‘The power of characterization’
A comparative analysis of the transformative works created by the
English-language and Japanese-language fandoms of BBC *Sherlock*

by

Carolina Lindström
“John, there’s something ... I should say; I-I’ve meant to say always, and then never have. Since it’s unlikely we’ll ever meet again, I might as well say it now.”

– Sherlock Holmes, *His Last Vow*  
(S03:E03, 2014)
Abstract

This thesis presents an insight of Japanese fan culture phenomenon as a comparative analysis of the transformative works across various online platforms created by the Japanese-language as well as the English-language fandoms of the BBC’s TV series Sherlock (2010–2017). The subjects which have been chosen for observation are a mixture of Japanese dōjinshi (‘fan magazines’) and English fan art and fan fiction. The intention of this research is to highlight certain similarities and differences between the two groups by focusing on the output of Japan’s contemporary boys’ love fandom and the contemporary fandom practices. Boys’ love, a genre made by women and for women, is a practice which queers assumingly and/or confirmed heterosexual characters. As such, these involve writing and drawing contents of already established characters. Imaginations of male-male relationships function as an escapism for heterosexual women all over the world. This thesis focuses on and illuminate its particularities by contrasting it with the respective genre of the English-language fandom, called slash.

Conventions

All translations, unless stated otherwise, are done by the author. This thesis is composed by British English spelling conventions with the exception of quotes written in American English.

In this thesis, the Modified Hepburn Romanization system will be used. Macrons will be used for a, e, o and u when writing long vowels. Long vowel for ‘i’ will be written as ‘ii.’ Japanese words are written using italics, even if they are loan words, excluding the Japanese city names and more commonly used words such as anime and manga. As an example, ‘kimono’ would be written as ‘kimono.’ Japanese names appear with the given name following the surname, Western names with the surname following the given name.

This thesis refrains from comparing Japan to ‘the West’ as a large amount of the fans engaged in the English-language fandom do not reside in what is considered ‘the West.’ The distinction has been made demonstrated through which language said narrative has been consumed, thus the comparison of Japanese and English-language works.

When referring to the characters narrated by original author Arthur Conan Doyle compared to the BBC’s adaptation, they will be distinguished by the notion of their surnames and given names; Holmes/Watson and Sherlock/John.

Keywords

Sherlock Holmes; BBC Sherlock; fan culture studies; popular culture; transformative work; dōjinshi; boys’ love; yaoi; slash; Johnlock.
Abbreviations

ACD: Arthur Conan Doyle.
AO3: Archive of Our Own.
BAFTA: British Academy of Film and Television Arts.
BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation.
BJ/MS (alt. MS/BJ): Benedict John/Martin Sherlock.
BDSM: Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism.
BL: Boys’ Love.
Dubcon (alt. rapefic): Dubious consent.
EMP: Extended Mind Palace.
F/F: Female/Female (homosexual; lesbian).
Het: Heterosexual.
JSHC: Japan Sherlock Holmes Club.
LGBTQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, etc.
MCU: Marvel Cinematic Universe.
M/M: Male/Male (homosexual; gay).
MP31: Movies Paradies 31.
Noncon (alt. rapefic): No consent.
STD: Sexually Transmitted Disease.
TJLC: The Johnlock Conspiracy.
TWC: Transformative Works and Cultures.

Translations

Ahegao: facial expression made during orgasm.
Bara: lit. rose, same-sex love fiction by and for gay men.
Bishōnen: beautiful boy.
Chibi: lit. little, type of deformed characters.
Cosplay: costume play, dressing up and representing fictional characters.
Dōjin: author of dōjinshi, i.e. self-published works.
Dōjinshi: self-published works.
Fujoshi/Fudanshi: ‘rotten’ girl/boy, enthusiasts of boys’ love.
Gendai-ban: modern version.
Hentai: pornographic genre of manga/anime.
Komiketto: Comiket (alt. Comic Market)
Mangaka: author of manga, i.e. Japanese comics.
Nekomimi: cat ears.
Otaku: geek/nerd, commonly of manga/anime/games.
Rakugaki: lit. graffiti (alt. ‘scribbles’).
Seme/Uke: attacker/receiver (alt. ‘top’/’bottom’).
Shōjo/Shōnen: genres for young female/male audiences.
Shōnen ai: genre of love between young men.
Shotacon: abb. shōtarō complex, erotic genre of pre-pubescent boys.
Tanbi: aestheticism.
# Table of Contents

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1  
   1.1 Purpose of Study & Research Questions .............................................................. 2  
   1.2 The Beginning of Doyle .......................................................................................... 2  
      1.2.1 Holmes & Watson .......................................................................................... 3  
      1.2.1.1 Characters: Visuals .................................................................................... 4  
      1.2.1.2 Characters: Skills ...................................................................................... 5  
2. Theory & Concepts ......................................................................................................... 6  
   2.1 Fan Culture Studies ................................................................................................. 6  
      2.1.1 Existing Research .......................................................................................... 10  
   2.2 Slash ....................................................................................................................... 13  
   2.3 Boys’ Love .............................................................................................................. 15  
3. Method & Material ......................................................................................................... 18  
   3.1 Method ................................................................................................................... 18  
   3.2 Material .................................................................................................................. 18  
      3.2.1 BBC Sherlock ................................................................................................. 18  
      3.2.2 Transformative Works of BBC’s Sherlock ....................................................... 21  
      3.2.3 Orthography in Transformative Works ............................................................ 23  
4. Analysis: Analogy .......................................................................................................... 25  
   4.1 Transformative Works of the Japanese-language Fandom ........................................ 25  
      4.1.1 Development ................................................................................................. 28  
   4.2 Transformative Works of the English-language Fandom ......................................... 31  
      4.2.1 Development ................................................................................................. 33  
5. Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 34  

Summary ............................................................................................................................ 35  

Bibliography ....................................................................................................................... 36  

Appendix .............................................................................................................................. 44
1. Introduction

The BBC series *Sherlock* shows what would happen if the world-famous stories featuring Holmes and Watson, written by Arthur Conan Doyle (below abbreviated as ACD, 1859–1930), were created and put on screen in today’s day and age; both in technology and narration. The first season of BBC *Sherlock*, starring actors Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman in the leading roles, broadcasted on British television back in July 2010. It only came to reach Japanese television a year later. By then, the series had gained a total viewership of over 25 million in the United Kingdom. Over the course of a total of four arcs broadcasted between 2010–2017, the series would only increase in popularity and by the time the second season aired, the premier nights’ viewership had reached a total of over 30 million views.

This popularity is closely tied to fandom, and a new kind of fandom at that. Enthusiasts have existed since the first publication of the novels and they have made Sherlock Holmes an iconic name for British history and culture. Societies have been created in his honour, drawing thousands of enthusiasts and scholars titled Sherlockians, to discuss the contents of the original textual narratives. The major ones are the Sherlock Holmes Society and the Baker Streets Irregulars, founded in London and New York in 1934. Japan has its own established society that was founded in 1977, called *Nihon Shōrōkku Hōmuzu Kurabu* (Japan Sherlock Holmes Club, abbreviated JSHC) with a number of 80,000 members. However, not all enthusiasts engage in activities such as belonging to a specific society, but recently rather in fannish activities via online platforms. Contemporary fandom practices involve writing and drawing their own content of the already established characters, Holmes and Watson as well as minor characters. Yet, a significant number of fans have a very specific inclination, namely towards imagining Holmes and Watson as a homosexual couple. Such imagination and the resulting creations have gained renown under the name of ‘transformative works’ since the mid-2000s.\(^1\) The word transformative was coined by the American fandom to avoid copyright issue, that is, claims of mere imitation. The BBC’s take on Holmes and Watson had been ranked within the top five most popular homosexual relationships by the amount of transformative fiction uploaded.\(^2\) This has led to the universal internet phenomenon called *Johnlock*.

The subject of this thesis is this expansion in the form of transformative creations across various online platforms. Furthermore, this thesis investigates the similarities and differences in development by focusing on the works submitted within specified fandom spaces. By applying critical tools developed in fan culture studies, the aim is to show and examine the extensive variety of content created from the same source material. This kind of material is what is called *canon* within the context of fandom; the material which is considered official and authoritative by the audience, in comparison to *fanon*, which is the subject of this thesis. Nowadays, referring to original content as canon has become common between fandom communities.\(^3\)

The idea of two male characters having a romantic/sexual relationship with or without evidence in the source narrative itself, will be discussed with respect to two different forms in this thesis: on the one hand, *slash*, and on the other hand, *boys’ love*, with slash representing English-speaking fandom practices and boys’ love representing Japanese-oriented fandom practices. Boys’ love, a genre made by women and for women, is a practice which queers assumingly and/or confirmed heterosexual

---

\(^1\) See for example the e-journal *Transformative Works and Cultures* (TWC).
\(^2\) Toastystats (destinationtoast), ‘[Fandom stats] Which are the biggest ships on AO3?’, *Archive of Our Own*, blog entry, 1 November 2013 (accessed 7 July 2017).


Centrumlumina, Tumblr, blog entry, no title, 4 August 2016 accessed 7 July 2017).
\(^3\) It was used for the first time in context to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, in fact. This was to distinguish the analogy of the fiction itself back in the 19th century.

Canon: the content which is considered official and authoritative (original) by the audience.

Fanon: the content created by fans, which has little or no connection to the canon.
characters. In some cases, slash can be equivalent to shipping fandom, as boys’ love is parallel to the Japanese abbreviation, called yaoi. The former term comes from the word relationship, thus the verb form of shipping certain characters when having a preference for them to be in a romantic/sexual relationship together. Boys’ love/yaoi, as mentioned, is the Japanese equivalent of this genre, and yaoi is the Japanese acronym which indicates “no climax, no resolution, no meaning”, hence erotica between men. While the two main views would appear similar, apart from their geographical origins at first look, the practices do in fact differ. This shall be demonstrated in this thesis.

In order to achieve its objective, this thesis applies a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. With respect to quantity, it determines on a broader scale the amount of transformative works that has been submitted to certain online platforms whilst the usage of qualitative methods is to determine the contents of said material. The primary sources of this thesis are dōjinshi (Japanese ‘fan magazines”) which will be subjected to content analysis. As the main subject for this thesis is the transformative works, the secondary data in the form of feedback regarding various content done previously by the fanbase is of utmost importance.

1.1 Purpose of Study & Research Questions

As this thesis is a study in fan cultures, the aspiration of its purpose is twofold: to draw attention to the responses and transformative works of the BBC series Sherlock, and to discuss this fan culture interculturally, in regard to both the English-language community as well as the Japanese-language community. As the original content written by Arthur Conan Doyle and its adaptation by the BBC was targeted to an English centred audience, it is of interest to take notion of any differences due to intercultural diversity; that is, whether the Japanese audience consumes the content and reconstructs it differently than its intended viewers. This could be investigated in the form of sociological or ethnographic audience research, but the fan creations themselves also provide rich insight. I shall focus on the output of Japan’s contemporary boys’ love fandom, and illuminate its particularities by contrasting it with the respective English-language fandom. My investigation is guided by the following research questions: firstly, what kind of transformative works have been created by fans? Secondly, how do transformative works by the English-speaking fans differ from what has come to exist within the Japanese part of the audience? And what are the significant differences in preferences shown in works created such as fan fiction and dōjinshi?

1.2 The Beginning of Doyle

Arthur Conan Doyle was a British novelist. Formerly a physician, he is also the author who created the characters known as Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson. Whilst some of their adventures became more popular than others, these two men came to feature in a total of four full length novels and 56 short stories during the time span of over 20 years (1887–1927).

Doyle published his first story featuring Holmes and Watson in 1887, titled A Study in Scarlet. It was the first out of his four full length novels, 95 pages of approximate A5 size. Unlike the majority of his later/subsequent stories which were published in The Strand Magazine, his first story was

---

4 In Japanese, “yama nashi, ochi nashi, iimashi”.
5 This thesis treats the difference between content and content analysis as the overall subject and the significant aspects included in said subject.
6 Self-published and officially published contents in fandom and cultural industry: the word content is being used in this thesis in a twofold way: first, as the theme and events and ideology of a narrative, and second, as the raw material of the publishing/creative industry. This is a specifically Japanese term used increasingly in recent years.
7 For an overview of Doyle’s following works, see Table 1 in the Appendix.
published in the paperback magazine, *Beeton’s Christmas Annual* of 1887.\(^8\) Although rejected at first by the magazine editors, the issue later came to sell out in two weeks.\(^9\) By the time, Doyle remained anonymous as he had sold the rights of the work to the publishers. After regaining his rights, he was able to put a name to the stories. Reminiscent of Japanese manga which is mainly magazine-based, the format of the magazine seems to match a contemporary format, i.e. the TV (mini) series with its reliance on standing characters, which do not develop as personalities like in modern novels, but are a given from the beginning and serve to keep readers/viewers hooked.

1.2.1 Holmes & Watson

A *Study in Scarlet* is perhaps one of Doyle’s most well-known works, along with *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902). It shows ACD’s way of organizing a popular-literature narrative, especially with respect to remarkable, easy-to-recognize, iconic characters, and as such it provides some points of attraction which have appealed to 21st century fans of boys’ love and slash. It is narrated from the perspective of Dr. Watson, as is stated in the beginning of the story itself: “Being a Reprint from the Reminiscences of John H. Watson, MD, Late of the Army Medical Department”. The plot is divided into two parts, titled *Part I: The Reminiscences of Watson* and *Part II: The Country of the Saints*, both of which have been taken into account by the BBC adaptation. As the story takes off, Watson, an injured army doctor, has been sent back home to England due to a shoulder injury, wounded in battle. By coincident, he stumbles across an old friend and receives some advice about how to find an affordable accommodation in the city of London. This is the prelude of Watson and Holmes’ first meeting.

A *Study in Scarlet* makes up for the introduction of these two characters as well as the beginning of their association. It is at this time Holmes lets Watson in on the knowledge of his profession: he is a consulting detective, the only one in the world, as he invented the occupation himself. Later on, a messenger along with a telegram reaches them, asking for Holmes assisting by the Scotland Yard (currently headquarters of the Metropolitan Police Service, London). Accepting the offer, however hesitant, Holmes brings Watson along and the two men arrive at their first crime scene together. The case unravels and gets solved by Holmes, yet the credit goes to the officers at the Yard. This angers Watson as Holmes refuses to record the chain of events, in an attempt to redeem himself. However, this is the very reason as to why Watson begins to chronicle many of Holmes’ cases. Watson assumes the position of the recipient, and as such, becomes a mediator between Holmes and the audience.

Two years after the publication of *A Study in Scarlet* follows *The Sign of Four* (1890), published in *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine*, February issue.\(^10\) This title has later been altered in the BBC adaptation, titled *The Sign of Three* (2014). Alongside the mysteries of the case, it also touches upon the subject of Holmes’ drug habit which was not brought up in the first novel. The story introduces Watson’s future wife as well, Mary Morstan. Like *A Study in Scarlet*, neither was this story a hit to begin with. The popularity set in the following year as it was after the publication of these two novels that Doyle was able to get his short stories of Holmes and Watson to *The Strand Magazine*; a popular monthly magazine featuring fiction, interest articles and puzzles. The first of many, *A Scandal in Bohemia*, was published in 1891.

---


1.2.1.1 Characters: Visuals

Sherlock Holmes’ visual appearance has changed many times over the years, yet there are still the iconic attributes to him such as the deerstalker on top of his head, his fluttering coat, a pipe and a magnifying glass in hand. This can be confirmed by a look at the history of Holmes’ visual representation.

The first artist to ever draw an official art piece of Holmes in one of Doyle’s stories was David Henry Friston (1820–1906), a British illustrator and figure painter. He was commissioned four sketches for the first publication of *A Study in Scarlet*, whereas years later other illustrators would draw over 20–40 new sketches accompanying the story. It is interesting to note that the popularity of ACD’s characters was linked to their visual representation almost from the beginning. The most famous illustrations were done by Sidney Paget (1860–1908), whose art pieces appeared in *The Strand Magazine*, starting with *A Scandal in Bohemia* (continuing along the whole of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*). He was in fact commissioned by accident, as the publishers intended to send the request to his younger brother. Paget did a total of 589 illustrations for Doyle’s work, 356 of which were only *Sherlock Holmes* ones, featured in *The Strand Magazine* between 1891–1904.

Paget was the one who initiated Holmes wearing the iconic deerstalker hat and Macfarlane cape-coat, which made its first appearance in Doyle’s fourth short story, *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* (1891). Doyle himself never referred to it as a deerstalker by name. It is described by Watson as “his ear-flapped travelling cap” (*The Adventure of Silver Blaze*, 1892). Holmes has also been depicted wearing a black top hat and a black bowler hat, also drawn by Paget. These two would seem more appropriate for a man of Holmes’ status as the deerstalker was a hat of the rural man, not a man living in the city.

The pipe came as an addition by the American stage actor William Gillette (1853–1937), known for his performance of Holmes both on stage and in film. He favoured the curved calabash pipe for his performances as its size was making it obvious for the audience of a theatre when an actor on stage was to be seen smoking. Yet Holmes himself preferred a long-stemmed cherry wood churchwarden pipe, as referred to in *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* (1892) by Doyle. A pipe of such shape can be seen used in the BBC special, *The Abominable Bride*, as well as a Peterson Killarney pipe with a saddle stem which vaguely resembles the calabash with its slightly curved shape. The calabash has never actually made an appearance in Doyle’s works.

Stereotypicality is of importance for the recognizability of characters; it makes it possible for them to move across narratives, times and media. Along with Holmes’ interest in forensic science comes the magnifying glass as one last iconic detail. This was incorporated by Doyle himself in his first story, *A Study in Scarlet*, along with Holmes’ use of measuring tape at a crime scene. This was the first detective story ever to describe the use of a magnifying lens as a tool of investigation. Holmes has also been described operating an optical microscope whilst in the presence of his home.

Apart from supporting the image of a dashing gentleman, Holmes is also characterized by his various dressing gowns: one blue, one purple, and one “mouse-coloured”. These were, along with his iconic coat, well fitted a man of his physique. Doyle pictured him as a tall, thin man with a gaunt and lean figure, as he measured up to 6 feet but appeared even taller; a narrow face with steady grey eyes, tufted brows; a hawk-like nose and firm lips. His hair was black, and he had a quick and high voice.

---

1.2.1.2 Characters: Skills

Apart from having the knowledge of *baritsu* practice, Holmes was also familiar with boxing, fencing, fishing, golf and swimming.\(^\text{15}\) He would rarely pick up the opportunity of indulging himself in exercise for the pure sake of exercise, however, he did have moments of eccentric behaviour. After all, Holmes was a man of unusual tastes who lived for his art; his fascination for exceptional murders, no less. He also had an interest in medieval pottery, Stradivarius violins, Buddhism of Ceylon and beekeeping. Along these attributes, he was also weak to flattery. He enjoyed showing off and get acknowledged with applause. However, only certain flattery was acceptable as he expressed a dislike towards some of Watson’s paraphrasing in his writings. He accused Watson to remove the scientific edge of their investigations as he himself enjoyed the solid facts; Watson’s writing has a more adventurous tone to it, as it is meant to catch the reader.

The relationship between these two men is as iconic as the deerstalker. There cannot be a Holmes without a Watson, as he himself once states, “I am lost without my Boswell”\(^\text{16}\). Becoming the trusty biographer of the eccentric detective strengthens their bond from acquaintances to close friends while sharing their lodgings. Whilst Watson did describe Holmes as an automaton and positively inhuman, he was also the man whom he admired above all.\(^\text{17}\) He sparked an interest in Watson since their first meeting which kept him going well into the weeks of getting to know one another. As their relationship progresses, Watson takes upon the role of partner and confidant to Holmes, both in business and private life. There is no denying this deeply bonded friendship, as often stated by Watson throughout his writing:

‘You’re not hurt, Watson? For God’s sake, say that you are not hurt!’

It was worth a wound – it was worth many wounds – to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one and only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great brain. All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in that moment of revelation.

‘It’s nothing, Holmes. It’s a mere scratch.’\(^\text{18}\)

The nature of their relationship reaches a point in today’s societal norms where it becomes ambiguous as to whether it was intended to be interpreted by mere platonic means. At one point, Doyle himself referred to the world of “Sherlock and his Watson” as “the fairy kingdom of romance”.\(^\text{19}\) Narrative word choices aside, their choice of living quarters raises its own share of wonders. Watson made a point early on into the story that the two of them were indeed “sharing rooms as bachelors, in Baker Street”\(^\text{20}\). Whether the specification of the word *bachelors* is of necessity remains debatable. Apart from the duration of Watson’s married life, and even then, he would still manage moments of staying with Holmes, the two men living together. It is also implied that they retire together as they grow older, as written in *The Problem of Thor Bridge* (1922). In 2005, historian Matt Houlbrook published his book *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis 1918–1937*, which takes notion of the so called ‘bachelor housings’ chosen by queer men.

---

\(^{15}\) *Baritsu* (possibly a misspelling of the actual word *bartitsu*): a diverse form of martial art, told by Holmes as the “Japanese system of wrestling”.


\(^{17}\) “My Boswell” is a reference to James Boswell (1750–1795), biographer and trusty companion of Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784); mirroring Watson’s position in Holmes’ life.


[...] the location of “bachelor housing” drew men to particular areas in large numbers. Men’s presence was most marked within the area bounded on the east by Baker Street, south on the line of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, west by Ladbroke Grove, and north along Harrow Road, taking in rooming districts like Marylebone, Bayswater, Paddington and Notting Hill.  

Close familiarity between two men was common in the late Victorian era. Occasions such as seeing a pair walk down the streets with their arms linked together did not raise eyebrows. However, a fine line was drawn between that of platonic and romantic/sexual intimacy. In the late 19th century, homosexuality was treated as an illness. It was made a crime titled ‘gross indecency’ under Section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885, commonly known as the Labouchere Amendment. An acquaintance of Doyle’s whom he got along well with, the famous poet and novelist Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), was convicted under said law as he had been said to be having relations with over 12 other men over the duration of two years. He therefore got sentenced to two years of hard labour, three years prior to his death. As to how Wilde connects to the relationship of Holmes and Watson, during the period of his prosecution, these two characters have incidentally been narrated into finding themselves placed outside of London for reasons unknown. This could have reflected real life events as both men and women of this time would leave the city out of fear for being caught engaging in same-sex activities.  

The story in which this event takes place falls on the same date as Wilde’s arrest; *The Adventure of the Three Students*, 6 April 1895 (published 1904).

### 2. Theory & Concepts

#### 2.1 Fan Culture Studies

By using Matt Hills’ monograph, *Fan Cultures*, and its distinction between *acafans* and *fan scholars*, it is easy to conclude that many people analysing the content of BBC *Sherlock* are fan scholars. Hills explains the difference between the two terms as follows: acafans (academic fans) study the content from an academic perspective, while fan scholars study it from a more fannish point of view. In means of interpretation, this differs between the scientific and self-indulged gain. Limiting this thesis to the BBC’s adaptation specifically limits the amount of academic content available. If this thesis would investigate the original stories by Doyle, the majority of references would no doubt come from acafans instead of fan scholars.

Henry Jenkins, American professor and self-proclaimed acafan, has written the heavily influential book, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. This book was published in 1992 and was celebrated for its positive perspective on fandom activities, but it might come off as old-fashioned in the view of current attitudes towards the variety of internet fandoms. One of its chapters concerns slash and features old-school slash fan tropes such as ‘We’re Not Gay; We Just Love Each Other’. This trope depicts assumingly heterosexual characters in a homosexual relationship. Applied to *Sherlock*, that would mean: John may not be gay, he just shows more intimacy and love for Sherlock than any woman he has ever dated. While this trope is still prominent in today’s fandoms, English-speaking fans have taken to interpreting the BBC’s *Sherlock* in relation to real-life identity politics and LGBTQ+ issues (discarding the assumingly heteronormative trope). Jenkins approaches slash along other fandom practices as ‘poaching’, a term first used by French scholar Michel de Certeau, and

---


“This means that scholar-fans are typically looked down on as not being ‘proper’ academics while fan-scholars are typically viewed within fandom as ‘pretentious’ or not ‘real’ fans.”
maintains that fan cultures “move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it for themselves”.

The line between official and transformative content gets blurred by the interchange between producers and audience, although “slash, like other forms of fan writing, strives for a balance between reworking the series material and remaining true to the original characterizations.”

The item of slash affections analysed by Jenkins is mainly Kirk and Spock (Star Trek), however, the theories mentioned are still applicable to an entirely different franchise, that of Sherlock and John. Jenkins addresses matters regarding both the inside and the outside fandom spaces, such as the fact that “[s]lash confronts the most repressive forms of sexual identity and provides Utopian alternatives to current configurations of gender; slash does not, however, provide a politically stable or even consistently coherent response to these concerns.” Later, he elaborates:

Not all of slash is politically conscious; not all of slash is progressive; not all of slash is feminist; yet one cannot totally ignore the progressive potential of this exchange and the degree to which slash may be one of the few places in popular culture where questions of sexual identity can be explored outside of the polarization that increasingly arounds this debate.

American author and feminist, Joanna Russ, complements this with what fandom practices reflect instead: “a love that is entirely free of the culture’s whole discourse of gender and sex roles”. Imaginations of male-male relationships function as an escapism for heterosexual women all over the world. This flight from reality and current matters becomes more evident in the following description by prolific slash writer M. Fae Glasgow:

Most women in fandom have longstanding female friendships… If we want to see strong female-female relationships, all we have to do is look in our own lives. To us that’s mundane. To us that’s as everyday as sliced white bread. Slash is something way out there – a total fantasy. Not many of us know men who incorporate this ideal bonding into their relationships and that’s what we want to see.

This correlates with how Japanese fans of boys’ love see themselves. Manga researcher and lesbian activist Mizoguchi Akiko points out, that “[yaoi] does not represent any person’s reality, but rather is a terrain where […] desires and political stakes mingle and clash and where representations are born”. The genre itself “offers fantasies of BDSM, anal intercourse, rape, and other mostly tabooed activities. Users can stop the encounter at any time, whenever they reach their threshold for entertainment or satisfaction”. The characters featured in these stories are considered belonging to ‘a third sex’ as

26 Ibid., p. 195.
27 Ibid., p. 227.
“[t]hese beautiful boys are ‘the idealized self-image’ of girls, and they are neither male nor female.” 32 This theory is also supported by Tan Bee Kee, who recognizes the fact that many English-speaking fans of boys’ love regard the genre as a new sexuality discourse that breaks down the framework of the existing gender structure as well as concerns regarding their own sexualities. She suggests that the genre is intended to have cultural power to be comprehensively incorporated into social structure rather than to describe it as a genre of imaginary relationships. 33 Alternatively, sociologist Hata Mikako defines it, along with other girls’ manga genres, as an autonomous genre with a deeper meaning than what meets the eye. 34

As opposed to this kind of assessment/affirmation, an opinion visible in Star Trek and Sherlock fandom alike is the intense dismissal of Sherlock and John being in a relationship, mainly because it has not been confirmed in the source material, neither by the BBC series nor Doyle himself. Fan and fan fiction writer of Star Trek, Kendra Hunter, rejects slash (although having published it herself under a pseudonym) as a form of ‘character rape’, a violation of the fans’ desire to remain faithful to the original program: “It is out of character for both men, and as such, comes across in the stories as bad writing […] A relationship as complex and deep as Kirk/Spock does not climax with a sexual relationship”. Accompanying this kind of opinion is a comment made by Tumblr user Animatedjoker in November 2015:

It’s stupid. It’s needlessly. It’s a total waste of time, and it’s putting these ages-old beloved characters into a spin that they don’t need. It serves zero purpose to the canon outside of pandering to like 5% of the audience. This is why I have a problem with Mr. Gatiss writing BBClock. Because it’s all flair, it’s all posh, and laden with homosexual context that doesn’t […] need to be there. In fact, I find it weakens the story. […] [It] is skewing two platonic best friends into some ridiculous kisssie-kisssie ship. Or spinning established characters into something they’re very much not. Make your own […] characters. 35

This is a debatable opinion as it is up for audience interpretation because neither sexuality has been stated. Whether the writers of BBC Sherlock consider this an important addition to their adaptation remains unknown, with the notation of their contradicted actions of repeatedly been witnessed to lying about upcoming content to keep the suspense. This includes writer Steven Moffat stating in A Conversation with the Crew of Sherlock by Nerd HQ:

The reality of shows like Sherlock […] is, the subject of who you prefer to date is unlikely to come up in the middle of the crisis, you know.
‘We’re being attacked by insects from the ninth dimension!’
‘I’d like to date my own sex.’
‘[…] I don’t think this is strictly relevant right now.’
So, it doesn’t come up in normal conversation, and there aren’t any normal conversations in Sherlock […]. 36

34 M. Hata, B L マンガ研究の多様化に向けて: 作品研究の概観と展望, (Towards a diversification of BL manga research: An overview of textual analyses and future prospects) Joshi [sic!] Culture Research, ed. by Joshi culture research group, Konan Women’s University, pp. 50–59, 2014.
By the time of this commentary, the Christmas special *The Abominable Bride* had already premiered six months back, in which this exact opportunity takes place as Sherlock and John are currently hiding on a case for a suspect to arrive whilst John questions Sherlock on his emotional state, romantic/sexual impulses and needs.

John: Damn it, Holmes, you are flesh and blood, you have feelings, you have... You must have... Impulses.
Sherlock: Dear Lord, I have never been so impatient to be attacked by a murderous ghost.
John: As your friend, as someone who worries about you... What made you like this?
Sherlock: Oh, Watson... Nothing made me. I made me.37

A topic frequently brought up in the English-language community of BBC *Sherlock* is also something Jenkins has pointed out in his writings.

Slash allows for a more thorough exploration of issues of intimacy, power, commitment, partnership, competition and attraction apparent both in the scripted actions of those characters and also in the nuances of the actors’ performances (ways they look at each other, ways the actors move in relation to each other). What fans have discovered in these programs is a subtext of male homosocial desire.38

Subtext gained from interpreting the material at hand such as scripts is without doubt content which the fandom enjoys reading their projections into. Another sub-textual point being the actors’ performances can be seen heavily discussed online. Fan fiction writer within the slash community, Joan Martin (n.d.) explains the practice as such:

In slash, the protagonists not only love each other but become (or are) lovers. Most commonly, slash tells first time stories [i.e. stories about the initial sexual encounter between a particular set of partners], but some stories involve an already established relationship. [...] It offers detailed and loving descriptions of beautiful men making love lovingly. It presents love as entailing mutual respect and possible only between equals; sex as a mutually undertaken, freely chosen, fully conscious interaction; and love and sex together as a source of great joy to the protagonists.39

‘Men making love lovingly’ might be one of the most prominent explanations to what male-male relationships exhibit to their primary audience, heterosexual women. Acafans of *Star Trek*, Patricia Frazer Lamb and Diana L. Veith, discuss slash as a play with androgyny by women.40 Jenkins explains the ‘Lamb and Veith formulation’ in his own words by the comparison as follows:

Both Kirk and Spock mix and match traditionally masculine and feminine traits, sliding between genders as they struggle for intimacy. Kirk is sexually promiscuous, an undisputed leader, always ready for action and in command of most situations (masculine), yet he is also beautiful, emotional, intuitive, sensuous, and smaller (feminine); Spock is rational, logical, emotionally controlled, keeps others at distance, and stronger (masculine) while he is also

virginal, governed by bodily cycles, an outsider, and fully committed to sexual fidelity (feminine).41

As he also states, “both characters can be equally strong and equally vulnerable, equally dominant and equally submissive, without either quality being permanently linked to their sexuality or their gender”. This applies oddly well to a relationship like that of Sherlock and John’s featured in the BBC’s adaptation. They both support mixed traits regarding gender, such as John being seen dating a number of other women, having served in the army and being always up for another thrill (masculine), while doing the house work and shopping, wearing soft and unintimidating clothes, and being significantly shorter in height (feminine); Sherlock, much like Spock, is rational and logical, rarely showing raw emotion (masculine) but also repeatedly pictured as lean and beautiful, with elegant movements and a great sense for fashion (feminine). This discourse of masculine versus feminine is very much like that in the so-called seme (attacker, alt. ‘top’) and uke (receiver, alt. ‘bottom’) dynamics of boys’ love characters, which will be explained in section 2.3.

2.1.1 Existing Research

Due to its recent airing, there is a limitation to academic works related to the BBC’s Sherlock written by acafans and fan scholars alike. Beneficial for this thesis is the academic e-journal Transformative Works and Cultures (TWC). Their purpose states as follows:

TWC publishes articles about popular media, fan communities, and transformative works, broadly conceived. We invite papers on all related topics, including but not limited to fan fiction, fan vids, mashups, machinima, film, TV, anime, comic books, video games, and any and all aspects of the communities of practice that surround them. TWC’s aim is twofold: to provide a publishing outlet that welcomes fan-related topics, and to promote dialogue between the academic community and the fan community.42

The published essays and articles touch upon different subjects, both regarding the source material as well as transformative works, English and Japanese ones alike. In 2016, Amandelin A. Valentine submitted her article Toward a broader recognition of the queer in the BBC’s Sherlock, an analysis of Sherlock and John’s relationship as shown in the BBC adaptation, which reaches for the show’s possibilities of having confirmed queer representatives in the form of homosexual/bisexual relationships. In the abstract, she writes, “[d]espite the producers’ proclamation that Holmes is above sex, much less gay sex, the show is ripe with a queer subtext that viewers have recognized and reclaimed as their own”.43 This is indeed a fact proven by the Sherlock fandom itself. Valentine’s essay is of significance to this thesis since it adds an academic layer of perspective to the subtext of the show itself, that is, the content any regular viewer comes across whilst watching the series. In her writing, she points out critical moments of the show, many of which can be seen re-used as confirmed character traits in the transformative works created by fans. An iconic moment often used in First Meeting scenarios between Sherlock and John is one of their canonical early encounters written by BBC series’ creators Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, which Valentine also regards as a way to

Valentine acknowledges the numerous times in the show where Sherlock and John get mistakenly assumed for being in a homosexual relationship together, as this subject gets brought up on more than one occasion in each episode. On the matter of gender and sexuality, this is featured frequently in the works of the English-language fandom. However, as a canonically recurring detail (especially as John keeps denying it by rejecting the notions, “if anyone out there still cares, [he’s] not actually gay”), the Japanese fandom has also integrated it into their works. This is often done in a more comedic sense whilst the English-language fandom tackles this by a mixture of amusing and serious angles alike.

Almost 900 works submitted to Archive of Our Own (a mainly English-based fan fiction site which will be introduced in section 2.2) within the ‘Sherlock (TV)’ tag have been labelled as featuring themes of either ‘Male Homosexuality’, ‘Homophobic Language’, or ‘Internalized Homophobia’ (July 2017).

With respect to the subject of gender and sexuality, another aspect seen more in the English-language fandom although somewhat rarely, is the usage of gender swapping characters. This goes along the so-called ‘Rule 63’ of the Internet: for any given male character, there is a female equivalent. Ann McClellan studies this phenomenon in her essay, *Redefining genderswap fan fiction: A Sherlock case study* (2014). She claims that the BBC’s *Sherlock* is “perhaps uniquely suited as a genderswap case study”, considering the characters’ various traits supporting various stereotypical gender roles. Therefore, “[t]he characters’ ability to embody stereotypical masculine and feminine gender behaviors simultaneously within male sexed bodies – and other characters’ reactions to those behaviors – makes them intriguing sites for exploring the relationship between the two concepts”.

Occasionally, fans will refer to works featuring a female version of Sherlock/John as femlock. This concept is prominent in both the English and Japanese fandom of the show. Most of the times, the creators of the transformative works within this genre will gender swap both of the characters, thus still keeping them on an equal level in comparison to when they were male-male than if they were to turn male and female respectively. Still referred to as femlock, this concept turns boys’ love content into its Japanese parallel genre, girls’ love. Because opposites attract, female Sherlock and female John (sometimes called Joan) are often shown featuring their already stated differences in appearance, however, altered to the feminine gender. Sherlock gets long, dark curls while John has her blonde hair cut short. As Sherlock is taller and lankier in the original, she gets pictured as slim with a nearly non-existent chest. John on the other hand is shorter, curvier, plump, and therefore female fans tend to give her huge breasts in their works. While swapping their genders, the characters still act accordingly to their previous stereotypically male behaviour. As McClellan points out, transformative works of the gender swapping genre differ from works tagged as transgender works.

---

Transgender fan fiction – that is, fan fiction that deals with characters who transition from one sex or gender to another – is even more underresearched and undertheorized than current genderswap scholarship, most likely because it is quite rare.\textsuperscript{48}

Transformative works featuring transgendered themes are rare within the Japanese community. While they do exist in the English-language fandom, only 34 of the 35,669 BBC \textit{Sherlock} works have been listed as containing transgender characters in fan fiction, uploaded to Archive of Our Own.\textsuperscript{49}

Different interpretations shown in transformative works make up for a significant contribution to franchises, called media mix in Japan. As a strategy of transmedia storytelling beneficial to the Japanese entertainment industry, fans get to publicize their interpretation of the source text as well as its subtext. Interpreting in the form of queering the source material is highly relevant for boys’ love. Academic Kathryn Hemmann points this out, alongside a few remarks about the BBC \textit{Sherlock}, in her essay \textit{Queering the media mix: The female gaze in Japanese fan comics} (2015). She mentions the huge female following of the series, which McClellan points out as misogynistic by the lack of the creator’s acknowledgement towards the fact, and overall lack of female characters in the show’s portrayal; BBC \textit{Sherlock} is the first fandom of any \textit{Sherlock Holmes} adaptation which has a predominant female audience. Hemmann further points out the importance of the Japanese media mix.

[...]

A proof of the strength of Japanese media mix is evident in the BBC \textit{Sherlock} franchise as well. In mid-2013, it got its own manga based on the series. It is printed by Kadokawa Books, drawn by mangaka Jay. As of 2017, there are three volumes available, all revolving around the first three episodes of the first TV season. Originally printed both in Japanese and English (having the romanization written into the sidebars), the first volume has recently gotten translated into English, distributed by British publisher Titan Comics.

The media mix is also evident, although not explicitly referred to, in another article submitted to \textit{Transformative Works and Cultures}. In early 2017, the 23rd volume of the journal featured the special issue \textit{Sherlock Holmes: Fandom, Sherlockiana, and the Great Game}. The issue offers a symposium by Lori Morimoto, titled \textit{Sherlock (Holmes) in Japanese (fan) works}. This text examines the BBC’s adaptation of the original stories by Doyle through a previously ‘Sherlockian’ perspective. Morimoto distances herself from “the online fans – mostly women – who read and write transformative fan fiction, those whom the Sherlockians would hold at arm’s length, form their own communities”.\textsuperscript{51} This is hardly specific for the \textit{Sherlock} fandom as preferences toward either originals or remakes appear in an amount of various circumstances. Furthermore, Morimoto puts focus onto a Japanese publication

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{48} A. McClellan, ‘Redefining Genderswap Fan Fiction: A Sherlock Case Study’, \textit{Transformative Works and Cultures}, no. 17, no pagination, 2014.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{50} K. Hemmann, ‘Queering the Media Mix: The Female Gaze in Japanese Fan Comics’, \textit{Transformative Works and Cultures}, no. 20, no pagination, 2015.
\end{itemize}
2.2 Slash

Slash has its origin in the Star Trek fandom, back in the early 1970s. Female audiences would latch onto the mutual gaze lingering between the two characters, Kirk, and his officer, Spock. These characters experience homosocial situations laced with interpretable homoerotic overtones which appealed to some fans, especially women, who enjoyed the thought of these two men being in a romantic and/or sexual relationship together. Showing an appreciation and preference for these characters and therefore interrelating them homosexually would result in the abbreviated, portmanteau Spirk, or simply written K/S, hence the name of the genre slash. Kirk and Spock were the first slash pairing within fan culture. Early slash fandom would revolve around practices such as the audiences producing their own imagined narratives in forms of art and fiction, mainly written texts accompanied by single illustrations, in so-called fanzines, short for ‘fan magazines’. These fanzines were distributed throughout the English-speaking fandom, shared and collected in their physical form. It is worth noting that not all K/S content produced by fans, has portrayed the two men in a romantic or sexual nature by default; it was just as common to depict the characters in an emotionally intimate and satisfying friendship. In contradistinction to the common belief that all fan works would be homosexually explicit, which can also be observed in the English-language fandom of Sherlock. The first piece of published fiction within the slash genre, A Fragment Out of Time (1974), is a two-page story about Kirk and Spock, who are not even mentioned by their names. However, the description of the characters makes it very clear, as well as an attached piece of art featuring the two Star Trek characters.

Nowadays, slash fandom has become such an integral part of fan culture that audiences might engage in the genre without even being aware of it or its widespread practices. Within the established fan communities, the majority of fans will refer to slash as shipping culture, derived from the word

relationship and indicating that two characters are being assumed to have a special relationship (previously, pairing and, in Japanese, coupling have also been used). As a fan, it is common to have a favourite pair or multiple, mostly within the same franchise. To mix certain characters from different series is considered crossovers which, while not uncommon, would appear not as preferable as slash pairings within the same series. A plausible reason to this might be its lack of appeal to the members within one of the fandoms who are yet to be introduced to the other half of the original content.

English-speaking audiences of slash fandom are using certain parts of the internet to interconnect, as many fans of subcultural phenomena do when faced with the lack of peers in real life. As of the early days, sites such as LiveJournal and FanFiction.net would be commonly used by these groups of people as they featured an easy-to-use thread system where members could interact with each other. Whilst LiveJournal allows members to post text as well as media, FanFiction.net focuses primarily on textual, i.e. written, communication. As the name of the site itself indicates, it is a site for users to publish fan fiction (shortened ‘fan fic’) in a category of their choice: anime/manga, movie, TV shows, games, books etc. As of 2017, its leading fandoms are featuring content related to Harry Potter (768,000 uploads), Naruto (414,000) and Twilight (219,000). The site has an age restriction, members have to be 13 or older, and while the Terms of Service do allow mature content, it does not allow explicit ‘+18 content’. Publications are also available for users not registered up as members.

Another site dedicated to fan fiction is Archive of Our Own, AO3 for short. Still in beta format since it launched in 2008, this site has been widely used within certain fandoms such as Sherlock Holmes (2017: 104,400 uploads), Doctor Who (55,000), Star Wars (48,400) and quite evidently, the Marvel franchise (232,200).

The biggest AO3 fandom is the Marvel universe, some more proof to help thwart the widespread delusion that women aren’t into the superhero genre. The world of fanfic is still predominantly female, and those readers and writers have spoken: They love Marvel, to the tune of about 63,000 fanworks – almost three times that of the DC Universe. Batman just doesn’t inspire as much fanatic as the Avengers, it seems.

In total, the site currently contains approximately 3 million fan works. It is debatable whether FanFiction.net has surpassed it or not with their recorded statistics of 2.2 million fan works back in 2009. In comparison, AO3 does allow explicit writings, tagged as ‘mature’ or ‘explicit’ at the very top of the work’s page if the author has chosen to do such. As for the membership statistics of the sites, FanFiction.net would have appeared to pass AO3’s amount of 1 million registers, already back in 2013. The reputation for privileging quality over quantity has made AO3 lack uploads while still maintaining many contributors to the different fandoms within the slash genre; as of June 2017, the site celebrated its milestone of reaching 25,000 different fandoms on the site.
Another site dedicated to fandoms is Tumblr. It is a micro blogging platform which does not only rely on textual communication but also media such as pictures, audios and videos. As of 26 June 2017, it is the home to 353 million blogs which collectively have a ratio of 150.2 billion posts. One particular post, a paraphrase of a quote originally from YouTube star Daniel Howell, who claims, “[t]he five pillars of Tumblr are aesthetics, fandoms, social justice, memes and porn [...] it’s what makes it a magical place” has reached over 10,800 notes, which would presumably seem like an agreement to the statement of fellow blog users.

However, this is not a site dedicated exclusively to written fiction, and so art works by fans are circulating through this platform as well. Sites such as DeviantART (online community for artists) also provide the English-oriented multifandoms with their own content, art as well as fiction.

2.3 Boys’ Love

An equivalent term, yet on another level in comparison to slash fandom, is the Japanese genre of boys’ love. This phenomenon, too, has its origin in the 1970s, however, related to other circumstances than slash, mainly a different media environment. Boys’ love, shortened BL, originated within the already existing genre of *shōjo*, or girls’ comics, which would commonly feature intimate friendships between females as well as androgy nous, beautiful young male characters (*bishōnen*, lit. beautiful boys). A classic example of this is *The Poem of the Wind and the Trees* (1976–1984), a manga created by Takemiya Keiko. A major point of boys’ love narratives is the dynamic of *seme* and *uke* characters. These are roles which the participants of the relationship perform, and they serve different purposes to the narrative. The terms are particularly used in fictional same-sex genres when penetrative anal sex is inserted into the story. *Seme* and *uke* are equivalent to that of being ‘top’ or ‘bottom’, as the words translate to ‘attacker’ and ‘receiver’. Usually their relation is stereotypical, and as such modelled on heterosexual gender roles: the *seme* plays the typical male character with masculine features, whereas the *uke* appears like a common female character who is timid and soft. As distinct from slash, which arose from fandom and stayed within it, boys’ love was early on embraced by the cultural industry, that is to say, content was provided not only by fans but also established publishers and magazines. However, fandom practices as such have been an important factor for the spread of the boys’ love genre. In addition to the role of the industry, another distinct aspect is that the Japanese audience would create their own homosexual content not from the already existing girls’ comics, but boys’ comics, also known as *shōnen*, and publish it in another kind of fanzines, called *dōjinshi*.

Appropriation, transformation or derivation, in Japanese often called parody, would turn out to facilitate the growth of boys’ love content, both within mainstream publications and amateur published works. The latter are the ones called *dōjinshi*. Many of these works feature already existing characters by other creators, making it a realm of fandom desires, but the usage of characters is a practice done for far longer than within merely this concept. Boys’ love and slash creations alike exist within a range of different genres themselves, along with romantic or angsty endings. There is a wide variety within both communities, featuring stories of different eras, science fiction or fantasy, mystery and so on. *Dōjinshi* featuring original characters had and still have a market of their own. However, this thesis will focus on the usage of already existing characters. The word, *dōjinshi*, translated into English would be equivalent to slash fandom’s fanzines, yet it is worth noting that the English-speaking

67 Phankatsu, Tumblr, blog entry, no title, 13 August 2016 (accessed 26 June 2017).
audience relies heavier on textual works, i.e. fan fiction in the strict sense, than the Japanese audience. While textual works are produced by both types of fans, what has commonly become known as dōjinshi would be rendered in manga style, meaning graphic narratives, that consist of drawn works and textual elements. Fans can be seen creating art and text alike, just as mangaka like Takemiya; purely textual fiction would be referred to as light novels. As this activity of creating individual works has become integral with the Japanese manga-reading public, prominent manga artists themselves sometimes engage in creating dōjinshi as this gives them the freedom to draw their own characters without complying to their editor as the representative of the publishing house. Many creators use pseudonyms for their fan works which they might change as they create content for different fandoms. This is also common for slash fans who often go by their internet aliases. As already mentioned, the slash community relies on itself to create their own content during their free time, and it puts emphasis on written fiction accompanied by single illustrations. In contrast, the boys’ love community has been influenced not only by officially published manga, but also audio productions. A market which has come to exist solely in Japan, is the market for boys’ love games and boys’ love CDs. In 2007, boys’ love games started increasing in popularity along with the usage of smartphones, until they became a commercial hit in 2010. It goes without saying that a lot of people are involved in this business, and a lot of work is put into the contents produced. This is noteworthy as it stands in stark contrast to beliefs that boys’ love is only a genre for teenage girls. As otaku (geek/nerd) culture researcher Nishimura Mari said regarding boys’ love audio, “in BL CDs, the interpretation of the male voice actors is reflected, which results in a feedback to the BL world”.

What makes the boys’ love genre appealing, might just be its aesthetics, mainly the beautiful look of characters which is called tanbi in Japanese (aestheticism). During the early days of the boys’ love genre in the 1980s, bookstores in fact had a corner dedicated to the genre titled ‘tanbi’. This visual beauty helps to make explicit sexual scenes accessible/acceptable to female consumers. A lot of boys’ love productions contain elements of sexual tension and/or sexual acts, to the point that it can be seen as pornography, but that is not always the case. There are also works, professional as well as amateur, depicting strong friendships. These works are sometimes referred to as ‘bromances’, a contraction portmanteau of the words ‘brother’ and ‘romance’. The term bromance is being heavily frowned upon by some slash fans, due to the lack of representation of romantic feelings, that is to say, a significant number of slash fans regards this lack as an attempt to comply with heteronormativity, to only play with homosexual characters and not advocate homosexual, or broader LGBTQ+, identity. This inclination applies also to the English-language fandom of the BBC’s Sherlock, and it makes for one of the most striking differences between English-language and Japanese-language fandom.

In regard to whether the genre is to be called boys’ love or yaoi, the more commonly known term for it in the English-speaking community, this thesis handles them as two separate units. While they do centre around similar concepts, boys’ love refers to what has been majorly consumed by the Japanese audience, and which is openly available in commercial publications not marked as pornography. In contrast, material referred to as yaoi is in Japan closely tied to fan productions, and is either mainly pornographic or easily accessible by the English-speaking community. The word’s pornographic connotation comes from the acronym, “yama nashi, ochi nashi, imi nashi” which translates into “no


“BLCD には男性声優たちの作品に対する解釈が反映され、結果的に BL 界へのフィードバックとなっている。”

70 S. Miura, [sic!] シュミじゃないんだ (Shumi ja nain da) [It’s not a hobby!], no pagination, Tokyo: Shinshokan, 2006.
climax, no resolution, no meaning.”  

This has gotten parodied by fans of male-male romance into the alternative acronym of “yamete, oshiri ga itai” which translates into “stop, my ass hurts”, with the implication of penetrative anal sex between males. At any rate, the English-speaking community tends to refer to the softer content as boys’ love, or shōnen ai (which in Japanese is used only for the classical manga series, for example, by the above mentioned Takemiya Keiko), and yaoi as its counterpart of the more hardcore materials, but the term boys’ love is commonly avoided as being reminiscent of paedophilia.

In Japan, the majority of boys’ love consumers are heterosexual women. There have been reports of a few gay men who enjoy the genre as well, and recently a few heterosexual men too seem to consume such contents (they are called fudanshi, leaning on the self-labelling of female boys’ love fans as fujoshi, i.e. ‘rotten girls’). Whereas in Japan, boys’ love and gay comics are published separately, this is not always the case abroad. In America and Europe, it is not uncommon to regard boys’ love as gay reading material; both gay and heterosexual men have stated their enjoyment of the Japanese version of the genre. It has been debated whether boys’ love is an accurate representation of gay men, supporting their human rights, or if it is exploitative, a fictional escape for heterosexual women and a compensation of their specific gender issues. While in Japan there was some debate in the 1990s when boys’ love first started to flourish, non-Japanese members of slash fandoms have been engaged in such debates until now, majorly concerned about queer representation in media and identity politics.

To summarize it briefly, there are a number of differences:

- Slash is usually inspired by real life (live-action, filmic) media while boys’ love is often inspired by entirely fictional works.
- The two genres are approached differently which effects its produced content; fannish (slash) and professional (boys’ love).
- While regarding similar subjects, different terms have varying implications of the content in question; whether that is preferred as slash, shipping, bromance, boys’ love, yaoi or shōnen ai.

The most striking difference between slash and boys’ love, however, would be, whether their taste is limited to fandom practice or not. Slash is not something integral within the wider audience as well as the official production companies, yet boys’ love is a genre widespread throughout Japan, enjoyed by millions of dedicated female fans and casual female readers, and produced both by fans and production companies alike.

---

72 Y. Fujimoto, 私の居場所はどこにあるの?―少女マンガが映す心のかたち [Where is my place? Heart and mind as reflected in shōjo manga], no pagination, Tokyo: Gakuyō shobō, 1998.
3. Method & Material

3.1 Method

This thesis focuses on fan activities, not their reception in society at large; therefore, it does not pursue why certain content is expressed but what choices are made and how the content is expressed as well as how individual works may differ from each other. Explicating my own position, I am a fandom participant on both sides and therefore familiar with the genre but will be writing here as an observer, combining inside and outside perspectives to make the insider’s view accessible to outsiders, and vice versa.

As a consumer of English-language material as well as Japanese-language material, I have decided to approach certain internet spaces which are each accessible through creating a membership of said sites: Tumblr, Archive of Our Own and Pixiv. These online networks are sites where fans are allowed to express themselves freely through both text and media. This results in a purposive sampling of my materials as I will have chosen to highlight certain outcomes of the two parts of the fandom. To additionally broaden my perspective of the Japanese-language material featuring BBC Sherlock, I have also come to acquire physical copies of numerous dōjinshi (13) of this series. These have been accessed through the Japanese second-hand store Mandarake at their international online store; the second-hand store K-Books would also have been of relevance to this study if the option of overseas shipping had been available.

3.2 Material

As the purpose of this thesis is to pursue an inside look into the transformative works created, it is also of necessity to be aware of its source material; in this case, the BBC’s adaptation, Sherlock. Whilst this study is not written with the intention of analysing their version, it is the origin and underlying foundation to this certain fandom’s very existence.

3.2.1 BBC Sherlock

The BBC Sherlock is written by one of the many previous creators of the science fiction series Doctor Who, Steven Moffat, co-written by Mark Gatiss and Stephen Thompson. Inspired by Arthur Conan Doyle’s novels and short stories featuring the great detective, the creators have stayed true to the originals by creating a crime drama series following Sherlock Holmes and his friend John Watson, on their adventures together. The series has reached a total of thirteen episodes, all 90 minutes episodes divided into four seasons, aired between 2010–2017. Creators Moffat and Gatiss have expressed their fascination of and interest in to the original stories at multiple occasions, stating they are “the biggest Sherlock Holmes geeks in the world”. This makes an interesting correlation to their definition of ‘geeks’ and the Japanese term otaku. The idea of making their own fannish adaptation of the world-famous detective came to them as they were both working on individual episodes of Doctor Who, presumably back in 2005. In addition to Doyle’s stories, Moffat and Gatiss have both been inspired by the 1970s film directed by Billy Wilder, The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes. Gatiss has even gone to the extent of praising it as “the movie that changed [his] life”. Peculiar for Wilder’s adaptation is its perspective on Holmes’ sexuality as he is portrayed by actor Robert Stephens as a gay

76 For a list of aired episodes, see Table 2 in the Appendix.
man. This fact has often been quoted by fans; many expected Moffat and Gatiss to incorporate such a trait into their adaptation as well.

The first episode is a rendition of Doyle’s first novel, with a minor adjustment to the title, *A Study in Pink*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes and Martin Freeman as John Watson. The episode was broadcasted in the UK in July 2010, with a previous 60-minute pilot episode to essentially pitch the idea to the BBC. The premiere of the actual episode gained a viewership of 8.70 million.\(^{79}\) It aired in Japan the following year, under the title *Pinku iro no kenkyū*. Along several nominations, the first episode came to win a Peabody Award (2010), and the whole first season ended up with a BAFTA for Best Drama Series (2011). As of 2012, Sherlock Holmes has come to be the most portrayed literary character in both film and TV.\(^{80}\) Additionally, the BBC’s adaptation has become the UK’s most watched drama series since 2001; it is the most watched programme on the BBC’s online demand service, iPlayer.\(^{81}\)

The narration of *A Study in Pink* is like that of *A Study in Scarlet* as the introductory perspective is John’s point of view. This, however, comes to change throughout the series’ progression; two minutes into the first episode, in fact.\(^{82}\) The series tends to have a multi-perspective point of view from a variety of the characters. This might have had effects on fannish imagination as the multiperspectivity suits fans’ imagination of alternatives in narratives and character relations.

The BBC *Sherlock* distinguishes itself in terms of adaptation. Whilst most adaptations have the two men solving cases during the Victorian era, the BBC has brought them into the 21st century. This way of picturing the detective is not new, but appeared mainly in animation (not live action drama) so far, for example in the animated TV series titled *Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century* (US/UK production, aired 1999–2001). The Italian-Japanese anime *Sherlock Hound* (1984) also adds a futuristic atmosphere to its 19th century narrative. In the BBC’s adaptation, certain events have been updated into more recent ones; horse carriages, handwritten letters and pipes have been replaced by cabs, text messages and nicotine patches, as seen in the first episode already. John Watson has still served and gotten injured in the army (however, the Second Anglo-Afghan War during 1878–1880 is now the 2001–2014 Afghanistan War). Still on the search for a potential flatmate, he stumbles across Sherlock Holmes through their mutual friend, Mike Stamford. As part of updating the series into more recent ways, manners and etiquette have been adapted. The characters no longer go by their surnames, Holmes and Watson; they now refer to each other on a first-name basis as Sherlock and John within the second time of their acquaintance already. This familiarity is never put into question during the run of the entire series.

Sherlock’s ability to observe is yet another distinguishable feature of the BBC adaptation, perhaps one of the most extraordinary. Whilst Sherlock is known for his outstanding deductions regarding situations as well as other humans, the BBC has put this trait on screen in a certain way which is reminiscent of digital screens. All his deductions are now made visual for the audience to see for themselves: it includes the floating and circulating numbers and keywords, clues, if you will. This form of processing data, which is only ever performed by and accessible to Sherlock himself, is only happening inside his own mind. In addition to Sherlock’s visual mind, there is his so-called Mind Palace, a place inside his head where he enters to search through the clues and facts he has encountered. The Mind Palace takes up such a great deal of the series, it even serves as the universe

---


\(^{82}\) The perspective of Sherlock starts at time 00:07:40, S01:E01, 2010.
for one whole episode, *The Abominable Bride* (2016). This episode is the only one of the BBC adaptation which takes place in the Victorian era, in the year 1895. The case at hand serves as an escape mechanism by Sherlock as he has in fact overdosed on drugs. Fans have called it ‘The Gay Victorian Fever Dream’ and they have developed the Extended Mind Palace theory (abbreviated EMP), a theory created and used only by ‘Sherlockians’ of the BBC series.  

The BBC’s version of Sherlock Holmes is portrayed by film and stage actor, Benedict Cumberbatch. As far as appearance goes, Sherlock is still pictured a man of tall and lean figure, yet the rest is new. This version of Sherlock features a man with ruffled curls, high cheekbones, clean of any facial hair and a deep baritone voice. He still wears his iconic coat, although a more fashionable one of current societal standards (a Belstaff ‘Milford’ coat, £1.350), and has become a man who evidently takes pleasure in possessing brand clothing. Although none is said about his interest in physical activity, he does wear his seemingly tailor-made clothes which fit like a second skin across his toned body. Cumberbatch adds more quirks to a character already as bizarre a Sherlock Holmes, insisting “[he is] not a psychopath […] [he is] a high-functioning sociopath”, Rude and seemingly unable to understand the concept of other human’s emotions, he attains the image of a secluded man comfortable being alone in his own presence for hours on end. Cumberbatch has favoured a hint of autistic features in the form of Asperger’s syndrome to the character such as flapping his arms when excited, rocking back and forth when distressed, and very often seen subtly flexing his fingers as another form of sensory stimulation. His deep and thorough interest in murders and solving crimes only adds to the odd features to the character.

John Watson is the one who keeps Sherlock Holmes down to Earth. The relationship between these two men is iconic as to what represents true friendship and utmost care for one another. It shows an unstrained friendship, which the BBC was fortunate enough to obtain by casting the actor Martin Freeman for the role of John, as he and Cumberbatch achieved that spark early on before filming the series. Freeman portrays John as a mirror opposite to Sherlock, both in appearance and personality. He is a man of short height, has blonde hair and somewhat soft features. Mainly dressing himself in stitched jumpers and flannel shirts, this is a long shot from Sherlock’s taste of fashion. Perhaps not the same gentleman that Doyle portrayed him as, John is still kind hearted, sympathetic, especially patient and has a strong sense of moral. At one point, Sherlock even mentions him to be his own “conductor of light”. John is practical to him in more than the fact that he would instantly kill another man to ensure Sherlock’s own safety, as displayed in the climax of *A Study in Pink*. It is this very case that has John beginning to tell the tales of their adventures; not in the previous sense of notebooks and publishing in a magazine, but in the form of a blog. This blog was initially advised by his therapist after returning from the war to keep as a diary of sorts, yet *The Personal Blog of Dr. John H. Watson* consequently becomes increasingly famous. Ironically, Sherlock has his own blog as well titled *The Science of Deduction*, but does rarely update it. Likewise, in this adaptation, Sherlock still manages to express a dislike towards John’s documentations. Another characteristic of the BBC *Sherlock* is the frequent assumption of these two characters’ relationship being of homosexual nature. Whether it is to be taken as a ‘gay joke’ or a serious matter has been heavily debated within the English-speaking community. There is the usage of heavily romantic TV tropes (clichés such as everybody else seeing they match together, the case of it only being one bed available, accidental hand-holding, prolonged eye-contact, and breaking their heart to save them from an unannounced threat) which do not get acknowledged enough, possibly because of current societal heteronormativity. Other characters of

---

83 The EMP theory implies that more than the confirmed events which shown in the series are a figment of Sherlock’s own mind as well.


86 Both blogs can be accessed at johnwatsonblog.co.uk and thescienceofdeduction.co.uk (RTC).

the show, both close acquaintances and simple bystanders alike, are making remarks about Sherlock and John’s familiarity towards each other, even as early as approximately ten minutes into the first episode. This continues even as John is seen dating other women, up until the point when he gets married by the end of the third season. Even whilst the assumptions come to an end, the romantic TV tropes do not. This relationship has attracted the interest by mainly female fans up to an extent that the question arises whether the creators of the series had been catering to such audiences from the very beginning.

3.2.2 Transformative Works of BBC’s Sherlock

According to Fanlore, the online encyclopaedia which aims to define fan works and fan communities, “the term Transformative Work is sometimes used as a formal and legal expression for fanworks”.88 While in a grey zone regarding legal matters of what is considered fair use, the term has been established as a debatable justification for the usage of copyrighted works; in this case, the BBC’s Sherlock. There is a plethora of contents using this specific franchise in the online world due to the audience’s enthusiasm. Additionally, on a more descriptive notion, Fanlore states:

Transformative works are creative works about characters or settings created by fans of the original work, rather than by the original creators. Transformative works include but are not limited to fanfiction, real person fiction, fan vids, and graphics. A transformative use is one that, in the words of the U.S. Supreme Court, adds something new, with a further purpose or different character, altering the [source] with new expression, meaning, or message.89

Thus, transformative works are the result of transformation and recontextualization of source material. In a way, audiences associating in the transformative fandom are the opposite to audiences associating in the so-called curated fandom, meaning the ones valuing the source material for what it is and being content with stated facts of the original. Transformative and curative can therefore be divided into groups aiming for change versus knowledge. It is not yet a widely investigated subject; it was first mentioned in an online forum in 2015, whilst also discussing its different connections to male and female fans.90 Statistics are showing that it is a majority of female fans which is engaged in boys’ love by creating transformative works.

Although an English term, boys’ love relates to the making of transformative works in Japan in the first place. From a foreign perspective, the Japanese audience has embraced this form of creativity by much larger means than the English-language community. The Japanese market therefore shows a different response to transformative works than the Western, positive as well as negative, the latter in case of conflict with Japanese copyright law; the law has been modified since then. However, these creations have been not just beneficial for fans, but also publishing. Broadly speaking, in Japan, the original creators usually allow transformative works as creative ways of publication, although distribution at one-day events only is preferred. The most famous is the Comiket (Komiketto, Comic Market). It is representative of dōjinshi themed fan conventions, drawing approximately half a million visitors (a total of 550,000 attendees in 2016) within three days, held twice a year.91

Transformative works include more than recreations in the forms of fiction and art. By using parts of the already comprehensive list provided by Fanlore, this thesis is based on a variety of written works

---

89 Ibid., italics done by Fanlore.
(including fan fiction, glossaries, encyclopaedias) and visuals (fan art, fan comics, dōjinshi, fan videos/documentaries). The material collected is considered through the perspective of achieving common as well as lesser known traits.

This thesis uses a combination of the transformative works stated above, submitted to three different online networks. These include Pixiv, the Japanese online community for artists; Tumblr, the worldwide microblogging and social network; and Archive of Our Own, the open source repository for fan fiction contributed by users. As of June 2017, Tumblr is ranked within the top 50 most used websites globally according to its web traffics whilst Pixiv comes in the top 1,500 chart. Accordingly, in the last two years the number of registered members rank as 353 million (Tumblr), 20 million (Pixiv) and 1.176,000 (AO3).

Tumblr is the most frequently used of the three platforms, it also provides the most variety of content. As a microblogging platform, it allows submissions within the following categories: text, photo, quote, link, chat, audio and video. These categories are all beneficial to an audience and to participants in the transformative community as it broadens their ways for creativity. Appropriate for this research is the amount of BBC Sherlock content distributed through the platform. Tumblr staff are aware of the great amount of transformative works uploaded to their site, thus has in recent years been making official records of their overall fandom statistics. The years 2013 and 2014 were the most successful ones for the Sherlock fandom: slash contents of Sherlock and John were ranked in fifth and second. In the years 2015 and 2016, the amount of contents dropped to rank twelve and then seventeen, possibly due to the series’ hiatus at the time between the third season and the special episode. Along with the fourth season, however, the content went back up into the top ten and placed ninth. By the ending week of July 2017, Sherlock and John are ranked on place twenty along the other top ranked slash fandoms currently trending. Between the years 2013–2017, out of all transformative works submitted to the site, content involving homosexual male relationships (m/m) have dropped from 76.67% to 56.67% while contents involving both homosexual female relationships (f/f) and heterosexual relationships (het) are becoming more prominent. When browsing for BBC Sherlock content, the site’s tagging system can prove itself useful for the fans as it shows the top five tags commonly put together in submissions. As of July 2017, this results in tags such as character names, the actors themselves, Johnlock (content involving both Sherlock and John) and TJLC (The Johnlock Conspiracy, which will be further explained in section 4.2.1).

Pixiv also features a comprehensive tagging system for each submission. It allows both artist and users to mark the submission (in this case, media or text only) with appropriate tags, as long as the artist has approved by unlocking said tags. However, there is a maximum of ten tags for each upload. Fans have also developed the usage of custom-made tags whenever an upload has exceeded a certain number of favourites by other users, commonly using amounts such as 1.000 and 2.000. This is making it easier for the users to search for the more popular submissions. The site itself provides an updated list of the top 5.000 used tags. There is also another branch of the platform, titled Pixpedia. This part of the site works as an encyclopaedia, allowing members to write informative articles about every tag available. Not every tag has been provided with an entry, however if available it could make it easier for new fans to understand the online vocabulary.

As a Japanese-based online community, it is predominantly used by creators from Japan. In recent years, the site has gotten translated into Chinese, English, French, Thai, Korean, and Russian. Before these were available, online tutorials on how to use the site were commonly distributed among foreign artists. Pixiv serves as portfolio to many, with artists using it as the homepage for their works. Some of the usernames displayed might therefore represent a whole group of dōjinshi artists, also known as

---

93 AO3 did not reach either amount of these numbers.
dōjinshi circles. The platform provides a convenient management for upcoming events; Comiket, for example. It is common to mark submissions with the appropriate tag whether the work is going to be available for sale at the event or not. In the preparation for Movies Paradise 31, the tag MP31 has been heavily used for transformative works of BBC Sherlock (a total of 650 submissions) during the time of this research. 95 While the series’ main tag is Shārokku (25,000 works submitted, textual and visual combined), the second most used tag is Gendai-ban SH (+5,900 works), addressing the BBC’s adaptation specifically. 96 If explicitly searching for content of Sherlock and John in a relationship together, the most commonly used tag is S/J. This tag has a total of 2,000 works, while J/S only has nearly 600 submissions (the difference will be explained in section 3.2.2). Along these tags are a variety of different ones which extend farther than BBC Sherlock. This is another phenomenon present in transformative creations as it allows to intertwine different fictional universes.

While the two previous platforms make up for a variety of creations, Archive of Our Own focuses primarily on written material in the form of fan fiction. Allowing contents in any language (65 registered), English is the major one. An approximate amount of 160 works is submitted in Japanese, the most popular ones being works on Sherlock and Star Wars. The BBC Sherlock makes up a great part of the Archive with a total of 96,800 submissions (July 2017). This is a major increase in fan fiction compared to the 46,000 works counted the year before. Sherlock and John rank second and eleventh for most popular characters in a relationship, both romantically/sexually (m/m) or in general. 97 They happened to be ranked in the exact same place in 2015, too. 98 The intended tag for BBC Sherlock contents is titled Sherlock (TV); however, many of these works are also tagged as Sherlock Holmes & Related Fandoms. These two are separated by the categories ‘TV Shows’ and ‘Books & Literature’, yet the latter tag has a total of 105,130 works. It is therefore safe to assume, that fan fiction of BBC Sherlock range between the amount of 96,800 and 105,130 works. Whilst exploring these two tags, the option to see the top ten additional tags is also available. Both main tags are identical in the top nine tags which are: fluff, angst, post-Reichenbach, alternate universe, romance, hurt/comfort, humour, first kiss and established relationship. 99 However, the tenth tag differs as it is a tie between the tags ‘crossover’ and typical erotica, works featuring ‘anal sex’. Unsurprisingly, the two categories have more explicitly tagged works (15,600–16,600) than mature ones (13,800–14,800). The site’s most commonly written crossovers with other movie franchises are other versions of Sherlock Holmes (ACD’s included), Doctor Who, Harry Potter, Supernatural, James Bond and Star Trek.

3.2.3 Orthography in Transformative Works

Within fandom spaces, there is a certain way to designate the relationship, or pair, in question. This is done differently in boys’ love and slash. Whilst the latter usually has one combined name which the fandom has mutually decided upon, the boys’ love genre displays a more complex practice. It is divided into either coupling (kappuringu) in Japanese or slashing/shipping (using the ship in relationship) in English.

The syntax of boys’ love relationships and the combination of names is all dependable on the nature of said characters; which one is the same, and which one is the uke? As this is often a set case of characteristics initiated by the author, it is relatively simple for the fandom to decide upon a mutual name. Assuming the same is character A and the uke is character B, this gets displayed as AXB in Japan, or an abbreviation of the two names in that order. The usage of the × symbol indicates romance

95 Movies Paradise is an annual one-day event for fan creators to establish and sell their transformative works of foreign drama/movies/series, held in Ikebukuro, Tokyo.
96 Gendai-ban SH (現代版 SH 時), meaning the modern version as well as including elements of boys’ love.
97 Centrumlumina, Tumblr, blog entry, no title, 4 August 2016 (accessed 7 July 2017).
99 The post-Reichenbach tag implies a story which takes place after Sherlock’s (faked) suicide.
and/or sexual encounters between the characters, whilst works featuring no mature content get distinguished by different symbols, such as A+B or A&B. In the cases of unrequired love, the pair gets presented as A→B or A←B, indicating which character is the one performing the action. Even though monogamous relationships are the most common, characters of polyamorous relations do also occur. These get displayed in the same fashion, as A×B×C, etc. While the *semexuke* dynamics is of such importance to the boys’ love genre, this is not the case in slash fandom. As mentioned, transformative works involving slash usually settle for one combined name regardless of the characters’ role in the relationship. The majority of the English-language audience creates their preferred names by overlapping or stress matching. This indicates whenever either name overlaps in sound/spelling or has stressed/unstressed syllables to match. In this case, the English-language fandom has settled for the developed relationship named Johnlock. As the article *A Linguistic Explains* illuminates, “John is monosyllabic, so it’s automatically stressed, and we can substitute it out for the whole stressed syllable of Sherlock”. This is regardless of whether one prefers either John or Sherlock as the top/bottom. However, it also makes it remarkably difficult to discern major preferences within the fandom. Thus, fans well invested into the contrasting meaning of the terms speak of certain content as either Toplock or Bottomlock. It does bring a sense of controversy to the subject as fans have debated whether these preferences show an improvement or deterioration toward queer matters.

Assigning a “female” and “male” role to a queer couple also really diminishes the unique status of same-sex pairings which can be so wonderfully free of expected gender stereotypes and power differential. One of the reasons many enjoy slash fic IS the relief of having partners who come to each other as equals, both deserving of respect, agency, and equal goodies in bed.

Because the stereotypical roles of masculine and feminine (giving/receiving) still serve a purpose to the boys’ love genre, the Japanese audience has created their appropriate names for each couple scenario accordingly. While the × symbol is still prevalent, abbreviations of the names are used as well, resulting in either Jonsharo or Sharojon. However, these are not the preferred names for BBC *Sherlock* works according to online submission statistics.

We can judge the yaoi genre for its prevalent seme/uke trope as heteronormative, as a slasher however this is disingenuous considering that many slash fans have just as set preferences about which character is a top and which a bottom, to the extent that fans will have long-lasting disputes and carry grudges against other fans because of disagreements about which character should fulfill which role. If a character switches in a story or performs a certain sex act that is coded as dominant/submissive without prior warning some fans will take umbrage, and this slasher can’t count on all fingers the times she’s been accused of ‘ruining the entire day’ of a reader by having the ‘wrong’ character perform a certain sex act.

Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto argues, that, although this concept ascribes to heteronormative concepts, it is still something seen as preferable to some fans. This is perhaps the reason, as well as the possibility of the series’ foreign origin, why the Japanese fans have taken slash fan culture into account as evident in the frequently displayed tags, S/J and J/S. In comparison to the former tags, an additional amount of 2,600 works has been submitted under the tags including the slash symbol to the art archive on Pixiv (July 2017).

---

101. Ibid.
4. Analysis: Analogy

4.1 Transformative Works of the Japanese-language Fandom

The works integrated in this comparison are either physical copies acquired in the form of dōjinshi or digital media (media/text), achieved through Pixiv’s online search engine. As previously mentioned, there is a great deal of BBC Sherlock creations made by fans. My sources of choice for this research imply the possibility for comparison of more than 18,000 (Pixiv) and 1,400 (Maedarake) works each. By achieving a minimum of 13 physical copies of dōjinshi, while having reviewed over 5,000 art pieces online during the span of approximately two months, I have come to pick out the most prominent traits for the Japanese Sherlock fandom as well as some less common practices by this chosen audience. Because of statistics, one would assume S/J is more popular with the fans than J/S. However, my acquired dōjinshi whose contents has been chosen at random shows the opposite as 62.5% of it makes up for John being in the role of the same. Is this a mere coincidence? It is possible, although considering the circumstances of which the 13 works were created by five different dōjinka (dōjinshi creators), this narrows down the odds of varying content. To aid this potential mishap in material available, creations submitted to Pixiv were used as well.

Thus, what impressions do prominent works with J/S content present? In Isha no Kusuri mo Sajikagen (2013), although Sherlock’s physicality is pictured as a male with wide shoulders, a broad chest and sharp face, he still features feminine traits; long eyelashes, blushing cheeks, shown panting as he is drawn submissive from above with feathers surrounding his body in bed. This dōjinshi is drawn by dōjinka Otoma, who also has created two other works examined for this study: Lollipop (2013) and APPLE PRESERVE (2014). While the former displays the same manner, the latter does not. It shows both characters blushing and John initiating intimacy, yet Sherlock is pictured as the same. Because this is the only adult oriented work, the front cover does say S×J, while the other two do not.¹⁰⁴

Another dōjinka who also pictures Sherlock with a mixture of masculine and feminine traits is Tomo from the dōjinshi circle Ipp. Five different works have been taken into account for this study although I will only be discussing two of them. Both characters are drawn in similar body shapes and height; although John does seem shorter, he is still drawn in positions where he appears superior. Sherlock is featuring Cumberbatch’s iconic bushy eyebrows while John’s eyebrows on the other hand are more prominent which makes him look aggressive, therefore dominant. They are both drawn quite muscular, which contrasts Sherlock’s less masculine facial features. Other than their visuals, there are two more distinct traits to these works. Firstly, in NO DATA (2014), Sherlock happens to have a déjà vu of an outside perspective of his child-self, which results in him falling unconscious during intercourse with John. While displaying a partner who is unable to give their explicit consent is not an uncommon trait featured in English-language fan fiction, it is hardly present in English-language fandom’s drawn works. This goes under the subgenre of hurt/comfort fiction, categorized as dubcon/noncon (dubious consent/no consent, otherwise called rapefic). However, it comes as no surprise as rape fantasies/scenarios are common tropes in boys’ love as a way to show love and affection; violence equals passion. Secondly, in Time of my life (2013), this dōjinshi becomes a rare exception as a condom is present during the set of intercourse. Because boys’ love is a genre which exists in the realm of pure fantasy made by women, it does not reflect the everyday life of real gay men, and boys’ love stories seldom put focus on precautions of homosexual intercourse such as preparation and the possibility of transmitting any STDs. Sherlock is seen complaining about lower

¹⁰⁴ Otoma, 医者の薬も匙加減, dōjinshi, circle: Otoguramu, printed by Eikō, 16 June 2013.
Otoma, Lollipop! Dōjinshi, circle: Otoguramu, printed by Eikō, 16 November 2013.
Otoma, APPLE PRESERVE, dōjinshi, circle: Otoguramu, printed by Eikō, 15 June 2014.
back pain the day afterwards while staying hidden in bed, indicating he was on the receiving end of said action.105 Contributing to the rest of the J/S content are works created by the circle Momoiro Furatto. I have chosen to examine three of their different dōjinshi, which are titled BRIDE DETECTIVE, Butterfly Kiss and BESET (2013–2014). They are quite distinctive as Sherlock is depicted in the most feminine way yet; slanted eyes with long eyelashes, plump and shimmery lips, frequently seen blushing. BRIDE DETECTIVE narrates him as John’s newly wedded wife, thus he indulges himself in house chores such as cooking and cleaning, all whilst dressing himself in effeminate aprons with adorning ribbons, something that is unheard of in the English-language fandom. He represents a stereotypical housewife, which one might argue is as far from the original texts as possible. BESET also depicts him as feminine to a certain extent. The story revolves around Sherlock having a particular sensitivity to his nipples, whereas the focus on his chest is inevitable for the whole of the 42-page story. The areolas of his nipples are drawn explicitly similar to a woman’s breasts and he has overall feminine curves. During the set of intercourse at the end of the story, Sherlock is also drawn featuring ahegao expressions, frequently used in hentai or pornographic works.106 The narrative of Butterfly Kiss differs slightly in the sense that while John still manages to make him appear submissive by blushing and squirming, he is drawn more masculine with a broader chest. This, however, remains pictured seductively in a female manner due to his still rather feminine facial features.107 Opposing the major contents of these dōjinshi are the two works, Boku no tomodachi wa zonbi de aru (2016) and Friend (2013). These dōjinshi are drawn by separate artists from different circles, however neither contributes to the larger scale of J/S narratives. The first work is a post-Reichenbach fiction, portraying Sherlock brought back to life as a zombie.108 Thus, he is pictured as passive since he can no longer speak because of his lack of vocal cords and uses few facial expressions when communicating. Despite all of this, he is still capable of triggering John into a state of fury by cutting him up with a pair of scissors therefore ruining his temporary body. This perspective of narrative brings the focus to Sherlock, who then appears smug about the whole ordeal as he has successfully managed to lead John into spending time with him instead of his current girlfriend and is left patching him back up again. It is a rather violent dōjinshi in comparison to the previous, as is Friend. This work features roughly drawn lines illuminated by lots of shadowing and dark backgrounds. For the unininitated, one might assume it leans on the brim between the boys’ love and bara genre, with a lack of body hair and less muscles.109 The narration is tense and pictures aggressive emotions in the turmoil of a previously suppressed anxiety attack on Sherlock’s part, with restrained expressions both before and during the sexual act.110 Among the online submissions to Pixiv’s art archive and its 18,000 creations themed around BBC Sherlock, I have come to gain an overall understanding from the 5,000 pieces reviewed for this study. To do a further comparison to the fandom creations’ prominent traits, I have chosen a qualitative sample size of 29 different uploads, all varying in popularity. The popularity is a comprehensive

Common traits featured in submissions are: nekomimi (cat ears), otters and hedgehogs, shotacon, and relatedly, John being drawn as ‘pocket-sized’ (also known as Pokejon). Firstly, the nekomimi genre is well-known and distributed in Japan among official and fan works alike, originating back in the beginning of the 1920s. These works are identified by characters featuring anthropomorphic traits such as cat ears and tails, known in English as catgirls/catboys. The Japanese audience of BBC Sherlock seems to have taken a liking to drawing Sherlock and John sporting these traits, both separately and simultaneously. Among the 29 chosen works for this comparison, three different submissions, ranked between the popularity of 347–575 favourites each created by two separate artists, demonstrate a verification to this fact. Simultaneously being pictured as equals in two of the art pieces, John has been portrayed as the only one with the cat features in the last remaining creation. As cat ears and tail are things often associated with an innocent and childlike charm, he therefore gives the impression of an uke. While Sherlock is drawn as an androgynous man, John has been turned into an adorable little boy. This correlates to the works categorized in the genre shotacon, which is an abbreviation of the term shōtarō complex. It is a Japanese genre defining works which bring up an attraction towards pre-pubescent boys of a suggestive and/or erotic nature. This can be seen drawn in many Japanese works as it resembles the way characters of anime and manga frequently get pictured as deformed, or more commonly known as chibi (lit. ‘little’), with bigger eyes and physically rounder features in an exaggerated manner as usually a third of the body consists only of the character’s head. As for the BBC Sherlock, both characters get subjected to this artistic metamorphosis.

Among five different works between a varying popularity of 221–608 favourites, artists have drawn Sherlock and John as children dressed up as pirates or young schoolboys; discussing how babies are made from a child’s youthful perspective; sleeping on top of marshmallows or inside a pea pod; living inside separate glass jars; and being small enough to fly with the help of dandelion’s seeds.

While on the subject of transforming the characters into smaller versions, the Japanese audience of BBC Sherlock came to invent Pokejon. This interpretation of John’s character is created more frequently than given credit for considering its assigned tag to Pixiv’s archive only has 14 results when using the site’s search tool. The implication of the nickname is as previously mentioned, as John appears to be of pocket size. A lot of the times, he is not drawn with a mouth but still manages to convey his feelings using clear facial expressions.

Lastly, a phenomenon which originated from the English-language fandom of the BBC Sherlock but has taken the Japanese audience by storm, is picturing Sherlock and John as otter and hedgehog. As previously mentioned in Lori Morimoto’s symposium, Sherlock (Holmes) in Japanese (fan) works, the initial idea was submitted to Tumblr in 2012; it has since gotten more than 55,900 responses on the

---


Tenzu, From summer to autumn, Pixiv, art submission, 6 October 2016 (accessed 25 July 2017).

Tenzu, From summer to autumn, Pixiv, art submission, 6 October 2016 (accessed 25 July 2017).
original submission (July 2017). It even made television on BBC One’s *The Graham Norton Show* as well as CBS’s *The Late Show with David Letterman* where Cumberbatch and Freeman were shown the similarities that their fans had picked up on.\(^\text{114}\) Whilst the English community tends to refer to this part of fan creations as *Otterbatch*, some of the Japanese fans specify it as the relationship between *Beneuso* and *Harimā*, which is a mixture of the actors’ names combined with the animals’ names in Japanese.\(^\text{115}\) The otter is commonly dressed in iconic clothes from the show such as Sherlock’s coat and blue scarf, and although the hedgehog is considerably unable to wear clothes, it still manages a matching expression to *Pokejon* which fans seem to connect to Freeman’s personality created for the character of John.\(^\text{116}\)

4.1.1 Development

As creative as the Japanese fandom has shown itself by contriving such original and far-fetched imagery of an already foreign series, it somehow manages to go even further. The fans do not only love Sherlock and John; they love the actors too, and become engaged in their other works as well. This is the phenomenon which, while not limited to the fans who enjoy BBC *Sherlock*, I have chosen as the aspect which indicates an innovative and committed fandom.

Pixiv offers the option of submitting more than one art piece at a time. While these submissions belong to the manga section of the archive, they are often titled as logs of whatever they might contain, also considered *rakugaki*.\(^\text{117}\) A common occurrence within the Japanese fandom of BBC *Sherlock* is that while these logs contain the obvious aka Sherlock Holmes, they do also contain media featuring other characters portrayed by Cumberbatch and Freeman as well. These characters then get subjected to another aspect of the creational process of transformative works as they no longer exist in solitude of their own fictional universe. It is a case of broadening the initial couple, Sherlock and John, into as many couples available regardless of chemistry. A fandom which partakes in transformative works thrives on the possibility of ‘if’, which would lead to progression for a character’s development. Furthermore, ruled by creativity, fans have been inserting these other characters portrayed by Cumberbatch and Freeman at one point or another, into the universe of the BBC *Sherlock*.

Once entering a keyword into Pixiv’s online search bar, eight other keywords in relation to said word appear as well. These words are based off the frequency of which tags the site’s users have marked to their submissions, thus change every few days. During my time of observing the main *Sherlock* tag, I have come to notice a pattern of the re-appearing tags in relation to associating characters and franchises.\(^\text{118}\) The most representative characters of this kind are listed by their popularity below, accompanied by a brief explanation:

- **G/D**, also known as *Giradiku*. This is both an abbreviation and a portmanteau of the names Peter Guillam and Hector Dixon.\(^\text{119}\) As characters of foreign movies, it is possible the

---

\(^\text{114}\) *The Graham Norton Show*, dir. G. Dowd, BBC One, season 14, episode 01, aired 11 October 2013.


*The Late Show with David Letterman*, dir. P. Shaffer, CBS, season 20, episode 71, aired 9 May 2013.

\(^\text{115}\) *ベネうそ*はりマー，abbreviation of *ベネディクト(+)*かわずうそ*はりねずみ(+)*マーティン*.

\(^\text{116}\) *Riri*，£8／らくがきすこし，Pixiv，art submission，18 June 2013（accessed 25 July 2017）.

*Nkr*，べねまちゃんまとめ【腐】，Pixiv，art submission，13 July 2014（accessed 25 July 2017）.

*Nkr*，べねまちゃんまとめ2【腐】，Pixiv，art submission，17 November 2014（accessed 25 July 2017）.

\(^\text{117}\) *Rakugaki*（落書き）, lit. graffiti, yet is commonly used as a word for ‘scribbles’.

\(^\text{118}\) As mentioned, the main tags considered are Shārokku (25,000) and Gendai-ban SH (+5,900).

\(^\text{119}\) Peter Guillam, played by Benedict Cumberbatch in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, 2011.

Japanese audience have taken upon the usage of the slash symbol as preferable, much like the cases of S/J and J/S. The appeal of bringing these two characters together most likely originate in the movies’ shared genre as they both label as spy/crime narratives. Guillam, a trustworthy agent, and Dixon, a sadistic assassin, thus make up for an appropriate couple of similar backgrounds. Fans often depict them in intense scenarios with guns being drawn by both men clad in suits, much like their attire in the original movies. In relation to the boys’ love genre, it would appear the fans prefer G/D over D/G as works marked by either tag show a difference of more than 170% between an amount of 421 respectively 26 works. Because of Dixon’s personality, however, he is often pictured the dominant character of the couple, although not the *seme*. Instead, he gets features such as devil horns and tail which implies he is a less innocent character mirroring a rough relationship with Guillam.\(^\text{120}\)

- K/A, also known as *Harisa* or *Kāsā*. This is an abbreviation and a portmanteau of the names Khan and Arthur.\(^\text{121}\) Much like the previous couple, the association of these characters is their common narrative of the science fiction genre. Khan is one of a group of genetically engineered superhumans, previously put in a state of hibernation by freezing, who involuntarily has gotten awakened by the enemy and then put in a state of blackmail. As a superhuman, he is strongly built and thoroughly aware of his superior qualities. Arthur, on the other hand, is a human who gets stuck in space while trying to resolve how to go back in time before the current Earth was destroyed. The lack of events in his day-to-day life has resulted in him wearing his green dressing gown for years. This set of contradictory characters makes for an attractive pairing of the boys’ love genre. The Japanese audience portrays Khan as still maintaining his masculine appearance, while Arthur often gets pictured more feminine than he is to partake the role of the *uke*. Apart from his iconic dressing gown, it is not uncommon for fans to create works of him wearing nightgowns and dresses alike. Another frequent attribute is depicting the two of them raising children together, as feeling a sense of belonging and family are prominent themes of both movies.\(^\text{122}\)

- BJ/MS, also known as *Benedict John* and *Martin Sherlock*. This is an unusual development, only accessible through the Japanese fandom, as it pictures Cumberbatch and Freeman themselves in the position of their BBC personas as John and Sherlock. While maintaining their personal choice of appearance, Cumberbatch often wearing casual attire whilst Freeman features a more fashionable wardrobe, their personalities still reflect their characters’ as shown on screen. Apart from their heights which fits the stereotypical *seme × uke* pattern, BJ manages to demonstrate the charm of a common *uke* yet fills the role of the *seme* and MS supports the cold, passive, often seen brooding characteristics.\(^\text{123}\)

---

\(^\text{120}\) AKIRA, LOG, Pixiv, art submission, 15 July 2016 (accessed 25 July 2017).


\(^\text{122}\) Matsurika, TwitterLog#1, Pixiv, art submission, 27 November 2016 (accessed 25 July 2017).

\(^\text{123}\) Tama kurenai, BJMS 筆ぐ, Pixiv, art submission, 8 April 2014 (accessed 25 July 2017).
- **Sutorosu.** Unlike previous couples, these characters have yet to be associated by abbreviation. Their couple name of choice is a portmanteau of the surnames Strange and Ross.¹²⁴ What ties these characters together is once again the trope of similar genres, and even though these two might not exist in the same motion picture yet, they do in fact belong to the same fictional franchise; Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). While both movies are still relatively recent to the industry and have yet to gain a certain following, the pair has still gotten more than 300 works uploaded to Pixiv’s art archive. Strange is portrayed as a somewhat clingy yet lovable and cheerful character, in contrast to his arrogant and presumptuous persona of the movie, who often gets pictured as rejected by Ross, the workaholic and Deputy Task Force Commander of the Joint Counterterrorism Center. A frequent addition to this duo is the detail of Strange’s mystical artifact; the Cloak of Levitation. While this piece of clothing allows its wearer to fly, it also displays an understanding of human emotion. Fans have thus refined this inanimate object by turning it into its own character along with a strong personality, often seen assisting Strange in his attempts to make Ross notice him. Because Strange is qualified in the practice of mystical arts of hidden magic and alternative dimensions, this aspect has also been frequently incorporated into fan works in the means of him opening unexpected portals to ambush Ross in one way or another.¹²⁵

- **Sumabiru,** another portmanteau of the names Smaug and Bilbo.¹²⁶ These characters, apart from BBC Sherlock, are the only ones starring in the same movie series. Both creatures of J. R. R. Tolkien’s fantasy fiction as dragon and hobbit, Smaug is the primary antagonist whilst Bilbo is the main protagonist. Originally, the dragon is portrayed as powerful, fearsome, and particularly possessive of his collection of golden treasures. As these are such defining features for a non-human character, the fans have mainly stuck to the original content in the form of his personality, adding a bit of kindness and shifting said possessiveness toward his attraction for Bilbo instead. As a hobbit, Bilbo is already a height of 1.07 m, which makes for a remarkable height difference between the two characters. While Smaug does get pictured in his dragon form, fans have taken it upon themselves to interpret an anthropomorphic as well as zoomorphic appearance for him, possibly in an attempt of justifying the couple as more than bestiality. Apart from an approximate height of possibly two meters, this includes dragon features such as wings, tail, pointy ears and horns on his forehead. Because his scales are of a red glow, this gets adapted into the colour of his hair as well as majority of his human attire. Bilbo on the other hand remains in his original appearance of curly hair, pointy ears and huge feet.¹²⁷ This couple, while still a minor one if acknowledging the statistics of nearly 140 submissions, is a popular combination with works of BBC Sherlock as fans have been picturing Sherlock and John in the roles of Smaug and Bilbo.

- **Benemā,** which is a combination of the actors’ own names in the Japanese pronunciation, Benedikuto Kanbābatchi and Mātin Furīman. This couple is available in the English-language fandom as well, although referred to as Freebatch. While the semexuke dynamics are not of

¹²⁴ Stephen Strange, played by Benedict Cumberbatch in Doctor Strange, 2016.


the same importance to the English-language fandom, Japanese fans have deliberately put Cumberbatch’s name in first as he is in the role of the seme majority of the time. Much like BJ/MS, they are pictured as happy-go-lucky contra sarcastic personas that compliments each other well with their own shortcomings.\textsuperscript{128}

Submissions concerned for this part of the analogy have consisted of a total of 16 different works with favourites ranking between an amount of 154–5,338 (average: 927, median: 350).

4.2 Transformative Works of the English-language Fandom

The works included to this comparison are entirely digital, media as well as text, achieved through a mixture of submissions uploaded to Tumblr and Archive of Our Own. Because Tumblr enables an infinite scrolling feature of its content, it becomes difficult to obtain a comprehensive understanding by calculating the specific amounts and frequencies of the works submitted. Therefore, users have to rely on the site’s own choices of relating content, much like featured on Pixiv. Once entering a keyword, five related tags appear at the top of the page. From my observation, these do not change as frequently as Pixiv’s. While the main tag unarguably is Sherlock or alternatively BBC Sherlock, tags such as Johnlock and the alike in forms of modifications of this term are highly noticeable. Some of the more apparent samplings of this kind are listed below, accompanied by explanation in the previously similar and brief pattern:

- Femlock, a portmanteau of the word female and Sherlock. This aspect has already been referred to in Ann McClellan’s theory, \textit{Redefining genderswap fan fiction: A Sherlock case study}, and it also benefits ‘Rule 63’.\textsuperscript{129} As the fandom of BBC Sherlock, English and Japanese alike, is predominantly female, it comes as no surprise that a lot of fans have taken this matter upon themselves by cosplay.\textsuperscript{130} Thus, this makes up for a big part of the Femlock content available online. By being naturally familiar with the female body, artists of this subgenre also submit a great deal of nude art works. Sherlock and John are frequently seen in bed together, wearing no or very little clothing. However, Femlock art pieces theme around a variety of scenarios as there is no specification to said universe; it is just an alternative timeline of the opposite gender.\textsuperscript{131}

- Potterlock, a portmanteau of (Harry) Potter and Sherlock. The combination of two popular franchises of different genres, therefore referred to as crossover or fusion. In July 2017, Archive of Our Own has an amount of 1,316 works submitted into both fandoms combined. These works either represent crossover fiction where characters from BBC Sherlock meet characters from Harry Potter, or fusion fiction where characters from BBC Sherlock has been put in the setting of Harry Potter. While the different houses are a significant detail to the Harry Potter universe, the fandom of BBC Sherlock appears to be unable to decide which houses each character belong to as there seems to be a never-ending debate between whether Sherlock belongs to either Slytherin (pride, ambition, resourcefulness) or Ravenclaw

\textsuperscript{128} Yū, ベネジョンとシャロママンが, Pixiv, art submission, 23 March 2014 (accessed 25 July 2017).

\textsuperscript{129} ‘Rule 63’ of the Internet: for any given male character, there is a female equivalent.

\textsuperscript{130} Cosplay (コスプレ), a contraction of the words costume and play, a hobby which also qualifies as a performance art of dressing up and representing certain fictional characters.

\textsuperscript{131} Cloudmelon, no title, Tumblr, art submission, 14 March 2016 (accessed 25 July 2017).
(intelligence, learning, wit) and whether John belongs to Gryffindor (courage, bravery, chivalry) or Hufflepuff (patience, justice, loyalty).

- **Balletlock**, a portmanteau of the word ballet and Sherlock. This subgenre of transformative works had a brief period of popularity in 2013, yet resurfaced after the airing of *The Sign of Three* (2014) as Sherlock himself declared his devotion to dancing. Because of the attraction of contradictory narratives, John frequently gets portrayed as a rugby player in return. This fact correlates back to the original stories by Doyle as Watson stated he had indeed been on the rugby team in younger days. Works themed around Balletlock features a variety of age in Sherlock’s case, from young adolescence to fully grown man.

- **Fawnlock**, a portmanteau of the word fawn and Sherlock. A merge of the fantasy genre, picturing Sherlock (and sometimes John) as an anthropomorphic character in the form of a fawn. Featuring elements of a young deer, the fans portray Sherlock with attributes such as antlers, fur, while holding himself up on his hind legs. Archive of Our Own has recorded an amount of 150 works factoring this genre (July 2017).

- **Merlock**, a portmanteau of the word mermaid and Sherlock. Another merge of the fantasy theme, too. Because of Sherlock’s already confirmed elegance, it makes him an excellent suitor of this certain portrayal. Thus, he is the one majorly pictured as a mermaid, while John either supports the role of a sailor or an octopus hybrid with tentacles. The former is more frequent than the latter mentioned. The scales on Sherlock’s tail are often a shade of blue mixed with green, grey or purple. Only 90 fictional works of this genre exists on Archive of Our Own (July 2017).

- **Omegaverse**, also known as Alpha/Beta/Omega. It is a subgenre of an alternative universe which narrative revolves around the characters’ secondary gender based on a hierarchical system of A/B/O. Discovered through animal behaviour research, the secondary gender is a defined biological role which decides who can produce offspring in the form of female or male pregnancy (mpreg). While betas stand the middle ground of being considered having ‘normal’ human anatomy, alphas and omegas make up for the abnormalities such as rut and heat. These are the biological cycles when either of the two become compelled to satisfy their need for copulation. In these situations, all omegas become self-lubricating in preparation for intercourse and have further chances of fertility, while alphas experience receiving a knot when buried inside their assigned omega, ensuring the possibility of them claiming an offspring as well as a mate. The A/B/O narrative is heavy on the sexual themes, and while some works are considered straight-up pornographic content, other works have broadened a perspective of exploring legitimate social justice issues. In 2014, omegaverse was by far the most frequently read subgenre of transformative works of BBC Sherlock. In 2017, Archive

---

144 Originated in the *Supernatural* fandom (2005–present), first mentioned online in 2010.
of Our Own featured an amount of 1.642 works in the assigned Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics tag, the three most popular ones ranking between 5.300–7.300 favourites. Creators of A/B/O works appear to have a preference for John portraying the role as the alpha, as there is a difference of 14% between the amount of works marked as either alpha John (532) or alpha Sherlock (465). However, the same is evident to the apparent omega preference as a difference of 10% is displayed between omega John (492) and omega Sherlock (447).

4.2.1 Development

Another blooming development of the BBC Sherlock, which this thesis has yet to address, is The Johnlock Conspiracy. Commonly written by its acronym, TJLC is a conspiracy theory fabricated by Tumblr users Graceebooks and Joolabee after the second season had finished airing in 2012. Because of the series’ reoccurring choices of narrative and subtext, fans convinced themselves that the writers of the show intended to eventually announce Sherlock and John being in a relationship together, thus making the fannish wish into canon.

Along the term’s increasing popularity, TJLC has become a synonym for any kind of Johnlock content. This however, is not its full implication. TJLC is a conspiracy theory for a reason: it is developed by a group of people who are questioning, altering and overthrowing the established power, in this case, the aired content on BBC Sherlock. By analyzing what has been shown, the fans try finding reoccurring evidence which supports the fact of an official Johnlock approval on the horizon. The fans have observed the major as well as minor details of the show. There is a range to choose from the first episode already:

- Why did the creators of the show decide to re-name the title from Scarlet to Pink (assuming pink is a more LGBTQ+ friendly colour)?
- In the unaired pilot episode, the audience is shown the title card put above the scenery of the statue of Anteros on Shaftesbury Avenue, the Greek God of requited love.
- By the end of Sherlock and John’s first acquaintance, Sherlock is leaving by winking at John, addressing their next meeting over at Baker Street.
- Even being the master of deduction, Sherlock still get things wrong by assuming John family member referred to as Harry is his alcoholic brother recently divorced from his wife, when in fact is John’s lesbian sister, Harriet. Sherlock is thus exposed to a heteronormative bias, much like the audience of the show itself in regard to non-believers in TJLC.
- The reoccurring assumption of supporting characters in the show who believe Sherlock and John are a couple; the landlord, the restaurant owner, and Sherlock’s own brother. They are all characters who have been present in Sherlock’s life previously to John, fans therefore assume it is safe to say they are the ones who know him on a more personal level, thus the implication of Sherlock being a homosexual.

Some fans refer to these choices of narrative as ‘Chekhov’s gun’. This is a dramatic trope which implies that every detail put into a story is of necessity, and if it not, it should not be present in the first place.

The birth of TJLC originates from the fact that a part of the fandom of BBC Sherlock belongs to the LGBTQ+ community themselves and is starved for queer representation in media, as proper and well-known characters are rare. This is supported by an anonymous survey compiled in 2016 by the Three Patch Podcast, titled Fandom & Sexuality. Over 2.000 fans partook by submitting their entries, which resulted in an amount of 85.9% female audience. Out of ten different options available, only

24% of these 2,000 reported identified as heterosexual, which resulted in 76% belonging to the LGBTQ+ community in one way or another. A majority of 34.8% of these minorities identified as bisexual, with an amount of 764 applicants.

5. Conclusion

Both the Japanese and English-language fandom of BBC Sherlock show an immense sense of commitment and dedication to the series. As one of the biggest fandoms in the online world, it continues to grow regardless of its lengthy hiatuses between seasons.

To answer the questions stated in the beginning of this thesis; what kind of transformative works have been created by fans? Evidently, there is a variety of both textual and drawn narrative as well as combined. It would appear the Japanese-language audience favours the combination of these practices, as manga is a genre well known to the public eye. The quality of the content which gets published (amateur/professional) varies since boys’ love is a genre which women of all ages enjoy, both by means of consuming and producing.

Secondly, how do transformative works by the English-speaking fans differ from what has come to exist within the Japanese part of the audience? As the BBC Sherlock is targeted towards an English-language audience, this fandom has come to take its content to heart much differently than the Japanese audience. This most likely bases itself on Western fans’ insight into gender and identity politics which differs from what is present in the Japanese society. The Japanese fandom is satisfied with enjoying fictional works for what they are: fiction. The boys’ love genre, whilst being a genre of escapism to some, gives enjoyment to express oneself freely in a safe space of similar minds. The English-language part of the community, on the other hand, have claimed a more analytical perspective towards the series, which results in projecting views of both fantasy and realism onto a fictional universe.

And thirdly, what are the significant differences in preferences shown in works created such as fan fiction and dōjinshi? The historical differences of slash and the boys’ love genre are still present as slash is considered a fannish practice while boys’ love is enjoyed by a large-scale audience in the forms of amateur and professionally published works alike. Some transformative works by the English-language fandom reflect societal issues present in the Western world, mainly regarding gender and sexuality. By comparing the common traits featured in either parts of the fandom, differences reflecting the fundamentals of how the society is structured become present. The Japanese way of transforming the characters into smaller versions featuring animalizations such as cat ears and tails for the sake of having a cuter appeal stands in to the content of English-language works. While some of these works do contain the same traits, the majority of transformative content approaches subjects of inner turmoil instead. In short, it puts animal ears in contrast to animalistic dynamics. In comparison to animalistic traits, the English-language fandom can instead be seen experimenting with inner (mental/biological) and societal matters.
Summary

The aim of the present research was to examine and presents an insight of a Japanese fan culture aspects of the transformative works across various online platforms created by the Japanese-language as well as the English-language fandoms of the BBC Sherlock. The subjects which have been chosen for observation are a mixture of Japanese dōjinshi and English fan art and fan fiction.

The main goal was to determine and bring light upon the similarities and differences between the two groups by focusing on the output of Japan’s contemporary boys’ love fandom and the contemporary fandom practices by contrasting it with the respective genre of the English-language fandom, slash. Creations of the boys’ love genre, focusing on male-male relationships, function as an escapism for heterosexual women all over the world, as proven. This project was undertaken to design an inside look of fandom spaces and evaluate it by making it accessible to the ones who are unfamiliar with the phenomenon. The investigation of creations within the boys’ love genre has shown that the practice of combining textual narrative and accompanying pictures is favoured by the Japanese audience on a much larger scale than by the English-language fandom. The latter generally seem to favour one or another of the two, however, hardly combined. As to what content has been produced is a mixture of both parts of the spectrum; fantasy scenarios which has no connection to the canon on any level, and analytical aspects of what could in fact become canon in any upcoming content released by the producers.

As a community which is constantly in motion and therefore developing, there is always room for further research of academic nature. More research is required to determine the meaning and efficacy behind certain aspects chosen by the two fandoms. Further research is also required to determine the amount of power the producers hold over their audience, or if the fans prefer to make up their own narrative featuring the established characters.
Bibliography


http://alexxphoenix42.tumblr.com/post/163052001493/hey-ive-asked-around-for-answers-but-have-always (accessed 24 July 2017)


BeautifulFiction. 2015. The Gilded Cage. Fan fiction. Archive of Our Own, 22 May


http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/bigread/top200.shtml (accessed 29 June 2017)


http://www.barb.co.uk/viewing-data/weekly-top-30/ (no permanent link available, search for relevant dates) (accessed 10 July 2017)


2012. “Sherlock episode with naked Lara Pulver most watched show on BBC iPlayer.” 29 May.  


Fujimoto, Yukari. 1998. 私の居場所はどこにあるの？—少年マンガが映す心のかたち (Watashi no ibasho wa doko ni aru no?— Shōjo manga ga utsusu kokoro no katachi) [Where is my place? Heart and mind as reflected in shōjo manga], no pagination. Tokyo: Gakuyō shobō.


Dir. Smith, Steve. 2015. BBC One. Season 18, episode 09, aired 27 November.


http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2013.0427

Pixiv, 18 September.


The Late Show with David Letterman (TV Series). Dir. Shaffer, Paul. 2013. CBS. Season 20, episode 71, aired 9 May.


https://np.reddit.com/r/gallifrey/comments/2u73cg/tumblrbashing_why_or_why_not/co5ucsk/ (accessed 14 July 2017)


Miura, Shiwon [sic!]. 2006. シュミじゃないんだ (Shumi ja nain da) [It’s not a hobby], no pagination. Tokyo: Shinshokan.


http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2017.0971


Nkr. 2014. べねまちゃんまとめ【腐】(Benemachan matome) [Summary on Benedict+Martin=Benema]. Art submission. Pixiv, 13 July.

2014. べねまちゃんまとめ2【腐】(Benemachan matome 2) [Summary on Benedict+Martin=Benema]. Art submission. Pixiv, 17 November.


Oji. 2016. 僕の友達はゾンビである (Boku no tomo dach wa zonbi dearu) [My friend is a zombie]. Dōjinshi. 7 February. Circle: Lakuno Star. Printed by Sun Group Co., Ltd.


https://archiveofouroun.org/admin_posts/6037 (accessed 26 June 2017)

Ōgi, Fusami. 2015. 女性マンガ研究 (Josei manga kenkyū) [Research on women’s manga], cited in “Rewriting Gender and Sexuality in English-Language Yaoi Fanfiction”, p. 143, Tokyo: Seikyūsha.

Otacco. 2015. 海外の801二次創作『スラッシュ』、閲覧初心者が知っておくと便利な用語集まとめ (Kaigai no yaoi nijī sōsaku Slash: Etsuran shoshinsha ga shitteoku to henri na yōgoshū matome) [Slash, a derivative yaoi work from abroad: A glossary which might help first-time viewers]. 30 November. https://otacco.com/articles/423 (accessed 26 June 2017)


Qunhyskoa. 2014. ベネマー詰め (2). Art submission. Pixiv, 1 January.


Stanzani, Simona. 2012. マイ BL スーベルバーグ派 (Mai BL nüberubāgu-ha) [My BL Nouvelle Vague] In Yuriika tokushū BL on za ran! [see above], no pagination. Tokyo: Seidosha.


Taikova. 2014. No title. Art submission. Tumblr, 23 June

Tama kurenai. 2014. BJMS ろぐ. Art submission. Pixiv, 8 April.


Tenzu. 2016. From summer to autumn. Art submission. Pixiv, 6 October.


Appendix

Table 1: ACD’s works and their Japanese publication history.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>UK</strong></td>
<td><strong>Japan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>A Study in Scarlet</td>
<td>緋色の研究</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>The Sign of Four</td>
<td>四つの署名</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>A Scandal in Bohemia</td>
<td>ボヘミアの醜聞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Red-Headed League</td>
<td>赤毛組合</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Case of Identity</td>
<td>花婿失踪事件</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Boscombe Valley Mystery</td>
<td>ボスコム渓谷の惨劇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Five Orange Pips</td>
<td>オレンジの種五つ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Man with the Twisted Lip</td>
<td>唇のねじれた男</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle</td>
<td>青い紅玉</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Speckled Band</td>
<td>まだらの紐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Engineer’s Thumb</td>
<td>技師の親指</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor</td>
<td>独身の貴族</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of Beryl Coronet</td>
<td>緑柱石の宝冠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Copper Beeches</td>
<td>ぶな屋敷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of Silver Blaze</td>
<td>白銀号事件</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Cardboard Box</td>
<td>ボール箱</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Yellow Face</td>
<td>黄色い顔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Stockbroker’s Clerk</td>
<td>株式仲買店員</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Gloria Scott</td>
<td>グロリアスコット号事件</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual</td>
<td>マスグレーヴ家の儀式</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Reigate Squire</td>
<td>ライゲートの大地主</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*  シャーロックホームズの冒険

*The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*  シャーロックホームズの思い出
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Japanese Title</th>
<th>English Title</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Crooked Man</td>
<td>背中の曲がった男</td>
<td>The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes</td>
<td>シャーロックホームズの思い出</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Resident Patient</td>
<td>入院患者</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter</td>
<td>ギリシャ語通訳</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Naval Treaty</td>
<td>海軍条約文書事件</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Final Problem</td>
<td>最後の事件</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>The Hound of the Baskervilles</td>
<td>バスカヴィル家の犬</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Empty House</td>
<td>空き家の冒険</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Norwood Builder</td>
<td>ノーウッドの建築業者</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Dancing Men</td>
<td>踊る人形</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist</td>
<td>孤独な自転車乗り</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Priory School</td>
<td>ブライオリ学校</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of Black Peter</td>
<td>ブラックピーター</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton</td>
<td>犯人は二人</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Six Napoleons</td>
<td>六つのナポレオン</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Three Students</td>
<td>三人の学生</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez</td>
<td>金縁の鼻眼鏡</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter</td>
<td>スリークウォーター失踪</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Abbey Grange</td>
<td>僧坊荘園</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Second Stain</td>
<td>第二の汚点</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge</td>
<td>ウィスタリア荘</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans</td>
<td>ブルースパーティントン設計書</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Devil’s Foot</td>
<td>悪魔の足</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Red Circle</td>
<td>赤い輪</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax</td>
<td>カーファックス姫の失踪</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Dying Detective</td>
<td>瀕死の探偵</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Japanese Title</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>The Valley of Fear</td>
<td>恐怖の谷</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>His Last Bow</td>
<td>最後の挨拶</td>
<td>His Last Bow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone</td>
<td>マザリンの宝石</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>The Problem of Thor Bridge</td>
<td>ソア橋</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Creeping Man</td>
<td>這う男</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire</td>
<td>サセックスの吸血鬼</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Three Garridebs</td>
<td>三人ガリデブ</td>
<td>The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Illustrious Client</td>
<td>高名な依頼人</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Three Gables</td>
<td>三破風館</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier</td>
<td>白面の兵士</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Lion’s Mane</td>
<td>ライオンのたてがみ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>The Adventure of the Retired Colourman</td>
<td>隠居絵具師</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger</td>
<td>覆面の下宿人</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Adventure of the Shoscombe Old Place</td>
<td>ショスコム荘</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season: Episode</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>First aired (dd/mm/yy)</td>
<td>Average rating (millions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>A Study in Pink</td>
<td>25/7/2010</td>
<td>22/8/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3</td>
<td>The Great Game</td>
<td>8/8/2010</td>
<td>24/8/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>A Scandal in Belgravia</td>
<td>1/1/2012</td>
<td>22/7/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:2</td>
<td>The Hounds of Baskerville</td>
<td>8/1/2012</td>
<td>29/7/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:3</td>
<td>The Reichenbach Fall</td>
<td>15/1/2012</td>
<td>5/8/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:0</td>
<td>Many Happy Returns</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>24/12/2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:1</td>
<td>The Empty Hearse</td>
<td>1/1/2014</td>
<td>24/5/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:2</td>
<td>The Sign of Three</td>
<td>5/1/2014</td>
<td>31/5/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>His Last Vow</td>
<td>12/1/2014</td>
<td>6/7/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special</td>
<td>The Abominable Bride</td>
<td>1/1/2016</td>
<td>9/5/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>The Six Thatchers</td>
<td>1/1/2017</td>
<td>8/7/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:2</td>
<td>The Lying Detective</td>
<td>8/1/2017</td>
<td>15/7/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:3</td>
<td>The Final Problem</td>
<td>15/1/2017</td>
<td>22/7/2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>