



**Detail from Donracky's BL fanzine A Comic where Keith and Kotetsu are Just Having Sex. Keith is a handsome Caucasian and functions as seme (top), lying on bed with Tiger as uke (bottom) who is hung-over. Keith is telling Tiger that he drank a bit too much. Tiger is refuting this claim but he is belching at the same time. Keith then says that Tiger's sexual reactions are good enough but his penis is not quite erect, so he really must have had too much alcohol. There is a shot of Tiger's flaccid penis and then Keith starts fingering him. Tiger actually reaches orgasm, even though his penis never gets erect.**

## Oyaji Uke: The Middle-Aged Professional (or Professor) as Bottom

Katrien Jacobs

Boys' Love refers to female-authored comics and micro-fictions about homosexual love affairs that involve emotional hardship and hard-core sex affairs. This genre of "emotive pornography" was invented in Japan and is currently roaring in Hong Kong and Mainland China. Large groups of young women in their twenties are writing and trading Boys' Love commercial products and d.i.y. zines (also called *dojinshi*). They have labeled themselves with the ironical self-description of "rotten girls" (the Japanese term *fujoshi* or *Funu* 腐女 in Chinese) or "rotten families" to distinguish themselves from well-behaved moral mainstream society. The stories comprise of many different genres but all depict heightened love affairs and sex scenes between a male "dominant" (攻 *seme*) character and a male "bottom" (受 *uke*).

Within the greater Chinese region, for decades Hong Kong and Taiwan have been important sites for the importation of Japanese animation and its surrounding *fujoshi* activities. Hong Kong has been a major distributor of commercial products and has also both have been, for the most part, tolerant towards the edgy, sex-themed genres. Boys' Love materials are allowed to circulate as commodities, but there is still a bias and lack of encouragement from within the mass media, or from the arts and higher education. Hong Kong fans buy commercial comics in regular bookstores, but they are also heavy downloaders of dubbed Chinese-language "scanlated" (scanned and translated) versions of comics produced in Japan. They access BL materials on portals and popular social networks such as Facebook, where they navigate sexually explicit materials despite stringent censorship regulations. One of the Hong Kong fans explains that the themes of gay love and explicit sex have indeed become part and parcel of Hong Kong youth netizen culture.

In the People's Republic of China the influx of Japanese manga happened in the 1990s and has been more tightly controlled by the government and publishers who are instructed to reduce the Japanese influence and produce censored "Chinese-style" comics and animation. Mainland Chinese fans have



Cover of the BL Fanzine *Das Melken* (The Milking) made by Yuzukabosu/Halkichi. Tiger "the old man" is not used to having gay sex. Bunny needs to remind the old man that he had made a bet and promised to give him fellatio. Tiger gets upset and tries to get out of the deal but Bunny persists and even demands to see Tiger's face while he is giving fellatio. Tiger is flustered and also inhibited about swallowing semen, while Bunny thinks his shyness is cute. Then Tiger interrupts the session and says that he cannot make sounds during sex and orgasm, and he is embarrassed. 3



to be very careful in posting their gay-themed erotica and use various strategies to circumvent censorship. Most fans express their fantasies as literary micro-fictions, rather than sexually explicit manga, and they use code words or symbols to denote sexual organs or sex acts.

### The BL New Wave and Sexual Failure

Even though BL fans want to depict sexual conquest and climax in great detail, these fantasies go along with tropes of mental and physical imperfections. Kazumi Nagaike explains that the tendency to focus on these imperfections is part of a larger trend towards diversifying the male lead characters. In her recent talk “For Liberation or Moe: The decline of bishonen and the emergence of new types of protagonists in contemporary BL,” she argues that the subculture has been moving away from its obsession with *bishonen* characters or love between two idealized beautiful and effeminate males. The BL new wave in Japan is one concerned with non good-looking characters (*busaiku*), such as older males (*oyaji*) who are average looking and cast in the submissive position. In *Fantasies of Cross-dressing: Japanese Women Write Male-Male Erotica*, Nagaike argues that Boy’s love is a counter-pornography precisely because it makes efforts to depict less attractive characters who fail to perform well in sex acts. This is indeed a deviation from the genre “pornography,” which is mostly focused on climactic sexual performance and which tries to suppress a visualizing of obstacles that would interrupt this mission.

I searched for the New Wave amongst Chinese BL micro-fictions, and found that some genres in sexually explicit fiction have emerged which have in common that the protagonists all have imperfections; for instance, they are physically handicapped, sexually impotent, or simply social outcasts and losers. On Sina Weibo, a user posts a collection of “high quality BL” fictions that are divided by “illness”: HIV, leukemia, problems with the brain, other diseases, disabled hands or legs, weaknesses, diseases of the five internal organs, mental problems, sexual disorders, and disabled facial features. In almost all cases, these disabilities are not profound nor permanent, and they can be fixed. If a person has a permanent disability, the story unfolds around a person taking care of his lover and even find erotic pleasure in nurturing the deformed body or mind. But most commonly their failure points to social status, an economic disparity or class difference that cannot be crossed eas-

ily but indeed it leads to love.

As far as sexual impotence goes, about fifty percent of stories are “classical stories” set within Chinese imperial history. Indeed Chinese BL fiction has spawned a unique sub-genre centering on the love affair between the emperor and his beloved eunuch. For instance, there is a story by Chen Shanguan, *Time-travel to be a eunuch*, which cast a submissive character Xie Dongjun as *uke* who serves the emperor Xuanqiu Puyang as *seme*. It is a typical “ancient-background” fiction involving the hero to witness an epoch that he is not familiar with. This journey also evokes trauma and physical pain:

After a long time in the darkness, he wakes up with great pain, only finding his penis removed. It seems that he travelled from modern times to ancient China, and became a person who has been sent to a palace to be a eunuch! He is very angry, telling himself that this is a dream and tries to “wake up”, but it doesn’t work, life always gives him the opposite of what he wants, he has to accept the facts: now he is a 9-year-old boy named Xie, waiting to serve as eunuch. (Other little boys died in operation because of the great pain, but he was the only one who survived.) (Personal Translation)

After several years go by, the two men develop a very close relationship and then they fall in love and have sex occasionally. Xie is very shy at first and doesn’t want Xuanqiu to look at the scar on his penis, but Xuanqiu thinks it is beautiful and kisses it. As the story goes:

His underwear has been taken off, and Xie’s twists his legs trying to hide his body, while he covers his hands covering his red face. He feels just like an ostrich, and doesn’t dare to look into Xuanqiu’s eyes. Because there is a pink scar between his legs, not the penis that should be there. It is covered by flabby skin, and there is an orifice or a little hole. Around the hole, a scar blossoms like a rose. The color of it is not so much deep red, but light pink. In Xuanqiu’s eyes, it is so attractive.

The reddening on Xie’s face spreads towards his neck. This is the most shameful moment that he has experienced in years. Even Xie himself didn’t have the courage to look at it carefully, but now Xuanqiu does.

“How could I... You’ll never know how beautiful it is...” Xuanqiu says, 5

"I can't help to kiss it. (Personal Translation)

The eunuch's penis removal does not only produce a scar, but becomes eroticized as a specific type of genital or "erogenous zone." The area causes psychological distress but is also recuperated because it is an attractive kind of deformity, a body part that is different and can be adored—as a matter of fact it is described as a beautiful flower.

These fantasies show that failure can be turned around and have a happy ending as the "bottom" gains power through his specific style of submission and sex appeal. There is a transfer of power as the dominant character becomes aware of his limitations, or is suddenly smitten by unspeakable love. In each case, failure is used to shake up social divisions and to assert the power of eroticism.

### Tiger and Bunny: The Fading TV Star As Bottom.

*Tiger & Bunny* is a 2011 Japanese anime television series produced by Sunrise under the direction of Keiichi Satou. It is set in a futuristic city called Sternbild (based on New York City) and focuses on two superheroes who participate in a reality TV show "Hero TV" where they are sponsored by companies to solve crimes. The series focuses on the older superhero Kotetsu T. Kaburagi "Wild Tiger" and the much younger Barnaby Brooks Jr., or "Bunny", who represents the company amazon.com.jp. Tiger and Bunny do not get along easily but they are forced by their employers to work together to solve crimes.

I made a selection of Japanese and Chinese d.i.y comics (*dojinshi*) to see how the issue of sex and power was further treated by fans. The fandom produces a wide range of sexual and romantic scenarios between these two males. Many of the Japanese *dojinshi* authors attract their hard-core readers through enticing imagery and sexualized titles in English and German such as "Das Milken" (German for "The Milking") "Perverseness" and "Get Wild." Some make it very clear to the audience that they are "just writing pornography" and that we should not be expecting too much else. As author Susugu prefaces her comic entitled "Birthday Animal":

I don't know how I am going to live day by day without being able to see Barnaby and the old man on TV. But when I noticed how much masturbat-

tion and *dojinshi* I've done these days and with the amount of fun and how busy I've been I might have overdone it!

This page of the comic itself is covered in bodily fluids. It is a story of Tiger who appears to be becoming-animal with a huge tail of a tiger and who then finds out it is a dildo and that he will have to use this dildo (which seems to have a life of its own) to pleasure Bunny for his birthday.

### Imagining the Middle-Aged Professor as Bottom



Detail from the Japanese BL fan comic *Birthday Animal* by Akou Susugu (Scanlated into English by Vices and Devices) In this story Tiger has a dildo-like tail (birthday present) which gives him sexual energy but also seems to have a life of its own.





Cover of Donracky's Japanese BL fanzine *A Comic* where Keith and Ko-tetsu are Just Having Sex.

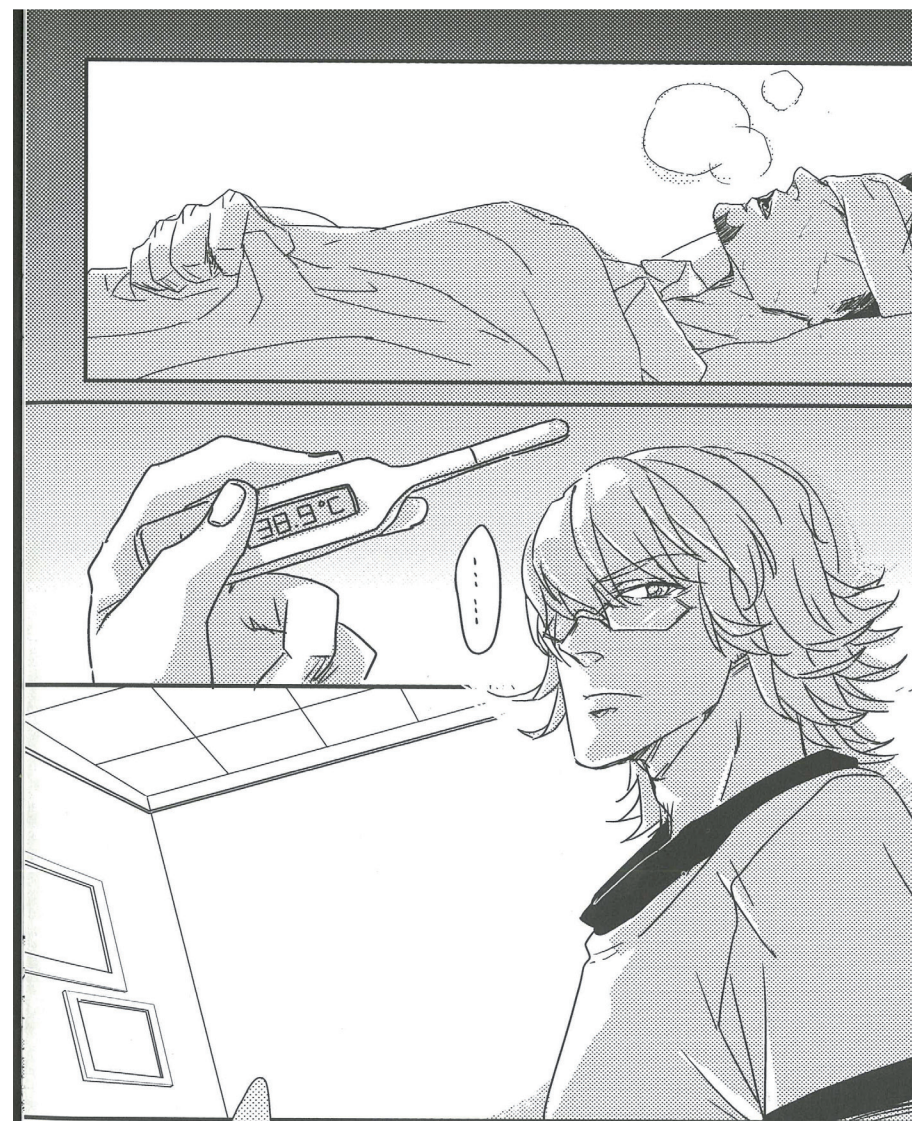


*TB confidential* by Mabataki makes a point of visualizing the ageing body, which is also feminized. Bunny and Tiger are in the changing room of their production house but fortunately the door is locked. Tiger is again a bit reluctant to have sex with Bunny—let alone in the dressing room of their production house—and wants them to hurry up. He shouts out in frustration: “What can you actually get from sucking an old man’s chest like that?” Bunny replies cunningly that the quality of the nipple does not depend on age.





Detail of a Hong Kong BL fanzine *37.5 degrees* by K.I (King Indigo). On a hot day, Bunny and Tiger end up in a shower together. Tiger's facial expression is one of shame and panic about having sex with the young man. But Bunny makes up for this feeling by showing extreme "sweetness" and even servitude towards Tiger and his body--wanting to lick him all over and thoroughly wash his body (and the lower regions). 10



Detail of the Mainland Chinese BL fanzine *Temperature* by Michun. Tiger is seriously ill and has a high fever. Bunny here becomes his nurse who gets into bed with him and shares moments of passionate intimacy, pouring cold water directly into Tiger's mouth, then getting turned on and wanting to make love with him.

## Imagining the Middle-Aged Professor As Bottom

In Guanzhou I was invited by Professor Sufeng Song at Sun-Yat Sen University to hold a storytelling workshop for BL fans. The university hosts a well-established Sex and Gender Education Forum, which deals extensively with research about sexual minorities and *tongzhi* activism. In this sense the fujoshi women who participated in my workshop were also tuned into discussions of queer sexuality.

Overall the discussion was highly spirited and evoked rich dialogues. When asking what kinds of erotic entertainment the participants were into, I received all kinds of answers-- some women preferred "pure" Boys' Love stories while others saw themselves as "senior fujoshis" who had grown up on Boys' Love culture since primary school or high school and now were into all kinds of subgenres. As explained by one of the participants:

I started my Boys' Love reading when I was twelve years old in primary school. The first one I was read was hard-core pornographic, so my taste is rather strong. (Personal Interview, May 2013)

Another male participant reacted by saying that the issue was not one of "hard-core" versus "soft-core" imagery but that there would be a "love-core" – it would be important for the love story to be well developed so that the sex scenes are not "gratuitous" and tell you "why the characters are falling in love."

In the second part of the workshop, the students were divided into small groups and asked to think of a short story about a gay couple in Berlin, an older professor, named Professor Moenen who falls in love with a much younger student named Fritz. The imagination runs wild as the fans improvise and then recite their versions of this relationship:

**[Story 1] ....The next day, the professor wakes up naked and finds a naked young handsome guy sleeping beside him, he is shocked. The young man is naughty and tells him they should have sex. The young man is good at seducing, so the supposedly heterosexual professor is being seduced and finally has sex with him. ... But the professor is rather conservative and can only accept having sex on bed, the young man finds it boring. Then**

**their relationship starts developing all kinds of problems.**

**[Story 2] .....Professor Moenen is very old-fashioned and strict, the kind of person who takes care of his own household. ...When Moenen runs into the gorgeous Fritz, he falls for him quickly and does all the things Fritz tells him to do. Fritz fucks professor Moenen very hard. But Moenen does not scream or shout it loud. Fritz wants him to say "Fuck me harder!" but he does not shout. Fritz soon is tired of the old dog who just follows him around.**

Just as in the Tiger and Bunny stories, the professor is an older man who is seduced by a younger, adorable and beautifully looking colleague as *homme fatale*. He is also ridiculed and stands for an old-fashioned authority figure who has lost his sex appeal. Fans want to embellish this "worn out figure" by pairing him with a younger man who teases him yet also loves him. Indeed, the bottom figure is loved and even healed him into sexual performance and orgasm(s).

## References

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Katrien Jacobs is associate professor at Chinese University of Hong Kong. She has lectured and published widely about pornography, art, censorship and media activism. Her most recent book *People's Pornography: Sex and Surveillance on the Chinese Internet* (Intellect Books, 2011) investigates mainland China's illegal porn industries and media activism. Her work can be found on [www.libidot.org](http://www.libidot.org)