

Boys' Love in Girls' Manga: The Sexual Ambiguity of Teenage Girls in Japan and One Asia

The 25th February, 2019
Universidad Complutense, Madrid

Emiko Nozawa
The University of Tokyo



Cross-dressing-Noh (14th century-)

Noh *Aoinoue* (葵の上)



Noh *Dojoji* (道成寺)



Cross-dressing Kabuki (16th century-)

Kyokanoko Musume Dojoji
(京鹿の子娘道成寺)



Fuji Musume (藤娘)



(C) 岡本隆史



Cross-dressing-Takarazuka (1914-)

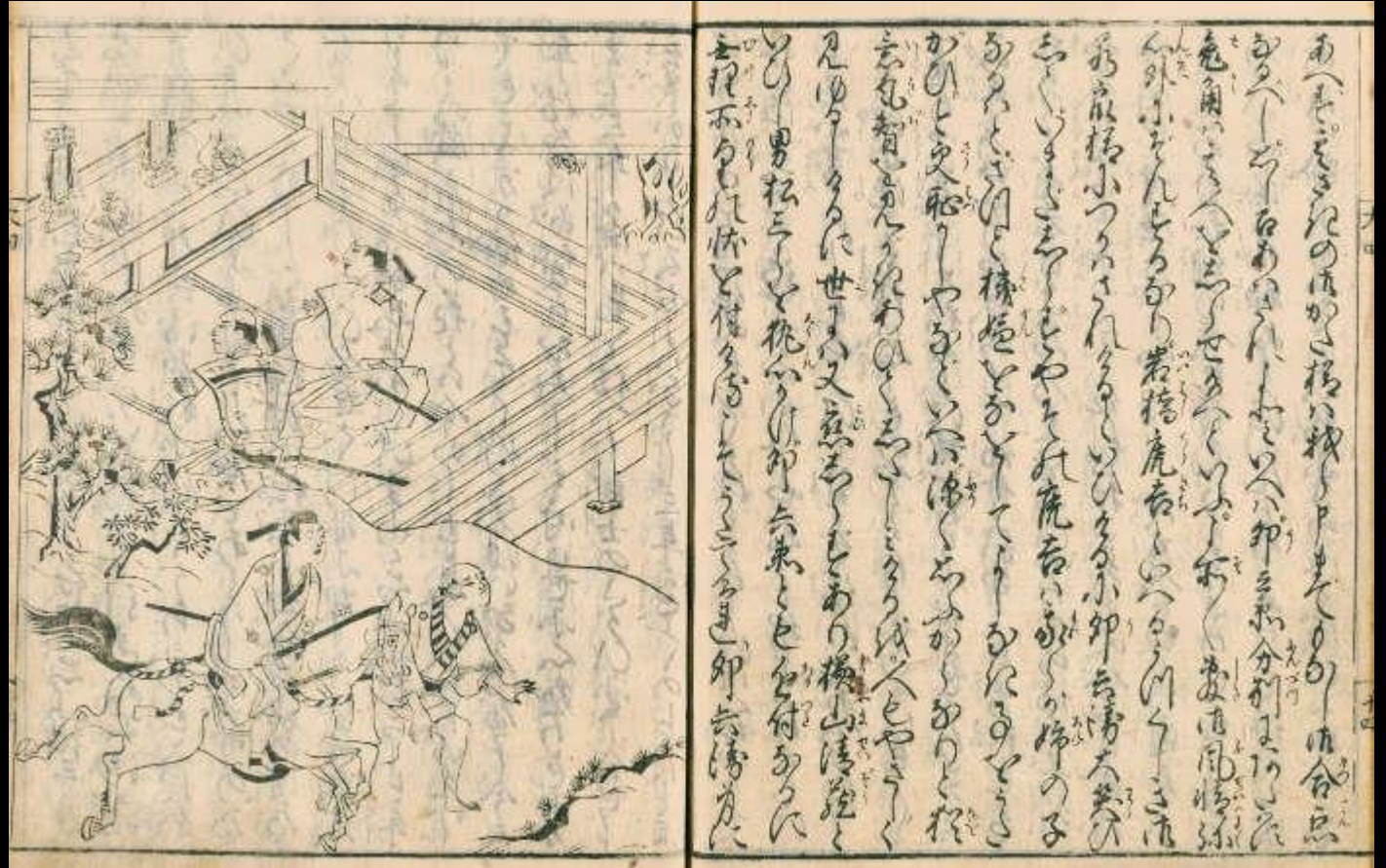
Gay Narratives & Portraits of Beautiful Boys

Edo Period (1603-1868)

Great Mirror of Male Love (1687) by
Saikaku Ihara

Taisho-Early Showa Period (1912-
1945)

Portraits of beautiful boys by Kasho
Takabatake (1888-1966)



S Culture amongst female students (1910-1930s)

S(ister): relationships or a literary genre that describes romantic relationships between teenage school girls

Generally a platonic relationship between a senior student and a junior student—considered a temporary innocent period

After some double suicide incidents, some schools prohibited



薔薇族 *Bara-zoku (the Rose clan)* (1971-2004)

The first commercialized and #1 selling gay magazine in Japan until the 1990s

Editor: Bungaku Ito (1932-)

Photographs, Novels, Manga, Pornography

Contributed by both professional and amateur creators

Contributed to visualize gay culture

Supported gay community by providing useful information on sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS/HIV

Later, a new magazine “Badi” replaced Bara-zoku



Cross-dressing in Manga: *Princess Knight* (1967)
Osamu Tezuka (1928-1989)

Tezuka is considered the god of Japanese manga & animation.

Created a wide range of stories and characters, including SF, medical drama, historical fantasy, animal fiction, mythological story.

- *Princess Knight* is an adventurous story of a prince(ss) Sapphire a girl bur raised as a prince.





Cross-dressing in Manga: *The Roses in Versailles* (1972), Riyoko Ikeda (1947-)

Historical Drama : 18 C Paris France

Main Characters:

- Oscar François de Jarjayes: A girl raised as a boy to command the Royal Guards serving at Court. Adored by court ladies
- the Dauphine Marie Antoinette



While serving as the Commander of the Royal Guards, Oscar secretly had the torment caused by her dual gender identities. Having learned about the corruptions of the royal family, and being sympathetic towards the sufferings of the impoverished people, she left her position and chose to help the people marching to the Bastille.



Before “Boys’ Love (BL)” in the 1970s: *The Heart of Thomas* (1974-1975), Moto Hagio (1949-)

Inspired by *Les amitiés particulières*, a tragic romance film between two beautiful boys in the 1920s at a boys boarding school in France

The Heart of Thomas, a sacrificial love story of adolescent boys with sensitive, complicated themes like suicide, love, religion, and spiritual rebirth in the mid 20th century, at a boys Gymnasium in Germany

On the last day of Christmas break, a beautiful school idol, Thomas threw himself onto the train leaving a letter to Juli that read “Here is my love. Here is the sound of my heart. Surely you will understand.” Having known that while acting as a role model for other students, Juli shut his mind to others and regard himself as sinful and not deserving God’ blessing, Thomas killed himself to make Juli understand that he is loved by everyone through his sacrificial act of love.



Before “Boys’ Love” in the 1970s:
The Poem of Wind and Trees (1976-1984)
Keiko Takemiya (1950-)

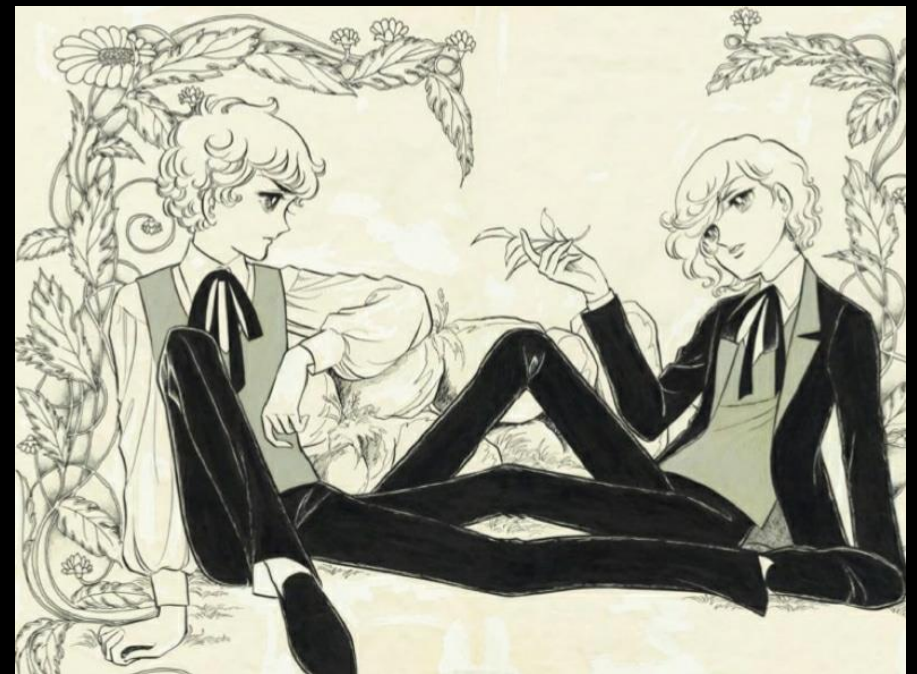


Also inspired by by *Les amitiés particulières*

The end of 19th century, all-boys- boarding school in France

A relationship story between two boys, with complicated themes, such as adolescent boys’ growth, friendship, homosexuality, pedophilia, racism, rape, and drug abuse.

- Gilbert Cocteau: raised by an uncle as his “pet” with physical, sexual, and verbal abuse. Grown up cynical and not to understand how to build healthy relationships with others
- Serge Battour: a honor student with half Roma background with dark skin.



Beautiful boys as “Other”?

- Relationship stories between effeminate adolescent boys
 - In Europe, the 19th, early 20th century
 - Elite boarding school—isolated settings
 - Problematic relationship with family
 - Sexually, racially, and ethnically marginalized
-
- The protagonists in these manga seemed the distant “Other” for Japanese teenage female readers, but got enthusiastic support from teenage girls.



Twisted identification: Beautiful boys as girls

For *The Heart of Thomas*, Hagio thought of depicting protagonists as girls.

→ male characters as it felt “smoother” —rejecting female sexuality

Later, in a film based on *Thomas*, girls acted main characters.



Teenage girls identified themselves with beautiful male protagonists

Adolescent period → The journey to search for self

Felt “do not fit in anywhere”: Sympathize gay boys’ marginalization, but distant enough

Beautiful boy’s romantic narratives allowed girls to be liberalized from various types of pressure and cultural restriction on their sexuality



Social changes in the 1960s-1970s: Urbanization, Improved standard of living, Universalization of secondary education, Mass higher education, Late marriage, Youth culture, Apparent changes in women’s roles and positions

The creation of BL as a genre & Fandom (1980s-1990s)

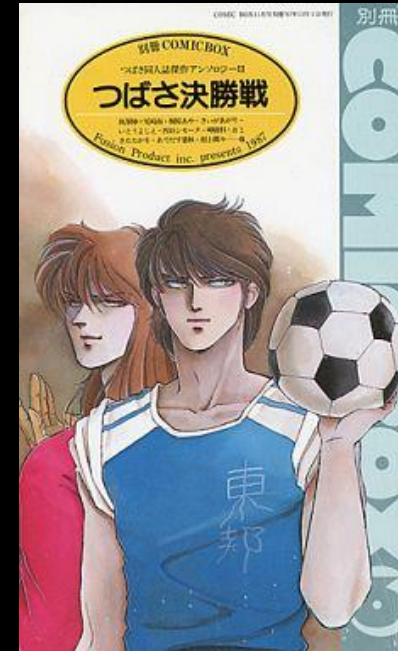
Fan Engagement/ Fan fiction stories

Amateur/Professional gradation

- Create their own versions of the stories with existing characters in BL manga
- Pair their favorite heterosexual characters of any existing manga

BL fandom as a site to “play with gender” (Fujimoto, 2015)

→ Creativity, Liberalization, Girls agency



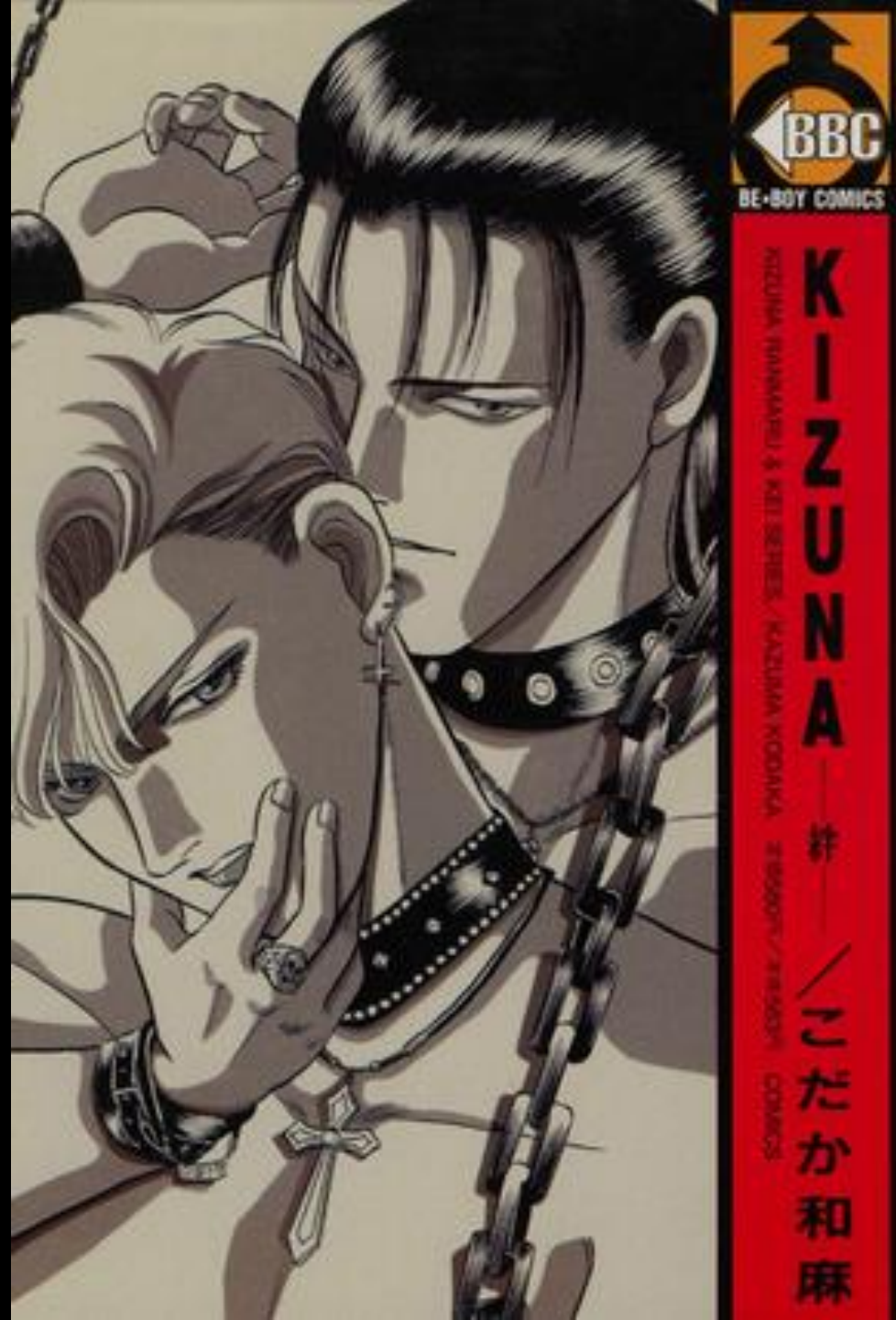
BL Manga as a genre (1980s-)

Various settings, dramatic stories

- Teen musician & Professional Football Player, "*Zetsuai-1989-*" (Minami Okazaki, 1989)
- College life and Yakuza conflicts, "*Kizuna*" (Kazuma Kodaka, 1992)

Dark themes, such as murder, violence, drag,
Handsome, but not effeminate men

- High School, "*Tsuki to Sandal*" (Fumi Yoshinaga, 1996-)



More realistic stories in everyday lives (2000s-)

- High School, *Dokyusei* (Asumiko Nakamura, 2006-)

A story of an ordinary boy who loves his classmate. Describes the process of his building a close relationship with the classmate

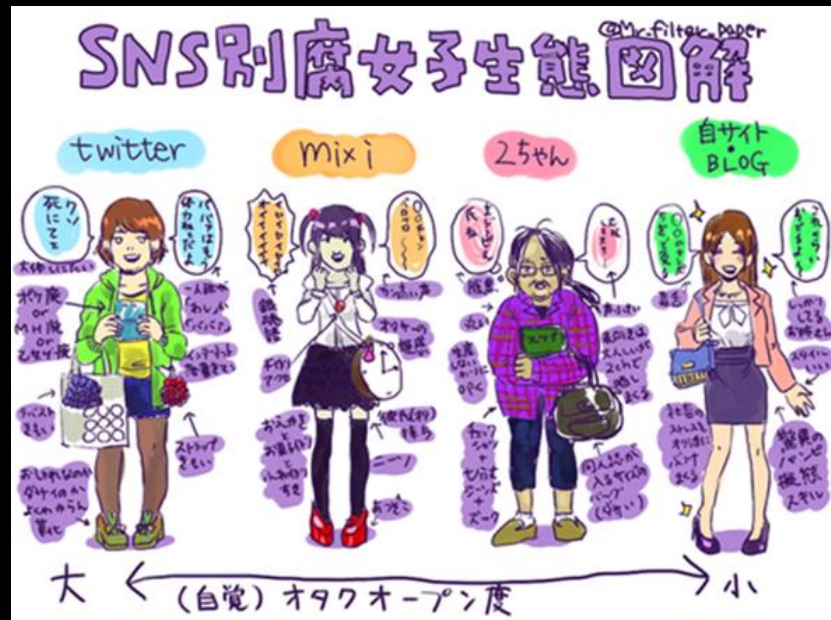
- Work, *Soredemo Yasashii Koi wo suru* (Kou Yoneda, 2014-)

A story of a businessman who has a secret crush on a straight ex-colleague



BL as Transition to mature sexuality?

- Generally BL readers are regarded at the transitional stage to adult heterosexual womanhood
- Lesbian women also read BL → Adolescent sexual ambiguity (Welker, 2006)



From Twitter: 塩 @Mr_filter_paper

- Culturally suppressed women's (hetero/homo) sexuality
- BL offers a space for adolescent girls and young women to play with gender and sexuality
- Approved ambiguous, alternative sexuality

“Rotten women,” women’s desire and hetero- normativity

Stereotyping for the creators and readers of BL

- “*Yaoi*” No Climax, no point, no meaning.
- “*Fujoshi*” Rotten girl
- These were originally self-mocking identity → became derogatory labels

Gender norm and Hetero normativity behind the stereotyping

—suggest societal discomfort and cultural taboo against women showing interests in overtly sexualized visual narratives

- Recently, manga/anime works where “*Fujoshi*” are protagonists

Kiss Him, Not Me by Junko (2013-2018)

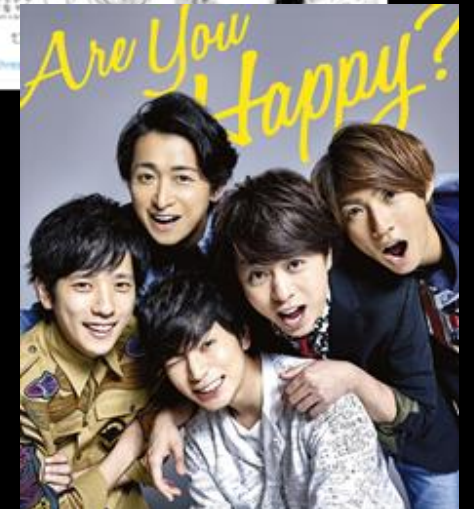
→ Comically describes *Fujoshi*’s perceptions, but filled with lookism, self-mocking, and heteronormativity



Recent Development of BL Fandoms

- The cyber space as a community: popular interactive sites to exchange information, share their work & feedback to each other's work
Twitter “# Boys Love”
- Emergence of adult (homo/hetero, married/not married) independent BL Fandoms—not necessarily in the transition period → more permanent “alternative”
- Problems: infringing copy rights and publicity rights—relatively relaxed legal practices in Japan (amateur-professional gradation)

From Twitter ふじまみお@原稿



Cross-dressing on mainstream media (late 1990s-) → Only MtF (Comical description & stepping down from power)



Mainstreaming LGBTQ? (2015-)

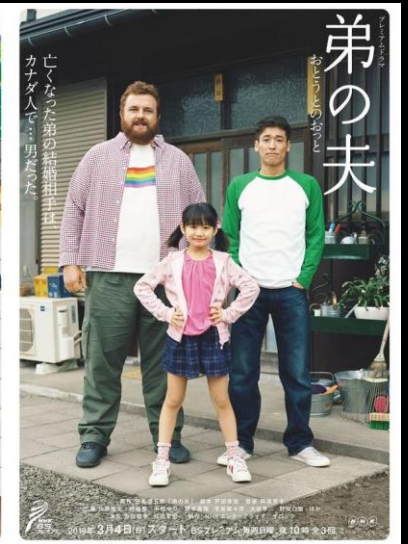
- *Yuri on Ice* TV animation series (2016) → Film (2019)
- *Ossan's Love* (2018) Gay Romantic Comedy
- *My Brother's Husband* (2014-2017)

Gengoroh Tagame (1964-) A gay manga artist

Descriptions of prejudice and acceptance

Won many awards → TV Drama (2018)

Not beautiful, not fantasized, but depict everyday life, from within gay community



BL contributions to LGBTQ activism?

BL fans not homogeneous—Readership: gay, straight, graight

- Twitter #ボーイズラブ (*boys love*) some posts mention activism
- But many hetero BL fans' "gaze" objectifies men in male-male relationship → Not necessarily involved in or aware of LGBTQ issues
- Seem to maintain conservative gender norms and heteronormativity rather than openly resist them (self-mocking and concealing their tastes)
- At present, BL manga has liberalized a certain type of women's sexual desire within their community
- Performance ≠ Activism → Unaware performances could have potential to be transgressive (Judith Butler), but could have negative effects as well

Girls' Love Manga (*Yuri Manga*) (2000s-)



GL Comic Magazines

- *Yuri Shimai* (2003-2004)
- *Comic Yuri Hime* (2005-)

GL Manga (⇔ “Lesbian” manga for men)

- *Yuru yuri* (2011-) (Namori, 1987-)
- *Citrus* (2012-2018) (Saburouta, unknown)
- *Bloom into you* (2015-) (Nio Nakatani, unknown)
 - TV animation (2018)

Its market size is 1/10 of BL Manga



Summary

- BL a narrative site to play with gender
- Explore sexuality—hetero- and homosexuality (not necessarily transition to hetero relationship)
- BL Fandoms: engagement, contributions, creativity, girls' agency
- Self-mocking/derogatory “*Yoi*” “*Fujoshi*” labels—heteronormativity
- Mature “*Fujoshi*” → not necessarily a transitional phase
- Potential to be more transgressive by collaborating with other genres, such as GL, gay manga
- Need more research to see to what extent BL manga further transforms existing gender norms & the homophobic discourse and creates alternative gender/sexuality

Discussion Questions

- Do you have any knowledge or insights on slash, male-male relationship culture in Europe? What are the similarities and differences with regard to gender and sexuality compared to Japanese BL manga?
- What are your perspectives on the relationship between nonpolitical performances and activism in terms of societal/cultural transformations?

References (English & French)

Fujimoto Y. (2015). The Evolution of BS as “Playing with Gender” M. McLelland, K. Nagaïke, K. Sukanuma, and J. Wleker Eds. *Boys love manga and beyond*. (pp.76-91). Jackson, University Press of Mississippi.

Hester, J. (2015). *Fujoshi* emergent. M. McLelland, K. Nagaïke, K. Sukanuma, and J. Wleker Eds. *Boys love manga and beyond*. (pp.169-188). Jackson, University Press of Mississippi.

McLelland, M. and Welker, J. (2015). An introduction to “boys’ love” in Japan, M. McLelland, K. Nagaïke, K. Sukanuma, and J. Wleker Eds. *Boys love manga and beyond*. (pp.3-10). Jackson, University Press of Mississippi.

Silverman, R. (2017). Review: My Brother's Husband GN 1

<https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/review/my-brother-husband/gn-1/.116086>

Silverman, R. (2017). Review: My Brother's Husband GN 2

<https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/review/my-brother-husband/gn-2/.138340>

Welker, J. (2006). Beautiful, borrowed, and bent: “boys’ love” as girls’ love in *shojo manga*, *Signs*, 31(3). pp.814-870

Film

Jean Delannoy (1964) *Les amitiés particulières*, France

References (Japanese)

Dream is Alive (1992) キャプテン翼同人誌

池田理代子 (1973) ベルサイユのばら、東京、集英社

内田静枝、弥生美術館 (2014) 女學生手帖: 大正・昭和 乙女らいふ (らんぷの本)、東京、河出書房新社; 新装版

浦野千賀子 (1968) アタックNo.1, 東京、集英社

尾崎南 (1991) 絶愛—1989、東京、集英社

こだか和麻 (2013) KIZUNA-絆 (Kindle版)

サブロウタ (2013) Citrus、東京、一迅社

田亀 源五郎 (2015) 弟の夫、東京、双葉社

竹宮恵子 (1995) 風と木の詩 (白泉社文庫)、東京、白泉社

竹本小太郎 (2017) 雲に抱かれて眠りたい (Kindle版)

(2017) まぶしい空にKissしよう (Kindle版)

つばさ同人誌傑作アンソロジー11 (1990) つばさ決勝戦

References (Japanese)

手塚治虫(2009)リボンの騎士(手塚治虫文庫全集)、東京、講談社

仲谷鳩(2015)やがて君になる、東京、KADOKAWA/アスキー・メディアワークス

中村明日美子(2008)同級生、東京、茜新社

薔薇族(1971-)東京:第二書房

なもり(2012)ゆりゆり(Kindle版)

萩尾望都(1978)萩尾望都作品集<11>トーマの心臓(プチコミックス)、東京、小学館

大和和紀(1975)はいからさんが通る、東京、講談社

よしながふみ(1996)月とサンダル、東京、芳文社

ヨネダコウ(2014)それでも、やさしい恋をする、東京、大洋図書

References—Images

Badi.Tokyo

<http://www.sbadi.jp/category/badi-magazine/>

Internet Musium

<https://www.museum.or.jp/>

J storm official site

<https://www.j-storm.co.jp>

mmm007 菅沼 誠

<https://lineblog.me/mmm0516/archives/1164363.html>

NHK

<http://www.nhk.or.jp/pd/otto/>

Official Website Takarazuka Review

<https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/revue/2015/genji/index.html>

Twitter: 塩 @Mr_filter_paper

https://twitter.com/Mr_filter_paper/status/464388293346357249/photo/1

Twitter ふじまみお@原稿

https://twitter.com/moto_drmd

References—Images

朝日新聞デジタル

<https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASL4R5QGKL4RUTFL00V.html>

<https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASL3W5GMVL3WUCVL01S.html>

演劇ニュース

<http://www.moon-light.ne.jp/news/2014/07/oscar-andre.html>

かんだ先生のお舞台日記

<http://noh-kanta.cocolog-nifty.com/blog/2011/06/post-fb8b.html>

神戸新聞NEXT

https://www.kobe-np.co.jp/rentoku/takaraduka/photo_gallery/201801/p3_0010861110.shtml

コトバンク

<https://kotobank.jp/word/%E7%94%B7%E8%89%B2%E5%A4%A7%E9%91%91-108834>

シネマトゥデイ

https://www.cinematoday.jp/video/VIYEMfOhsax5_1

References—Images

ダ・ヴィンチ ニュース

<https://ddnavi.com/interview/420470/a/>

手塚治虫 Tezuka Osamu Official

<https://tezukaosamu.net/jp/mushi/>

テレビ朝日

<https://www.tv-asahi.co.jp/ossanslove/>

東洋経済オンライン

<https://toyokeizai.net/articles/-/180184?page=5>

中村圭子(2003)昭和美少年手帖、東京:河出書房新社

モモモサーバー

<https://momomon.club/omoshiro/tkm2019>

やがて君になる Bloom into you

<http://yagakimi.com/>

るつきのポストカードコレクション 竹宮恵子編

<http://www.geocities.jp/rukio822068/takemiya/a-takemiya.html>