no need to justify or identify a particular source of ongoing inspiration since one's activities are almost second nature—one

creates and continues to do so "just because." Having said that, the 18% of respondents who indicated that readers' reception of their work motivated them somewhat contradicts this claim. While it appears that there is a strong emphasis on self-serving self-expression, there is nonetheless a need for the peer assessment or acknowledgement facilitated through social interaction. For instance, some of the respondents distinctly stated that conversations with friends who like the same anime (R9), "warm impressions from customers" (R2), or the "hearing other people's opinions" (R59) motivated them. In contrast, statements such as "the existence of people whom my pictures bring happiness to" (R13) seemed to acknowledge that while readers are generally valued, the emphasis is primarily placed on one's work.

Given that such statements indicate gratifications associated with bringing joy or pleasure to others, this may also be tied to one's sense of pride in one's work. If we accept that *dōjin* primarily create works to please themselves (personal gratifications), then the happiness which they bring to others is arguably secondary, if not a by-product. I argue that the pride in, or pleasure derived from, one's original work takes priority over the warm impressions/reception among fans and readers which follow. However, even if positive responses to the output of one's interests and creative pursuits are secondary to one's own self-gratification, the relationship between *dōjin* and their enthusiasts still seems symbiotic, given the number of respondents who reported valuing the reception of their work through exchanges with readers/fans as a constant source of inspiration. Acknowledgement is gained through the presence of acquaintances, but this can only occur provided there is an initial production and exchange of creative items, ideas, or interests between two parties. In spite of the great emphasis the *dōjin* community places on autonomy, it is perhaps this interdependence between *dōjin* and their peers that reinforces a need for acquaintances and the respective need for acknowledgement.

Aside from the acknowledgement and adoration of fans, some of the responses belonging to the "Other" category suggested that there were more abstract or psychologically complex stimuli to produce *dōjinshi* for many of my respondents. Although relaxation, practice, stress relief, and self-motivation were mentioned several times, over half of the respondents considered *ai* (love) as one of or their primary sources of motivation. Originally, I did not intend to analyse word frequency in my data, since I did not anticipate or expect that any common keywords or expressions

would arise. However, I increasingly became aware of the high frequency of phrases such as "the love of..." or "that 'I like it' kind of feeling." Therefore, the frequency of such expressions seemed to be phenomenon in itself. Whether a love of drawing or creating, a love of particular characters or one's original works, "love" seemed to be the operative word in a large number of cases.

In particular, the 18 respondents who suggested that a love of drawing or engaging in *dōjin* activities was their primary source of motivation indicated that, for instance, "the 'thought of wanting to make books' kind of feeling" (R46) inspired them. One particular respondent had trouble articulating her passion about illustrating and making *dōjinshi* so reduced it to its simplest terms, arguing "Drawing = life so it is hard to explain in detail" (R48). Despite this value placed on self-expression, the individuals belonging to this category of responses did not indicate that they were drawing for a specific audience. In this respect, one can assume that their enthusiasm for drawing stems from a creative impulse for self-expression which could be interpreted as self-serving in nature. On the other hand, in contrast to output-based motivations, there were a greater number of respondents who indicated that their major sources of inspiration were associated with input. Such respondents specifically suggested that their sources of motivation were *kyara ai* (the love of characters) (R64), the "love of the original work" (R4) or a love of several aspects such as "That 'I love that character!' kind of feeling and CP [coupling] *moe*" (R66). Given that these findings indicate a deep respect for, or passionate dedication to, a source text or its *moe yōso* (the aforementioned *moe* elements), the fact that "*moe*" was the single most common response to Question 21 seems relatively plausible. Whether one considers the discursive use of *moe* as simply a buzzword or as a term denoting a deep emotional response to predominantly fictional phenomena is subjective. Much like other emotional responses, *moe* is inherently complex, abstract, and thus ambiguous. Although Galbraith's extensive research on the *otaku* phenomenon and *moe* in *Moe Manifesto: An Insider's Look at the Worlds of Manga, Anime, and Gaming* (2014) offers various definitions of *moe* provided by scholars and creative artists involved in *otaku* culture, it does not settle on any one concrete definition of *moe*. Nevertheless, in the introduction, Galbraith suggests that when talking about *moe*,

[W]e are necessarily also talking about how people interact with
fictional characters. Available evidence suggests that interacting with
a character in a manga, anime, or game, one can become significantly
attached to that character. (2014, p.7)

Similar arguments are made throughout the interviews in the book. For
instance, Kaiichirō Morikawa also considers *moe* as more or less an "expression of
affection for fictional characters, especially the characters of manga, anime, and
games" (2014, p.155), whereas Kimio Itō's definition sees *moe* as "a feeling for two-
dimensional entities" in which one can both control the character and there is no risk of
risk "getting hurt in a relationship with a fictional character" (2014, p.29). For Gō Itō,
*moe* is "a psychological effect that is triggered by a character image," which sometimes
also triggers a physical reaction (2014, p.163). Tōru Honda, by contrast, sees *moe* as
more than the simple affection or feelings for a character: "I don't think *moe* is just
about physical attraction. People who pursue *moe* are looking for something deeper"
(2014, p.124). He further suggests that "[p]eople don't imagine a relationship with an
anime character because they couldn't find a girlfriend, but rather they fell in love with
a character in the first place" (2014, p.125). Finally, although Hikaru Higashimura
argues along similar lines as Honda about the love of a character and the affective
response, he distinguishes *moe* from "the love at first sight" analogy in the following
fashion:

[With] *moe* you cannot expect a response from the object of affection.
Love at first sight is very similar to *moe*. Both depend on an object's
appearance or behavior. The starting point of love at first sight is
when you experience extremely positive feelings toward a person you
know very little about. The difference between *moe* and romantic
love is a difference in results. (2014, p.139)

Hence, it is clear that opinions on the meaning and definition of *moe* vary.
Synthesising some of the common arguments, one can say that *moe* triggers a range of
physiological and psychological responses such as admiration, emotional attachment,
obsession, love, or lust. Also, and perhaps more significantly, although the associated
feelings of *moe* towards a figure or *moe yōso* cannot be reciprocated materially, they

can be shared through mutual feelings of *moe* amongst peers. Some of the commentators go further and argue that, since this unreciprocated love or lust is essentially futile in nature, it seems to primarily appeal to a particular demographic. In respect to this demographic of enthusiasts, Honda suggests that individuals who tend to have an interest in *moe* characters are clearly "those who are marginalised" (2014, p.122), whereas Takurō Morinaga argues rather disparagingly that "[p]eople into *moe* are losers in the love market," are "weak" and are thus "disempowered both economically and in the love market" (2014, p.131). Needless to say, these somewhat belittling generalisations or cultural observations are subject to debate. However, while I disagree that such individuals are weak or worse still, "losers," I concede that many *moe* enthusiasts can be considered disempowered to some extent. Given the findings from Question 21, it seems plausible that some of my respondents—who specifically indicated that *moe,* or the love of characters, or original works were their ongoing sources of motivation—might fall into the character profile of these supposedly disempowered *moe* enthusiasts. However, I argue that it is through *moe* production and consumption practices that many *dōjin* find fulfilment and to some extent, empowerment. Since *moe* is, for the most part, experienced on an individual level, there is generally no need to seek acknowledgement or encouragement from peers. The formula for *moe* empowerment as experienced by *dōjin* is arguably encapsulated in the following process:

> Individual encounters a source of *moe* or *moe yōso* through the consumption of an original text → an initial emotional and/or physiological *moe* reaction is triggered → the initial feeling of *moe* might then be acted upon through an ongoing emotional or physiological attachment to the source (whereby the individual is arguably gratified, if not empowered by the attachment) → if a level of dissatisfaction with the source material occurs, the source of *moe* is then appropriated in a fashion which pleases the individual (e.g. through production of *dōjinshi* or similar creative works) → this process of appropriation can then be repeated ad infinitum, and the works may also be shared with peers (thus triggering mutually experienced *moe* and empowerment as a community).

Taking into account this process of *moe* empowerment and the predominantly *moe*-oriented findings from Question 21, as a manifestation of *akogare*, *moe* could be considered as an additional and significant factor influencing *dōjin* output. If we thus accept the idea that *akogare* is a facet of *moe,* then we could also argue that *akogare* is an additional (A)-factor which drives the *dōjin* community and the content they produce.

> ➢ Content

Given that the production of content relies on a community of enthusiasts and vice versa, determining the kind of content which continues to stimulate and foster the creative pursuits of *dōjin* circles might reveal the extent to which producing such content can be empowering. In response to Question 18 (regarding the genres and the nature of the stories and characters in one's content)—perhaps not surprisingly, given the overwhelming popularity of derivative works—responses indicating the name of a particular source text were the most common (29%). Although the bulk of responses varied significantly in terms of genre, story, and character details, the following categories of responses were the most common after *nijigen* works: nondescript or blank responses (11%), BL and *nijigen* texts (7% each), original texts (6.5%), *sanjigen* (6%), "serious" narratives, and *Jump*-specific parodies (4% each).

As I have argued in the discussion on themes and genre, some of my respondents explained that they created *nijigen works* based on their favourite character couplings or series simply because homoerotic depictions within the source texts were unavailable, and seeing their favourite characters in new and subversive forms was fun or just a "fantasy." Furthermore, by placing one's beloved real or fictional figures into unfamiliar, exotic, romantic, or erotic scenarios of one's choosing, one can essentially incorporate various levels of *akogare* into a narrative, thereby enhancing its affective potential. That means *nijigen* and *sanjigen* works can be considered as an ideal mechanism for the satisfaction of *akogare*, and also as a source of *akogare*. The reason for this is that *dōjin* can dictate, consume, and create/recreate what they long, for irrespective of authenticity or notions of value-based judgment.

Considering the largely *moe*-oriented responses to Question 21 and the value placed on *akogare*, I anticipated the greater ratio of derivative content to original

content evident in the findings from Question 18. To what extent producing derivative or "transformative" works may be empowering is questionable. However, given that quite a significant amount of *nijigen* works are parodies of popular male-marketed texts, the playful portrayals of the protagonists pushed to explicit extremes are not intended to be taken seriously. On the premise that *nijigen* and *sanjigen yaoi* are to be taken lightly, as mere tongue-in-cheek appropriations of mainstream texts, the element of "play" perhaps legitimises the explicit sexual imagery. In other words, since they employ humour, parodies are a safe avenue to produce and consume erotic texts on the premise that they are "just a joke." It might also be the case that many *dōjin* appropriate a popular text as a base or starting point before producing original works. That is, there is arguably less shame attached to producing sexually explicit derivative works than standing out as the one artist who produces extremely explicit original works, since hundreds or fans already recognise or also appropriate the source text for their own self-serving purposes. Furthermore, if criticised for the depravity of one's derivative works, one can simply argue that everybody else is doing it and that they are "jumping" on the *yaoi* bandwagon, per se.

Needless to say, the gratifications and motivations involved in the creative pursuits of BL and *yaoi dōjin* vary from circle to circle, but given the findings associated with my respondents' sources of inspiration and the nature of their output, I suggest that the phenomenal prevalence and value of *moe* among the community is no coincidence. Although I have stressed the importance of autonomy, acquaintances, and acknowledgement, it seems that *akogare* (manifested in the production of *moe*) is the major motivation for output. Unlike many of the Victorian women who perhaps utilised fiction for various political, social, or economic means, the subcultural phenomenon of BL as a whole may simply be a case of creating boys' love for the love of it, so evidently, the love of characters or particular texts cannot be discounted. However, is it empowering? In terms of economic independence or belonging to a community of predominantly like-minded female fans (as evidenced in the responses), perhaps it is not. Rather, the phenomenon is arguably driven by a desire to have control over another's creative work, over characters or couplings one yearns for, and to fulfill one's creative, psychological, and physiological desires. As Tamaki Saitō notes, "*dōjinshi* are significant because they constitute an *otaku* 'rite of ownership,' whereby the fans take the works they love and make them their own through the act of parody, which is to say by fictionalising them even further" (Saitō, 2007, p.228). To encapsulate and reinforce

this devotion to characters or texts, while talking about transforming her favourite character into an untouchable, passive-aggressive character type known as *shinkakuka-gata* (deified type) one of my respondents said: "Since I deify my favourite characters, I use the original text as a base and make progress from there. With each little story I work towards creating a *shinkakuka-gata*" (R18).

The "it" in creating "boys' love for the love of it" may vary from circle to circle: it may be a character, a source text, *dōjin* subculture, illustrating, interacting, or any combination of these aspects. However, much like most creative pursuits, it might all begin with an initial spark, that budding or sprouting-like sensation known as *moe*.
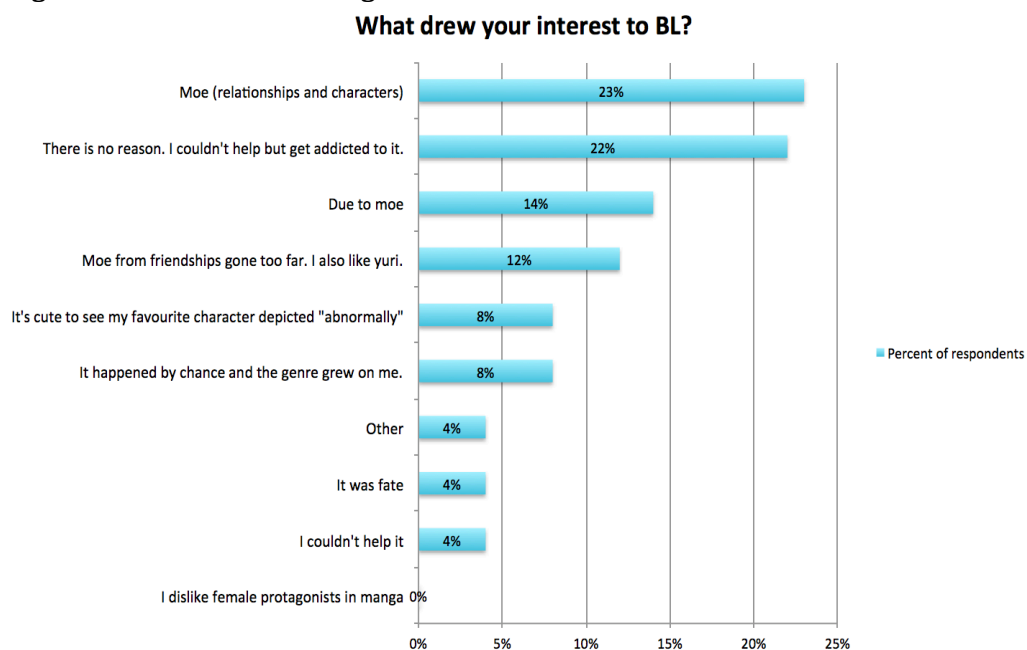
### 3.6 On Interests

Having considered what triggered my respondents' initial engagement in producing either transformative or original BL or *yaoi* works, determining what drew their general interest in BL (Question 3) as well as the types of genres and narratives they enjoy reading (Questions 5 and 7, respectively) was necessary in order to explore the hybrid nature of *dōjin* as consumers.

When anticipating responses for Question 3, I recalled that my personal experience or first encounter with BL manga happened unexpectedly. Although I was familiar with slash fiction, one afternoon on our way back to Kawagoe station after a day of temple-hopping, a Japanese friend of mine dragged me into the BL corner of Animate's manga floor. Admittedly, at first I was quite startled by the sheer number of titles available and the lack of censorship of even explicit content and illustrations, but after reading a few titles, the genre started to grow on me. As with many of the younger generation of fans, I too was unaware of the rich history of BL when I first encountered it. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time, and in the right frame of mind to enjoy male-male romance narratives. Given that my encounter with BL manga occurred in 2007, I suspected that many of my younger respondents might share similar experiences in their answer to this question. In fact, this was accordingly reflected in the answers of 31 respondents who stated that they simply got addicted to BL, or that there was no particular reason or explanation as to why they started to like the genre—like me, they just had a randomly-timed yet fortuitous, and ultimately productive, encounter.

Regardless of this, other respondents gave multiple and various reasons when replying to Question 3. In addition to the abovementioned 31 respondents who could not articulate reasons why they started to like BL, 33 respondents suggested that feelings of *moe* towards particular characters and relationships between characters drew their interest to the genre. Furthermore, 20 respondents agreed that *moe* was in fact the sole factor which accounted for their interest in BL, while another 17 indicated that they were drawn to *yuri,* as well as narratives in which friendships go "too far" (Figure 20). Having stressed the difficulty and complexity of justifying one's likes and preferences earlier, responses to Question 3 were no exception. Moreover, having also illustrated the value my respondents place on *moe* and their respective love of certain characters or series, the large proportion of respondents who factored *moe* into their answers can perhaps be easily explained. Similarly, responses which mentioned a love of narratives involving friendships gone "too far" or *yuri* could be explained for given the aforementioned emphasis which *dōjin* place on *akogare* and homosocial relations based on junior/senior partner dynamics. Thus, on the premise that *moe* and homosocial pairings seem to be at the heart of BL's appeal, it may not reflect, but it can perhaps be likened to the value that pre-war girls' culture placed on intimate friendships and *akogare*.

**Figure 20: Reasons for liking BL**



What drew your interest to BL?

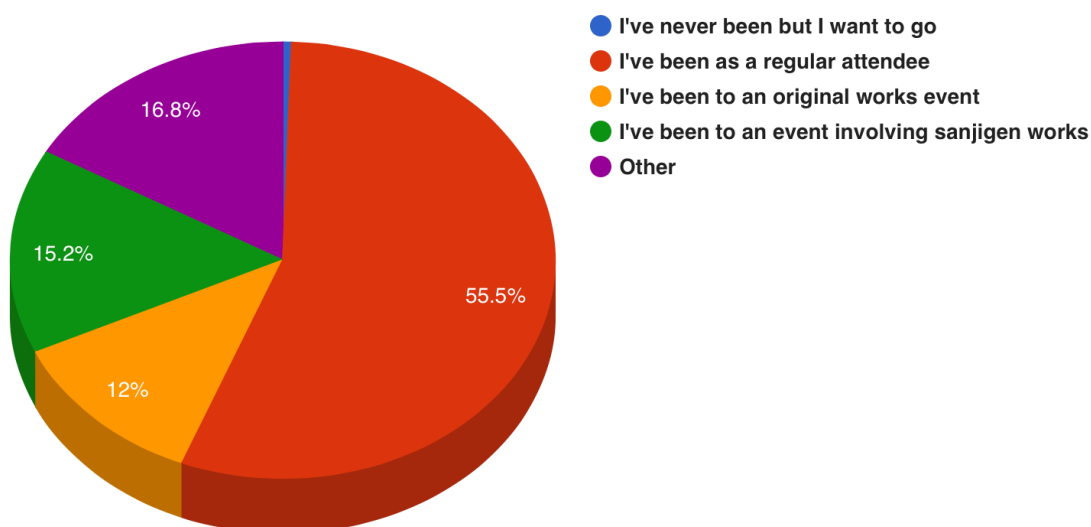| Reason | Percent of respondents |
|---|---|
| Moe (relationships and characters) | 23% |
| There is no reason. I couldn't help but get addicted to it. | 22% |
| Due to moe | 14% |
| Moe from friendships gone too far. I also like yuri. | 12% |
| It's cute to see my favourite character depicted "abnormally" | 8% |
| It happened by chance and the genre grew on me. | 8% |
| Other | 4% |
| It was fate | 4% |
| I couldn't help it | 4% |
| I dislike female protagonists in manga | 0% |

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As I had anticipated, Question 5's concern with consumption trends produced similar results to the questions associated with output. That is, the vast majority of respondents expressed the most interest in *nijigen* works (60 respondents). A further 27 respondents favoured mainstream original BL works, while 26 respondents preferred originally produced BL/*June* works. To a lesser extent, 18 respondents also enjoyed reading *dōjin*-produced *sanjigen* works, while three stated otherwise (see Figure 21).
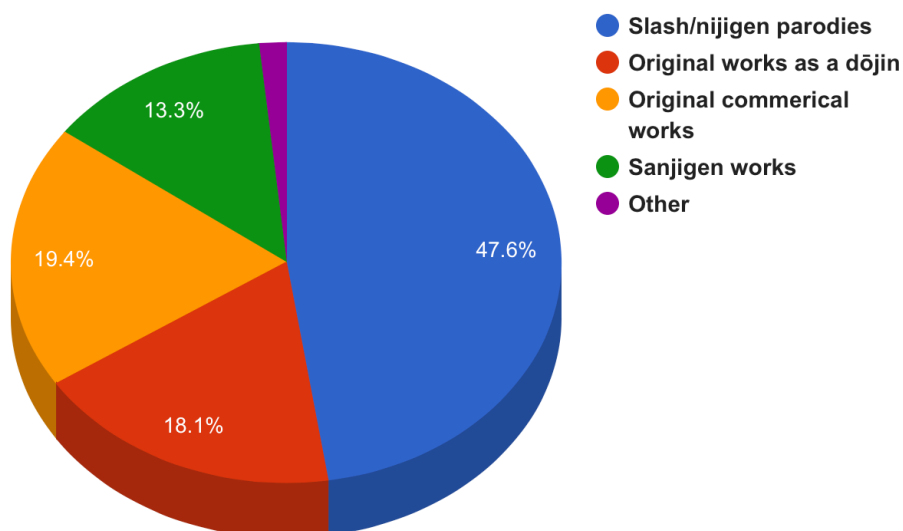
**Figure 21: Upper: Experience at Comic Market and other events**

**Do you go to Comic Market or other fanzine events?**

- 🔵 I've never been but I want to go
- 🔴 I've been as a regular attendee
- 🟠 I've been to an original works event
- 🟢 I've been to an event involving sanjigen works
- 🟣 Other

16.8%
15.2%
12%
55.5%

**Figure 22: Genres one enjoys reading or creating**

**What do you often read or write?**

- 🔵 Slash/nijigen parodies
- 🔴 Original works as a dōjin
- 🟠 Original commerical works
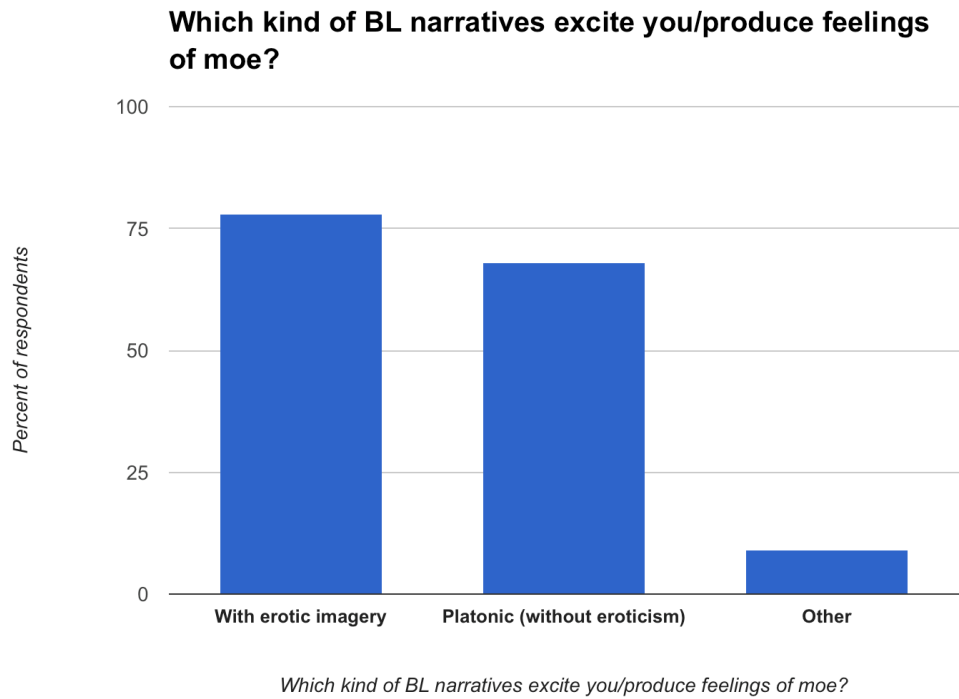- 🟢 Sanjigen works
- 🟣 Other

13.3%
19.4%
18.1%
47.6%

Given the generally ephemeral nature of *dōjin*-produced texts, the findings additionally indicating a strong trend towards the consumption of mainstream texts
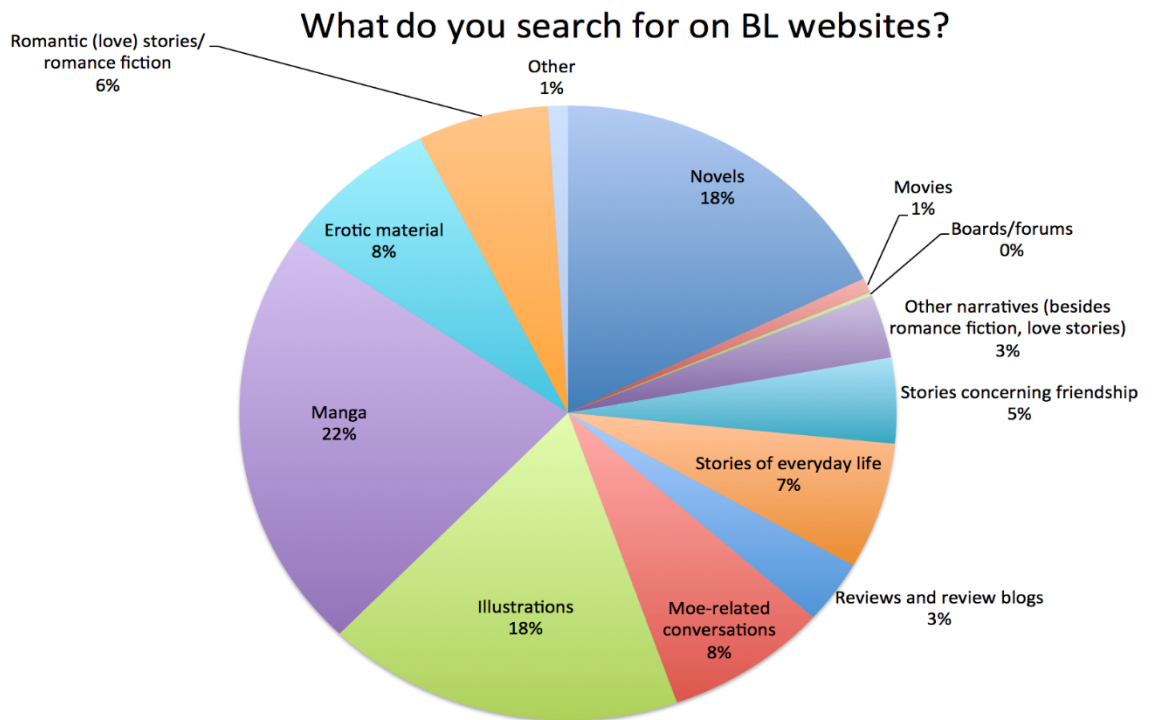
suggests that character- or series-related *moe* perhaps precedes the consumption and production of *nijigen* works. In this sense, the mainstream market and *dōjin* market are interdependent. Circles require source texts and mainstream BL texts for inspiration, and the mainstream market similarly depends on the trends in the *dōjin* market to analyse and predict current and upcoming trends. The potential for empowerment therein lies in the fact that since many *dōjin* read both mainstream and *dōjin*-produced texts, their presence in and influence on the mainstream market is undeniable. While it would require much more research to substantiate these claims and determine exactly how *dōjin* consumption and production practices dictate the mainstream market, given the above findings, one cannot assume that their activities have little to no effect on the mainstream market even in the absence of such research. For instance, in their research on the survival strategies of manga magazines, Izumi Tsuji, Yūto Nomura, and Hibiki Ōkura note that on the one hand, cases of *dōjin* who become *mangaka* are not uncommon, while on the other hand, corporate booths and professional artists also appear at events like Comic Market (2015, p.76). Fujimoto has also claimed that many of major publisher Kadokawa's *mangaka* were former *dōjin* who were eventually scouted, highlighting the interdependence of both markets (Fujimoto, 2014). Furthermore, regardless of whether or not one is directly affiliated with mainstream publishers, given that almost half of the respondents indicated an overall preference for *nijigen* works, one could rightfully argue that *dōjin* have created a market of their own beyond the expectations and limits of events such as Comic Market. Although a number of respondents denied that belonging to a community of *dōjin* and BL enthusiasts was in any way empowering, with autonomy, acquaintances, acknowledgment and *akogare* driving and sustaining the *dōjin* community and its market, one can at least surmise that belonging to the community is gratifying.

While analysing the results, having considered my respondents' initial attraction to the genre as well as their consumption of both mainstream and *dōjin*-produced works, I also examined their preferences for either erotic or platonic narratives. Since narratives in the 1970s were generally homosocial in nature in contrast to the gradual shift towards homoeroticism, I attempted to determine to what extent love or lust was valued among my respondents. The results, I thought, might clarify whether *moe* is associated more with romantic love or erotic imagery. However, as the graph on Figure 23 reveals, the results were fairly even.

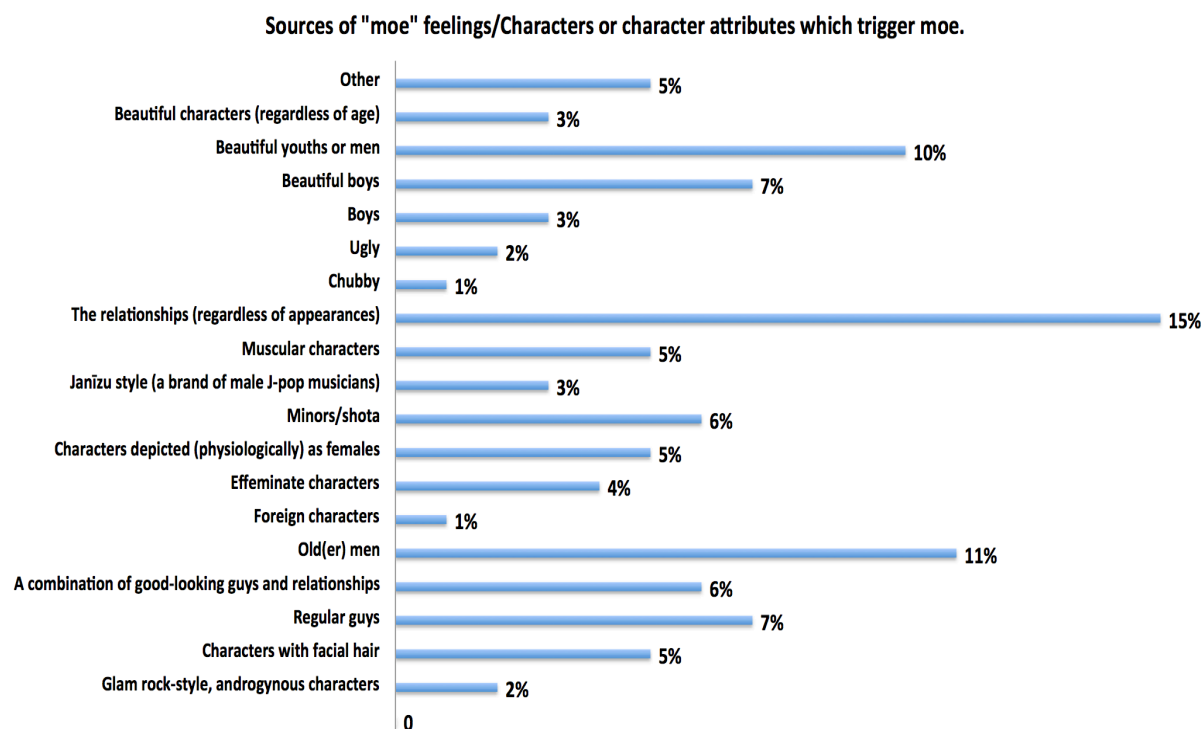**Figure 23: Preferences for erotic, platonic, or "other" narratives**

## Which kind of BL narratives excite you/produce feelings of moe?



*Which kind of BL narratives excite you/produce feelings of moe?*

**Figure 24: Information sought on BL and *yaoi* sites**

**Figure 25: Preferred character types**

Sources of "moe" feelings/Characters or character attributes which trigger moe.



With 50% of respondents favouring erotic narratives over the 44% who preferred platonic narratives, and another 6% who stated otherwise, the results reinforce that *moe* is tied to both physiological and psychological reactions. The remaining 6% who stated otherwise either selected both options (erotic and platonic) or nothing at all. Additionally, some respondents justified their reasons for choosing both or neither of the options. Analysis of such comments, though limited in number, was conducted, as a means to determine why most of my respondents were divided about which type of narrative they preferred. For instance, one respondent indicated that a preference for one or the other (erotic or platonic narratives) depended on the relationship (R63), while another suggested that both types of narratives can trigger feelings of *moe* depending on the relationships between the characters (R116). Another respondent added that the relationship between the couple and a good story combined can trigger feelings of *moe* (R77). Arguably more insightful was the recognition by one respondent that *moe* is triggered irrespective of the type of narrative, but that eroticism, or rather, sex, was also an essential part of life (R73). This particular respondent added that although sex acts are "essential," there is a wonderful kind of *moe* associated with the process leading up to them and the inability to see anything else but one's partner during sex. Simply put, regardless of whether the narrative contains eroticism or

graphic sex, for this respondent the greatest *moe* springs from the "sweetness of one's partner feeling the same" (R73).

While these responses are only a fraction of the total sample, what they generally seem to place value on is the relationship between the characters and the story—reinforcing Mari Nishimura's argument that since the foundation of BL (as a genre), the relationship between the *seme* and *uke* ("relationship-*moe*") has been at the heart of the genre (Nishimura, 2015, p.99). Perhaps this indeed reflects the concept of romantic love, which was introduced in the Meiji period and thereafter flourished as a central theme in *shōjo bunka*. If we accept that the concept of romantic love is a physiological and psychological phenomenon, then we can assume that the production of *moe*, which has been characterised in a similar fashion, is either a manifestation of romantic love or dependent on it. Considering too that the findings associated with interests and consumptive practices revealed a general preference for *nijigen* works and were tied to notions of *akogare* and *moe*, being able to address one's specific psychological and physiological desires is clearly a large aspect of BL and *yaoi*'s appeal. Although the extent to which consuming BL or *yaoi* might be empowering is unquantifiable, based on the findings and comments in my study, the existence of the satisfaction derived from re/producing feelings of *moe* associated with the characters one yearns for is as undeniable as it is profitable for those who indulge in it.

### 3.7. On Gender Representation

Thus far, I have considered the respondents' general preferences in BL consumption. However, to determine respondents' attitudes towards representations of gender and power relations, Question 6 considered the various character types which stimulate feelings of *moe* (based largely on appearance, age and stock characters), while Questions 9 and 10 asked which figure (*uke* or *seme*) respondents were more inclined to like and with whom they generally empathise. While I acknowledge that the scope of Question 6 was limited in that it yielded only quantitative results, simple inferences can nevertheless be made and the data may also serve to substantiate previous claims. Excepting the five most common responses to Question 6, the remaining responses were fairly even, so for the purpose of a concise yet contemplative discussion, only the top five results will be examined. Of all the options listed, 21 respondents selected "*Moe* based on relationships rather than the characters'

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appearances." 16 expressed a preference for old/-er men, while 14 preferred *biseinen* ("beautiful" or attractive adult males). 10 respondents felt that *moe* was stimulated by *bishōnen*, while another 10 individuals preferred ordinary-looking characters. At first glance, the contrast between respondents who were attracted to old/-er men and those who were attracted to beautiful young men or boys may seem strange. Furthermore, the emphasis on beautiful characters was almost equalled by a preference for "ordinary-looking" characters. Granted, these results may be a coincidence, but given that the question permitted multiple answers, the results arguably reinforce the claims that romantic love and character dynamics are major sources of *moe* stimuli, rather than the depiction of certain types of characters (although this cannot be ruled out as a contributing factor).

Also, the question left room for interpretation as to what is meant by "relationship." If relationship is considered the equivalent of coupling, then it could be said that the coupling rather than the narrative is valued. Regardless of how the respondents interpreted "relationship," without some kind of initial relationship between characters, there is of course no coupling, and without a coupling, there is no relationship. Thus, if *moe* is largely dependent on the narrative presentation of a particular coupling or relationship, then it should follow that the dynamics of the couple are an integral aspect of the narrative. Although this is only speculation, it may explain the contrasting responses concerning the preferred character types amongst the majority of respondents. To exemplify, an ordinary-looking old/-er male paired with a beautiful young/-er male is perhaps the most obvious junior/senior coupling combination. Firstly, there is a distinct emphasis on the *akogare* associated with the younger *bishōnen* or *biseinen*'s attributes of beauty and youth contrasted with his polar opposite. Such basic contrasts in age and general appearance reflect *uke/seme* dynamics and the typical narrative trope of the process of overcoming certain differences or barriers in the pursuit of love. To some extent, without contrast, there is no conflict, and without conflict, there is little to drive the progression of the relationship and the narrative in general. The need for some degree of resistance, tension, or conflict leading towards a gradual climax is, in effect, a stimulus for feelings of *moe*.

If we thus acknowledge that character contrasts and coupling or character dynamics are central to the production of *moe*, then the importance of the question of whom one identifies with becomes clear. Needless to say, since character personalities

vary from story to story and can also change throughout the course of a narrative, deciding whether one empathises with one character or another is inherently difficult. However, from my research, it seems that in the case of BL, y*aoi*, and romance fiction in general, readers arguably have a tendency to admire, if not feel empathy for, both characters. This was reflected in the responses to Question 9. Not only was the number of respondents who indicated that they empathised with *uke* figures (51 respondents) closely rivalled by the 48 respondents who empathised with *seme* figures, but respondents who stated "both" (10), otherwise (26), or made no comment (7) also made up a large percentage of respondents. Given these results, one could argue that such reading practices reinforce the existing supposition that BL allows for gender exploration, as well as Sugiura's claim that BL consumption is a means to escape from oneself through *kami no shiten* readings of texts.

Since the number of respondents empathising with either *uke* or *seme* characters was almost even, it was imperative to examine how the respondents explained or justified their answers. For some respondents who felt they related more to *uke* figures, their choices were based on the cuteness of *uke* characters. One particular respondent supposed that she empathised with *uke* characters because, as a woman, she thinks as an *uke* would think (R110). Conversely, some respondents who tended to empathise with *seme* figures believed that their choices were somewhat related to their own *seme*-like characteristics, stating reasons such as "Because I have a *seme* personality" (R141) or "Because I have a mannish personality?" (R92). Others expressed somewhat sadistic desires or yearned for greater sexual agency. Regarding the former, respondents 97 and 129, for instance, both suggested that there was pleasure in seeing the *uke* cry or bawl. Regarding the latter, Respondent 113 stated "I think my desire to do [~~] is stronger than the desire to have [~~] done to me," and Respondent 17 similarly expressed a desire to do what she wanted to the *uke*. To a lesser extent, some respondents expressed nurturing tendencies or a desire to show affection in comments such as "I want to please the cute little *uke*" (R54) or "It's because the *uke* is cute and if I were a man, I think I'd like to hug [the *uke*]" (R139). Evidently, respondents' justifications of the selection of one character over another took into account notions of gender identity, as well as one's individual emotional and physical desires. Although highly speculative, one could assume that such respondents showed considerable self-confidence or self-assertion in not only admitting which character they empathised with, but also precisely justifying their choices by divulging their deeper desires.

In contrast to the many respondents who selected either *seme* or *uke* figures, the remaining respondents who selected "Both" or "Other" often suggested that they could not decide on just one of the characters. Furthermore, quite a number of respondents claimed that they do not empathise with either of the characters. Rather, they emphasised that they read or look at the texts as "third parties" (R72, R82, R90). For example, one respondent argued that she could not decide since she wanted "to watch over" both of the characters (R82), while another suggested that with whom she empathised depended on the work (R71). Once again, such comments reflect the significance of "houseplant" or *kami no shiten* readings of texts. In contrast, several respondents stressed that rather than empathising with any one of the characters, they invested their feelings more abstractly in *moe* (R15) or *moe* generated from the story (R11). One could consider the context, the coupling, and the overall narrative as a package with the primary function of generating feelings of *moe*. I posit that rather than empathy, one of the major gratifications and emotional investments associated with the consumption of BL and *yaoi* is, quite simply, feelings of *moe*. As suggested previously, unlike love, feelings of *moe* are not as easily or as directly reciprocated. Due to this lack of resolution or climax, *moe* could then considered an insatiable feeling, which in turn triggers a prolonged sense of yearning (*akogare)* and an endless cycle of consumption in the pursuit of the unattainable and beautiful ideal of romantic love.

I examined the responses to Question 10 to determine whether coupling or story-associated *moe*, rather than identifying with or feeling empathy for a single character type, was indeed a major gratification for readers of BL fiction. Essentially considering which character types the respondents were more inclined to like and why, Question 10 produced similar results to Question 9. Rather than limiting their selection to either *uke* or *seme*, a large 11 respondents selected both, 14 stated otherwise, and 11 left the question blank. The major difference between Question 9 and 10 was the number of respondents selecting *uke* over *seme*. While Question 9 revealed a balance of respondents who identified with either *uke* or *seme* figures, Question 10 revealed a greater preference for *uke* characters. With as much as 48% of respondents favouring *uke* over *seme* (while 28% favoured *seme* over *uke*), it perhaps indicates that *uke* figures have a greater capacity to produce feelings of *moe* on the premise that they are generally helpless, cute, or beautiful by nature. This was underscored by the frequency of the word "cute" in a number of the respondents' comments, which to some extent

reinforces the enduring popularity and value placed on the *bishōnen* as a figure worthy of one's attention, love, or nurture. Also, the results might suggest that readers who tend to admire *uke* figures—whether reading from the perspective of a "third party" or otherwise—have a tendency to position themselves as the dominating yet nurturing *seme*. Although it depends on one's level of engagement with the text and characters, I argue that this *seme*-like desire to be or remain in control over *uke* figures satisfies a *dōjin's* need for independence and *moe*-associated self-gratification. To briefly clarify and contextualise, if one admires *uke* characters and thus reads for *uke*-generated *moe*, one may exercise control over characters in the sense that one loves rather than being subject to the *uke*-like condition of "being loved." Much like *moe,* this love is not expected to be reciprocated, but even if it is, the distribution of power is arguably in favour of the *seme*. This desire to overpower *uke* characters, for example, was reflected in comments in which respondents specified that they were attracted to the *uke*'s face when he knows "in trouble" (R122) or seeing the *uke* being driven to tears (R53).

In contrast, respondents who expressed a preference exclusively for *seme* figures justified their responses based on the character's demeanour and his particular physical or character attributes, which emphasise both traditional notions of masculinity and the *seme*'s overall position of power. In a similar manner to the respondents who emphasised the *uke*'s cuteness, many respondents who preferred *seme* characters emphasised their coolness or good looks using the Japanese expression "*kakkoii*" (cool). Respondent 18, for instance, added in brackets that by *kakkoii,* she meant "manly." Perhaps in a more idealistic sense, one respondent suggested that a "manly figure who boldly confesses his love to the *uke* in spite of being in a world prejudiced against homosexuality is sexy" (R78). Others justified their preference for *seme* characters based on a desire to see their favourite characters "attacked" (R60), liking the fact that "the *seme* cherishes his autonomy" (R47) or because they were "seeking a man who is hard to find in reality" (R4). In this respect, the *seme*'s boldness, (supposed) autonomy, aggressive disposition, and essentially idealised personality and looks render him both practically unattainable and a target of yearning (*akogare*) in his own right. Thus, when both *uke* and *seme* are paired together in a desirable fashion, it arguably enhances the level of *akogare* manifested in *moe*. This greater sense of *akogare* engendered by both characters appearing together as a package perhaps accounts for about a third of the respondents who remained undecided or stated otherwise. Of these individuals who stated otherwise and in response to Question 10,

one respondent suggested that it was "strong" to request respondents to limit their choice to just one character, adding "*Uke. Seme.* It has got nothing to do with that" (R23). Others responded with comments such as "Case by case" (R11), "I most often like the two as a set" (R52), "I like the coupling" (94), "It depends on the genre and coupling" (R136) or "I like whoever happens to be the hero every time" (R28).

Considering the overall findings related to Questions 6, 9 and 10, and despite the fact that I argued that BL and *yaoi* reading practices are a means to escape from oneself and allow for gender exploration, the greatest gratification for producer-consumers is perhaps much more simple. I suggest that rather than feeling empathy for, liking, or identifying with any one of the characters, it is *moe* generated by a combination of the coupling, the context, and the overall narrative as a package which is more or less the major source of gratification associated with the consumption of BL and *yaoi*. Although I have argued that the production of BL and *yaoi* is driven by autonomy, acquaintances, and acknowledgement as well as *akogare*, the consumption of BL and *yaoi* also incorporates some degree of autonomy (when reading from a third-person omniscient view) and *akogare* (manifested in *moe*). Thus, in both their consumption and production practices, *dōjin* remain self-serving and self-dependent. However, precisely how their production and consumption of BL, *yaoi*, and other genres affect the wider LGBT community in Japan is another matter to be discussed.

### 3.8 On Sex and Sexuality

Before her success as a novelist, in her research on women's production of gay literature, Sarah Waters observed,

> While literary historians, both gay and straight, have identified a weighty tradition of male-authored lesbian fictions […] few have really addressed the considerable body of women's writing about homosexual men. As we have just seen, male homosexuality has been a prominent topos of the women's historical romance; but throughout the century, women writers have made substantial and important contributions to what we have come to think of as 'gay literature' itself. (Waters, 1995, p.214)

What is meant by 'gay literature' and whether this statement is still valid is debatable. However, one can nevertheless suggest that women's contributions to such fiction have generally been overlooked as "substantial" or "important" works. Needless to say, the worth of a piece of fiction as judged by literary critics is evaluated based on a number of factors. However, a text's wider social implications and potential to instigate social change or eliminate prejudice is perhaps often overlooked. In the context of BL as a cultural phenomenon, I argue that a certain disregard for BL's cultural and social worth tends to exhibited by critics and the general public alike.

Regarding LGBT rights in Japan, Katsuhiko Suganuma argues that in contrast to some countries in the West, "Japanese minorities do not receive the same legal protection" on a constitutional level (Suganuma, 2015, p.249). In a similar vein, Jeniece Lusk argues,

> While the United States in particular has made progress in policies regarding same-sex marriage, acceptance of (what is popularly viewed as) self-determination in transgender and transsexual identity and reassignment, and—interestingly—discussion on who can use which public restroom, Japan's negotiations in these areas are in preliminary stages at best. (Lusk, 2017 p.613)

In spite of this, some progress has been made. For instance, at the time of writing, same-sex partnership certificates can be issued in certain wards and cities in Japan such as Shibuya, Setagaya, Iga, Naha, Sapporo, and Takarazuka. However, these partnership certificates are not recognised nationwide and there are still legal hurdles and challenges in LGBT-related policy making that have yet to be addressed. Take, for instance, transgender rights. Lusk notes that when the Japanese Diet passed the Gender Identity Disorder (GID) Act in 2003—which thereafter allowed individuals receiving reassignment to legally change their registered gender—it revealed Japan's "progressiveness in confronting gender and sexuality inequalities" yet reinforced "the binary gender norms that the society subscribes to in several ways" (Lusk, 2017, p.616). There is of course also the issue of having to be diagnosed with a "disorder" in order to change one's gender.

However, aside from policymaking and legislation, there is also the issue of media representation. Although the mass media in Japan boasts a number of gay or transgender *tarento* (usually television co-hosts) and welcomes gay and lesbian-oriented forms of entertainment or themes, more emphasis is arguably placed on their "entertainment value" than on their political identity. That is, rather than being genuinely concerned with LGBT-identified individuals' social position or rights, such individuals are generally featured for their flamboyance, unique talents, or novelty value. Regarding transgender visibility in Japanese media, Mark McLelland has noted that the major dailies are somewhat silent "in contrast to the sensational interest shown by television and the tabloid press" (2004, p.14). He adds, for instance, that in the year 2000 alone a number of entertainers of diverse gender identities were featured in both men's and women's magazines. However, while women's magazines generally cover "human interest stories," male-oriented tabloids focus on "scurrilous aspects" such as fraud and the sex industry (2004, p.14). Nevertheless, that is not to say that the mainstream media's approaches to gender representation and attitudes towards gender identity in media discourse have not changed in recent years. Vera Mackie has called attention to the fact that a number of texts have actually contributed to the visibility of "non-normative" families and relationships (Mackie, 2017, p.151). Mackie notes, for example, that such texts have centred on "the possibilities of lesbian parentage" or "international gay male marriage" (2017, p.151). In addition, while citing Tsunehiro Uno (2009, p.57), Shu Min Yuen suggests that "the recent 'boom' in dramas such as *Last Friends* that featured unconventional families highlights the increasing popularity (and perhaps desirability) of a new family type […] comprising of gender/sexual non-normative characters and members who are not necessarily bound by biological ties" (Min, 2011, p.394).

Has the proliferation of mainstream and *dōjin*-produced BL or *yaoi* also been a mere celebration of the entertainment value of sexual minorities, comparable to the mass media—which, one might argue, has tended to avoid any critical discussion of identity politics and LGBT rights for the most part? In *Theorizing BL as a transformative genre: Boys' Love moves the world forward* (2015), Mizoguchi investigates and attempts to demonstrate how BL has evolved and perhaps become more progressive and less discriminatory since the 1990s. Based primarily on textual analyses, a few of the factors she highlights are: 1) homosexuality being referred to as a

choice rather than a preference (2015, p.162); 2) a shift from androgynous, beautiful boys to more diverse physical depictions of gay males including stocky or chubby characters or "bears" (2015, p.160); 3) lesbian visibility and the cooperation of gay characters with lesbians as sperm donors (2015, p.139); 4) more realistic coming out scenes whereby the character is accepted by family members and co-workers (2015, pp.174-175); and 5) same-sex marriage (2015, p.182). In the late 2007 edition of literary magazine *Eureka,* Sumiko Fujimoto also noted the presence of more characters who self-identify either as gay or bisexual in BL and *yaoi* (Fujimoto, 2007, pp.91-92). However, to what extent is this valid? What is the ratio of these "transformative" texts to the regular explicit fare that some *dōjin* seek and produce? Furthermore, how does one ascertain whether these texts have been able to "move the world forward" as the title suggests?

While I have argued that a prevalent subcultural phenomenon such as BL has encouraged greater LGBT visibility and shifted concern towards LGBT rights, I believe that as well as textual analyses, further longitudinal research with both BL/*yaoi* enthusiasts and the LGBT community is necessary to determine and demonstrate any major social and cultural shifts towards greater visibility and rights. In any case, I will briefly summarise the results and comments made by the LGBT-identified respondents willing to cooperate. This will follow the findings based on the artists' general attitudes towards homosexuality and their relative consumption of content depicting homosocial/-sexual relations. My specific aims here were to determine whether my respondents limited their consumption of romance fiction to BL (Question 13), whether BL was their sole source of *moe* (Question 11)*,* what was their interest in males or sexual orientation (Question 12), and more pertinently, what their attitudes were towards the LGBT community (Question 15). See Figures 26, 27 below for an overview.

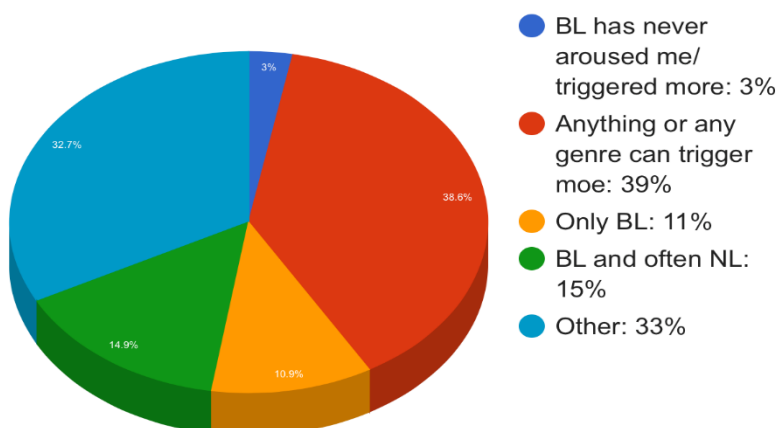**Figure 26: Sources of "*moe*" feelings**

## Sources of moe based on genre

- BL has never aroused me/ triggered more: 3%
- Anything or any genre can trigger moe: 39%
- Only BL: 11%
- BL and often NL: 15%
- Other: 33%

**Figure 27: Interest in males**

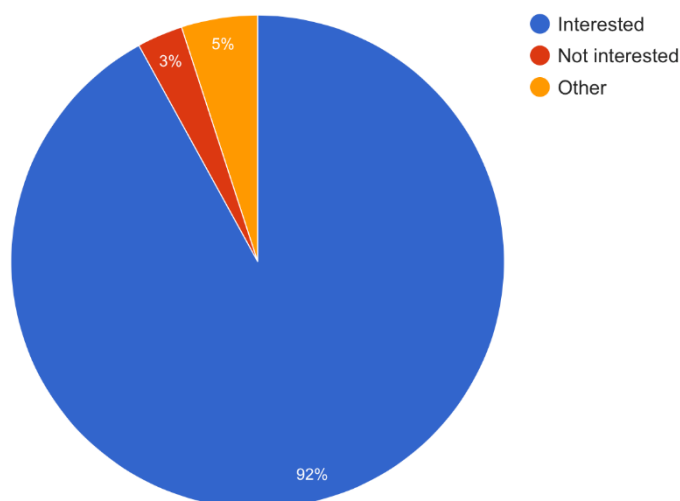## Level of interest in men/males in general

- Interested
- Not interested
- Other

**Figure 28: Preferences for BL and/or other forms of romance fiction**

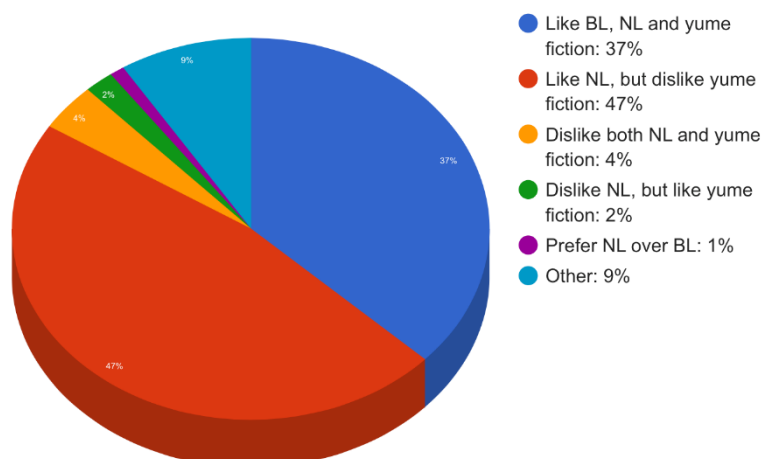### Attitudes towards NL, yume and other genres of romance fiction

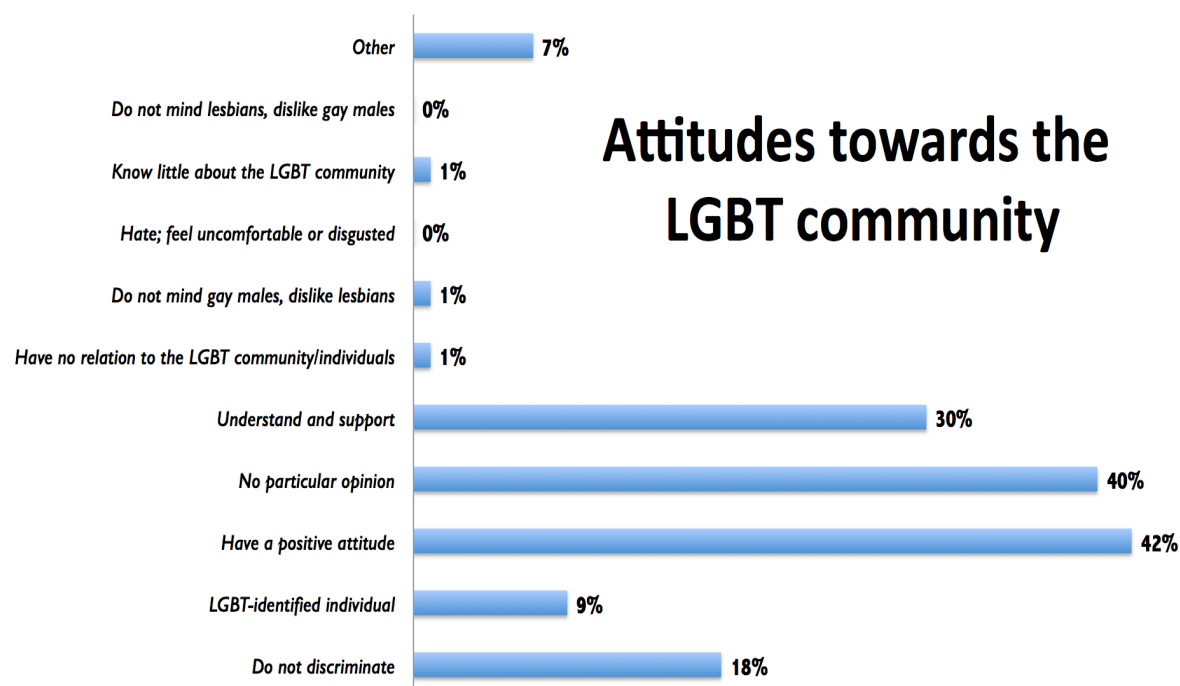- Like BL, NL and yume fiction: 37%
- Like NL, but dislike yume fiction: 47%
- Dislike both NL and yume fiction: 4%
- Dislike NL, but like yume fiction: 2%
- Prefer NL over BL: 1%
- Other: 9%

**Figure 29: Attitudes towards the LGBT community**

**Attitudes towards the LGBT community**

| Category | Value |
|---|---|
| Other | 7% |
| Do not mind lesbians, dislike gay males | 0% |
| Know little about the LGBT community | 1% |
| Hate; feel uncomfortable or disgusted | 0% |
| Do not mind gay males, dislike lesbians | 1% |
| Have no relation to the LGBT community/individuals | 1% |
| Understand and support | 30% |
| No particular opinion | 40% |
| Have a positive attitude | 42% |
| LGBT-identified individual | 9% |
| Do not discriminate | 18% |

Certainly, some of the aspects which continue to fascinate scholars and first-time attendees to Comic Market are the astounding amount of BL and *yaoi* works on display and the overwhelming amount of females who create and consume such texts. Are other forms of romance fiction of little or no interest to these women? Are their sources of *moe* limited to BL and *yaoi* fiction? Is there a correlation between fluid sexuality and an interest in BL manga? Furthermore, is there any correlation between the consumption of BL and shaping positive images of and attitudes towards Japan's LGBT community? These are some of the questions which arise from speculation on this phenomenon, some of which I shall tackle in the discussion below.

By surveying my respondents' general consumption of other forms of romance fiction, I was able to determine to what extent they enjoyed so-called NL ("normal love") fiction centring on male-female romance. According to the data, only a small fraction of respondents showed interest in non-BL genres of romance fiction. In line with my expectations, only one respondent suggested they preferred NL to both BL and "*yume*" (generally web-based romance fiction centring on user-named female protagonists paired with male characters from popular texts). Another three respondents expressed a general dislike of NL but said they enjoyed *yume* fiction. More pertinent, however, is the fact that only five respondents disliked both NL and *yume* fiction. In contrast, the majority (67 respondents) agreed that they were fond of NL but

disliked *yume* fiction, while an additional 53 respondents showed interest in NL, *yume* and BL fiction. Before considering the ramifications of the findings mentioned above, the comments made by the remaining 13 individuals who stated otherwise will provide some additional insight into other attitudes towards male-female romance genres. Of these 13 respondents, some stated no reason in particular, while others claimed that they were not sure, had not read any such texts, or were not interested. More notably, several respondents specifically stated that they did not dislike *yume* fiction. Rather, they were simply "not interested" or disliked stories which were too close to home, so to speak (R118). Although one could thus surmise that there seems to be a general lack of interest in *yume* fiction, it is essential to review the overall results prior to postulating reasons as to why such romance genres might fail to attract the interest of a significant portion of BL and *yaoi* enthusiasts.

The first and perhaps most important factor to take into account is that the majority of the respondents both produce and consume BL and/or *yaoi* fiction. In this light, it is perhaps no surprise that very few of the respondents would select NL as their preferred genre of romance fiction. While 2% claimed to enjoy *yume* fiction over NL, given that the overall majority of respondents still preferred NL to *yume* texts, this arguably indicates that readers may dislike the idea of having to identify with a particular character. To briefly elaborate, as my findings thus far have illustrated, rather than identifying with characters, many *dōjin* tend to read rather neutrally as so-called "houseplants" or "third-parties." Thus, when a textual format such as *yume* fiction gives readers the opportunity to directly position oneself within a text, it may be uncomfortable for individuals who tend to read neutrally without identifying with any particular character. Whether this relates to the importance of the sense of autonomy stressed in *dōjin* subculture is questionable, but as independent producers, reading independently and not feeling obligated or forced to identify with a particular character may be a significant part of the attraction of BL and NL texts over *yume* fiction for BL and *dōjin* fans.

The more salient finding, however, is the overwhelming consumption of NL texts. Although secondary to BL and *yaoi*, the popularity of narratives emphasising "normative" relationships highlights that many readers of BL and *yaoi* are perhaps not so deeply invested in stories specifically concerning homosexuality or homoeroticism. Rather, part of the appeal of all three genres of BL, *yaoi*, and NL texts arguably rests in

their general ability to stimulate feelings of *akogare/moe*. Although by no means an absolute rule, aside from youth, cuteness, or beauty as major motifs, I suggest that BL and NL narratives which effectively stimulate *moe* involve the following common features: a pair of unlikely characters "drawn together," a distinct emphasis on character dynamics (or coupling), a narrative in which painfully prolonged sexual tension is optionally followed by an explosive and emotional release, or a narrative in which love simply overcomes extreme obstacles. In any case, while stimulating feelings of *moe* may be one of the major motivations and gratifying aspects of creating and consuming BL and other genres of "romance" fiction, the argument still holds that for many of my informants, their investment in BL and *yaoi* is simply for the love of it.

In spite of these findings which revealed that many respondents like NL equally or to a similar extent as BL, determining whether other genres of romance fiction stimulated feelings of *moe* was essential to confirm to what extent homoeroticism might be appealing to BL and *yaoi* enthusiasts. Needless to say, questioning one's sources of *moe* or sexual and romantic arousal is quite a private matter. However, given the enthusiastic response rate, I can only assume that respondents were comfortable with, or perhaps even enjoyed, discussing such seemingly private subject matter. In fact, the largest number of respondents (55) responded to Question 11 by agreeing that BL, NL and essentially any form or genre of erotica (for instance, even *shokushu*—the notorious tentacle porn genre) were all sources of *moe* stimuli. The second largest group (47 respondents) stated otherwise, and 21 respondents suggested that although BL was their primary source of *moe*, there have been many cases in which they experienced feelings of *moe* from NL fiction. An additional 16 respondents suggested BL was their only source of *moe*, and the remaining four respondents claimed that neither BL nor any other genres of fiction stimulate feelings of *moe*. The immediate inference from these results is that BL is the major source of *moe* for 98% of the respondents. Also, the fact that not a single respondent claimed that NL rather than BL was their only source of *moe* likely reinforces the earlier claim concerning *dōjin* investment in boys' love "for the love of it."

However, to validate such claims, it is crucial also to examine the comments by the large proportion of respondents who provided different responses. Although the majority of the respondents left the answer space blank, the remainder commented that *moe* stemming from either BL or NL depended on aspects such as the story (R11, R19,

R33, R98), the presence of one's favourite characters (R23), the relationship (R62) or the content (R63, R98). If we acknowledge that BL is the greatest source of *moe* for many *dōjin*, and if we agree with the previous claim associating successful *moe* production with the presence of certain narrative elements, then the comments made in response to Question 11 reinforce that the appeal of BL, *yaoi*, and NL texts arguably rests in their ability to stimulate feelings of *akogare/moe.* However, in addition to content- and character-based *moe*, the multiplicity of male characters permitted in BL fiction is perhaps one of the genre's great merits which sets it apart from NL. Aside from the multitude of male characters, the possibility that BL narratives might offer enhanced opportunities for *akogare*—on the premise that same-sex couples arguably face greater obstacles in accepting themselves, accepting their love, and being accepted—is another factor which may account for the genre's massive appeal. Whether the genre actually attempts to address LGBT rights or raise awareness about such issues is debatable. Nevertheless, there are circles with political intentions, and the sheer presence of the genre is arguably enough to promote greater visibility of the LGBT community. However, whether the production and consumption of BL and *yaoi* is empowering for either community (that is, BL and *yaoi* enthusiasts and Japan's LGBT community) is yet to be fully determined. In the following discussion, I will attempt to address the matter based on the findings from Question 12 and 15.

Regardless of what the proliferation of genre and its producers have achieved, will achieve, or might achieve in a political sense, by questioning my respondents' sexual preferences, I attempted to determine whether the genre allows readers to explore their own gender identity and/or sexuality, or whether it attracts a pre-existing readership of self-identified LGBT individuals. Under the assumption that most of BL the readers of BL in my sample were female, it was unsurprising that 92% (130 respondents) indicated that they were attracted to or interested in males. Of the remaining 8%, eight respondents stated otherwise, while four expressed no interest in males. Almost all of those who stated otherwise simply refused to leave a comment. Needless to say, given that questions regarding one's sexuality are fairly personal, this kind of response is understandable. Only one respondent admitted to being heterosexual, but not particularly being interested in males. Whether the respondent felt a general lack of interest or physical attraction is uncertain. However, the refusal of several respondents to answer the question might reconfirm Sugiura's claim that some BL and *yaoi* enthusiasts generally want to be left alone. In this sense, the respondents

seem to be stressing that although BL concerns the homosocial/-sexual relations between males, their respective investment in it should not be of anyone's concern. What the general findings reinforce is that the mass investment in BL and *yaoi* is a phenomenon predominantly, but not exclusively, associated with heterosexual females. Whether the production or consumption of BL and *yaoi* fiction involves the exploration of gender or sexuality (and to what extent it might be empowering) certainly depends on the individual. If and to what extent it empowers an existing LGBT readership and the wider community is, as noted, yet to be determined.

Although the responses lacked complexity, it is nevertheless worth discussing the respondents' general values and attitudes towards LGBT-identified individuals and the wider community in general as revealed in their comments. Admittedly, I had expected many respondents to take a neutral stance by either stating that they were not sure how they felt or avoiding answering the question altogether. This was reflected accordingly in the results, which reveal that a large proportion of the respondents (38) claimed to have no particular opinion. On the other hand, on top of the 29 respondents who stated that they support/are tolerant of "sexual minorities," 42 indicated that they see LGBT-identified individuals in a generally positive light. To a lesser extent, 18 respondents claimed to feel no prejudice towards sexual minorities, six stated otherwise, and nine individuals identified themselves as LGBT.

What this data suggests is that although the majority of the respondents are tolerant of the wider LGBT community or see it in a positive light, there is still a relatively large number of individuals who perhaps feel indifferent. This indifference to sexual minorities could be due to lack of exposure and awareness, and the inability to form an informed opinion. For instance, one respondent admitted that she could not answer the question since she knew very little about sexual minorities (R108). On the other hand, the general indifference might be partly due to a lack of interest in identity politics or the reality of individuals beyond the realm of their works and fantasies. One of the respondents encapsulated this sense of detachment from the gay community by outright admitting that she had not really cared about the gay community before (R52). To some extent then, this response might indeed reinforce Mizoguchi's claim that BL is essentially a "fantasy" and is not supposed to be political (2015, p.254). It seems that respondents are well aware that BL and *yaoi* concern homosocial/-sexual relations, but the emphasis of such fiction is not so much on the sexual identity of its protagonists as

it is on the heightened sense of *akogare* that it produces for readers.

As outlined and discussed previously, for many of my respondents and perhaps the wider readership in general, BL is a "fantasy" or a break from reality. It is a space where one can step outside of oneself and pine over a pair of protagonists whom one need not identify with and does not feel obliged to identify with. BL as a phenomenon in and of itself does not have to be intrinsically political. In fact, several respondents somewhat suggested a need to be less political. For example, one of the respondents who stated otherwise emphasised that, "I don't think it [homosexuality] is anything peculiar. I think the segregation of sex is stranger" (R47). In a similar vein, certain comments were made about the presence of diverse sexualities and respective difficulties involved in addressing and interacting with such individuals. One respondent, for instance, felt that bisexual men and gay men were the same (R66), while another explained that she did not know how best to associate with individuals who seem as if they want to come out (R111). In a comment of a more personal nature, another respondent specifically mentioned a family member who happened to have gender identity disorder (GID) and explained that she felt confused as to how she should best address the individual post-transition (R67). Granted, one could argue that the tone of such responses seems to carry a sense of frustration; however, one could also interpret it as a desire for simplicity and a movement towards the abolishment of labels and identity politics. To some extent, perhaps this reflects the nature of BL in general: that love knows no labels or boundaries, and that what matters is not who or what one is, but rather what one feels. For the romantic love emphasised in BL to function, one arguably needs to abandon all reason and ideology. Also in light of the results and comments made in Question 15, we can surmise that the majority of respondents are not necessarily prejudiced. Neither do they think ill of sexual minorities. Moreover, although their seemingly indifferent attitudes might at first glance appear prejudiced, these attitudes are arguably due to a general lack of exposure to LGBT-identified individuals, as well as the notion that BL concerns "love between males" rather than homosexuality. These observations are simply assumptions based on responses from the majority of my respondents, but I also encountered respondents who were more politically conscious and/or identified themselves as LGBT. Thus, in order to provide a balanced analysis, I conducted follow-up interviews, addressing any further questions I had for these individuals via email correspondence.

I encountered the first of such individuals at J-Garden 36, 2014. Going by the circle name of Andre' and only occasionally producing BL/*June* manga as a *dōjin*, Andre' was trained as an oil painter and has been producing art for most of her life. However, all the while, as she explained in her own words, "[I]t is a hobby to draw a comic. There has always been an amateur [artist] inside of me" (Andre', 2014). As a child she was drawn to art, manga, and anime, and she started sketching and drawing manga in junior high school. However, it was a friend that aroused her initial interest in creating manga, attending *sokubaikai*, and distributing her original manga as a *dōjin*. Inspired by her subcultural activities, she mastered the craft of manga production and became a semi-professional *mangaka*. Although initially selling her work online, she eventually handed over the burden of sales to major BL manga publisher, K-Books. While this path is all too familiar amongst members of the *dōjin* community, Andre's story differs in that her current motivations and her manga agenda have a more political edge.

In her attempt to explain the function of BL, Andre' acknowledged the oft-cited idea that women find it difficult to have fantasies about manga depictions of heterosexual love, since one inevitably associates the female protagonist with the docile Japanese housewife cliché—the kind of character who, according to Andre', "falls pregnant and spends the rest of her married life keeping the house spotless." Since BL manga and narratives featuring same-sex couples are more or less free from these associations, Andre' argues that women can vicariously enjoy all aspects of sexual and romantic relations without the formulaic heterosexual endings. It is just "one of many kinds of fantasies," she added (Andre', 2014). Although indicating that BL is somewhat synonymous with "fantasy" and that her works are primarily made for her own pleasure, Andre' nonetheless expressed her awareness of the wider LGBT-identified readership and community. With regard to the community and her own manga agenda, Andre' explained, "[H]omosexuality is normal love. I want anyone to know it. I have begun to draw BL to inform it. My interest is the right protection of the Gay more than BL" (Andre', 2014). Rather than implying that the attachment of labels is irrelevant or unnecessary, Andre' seems to go further and reinforce that love knows no labels or boundaries. Given that Andre' is middle-aged, married, and therefore mostly isolated from her younger manga-producing peers and circles, one is tempted to conclude that if someone like Andre' can recognise and support LGBT rights through her work, then there is indeed some possibility that other *dōjin* have followed or might

follow suit.

Rather similarly yet the polar opposite of Andre' is full-time artist and occasional *dōjin* Kazuhide Ichikawa. He is a gay, middle-aged *mangaka* and designer who started sketching and illustrating in elementary school. Currently publishing gay manga through Furukawa Publishing Company (a major gay-oriented magazine and manga publisher), Ichikawa also publishes as a *dōjin* to exercise greater control over his work. When asked what initially motivated him to create gay manga, he explained in the following fashion:

> Being gay is the biggest part of the reason. Except for BL, I've never seen any Manga in which gay people are the protagonists besides gay porn manga. Although, of course, I really enjoy gay porn Manga, I wanted to read some gay Manga as an entertainment. In the Star Wars like world, heroes are fighting to save Earth. But they're gay. In the Middle Earth like world, heroes are traveling around seeking for a secret treasure. But they're gay. In the world like Doctor Who, heroes are time traveling. But they're gay. They live their life, laugh, smile like the other ordinary heterosexual characters. Only one this is different. They just fall in love with people of the same sex. That's all. Nothing special but the protagonists are gay. That's the Manga I wanted to read. So I decided to draw such Manga. (Ichikawa, 2014)

Interestingly, although Ichikawa produces original works, he highlights the significance the *dōjin* community places on character-associated *moe*, as well as source texts for inspiration. Furthermore, he reinforces that the romance and relations between characters in BL and gay manga are no different to heterosexual couples on the basis that they simply lead their lives in an ordinary fashion and just happen to "fall in love with people of the same sex." However, in contrast to BL characters, Ichikawa stresses that "real gay people" are the subjects of his manga. The difference between gay manga and BL manga, he adds, is that "BL manga is by mainly female artists for basically female readers" and focuses more on romance and relationships, whereas "gay manga is by gay people for gay people" and focuses more on porn (Ichikawa, 2014). While there is nothing restricting gay males from reading BL or female BL enthusiasts from

reading gay manga, because BL manga is more prominent and supposedly less pornographic, it is perhaps more accessible for both readerships, that is, "female readers" and "gay people." Assuming that female readers are more likely to purchase BL manga or *yaoi* than gay manga, BL's merit, according to Ichikawa, is that it "lowers the social burden among BL readers against gay because BL basically deals with male-and-male relationships and tell them that it's nothing special and it's just one of the forms of love" (Ichikawa, 2014).

Given some of the previous comments from respondents, which placed more significance on love than matters concerning sexuality or gender, Ichikawa's claim may well hold some validity. However, as noted, determining whether such tolerant attitudes are held by the wider non-BL reading public requires further investigation. On that note, Ichikawa expresses his hopes that at least "people will pay more attention to the international issues of sexual minorities. This is not only for Japanese but also for anybody in the world." He adds, "I wish for the bigger market of Japanese gay manga for the international audience […] I wish if people would buy more gay manga with less pornographic contents" (Ichikawa, 2014). Ichikawa's hopes for the crossover and intermingling of different readerships—whether domestic/international, romantic/sexual or sexual minorities/non-sexual minorities—is interesting, not to mention potentially progressive or even transformative. Although it is plausible that exclusively male-oriented gay manga circles have participated differently at events in the past, at least from my experience at Comic Market 85 and 86 and J-Garden 36, 37 and 40, I noticed that at each event there was generally a row allocated for "gay manga" circles. Usually placed in the halls and rows designated for BL/*June* circles, gay manga circles are easily identifiable due to the cluster of male-only circles. While the presence of male circles within a generally female-oriented genre may seem somewhat progressive, in some ways it is also discriminatory. To elaborate, rather than being scattered amongst the other circles, the fact that gay circles are clustered in a particular row within the BL-designated areas arguably implies that gay manga either remains too minor a genre to deserve a space of its own, that it belongs to BL as a specific subgenre, or that event organisers might feel uncomfortable placing it in areas designated for *dansei-muke* (male-oriented) manga.

Regardless of the organisers' logic or intentions, what this practice highlights is that LGBT creators of LGBT content remain in a floating category, both within and

outside of the mainstream, without a sense of place and essentially "minor." This also highlights a need to at least briefly examine the extent to which my small number of LGBT-identified respondents thought that the proliferation of BL and *yaoi* might be empowering for LGBT-identified individuals and the wider LGBT community in Japan. It also demonstrates a need to briefly examine my LGBT-identified respondents' attitudes towards the proliferation of BL and *yaoi*, and in what sense it might be empowering or discriminatory.

# Chapter 4: Findings and Discussions: An LGBT Perspective on BL

Aside from Ichikawa and the small fraction of *dōjin* respondents who identified themselves as being LGBT, the voices and perspectives of the individuals who willingly responded to the LGBT questionnaire also require attention, if not a general analysis of the overall results. Although I distributed the questionnaire at several cooperative NPOs and venues catering for the LGBT community in the Kantō region (see Appendix 3: 'LGBT Venue and Correspondence List') and corresponded with various LGBT university circles, online communities, and noticeboards, the overall response rate to the questionnaire was not high enough to provide a summary that is genuinely representative of the wider LGBT community in Japan. However, with the thoughtful and profound responses the questionnaire yielded, I can at least reveal the thoughts of a minor few on a supposedly "minor" genre of manga. While I can only extrapolate from the data to a limited extent, the nature of the responses alone will perhaps demonstrate that a love of boys' love is neither limited to its largely female following, nor has it had absolutely no impact on the LGBT community in Japan.

In fact, critics and members of the gay community in Japan have been criticising *yaoi* for its misrepresentation of gay males and homophobic undertones since at least the 1990s. A key figure in this movement was Masaki Satō, who first addressed the issue in the feminist zine *Choisir* in 1992. According to Wim Lunsing's interpretation of the original text,

> He [Satō] felt that his human rights as a gay man were harmed by
> women drawing and enjoying *yaoi* manga. He compared them to the
> 'dirty old men' [*hentai jijii*] who watch pornography including
> women engaging in sexual activities with each other. In addition, he
> accused *yaoi* of creating and having a skewed image of gay men as
> beautiful and handsome and regarding gay men who do not fit that
> image and tend to 'hide in the dark' as 'garbage' [*gomi*]. In addition,
> he attacked them for creating the 'gay boom', a media wave of

interest in gay issues sparked by women's magazine Crea, which, according to him, did nothing for gay men at large. (Lunsing, 2006)

Although it has been over two decades since Satō's *Yaoi Ronsō* (*yaoi* debate) sparked a heated debate between artists, critics, and members of the gay community, tensions are arguably still high and, aside from discussions, perhaps very little has been done to resolve the issues at hand. Ishida recently brought this issue to fore. At first, he acknowledges that at the time of the *yaoi* debate, there was an overall consensus that representations of gay males in *yaoi* entailed "elements which can be discriminatory to gay men" (Ishida, 2015, p.215). He then proceeds to argue that while in recent years, "fewer and fewer characters in *yaoi/*BL make explicit homophobic remarks" (2015, p.221), there has been a tendency of BL and *yaoi* writers to "deny the connection between what *fujoshi* imagine in *yaoi/*BL materials and gay men in real life" (2015, p.213). Ishida notes that this claim is often made when "*yaoi/*BL are accused of containing homophobic discourse, or criticised for appropriating the representations of male homosexuals" (2015, p.213). For Ishida, this homophobia is manifest in one of the most frequently used expressions in *yaoi/*BL "*kimochi warui*" (disgusting) and utterances from straight male protagonists such as "I am not a homo! It's not the case that I love men in general! I just love you" (2015, p.221). Indeed, in spite of Mizoguchi and Ishida's claims, "fewer homophobic remarks" does not imply "no homophobic remarks," but one could argue that it is at least more positive than "more homophobic remarks." However, taking into account that *yaoi/*BL writers tend to make defensive or apologetic claims that their works are "fantasy" or do not reflect the lives of "gay men in real life," yet continue to appropriate representations of gay males, can we genuinely argue that the LGBT community in Japan has seen some progress in terms of visibility and positive representations? This is something which I have attempted to investigate in this thesis, and the reason why the dialogues and exchanges I had with the LGBT respondents are invaluable resources that require attention and discussion.

Firstly, let us look at the basic profile of my respondents. The ages of the respondents ranged from 20 to 40. My group of respondents included gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and pansexual-identified individuals. In contrast to the *dōjin*/fan questionnaire (which did not yield responses from non-Japanese fans and artists), the 16 respondents were comprised of Japanese nationals and foreign residents in Japan.

Although it seems logical to combine both groups together, for the sake of contrast and since they may have very different lived experiences, I will outline the responses from the foreign residents in Japan and Japanese nationals separately.

Based on the responses of the four non-Japanese residents, their consumption of queer media seems to include television series such as *The L Word, Ru Paul's Drag Race, yuri*-themed anime, films, pornography, music, games, manga, fan fiction, and novels. Although this indicates that quite a range of diverse digital and print texts are consumed, one particular response both reinforced Ichikawa's comment regarding the pornographic nature of gay-oriented manga and the need to provide a balance of romantic and pornographic content, as well as the significance of *akogare* in Japanese culture:

> I've always had a special regard for porn because seeing naked men in all sorts of shapes and hairiness helped me overcome a serious body confidence issue when I was younger. Also I guess a serious need was wanting physical, sexual intimacy with men for such a long time, a confirmation of acceptance/release of horny tension which most stories cannot provide. Porn is obviously something that you can masturbate to however. Every now and again erotic comics (e.g. Tom of Finland) or Bara-style comics take an interest. […] I could probably do with including Bi men here. The big exception is Ursula Le Guin's "Unchosen Love." It's not a typical love story, and involves a whole (alien) world and it's history and economics, rather than just a story about two men who fall in love. It's the imperfect nature of the relationship is also something I feel comfortable with. Also the Japanese film from the 90's starring Ayumi Hamasaki (forgot the title) - the friendship storyline, the setting (I love Japanese countryside) and the nostalgia aspects appeal to me a lot too. (LGBT-EN-R4).

In terms of manga consumption, an equal number of respondents indicated that they either read or did not read manga. Of those who claimed to read manga, only one respondent indicated that they purchased manga (as opposed to downloading). On the

appeal of BL, one respondent explained:

> I read BL manga all the time. I love reading about/seeing a
> relationship between two male characters. Not only does it just seem
> more romantic, the "taboo" nature is attractive. Also, while I do like
> women, I prefer men's bodies […]  so it is arousing to see two men
> together. (LGBT-EN-R1)

Regarding preferred character types, much like the majority of *dōjin* respondents, three out of four respondents indicated a preference for "regular guys," followed by a combination of good-looking characters and characters with either glasses or facial hair (two respondents respectively). Results concerned with frequently-sought online content revealed that three out of four respondents sought erotic material, followed by romance fiction/love stories (two respondents). While one cannot make generalisations, let alone solid claims based on a single study, I nevertheless suggest that BL and *yaoi* enthusiasts, and to some extent LGBT-identified individuals, share a similar appreciation of erotic rather than romantic content and relationship-oriented narratives based on the coupling of ordinary attractive males. Having said that, the prevalence and emphasis placed on *akogare* among both groups implies that an ideal narrative might necessitate some degree of fantasy. This was reinforced in some of the comments made about the types of narratives and depictions which were considered exciting or stimulating for foreign respondents. For instance, one respondent considered "risky, edgy, fiction/fantasy" and GL (girls' love) appealing (LGBT-EN-R2), while another suggested:

> I really like a forbidden kind of narrative—like brothers/step-brothers
> or two guys who have been friends since they were young. I also like
> narratives that have a conflict between the two—such as two rivals
> who used to hate each other but have come together as lovers, or a
> villain x hero narrative. (LGBT-EN R1)

In contrast to the *dōjin* sample, however, when asked which character they tend to empathise with and admire, the majority of the respondents revealed that they

identify with the "passive" (*uke*) character (four respondents), followed by "the aggressor"/*seme* (one respondent) and "other" (one respondent). Also, there was a general preference or admiration for passive characters (three respondents) over aggressors (two respondents) and "other" (one respondent). Rather interestingly, half of the respondents expressed a liking of both NL and BL (but preferred BL), which was more than those who agreed that they liked both genres, or the remainder who stated otherwise. Irrespective of their reasons to empathise with and prefer the *uke* over the *seme*, I suggest that these findings demonstrate that the element of fantasy combined with formulaic *uke/seme* power dynamics in BL fiction provide some of its LGBT-identified readership with the kind of Harlequin fiction-like romantic clichés and eroticism which some contemporary romance fiction authors try to avoid.

When asked to account for BL's largely female following and the genre's general appeal, responses somewhat resembled those of the *dōjin* group. In reinforcing the argument that female readers of BL enjoy reading from a neutral or "houseplant-like" perspective, one respondent stated:

> I think there is a type of woman out there that does not want to
> interject herself into a love story, which is all but impossible when
> reading an NL manga. When reading BL, a woman can appreciate it
> wholly. Also, just as men find two women together attractive, I think
> a lot of women like to see two men. (LGBT -EN-R1)

In greater detail, another respondent considered various factors which could be attributed to BL's popularity:

> My opinions are: BL was more accessible than Young Adult lit that
> dealt with sexuality issues and affirming same-sex love in the West.
> Being Japanese helped it stand out (e.g. displays) when the manga
> format was booming last decade. There just aren't many other
> representations of same-sex love in the media that one could easily
> access repeatedly. However, the manga format is easily digestible,
> can be carried everywhere, and is not just visual because the text

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alongside the picture adds a different level to it. Why women like it? I've heard that women enjoy putting themselves in the role as one of the characters, but I've always been stumped by that about Japan. I do understand that not just straight women but lesbians watch gay porn, so perhaps there is something about male homosexuality that appeals to different groups? For straight women, it's two men who look good. For lesbians, it could be the raw sexual element [...] how this translates to BL though I don't know. (LGBT-EN-R4)

Notable here is the respondent's observation that there is a lack of representations of same-sex love in the media which one can "access repeatedly" in BL. I suggest this constant exposure to same-sex themes in BL has contributed the proliferation of queer culture and LGBT visibility, although it is difficult to gauge the extent to which it has done so.

Having investigated the genre's appealing attributes, I followed up by questioning the respondents' attitudes towards the physical depictions of LGBT characters and their personality traits in BL and *yuri* manga. While not all of the respondents had read *yuri* manga, those who were familiar with BL drew attention to the charming yet unrealistic depictions of the protagonists. For instance, one respondent quite frankly mused "Oh wouldn't it be nice if a hunky/gorgeous gay man would walk into my life and make me feel like it was possible to fight for him" (LGBT-EN-R4), while another argued that most characters were "glorified and 'photo-shopped' versions of real life," further suggesting that that because their *raison d'être* is to "satisfy people's fantasies" there is supposedly "no real reason to keep them true to reality" (LGBT-EN-R2). Perhaps due to this photo-shopped quality of depictions, another respondent suggested that "BL would be better to have a stronger 'normal guy' presence" since the "majority of the BL is two very girly men or one overly girly man and one slightly less girly man. I think it's important to represent the 'regular' looking guys, too" (LGBT-EN-R1). Again, these three comments seem to reinforce Mizoguchi's argument that BL is essentially a "fantasy" and is not supposed to be political (2015, p.254). Furthermore, the suggestion that it is important to represent "regular looking guys" reflects a similar observation made by Mizoguchi. That is, in her analysis of recent BL texts, Mizoguchi indicates that some writers are avoiding the

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clichéd depictions of BL protagonists and that the genre is thus evolving (2015, p.160).

In terms of authenticity or whether the characters realistically reflected the respondents' personal experiences as LGBT-identified individuals, once again, the respondents reflected Ishida's claims about the generally unrealistic portrayals of same-sex relationships in BL and the tendency of its writers/artists to simply satisfy readers' demands for fantasies (2015, p. 214). To exemplify, two respondents argued that depictions of LGBT relationships and characters in BL are "sometimes" authentic, but added that they are "usually a little too dramatic for real life" (LGBT-EN-R1) and, much like Hollywood films, they are far-fetched, romantic and provide "escapism and a sense that anything is possible" (LGBT-EN-R2). In contrast, another respondent more frankly claimed:

> They [portrayals of same-sex relationships in BL] don't reflect my own experience because apart from recent sexual encounters, I've mostly been met with rejections […] I realise as I grow older that Japanese media tends to be melodramatic, so I don't think so. [R]egardless of whether they are lovely or not. (LGBT-EN-R4)

Thus, respondents generally acknowledged that BL is essentially romance fiction and places emphasis on fantasy and *akogare* rather than reality. Aside from the occasional "realistic" portrayals of same-sex relationships in BL which are mentioned in Mizoguchi's work (2015), BL is nevertheless BL—it is neither gay manga nor LGBT-focused essay manga. As the *Yaoi Ronsō* affair demonstrated, to assume that BL is (or should be) something that it is not can often lead to endless discussions and debates. Having said that, since BL arguably has the potential to influence attitudes towards LGBT issues, one should not be dissuaded from striving to produce or encouraging the production of more progressive texts.

Regarding BL's potential influence on public attitudes towards the LGBT community in Japan, when asked about its overall impact on society, the responses were generally divided. For instance, Respondent 4 argued the following about BL's impact on Japanese society:

It's obviously allowed homosexuality to be more of a norm than in places where transgression is met with violence or the death penalty […] I don't feel it's a [factor contributing to] how gay men have stayed strong and happy in such an emotionally oppressive country oddly enough. (LGBT-EN-R4)

Respondent 2 also conceded there were certain positive aspects (such as encouraging individuals to challenge gender norms or giving young adults the courage to come out), but added that BL "might also be regarded as one of the 'perverse' indulgences in Japan; viewed in the same light as love hotels and host bars" (LGBT-EN R2). As for the influence on the general public's attitudes towards the LGBT community and whether BL might have contributed to the greater tolerance of the community, Respondent 1 stated:

Unfortunately, from what I've read about Japan and how life is for a LGBT person there, I do not think BL manga has contributed. I think Japan would need a more pervasive outlet to overhaul their cultural ideas towards LGBT lifestyles. (LGBT-EN-R1)

Similarly, another respondent argued that the general public tends to ignore things it dislikes yet publishing companies "have only touched it [BL] because it makes money" (LGBT-EN R4). However, on a somewhat positive note, the same respondent further suggested that despite the ignorance that arguably persists, BL has "made it easier for gay men to talk to readers about same-sex relationships." The respondent added, "If people are making stories out of love, then it's always beautiful, regardless of whether it's critical enough for me or not. Here's [to] hoping that they don't stop" (LGBT-EN R4).

Despite the relatively small sample size, the dense and carefully considered responses highlight that although BL is generally marketed towards a female readership, it is nonetheless appealing to its LGBT-identified readership. Whether some mix of romance, fantasy, far-fetched character depictions and narratives, or sexual themes appeal to readers is, needless to say, dependent on individual taste. However, some recognition and appreciation of *akogare* cannot be denied. Furthermore, although

respondents recognised that BL might be ignored by the general public or else merely considered a profitable genre thriving on its female readership's demands for fantasy, some also believed that the genre may have had positive (as well as negative) implications for its LGBT-identified readership. To surmise, even if it is not entirely possible to measure the extent of its impact, through increasing its exposure, BL has arguably fostered the visibility of the genre, its creators, and the presence of an LGBT community.

To complement the responses to the English questionnaire, the LGBT-identified individuals who completed the Japanese questionnaire (although Respondent 4, 10 and 11 often responded in English) provided a balance of perspectives and perhaps greater insight into Japanese culture, sexuality in Japan, and BL as a subcultural phenomenon. Regarding media consumption, my findings revealed that film was the most popular source of queer media content (16%), followed by websites (14%) and manga and social networks (tied at 13%). Given these almost balanced ratios, one can perhaps argue that manga is neither a major nor minor source of entertainment for the LGBT community in Japan. Furthermore, given that around half (five out of twelve respondents) in the Japanese group explicitly stated that they did not read BL manga, one can deduce that BL manga is neither read with great enthusiasm, nor entirely ignored by members of the LGBT community in Japan. Several respondents who expressed interest in the genre justified their reasons on the basis that the stories were familiar to them (LGBT-JP-R12), or that the stories of far-fetched romantic love and the escape from reality that BL fosters are appealing (LGBT-JP-R1). Of the BL-associated content which the respondents reported consuming, the most commonly purchased items were mainstream BL manga (29%), *dōjin* manga, novels and games (14% each). If we also take into account that the number of respondents who enjoyed either platonic or erotic narratives, and identified with either *uke* or *seme* characters were evenly split, the finding indicating that mainstream BL was preferred over *dōjin*-produced *yaoi* seems plausible. More significantly, this finding reinforces that LGBT-identified readers are perhaps seeking narratives with a balance of homoeroticism and romantic love or friendship. This balance of perhaps unrealistic erotica and the ordinary (the boy-next-door trope a or formulaic friendships gone too far) in plotlines was also reflected in the group's choice of character types. That is, they showed that a mix of both "ordinary" characters (20%) and fetishised gay tropes such as muscular figures (16%), figures with facial hair (12%), and beautiful youths/young men (12%) were

once again favoured by the majority of respondents.

Regarding the group's overall attitudes towards BL's popularity and predominantly female prosumers, respondents' comments varied. For instance, some respondents could not "imagine" that BL would be popular among "normal girls" (LGBT-JP-R6), or thought it was only popular among a certain "type of people" (LGBT-JP-R8). One respondent succinctly explained, "I think *dōjinshi* is only popular among those women [who are] into *dōjinshi*. BL is just the same. Not a big population, I guess" (LGBT-JP-R5). In contrast, other respondents agreed that there is a growing demand for BL (LGBT-JP-R1, LGBT-JP-R9) or suggested that it was popular among half of the female population of Japan (LGBT-JP-R10). In spite of the responses which seemed somewhat critical of BL's female following, certain respondents, for example, were pleased that more people were supporting "sexual minorities" (LGBT-JP-R6) or thought it was good to have a hobby (LGBT-JP-R7).

When asked to account for BL's popularity among women, some argued that it was perhaps "instinct" (LGBT-JP-R5), "natural" and that "everybody is interested in romance" (LGBT-JP-R10). One respondent specifically outlined several types of BL readers in the following fashion:

> From my observation, there [are] three types of female BL readers.
>
> 1) Those people want to be away from their sex as female or gender expectation they're assigned. In BL, they can empathise with male characters. So, in their imagination, they can be loved by [a] male as a male character with penis or they can love male as a male with penis. Those are the people who would like to be away from their gender expectation as female in this society but still they're heterosexual females.
>
> 2) Those people would like to enjoy it as a form of porn. Simply similar to heterosexual male enjoys lesbian porn. One male is good. Two males are better.
>
> 3) Those people who use BL to connect with other women. I see some lesbianism among them. It's like Takarazuka. Even though BL

treats male-to-male sex, the entire world of BL is exclusively female only. In BL world where no real male allowed to enter, they can make intimate relationship with other women. (LGBT-JP-R5)

Highlighting some of the findings and arguments made by myself and other scholars in the field, Respondent 4 recognised the importance of self-gratification, acquaintances, and acknowledgement from peers, as well as some of BL readers' deep-seated desires to escape from themselves or gender expectations in general. Several respondents also reinforced such comments when asked to explain why many female artists invest so much time and effort into creating BL fiction, while others suggested that there were psychological or economic factors involved. For instance, Respondent 4 stated:

For some people, it's because of money. No matter, if they really like BL or not, the market is huge. Creating BL contents can make money. But for most of people, I guess BL is working for them to establish "friendship" with other females. (LGBT-JP-R4)

On the other hand, another respondent suggested that women's investment in BL was a "complex" associated with an old unrequited love, adding that "[It] might be because they can't get the man they long for and rather than recognising their own shortcomings, focusing on his sexuality might be a self-defence mechanism. It's easier just to think he is gay" (LGBT-JP-R2).

Whether women's investment in BL is considered in a positive or negative light and whether it is influenced by psychological, physiological, or economic needs is in many ways irrelevant. Rather, what is intriguing is that LGBT-identified individuals acknowledge and may even understand or accept heterosexual readers' reasons to be enthusiastic about homoerotic fiction. While I cannot argue that the LGBT community is generally tolerant of BL enthusiasts, based on the findings from both groups of respondents (*dōjin* and LGBT-identified), I nevertheless suggest that both communities are somewhat supportive of each other. Irrespective of the relationship between the producers of BL and the wider community of LGBT-identified individuals, there is of course the question of the authenticity of the representations of gay figures in BL and *yaoi* fiction. Despite the occasional comments which praised commendable attributes

of the characterisation of gay males in BL or *yaoi* texts, the majority of the LGBT-identified respondents were relatively critical. For instance, some explained that the characters were too "surreal" (LGBT-JP-R3), "completely different" (LGBT-JP-R5) or "extreme" in the sense that they were "too childish and girly, or too handsome and insensitive," and thus extreme versions of traditional heterosexual couples (LGBT-JP-R2). Others further suggested that if "more realistic guys appeared in their manga, maybe guys would read it more" (LGBT-JP-R12). Several respondents' comments reflected diverse attitudes towards "bed scenes" and the centrality of romantic love in BL. Respondent 1, for instance, stated:

> I've never come across sexual minorities like the ones in BL, who can jump from a kiss straight to sex […] to have anal sex without any preparation beforehand is enviable, don't you think? (LGBT-JP-R1)

In contrast, Respondent 3 argued:

> I think, at least, they're different from real gay male. Real gay males are more phallocentric and their sexual desire drives them most of the time. For real gay males, most of the time, usually it's like, "Is he fuckable or not?" However males in BL is more romantic and rational. They sometimes might follow their sexual desire. (LGBT-JP-R5)

In further contrast, the respondents who acknowledged some realistic or commendable attributes particularly considered the conflicts characters might face as members of the gay community. While one respondent argued that BL is "good when you're able to encounter sexual minorities face to face and relate closely to troubled characters" (LGBT-JP-R2), others stressed that it depended on the characters or situation. For example, Respondent 12 mentioned situations in BL in which the character has something to say but hesitates or refrains from expressing his feelings (LGBT-JP-R12). In a similar yet more critical vein, Respondent 4 highlighted the major difference between the dilemmas faced by gay males in BL and in reality in the following fashion:

> In BL (purely in my opinion), male characters might suffer from the pain of love. "Oh, does he like me?" or "Will he love me?" Those are the questions they ask themselves. However, they don't have to face

to the prejudice based on their sexuality or don't need to make a question towards their entity. "Will this society accept me as a gay?" or "Can I be a gay in this community?" Those are the questions they never ask themselves in BL. In BL, if a character starts asking such questions, it gets way too serious. I guess, in BL world, love is more important than the reality of how LGBT people are discriminated in their everyday life. (LGBT-JP-R5)

Whereas Respondent 4's claim might hold true for most transformative works, Respondent 6 seemed to suggest that realism rests in the portrayal of a character's personal issues, as well as the matter of wider social acceptance in the following statement:

As long as they don't look too girly, a character seems real to me if they worry about how they are perceived by those around them, if they get depressed when things don't work out. (LGBT-JP-R6)

Aside from the few respondents who believed, at least to some extent, that some aspects of BL represented the reality of gay individuals, a number of similar comments were made in regard to the merits of BL. Reinforcing the respondents' general partiality and BL's limitations, Respondent 4 explained that one of the great aspects of BL is that it encourages its readers to abolish their prejudice towards the gay community on the premise that whenever BL readers read BL, they are exposed to male-and-male relationships. While acknowledging this potentially positive aspect, Respondent 4 reflected upon this comment and added, "I don't think that things are simple like that, but I still agree that BL is helping to some extent" (LGBT-JP-R4).

However, rather than being concerned with BL's social implications, the majority of respondents were focused on aspects of narrative presentation such as the conflicts which gay protagonists might face (LGBT-JP-R1), or the high level of manga artistry (LGBT-JP-R2). More pertinently, though, several respondents stressed the significance of romantic love. For example, Respondent 6 claimed that although BL is the same as GL, "one is impressed by a love which grows by overcoming obstacles" (LGBT-JP-R6), while Respondent 10 indicated that BL depicted romance well (LGBT-JP-R10). Respondent 7 thought highly of only non-erotic BL fiction in which "relationships implying a spiritual connection" are reflected (LGBT-JP-R7). Evidently, while idealised romantic love appealed to many or even most of both *dōjin* and LGBT

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respondents, there are nevertheless others who perhaps look beyond the romantic ideals and remain more critical of the genre. On this note, before revealing the respondents' general attitudes towards BL and its respective impact on the LGBT community, I will outline the particular aspects about BL which offended some respondents or seemed to make them uncomfortable. Perhaps encapsulating the negative criticism of BL and *yaoi* overtly expressed in Satō's *Yaoi Ronsō* (1994), Respondent 1 argued:

> It's offensive if artists think their knowledge [of homosexuality] in their manga reflects the experiences of real homosexuals. The manga and illustrations are good, but it makes me angry if they think that real homosexuals are disgusting, or if they think of homosexuals in terms of consumption [...] For the most part, rather than the course of romantic love, many of the women only depict sexual situations. It's offensive if they think homosexuals are like that. (LGBT-JP R1)

On a more personal level, Respondent 5 (who responded in English) revealed:

> Till 90s, in BL world, gay male has to be female like beautiful person with a mysterious profile like a male version of Famfatale [femme fatale]. Gay relationship has to end up with beautiful, poetic death. That was their idea. As a kid, I knew I'm gay. But I was not like the beautiful male version of Famfatale [femme fatale] type of person as they describes as gay at all. Also the image that we, gay people, have to die or can't live happy life was really painful and I had very hard time to build up positive life image of myself. Reading those BL books, I was seriously suffering from the gap between the reality and the fiction. (LGBT-JP-R5).

As for aspects which respondents explicitly disliked, one respondent specifically disliked instances when characters abruptly jump straight to sexual intercourse (LGBT-JP-R9) or scenes in which "[They] make fun of gays" (LGBT-JP-R8). To a lesser extent, one respondent was not particularly offended but expressed concern towards the over-consumption of BL by suggesting:

> It has nothing to do [with sexual minorities], so it is not offensive. I just don't want young people to read it too much. Rather than seeing

a dream world, it's important to see the importance of openly and
actively taking action in the real world. (LGBT-JP-R2)

One can surmise from these comments that certain aspects of BL are unpleasant or offensive to members of Japan's LGBT community. Whether it is the hyper-femininity, the hyper-masculinity, the hyper-sexualised gay clichés, or the hyper-consumption of BL in general, the idea of being ridiculed, represented in a negative light, or used "only for consumption" is not only offensive to some individuals, but may also continue to perpetuate pre-existing prejudice and stereotypes. Furthermore, while depictions of romantic love are both idealised and praised, the recognition that such works are pure fantasy might not be enough to placate the LGBT community and convince readers to overlook the abundance of cultural clichés and commodification of gay identities in BL. For this reason, I finished the questionnaire by further asking for respondents' thoughts on whether BL has stimulated greater LGBT visibility and tolerance towards LGBT-identified individuals in Japan. Although half of the respondents either outright stated or suggested that BL has not contributed to the greater tolerance of the LGBT community in Japan; 25% agreed that BL has had a positive influence on the community; while another 25% indicated that BL's impact has been both positive and negative.

To discuss these results in more detail, of the majority of respondents who did not agree that BL contributes to greater LGBT tolerance, some thought that the "excessive representations" or "false knowledge" in BL are detrimental to the community (LGBT-JP-R7), while others thought that LGBT awareness has not increased at all (LGBT-JP-R3). Another respondent claimed that "normal people" did not read BL, but nevertheless added that, "we can change the world from a gay community!!" (LGBT-JP-R11).

Perhaps referring more directly to the artists and readership, one respondent suggested:

It has become easier to come out. On the other hand, when
encountering so called rotten [individuals] whose intentions are not to
understand homosexuals, I really don't know. (LGBT-JP-R6)

To a greater extent and on a more defensive note, Respondent 4 argued:

> [A]s BL becomes known by people, I see some people started seeing gay life as a matter of "entertainment." Not like what we're. Nothing to do with human rights. However, at the same time, some BL manga artists told me that BL is playing a role to "teach" BL readers that gay people do exist and they're ordinary people and nothing is wrong with them. I really think that's an interesting point of view. (LGBT-JP-R4)

Needless to say, some comments also considered the wider implications of BL in a more positive light. For instance, several of these respondents suggested that "self recognition has increased" (LGBT-JP-R8), or that it has become easier to come out or be accepted (LGBT-JP-R7, LGBT-JP-R9). On the other hand, rather than focusing exclusively on the LGBT community, respondents argued that BL freed women from gender (LGBT-JP-R10), that it "gives one courage" (LGBT-JP-R11) or that "Gay terminology is used more commonly now" (LGBT-JP-R9). Granted, whether such claims are entirely positive, let alone statistically valid, is subject to opinion and would require a longitudinal study to confirm. As I have stressed in this chapter, accurately gauging the extent to which BL might have changed attitudes towards gender, sexuality and the wider LGBT community is problematic. Nevertheless, one can at least make the following assumptions.

Based on the consumption patterns and preferences among LGBT-identified respondents, it was found that although BL is generally marketed towards a female readership, it also boasts a significant LGBT-identified readership. While the appealing aspects identified by respondents varied, they included romance, fantasy, far-fetched character depictions, and narratives or sexual themes. In general, it seemed that respondents were seeking narratives with a balance of homoeroticism and romantic love or friendship. However, rather than agreeing that it provides a satisfactory balance of eroticism and romantic love in BL, several respondents indicated a dislike of the unrealistic erotica or "glorified and 'photo-shopped' versions of real life." Such respondents tended to overlook the romantic ideals or element of fantasy, and were arguably more critical of the genre.

Although respondents to the Japanese questionnaire seemed to be more critical of the genre, some of the respondents to the English questionnaire were also critical. For example, some of the more critical respondents argued that BL artists' *raison d'être* was to "satisfy people's fantasies," suggested that Japan needed a "more pervasive outlet to overhaul their cultural ideas towards LGBT lifestyles," or recognised that BL might be ignored by the general public. In spite of the seemingly negative tone of these comments, I would stress that some of these respondents also acknowledge or understand the diverse reasons why heterosexual BL fans are enthusiastic about homoerotic fiction. As previously emphasised, it is difficult to argue that the LGBT respondents were 100% tolerant, let alone positive towards the wider BL fan community. However, I maintain that the respective communities are at least somewhat supportive of each other, and are perhaps more visible or "out" in contemporary Japanese society. Given more time for longitudinal research and a variety of avenues to conduct on-site research with the LGBT community, I believe a more accurate picture of the wider community's general consensus on BL and its readership can be achieved.

# Conclusion

Is writing and illustrating an assertion of individuality and autonomy, an act of defiance, or a means to construct and control a worldview without interference from the "masters"? Perhaps it has been and still is. As I have demonstrated, for the female writers in nineteenth-century Britain (before suffrage, before receiving their right to education, and long before legislation of same-sex marriage was approved in the UK), the very act of taking up the pen was a right to be fought for in and of itself. Whether an author or an amateur, for a woman, to write was a means of self-expression or self-subsistence, and in some cases, a means of resistance, social commentary, or a vehicle for social reform. In this dissertation, I have attempted to illustrate the extent to which Japanese women's investment and production of BL and *yaoi* manga is comparable to the investment and production of the proliferation of female writers in Britain during the Victorian era. As I have suggested, the major parallel between the two cultures was that the proliferation of either amateur or professional female illustrators or authors preceded or occurred during periods of major social changes involving gender equality—namely, the women's suffrage movement in Britain; Japan's women's liberation movement; and the recent developments in LGBT rights in Japan. Needless to say, investigating whether and how literary and cultural phenomena might influence social change is a complex and challenging task, which requires thorough investigation in diverse disciplines and with various research approaches. In any case, what I have attempted to explore herein is the extent to which these "Lady" authors, amateur writers, professional BL *mangaka*, and *dōjin* alike have empowered themselves as individuals or as members of a subcultural or like-minded community. Moreover, and in a broader sense, I have attempted to illustrate how they might have empowered themselves and others in matters of gender and sexuality.

As my findings reveal, rather than considering their activities as "empowering" per se, many of the *dōjin* respondents were compelled to consume and create BL/*yaoi* texts based on a variable set of elements. To recapitulate, rather than belonging to a creative community, *dōjin* respondents generally placed more value on publishing autonomously, having one's work read or acknowledged by acquaintances, and *moe* (as a form of *akogare*). While I concede that the NRI's model of *otaku* marketing based on collection, creativity, and community also applies to *shōjo bunka*, I maintain that the

current community of BL enthusiasts are driven by (A)utonomy, (A)cquaintances, (A)cknowledgment, and (A)kogare. In contrast to the economic and political motivations which drove the vast majority of British female writers in the Victorian era, my respondents' activities and efforts were rarely motivated by political or economic incentives. Primarily self-serving and self-dependent in nature, these creative works are more or less made by oneself, for oneself and simply for the love of it—for the love of boys' love, that is.

Although previous research has demonstrated that the uses and gratifications of BL and *yaoi* vary amongst *fujoshi* and BL enthusiasts, the ever-changing social implications of the content beyond its intended readership are certainly matters that need to be investigated in longitudinal studies. It is through longitudinal studies—especially with the LGBT community in Japan—that I believe subtle shifts in values and attitudes towards BL and the LGBT community can be identified. This, in turn, would provide greater insight into the wider social implications of BL. In addition to ethnographic studies, analysing media discourse surrounding both BL and LGBT matters in Japan would certainly provide at least one source of constant and easily accessible information. Not only Japanese television programmes and newspapers, but also social media and web-based content are invaluable resources for research on LGBT issues. LGBT discourse amongst Japanese social media users would be a particularly ideal resource to gauge shifts in values and attitudes towards LGBT issues over an extended period of time. In short, I believe a longitudinal study combining media discourse analysis with periodical content analyses of subjects covered in BL narratives would be a feasible and fruitful means to gain further insight into the arguably interdependent relationship between BL and LGBT visibility in Japan.

Throughout this thesis I have argued that since BL and *yaoi* specifically concern same-sex relations, one cannot assume that the LGBT community in Japan has not been involved or affected by the phenomenon. If we accept that both the *dōjin* respondents and the LGBT respondents could be considered as disempowered groups in society, we can also assume that they might be more mutually supportive or respectful of each other. Although I can only make assumptions based on my findings, it seemed that the majority of the *dōjin* respondents were at least tolerant or supportive of the LGBT community. However, there were also many respondents who were indifferent. On the other hand, some of the respondents to the LGBT questionnaire were overtly critical

and considered certain aspects of BL unpleasant or offensive. As demonstrated in this thesis, the idea of being ridiculed, represented in a negative light, or commodified continues to perpetuate pre-existing prejudice or dismay a number of individuals. Having said that, a considerable number of LGBT-identified respondents also acknowledged that while BL might be ignored by the general public, they believed that the genre may have had some positive implications for its LGBT-identified readership.

Creators, readership and communities aside, is it possible to consider the content of BL alone? How significant is BL as a genre, irrespective of its creators and readership? If a picture is worth a thousand words, does it have intrinsic value? If so, what do the millions upon millions of panels of BL manga "say"? Perhaps they reveal, rather than "tell." They reveal that while exposure has the potential to be positive, at present, same-sex relations remain more or less a "fantasy" in the eyes of BL's wider readership. Having said that, through greater support from BL *mangaka* (as Mizoguchi has also urged) and greater recognition of same-sex relations and progressive legislative changes in Japan, the same-sex relations depicted in BL manga may one day come no longer to be regarded as mere "fantasies." If, as a result of such changes, the aspect of *akogare* in BL associated with love overcoming harsh social circumstances or "forbidden love" is diminished or even eliminated, will BL lose some or all of its allure? Given Japan's history, with its enduring cultural representations of same-sex relations, and the modern-day currency of *kyara moe*, it would seem not. In fact, perhaps legislative changes and greater LGBT visibility could even herald an age of more realistic depictions of same-sex relations. In any case, driven by motivations of autonomy, acquaintances, acknowledgment, and *akogare*, Japanese women's love of boys' love and, more importantly, of its depictions of a bold and borderless love that transcends sex, gender, or social change, is proving sufficient to generate and fuel a self-sustaining "comic market" for lovers of boys' love.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: *Dōjin*/Fan Questionnaire
### English Questionnaire

1. Age
- 19 to 22 years (universities, technical schools, other)
- In my twenties
- In my thirties
- In my forties or over

2. If you consider yourself a *fujoshi* (female BL enthusiast), when did you consider yourself a *fujoshi*?
- In elementary school or junior high school
- In high school
- Around my twenties
- Other

3. If you are interested in boys' love (BL) comics, what drew your interest? Please state the various influences.

4. Do you go to Comiket or other fanzine sale events? Why/why not? Please state your reasons and/or choose from the options below.

- I've never been but I want to go
- I've been as regular attendee
- I've been to an original works event
- I've been to an event involving *sanjigen* works

5. What do you often read or write? Please answer in detail and/or select from the options below. Multiple answers allowed.

-Slash manga/parodies/*nijigen* works
- Original works as a *dōjin*
- Original (commercial/mainstream) works
- *Sanjigen* works
- Other

6. If BL gets you excited, what kinds of characters and particular aspects about BL are turn-ons? Why? Please answer in detail and/or select from the options below. Multiple answers allowed.

- Generally good-looking characters
- Glam rock-style, androgynous characters
- Characters with facial hair
- Just regular guys
- A combination of gorgeous guys and relationships
- Old men
- Foreigners
- Effeminate teens or men

- Minors
- Teens
- *Janīzu* style (a brand of male J-pop musicians)
- Muscular characters
- Characters with glasses

7. What kinds of narratives /stories, or graphic depictions excite you? Why? Please answer in detail.

8. If you visit BL websites, what do you look for on BL sites? Please answer in detail and/or select from the options below. Multiple answers allowed.

- Novels
- Comics
- Illustrations
- Erotic material
- Love stories
- Conversations about turn-ons and impressions of texts
- Stories of everyday life, friendship, or stories other than love stories
- Chat rooms, bulletin boards, forums

9. Who do you empathise with more often? Why?

- The passive character
- The aggressor
- Neither
- Other

10. Which type are you more often inclined to actually like? Why?

- The passive character
- The aggressor
- Neither
- Other

11. Do you get excited while reading certain manga? Why/why not? Which genres? Please explain.

12. Are you attracted to men in reality any more or less than in BL manga or other genres of manga? Why/why not?

13. What do you think of heterosexual/ "normal" love manga (NL), and dream/fantasy novels? Please explain and/or choose from the options below. Multiple answers allowed

- I like both NL and BL, but I also like dream/fantasy novels
- I like NL but I dislike dream/fantasy novels
- I dislike both
- I dislike NL but I like dream/fantasy novels
- I like both dream/fantasy novels and NL better than BL

14. What do you talk about with your *fujoshi* or other manga-loving friends? Please explain and/or choose from the options below. Multiple answers allowed.

- Anime and manga
- BL and turn-ons
- Daily life
- Fashion, gourmet food, sweets
- Conversations about our love lives in reality

15. Whether or not you identify yourself as LGBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender), what is your attitude towards LGBT-identified individuals in real life as opposed to in BL manga? Please explain in detail.

16. Why do you think that *dōjin* (amateur) manga are so popular amongst female readers both in Japan and worldwide?

17. What do you think female readers seek in BL?

18. Do you create your own comics, novels, games, CDs or goods? (Yes/No? If yes, what do you make? Describe the genre, kinds of characters, and the content)

19. How long have you been creating your original work?

20. Why did you start creating your original work? Please explain in full detail.

21. What motivates you and inspires you to create your work? Please explain.

22. How important are your fans to you? Please explain.

23. Do you take into account your fans' requests when creating your work? Why/why not?

24. Are you part of a circle/group? (If so, what do you find important in belonging to a circle/group?)

25. Do you sell your items? How? Please provide details.

26. Do you prefer to sell a limited amount of items at events or make your work available to everyone? Why? Please explain.

27. Do you make much profit? How much would you make per event? And is profit important to you? Why/why not? Please explain.

28. What is your motivation as a creative artist? Please answer in detail and/or choose from the options below.

- It's a way to get into the manga industry
- It's a side job
- It's a hobby
- Other (please explain)

29. Do you feel empowered as a part of the BL subcultural community and as a creative artist? Explain why/why not.

30. Other comments about BL and amateur artists that you would like to share.

## Japanese Questionnaire

１．年齢
- 　　19歳〜22歳（大学・専門学校）
- 　　二十代前半
- 　　二十代後半
- 　　三十代
- 　　四十代以上

2a. あなたが、「自分は腐女子である」と自覚したのはいつ頃ですか？
・小学校低・中学年のころ
・高校生のころ
・二十歳前後
・それ以降

2b. どうしてBLが好きなのですか？
・好きになるのに理由はないし、嵌ったらもうそれはしょうがない
・萌えるから
・たまたま好きになったのがBLだった
・行き過ぎた友情に萌える。百合も好き
・関係性萌え+キャラ萌え
・好きなキャラが異常なまでに可愛いから。
・これも人生の定めだよ、うん
・漫画に出るような女性が嫌いだから
・しょうがないのさ
・セーラームーンやCCさくらを読んで育った影響か疑問を抱かなかった

3. 腐女子歴はどのくらいですか？数字を記入してください。＿＿年ぐらい

4. コミケ、同人誌販売イベントに参加したことはありますか？(複数回答可)
・行ったことはないし、行ってみたいとも思わない
・行ったことはないが、行ってみたい
・行ったことがある（一般)
・オリジナル（商業)
・三次元（芸能など）

5. 良く読む（書く）のはどれですか？（複数回答可)
・二次パロディ
・オリジナル（同人)
・オリジナル（商業)
・三次元（芸能など）

6. どういうタイプに萌えますか？（複数回答可)
・美青年　　　　　　　　　　　　・オッサン
・ビジュアル系　　　　　　　　　・人外
・ヒゲ　　　　　　　　　　　　　・女の子っぽい美少年

・ブサイク　　　　　　　　　　・ショタ
・デブ　　　　　　　　　　　　・美少年
・外見関係無しに関係性萌え　　・筋肉
・普通　　　　　　　　　　　　・ジャニ系
・双方美形＋関係性萌え　　　　・女体化
・美形なら年齢問わず　　　　　・その他

7. BL は、プラトニック（エロ一切無し)とエロ有り、
どちらにより萌えますか？
・エロ有り
・プラトニック（エロ無し）

8. BL サイトを訪れる主な目的は何ですか？（複数回答可）
・小説
・漫画
・絵
・エロ
・恋愛ストーリー
・萌え語り・感想
・日常・友情もの・恋愛以外のストーリー
・チャット・掲示板など、交流

9. 攻と受、より感情移入する(自分を重ねる)のはどちらの場合が多いですか？
それは何故ですか？
・受
・攻

10. 攻キャラと受キャラ、より好きなのはどちらの場合が多いですか？
それは何故ですか？
・受
・攻

11. BL 本で燃える事はありますか？
・ない
・BL でも男性向けエロでも百合でも触手でも何でも燃える
・BL でしかしない
・BL でもするが、男女ものですることの方が多い
・男女ものではするが、BL ではしない

12. 男性に興味はありますか？
・ある
・ない

13. 男女の恋愛もの（NL）や、夢小説をどう思いますか？
・BL も NL も夢も好き
・NL は好きだけど夢は嫌い
・嫌い
・NL は嫌いだけど夢は好き
・BL よりも、NL や夢の方が好き

14. 腐女子の友達がいれば、彼女達とは、どんな話をしますか? (複数回答)
・アニメ・漫画
・萌え話・BL 話
・お洒落・グルメ・スイーツ
・彼氏 ・彼女・配偶者や好きな人など現実の恋愛の話
・日常の話

15. 実際の同性愛者をどう思いますか？(複数回答可)
・同性愛者か LGBT*者です。＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿と思います。
・何とも思わない・偏見はない
・理解しているつもりなので応援する
・他人事なので自分とは関係ない
・ゲイは平気だけどビアンは嫌い
・気持ち悪い・嫌い
・同性愛者についてはよくわからないので答えようがない
・ゲイは嫌いだけどビアンは平気
・その他
*ゲイ、レズビアン、バイセクシュアル、トランスジェンダー、など

16. 世界や日本において、一般女性の間で同人誌はどのぐらい人気があると思いますか？

17. 女性が BL コミックに興味を持つことについてどう思いますか？
今、BL コミックに（コミケ等において）なぜ人気があるのでしょうか？

18. ご自身でも同人漫画や小説、ゲーム等の創作活動をされていますか？
そのような活動をされている場合、分野（ジャンルやキャラクター、ストーリー等）についてご回答ください。

19. もし同人等の創作活動をされている場合、いつごろから活動されてます？

20. 創作活動を始めよう、と思った理由は何ですか？

21. 創作活動の原動力となっているものは何ですか？

22. ファン（作品を購入してくれる人、コメントを寄せてくれる人など）は大事だと思いますか？それはなぜですか？

23. 創作活動において、ファンの要望やコメントを反映することはありますか?その理由や、どのように反映するか(そのまま反映、違った形で反映等)も可能であればご回答ください。

24. あなたは何らかのサークルや同人団体に所属されていますか?また、サークルや団体に所属することは同人活動において大事だと思いますか?

25. あなたが創作したものを、即売会やネット等で販売したことはありますか?販売されたことがある場合、その手段等詳細についても可能ならば回答ください。

26. 仮に自分の創作したものを売る際に、即売会等で限られた部数のみを販売するのと、商業ルート等により多くの人に販売するのでは、どちらの方がよいと思いますか?

27. 創作したものを販売されている場合、利益は出ていますか?
差支えなければ、どれくらいの利益が発生しているのかもご回答ください。

28. あなたの生活・人生における、同人活動の位置づけを教えてください。
　例)
　　　・プロになるための通過点
　　　・副業
　　　・趣味
　　　・その他（可能であれば詳細を教えてください）

29. ここ数年で、同人活動やBL界隈で勇気づけられたと感じたことはありますか?(可能であれば詳細についても教えてください)

30. 他のコメント、BL・同人の関係について言いたい事があればお書きください。

**Appendix 2: LGBT Questionnaire**
**English Questionnaire**


1. Age
- 19 to 22 years (universities, technical schools, other)
- In my twenties
- In my thirties
- In my forties or more

2. Do you identify yourself as LGBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex)? Clearly state how you identify yourself.

3. If you are interested in queer-oriented popular culture, what kind of media do you generally prefer? Films, television programs, magazines (includes pornographic), novels and literature, comics, websites, social networks, music, theatre productions? Explain your preferences.

4. If you read manga, do you read boys' love (BL) manga? If so, why? Please state your reasons.

5. If you read BL manga, are you a member of a BL circle/group? Why/Why not?

6. Do you attend fanzine events like Comiket, Comitia, etc? Why/Why not?

7. If you purchase BL items, what kind of BL items do you purchase? Mainstream manga, amateur manga, CDs, films, anime, art, games, other.

8. Do BL characters get you excited? Yes/no? If yes, what kinds of characters and particular aspects about BL are turn-ons? Why? Please answer in detail and/or select from the options below. Multiple answers allowed.

- Generally good-looking characters
- Glam rock-style, androgynous characters
- Characters with facial hair
- Regular guys
- A combination of gorgeous guys and relationships
- Old men
- Foreigners
- Effeminate teens or men
- Minors
- Teens
- *Janīzu* style (a brand of male J-pop musicians)
- Muscular characters
- Characters with glasses

9. What kinds of narratives or graphic depictions excite you in BL manga or certain genres of manga? Why? Please answer in detail.

10. If you visit BL manga websites, what do you look for on BL sites? Multiple answers allowed. Please state or choose from the options below

- Novels
- Comics
- Illustrations
- Erotic material
- Love stories
- Conversations about turn-ons and impressions of texts
- Stories of everyday life, friendship, or stories other than love stories
- Chat rooms, bulletin boards, forums

11. If you read BL manga or other manga, who do you empathise with most? Why?

- The passive character
- The aggressor
- Neither
- Other

12. If you read BL manga or other manga, which character type are you more often inclined to like? Why?
- The passive character
- The aggressor
- Neither
- Other

13. What do you think of heterosexual/ "normal" love manga (NL), and dream/fantasy novels? Please answer below or choose from the available options.

- I like both NL and BL, but I also like dream/fantasy novels
- I like NL but I hate dream/fantasy novels
- I dislike both
- I dislike NL but I like dream/fantasy novels
- I like both dream/fantasy novels and NL better than BL

14. Why do you think that *dōjin* (amateur) manga is so popular amongst female readers both in Japan and worldwide?

15. What do you think female readers seek in BL comics?

16. How do you feel about the physical depictions of LGBT characters and their personality traits in BL manga? Explain your reasons.

17. Do you think the portrayals of LGBT relationships and characters in BL manga are realistic or reflect your own experience? Why/Why not?

18. Which titles or genres (if any) of BL manga do you think most accurately reflect the lives and experiences of LGBT individuals in Japan? Why? Explain your choices.

19. Do you think other media more accurately depict the lives of LGBT characters? If so, which other media? Explain your reasons.

20. If you find any aspects of BL manga unfair, what are they and why do you find them unfair?

21. If you find any aspects of BL manga admirable, what are they and why?

22. What is your opinion of the female manga artists who create BL manga? Why do you think these artists consume and produce so many homoerotic manga?

23. What kind of influence do you think the popularity of BL manga has had on the general public in Japan? (e.g. It has encouraged more young adults to come out/masculine and feminine ideals have altered, etc).

24. What kind of influence do you think the popularity of BL manga has had on the general public's attitude towards the LGBT community (if any)? Please explain. (e.g. People are more tolerant of minority sexual identities, people only exploit queer culture as a means of entertainment, etc)

25. Finally, do you think BL manga has contributed to the greater tolerance of the LGBT community in Japan? Explain your reasons.

26. Other comments about BL and amateur artists that you would like to share.

## Japanese Questionnaire

1. 年齢
- 19 歳〜22 歳（大学・専門学校）
- 二十代前半
- 二十代後半
- 三十代
- 四十代以上

2. 貴方は同性愛者もしくは LGBT*者ですか (細かく教えてください)。

3. もし, あなたが同性愛のカルチャーの興味があれば、どのメディアで楽しみたいと思いますか?　そのメディアを好む理由もお聞かせください。
映画＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
テレビ番組＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
雑誌（ポルノを含む）＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
小説や文学作品＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
漫画＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
WEB サイト＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
SNS＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
音楽＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
演劇＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
他＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

4. あなたは漫画を読みますか。読むと答えた方へ。あなたは BL(ボーイズラブ)を読みますか。もし読むのなら、その理由は何ですか。

5. あなたは BL サークルのメンバーですか? 何故サークルに参加されている / されていないのですか?

*ゲイ、レズビアン、バイセクシュアル、トランスジェンダーインター

6. あなたはコミケやコミティアなどの大手のコミック又は同人のイベントに参加しますか? それは何故ですか。

7. どのような BL グッズを買いますか?(複数回答可)
・ 有名漫画
・ 同人漫画
・ 音楽
・ 映画
・ アニメ
・ 絵
・ 小説
・ ゲーム
・ 他

8. どういうタイプに萌えますか? (複数回答可)
・美青年　　　　　　　　　　　・オッサン
・ビジュアル系　　　　　　　　・人外
・ヒゲ　　　　　　　　　　　　・女の子っぽい美少年
・ブサイク　　　　　　　　　　・ショタ
・デブ　　　　　　　　　　　　・美少年
・外見関係無しに関係性萌え　　・筋肉
・普通　　　　　　　　　　　　・ジャニーズ系
・双方美形＋関係性萌え　　　　・女体化
・美形なら年齢問わず　　　　　・その他

9. BL は、プラトニック（エロ一切無し）とエロ有り、どちらにより萌えますか?
・エロ有り
・プラトニック（エロ無し）

10. BL サイトを訪れる主な目的は何ですか?(複数回答可)
・小説
・漫画
・絵
・エロ
・恋愛ストーリー
・萌え語り・感想
・日常・友情もの・恋愛以外のストーリー
・チャット・掲示板など、交流

11. 攻と受、より感情移入する（自分を重ねる）のはどちらの場合が多いですか?何故?
・受
・攻

12. 攻キャラと受キャラ、より好きなのはどちらの場合が多いですか?何故?
・受
・攻

13. 男女の恋愛もの（NL）や、夢小説をどう思いますか?
・BL も NL も夢も好き
・NL は好きだけど夢は嫌い
・嫌い
・NL は嫌いだけど夢は好き
・BL よりも、NL や夢の方が好き

14. 世界や日本において、一般女性の間で同人誌はどのぐらい人気があると思いますか?

15. 女性が BL コミックに興味を持つことについてどう思いますか?今、BL コミックに（コミケ等において）人気がある理由は何であるとお考えですか?

16. あなたは BL 漫画に登場する LGBT のキャラクターの、具体的な描写や彼らの性格の特性について、どう思いますか? その理由も説明して下さい。

17. あなたは BL 漫画に於ける(おける)LGBT の人間関係やキャラクター達の描写は、現実的である、または、あなた自身の体験を映し出していると思いますか? 何故そう思う/思わないのですか?

18. 日本の LGBT の人々の生き方や体験を、最も正確に(忠実に) 描いている BL 漫画の作品名、ジャンルはどれだと思いますか？また、それを選んだ理由も教えて下さい。(もしあれば、幾つか例を挙げて下さい)

19. BL 漫画よりもっと正確に生き生き LGBT のキャラクターを描写している、とあなたが思うのはどのメディアですか。そう思う理由も教えて下さい。

20. あなたが BL 漫画で不快であると感じる面がありましたら、それはどういった点ですか? また、何故ですか?

21. もしあなたが BL 漫画に対して「賞賛に値する、功績がある、又は単に魅力的だ ] と感じる面がありましたら、それは何ですか? また、何故ですか?

22. BL 漫画を描く女性漫画家について、何故彼女達は同性愛を題材にした漫画の創作に情熱を燃やしていると思いますか。

23. BL 漫画のブームは日本の一般市民にどのような影響を与えたと思いますか？ （例：多くの若者が性的嗜好について、カミングアウトすることに前ほど抵抗を覚えなくなった)。

24. BL 漫画のブームは、LGBT の方々にに対する一般市民の態度（もしあれば）にどんな影響を与えたと思いますか？ （例：人々は、少数派の性的アイデンティティに対して寛容になった。単に、娯楽の手段として、LGBT の文化を活用しているなど)

25. BL 漫画は日本に於いて、LGBT の方々に対して寛容な社会作りに貢献していると思いますか。またそれは何故ですか。

26. 他のコメント、BL・同人の関係について言いたい事があればお書きください。

**Appendix 3: LGBT Venue and Correspondence List**

<u>Venues</u>

Rainbow Burritos
3-1-32, Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku
Shinjuku Bldg 3F
Tokyo, Japan
090-9834-4842

Bar Hoshio
2-6-8, Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku
Ozawa Bldg 1F
Tokyo, Japan
03-5379-6066
http://ameblo.jp/barhoshio/

CoColo Café
2-14-6, Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku
Dai-ichi Hayakawa-ya Bldg 1F
Tokyo, Japan
03-5366-9899
https://www.facebook.com/CoCoLoCafe

Gossip Café
5-46-15 Jingu-mae, Shibuya-ku
Phil Park 2F
Tokyo, Japan
03-6427-5505
http://gossip-cafe.com/

Mfnote (LGBT/*Sekumai* Social Network Service)
http://mfnote.com/

Occur (NPO)
6-12-11 Honmachi, Nakano-ku
Ishikawa Bldg 2F
Tokyo, Japan
03-3383-5556
occur@kt.rim.or.jp
http://www.occur.or.jp/

Paddy's Junction (Pub)
2-13-16, Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku,
SENSHO Bldg 1F
Tokyo, Japan
03-6273-1755
info@paddys-junction.com
http://www.paddys-junction.com/

Ship Rainbow Cabin (NPO)
7-2 Heights Yokohama #713

Daimachi, Kanagawa-ku, Yokohama
Kanagawa, Japan
045-306-6769
http://www2.ship-web.com/Top.html

University Circles

Betty Aoyama University LGBT Circle
aoyama.betty@gmail.com
http://betty.sakuraweb.com/index.shtml

Meiji University Sexual Minority Circle
meiji.arcoiris@gmail.com
http://arcoirism.blog.fc2.com/

Nihon University Mille Coleurs LGBT Circle
chs.1000coleurs@gmail.com
https://twitter.com/1000couleurs

Stonewall Japan
stonewallsig@ajet.net
http://stonewall.ajet.net/
https://twitter.com/StonewallJapan

**Appendix 4: Fan/Artist Associated Venue List**

*Sokubaikai/Events*

Comic City Tokyo 133 (KEI Corporation/Akaboo). January 26, 2014. Tokyo Big Site, Tokyo.

Comic Live in Nagoya: Winter Special (Sutajio YOU/ You Media). December 22, 2013. Pooto Messe Nagoya, Nagoya.

Comic Market 85 (Komikku Māketto Junbikai). August 15- 17, 2014. Tokyo Big Site.

Comic Market 86 (Komikku Māketto Junbikai). December 29-31, Tokyo Big Site, Tokyo.

Comitia 107 (Comitia). February 2, 2014. Tokyo Big Site, Tokyo.

DC Returns 2 (KEI Corporation/Akaboo). April 13, 2014.Tokyo Big Site, Tokyo.

Futari de ocha wo 4: Hetaria Igirisu x Nihon Onrii Dōjin Sokubaikai (Akaboo). February 11, 2014. Toritsu sangyōbōeki sentā (Taitō-kan), Tokyo.

Haru Comic City 19 (KEI Corporation /Akaboo). March 16, 2014. Tokyo Big Site, Tokyo.

J-Garden 36 (Comitia). March 9, 2014. Ikebukuro Sunshine City, Tokyo.

March Only Festa 2014 (Sutajio YOU/You Media). March 30, 2014. Tokyo Big Site, Tokyo.

Only Live (Sutajio YOU/ You Media). January 13, 2014. Tokyo Ryūtsū Sentaa, Tokyo

Only Live (Sutajio YOU/ You Media). February 23, 2014. Tokyo Ryūtsū Sentaa, Tokyo.

Shōta Scratch Special 2. May 5, 2014. Ōta-ku Sangyō Puraza PiO, Tokyo.

Spring Only Festa 2014 Part 2 (Sutajio YOU/ You Media). April 6, 2014. Tokyo Big Site, Tokyo.

Tiger & Bunny Only Event: Go Next 6 (Kettokomu). February 22, Berusaaru Shibuya Gaaden, Tokyo.

Tokiya & Hayato Chūshin Only (Happy Star). January 5, 2014. San Pooru Arakawa, Tokyo.

<u>Venues (where Fan/*Dōjin* fliers and questionnaires were distributed)</u>

Café 801
3 -10-6 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku
Katō Dai-6 Bldg 2F
Tokyo, Japan.

Tel：03-5944-9417

http://cafe801.org/top.html

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Takamure, Tamotsu. 1999. *Umi ni nita sora no iro* (3). Tokyo: BiBLOS.

Comic Market Catalogues (1982 - 2003)

Komikku Māketto Junbikaihen. 1982 - 2003. *Comic Market Catalogue*(s).
        Tokyo: Komiketto Co., Ltd

Note: Catalogues were only available after 1982. At early events only fliers were distributed. Therefore, the only catalogue for 1982 is from *Fuyu Komi* (Comic Market in winter), while the remaining sample includes only the summer catalogues from 1983 to 2003 inclusive.

June Publications (1978-1988)

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1978, 10.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1979, 2.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1979, 8.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1981, 10.

*June* (Shōsetsu), Tokyo: Sun, 1982, 1.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1982, 3.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1982, 7.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1982, 9.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1982, 11.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1983, 5.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1983, 7.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1983, 11.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1984, 1.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1984, 3.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1984, 5.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1984, 7.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1985, 1.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1985, 3.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1985, 7.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1986, 1.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1986, 3.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1986, 7.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1986, 9.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1986, 11.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1987, 1.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1987, 7.

*June* (Comic), Tokyo: Sun, 1987, 9.

*June* (Shōsetsu), Tokyo: Sun, 1988, 8.

*June* (Roman), Tokyo: Sun, 1989.

*June* (Shōsetsu), Tokyo: Sun, 1990, 2.

*June* (Shōsetsu), Tokyo: Sun, 1990, 6.

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*June* (Shōsetsu), Tokyo: Sun, 1991, 2.

*June* (Shōsetsu), Tokyo: Sun, 1994, 6.

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Anonymous. (2014). *Toriko* (fan book). Tokyo: Self-published.

Anonymous. (2014). *Web profile*. Tokyo: Self-published.

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