

Deviation and conformity in fanwork: Narrative transformation in yaoi

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Keywords: fan culture, yaoi, manga, narrative, diegetic transposition, character

Abstract

This paper investigates how *yaoi* deviates from and conforms to source texts through analysis of *manga* fanwork, drawn in Japanese comics style. Yaoi, a popular form of fanwork in Japan, refers to women-oriented productions that borrow male characters from source texts and develop their male bonding into a romantic relationship. This paper focuses on yaoi that transposes the diegesis from the original world to an alternative one. This diegetic transposition in yaoi also carries with it a transformation of plots and character traits. While this type of yaoi is not regarded as particularly similar to the source text, it is identified as derivative work rather than independent work. What is the identifiable derivative element of the source text? Why is the diegetic transposition needed in yaoi? Using *dōjinshi*, or self-published work, of *One Piece*, a popular pirate adventure manga in Japan, as an example, this paper investigates the mechanism and function of narrative transformation, especially the diegetic transposition, in yaoi.

1. Introduction

This paper investigates how *yaoi* deviates from and conforms to source texts through an analysis of *manga* fanwork drawn in Japanese comics style¹. Yaoi, a popular form of fanwork in Japan, borrows male characters from source texts and develops their bonds into romantic relationships. It belongs to a genre of novels, comics or video games produced by and for women, that focuses on (mainly romantic) relationships between male characters. This genre is variously called *shōnen-ai*, *June*, *Boys' Love (BL)*, or yaoi². The present study refers to yaoi—the object of investigation—as secondary fanwork and BL as the original commercial work.

In Japan, previous studies of yaoi/BL have mostly been conducted within the frameworks of feminism, gender studies, and queer studies. Kaneda (2007) summarizes yaoi/BL studies in Japan since the 1980s as follows: The perspectives on yaoi/BL in these studies have shifted from “negative aspects,” such as misogyny or escapism, to “positive ones,” such as subverting heterosexual order or providing pleasure for women (Kaneda 2007: 169). Moreover, Fujimoto (2007) notes that recent yaoi/BL studies have focused not on the reasons why women enjoy male–male narratives but on the functions/effects of this genre for/on women (Fujimoto 2007: 44). These remarks suggest that previous research has contained a great deal of discussion about yaoi/BL in relation to women’s gender and/or sexuality.

The present study examines how yaoi relates to source texts, not what women seek from it. Since yaoi narrative is produced by quoting from, appropriating, and adapting source texts, there is a need to investigate the

1. Some proper nouns and technical terms in Japanese have been Romanized and translated into English; these are indicated in parentheses. Citations from Japanese works have also been translated into English by the author.
2. BL is particularly popular today. In 2009 alone, BL publishers published 12 or 13 magazine titles monthly, and official circulation was estimated at around 100,000 to 150,000 copies per title (Hori 2009: 120).

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mechanism by which yaoi is generated. Specifically, this paper suggests that some yaoi transposes the diegesis—the spatiotemporal world of the narrative—from the framework of the source text to an alternative one. This diegetic transposition in yaoi carries with it a transformation of plots and character traits such as age and occupation. While this type of yaoi, called *parareru* (parallel) in Japanese, is not regarded as particularly similar to the source text, it is considered derivative rather than independent work.

To investigate this issue, the present study refers to Genette's (1982[1997]) concept of narratology as well as character analysis in manga studies. Following Genette's (1982[1997]) discussions of textual adaptation in literature (e.g., parody, satire, and pastiche), I investigate the identifiable elements derived from a source text and the reason why yaoi requires diegetic transposition. Of course, in applying literary theory to this research, it is necessary to consider the differences between derivative literature and manga. Genette (1982[1997]) suggests we should “envision a series of specific inquiries concerning each type of art, where possible parallelisms and convergences should in no case be postulated beforehand but observed after the fact” (Genette 1982[1997]: 392). A major difference between literature and manga concerns the use of images. Therefore, I also refer to manga studies, especially character analysis, to discuss yaoi manga. In this way, by eclectically utilizing narratology and manga studies, this paper explores the relationship between yaoi and source texts.

My example text is a *dōjinshi* (self-published)³ manga, a popular form of Japanese fanwork, derived from the source text *One Piece*. *One Piece* has been serialized by Eiichirō Oda since 1997 in the boys-oriented manga magazine *Shūkan Shōnen Janpu* (*Weekly Shōnen Jump*). *One Piece* is a coming-of-age story in which the main character, Luffy, dreams of becoming *Kaizokuō* (the Pirate King). This long-running series holds the record as the bestselling manga in Japan⁴. As of December 2014, its total circulation had reached 320 million⁵.

One Piece was chosen as the example text for this research because it has sustained a stable fan community. Misaki (2007) notes that fan community activity is generally maintained by a constant supply of fan objects, such as those available through weekly animation broadcasts or serialization in weekly magazines. Since *One Piece* has been adapted into animations, movies, video games, novels, merchandise, etc., fans can access multiple forms of media and exert control over their fan activities. For these reasons, *One Piece* is well suited for diachronic research on yaoi. Given the risk of copyright infringement, as well as some conservative attitudes in the fan community, this paper does not show visual images of any fanwork or give detailed information about fan artists. Instead, sample information for each fanwork is listed in the appendix.

The discussion below is divided into four parts. First, I outline the history and current status of yaoi in the *dōjinshi* community, with particular attention to fan activities at *Komikku Māketto* (the Comic Market or the Comiket), the biggest *dōjinshi* convention in Japan. The next section investigates the number of yaoi accounts that existed between 2001 and 2010 in the *One Piece* fan community and which male–male couples tended to be popular. Then, yaoi narratives are classified in terms of how they are transformed, with particular attention to diegetic transposition. Finally, I analyze yaoi narratives in terms of diegetic transposition and character transformation (or replication) using the frameworks of narratology and manga studies.

2. Yaoi *dōjinshi* culture in Japan: Terminology and definitions

This paper defines yaoi as fanwork that borrows male characters from a source text and develops their bonds into romantic relationships. Manga, *anime* (animation), video games, novels, movies, television dramas, and other related popular media function as sources for yaoi.

The term *yaoi* was coined in the late 1970s as an acronym for “*yamanashi, ochinashi, iminashi*,” which means “no punch line, no climax, and no meaning” (Nobi 2003). This term first appeared in a *dōjinshi* entitled *Rappori*,

3. Although the term *dōjinshi* originally referred to a magazine coedited by *dōjin* (the coteries) who share some interests or ideas, most *dōjinshi* fanwork today is published by a single artist (Yonezawa 1998). See also note 9.

4. See *Asahi shimbun* (*Asahi News*), November 5, 2011.

5. See *Asahi shimbun*, June 16, 2015.

which was self-published by amateur manga artists in 1979. According to Akiko Hatsu (1993)—one of the main editors of *Rappori*, who is now a well-known professional manga artist—the term was used to refer to short stories containing male–male relationships that often lacked the punch lines, climaxes, and meanings needed for more commercial work⁶. Hatsu (1993) also notes that yaoi was not coined by a single person but arose naturally through wordplay among groups. This etymology suggests that yaoi was connected with *dōjinshi* culture from the start.

The term came to refer to the entire genre as yaoi rose in popularity in the 1980s, facilitated by technological advances that allowed for low-cost printing. During that time, *Kyaputen Tsubasa* (known in the Anglosphere as *Flash Kicker*), *Yoroiden Samurai Torūpā* (*Ronin Warriors*), and *Seinto Seiya* (*Saint Seiya: Knights of the Zodiac*) were popular source texts for yaoi. Although yaoi has existed on the Internet since the 1990s, print media is still its main form of distribution.

Chart 1 shows that *dōjinshi* can be represented as four quadrants, depending on the gender of the assumed reader (i.e., male-oriented or female-oriented) and whether the work is based on a source text (i.e., secondary fanwork or original work). Yaoi *dōjinshi* occupies the fourth quadrant—female-oriented secondary fanwork.

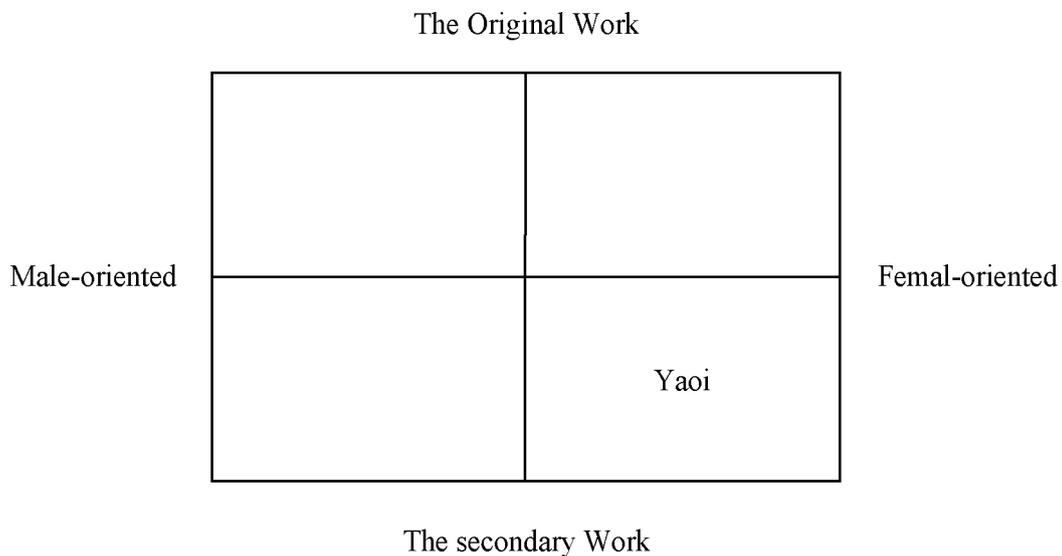


Chart 1. The four quadrants in *dōjinshi*.

Founded in 1975, the Comiket is the largest *dōjinshi* exchange convention in Japan. It has grown to become a three-day event held twice a year at Tokyo Big Sight (Tokyo International Exhibition Center), attracting 35,000 groups of *dōjinshi* creators—called *sākuru* (circles)⁷—and about 500,000 attendees. Each circle is arranged according to *janru kōdo* (genre code), which is used to divide several groups of *dōjin* works. Genre in this sense indicates the classification as original work or fanwork (i.e., *sōsaku* or *FC*) and the style or content of the *dōjinshi* activities (e.g., *hyōron/jōhō* or *gakuman*: critiques/information or groups of university manga fan clubs). The genre codes for fanwork are generally more ramified than for original work: they are classified according to media (e.g., *anime* or *gēmu*: fanwork based on animation or video games), the title of the magazine in which the source work appears (e.g., *FC Gan Gan*: fan clubs for *Monthly Shōnen Gan Gan* works), or the titles of the individual source works.

Such ramification of the genre code points to the domination of fanwork in the *dōjinshi* cultures at the Comiket. Yonezawa (1998), former representative of the Comiket, noted that during the late 1990s an increase in fanwork

6. Professional female manga artists, who were later called *Nijūyōnen gumi* (Magnificent 49ers or Year 24 Group), clearly influenced such works, especially through their girl-oriented manga, called *shōnen-ai* or *bishōnen*, focusing on love between beautiful boys (Ishida 2008). A fuller study of this subgenre is beyond the scope of this paper, however.

7. In *dōjinshi* cultures, circles originally referred to the group of fans and/or artists who shared *dōjinshi* activities. However, single-person circles called *kojin sākuru* (individual circles) are increasing today (Yonezawa 1998).

circles caused the proportion of original *dōjinshi* circles to decrease to 30% or 40%. In contrast, original *dōjinshi* circles accounted for about 70% in the late 1970s (Yonezawa 1998: 19). In addition, according to a 2004 study conducted at the Comiket, about 71.2% of *dōjinshi* circle participants are women (Sugimoto et al. 2005: 290). These two aspects—the increase in fan artists and the dominant women presence—imply that a large amount of *yaoi dōjinshi* is distributed at the Comiket today.

3. Overview of *One Piece* *yaoi*: Scale and pairing trends, 2000–2010

3.1. Proportion of *yaoi* in *One Piece* fanwork

This section is divided into two parts. First, I provide an overview of the scale of *yaoi* in *One Piece* fanwork. Second, by referring to circles at the Comiket, I show that male–male pairings are especially dominant in this genre.

Let us begin with the first point by considering *Komikku Māketto Katarogu* (*The Comic Market Catalog*), which includes a list of participating circles and information for attendees. I investigated the number of *supēsu* (booths) designated for *One Piece* circles from 2000 to 2010 at the Comiket. At the Comiket, one booth (i.e., half of a long desk) is allocated to each circle generally; therefore, the number of booths is almost equivalent to the number of circles. The research period was established based on the appearance of the *One Piece* genre code; *One Piece* first received an independent genre code at the Comiket held in December 2000⁸.

Table 1 shows the change in the number of Comiket booths for *One Piece* circles by year from December 2000 to December 2010. The table shows that the number of *One Piece* booths peaked at 678 in December 2002 and ranged between approximately 200 and 600 in subsequent years. These numbers indicate that *One Piece* fanwork circles maintained a medium-scale presence.

Date	Total number of circles at the Comiket	Number of <i>One Piece</i> fanwork booths
Dec. 2000	23,000	377
Dec. 2001	23,000	507
Dec. 2002	35,000	678
Dec. 2003	35,000	636
Dec. 2004	23,000	310
Dec. 2005	23,000	258
Dec. 2006	35,000	338
Dec. 2007	35,000	272
Dec. 2008	35,000	198
Dec. 2009	35,000	188
Dec. 2010	35,000	288

Table 1. Number of *One Piece* fanwork booths at the Comiket, Dec. 2000 to Dec. 2010.

Table 2 shows the number of *yaoi*, male–female pairings, friendship, and other fanwork circles across all *One Piece* fanwork booths by year for the same period. The highest proportion of *yaoi* was 79.1% in 2005, and the lowest was 56.5% in 2000. On average, *yaoi* accounted for 69.5% of *One Piece* fanwork booths. These numbers indicate that *yaoi* represented the mainstream for *One Piece* fanwork at the Comiket. These data were calculated by referring to *sākuru katto* (circle cuts), in which “circles can advertise themselves via an art sample and whatever information they can squeeze in” (Noppe 2014), in the Comiket catalogs. These cuts were listed according to the arrangement of booths in the hall.

If either of the following conditions was satisfied, *yaoi* circle cuts were identified: (1) the names, or their con-

8. In December 2013, it was integrated into the category *FC Janpu sono ta* (fan clubs for *Shōnen Jump* works).

Date	Yaoi	Heterosexual romance	Friendship	Other	Proportion of yaoi
Dec. 2000	213	49	11	104	56.5%
Dec. 2001	310	66	11	120	61.1%
Dec. 2002	446	74	8	150	65.8%
Dec. 2003	432	70	4	130	67.9%
Dec. 2004	195	75	2	38	62.9%
Dec. 2005	204	17	3	34	79.1%
Dec. 2006	251	20	3	64	74.3%
Dec. 2007	190	14	1	67	69.9%
Dec. 2008	148	9	2	39	74.7%
Dec. 2009	142	8	1	37	75.5%
Dec. 2010	222	13	3	50	77.1%

Table 2. Proportion of yaoi in *One Piece* fanwork (unit = booths).

tracted form, in a male–male pairing were specified. For example, the representation of male character A x male character B, or AB in contracted form, in the circle cuts was identified as yaoi⁹. (2) Unmarked cuts listed before and after cuts that satisfied condition (1) were identified as having the same yaoi pairing. Circle booths with the same pairings are conventionally arranged together in the Comiket hall, except for circles assigned booths in *kabe* (wall) and *tanjōbi-seki* (birthday seat) areas. *Kabe* refers to a booth allocation next to the wall, and *tanjōbi-seki* refers to a booth allocation at the corner of *shima* (an island) in the middle of the hall. The booths assigned such positions are often regarded as those that are popular and therefore have a need to avoid the crowds of buyers¹⁰.

Circle cuts containing indicators of male–female pairings were classified as heterosexual romance, and those lacking romantic relationships were classified as friendship, whether yaoi or not. If yaoi and heterosexual pairings were intermingled, the cut was classified as other.

3.2. Priority of pairings in *One Piece* yaoi

Kappuringu (coupling) is the fundamental narrative code in yaoi. This term refers to the pairing of two characters and implies that those characters are in a romantic relationship. The two participants in the relationship are referred to as *seme* (the top or active person in the relationship) and *uke* (the bottom or passive person). These roles are generally fixed, and the two participants are represented as “[character name of seme] x [character name of uke].” Previous studies have highlighted the importance of this pairing code in yaoi (Nishimura 2001; Nobi 2003; Kamm 2013). Pairing information is given in the circle cuts in the Comiket catalogs and functions as a fanwork search index for yaoi fans.

Table 3 shows the three most popular pairings in *One Piece* yaoi between December 2000 and December 2010. The criteria used to identify yaoi circle cuts were the same as in Table 2. The first pairing was selected if multiple pairings were specified in one circle cut. Table 3 shows that while popular yaoi pairings have persisted over time, less popular *One Piece* pairings were identified as well. Since 2000, the Zoro x Sanji pairing has been the most popular; the reverse pairing, Sanji x Zoro, was the second most popular, followed by Zoro x Luffy. The pairing of Marco and Ace was only found in 2010. Luffy, Zoro, and Sanji have thus been the most popular characters in *One Piece* yaoi.

9. An “x” between two characters’ names indicates a romantic relationship between them in yaoi cultures. See 3.2.

10. See comment from the Comiket staff in 2009: <http://www.comiket.co.jp/info-c/C76/C76hitokoto/hitokoto.html> (last accessed: September 20, 2015).

These three characters are the main actors in the source story. The main character, Monkey D. Luffy, is the captain of *Mugiwara no ichimi* (the Straw Hat Pirates). Roronoa Zoro and Sanji are also part of this pirate crew. Meanwhile, Portgas D. Ace, who is Luffy's adopted brother, and Marco belong to another pirate crew called *Shirohige kaizokudan* (the Whitebeard Pirates). Luffy first appeared in the source text in episode 1 (volume 1), Zoro in episode 3 (volume 1), Sanji in episode 43 (volume 5), Ace in episode 157 (volume 18), and Marco in episode 434 (volume 45). These data imply that the popularity of certain fanwork pairings might be related to the frequency with which characters appear in the source text. This seems to corroborate Misaki's (2007) abovementioned remarks on the sustainability of fan community activity.

Dec.2000		Dec.2001		Dec.2002		Dec.2003		Dec.2004		Dec.2005	
Zoro x Sanji	58	Zoro x Sanji	83	Zoro x Sanji	157	Zoro x Sanji	190	Zoro x Sanji	82	Zoro x Sanji	96
Zoro x Luffy	30	Zoro x Luffy	37	Sanji x Zoro	56	Sanji x Zoro	62	Sanji x Zoro	25	Sanji x Zoro	41
Sanji x Zoro	29	Sanji x Zoro	29	Zoro x Luffy	45	Zoro x Luffy	39	Zoro x Luffy	12	Zoro x Luffy	14
Dec.2006		Dec.2007		Dec.2008		Dec.2009		Dec.2010			
Zoro x Sanji	125	Zoro x Sanji	94	Zoro x Sanji	66	Zoro x Sanji	58	Zoro x Sanji	66		
Sanji x Zoro	44	Sanji x Zoro	23	Sanji x Zoro	21	Sanji x Zoro	56	Sanji x Zoro	20		
Zoro x Luffy	19	Zoro x Luffy	15	Zoro x Luffy	12	Zoro x Luffy	15	Marco x Ace	18		

Table 3. The three most popular pairings in *One Piece* yaoi (unit = booths)

4. Classifying narrative transformation in yaoi

4.1. Theoretical framework: Pragmatic and diegetic transpositions

Although the popularity of yaoi fanwork pairings might be related to the frequency with which characters appear in the source text, the relationships between source texts and fanwork stories cannot be similarly explained.

In this section, I will classify the ways in which yaoi transforms source-text narratives by drawing on Genette's (1982[1997]) concepts of narrative adaptation discussed in his book *Palimpsestes (Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree)*. In particular, I focus on the concept of "a thematic transformation bearing on the very significance of the hypotext" (Genette 1982[1997]: 294)¹¹. A narrative is a concatenation of events or actions, and its transformation generally relies upon two transformational devices: pragmatic transposition and diegetic transposition. According to Genette (1982[1997]), pragmatic transposition modifies the action and events of the plot, while diegetic transposition changes the spatiotemporal world of the story. Prince (1987) describes plot as "the main incidents of a narrative" and story as "the content plane of narrative" (Prince 1987: 71, 91). Hence, these two narrative transformations (pragmatic and diegetic transposition) imply modifications to the content of the narrative.

Genette (1982[1997]) also suggests that "diegetic transposition thus inevitably and necessarily entails a few pragmatic transpositions" (Genette 1982[1997]: 296). In this sense, pragmatic transposition can be classified into two types based on whether there is also diegetic transposition¹². The present study—which investigates deviation from and conformity to source texts in fanwork—focuses on diegetic transposition since it transforms the source more than pragmatic transposition.

4.2. Classification of diegetic transposition in yaoi

At the Comiket held in December 2010, I collected 38 examples of yaoi work from the *One Piece* dōjinshi¹³.

11. Genette (1982[1997]) defines *hypotext* as an earlier text that is connected to the alternative text (Genette 1982[1997]: 5).

12. Referring to Genette (1982[1997]), derivative practices in literature are first divided into imitations and transformations, and transformations are classified as stylistic transformations and semantic transformations. Furthermore, semantic transformations can be pragmatic or diegetic. This paper refers to the last two categories.

13. As mentioned above, general information about these samples is given in the appendix.

These were selected from new *dōjinshi* manga (i.e., no series, reprints, or anthologies) issued by circles allocated in kabe and tanjōbi-seki. Among these 38 examples of yaoi, 24% (nine works) used diegetic transposition while 76% (29 works) maintained the same diegesis as the source text. Although it would be premature to conclude from this small sample that pragmatic transposition is the privileged adaptation style in yaoi, this study found that the dominant type of textual transformation in *One Piece* yaoi preserved the original diegesis.

For the 24% of yaoi cases involving changes to the spatiotemporal world of the source text, diegetic transposition was classified into two types. In the first type, the diegesis was established by the yaoi artists. For example, the characters of *One Piece* are transposed as high school students in contemporary Japan. In the second type, the characters of source text A are crossed with the diegesis of source text B. For example, the characters of *One Piece* are situated in the diegesis of *Snow White*. Eight of the nine sampled works are of the former type while only one is of the latter. This paper focuses on the former type.

As previously mentioned, diegetic transposition often implies pragmatic transformation as well. In this paper, I identify modifications to character(s) as pragmatic transpositions. Since characters' actions form the series of events in a plot, transforming characters implies some degree of plot modification. Prince (1987) suggests that "an event can be an action or act (when the change is brought by an agent [...])" (Prince 1987: 28). Characters as agents in a yaoi story are thus transformed in three ways: first, the male–male relationship becomes romantic; second, the frameworks of other relationships are also transposed (e.g., the pirate crew in the source text may be transformed into teacher–student relationships); and third, single characters may be transformed, as in male-to-female gender alteration.

5. Narrative analysis of yaoi *dōjinshi*

5.1. Diegetic transpositions in yaoi

How are the connections between yaoi and source texts maintained if the diegeses and characters are transformed? For example, yaoi that transforms male–male relationships into romantic relationships is often referred to as "quite different" from the source text (Ōtsuka 1989[2001]: 16). While the differences between such derivative works and their source texts are emphasized, yaoi is also premised on being linked in some way with the source text. Even if yaoi significantly transforms character and diegesis, it is still regarded as secondary rather than original work. Therefore, this paper analyzes yaoi works in which the artists have diegetically modified the source texts. As mentioned above, eight of the collected samples belong to this category.

Table 4 presents the diegesis of each sample yaoi work. The case number corresponds to the list number in the appendix of diegetic transformations. I analyzed textual information such as narration, dialogue, and disclaimers in the discourse to determine the transposed diegesis. In works containing no textual clues, image elements such as customs, manners, living styles, and architectural forms suggest the spatiotemporal frameworks. The original diegesis of *One Piece* is as follows: the time is *Daikōkai Jidai* (the Great Age of Pirates), and the place is a ship on a fictional ocean current called *Grando Rain* (the Grand Line). As cases 1–4 in Table 4 indicate, the spatiotemporal framework for most of the selected yaoi works is contemporary Japan. Furthermore, familiar places in contemporary society, such as schools (preschools and high schools), houses (private houses and apartments), and offices, tend to be the settings for the characters' everyday lives and activities in yaoi.

Diegetic transposition from the pirate world to contemporary Japan also creates pragmatic transpositions for the characters. *One Piece* characters going on ocean adventures in the source text become ordinary people living in a contemporary Japanese city. This kind of yaoi represents a narrative of *One Piece* characters becoming ordinary people in common places.

5.2. The function of proximization and interpretive communities

Well-known spatiotemporal frameworks and character settings are often chosen to lend "proximization" to the diegetic modification (Genette 1982[1997]: 304). According to Genette (1982[1997]), "the hypertext transposes the diegesis of its hypotext to bring it up to date and closer to its own audience (in temporal, geographic, or social

	Temporal framework	Spatial framework	
		Geographic back-ground	Life and activity settings
Source	The Great Age of Pirates	The Grand Line	Ship
Case 1	Contemporary	Japan	Private house, kindergarten
Case 2	Contemporary	Japan	Apartment, office
Case 3	Contemporary	Japan	Apartment
Case 4	Contemporary	Japan	Private house, high school
Case 5	Modern times	Japan	Residence
Case 6	Modern times	Japan	Post town
Case 7	Unidentified	A small country	Restaurant
Case 8	Unidentified	Forest	Forest, village

Table 4. Modifications to the spatiotemporal world in *One Piece* yaoi.

terms)” (304). Thus, diegetic transposition supplies a more familiar narrative for readers (and perhaps the artists themselves)¹⁴. This applies to yaoi as well—that is, diegetic transpositions in yaoi may modify temporal and geographical frames to help readers empathize.

As shown in Table 4, a diegesis of Japan is most common, even if the temporal frame is not set in the present. This case study reveals that yaoi can construct more familiar narratives by transposing the diegesis to Japan, a place most yaoi fan artists and readers feel an affinity with. Diegetic transposition in yaoi thus performs the function of proximization, thereby generating narratives yaoi fan artists and readers can empathize with.

The concept of interpretive communities can be used to judge “empathic” spatiotemporal frameworks and character settings. Fish (1980), who developed reader-response criticism in literary theory, defines interpretive communities as “made up of those who share interpretive strategies” (Fish 1980: 171). In light of this concept, yaoi artists and readers can be understood as sharing interpretive strategies and collectively distinguishing whether settings are empathic.

Take the transposition of “unknown” or “not-empathic” diegesis to yaoi as an example. As mentioned in 4.2., I divided diegetic transposition in yaoi into two types: (1) diegesis established by the yaoi artist and (2) the transposition of characters from source text A to the diegesis of source text B. In this study, there was only one work of the latter type (case 9). This yaoi work places characters from *One Piece* into the diegesis of an animated television series that ran from October to December 2010. It is difficult to regard an anime broadcast for only two and a half months as a widely shared work in the community. The author’s disclaimer—“readers of this fan work may not know the source text”—shows that proximization through diegetic transposition is not clearly achieved in this type of yaoi.

This case helps clarify the principles of empathic settings for yaoi artists and readers. While former type of diegetic transposition has autonomy from the diegesis of the specific work (and even of *One Piece*), the latter type requires knowledge of both *One Piece* and the diegetically crossed work. In such a context, the well-known, familiar, or empathic setting can be understood as a measure of the possibilities for shared interpretive strategies in yaoi communities.

14. Genette (1982[1997]) uses *Ulysses* by James Joyce and *The Odyssey* by Homer as examples of the effects of proximization in diegetic transposition (307–310).

5.3. Character components: Fluidity and autonomy

While diegetic transpositions offer familiar narratives to yaoi artists and readers by evoking their empathy, they may cause narratives to become different from their source texts. Thus, even though diegetic transposition creates proximization for yaoi artists and readers, it also creates more significant character modifications and narrative deviations from the source text.

I will investigate this issue by referring to knowledge derived from manga studies. Odagiri (2010) discusses *kyarakutā*, or character, in manga/comics and other related visual media with reference to literary studies, art history, and manga studies. By examining Edward Morgan Foster's character studies and Gō Itō's *manga hyōgenron* (manga expression theory), Odagiri (2010) concludes that character is composed of four elements: *koyūmei* (proper name), *imi* (meaning), *naimen* (interiority), and *zuzō* (iconography, icon, or visual appearance) (Odagiri 2010: 119). "Meaning" refers to the attributes given to a character, "interiority" refers to a character's mental growth throughout a narrative, and "iconography" is the graphic element of a character.

According to Odagiri (2010), character can be formed on the basis of a proper name and any of the other three elements. All components of character are interrelated, even if some elements are absent or one component is prioritized over the others. The relationships among components often change in the process of generating a story or of commercial development. More importantly, Odagiri (2010) notes that character can be expanded and transformed from a source text as long as the proper name and parts of the aforementioned components are retained. This fluidity of components facilitates the autonomy of characters in yaoi and their separation from their source contexts.

5.4. Replication of character components in yaoi

Here, I focus on the iconographic element of character. Generally, this graphic element can be understood as comprising two parts. The first part depends on the manga artist's individuality, such as *byōsen* (his or her line work or touch). Natsume (1997) notes that the original line work arises from the relationship between the drawing tool and the artist's drawing work (Natsume 1997: 37)¹⁵. Taking *One Piece* as an example, Oda uses *G-pen* (pen nibs) for drawing manga and *Kopikku* (COPIC marker) and colored pencil for coloring (Kadokura 2010: 251, 255). The characteristics of the tools and the artist who uses them skillfully form the "artist's originality of drawing manga" (Natsume 1997: 32). The second part is more codified, replicable, and independent of the artist's "originality." The iconographic element of character belongs to this latter category.

This element also overlaps with the concept of *kyara* (*chara*) discussed by Itō (2005). Nakamura (2010), the English translator of part of Itō's work, describes *kyara* in her introduction as "a 'proto-character' entity that turns into a complete *kyarakutaa* once the reader identifies it as 'human-like'" (Itō and Nakamura 2010: 69). LaMarre (2011) comments on *kyara* as follows:

Kyarakutaa remains subordinate to the narrative world of the manga, in Itō's opinion. [...] In contrast, the pared-down design of *kyara* allows it not only to move across different narrative worlds but also to generate new worlds whatever its users see fit. (LaMarre 2011: 129)

This is the important point to consider when analyzing transformation and replication in yaoi. In an interview with Yonezawa, Ai Naniwa and Yayoi Takeda, who have been manga artists and circle participants since the early Comikets, discussed characters drawn in yaoi as follows:

Naniwa: The *fuchō* [code] of a character absolutely exists—for example, if a character's hair whorl is in front [...]. Once I remove this code from the source text in my fanwork, the reader can no longer identify the character. This is so-called "*manga no kigōka*" [codification of manga].

15. Natsume's (1997) discussion assumes that manga is drawn by pen on paper, not digitally. An extended discussion of the differences between manual and digital line work is beyond the scope of this paper.

Yonezawa: Is the hairstyle of a character the important code for girls?

Takeda: Yes, it ends up being the hairstyle. (The Comiket ed. 2005: 229–230)

Naniwa’s remark about the “code,” or “codification,” relates to the iconographic component of character. While it might be difficult to replicate another artist’s line work, a character’s iconographic convention can be easily reduced to a “hair whorl,” replicable by yaoi artists.

Yaoi works that privilege alternative diegeses effectively maintain character iconography. Case 1 provides a good example. This yaoi focuses on pairing Luffy and Ace. Luffy, the 17-year-old captain of the pirates in the source text¹⁶, becomes a kindergartner, and Ace, commander of the pirates, becomes a researcher and Luffy’s custodian. The relationship between these two male characters is also changed from adopted brothers to nephew and uncle. In this case, uncle Ace and little Luffy live together for “family reasons.” The modifications to the characters’ ages and occupations transform the relationship between them and imply further changes in their lives. This modification of a character pair (case 1) is summarized in Table 5.

On the other hand, this yaoi work maintains character iconography (see Table 6). Luffy has black hair and a scar under his left eye, and he wears a straw hat as his trademark. Meanwhile, Ace has black hair parted in the middle and freckles on his cheeks. These elements are all preserved. Their clothes, on the other hand, are transformed to fit the modified age and occupation. Ace’s two tattoos, on his left upper arm and back, are covered by a T-shirt, which he wears along with an apron to prepare the lunch box, and the kindergartner Luffy wears children’s clothes. Thus, in this case, the iconographic elements of clothing and accessories are transformed, but the hairstyles and faces are replicated. Although this finding is based on a limited case study, the preservation of such iconographic elements, especially regarding faces, seems to corroborate Naniwa’s and Takeda’s statements.

In case 1, the elements shared by the yaoi and the source text are the characters’ proper names, gender, and some iconographic components. Meanwhile, the yaoi work transposes the narrative’s spatiotemporal framework from the Grand Line and the Great Age of Pirates to contemporary Japan. In other words, yaoi can potentially construct any story as long as some character components, especially iconographic ones, are maintained.

	Proper name	Gender	Occupation	Age	Relationship	Living arrangement
Source	Luffy	Male	Pirate (Captain)	17	Adopted younger brother	Separated
	Ace	Male	Pirate (Commander)	20	Adopted older brother	
Case 1	Luffy	Male	Kindergartner	3–5	Nephew	Living together
	Ace	Male	Researcher	Adult	Uncle	

Table 5. Character modification in case 1

5.5. Transmotivation and transvaluation of character in yaoi

Furthermore, characters’ intentions are often changed. All actions by *One Piece* characters are based on their aims and motives, and these cannot be separated from the story. For instance, Luffy acts based on his desire to help his company or become the Pirate King. The plot of *One Piece* develops through descriptions of his actions, conflicts, and triumphs. However, divorced from the source diegesis, characters set in alternative yaoi diegeses do not have the same motives and aims as the characters in *One Piece*. Yaoi constructs an alternative story by transposing

16. The original settings and ages of the characters are as of August 2010, which was the time of the application deadline for the December 2010 Comiket.

	Proper name	Hair style	Face	Clothes	Accessories	Other
Source	Luffy	Black hair	Scar under the left eye	Red vest, shorts, and sandals	Straw hat	---
	Ace	Black hair, parted in the middle	Freckles on the cheeks	Naked to the waist with shorts	Hat, necklace, and jockstrap on the left elbow	Tattoos on the left upper arm and back
Case 1	Luffy	Black hair	Scar under the left eye	T-shirt and pants, pajamas, or a smock-frock for a kindergartener	Straw hat	---
	Ace	Black hair, parted in the middle	Freckles on the cheeks	T-shirt and pants	Nothing	Unknown

Table 6. Character iconographic transformations and replications in case 1.

the diegesis, transforming character components, and eliminating the characters' original motives and aims. In other words, diegetic transpositions in yaoi show that yaoi works are not trivial deviations from their source texts; rather, they construct independent stories by changing the elements that compose characters' identities in the source texts.

How do yaoi artists substitute characters' motives and aims in the process of diegetic alteration? According to Genette (1982[1997]), a semantic transformation of character includes transmotation and transvaluation. Transmotation refers to the substitution of motives—that is, “introducing a motive where the hypotext offered, or at least stated, none” (324). Demotivation involves “suppressing or eliding an original motivation” (325), and transmotation occurs through “a double process of demotivation and (re)motivation (by a new motive)” (325). Transvaluation refers to “any operation of an axiological nature bearing on the value that is implicitly or explicitly assigned to an action or group of actions” (343). It is divided into two categories: primary valuation, or evaluating the main character and his or her actions, and secondary valuation, or assigning a value to the marginal or subordinate character and its action in the source text. Transmotation and transvaluation have positive, negative, and complex notions in common.

Again using case 1 as an example, this yaoi work describes the quiet lives, somewhere in the Japanese countryside, of uncle Ace and his little nephew Luffy. Luffy's privileged status as the main character is maintained; he plays the main role in the events of the story. However, he also needs a caretaker since he has transformed in age from a teenager to a kindergartener. In this sense, Luffy is transvaluated through primary valuation and devaluation. Meanwhile, Ace is given a new role as Luffy's caretaker and partner. His valuation in the story is reinforced in relation to the main character/partner, which can be understood as secondary valuation.

In case 1, Luffy's and Ace's motivations are also transformed along with their transformed relationship. In *One Piece*, their actions and motives do not overlap¹⁷. They belong to different pirate crews. Luffy aims to become the Pirate King, and his motives and actions are all linked with this aim to some degree. Ace, meanwhile, swears loyalty to his captain, Edward Newgate, alias *Shirohige* (Whitebeard), and his actions are motivated by this loyalty in the source text. In yaoi, these motivations are erased by the diegetic transposition. This case of transmotation can be regarded as demotivation.

Genette (1982[1997]) further notes that demotivation is “practically absent from the corpus of real hypertextuality” (328):

Moreover, the circumambient semantic pressure is such that canceling one motive may be enough to suggest another irresistibly (by virtue of the formidable principle *no motive, no action*), without even having to identify it explicitly. (328)

17. There are some exceptions to this statement since there are some *One Piece* episodes in which their actions overlap. See *Inperu Daun hen* (Impel Down arc, volumes 54–56), *Marinfōdo hen* (Marinford arc, volumes 56–61), or their childhood arc (volume 61), which focus on the bond between Luffy and Ace.

Thus, for Genette (1982[1997]), demotivation is an inherent part of transmotivation because of the principle of “semantic pressure.” Accordingly, in case 1, the characters are given motives for their actions. Ace takes Luffy to kindergarten every morning, and Luffy plucks little flowers for Ace. While Luffy’s and Ace’s actions are mostly independent in *One Piece*, their motives become directed toward each other when they are paired. Furthermore, this transmotivation persists in their everyday tasks such as housework and childcare; it becomes a subordinate axis of the story of Luffy and Ace. It is inevitable, of course, that characters’ original motives will be eliminated when the diegesis is transposed. Demotivation, however, does not reveal deep desires but involves new motives within the male–male relationship.

6. Conclusion

In summary, this paper identified and defined yaoi as derived from a source text, and focused in particular on diegetic transposition, which was divided into two types: (1) modifying the diegesis of the source text and (2) adopting the diegesis of another source text. In the former type, contemporary Japan is the most commonly chosen alternative diegesis. With reference to Genette (1982[1997]), I argued that one of the reasons for diegetic modification involves proximization—that is, constructing a narrative that readers are more likely to emphasize with.

This paper also noted that diegetic transposition in yaoi functions as an effective device for highlighting male–male relationships. According to Odagiri’s (2010) studies of manga and comics, *kyarakutā*, or character, is composed of four elements: *koyūmei* (proper name), *imi* (meaning), *naimen* (interiority), and *zuzō* (iconography, icon, or visual appearance). Characters can be expanded and transformed from a source text as long as their proper names and parts of other components are retained. This fluid property connects the source text and yaoi, which might otherwise be regarded as completely different from the source text. Even though the diegesis is transposed and character elements are transformed, the fluidity of character marks yaoi as derivative of, and thus loyal to, its source text.

In diegetic transposition in yaoi, the spatiotemporal world changes while the (often iconic) character identity conforms to the source text. In addition, character motives and valuations are regiven or newly given by yaoi artists. Characters in such yaoi works no longer need to follow the original story. Transvaluation can elevate the status of characters not privileged in the source text, and transmotivation supplies motives for their actions, which in yaoi are focused on male–male relationships.

Thus, diegetic transposition in yaoi functions as a means to construct a narrative focused on male–male relationships that is distinct from the source text. This—rather than increasing proximity—is the central function of diegetic transposition in yaoi. Such a device highlights male pairing in the story by transposing the diegesis, conforming to character components, and having characters’ motives deviate from those in the original text.

This study showed the emphasis on relationships between male characters in yaoi narratives. Previous yaoi/BL studies have highlighted the same issue in relation to female gender and sexuality. This paper, however, focused on the mechanisms by which yaoi generates derivative texts foregrounding male–male relationships. Moreover, it showed how diegetic transposition and the fluidity of character function in yaoi works. Yaoi artists use the methods of textual adaptation to generate their own narratives from popular media. Other types of narrative transformation and generation processes in the textual adaptation mechanisms of yaoi remain to be investigated in future research.

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Appendix

Samples of *One Piece* yaoi collected at the Comiket held in December 2010*

(1) Yaoi that transposes the diegesis

	Character coupling	Number of pages**	Book format
1	Luffy x Ace	15	A5
2	Marco x Ace	14	B5
3	Marco x Ace	14	B5
4	Kid and Law x Luffy	14	B5
5	Zoro x Sanji	15	B5
6	Zoro x Sanji	18	B5
7	Zoro x Sanji	50	B5
8	Zoro x Sanji	46	B5
9***	Zoro x Sanji	37	B5

(2) Yaoi that maintains the diegesis

	Character coupling	Number of pages**	Book format
1	Zoro x Luffy	14	A5
2	Zoro x Luffy	14	A5
3	Ace x Luffy	34	B5
4	Kid and Law x Luffy	9	A5
5	Kid and Law x Luffy	9	A5
6	Bepo x Luffy	7	A5
7	Law x Luffy	13	A5
8	Law x Luffy	14	B5
9	Law x Luffy	12	B5
10	Crocodile x Luffy	38	B5 (transformed into squire)
11	Zoro x Sanji	17	B5
12	Zoro x Sanji	27	B5
13	Ace x Sanji	16	B5
14	Marco x Ace	27	A5
15	Marco x Ace	11	B5
16	Marco x Ace	11	B5
17	Marco x Ace	26	B5
18	Marco x Ace	22	B5
19	Luffy x Ace	11	B5
20	Luffy x Ace	11	B5
21	Shanks x Ace	17	B5 (transformed into squire)
22	Shanks x Buggy	28	A5
23	Mihawk x Shanks	10	A5
24	Ace x Marco	23	B5
25	Doflamingo x Crocodile	21	B5
26	Doflamingo x Crocodile	13	B5
27	Luffy x Crocodile	32	B5
28	Helmepo x Coby	11	A5
29	Luffy x Usopp	28	B5

*Publication data are all from December 2010.

**Not including cover, flyleaf, preface, afterward, and imprint.

***Crosses the characters of *One Piece* with the diegesis of another source text.