

READING FOOD IN BOYS LOVE MANGA

*A Gastronomic Study of Food and Male Homosexuality
in the Manga Work of Yoshinaga Fumi*

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements, nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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ABSTRACT

Gastronomy is the study, not of food itself, but the relationship between food and our world. This study aims to investigate the relationship between food and homosexuality in the realm of Boys Love (BL) manga, a Japanese comic genre which depicts same-sex relationship traditionally produced by women and for women.

The dissertation, employing Roland Barthes's semiotics, offers an analysis and critique of relationships between food and male homosexuality in four manga series of Yoshinaga Fumi, a successful BL manga artist who is also openly known for her feminism and a love of food. They are *The Moon And The Sandals* (2007), *Antique Bakery* (2005-2008), *Not Love But Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy!* (2010), and *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* (2014-present). Through semiotic analysis, each of the manga is proved to be unique in the way the author has employed food and homosexuality to depict characters and to tell stories. In each of these manga, food, cooking, and dining come to stand for different things, from the love and caring nature of one character to the sexuality and the way of being of another. What is significant is the fostering of gender dynamics and male homosexuality, though in different forms across the manga. In addition, it has also found that Yoshinaga, employing the ordinariness of each character's cooking and environment, familiarises a broader readership with the erotic lives of the modern homosexual, thereby breaking through the borders between genres but also between fiction and reality.

Key words: gastronomy; food; homosexuality; manga; Boys Love; Japan; Yoshinaga Fumi; semiotics.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

I. Why Read Food in Boys Love Manga?

When food appears in literature, what can we read in it? And how much can we, and should we, read into it? How has that food in the text been read by various readers over time? What factors affect our reading? Why, indeed, should we bother to pay attention to food in literature? [...] The food we read may well be closely related to the food in the actual, physical world. Or it may be symbolic or metaphysical food [...] It [food] is, to borrow Gaye Poole's words, "a polysemous signifier that articulates in concrete terms what is very internal, vague, abstract". (Aoyama, 2008, p. 2)

Tomoko Aoyama (2008) has raised these questions in starting her book that investigates food in modern Japanese literature. Aoyama's work (2008) has revoked a long-held belief that Japanese literature does not pay interest in mundane subjects like food. Not only has she proved that perception wrong, but Aoyama (2008) has also highlighted a significant variety of interrelationships represented by food in Japanese literature. Though food may seem to be trivial and insignificant, it closely connects to different aspects of sociocultural life in Japan, such as gender, equality, political freedom, and family (Aoyama, 2008). Acknowledging the significance of food in Japanese literature, this study wishes to understand food in a different Japanese medium, *manga* – loosely translated as Japanese comic.

Although not being listed in Japanese literature as 'high culture', manga have been associated with the image of Japan for decades (Gravett; 2004; MacWilliams; 2008; Cooper-Chen, 2010; Schodt, 2014). The significance of manga is beyond the financial benefit it has brought to Japan's domestic publishing industry or the 'soft power' effect of the 'Japan Cool' campaign – in other words, using popular culture to attract overseas consumers (Norris, 2009). Academics, too, have been studying manga in relation to gender, history, religion and politics (Norris, 2009). This is not surprising, considering that high culture and popular culture have always been together in Japan's history

(Bouissou, 2010). Serving a different targeted group of readers inside and outside the country, the role of manga as a product reflecting Japanese culture seems to be not much different from 'high' literature. Hence reading food in manga is appealing, for manga are not only informative, symbolic, and politically powerful, they are also entertaining and amusing (Ito, 2005; Murakami & Bryce, 2009; Schodt, 2014).

Manga, reflecting the significance of culture within contemporary Japan's society (Schodt, 2014), commonly uses food as a main narrative driver (Brau, 2004; Cavcic, 2013). A division within the genre is evident: on one hand, the original food-themed genre *gurume* (gourmet) manga targets male readers by using food to express masculine heroism (Brau, 2004; Cavcic, 2013); on the other hand, Boys Love (BL) manga, mostly written by and for women in depicting male same-sex relationship (McLelland, 2000, 2005; Aoyama, 2015; McLelland & Welker, 2015; Suzuki, 2015), has used food to convey love and sexual pleasure (arguably of and for women) (Cavcic, 2013). Given the unusual existence and complication of BL manga (McLelland & Welker, 2015), approaching BL manga academically will help to shed light on understanding Japan's contemporary culture.

This study's intention is to examine a new subgenre of the popular BL genre: gastronomic BL manga. It argues that this subgenre employs food to represent homosexual gender performance in a variety of ways. Reading food in gastronomic BL manga, the study asks, what is the relationship between food and homosexuality in BL manga? Given that gastronomy is not the study of food per se but the complex place of food within the fabric of life (Santich, 2007), the role of food in BL manga offers a window into the contemporary issues of identity and gender, but it also provides a means for expanding gastronomy studies by better understanding how food and gender play out in contemporary Japan's culture.

II. Food, Gender, Manga and Lives of The Ordinary

Food is important to Japanese culture across a range of contexts, from ordinary life to religious celebration (Cwiertka, 2006; Aoyama, 2008; Rath & Assmann, 2010; Rath, 2016). Aoyama (2008) further asserts that food and gender in Japan's society have always been linked closely. This relationship is reflected in the characteristic of each type of food, the preparation of it, the cooking of it, the kitchen in which it appears, and the etiquette at the dining table (Aoyama, 2008) (see also Crowley, 2002; Traphagan & Brown, 2002; Cwiertka, 2006; Rath & Assmann, 2010; Rath, 2016). Considering the links between gender and food in literature is fruitful because it can "highlight the significance of the everyday, the ordinary, and the basic" (Aoyama, 2008; p. 205) – even if these aspects in Japan's culture were once neglected for their ordinariness and triviality (Aoyama, 2003). Similarly, manga was once overlooked by academics (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2003; Bouissou, 2010). However, manga is significant in Japanese society, for as a product of popular culture, it embodies how the culture imagines itself. Manga is, first of all, a dreamland, "where stressed-out modern urbanities daily work out their neuroses and frustrations" (Schodt, 2014 p. 31). Furthermore, "viewed in their totality, the phenomenal number of stories produced [in manga] is like the constant chatter of the collective unconscious, an articulation of a dream world" (Schodt, 2014, p. 31). As such, manga serves as a window for understanding the culture despite its appeal as entertainment (Ito, 2005). This function of it is, in a sense, similar to the study of gastronomy in pursuing cultural understanding and appreciation through food (Santich, 2007). In this context, the research aims to investigate gastronomic BL manga via the complex relationship between food and male homosexuality in its sociocultural context. Researching food or gender separately in manga is not new. However, considering them together as a whole has rarely been undertaken, at least in an English-speaking academic context.

III. Yoshinaga Fumi's manga work as texts

In order to investigate the unique relationship between food and homosexuality in gastronomic BL manga, this study chooses to examine the work of Yoshinaga Fumi, a popular female *mangaka* (manga artist). Unique among many contemporary *mangaka*, Yoshinaga is 'openly feminist', and not afraid of discussing this aspect in interviews and exploring it in her manga (Hori, 2012; Aoyama, 2015; Kim, 2016). Hence, Yoshinaga is recognised by Aoyama (2015) as being the most "gender-conscious" of manga artist. She is similarly "acclaimed as such, among leading contemporary manga artists" (Aoyama, 2015, p. 233) and recognised for her contribution to the BL genre and the wider scene of gender equality awareness in Japan's society. Yoshinaga's way of approaching the issue of feminism, gender equality, and homosexuality is unique in that she does so through food and cooking. Despite being known as a food lover, she refuses to be called a foody (Aoyama, 2015). In her manga, food is depicted with exceptional detail. While appearing delicious, also meaningful is the way it is used to convey sexuality as well as the negotiation between individual being and the sociocultural forces, particularly gender myths. To better grasp how this is achieved, the study chooses four of her most prominent manga for analysis: *The Moon And The Sandals* (2007); *Antique Bakery* (2005-2008); *Not Love But Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy!* (2010); and, *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* (20014–present). Initially, it should be noted that manga, even that of Yoshinaga Fumi, are still works of fiction and do not represent a precise reality. On the other hand, they are indicative of cultural mores and they productively shift what can be imagined, and consequently, what can be experienced and ultimately lived. This study aims to understand these shifts through the way in which food and homosexuality are depicted in Yoshinaga's manga works. What is significant for this study is the internal

operation of the genre in its representation of BL and in the linkage Yoshinaga Fumi establishes between food and homosexuality.

IV. Research Question

In general, this research aims to address the cultural relationship between food and masculinity, particularly male homosexuality, and how this gastronomic dimension frames contemporary gender relationships in Japan. In order to do so, it investigates four internationally popular by Yoshinaga Fumi in seeking to answer two questions:

1. What can be read into the relationship between food and homosexuality in Yoshinaga's manga?
2. What is the significance of Yoshinaga's deployment of food in BL manga, for the broader scene of gastronomy, manga and gender studies?

V. Chapter Outlines

Chapter two is dedicated to reviewing literature written on the subjects of food and homosexuality in manga. It then constructs a specific theoretical framework for addressing the concerns driving this study.

Chapter three describes the methodology of this study, ethical matters, and the project's limitations. As stated earlier, this study is designed to examine the relationship between food and homosexuality in the manga work by Yoshinaga Fumi through four of her manga. To analyse these series, semiotic analysis developed by Roland Barthes (1957/1991) is used.

Chapter four analyses Yoshinaga Fumi's writing more generally, while each of the chosen manga is analysed and discussed separately in chapters five to eight. Finally, a general discussion about the ways in which food and homosexuality are used in all four manga is

considered in chapter nine. Chapter ten concludes this study and provides suggestions for future research.

It should be noted that an earlier version of chapter eight was presented in an oral presentation at the 2017 New Zealand Symposium of Gastronomy (Christchurch, New Zealand).

VI. A Note on Japanese Names, Terminology, and the Manga Way

This study has reproduced the Japanese names of the characters and the author in the traditional Japanese order with surnames coming first. Names of the Japanese scholars, who have published in English have followed the English convention (given name first).

This study contains many Japanese words and these have been formatted in *italic*. The Exceptions to this include proper names, businesses, and place names that have a recognised English usage (e.g. manga, sushi, etc.). A short explanation of each Japanese word is listed in brackets following its first appears in each chapter.

To depict certain scenes, illustrations from the manga have been added. International manga publishing continues to apply the original Japanese way of reading comics, which is from right to left and from top to bottom.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

I. Gastronomy: An Interdisciplinary and Multidimensional Approach

1. Food Matters

We have to eat; we like to eat; eating makes us feel good; it is more important than sex. To ensure genetic survival the sex urge need only be satisfied a few times in a lifetime; the hunger urge must be satisfied every day. (Fox, 2003, p. 1)

Food reveals our souls. Like Marcel Proust reminiscing about a madeleine or Calvin Trillin astonished at a plate of ribs, we are entangled in our meals. The connection between identity and consumption gives food a central role in the creation of community, and we use our diet to convey images of public identity (Fine, 1996, p. 1)

Food is central to our sense of identity. The way any given human group eats helps it assert its diversity, hierarchy, and organization, and at the same time, both its oneness and otherness of whoever eats differently. Food is also central to individual identity, in that any given human individual is constructed, biologically, psychologically and socially by the food he/she chooses to incorporate. (Fischler, 1988, p. 275)

As the above quotations illustrate, food is critical to human life, whether as fuel for bodies or as a means of individual and collective identity formation. This study draws on food anthropologist Warren Belasco's comprehensive analysis of the usage of food in cross-disciplinary research in the chapter 'Food Matters: Perspectives on An Emerging Field' (Belasco & Scranton, 2002). Food, in Belasco's terms, is a critical and essential component of everyday life, if perhaps under-recognised as such (Belasco, 2008). Although Belasco is not the first to consider the role of food in an academic context, he is important for collecting and analysing the use of food across different disciplines, and therefore, demonstrating the potential and the significance of it for interdisciplinary study. The study of food, which can also be known as *gastronomy*, however, has a longer tradition than the current new field of *food studies* proposed by Belasco (see Neill, Poulston, Hemmington, Hall & Bliss, 2017).

2. Gastronomy: An Interdisciplinary and Multidimensional Approach

Early studies in gastronomy owe much to the work *The Physiology of Taste* (Brillat-Savarin, 1825/1994), written by the French lawyer Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in the early 19th century. The term gastronomy is itself a combination of two Greek words: *gastro* which means stomach, and *nomos* which means rule of regulation (Santich, 2007). Thus, gastronomy can be understood as ‘the rule of the stomach’, thereby implicating food as its main subject. As Brillat-Savarin wrote, “gastronomy is the reasoned comprehension of everything connected with the nourishment of man” (Brillat-Savarin, 1825/1994, p. 52).

Although gastronomy deals exclusively with food, cooking, and dining, it is not a study about food per se, but of food in its wider sociocultural context (Santich, 2007). Gastronomy, according to Santich (2007), acts as a catalyst in cultural understanding which is critical to not only the humanities but also a wide range of other social sciences. This reflects the widespread importance of food and the value of the study of it. The interdisciplinary and multidimensional value of food and gastronomy has more recently been developed by scholars such as Belasco (2002, 2008); Santich, (2007); Black (2013); Parasecoli (2013, 2014); and, Neill, Poulston, Hemmington, Hall & Bliss (2017). Indicative of this developing scholarship, Santich (2007) defines gastronomy as having:

[a...] focus on the how, what and why of eating and drinking, necessarily draw[ing] upon the complete spectrum of the humanities as well as the social and natural sciences. (Santich, 2007, p.53)

Given the multiple foci of this research (namely homosexuality Japanese popular culture, and food practices), this interdisciplinary and multidimensional approach to gastronomy is particularly useful.

II. Gastronomic Boys Love Manga

This section discusses the dynamic nature of gastronomic Boys Love (BL) manga. In doing so, it first presents manga studies and the links between food and homosexuality in manga, before discussing previous academic works utilising gastronomic BL manga.

1. Manga and Manga Studies

This study employs a gastronomical approach to the Japanese comic genre popularly known as manga, a medium commonly associated with Japanese popular culture. The precursor to current forms of manga started in the late 1940s and is known as *kindai* (Brau, 2004; Bouissou, 2010). Over the last century manga has gone through many different variations though (Brau, 2004; Bouissou, 2010).

Manga first came to North America and Europe in the 1980s and bloomed internationally in the 1990s when the Japanese government launched the ‘Cool Japan’ campaign in what amounted to a form of ‘soft power’ that employs cultural products to generate political and economic influence (Gravett, 2004; MacWilliams, 2008; Cooper-Chen, 2010; Brienza, 2013, 2014, 2018; Schodt, 2014). Distinctively, manga genres in Japan are based on targeted readership defined mostly in terms of gender and age (Bryce & Davis, 2010; Kalen, 2012). For example, *shōjo* (girl) manga is for young girls (and also women); *shōnen* (boy) manga is for adolescent boys; and *seinen* (men) manga is for adult males. These reader-based genres contain a wide variety of themes, including historical, thriller, romance, and erotic variants or subgenres (Kalen, 2012). Some of these subgenres have become so popular that they constitute something approaching full genre status.

Nevertheless, each of these genres is relatively strict about the types of storylines and aesthetics *mangaka* (manga artist) and editors can publish (MacWilliams, 2008; Sell,

2011). However, there are always exceptions in which a manga can cross borders incorporating more than one subgenre's identified elements.

Manga production in Japan operates as an on-going negotiation between the producers and the readers (MacWilliams, 2008; Sell, 2011). Typically, every manga starts in one of the many manga magazines which are published weekly or monthly. Only the best manga – those that receive excellent feedback from the readers - are serialised in *tankōbon* (individual book format). Of these, only a fraction of the massive amount of *tankōbon* in Japan is legally translated and published in other countries, notably in the US (Brienza, 2014, 2018).

Nonetheless, despite their huge popularity, manga must be recognised as not merely a medium for entertainment, especially in the context of Japan, where high culture and popular culture have always co-existed (Bouissou, 2010). The significance of this medium has long exceeded its economic benefit and is related closely to Japan's contemporary culture and national brand (Norris, 2009). Academics from a wide range of disciplines in social sciences and the humanities have been drawn to manga (Norris, 2009), and the complexity of its history, culture, authorship, and readership has fostered burgeoning scholarship in it (Bouissou, 2010). Like gastronomy, manga study is itself interdisciplinary and multidimensional due to its dynamic nature. As renowned manga scholar Kinko Ito as claimed, “manga thus reflects the reality of Japanese society, along with the myths, beliefs, rituals, traditions, fantasies, and Japanese way of life” (2005, p. 456).

2. Food in Manga

Depictions of food in manga are commonplace. However, borrowing from Mervyn Nicholson's (2001) study of food in film genres, food in manga is used in two common ways: on one hand, food provides “a mimetic prop” facilitating narrative progression and

context setting; on the other, food is itself made a “symbolic object” (Nicholson, 2001, p. 279). In its symbolic sense, food choice and practice can reflect one’s identity, gender, or sociocultural conditions even without verbal communication. This study focuses on the symbolic deployment of food, seeing in it a far more important role than just providing a prop or a tool to express the normativity or particularity of the characters – for instance, the notion that everybody eats.

The next section outlines two manga genres which feature food, *gurume* manga (gourmet manga) and the gastronomic subgenre of Boys Love (BL) manga – what shall be called gastronomic BL manga. Although *gurume* manga is not the focus of this research, understanding aspects of it helps to lay the foundation of how food is depicted in manga traditionally. This will better contextualise what is significant in the combination of food and homosexuality in gastronomic BL manga.

2.1. *Gurume* Manga: Food in Boys Manga – Masculinity in Display

In the 1970s, a food-theme genre made its debut in the manga *Hochonin no Ajihei* (Ajihei The Knifeman) (Gyu, 1973-1977). This genre is called *gurume* manga (gourmet manga) which has its origins in *seinen* and *shōnen* manga – genres which target male readers in general. In the 1980s, Japanese people had increasing disposable income and one of the ways this was consumed was through dining with better food – something that became known as the ‘gourmet boom’ (Brau, 2004; Cwierka, 2005; Holden, 2005; Aoyama, 2008). In response, *gurume* manga emerged as a subgenre and quickly developed into a distinct genre in its own right. Many of its manga are successful not only as a manga but are also made into *anime* (Japanese cartoon), movies, TV dramas, as well as translated and published in other languages. Examples include *Oishibo* (The Gourmet) (Kariya & Hanasaki, 1983-2014), *Kukkingu Papa* (Cooking Papa) (Ueyama, 1985–), *Yakitate!!*

Japan (Freshly Baked!! Japan) (Hashiguchi, 2002-2007), *Kami no Shizuku* (The Drops of God) (Kibayashi, 2004-2014), to name a few.

Consistent with *shōnen* and *seinen* manga, *gurume* manga continued to target a male readership. Within the readership itself, *shōnen* was typically directed at boys and *seinen* to young men. Moreover, *seinen* is considered the developed form of *shōnen* and was created to serve the first generation of *shōnen*'s readers when they had reached adulthood. Antonija Cavcic (2014), adopting the 'hero's path' typology in boy's manga developed by Honda Masuko (2010), asserts that food in *gurume* manga acts as a theme in which food-related challenges are created for the protagonists to overcome on the way to success. Cavcic (2014) suggests that *gurume* manga (along with other Japanese food-related media) are indicative of a 'gastro-gaze' which serves to define and to "enhance a man's cultural capital" (p. 281). By this, Cavcic (2014) means to criticise the use of food in Japanese popular culture in giving power and authority to the male counterpart while ignoring the women who cook the trivial meals. Aoyama (2003) offers an extended view of how food, cooking, men, and masculinity are depicted in *gurume* manga through consideration of the image of men who cook in Japanese literature. According to Aoyama (2003), food in literature in general, and *gurume* manga, in particular, reinforce certain culturally determined measures of successful masculinity. The 'cooking man', the food he cooks, and the way he cooks are a representation of the balance between *bu* (physical figure) and *bun* (skill, knowledge, professional) negotiated by sociocultural and economic conditions (Aoyama, 2003). According to Aoyama (2003), the 'cooking men' in the 1970s literature (including *gurume* manga) expressed the bulky and muscular *bu* and the high status of *bun*, while the 'cooking man' in the late-1980s (which Aoyama names as the 'postmodern cooking man') was different for "his gentle and caring nature, which is an integral part of his cooking" (p. 170). Moreover, as Aoyama (2003) notes, "this

masculine figure with knowledge and skills, however, is also presented as a comic and quite ordinary figure with innocuous weakness” (p. 1970), and further, that “[the] sensitive cooking men [also] seem too good to be true” (p. 171).

This likely conforms to the evolving nature of masculinity in Japan (Aoyama, 2003; Takeyama, 2010; Charlebois, 2013; Yuen, 2014; Suganuma, 2015). For instance, the appearance of new ‘cooking *danshi*’ (cooking boys) (Yuen, 2014) and the herbivore man (Charlebois, 2013; Morioka, 2013; Yuen, 2014) in recent years, suggests that Japanese masculinity is less identified with the previous career-driven *salarymen* (McLelland, 2005; Hidaka, 2010; Suganuma, 2015), and that a gentler type of masculinity is possible, one that can identify with domestic cooking (on a daily basis), and can derive from it different senses of self-care and expressions of selfhood.

While the old salarymen masculinity has not fully been replaced just yet, the herbivore masculinity has become highlighted in many different male magazines in Japan (Takeyama, 2010; Charlebois, 2013; Yuen, 2014). The herbivore or grass-eating man (*sōshoku[kei] danshi*) is a male who pays no interest in marriage or romantic relationships or career advancement but his own personal appearance and by being stylishly groomed and cooking for himself (Takeyama, 2010; Yuen, 2014; see also Morioka, 2013). Morioka (2013) asserts that they are “kind and gentle men who, without being bound by manliness, do not pursue romantic relationships voraciously and have no aptitude for being hurt or hurting others” (p. 7). In other words, a herbivore man is a man that lost his (hetero) manliness but, in a way, pervades a different kind of masculinity in which he differentiates himself from the iconic salarymen. He confronts the career-driven salarymen ideology which has been long existed and conformed to by generations in Japan. Furthermore, Yuen (2014) points out that even the herbivore man masculinity has already become diverse in itself in which a type of ‘new men’ has appeared. The ‘new

men' are still interested in taking care of their appearance and cooking their own meals but only because they believe that by doing so they can have a romantic relationship followed by marriage. Examining this phenomenon through the cooking men images (see also Aoyama, 2003), Yuen (2014) asserts that the old men cooking (*otoko ryōri*) has been being replaced by the 'new men' cooking, known as lunchbox boy (*bentō danshi*). Not only is general 'cooking' (*ryōri*), which usually refers to the proper work in a professional kitchen, been replaced by the 'lunchbox' (*bentō*) – otherwise held to be the task of women in domestic kitchens (Allison, 1991) – but the word 'men' (*otoko*) has been changed to 'boy' (*danshi*).

Clearly, both masculinity and its gastronomic performance can be observed as shifting and uncertain, a relationship in the Japanese context which is open to considerable negotiation.

2.2. Boys Love Manga: Japan's Homosexuality in Fiction and Reality

Boys Love (BL) nowadays is the term used to describe all media which depict male homosexual relationships while obeying the aesthetic of its origin *shōjo* (girls) genre in terms of characters' figures and narratives (McHarry, 2011; Pagliassotti, Nagaike & McHarry, 2013; McLelland & Welker, 2015). BL manga started as *dōjinshi* (amateur and self-published) works utilising characters from the popular *shōjo* manga in the 1960s, and quickly developed into its own individual genre due to its commercial potential (McHarry, 2011; McLelland & Welker, 2015). Although there are several popular male BL *mangaka*, the vast majority of BL authors are female. Besides, emerging from the tradition of *shōjo* manga, BL's targeted readership is also primarily female. Although acknowledging the complexity of the BL term (see McLelland & Welker, 2015), this study uses the term Boys Love, abbreviation as BL, as an umbrella which covers the

printed manga works which depict either mainly or partly male homosexual relationships and /protagonists.

Given these changes, BL manga has evolved its own field of scholarship within manga studies (see Levi, McHarry & Pagliassotti, 2010; Pagliassotti, Nagaike & McHarry, 2013; McLelland, Nagaike, Suganuma, & Welker, 2015). Because of its dynamism and complexity, BL manga offers considerable critical perspectives. Mark McLelland (2000) has been investigating BL in connection with gay culture in Japan. This connection is problematic in the context of a theoretical framework called *yaoi¹ ronsō* (*yaoi* dispute) outlined by Hitoshi Ishida (2007/2015). In the framework of *yaoi ronsō*, Ishida (2007/2015) asserts that there is a problem with the queer “representational appropriation” (p. 210) of many BL authors and readers, who claim that the Japanese gay men in reality have no connection with the characters in BL manga. According to Ishida (2007/2015), the characters in BL manga, even when committing to same-sex relationships, do not normally identify themselves as ‘gay’, but as a regular man who has simply fallen in love with another man. It is also important to note that while homosexuals (*dōseiaisha*) and homosexual behaviours (*nanshoku*, also known as male colours – the term ‘colour’ also means sexual pleasure) are not strange to Japan, homosexual identity is itself. Mark McLelland, in *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan: Cultural Myths and Social Realities* (2000), has analysed the sociocultural aspects of Japanese homosexuality, and dates these back to the Tokugawa era (1603 – 1868). Its modern capacity as a type of self-identity is considered problematic precisely because westernised. Modern homosexual identity in Japan implies a failed duty to the traditional family in which reproduction is primary (Berry, 2000, 2001; McLelland, 2000). BL

¹ *Yaoi* is a common term for a type of BL work in describing its mainly erotic male homosexual narratives. *Yaoi* is itself an abbreviation of *Yama nashi*, *Ochi nashi*, *Imi nashi* (no peak, no fall, no meaning). Despite their differences, many readers (mostly of the non-Japanese readership) often use the terms *Yaoi* and BL interchangeably (McLelland & Welker, 2015).

manga is considered by many authors, readers, and academics as a genre which instead depicts the homosexual ideal and relationships of the Tokugawa era, where a duty of reproducing is lifted in favour of a pursuit of pure love (McLelland, 2000).

Other researchers find difficulties in explaining why a male homosexual narrative genre is produced by and for women, while the genre itself mostly excludes the role of the female characters (see Blair, 2010; Tan, 2010). Academics like Mori (as cited in Pagliassotti, 2013), Nagaike & Aoyama (2015) assert that BL is a hybrid between manga genres that condenses different sociocultural and economic conditions. However, although not recognised as having any connection with the male homosexual in real life, BL manga has been known for crossing the border from fiction to reality in many occasions, particularly in the area of gender equality and in the depiction of the hardships of the homosexual community in modern Japan (Toku, 2007). In recent years, ‘coming out’ has been a phenomenon for the BL authors who have broken themselves from the old tradition and entered into a more radical era with new freedoms, particularly the freedom for their characters to enter into same-sex relationships.

2.3. Gastronomic Boys Love Manga: The Comic Cooking Gay Man

Referring to a food-themed, subgenre of BL manga, Antonijia Cavcic (2014) coined the term ‘gastrogasmic’ in her conference paper *From Dashing to Delicious: The Gastrogasmic Aesthetics of Contemporary BL Manga* (2014). The Urban Dictionary (a website which gives references to urban terms and slangs) defines ‘gastrogasmic’, a contemporary term, as the sensation of having “an orgasm brought on by eating great food” (Urban Dictionary, n.d.). Nevertheless, this study prefers to name this food-themed, subgenre as *gastronomic BL manga*. It does so because its approach to the food element in these comic works draws on broader questions of cultural expression and gender/sexuality politics than the limited sensorial focus suggested by ‘gastrogasmic’.

Consistent with recent considerations of food in film discourse (see Nicholson, 2001; Bower, 2004; Keller, 2006, Baron, Carson, & Bernard, 2014), this study argues that food in gastronomic BL manga can, as Bower (2004) puts it, “consistently depict characters negotiating questions of identity, power, culture, class, spirituality, or relationship through food” (p. 6).

Considering that this field of study is relatively new, this research has focused on the works of three academics: Cavcic (2014) (as discussed above), Tomoko Aoyama (2015), and Katsuhiko Sukanuma (2015). These three works are important in this study because they similarly focus on Yoshinaga Fumi’s gastronomic BL manga. In exploring the use of food in gastronomic (or ‘gastrogasmic’ in Cavcic’s term) BL manga, Cavcic (2014) has conducted a content and thematic analysis of two manga works by Yoshinaga: *Not Love But Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy!* and *What Did You Eat Yesterday?*. Stressing Frederick Kaufman concept of ‘food porn’, Cavcic (2014) recognises in Yoshinaga’s works connection with the traditions of *shōjo* manga, which conveys love through food (Honda, 2010), but also with Japanese’s love for delicious foods, hence the term ‘gastrogasmic’. Different from Cavcic, Aoyama (2015) analyses Yoshinaga’s works by examining gender and homosexuality depiction through the depiction of food and cooking. Aoyama (2015) has taken her investigation through the three most iconic works of Yoshinaga Fumi: *The Moon and The Sandals*, *Antique Bakery*, and *What Did You Eat Yesterday?*. Aoyama’s work (2015) is critical and essential for this study as she analyses not only the manga by connecting the depiction of food and gender performativity but more importantly Yoshinaga Fumi per se in questioning the gay sexuality commodification in Yoshinaga’s works. Aoyama’s view on Yoshinaga opens a new way to look at Yoshinaga’s in particular and BL manga in general, beyond the *yaoi ronsō* discourse of Ishida (2007/2015). Last but not least, Katsuhiko Sukanuma (2015) made an interesting view on the manga *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* as he recognises that this

manga is the first time that queerness is depicted with happiness in the domestic space in Japan's mainstream media. Employing the concept of 'different taste' (as referring to the BL 'flavour' of the manga), Sukanuma (2015) explained the way in which *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* has been assisting the non-homosexual readers to consume the BL element (considering that this manga has been published in a *seinen* manga magazine).

III. A Gastronomic Study of Food and Male Homosexuality in BL Manga

This research aims to address the relationship between food/cooking/dining and male homosexuality in gastronomic BL manga works by Yoshinaga Fumi. It asks the questions of what can be read in this kind of relationship and how this reading can benefit the broader scene of gastronomy, manga and gender studies. On the side of food, it employs an interdisciplinary and multidimensional approach as set out by Warren Belasco (2002, 2008) and Barbara Santich (2007) particularly. Relative to male homosexuality and its overlap with food, this study has found useful, in one direction, the theory of gender performativity developed by Judith Butler (1990, 1993), and in another, studies of homosexuality in Japan, particularly as these have facilitated aspects of BL studies by Mark McLelland (2000, 2005; McLelland & Welker, 2015). Investigating gay female impersonators, Butler asserts that gender and sexual identities are not determined by biological sex as a precondition, but rather, by iterative *performances* of gender and sexuality, themselves expressive of deeply consolidated - if far from fixed, and at times unstable - cultural patterning (Corber and Valocchi 2003, p. 4). In addition, this study also employs a model of masculinity critiqued by R.W Connell (1992) in which homosexual masculinity is derided (see also Connell, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2003; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This notion of homosexuality masculinity contributes to the hardship the LGBT community bears in modern Japan, as elsewhere (McLelland, 2000, 2005). In this context, gastronomic BL manga by Yoshinaga Fumi has emerged as an important discourse portraying and discussing such issues, one centred on food and

cooking (Aoyama, 2003). Her manga has created a critical but also entertaining space for, as Aoyama (2015) has noted, “questioning and subverting binaries such as male/female, subject/object, self/other, consumer/consumed, internal/external, body/mind and *hare/ke* [special, extraordinary/everyday, ordinary]” (p. 235).

In doing so, this research employs semiotic analysis as its methodology. The next chapter considers semiotics and its applicability for food analysis and male homosexuality as it overlaps with gastronomic frameworks in BL manga. Given that gastronomy is not just the study of food *per se* but the complex place of food within the fabric of life (Santich, 2007), the role of food in BL manga offers a window into the contemporary issues of identity and gender. It also provides a means for expanding gastronomy studies cross-culturally, across media, and within minority communities.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

As outlined in the previous chapter, this research aims to explore the relationship between food and male homosexuality in Yoshinaga Fumi's gastronomic BL. In order to do so, it chose to apply semiotic analysis on the 'food' sign in connecting with the 'male homosexuality' element in four successful manga series by Yoshinaga. Furthermore, it also employed Roland Barthes's notion of myth (Barthes, 1957/1991) to read the layers of sociocultural myth joining food and male homosexuality within Japan's contemporary context. The chapter will (1), present and justify semiotics as a methodology, (2), discuss ethical matters, and (3), acknowledge limitations of this approach.

I. Methodology

1. Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of signs. A sign can be anything that semioticians - people who study semiotics - choose it to be (Eco, 1979; Chandler, 2007). As Chandler asserts, "signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects" (2007, p. 2). Semiotics owes its existence to two founders: Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. In Ferdinand de Saussure's book *Course in General Linguistics* (1915/1966), he claimed that a sign was a unit in language which had a minimum of two components: a *signifier* (the appearance), and a *signified* (the meaning). Charles Sanders Peirce (Hartshorne & Weiss, 1931-1935; Burks, 1958), on the other hand, claimed that a sign could be anything (not just language) as long as it had the ability to refer to something else.

While acknowledging the foundations of semiotics, this research specifically employs the semiotic approach developed by the French semiotician Roland Barthes. Barthes successfully combines the theories of Saussure and Peirce to create new possibilities of semiotic interpretation. According to Barthes (1957/1991), a complete sign (made up by

signifier and signified) can also become the signifier of another sign, more abstract and mythic. In *Elements of Semiology* (1964/1967), Barthes defines the first sign system (primary signification) as denotation, and the second sign system (secondary signification) as connotation. Denotation is the literal and objective meaning of a sign, while connotation is the abstract and/or subjective meaning read into signs by sign-readers (Storey, 2009).

Moreover, beyond denotation and connotation, a sign does not exist in a vacuum (Storey, 2009); it persists within a multi-dimensional web made up of other signs. Hence, semiotic analysis not only seeks to understand a sign in its particular context; it seeks to critically grasp the relationships between it and other signs (Storey, 2009). However, neither the sign nor its context is permanent or unmovable. Berger and Luckmann (1991) argue that the reality as we know is formed spatially and temporally, hence signs only exist in particular settings of time and space. In addition, the second signification of a sign is not totally arbitrary or permanent, but rather it is formed by either individual or social agreement (Fiske & Harley, 2003; Storey, 2009). For Herbert Blumer (1969), this agreement can be defined via a theory of symbolic interactionism, in which the meaning of an object is given through the interaction between humans and other aspects composing daily life, aspects themselves that are subject to change. Hence, semiotic analysis of a sign cannot bypass the particular context in which the sign exists and is analysed.

As advanced in *Mythologies* (Barthes, 1957/1991), Barthes develops a concept he refers to as myth, an advanced mode of second signification. Accordingly, for Barthes (1957/1991), myth happens at the connotational level of a sign in which abstract and subjective meanings are read unconsciously by myth-consumers who perceive these as literal and objective. Moreover, he argues that myth is typically created by the dominant ideology defining the time and place in which the sign exists. In other words, a myth, like a sign, is first bounded by the context in which myth-consumption happens. Although

Barthes (1957/1991) asserts that myth is where humans are “plunged into a false nature” (p.157), to him, myth’s function is not to hide anything, but to naturalise the relationship between what is experienced as the objective signifier and the artefactual, or what is subjective signified in modern society. Myth, in the sense of a dominant ideology, is, therefore, “constantly changing and updating” (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 27).

2. Justification

When coming to read and analysis food and homosexuality in manga, this study suggests that the semiotic approach developed by Roland Barthes is useful as a methodology. Drawing this kind of analysis closer to the question of food, Terry Eagleton (1998) proposes that food itself be compared with literature. As he asserts, food is “endlessly interpretable” (p. 204), as is literature, and as such, what “look like an object [...] is actually a relationship [or a signification]” (p. 204-205). In *Mythologies* (1957/1991), Barthes himself applied semiotic analysis multiple times to food (for instance, to margarine, wine, milk, steak, chips), and food-related objects (ornamental cookery). In *Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption* (1961/2013), Barthes further asks:

For what is food? It is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour. (Barthes, 1961/2013, p. 24)

In this sense, food particularly, although usually overlooked as an insignificant object, in fact plays an important role in “carrying a system of communication” (Barthes, 1961/2013, p. 25). In any society or culture, people from different classes and economic conditions choose different types of food for various reasons, including their tastes which are shaped by their cultural and financial capitals (Barthes, 1961/2013). Therefore, particular kinds of food can bear different meanings for different people. As such, food

should be treated as a system of signs, in which it is possible to recognise what is signified, rather than recognising it literally as a substance (Barthes, 1961/2013). Useful for this study, Barthes also noted that “food has a constant tendency to transform itself into situation” (1961/2013, p. 29). In other words, if food is a sign which exists in a specific culture or society then, when that sociocultural condition changes, the meaning of food also changes. Moreover, as food can act as a myth created to be consumed in ideological senses, the changes in itself can also shape the culture and society it exists within.

Following this argument, homosexuality, like food, also constitutes “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour” (Barthes, 1961/2013, p. 24), especially in the context of contemporary Japan and manga. Dobbins (2000) points out, the stereotypical use within Japanese society of images of gay men as weak and feminine (often cross-dressed), have been widely adopted within Japan’s mainstream media. This stereotyped gay identity equally contributes to the myths sustaining gender roles in contemporary Japan. Dobbins (2000) also states that, contrasting with the widely consumed myth about gay men, the images of gay men in gay magazines (which also offer gay manga) present a different version of these men, as at once happy, successful, and respected. Accordingly, for Dobbins (2000), manga is capable of creating and enacting new role models for people (in Dobbins’s research, gay men specifically). However, these role models should necessarily be treated as myth too, no different in process (if different ethically) from the myth-production of cross-dressing homosexuals entertaining the mainstream media. Each of these myths effect differently and through different channels, but they remain powerful and important in Japan, given that both mainstream media and manga are so widely consumed (Suganuma, 2015), but also prompting of social conversation and movement (Kinsella, 2000).

Manga as a medium, with its combining images and words like other types of comics, has offered a fruitful field for semiotic studies (Cohn, 2013; Bongco, 2014). Combining both

food and homosexuality, Yoshinaga Fumi's gastronomic manga, as Aoyama (2015) claims, establishes "an endlessly interpretable relationship that provides a window on gender and sexuality" (p. 234). To better analysis this 'endlessly interpretable relationship', semiotics seemed well suited, methodologically, to grasp the complex play of context and their signs.

3. Semiotic Analysis

A manga (as text) composed of many signs, usually embraces a number of common myths (Barthes, 1957/1991). Each manga of this study was deconstructed into chosen signs which contains a relationship between food and homosexuality for analysis. There vary considerably given the differing contexts and the way the author chose to tell particular stories and depict certain characters unique to each text. Therefore, the study as aimed to stay open to the variability of signs and the insights that analysis can draw from one manga to another.

II. Ethics, Trustworthiness, Reliability and Validity

Although this research has dealt with primary data, there was no human interaction or any alteration of the data's originality. Furthermore, the data for this research was published in the public domain, hence, no ethics approval was required.

Defining the reliability of qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasis "truth value; applicability; consistency; and neutrality" (p.11). They similarly argue that in order to maintain the trustworthiness of qualitative research, it is the researcher's duty to demonstrate to readers that analysis builds out of an in-depth engagement with a data source that is rich in information. However, it needs to be stressed that no research is completely neutral (at least in the humanities' field) (Eco, 1786/1789).

This research is rooted in the author's identity - my identity. Born in Vietnam, my childhood was greatly influenced by images of Japan carried in manga - itself available in Vietnam since the early 1990s. As a gastronomy researcher also fascinated by Japanese culture, I have also been drawn to the representation and depiction of Japanese food in popular culture inside and outside of Japan. Finally, as a gay man, my interest in BL culture and its production has also contributed to this topic and helped shape the design of this research.

Reading a text or eating a particular food is, in fact, a process of consuming (or constructing) and expressing one's identity, as in Brillat-Savarin's famous assertion: "tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you what you are" (1825/1994, p.15). For Diane Raymond (2003): "there is no unambiguous meaning in a cultural text and that the reception positions that audience members occupy are culturally and historically grounded" (p. 99). Thus, reading food and homosexuality in manga (as text) cannot be completely separated from the reader's personal (queer and gastronomic) lens despite the intended objectivity of the author. As Barthes indicates in 'The Death of the Author' (1984/1989, pp. 49-55), reception and the value of a text ultimately sits with readers: "a text consists of multiple writings, proceeding from several cultures and entering into dialogue, into parody, into contestation; but there is a site where this multiplicity is collected, and this site is not the author, as has hitherto been claimed, but the reader" (p. 54). In this sense, as he puts it: "the birth of the reader must be requited by the death of the Author" (p. 55). In the essay, 'From Work To Text' (1984/1989, pp. 56-64), Barthes further recognises that a text is less something consumed, than it is a thing put into productive play, a play that is between writing and reading. Hence, at stake is not an "intensifying [of] the reader's projection into the work, but [it is a matter of...] linking the two together into one and the same signifying practice" (p. 62). Therefore, it was important to position me as the author to calibrate and limit any bias as much as possible

in semiotically analysing the texts (and their signs) of this. In the end, the reliability and validity of qualitative research like this should lie in the quality of the research itself through how well it can interpret the text and make meanings.

III. Limitations

This research does have several limitations associated with the way in which the data was approached. Firstly, because of the time and word requirements of this particular research assessment, a limited theoretical framework was applied, one which could not extensively employ theories such as that on *taste* by Pierre Bourdieu (see Bourdieu, 1979/1996) or notions related to *ideology* and *ideological state apparatuses* developed by Louis Althusser (see Althusser, 1970/2014). Given this, the research focused on semiotic analysis, specifically as developed by Barthes. Nevertheless, this focused approach does leave open opportunities for future research across a broader theoretical framework.

Secondly, in analysing the manga, this study employed English translations rather than the original language versions. Clearly, language is critical in the expression of culture generally. Manga's language is a distinctive one that includes various features indicating how it is to be read, the context particular series adopt, and even how to react to various scenes (Sell, 2011). In addition, the Japanese language is highly gendered (Clarke, 2009). For example, while the normal use of the word lunchbox is *bentō*, the feminine version of it is *obentō*. Although heavily gendered language is less used in contemporary Japan (Clarke, 2009), this difference in fact spans from older manga to its more recent iterations and is a factor that could have enriched the findings of this study. Translation can affect the primary data in this case, although it was felt that the relatively large sampling and cross-research with other scholarly sources offset the transitions in meaning translation can induce. Nevertheless, further research in transnational and comparative studies of manga and Japanese culture is possible and likely desirable.

CHAPTER 4. THE AUTHOR – YOSHINAGA FUMI

I. A Successful Boys Love Author

Yoshinaga Fumi (1971 –) started her career by drawing BL *dōjinshi* (self-published), works for *shōjo* (young girls) manga series. She made her debut in 1994 with the BL manga, *The Moon And The Sandals* (*Tsuki to Sandal*), which first appeared in the comic market (also known as *Comiket*, a biannual marketplace for self-published *dōjinshi* works, sold for promotion of an artist's work or to support fandom of particular manga or anime series) and was serialised later in *Hanaoto* magazine. Her career took off with the popular manga *Antique Bakery* (*Seiyō Kottō Yōgashiten*) (which originally ran from 1999 to 2002) and which won the 2002 Kodansha Manga Award for *shōjo* manga (for girls). Even though being classified as *shōjo*, *Antique Bakery* contains several BL aspects. The spin-off *dōjinshi* BL/*yaoi* version of *Antique Bakery* (with fourteen stories) was later self-published by Yoshinaga herself. Mizoguchi Akiko (2003) asserts that even though the *dōjinshi* of *Antique Bakery* is very highly ranked among BL fans, it has never been officially published anywhere, thus, is considered one of Yoshinaga's 'underground' works.

Yoshinaga's manga include several series and one-shots (one-volume manga), mostly in *shōjo* and BL genres. Despite this, BL elements or associations have always been found in her work. Considering that the BL genre emerged from the tradition of the *shōjo* genre, featuring BL relationships in *shōjo* manga is not such a rare move. However, her on-going series *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* (*Kinō Nani Tabeta?*) (2007 –) is an exception where Yoshinaga depicts stories of a gay couple despite being published in *Morning*, a *seinen* manga magazine (for young men). Not only crossing the border between genres, the manga works of Yoshinaga also contain diverse settings and topics spanning alternative Japanese history, (as in *Ōoku: The Inner Chamber* [*Ōoku*]; 2005 –) to Western history

(for example, *Gerard And Jacques* [*Gerard to Jacques*], 2000), to modern Japanese settings (such as *Flowers of Life* [*Furawā obu Raifu*], 2003 and *All My Darling Daughters* [*Ai Subeki Musumetachi*], 2002).

Her manga is consistently rated highly by critics and consumed broadly in not only Japan but also overseas. Many of them have been translated officially into English (mainly) and other languages (namely Chinese, Korean, and French). On the other hand, most of her manga have also appeared online as works of ‘scanlation’ – which entail breaches of copyright law (by scanning, translating, and posting manga on the web without permission). While *All My Darling Daughters* was the Jury Recommended Work in the 8th Japan Media Arts Festival in 2004, *Antique Bakery* has been adapted into a TV drama, an *anime* (cartoon) series, and a live-action movie. Among them all, *Ōoku: The Inner Chamber* is arguably Yoshinaga’s most successful one. The manga has already earned its author multiple awards including some significant ones, such as the Sense of Gender Award (2005) by The Japanese Association of Feminist Science Fiction and Fantasy, the 10th Award for Excellent in the area of Culture at the Media and Arts Festival (by the Agency for Culture Affairs) (2006), the James Tiptree, Jr., Award (2009), and the 13th Tezuka Osamu Cultural Grand Prize for Manga (2009). *Ōoku* had its own film adaptation in 2010 and live-action TV drama series in 2012.

As stated earlier, Yoshinaga’s manga all contain aspects of BL, whether explicitly or implicitly, with attractive male characters who either reveal their sexuality as gay or drop hint for imagined same-sex relationship. However, the BL element in Yoshinaga’s work always extends beyond the ‘gay sexuality’ of the protagonists (or any other characters). What is significant about Yoshinaga’s BL element is that it portrays a stark on-going debate about gender and sexuality roles more generally. For example, while classified as a *shōjo* manga, the story in *Ōoku* takes place in a palace/harem (the inner chamber) of 3000 beautiful young men ruled by one female *shōgun* (military general) in the Tokugawa

time (1600 – 1868). Those men are kept not only as servants by the female *shgun*, but also as her ‘studs’ – sexual partners for reproduction purposes.

The setting of 3000 beautiful young men seems to easily connote the hidden BL factor in *Ōoku* as the BL genre has given rise to the phrase “the world of ‘One Hundred Million Homosexuals’ (*Ichi oku sō homo*)” (Kim, 2016, p. 211). However, Mizoguchi (2010) asserts that, beyond such a setting, there is a notable discourse about “reproduction, romantic relationships, marriage, and family” (p. 163) – a feature of the which marks *Ōoku* “an offspring of BL” (Mizoguchi, 2010, p. 165). Kim (2016) asserts that this discourse does not only appear in *Ōoku* but also in Yoshinaga’s other manga and essays as well – a factor likely arising with her thinking on feminism, a rare focus among the world of Japanese manga artists.

II. A Feminist

Unique among other successful *mangaka* (manga artist), Yoshinaga Fumi is ‘openly feminist’. She ‘came out’ with the critic, author and BL reader Shion Miura in an interview in 2007 (Hori, 2012). However, Yoshinaga does not conform herself to the mainstream definition of a feminist as she states:

When I speak of feminism, I’m absolutely speaking of my own personal definition of it. I’m not sceptical of the institution of marriage, but my idea of feminism imagines a society that would see a woman endowed with the necessary financial independence to be able to leave her husband if she came to realise she’d made a mistake in marrying him. (as cited in Kim, 2016, p. 213)

According to Kim (2016), the attempt at differentiating her feminism is not “an effort to find a moderately realistic compromise” (p. 213), but the formation of a more radical definition that favours women exploring other options beyond marriage and finding support to do so through new economic conditions. As Kim (2016) argues, this is not a

moderate feminism but is indicative of a painful reality in Japan, where women rarely achieve financial independence outside marriage.

Although rarely admitted or even discussed among the manga world (until Yoshinaga), feminism in pursuing gender equality has always been celebrated by the BL genre as underscored by BL author Yoko Nagakubo:

One of the reasons [to depict same-sex romance in BL] is to eliminate power structures between couples of different genders. In heterosexual love relationships, it is extremely difficult to exclude the normal power structures in which men are strong and women are weak. Using male couples makes it possible to describe a more equal relationship between two individuals. (as cited in Toku, 2007, p. 29)

Allowing herself to celebrate such BL's tradition, but with a poignant awareness of the reality inside and outside the world of manga, Yoshinaga states that:

I want to depict people who try very hard but don't make it. In boys' magazines people who try hard always win. That is not what I want. I want to show the people who didn't win, whose dreams didn't come true. It is not possible for everybody to get first prize. I want my readers to understand the happiness that people can get from trying hard, going through the process, and being frustrated. The job I got was with a Boys Love magazine, so I decided to show my philosophy through Boys Love. Boy's love stories deal with minorities. I show the pains of gays who can't fit in. Minorities have to deal with society before they can achieve happiness. (as cited in Toku, 2007, p. 29)

I used to think there was no way I could possibly portray anything to do with feminism in manga, but in writing about women, ultimately, there's no way to get around it. So that's why I've avoided depicting love stories between men and women until now [the work of *Ōoku*]. (as cited in Kim, 2016, p. 214)

This has been said by people before, but I've come to realise the sad fact that I simply can't write a "boy-meets-girl" romance without distorting the real world to the degree that I do [in *Ōoku*]. (as cited in Kim, 2016, p. 214)

Being open about her feminism, Yoshinaga provides a better view of the BL genre and its core value in terms of the conversation between gender, power, and ideology. Aoyama (2015) has praised Yoshinaga for being the most gender-conscious and acclaimed

mangaka whose works are at “the cutting edge of what BL can contribute to gender awareness, and vice versa, both within and outside the genre” (p. 233).

III.A Food Lover

Besides her gender consciousness and expertise in the BL genre (and other BL related works), Yoshinaga is also well-known for her love of food (Aoyama, 2015). Many of her manga’s stories take place partly or wholly in kitchen or restaurant settings. Given this, the research investigates four specifically.

Her debut manga *The Moon And The Sandals* portrays the protagonist as a young man who likes to cook for his loved one, who is picky about his food.

Antique Bakery and *Not Love but Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy!* (*Ai ga Nakute mo Kutte Yukemasu*) are manga which employ food as their main theme. While *Antique Bakery* indicates its food-related focus in its name, *Not Love but Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy!* is an expression of the protagonist’s love of food (who is believed to be Yoshinaga herself) in the form of a restaurant guidebook.

Her on-going manga (besides *Ōoku*) *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* tells stories about a handsome gay lawyer who loves to cook for his hairdresser partner, family and other friends who all live in the setting of modern Tokyo. This manga, with a great sense of humour, is also a cookbook in manga form with Yoshinaga incorporating different recipes for regular homemade meals and special occasions in parallel with the protagonist’s cooking.

While the comprehensive analysis of each of these manga is presented in the following chapters, it should be noted initially that food in Yoshinaga’s manga is not just a backdrop but a space for exploring and foregrounding issues concerning gender roles, their diversity, and their contest (Aoyama, 2015). According to Aoyama (2015), food in

Yoshinaga's manga manifests various relationships between, not only the characters, but also "group/society and individual, ideal/fantasy and reality, convention and innovation, and many others" (p. 234). Through her illustrating and storytelling techniques (themselves with many plot twists), Yoshinaga "subverts phallogentric and heteronormative myths and stereotypes" (p. 234) and her manga is "an endlessly interpretable relationship that provides a window on gender and sexuality" (p. 234).

CHAPTER 5. THE MOON AND THE SANDALS

I. Overview

The Moon And The Sandals (Tsuki to Sandals) was Yoshinaga Fumi's debut in 1994. This manga first appeared in the comic market before being serialised in Hanaoto magazine. The *tankōbon* volumes (collected series) of it were later published by Houbunsha publisher (Tokyo, Japan) in 1996 and 2000. The manga was then translated into English and distributed by Digital Manga Publishing in 2007. In the US, the English version of *The Moon And The Sandals* was nominated for the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards (commonly known as the Eisner Awards) in 2008. It was also nominated by the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) to be listed in the 2008 Great Graphic Novels for Teens.

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Figure 5.0. The Moon And The Sandals, Vol. 1 Cover (Yoshinaga, 2007a)

The manga tells stories about two gay couples with the protagonist, Kobayashi Koichi, a second-year high school student. In the first volume, Kobayashi first has a crush on his world history teacher, Ida Ryo, who is in a relationship with Hashizume Shu, a professional chef. When the relationship between Ida and Hashizume gets rough, Kobayashi confesses to Ida with a kiss over a home-cooked meal which he makes for Ida. However, as Hashizume comes back to Ida the next day, and Kobayashi storms out of Ida's house while still wearing in-door sandals.

Kobayashi later meets his (soon-to-be) boyfriend, Narumi Toyo, when his classmate and English tutor, Narumi Rikuko, (Toyo's little sister) gets injured in an accident. Toyo agrees to substitute his sister to tutor Kobayashi under one condition – that Kobayashi must make lunch for him every day.

Their rough loves (of both couples) have gradually developed throughout two volumes. The manga ends with Ida deciding to come out with his parents and Toyo becomes open about his relationship with Kobayashi at work.

II. Analysis and Discussion

1. The cooking student and the home-cooked dinner

Right after the fight between Ida and Hashizume, Kobayashi confronts his teacher about the dramatic relationship and cooks dinner for him (Yoshinaga, 2007a, pp. 3-26). Kobayashi appears to be contrary to the idea of men cooking in the 1970s and more as a 'post-modern cooking man' (Aoyama, 2003). Before the beginning of the 21st century (considering that this manga was first published in the mid-1990s), there was a popular gendered ideology which said, "man outside, women inside" (*otoko wa soto, onna wa uchi*) (as cited in Cwiertka, 2006, p. 94) which indicated the differences between men's and women's roles in Japan's society. As Aoyama (2003, 2008) asserts, a man was

believed to never cook in a domestic kitchen (inside – *uchi*); and if he would ever cook, it should happen in a professional kitchen. The old era's cooking men, especially in popular culture, were either professional chefs or wandering gourmets (who did not appear in domestic space but outside - *soto*). Also, those men were portrayed with their aggressive and generous attitudes, who did not cook miscellaneous food but in bulk and with a vulgar manner (Aoyama, 2003). Unlike those cooking men, Kobayashi does not hesitate in his 'feminine' cooking in naming all the dishes:

Today it's an all Chinese food menu, teach! Spring rolls, cold Chinese-style tofu, stir-fried bok choy, and Chinese cabbage – and – meatball soup. (Yoshinaga, 2007a, pp. 10-11)

As Ida appears to be surprised by Kobayashi's good cooking skills, Kobayashi explains that since his parents work all the time, he must cook dinner for himself. However, it should be noted that Kobayashi is gay (and very open about it) and gay men in Japanese culture are popularly assumed as being feminine (McLelland, 2000). Hence, Kobayashi's 'home' cooking skills seems to be both a confrontation to the ideology that 'men do not and should not cook at home' (Aoyama, 2003) and a conformation to the idea that 'gay men cook in a feminine way' (McLelland, 2000). The complexity of Kobayashi's sexuality has been depicted similarly to the way in which Yoshinaga describes her feminism: there is no fixed definition (Mizoguchi, 2010; Kim, 2016). Contextualising Kobayashi's home cooking in Japan's sociocultural condition in the 1990s, it can be said that the way Kobayashi cooks is his gender performance. As Butler (1990, 1993) asserts, while gender is not a pre-condition fixed by one's biological sex, it is also not a choice but performed by repeating a certain set of behaviours over time. These behaviours are gendered by the sociocultural context (Butler, 1990, 1993). Kobayashi does not always cook as a gay man but started as his surviving skills before it becomes his devotion. Yoshinaga has explained Kobayashi's 'feminine' cooking through a process of repetition rather than depicting him as a gay man who assumingly always cooks in such a manner.

Besides being Kobayashi's gender performance, food in this manga appears to convey the message of love as it has been popularly portrayed across cultures (see Goody, 1998; Parkin, 2006; Belasco, 2008). Kobayashi cooks also to express his affection towards Ida as he thinks to himself: "You only need one guy – me – who can cook well for you" (Yoshinaga, 2007a, p. 12). While Hashizume, Ida's chef boyfriend, has been away since their fight, Kobayashi comes and cooks dinner for his teacher. At one dinner, reaching for Ida's attention, Kobayashi gives asparagus to Ida by feeding him with his chopsticks. Like in a romantic movie, the surrounding is blurred and even disappears while the asparagus, Kobayashi's hands, and Ida's mouth are focused on one by one.

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Figure 5.1. Kobayashi feeds Ida (Yoshinaga, 2007a, p. 15)

Not just a romantic scene, this also connotes the characters' gender and sexual orientation. The feeding act offers references to both sex roles in a typical homosexual relationship between a *seme* (top – giver) and an *uke* (bottom – receiver). Ida, although older, is an *uke*, who 'receives' the food/affection from Kobayashi, the younger but bigger in stature and a *seme*. This also contrasts to the original *nanshoku* code (the way of youth) in Tokugawa time (McLelland, 2000), which is arguably believed to be the original idea around the birth of the BL genre (Welker, 2015). In *nanshoku* the younger tends to be the *uke*, and the older tends to be the *seme* (McLelland, 2000). Although the *nanshoku* code does not strictly apply to the BL genre anymore, there are still a few strong customs depicting a same-sex couple, such as the *seme* should be the one who is strong and protecting while the *uke* is the one who gives care (in a feminine way) (Fujimoto, 2015). In this particular scene, Yoshinaga has subverted all of those gendered ideologies and customs in BL since Kobayashi has been playing the role of both a carer (*uke*) and a giver (*seme*), though his sex role is clearly a *seme*.

As a twist, the romantic scene ends in a comical way as the asparagus is too hot and burns Ida's mouth. After the accident, Kobayashi confesses his feeling to Ida with a surprised kiss which leaves Ida confused. The next day, when Kobayashi comes back for Ida's answer, they instead hear Hashizume's apology to Ida (over Ida's apartment door) as he decides to stay and also asks Ida to live with him as a couple. Kobayashi storms out while still in Ida's in-door *sandals*. The *moon* is shining outside that night.

2. Lunches with the picky bully

In the chapter 'Lunch on the Mountaintop' (Yoshinaga, 2007a, pp. 51-86), Rikuko appears as Kobayashi's classmate, lunch companion, and English tutor. Rikuko's role is not the main one; however, she comes back later in the series as an emotion supporter for her older brother, Toyo. Being hospitalised in an accident, Rikuko has to ask Toyo to

substitute for her as Kobayashi's English tutor. In exchange, Kobayashi must make lunch for Toyo every day. From his classmates, Kobayashi finds out that Toyo is a famous senior-year student for his handsomeness, high GPA, and "twisted personality" (Yoshinaga, 2007a, p. 63). Toyo is also the only member of the Mountaineering Club.

Their first meeting nearly turns into a fight as Toyo rudely complains that Kobayashi's lunchbox is inedible and he is so bad at English. From the second meeting, Kobayashi starts calling Toyo *Giant (Jaian)* for his arrogant and bullying attitude (*Jaian* is the nickname of the bully character Takeshi Gōda in the globally popular manga *Doraemon* by Fujio F. Fujiko), although Kobayashi is bigger and taller in stature.

Home-cooked food in this context has changed from a way to express affection, as in the dinner Kobayashi cooks for Ida, to a commodity in exchange for Toyo's tutoring. What is significant here is the way in which Toyo describes his preferred food. He first writes a memo to Kobayashi, "Food I like: meat. Food I hate: vegetables and fish" (Yoshinaga, 2007a, p. 66). When Kobayashi complains that he "can't stand people who are that picky about their food" (Yoshinaga, 2007a, p. 67), Toyo shouts back at him, "Shut up!! The fact that I have so many things I can't eat is precisely why I bring my lunch every day! Never put green peppers in my lunch again!!" (Yoshinaga, 2007a, p. 67).

Again, this is the complication in one's identity which is cleverly conveyed through Yoshinaga's way of character-building. Toyo, like Kobayashi, has both confronted and conformed many ideologies of what should be thought of as a typical man in the Japanese culture of the mid-1990s. Toyo appears to be a bully with a strong figure, who is also the only member of the Mountaineering Club. These characteristics give the others the impression that he is a strong and tough man. In the chapter, *Natural Born Winner* (Yoshinaga, 2007a, pp. 87-122), Toyo thinks to himself: "Homosexuality is for... I don't know... more sensitive types" (Yoshinaga, 2007a, p. 108). Toyo refuses to be the

‘sensitive’ type by consciously performing in a manly and tough manner. The fact that he only eats meat and despises vegetables and fish embraces this impression even more strongly as there was a dominant ideology in Japan at the time (and other countries as well) that eating meat was an expression of manliness (Aoyama, 2003; see also Sobal, 2005; Sumpter, 2015). Also, eating vegetables and fish has been considered too feminine for the food’s delicacies, compared to the bulky and bloody features of meat (Crowley, 2002; Sobal, 2005). However, at the same time, Toyo shows his pickiness with his food which feminises himself in a way that most men are believed to be not being picky about such mundane and miscellaneous things like food.

Acting tough, eating meat, and despising delicate food, Toyo, even without saying, has refused to be ‘sensitive’, or more precisely, to be a homosexual. Although there is no scene that Toyo directly denies his (later-to-revealed) sexuality, his denials lie in the way he chooses to appear and the food he chooses to consume.

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Figure 5.2. Toyo’s complaint about Kobayashi’s lunchbox (Yoshinaga, 2007a, p. 70)

On the fifth day of tutoring, Toyo appears to be angry as Kobayashi again puts broccoli in his lunchbox. As Kobayashi insists Toyo to try before complaining, Toyo eats the vegetable with a surprised face. He then turns to deny that it “isn’t broccoli” and “broccoli doesn’t taste like that” (Yoshinaga, 2007a, p. 71). As discussed earlier, since vegetables and fish culturally stand for the feminine characteristic, the fact that Toyo has pleurably consumed Kobayahsi’s broccoli indicates that he has come to be in touch with his (more feminine) sexuality (as homosexuality is believed to be feminine), though Toyo has denied it right away.

However, again, it should be noted that Kobayashi is the one who cooks the food which Toyo consumes. The role of the giver and receiver of food and of sexual orientation through the depiction of food, as in the dinner at Ida’s house, has subtly reappeared. By twisting the tradition of depicting one’s gender and sexuality beyond the pre-established homonormative code of the BL genre, Yoshinaga has successfully conveyed the issue of gender’s diversity in a subtle and comical way, through food.

3. The Homemade Lunchbox

Lunchbox or *bentō* (or *obentō*) is a bold culinary figure in Japan’s culture. Anne Allison (1991) asserts that the Japanese lunchbox is a cultural myth of how it came into being and who should be preparing it. In Japan’s culture, it comes to a belief that a lunchbox is the love and care a wife or a mother put towards her husband and children (Allison, 1991). According to Allison (1991), the lunchbox, popularly considered as the act of mothering, is a *Gendered Ideology State Apparatus* (see Althusser, 1971). It frames women to the domestic kitchen in which they must perform some certain gendered duties, including making lunchboxes. Hence, the lunchbox and its preparation are also generally gendered as feminine in Japan.

Here in *The Moon And The Sandals*, Yoshinaga has first subverted this gendered cultural myth by making Kobayashi, a male, prepare Toyo's lunchbox and (at first) not for love or care but as a commodity in exchange for his tutoring. However, as the story goes on, Kobayashi's lunchbox has eventually become a figure of love and care. In this setting, Yoshinaga has cleverly bypassed the cultural myth behind the Japanese lunchbox by deconstructing the iconic feminine lunchbox to the basic concept of food. By doing this, the lunchbox is not a Japan gendered myth anymore, but only food, which can act as both a commodity for exchange and a way to convey love without any cultural restrictions.

The lunchbox sign comes back in the chapter 'Kobayashi and Giant Thereafter', volume two (Yoshinaga, 2007b, pp. 113-149). The story happens some years after the previous event. At this time, Kobayashi has become a history teacher at his old school while Toyo has earned a competitive job at the Ministry of Finance. The lunchbox now has definitely become an expression of love as Kobayashi literally calls it the "box lunch of love" (Yoshinaga, 2007b, p. 118). Toyo comes home one day and asks Kobayashi to stop making him a lunchbox since his supervisor has mistaken it as a girlfriend's production. The reaction of Toyo is to deny it, not to the supervisor's assumption, but to the lunchbox's preparation by Kobayashi, as in the broccoli scene. This indicates that he is still closeted, although his long-lasting relationship with Kobayashi means that he has come to accept his gender and sexuality.

In this piece, Yoshinaga also presents the 1990s salarymen masculinity in Toyo and his work environment. The salaryman is arguably the most iconic image of Japanese masculinity in the 1990s and even now. A typical Japanese male adult is portrayed (by media and in popular culture) to be in a black business suit, who works from day to night at one of the big companies (McLelland, 2005; Hidaka, 2010; Suganuma, 2015). Also, a successful salaryman, who is suitable for promotion, is the one who has both his career and marriage well-settled (or soon-to-be) (Tamagawa, 2016). Toyo's supervisor has

commented that he is a prospective candidate for promotion after complementing his well-packed lunchbox. The gendered assumption has turned into a satisfied condition for one to be considered as ‘grown-up man’. However, as the story goes, Toyo decides to come out with his supervisor and asks her not to keep it a secret to herself.

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Figure 5.3. Toyo’s supervisor on Kobayashi’s lunchbox (Yoshinaga, 2007b, p. 118)

There is no more appearance of the lunchbox to tell if things turn out right for the couple. Yet the fact that Toyo has come out at the workplace (and soon to his parents as the ending of the series suggests) seems to announce that Kobayashi’s lunchbox will retain its meaning of love and care, not just as a Japanese iconic lunchbox but as home-cooked food for a loved one.

CHAPTER 6. ANTIQUE BAKERY

I. Overview

Yoshinaga's award-winning manga *Antique Bakery* (*Seiyō Kottō Yōgashiten*) was first serialised in *Wing* magazine from 1999 to 2002. Its *tankōbon* (collected series) version was published in four volumes from 2000 to 2002 by Shinshokan (Tokyo, Japan). Its English version was distributed by Digital Manga Publishing (California, USA) from 2005 to 2006. Not only winning the 2002 Kodansha Manga Award for *shōjo* manga, *Antique Bakery* was also adapted into a Japanese TV drama (2001), an anime series (2008) and a Korean live-action movie (2008).

In this four-volume manga, Yoshinaga tells stories about four men who all work at a small bakery named Antique. Tachibana Keiichiro is the owner of the bakery, who claims to be straight and into big breasts. Ono Yusuke is the pastry chef at Antique, who is openly gay with a 'demonic charm' able to seduce any man he wants, straight or gay (except for Tachibana). Kanda Eiji is the youngest among them, an ex-professional boxer who is straight, vulgar, and reckless. However, Eiji turns gentle and delicate when it comes to his master Ono and sweet cakes. Last but not least is the tall, muscular, handsome, clumsy and kind-hearted Kobayakawa Chikage who always wears a pair of dark glasses.

Antique Bakery is not a BL manga but a *shōjo* work with a lot of BL flavour. Yoshinaga successfully implanted many BL hints in the original series which she later developed in fourteen spin-off *dōjinshi* BL/*yaoi* chapters as an 'underground' work. In *Antique Bakery*, "gorgeous" and "delicate" (Aoyama, 2015, p. 242) food (and male) depictions do not only entertain readers or act merely as a selling point of the manga. They entail the complex sexuality and identity of each character gradually told in a comical yet dramatic way.

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Figure 6.0. Antique Bakery, Vol. 1 Cover (Yoshinaga, 2005a)

II. Analysis and Discussion

As this study is interested in the relationship between food and male homosexuality, it chose to analyse and discuss the depiction of Ono Yusuke – the gay pastry chef and the bakery. This study recognises them as signs which contain several other signs in terms of their appearance, functions, and meanings in relations to food and homosexuality.

1. The Legendary Gay Pâtissier

At the beginning of the manga, Ono Yusuke appeared as shy and somehow weak compared to the macho Tachibana, who rejected Ono's confession cruelly and told him to "hurry up and die" (Yoshinaga, 2015a, p. 8) when they were classmates in high school. In the kitchen, although being the legendary pastry chef, Ono still performs the shyness and gentleness on most occasions. Yoshinaga has employed several homosexual ideologies in depicting this character. Homosexuals are normally thought of as shy, weak and feminine in Japan. However, it poses a question about how the semiosis process works. Is it because Ono is gay, he appears to be shy or vice versa? Is it the way in which a gay man is supposed to perform? But more importantly, it is the social assumption upon his occupation that points out Ono's gayness. In Chapter 12, part two (Yoshinaga, 2006a, pp. 91-122), after refusing his ex-boyfriend's (also teacher) offer to come work in Paris, Ono confesses his own feeling about his career as a pâtissier:

To tell you the truth, there was never a time when I thought working as a pâtissier was fun. The only reason I put energy into my work was because, as a gay man, I knew I didn't have a lot of job options. (Yoshinaga, 2016a, p. 118).

As Aoyama (2003) asserts, in Japanese culture, a man should not cook at all, unless it is his profession. However, the cooking 'profession' of a man is also a tricky term when it mostly refers to the savoury kitchen domain where meat, blood, and offal are prepared and consumed as an expression of manliness (Aoyama, 2003, 20013). On the other hand, sweet food is rarely a choice for a male chef because of its delicacy and *yin* element (cold and feminine) compared to the vulgarity and *yang* element (hot and masculine) in meat cooking (Crowley, 2002; Aoyama, 2003). In contrast to Ono, Yoshinaga has presented this masculine myth in Tachibana. Tachibana, though being the owner of Antique, once comments that all cakes taste like sugar, which are "for woman and children" while his taste "runs toward liquor and *ankimo* (a dish made with monkfish's liver)" (Yoshinaga,

2005a, p. 165). Therefore, even in the professional gastronomic world (supposed to be for men only), there are still divisions between masculine and feminine. Hence, Ono, conforming to the femininity of what is believed to be a homosexual, has chosen to become an (extremely successful) pastry chef despite the (masculine) hard and heavy workload in a pastry kitchen. However, Ono turns out to have several twists.

Myth, according to Barthes (1957/1991), works to make people believe in the false nature of things. Ono can be seen firstly as a sign which embraces several gendered gastronomic myths which makes readers fall for his supposed-to-be gay nature. Only by then, Yoshinaga makes a twist in Ono's persona. While a gay man in Japan is popularly believed to be females' best friend (McLelland, 2000), Ono is afraid of women. Also, though being portrayed as shy even in his own kitchen, Ono turns out to be a charming handsome gay who is confident and irresistible to all men and women in his personal life. In contrast to his regular timid appearance with round glasses and soft masculinity, Ono, in his confident gay form, appears without glasses and with stylishly groomed hair and a charming smile.

In chapter 11 (part one and two) (Yoshinaga, 2006a, pp. 5-54), when the bakery is invited to attend to a TV reality show, Ono becomes afraid finding out that he has to work in front of many people (mostly women). At the last moment before airing, to gain confidence, he quickly grooms his hair, removes his round glasses, and transforms into his handsome charming gay form. However, the charming Ono does not appear to seduce anyone this time but to perform the gastronomic profession of a pastry chef. In addition, Ono has not only transformed himself but also the female audience by keeping on thinking to himself that they (women) are actually beautiful men in dresses.

Not only is Ono's food delicious, his handsome look is now attracting all audiences. While one female presenter focuses on Ono's amazing crepes and desserts, another takes

a glance at him as she says “Looks so delicious... ♥” (Yoshinaga, 2016a, p. 42). In this scene, not only Ono’s food but also himself, or his charming gayness to be exact, have been fetishised and consumed by the female presenter and diners to the point that they want to “flap around and dance” (Yoshinaga, 2006b, p. 43). Even being gay in nature, Ono still performs his gender in different modes, transforming between these modes through changing his appearance and thinking. The same thing can also be said about his food of which the exotic sweet cakes and desserts indicate the manly professionalism but also the feminine characteristic.

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Figure 6.1. Ono in the shy and gentle form (Yoshinaga, 2006a, p. 34)

Figure 6.2. Ono in the charming gay form (Yoshinaga, 2006a, p. 37)

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Figure 6.3. Ono’s food makes them want to dance (Yoshinaga, 2006a, p. 43)

There is no doubt about Ono’s gender and sexuality as an *uke* (bottom) male homosexual. At first, he appears to conform and even reinforce many gendered myths upon homosexuality in Japan. However, the depiction of Ono has contained many twisted elements in which his male homosexuality is revisited for deeper understanding. In contrast to the gastronomic machismo Tachibana, in Ono Yusuke, Yoshinaga has created a space for the diversity of the term ‘homosexual’. What is popularly considered as gay seems not always to be the case in depicting Ono Yusuke. If his feminine gayness has led him to the path of a pastry chef, then his also gay and feminine food (sweet pastries and desserts) have been fetishised and consumed by the female counterpart while he is afraid of women. Also, sweet food is believed to be feminine, but professional cooking is

(supposed to be) for male, Ono's career as an excellent pâtissier becomes not only a twist in his depiction but also in Japan's gendered ideology towards food and occupation.

In a late chapter (Yoshinaga, 23006b, pp. 75-110), Ono visits his favourite gay bar and finds out that his ex-lover (not to be confused with his French ex-boyfriend) has settled with a new boyfriend who happens to be a former banker. Another gay man immediately turns towards this 'new boyfriend' expressing his surprise about the fact that there are gays in the banking environment which is believed to be too 'straight' for gays. This piece is another way for Yoshinaga to impose her radical feminism. Instead of creating an ideal world for gay people to live, Yoshinaga presents in her manga the harsh reality of being gay in Japan where homophobia happens silently in ignoring the existence of the gay identity (Tamagawa, 2016). Work environment is gendered in which banking is straight, and so is the professional kitchen. In this manga, Yoshinaga, while assuring that there are still gays in the banking environment, has presented Ono's professional pastry kitchen as a complex environment where even his homosexuality is both conformed and confronted at the same time.

2. Antique Bakery

Tachibana Keiichiro, the bakery's owner, comes from an extremely wealthy family, and retains a twisted childhood memory of when he was kidnapped for one whole month. Tachibana claims that the only thing he remembers is that the abductor was feeding him delicious cakes all the time. After being rejected by many women in marriage, including his ex-colleague, feeling too embarrassed to go to work, he decides to purchase a closed antique shop and opens a little bakery, hence the name Antique. Later in the series (Yoshinaga, 2006, pp. 111-170), a team of police detectives comes to him seeking help when several abduction cases, similar to his own, have been happening. However, this time, all the victims are discovered dead. Forensics have found Antique's unique cake

ingredients inside the victims' stomachs. In a moment, the frames turn black into a flashback. There is no indication to tell of whom the thoughts were, Tachibana himself or his abductor:

I would make it a delicious cake shop... so delicious that any pastry-lover would come from miles away just to eat there once.

I would make it a small shop... small so that I could keep an eye on the entire interior.

And the opening hours would be as late as possible, so that anyone, regardless of occupation, age or gender, could casually come to buy pastries.

That was the kind of shop I wanted... (Yoshinaga, 2016b, pp. 111-114)

This is exactly how the Antique turns out to be. The bakery itself is a sign which contains every other sign since mostly everything that happens in the manga takes place at the bakery or in relation to its existence. If Ono's being entails the conversation of several ideologies about homosexuality, then the bakery becomes the environment in fostering that conversation with a broader scope.

The bakery is not only where the four main characters come for work but also a hub for interactions and relationship development. This is a feature of a restaurant/café (see Spang, 2000), or a cake shop/bakery in this case. Food premises in the context of the urban life work as a nexus where different sociocultural agencies occur and interact. These interactions reflect the sociocultural life inside and outside those food premises. What is significant is the way that Yoshinaga chooses the 'bakery' setting in the manga to foster such gender and sexuality conversation in modern Tokyo.

Employing the notion of *hare* (special, exotic, occasional), *ke* (mundane, trivial, daily) and *kegare* (the state of consuming *ke*) (see Sugimoto, 2010), Aoyama (2015) asserts that in Japan while males cooking is celebrated as *hare*, females cooking is deemed to be *ke*. Moreover, as *hare* also means exotic and occasional, it also refers to the foreign and high-

cuisine which one does not consume on a daily basis. The products of Antique are inarguably *hare* since it states clearly to be French pastry. In addition, the ‘gayness’ in the cake shop, produced by its gay pastry chef and the setting of four beautiful men in a place, also embrace the *hare* element since homosexuality is generally considered exotic in modern Japan (Suganuma, 2015). This is where the BL element plays out in complicating the foundation of the bakery, where femininity, masculinity, and homosexuality are present all at once.

As discussed earlier, pastry and desserts are sweet and referred as delicate, feminine, and unmanly, which seem to be *ke* (women are usually referred as *ke*). However, they are not *ke* but *hare* for being consumed occasionally. On the other hand, they are made by the legendary gay pastry chef Ono Yusuke (considering that ‘gay’ is believed to be feminine) on a daily basis (*ke* element). In the kitchen, Ono is helped by his apprentice Kanda, who is cute (feminine) but vulgar (masculine). Their sweet products are then served by the two manly looking but ungendered Tachibana and Chikage. The foundation of the bakery itself is indeed a complication of sex, gender, sexuality and the Japanese ideologies upon the notion of *hare*, *ke*, *kegare* which each of the four characters has brought into it.

While homosexuality and French pastries are exotic (*hare*) to the Japanese in general, they are also erotic in a way that the consumption has been made into a great desire by “any pastry-lover” (Yoshinaga, 2016b, p. 111). Yet this great desire and consumption are performed in a “casual” manner (*ke*) by customers, “regardless of occupation, age or gender” (Yoshinaga, 2016b, p. 114). Yoshinaga has cleverly added the BL flavour into her beautiful and delicious cake depictions by implementing these acts without queering the relationship of these four men to the extreme. In fact, her work has added diverse and complex flavours into the conversation of gender and sexuality, especially towards the male homosexuality and masculinity assumptions which are forcefully placed upon one in Japan’s society.

CHAPTER 7. NOT LOVE BUT DELICIOUS FOODS MAKE ME SO HAPPY!

I. Overview

Not Love But Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy! (Ai ga Nakute mo Kutte Yukemasu) was first serialised by Ohta Shuppan (Tokyo, Japan) in 2005. The English version of it was published by Yen Press (New York, USA) in 2010. This is an unusual manga in many ways. First of all, unlike many of Yoshinaga's manga, or the vast majority of manga in the market, *Not Love But Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy!* appears as a collection of restaurant reviews in which it features a BL *mangaka* (manga artist) who has no interest in romantic relationships but the delicious foods. Most of the characters in this one-shot manga (one volume only) are not identified by their full names but with a kind of anonymity protection with missing characters in their names. At the beginning of the manga, it states, "This story is a work of fiction. Any similarities to actual persons is purely coincidental. But all of the restaurants in this book are real." (Yoshinaga, 2010, p. 6). However, the protagonist is called Y-naga F-mi, which strongly implies the author name Yoshinaga Fumi. The protagonist Y-naga also shares many of Yoshinaga's personal traits, such as a career of drawing BL manga and a great love of food. On the other hand, while hiding the true identities of most of the characters, the manga depicts real restaurants in Tokyo with names, addresses, and other business details at the end of each chapter. On only rare occasions a manga features a real-life character or business unless they are a kind of popular figure. The fact that *Not Love But Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy!* does not feature any popular figures yet still entails real restaurants' details and hints about real-life characters make it stand out on its own terms.

Not Love But Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy! is indeed an unusual one which seems to be Yoshinaga's own biography. In this manga, the protagonist Y-naga spends time in every chapter to enjoy delicious foods with friends at different restaurants and writes

reviews about them. However, instead of plainly performing a critic's job, Yoshinaga (or the protagonist Y-naga) employs the restaurant setting as space for many interrelationships to happen. In this manga, the ordinariness of foods and eating becomes the catalyst for understanding, expression, exchanging of information, stories, and feelings. As a popular Japanese saying goes, '*Hana yori dango*'² (dumplings over flowers), Yoshinaga has dedicated this manga to illustrate that very saying while adding many different flavours of life into it, such as friendship, romance, guilt, and anger.

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Figure 7.0. Not Love But Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy! Cover (Yoshinaga, 2010)

II. Analysis and Discussion

Although this food-theme manga is not BL, and there is no hint about any kind of BL relationship or setting in it, it is important to this study as it reveals the way in which

² Not to be confused with the manga *Hana Yuri Dango* (Boys Over Flowers) by Kamio Yōko. In this manga, Kamio has played with the homophone feature between the word 'boy' and 'dumpling' in Japanese. Both are pronounced '*dango*'.

Yoshinaga (or the protagonist Y-naga) has employed gay characters in her works. In Chapter four (Yoshinaga, 2010, pp. 37-46), over a delicious meal, Y-naga has come to apologise to a long-time gay friend, A-dō, for employing the gay-theme in her manga works but not being able to realise he is gay earlier. This event seems to be just a way to spice up a restaurant review at first. But in contrast, it entails both the function of the restaurant setting in the fabric of life and Yoshinaga's gender consciousness towards to issue of gay identity appropriation and commercialisation, which have long been stressed by Ishida (2007/2015). The sign to be analysed and discussed here is the whole dinner of Y-naga and her gay friend, A-dō. A dinner is a complicated event in itself which should be viewed as a sign composed of other signs. The dinner in this analysis includes two parts: inside and outside the restaurant, where the presence and absence of food represent different meanings in relation to male homosexual ideologies and discriminative customs against gays in modern Japan.

1. Inside the restaurant

When entering the sushi bar, Y-naga and A-dō start the dinner with a talk about the fact that A-dō has been a gay man long before Y-naga's knowing. A-dō explains a concept called 'the atmosphere', caused by the romance between two male persons, which connotes their gay identity without saying. Although A-dō does not explain in depth, placing the 'atmosphere' in the context of modern Japan, it also represents the hardship of the homosexual community in Japan. In a sense, 'the atmosphere' is framed as queer and inappropriate as Japan's society has firm expectations for how a man (or woman) should behave according to their biological sex (McLelland, 2005; Tamagawa, 2016). Failing to fulfil these expectations has resulted in being targeted by many discriminative customs (McLelland, 2005; Tamagawa, 2016). Japan's society (including people who are afraid of being identified as queer) tends to ignore and make queer people invisible

(McLelland, 2005; Tamagawa, 2016). This conversation is then interrupted by the presence of food.

After every piece of sushi, Y-naga and A-dō take a moment just to describe the texture and flavour of it, plus the use of sake in sushi appreciation, as in a professional restaurant review, but in a comical comic form. Their feelings seem to sync with each other at that very moment of *umami* (meaning the taste of deliciousness or the feeling of being extremely satisfied).

At the end of the meal, insisting A-dō try the conger eel sushi, as Y-naga gives a big smile when A-dō is stunted by how delicious the sushi is, she thinks to herself, “When it comes to foodies, be they gay, straight, or beautiful women, they all fall to power of deliciousness.” (Yoshinaga, 2010, p. 43). Through Y-naga, Yoshinaga herself has pointed out a significant idea, that regardless of genders, everyone is equal when it comes to delicious food. Interestingly enough, the conversation about the ‘atmosphere’, which stands for Japan’s homosexual ideologies and discriminative customs towards the LGBT community, happened before the meal, when the food was absent, and has remained muted throughout the meal. If the inside-restaurant scene was cut out from when the first dish was brought out, it would look like just two friends having dinner together.

Here, not only has Yoshinaga embraced the power of food in the context of daily life in which it provides a way to connect people (Belasco 2002; Santich, 2007), she has also broadened the scope of it in providing gender equality. However, it should be stressed that what Yoshinaga (or Y-naga) means is the consumption of food only. Of course, what we eat and how we eat are important in revealing our own identities (Brillat-Savarin, 1825/1994; Fischler, 1988; Fine, 1996; Eagleton, 1998; Belasco, 2002, 2008; Fox, 2003; Santich, 2007; Anderson, 2014). However, at the bottom line, food offers humans the pleasure of eating first, before anything else can possibly be involved (Brillat-Savarin,

1825/1994). By deconstructing the food element to its basic form, apart from the sociocultural context of Japan in which food-related etiquette is heavily gendered (Traphagan & Brown, 2002; Cwiertka, 2006; Aoyama, 2008), Yoshinaga has presented food as a neutral/public space which is deemed to be equal by everyone.

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Figure 7.1. “They all fall to power of deliciousness” (Yoshinaga, 2010, p. 43)

2. Outside the Restaurant

As it comes to the end, Y-naga finally finds her courage to apologise to A-dō:

I’m sorry! I’ve always thought that I really should apologise if I ever got to talk to a gay person for any length of time! I’m sorry! I’ve been paying my rent by drawing manga with gay themes, but none of them are real gay themes! An I didn’t even know that I had a gay friend! I don’t know the first thing about gay culture! I’m so sorry! (Yoshinaga, 2010, p. 44)

In her apology, the most significant point is that she has declared that all her gay depictions are actually fake gays. The ‘fake gay’ identity refers to the use of same-sex relationship in the BL genre in general, in which a man is not necessarily gay to be in love with another man. While the Japanese do not have their own word for ‘gay’ but a loan word ‘gei’, the existence of the gay identity at the first place in the BL genre seems to be problematic into itself (McLelland, 2000, 2011). Many BL authors and readers have claimed that the characters in BL manga have no connection to gay men in real life (Ishida, 2007/2015). According to Ishida (2007/2015), the negligence and ignorance of these BL *mangaka* have caused the issue of representative appropriation and commodification of the gay identity. In this manga, Yoshinaga, being aware of this issue, has tried her way around to explore the topic by confusing the reality and fiction in Y-naga’s gay friend A-dō and via Y-naga’s apology. However, Y-naga’s apology should not be seen as the absolute solution for this issue (Aoyama, 2015) but rather a radical view of it since there might not be any absolute solution after all.

In the end, A-dō says that he does not have any problem with the ‘fake gays’ in her manga at all. He explains that if he minded, he “wouldn’t survive long as a gay person” (Yoshinaga, 2010, p. 44). Yoshinaga has skilfully inserted her opinion here in objecting to the criticism of the use of a ‘not-real-gay’ theme in the BL genre, which was a critical debate in the 1990s (Ishida, 2007/2015). Through A-dō, she also illustrates the hardship of gay life in Japan in which the person does not just ‘live’ but “survive as a gay person” (Yoshinaga, 2010, p. 44) (McLelland, 2005; Tamagawa, 2016). Considering that the manga was composed in the late-2000s, it appears that Yoshinaga has broken herself from the old form of the gay liberation in the 1990s (known as the ‘gay boom’) (see McLelland, 2000; Harada, 2001) and moved forward into a more postmodern gay identity in her work. Yet Y-naga admits that her gay characters are not ‘real gays’, A-dō appears to be a more radical character who represents a closer reality but a moderated one. A-dō is happy to

discuss his sexuality but at the same time delivers the harsh reality in which a gay man must endure in Japan. This is contrasted to what Gregory M. Herek (1986) asserted, that “As males in this culture, gay men are taught the ideal of heterosexual masculinity. When they acknowledge their own sexual preference to themselves, however, they must discard this ideology in order to maintain their self-esteem” (pp. 574-575). While Herek’s idea was confirmed by Harada Masashi in his study of male homosexual and bisexual identity in Japan (2001) based on interviews with Japanese gay men in the gay liberation movement of the late-1990s. A-dō seems to represent the post-modern gay men, who are aware about their own sexuality but also work themselves into a more postmodern Japanese, rather than a critical gay person (see Tamagawa, 2016). They do not completely discard the existing gendered ideologies but present a subtler movement towards gender dynamics. This is not a recession but a sense of balance in one’s doing and being.

Although there is no actual food in the last scene, the fact that Y-naga chooses to give her apology over a delicious meal is an interesting point besides a popular belief that a meal can act as to say sorry (as A-dō believes it is). Beyond that function, the delicious meal at the restaurant acts as a neutral space in which gender and sexuality are not framed from such Japanese ideological beliefs and customs towards what it means to be gay, man, or woman. Y-naga could have confessed to A-dō when they were eating but she did not. It is not the presence but the absence of food that is the sign of this scenes in which the false nature of homosexual ideologies reappears in Y-naga’s apology. The use of food in this chapter, of its presence and absence, is not to censor the issue of homosexuality or to appropriate it but to offer space for equality and diversity to happen.

CHAPTER 8. WHAT DID YOU EAT YESTERDAY?

I. Overview

What Did You Eat Yesterday? (*Kinō Nani Tabeta?*) started in 2007 and was first serialised in Morning magazine, a *seinen* manga magazine (for young men) before being collected into its *tankōbon* (collected series) version by Kodansha (Tokyo, Japan) – the owner of Morning. The English version was brought into the US market in 2014 by Vertical (New York, USA). The manga was nominated for the First Taishō Manga Award in 2008 and a Jury Recommendation at the 13th Japan Media Arts Festival Awards. It is still on-going in 2018. The thirteenth volume in Japanese was published in September 2017 while the English version is scheduled in August 2018.

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Although being serialised in a *seinen* magazine, *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* comes to tell stories of a gay couple in their ordinary life in which cooking and eating at home can be considered the main focus of the manga. Kakei Shirō is a handsome lawyer who loves to cook and always cooks at home after work. Yabuki Kenji is a professional hairdresser and Shirō's partner. They have lived together for over ten years in a rented apartment in Tokyo to which they return every day after work to have dinner together. Throughout the manga, there are several other characters that come into the life of the couple, and mostly in some forms of cooking or food consumption. The BL element in the manga is not hidden as in other works of Yoshinaga but is visible in every aspect, although it is not a fully BL manga. The conversation between sexuality, gender and ideology has, again, been brought into the series, and occurs mostly over the dinner table at Shirō's or others' places. Furthermore, *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* is a comic cookbook in which Yoshinaga has included cooking recipes via Shirō's and other characters' cooking. The success of the manga is undeniable for it has been going on for over a decade now. However, extreme drama (as in *The Moon And The Sandals* or *Antique Bakery*) has never appeared.

II. Analysis and Discussion

1. The Cooking Middle-Aged Man

Shirō Kakei is a lawyer who works in a small law firm of only four people (including himself). He is depicted as a tall, fit, and handsome man in his 40s (at the time in the first volume). In the first chapter, he appears as cold and with a 'not-my-problem' attitude. However, Shirō turns out to be a kind-hearted man who has a cold look on his face while hiding his own insecurity about being gay. Every night, Shirō returns to his apartment and cooks dinner. During the cooking process, Shirō thinks to himself of every ingredient he gathers, every step he makes, every tip he uses in a pleasuring way. There is no cooking

competition in the manga for Shirō only thinks of cooking and food as a hobby, or more exactly, a lifestyle which he has always enjoyed for decades. Shirō declares himself as “a humble househusband who only cooks daily out of necessity” (Yoshinaga, 2014d, p. 23).

The being of Shirō does not belong to the old pool of the old era’s cooking men (Aoyama, 2015). His cooking is everything but bold, occasional, or special. One can argue that Shirō’s cooking is feminine or gay since he does not perform any manly manners in his doing. Shirō enjoys cooking domestic foods, in small batches, and with precise measurements. However, instead of supposing Shirō’s gender as gay, his colleagues believe that he is living with a girlfriend while ‘creepily’ he does very little house chores and maintains his handsomeness at the age of forty-three. Hence, Shirō’s doing in this new era may not fall into the category of gay or queer either but somewhat a new kind of masculinity, that has been spreading in Japan during the last decade, called the ‘herbivore men’. However, while a herbivore man is described as having no interest in romantic relationships, marriage or a highly achieved career (Charlebois, 2013; Morioka, 2013; Yuen, 2014), Shirō is in a long-term relationship (and several before). He only conforms to the feature of no career motivation in spite of being a lawyer, a highly praised masculine occupation in Japan. On the other hand, it can also be argued that Shirō is a lunchbox boy (*bentō danshi*) (Yuen, 2014) who cooks for himself neatly. At first, it is hard to call a forty-three-year-old man like Shirō a ‘boy’ (*danshi*). However, placing it into Japan’s sociocultural context in which one should not be earning the full status as a grown-up man or a ‘socialised person’ (*shakaijin*) unless he has his own career and (‘normal’ - hetero) family (McLelland, 2005), then Shirō seems to fit into the category of ‘*danshi*’. Yet his gay gender (though closeted) has created a twist in this classification as gay in Japan has not made itself into a fully developed mode of masculinity. Thus, his cooking has put him outside the current gendered ideologies of either a herbivore man or a lunchbox boy and on his own terms of being a middle-aged gay man who likes to cook

for his own comfort. In depicting Shirō, Yoshinaga has employed the contemporary ideologies of masculinity in Japan (outgrown the old gendered myths of the last era). Even though the contemporary masculinity in Japan has moved away from the traditional hetero one, the process is slow in expanding its scope to recognise male homosexuality and homosexual masculinity as a part of the gender and masculinity spectrums.

2. The ‘Gay’ Versus the ‘Mother-Like’ Cooking

Even the gay ideology fails to recognise Shirō. In a double-date picnic (Yoshinaga, 2015a, pp. 41-56), Wataru, a gay friend of Shirō and Kenji, has commented that Shirō’s lunchbox is not ‘gay’ enough or not even ‘gay’ at all. To prove his point, Wataru proudly shows his gay lunchbox at best (or ‘gayest’) as an example of ‘gay standard’.

The colours are horrendous! This isn’t a savvy chef’s boxed lunch but the makeshift *bentō* of a middle-aged mom who just cooked whatever she had on hand. (Yoshinaga, 2015a, p. 47)

Gay *bentō* has to look good!!! I used paprika, cod roe, ham, and smashed fish so that it’s pink and red overall, gay colours, and cute ♥ See?! This is the gay standard!! (Yoshinaga, 2015a, p. 48)

While Shirō’s lunchbox is wrapped in newspaper and a rubber band, which, according to Wataru, looks ordinary and ‘mother-like’, Wataru’s lunchbox is colourful with foods in cute bear, heart, or star shapes. Although the manga is in black and white, the readers can easily imagine the flamboyant look of Wataru’s lunchbox.

In this scene, Yoshinaga has employed several gendered myths towards the making and the appearance of the Japanese lunchbox as well as the supposed-to-be gay characteristic (of one’s being and his cooking). While Shirō is closeted, Wataru is openly gay and has never missed a chance to embrace his gayness. Yoshinaga herself even comments on Shirō as “afraid of being seen as gay by straight people and also of not being a mainstream

gay” (Yoshinaga, 2015a, p. 49). What are conveyed through the lunchboxes of both are not only Shirō and Wataru’s different types of homosexuality but also a space for readers to think about the definition of gay or homosexuality in general.

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Figure 8.1. The
‘mother-like’
lunchbox
(Yoshinaga,
2015a, p. 47)

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Figure 8.2. The gay lunchbox (Yoshinaga, 2015a,

It then turns out that the ‘mother-like’ lunchbox of Shirō tastes better than Wataru’s gay lunchbox. Despite there being no competition here, the gay lunchbox’s defeat connotes that there is a weak link between what is embraced by the mainstream and one’s nature of being in terms of gender and sexuality. The taste of the lunchbox is not only the taste of the foods it contains but the nature of being between the ways in which Wataru and Shirō perform their gender.

According to Butler, gender performance is out of one’s consciousness and “has to do with repetition, very often with the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms to force them to resignify”, which “is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in.” (as cited in Kotz, 1992, p. 84). Not only is Wataru very aware of his gay identity, he embraces it strongly by presenting his flamboyant lunchbox while denying the natural, unaware, and hassle-free Shirō’s lunchbox as a gay’s production. Wataru does not choose his gender but instead refuses Shirō’s in a number of cases (including the lunchbox incident). He seems to believe that one must embrace his gender through reinforcing the gendered ideology consciously. In the case of Shirō, his cooking is at ease as the way he is, unaware of what the ‘gay standard’ is. When Wataru confronts Shirō’s lunchbox for not being ‘gay’ enough, Shirō turns to Kenji and ask in his surprise, “Is that true?” (Yoshinaga, 2015a, p. 49).

On a different occasion, Kenji wants to invite Wataru and his boyfriend, Kohinata, to come over for a pancake ‘party’ (Yoshinaga, 2016a, pp. 61-77). Pancake, an exotic food to Shirō’s appetite (and of most Japanese), is considered feminine (and gay to some extents) for its sweet taste, and glossy and colourful look. Kohitana, in trying to please his boyfriend, comes early with a bag of expensive ingredients and a ricotta pancake recipe which Wataru wants to eat. As Shirō goes through the ingredients list, he gets confused between crepes and pancakes as he has never grown any interest in such food. Finally, when the pancakes are done, Wataru, without hesitation, insists that the dish (full

of colourful fruits, honeycomb butter and maple syrup) looks “pretty nice” “for a Kakei dish” (Yoshinaga, 2016a, p. 74). Regardless of how delicious the dish turns out to be, the fact ‘Kakei dish’ has become the standard of Shirō’s ordinary ‘mother-like’ cooking to Wataru which indicates the differences in the ways these two gays perform their own gay identities through the work of food and cooking. While Wataru remains in the realm of flamboyant gayness reinforced by his very belief, Shirō only repeats his doing till it becomes his being which is free from the mainstream ‘gay standard’.

3. The happy home kitchen and dinner table

Most foods in *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* are cooked in the home kitchen, either of Shirō, his mother, or his friends. The use of the kitchen in this manga does not just provide a mere or random location but political space for the characters and many sociocultural agencies to interact. The kitchen itself is important to a human’s life as it is the place where food is made to nourish our well-being, physically and mentally (Santich, 2013). The kitchen can also be broadened into the space for many different activities to take place, including cooking and eating at the kitchen table, where stories are exchanged, lessons are learned, and relationships are bonded (Santich, 2013). However, it should not be ignored that as space is gendered (Getreuer-Kargl, 2012), the kitchen in Japan is in fact the most gendered place in the house where either the old ‘good wife, wise mother’ (*ryōsai kenbo*) or the modern ‘professional housewife’ (*shufu*) embraced their gender role in cooking and lunchbox making (Allison, 1991; Aoyama, 2003; Cwiertka, 2006). In Japan, the home kitchen stands for the wellness of a family, which is traditionally taken care of by women (Cwiertka, 2006). The gendered kitchen is not discarded in Yoshinaga’s manga. In this manga, from time to time, there are women who performed such gender roles as a wife, a mother, or even a grandmother in the home kitchen. They are Shirō’s mother, his friend, Kayoko, and his colleagues, Yamada and Shino. Instead,

Yoshinaga has deconstructed the kitchen space, like she does with the lunchbox, into its basic form as a space to host cooking and eating activities.

What is also significant about the way in which Yoshinaga employs the kitchen setting in the manga is that it hosts the happiness of all the characters, regardless of their gender, age, occupation, or intention. Throughout twelve volumes, there have not been any extreme dramas happening in the kitchen.

While many may see cooking as an uninteresting and heavy chore, Shirō considers it as the joy of his life, and the kitchen is his happy place. Once, in the living room, Shirō shouts at Kenji for murmuring his *uke* (bottom) sex role to a customer of Kenji's (Yoshinaga, 2014a, pp. 45-62). As Kenji bursts into tears and apologises to him, Shirō then turns away in guilt and replaces the little dramatic event with his joy of cooking, "Now!! Guess I'd better make dinner!!" (Yoshinaga, 2014a, p. 58). As finishing his final dish, Shirō comes to make a smile. Then, at the kitchen table, where they have dinner together, Kenji merrily compliments Shirō's food as if the fight had never happened.

It is sure that Shirō's kitchen is indeed an ideal version of reality, or at least, a nicer one. Nevertheless, it offers space for people to open up about their own stories, over his delicious 'mother-like' foods. At one dinner, Shirō tells Wataru and Kohinata that he intends to take Kenji to his parent's home for dinner the coming New Year's Eve (Yoshinaga, 2015b, pp. 3-19). The family meal or dinner is essential to the formation of a family unit in modern Japan. It is different from the pre-modern mealtime when gender and status are separated by the family members in different rooms and acted on as a way to strengthen the non-kin members in a community instead (Cwiertka, 2006). The modern family meal, especially on a special occasion like New Year's Eve, is somewhat exclusive to the closed circle of family members which "old and young, big and small gather in a happy circle and enjoy meal together" (as cited in Cwiertka, 2006, p. 92). Although

Shirō's parents have already known about Kenji and actually insisted he bring Kenji home, the decision of Shirō is rather an important one to all counters, his parents, Kenji, and especially Shirō himself. Coming out in Japan is uncommon and difficult, bringing a homosexual partner home is even rarer and extremely risky to some extent. Understanding the risk of such action, Wataru confronts Shirō right away:

Wataru: I'm not so sure about introducing lovers to our parents. Think about it. They were already shocked that you were gay. If they see your bearded lover on top of that, that's twice as shocking for them, no? After all, they just think gay are gross. It's not like they'll lose their prejudice against gays.

Shirō: Yeah. To be honest, I worried about the very same thing, but... I've been thinking about this a lot, wondering that my parents thought when they first learned that I was gay. And here's what I figure: I'm sure they must have thought that I was "an unfortunate child" when they learned that I was gay. And they might have blamed themselves, thinking there was something wrong in the way they raised me for me to have turned out this way. So... So it's not that I want them to learn what it means to be gays. I just want to show them that I'm not as unhappy as they think. That's why I want to bring Kenji. (Yoshinaga, 2015b, pp. 16-18)

Here, at the kitchen table, an essential conversation is made. In this piece, Yoshinaga, through Wataru, has again expressed her knowing of the rough life of the LGBT community in Japan. These people are considered a shameful minority, who have to find ways to understand themselves, comfort their families, and live among prejudices against their sexuality. Through Shirō, Yoshinaga has presented a new view upon this particular issue without sugar-coating or idealising Japan's gay life. At the kitchen table, there are conflicts to be resolved and progress to be made.

Moreover, as Suganuma (2015) points out, *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* seems to be the very first product in Japan's mainstream media that depicts the happiness of a same-sex couple in the domestic space. In his analysis of the depictions of the gay identity in the Asian movie culture, Berry (2000, 2001) asserts that a gay man seems to be the cause of domestic problems for he cannot fulfil the traditional hetero man's duty in a family. Therefore, gays are usually portrayed as unhappy and at the centre of family dramas

(Berry, 2000). Even when being portrayed as living by themselves, gay men in the Asian mainstream media seem to be condemned to be lonely and unhappy inside their homes, whereas their lives outside can be fun, glamorous and desirable (Berry, 2000). In contrast, *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* has never presented such sadness or loneliness but the familial happiness of Shirō and Kenji. The happiness in *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* is not only present in the all-gay household but also in a ‘normal’ household in which the gay men are just a part of the spectrum of gender dynamics, rather than being discriminated against and marginalised. However, it should not be assumed that reality’s homophobia is censored by these types of controversial familial happiness. It is instead present in the manga.

In an early chapter (Yoshinaga, 2014a, pp. 3-24), Shirō mentions that he accidentally came out to his parents in high school. The immediate result of that event was that his mother “fainted on the spot and was bedridden for three days” (Yoshinaga, 2014a, p. 20). Then, she “went straight out to join a new religious sect and bought some overpriced urn” (Yoshinaga, 2014a, p. 20) praying for Shirō to turn ‘normal’. However, after all that, Shirō’s parents come to not only accept that he is gay but also push him to embrace it by coming out in his workplace (though Shirō has not). In contrast to the majority mainstream media’s homosexuals whose parents would disown them for being gay (Berry, 2000, 2001), Shirō’s parents are happy whenever he comes over and celebrate the occasion with home-made delicious food. At one dinner (Yoshinaga, 2014e, pp. 117-133), when they are happily enjoying a meal with home-made *tonkatsu* (deep-fried pork cutlets), Shirō’s parents assert that:

The mother: We never make *tonkatsu* just with us two of us anymore. Too much work. I do crave for it once in a blue moon, though. We could have deep-fried food for the first time in a while because you came home, Shirō.

The father: In other words, you should come see us once in a while. (Yoshinaga, 2014e, p. 129)

The *tokatsu* in this context has become a tool which Shirō's parents employ to ask him to visit them more often, so they can have more happy meals of deep-fried foods. As they explain, elders are normally forced to eat tender and mushy foods which they despise, home-made deep-fried foods are their happiness for not only its tastiness and crunchy texture but also the presence of their gay son. Also, as Yoshinaga's work usually contains twists, after the meal, while Shirō's mother is packing the left-over *tonkatsu* for him to take home for Kenji, Shirō's parents burst into shouting that Shirō needs to bring Kenji home at the coming New Year's Eve since they are "pretty much married" and it is "common sense to introduce [one's] spouse to [one's] family" (Yoshinaga, 2014e, p. 132).

This is not only a comical way to end the dinner but also indicates a salient point in the way which Yoshinaga chooses to express her feminism:

I'm not sceptical of the institution of marriage, but my idea of feminism imagines a society that would see a woman endowed with the necessary financial independence to be able to leave her husband if she came to realise she'd made a mistake in marrying him. (as cited in Kim, 2016, p. 213)

Similar to the women who could possibly be independent of her husbands financially and recognised by Japanese society, homosexual identity and same-sex marriage are still a controversial topic. However, in both cases, Yoshinaga seems to assert that Japan's marriage institution is not necessary to be broken (as Shirō and Kenji are still considered as "pretty much married"). Nevertheless, it should be reviewed in order for reformation to take place (see Tamagawa, 2016).

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Figure 8.4. The *tonkatsu* dinner (Yoshinaga, 20142, p. 129)

This event leads to the conversation between Shirō and Wataru that was analysed earlier. During the New Year’s Eve dinner (Yoshinaga, 2015b, pp. 23-40), Shirō’s parents have been nervous and somewhat upset. It is then revealed that they were thinking that in a gay couple, it must have been one person who performed female impersonation. Since Kenji appeared to be all ‘manly’ in his male suit and bearded face, they were thinking that Shirō must have been the one who cross-dressed. As they find out that Shirō does not wear

women's clothes, they instantly become cheerful. This is not a straight kind of homophobia, but rather the false perception of the majority of Japanese towards the gay identity. Ishida (2007/2015) argues that this type of false myth about gays and LGBT in general is caused by the false representative in mainstream media, namely the show business and the BL manga industry. After the dinner with Shirō's parents, on the way home Kenji bursts into tears for being happy. Despite being afraid of being exposed to the public, Shirō gently pulls Kenji's head under his arm to comfort him. This rare intimacy between the two is caught by some pedestrians, whose homophobic comments are depicted by Yoshinaga without hesitation:

Ugh, gross!! Are they for real? Ew, ew, ew, ew, ew, ewww! Quit cuddling, you old geezers. Ugh, that shit makes me sick. I want fags to die!! Fuckin' die!! (Yoshinaga, 2015b, p. 40)

In *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* Yoshinaga has employed the home kitchen and dinner table to represent the exotic and controversial happiness of gay people in a more postmodern way. She has broken the normative of how gays are normally portrayed in Japan's mainstream media as unhappy and problematic (see Berry, 2000, 2001; Suganuma, 2015). However, instead of creating an ideal world for them to live as in many other BL manga by other artists, where homonormative is the new norm, Yoshinaga instead chooses to portray her characters through the hardship of coming-out and homophobia in the actual gay's life in modern Japan. The happy kitchen and dinner table becomes the space to resolve conflicts and mellow out any intensive discourse about one's gender and sexuality. However, *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* is still a fictional work and does not fully represent the reality, yet it does open a window into the life of a minority in which there are possibilities for familial happiness to take place.

CHAPTER 9. DISCUSSION

I. Introduction

This research's main purpose is to examine the relationship between food and homosexuality in Yoshinaga Fumi's manga in order to address the significance of her work. It asks what can be read in this relationship and how this relationship can contribute to a broader academic framework? Being guided by these two questions, this study has been built on the theoretical framework of gastronomy study, BL manga study (with an extent to gender study in contemporary Japan's context) illustrated in chapter two.

Food itself, according to Barthes (1961/2013), is "a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour" (p. 24). Barthes (1961/2013) asserts that different food represents different sociocultural groups, defined and constrained by their cultural and economic capital. In other words, the meaning which food, as a system of communication, carries is not fixed but it is socially and culturally constructed through repeating practices in a certain sociocultural and economic conditions. In this sense, homosexuality appears to follow the same logic of being constructed and reconstructed over time. Connell (1992) argues that homosexuality is not predetermined but produced through practices. This aligns with Butler's view on gender performance in which she claims that gender is constructed, or performed, through repeating a certain set of doing and thinking over time rather than predefined by biological sex (Butler, 1990). While studying food in a specific context can foster cultural understanding (Santich, 2007), investigating homosexuality in the contemporary context can "define possibilities and provide some models for major changes in the social relations of gender" (Connell, 1992, p. 749).

Localising these theoretical premises, there has been an increasing number of studies conducted in Japan. However, while food and homosexuality have been gaining attention

in recent years, for different political reasons, the relationship between these two subjects have rarely been touched. Food is important to Japan as a country 'national brand', therefore, studying its food culture is constrained politically (see Reiher, 2012). Homosexuality, on the other hand, is still a controversial topic for the mainstream media in discussing it politically (Tamagawa, 2016), although homosexual behaviours in Japan have a long and profound history (McLelland, 2000). The complicated nature of Japan's homosexuality can be found in the existence of BL manga, where male same-sex relationship is celebrated by (mostly) female authors and readers. Academics have been analysing this genre in relating to gender equality, homosexuality and social movement. However, only a few studies are interested in the relationship between food and homosexuality (see Cavcic, 2013; Aoyama, 2015; Suganuma, 2015).

Attempting to draw connection across academic fields (food, homosexuality, manga), this study chose to examine the relationship between food and homosexuality in BL manga works by Yoshinaga Fumi. Manga, the iconic comic of Japan, has been featuring food for several decades, but hardly before with radical gender consciousness, especially in a controversial genre like BL, as in Yoshinaga Fumi's manga work (Aoyama, 2015). Yoshinaga Fumi has been known as a BL manga artist, who not only is gender-conscious but also illustrates that consciousness in her manga through the depiction of food and cooking (Aoyama, 2015). Using the analysis of Yoshinaga's four manga series presented in previous chapters (four to eight), this chapter is set out to answer the two research questions:

1. What can be read in the relationship between food and homosexuality in Yoshinaga's manga works?
2. What is the significance of Yoshinaga's gastronomic BL manga in contributing to a broader academic framework of gastronomy, manga, and gender studies?

II. Reading Food in Yoshinaga's Fumi Boys Love Manga: Japan's Contemporary Discourse of Homosexual Masculinity and Gender Dynamics

In all four series, through the depiction of food and cooking, Yoshinaga has illustrated and discussed the diversity of masculinity and (homo)sexuality, a controversial issue to Japan's society. While homosexuals (*dōseiaisha*) and homosexual behaviours (*nanshoku*) have a long history in Japan, homosexual identity as a stand-alone identity, which also entails homosexual masculinity, is seen as strange, exotic and westernised in modern Japan (McLelland, 2000). The recognition of homosexual masculinity is far from the grasp of Japan's society, although discussing it has been less a taboo as it used to be (Tamagawa, 2016). With her own unique way, Yoshinaga Fumi has presented and discussed this complicated and controversial topic in her manga. Regarding the way gender and sexuality is discussed in Yoshinaga's manga in general, Mizoguchi (2010) asserts that Yoshinaga, during her career as a professional BL manga author for nearly three decades, "has undoubtedly gained such representational skills" (p. 165). In addition, Aoyama (2015) has emphasised the fact that Yoshinaga is 'openly feminist' which helps foster her gender consciousness presented in her manga in a unique way: through food.

In using food to discuss one's gender and sexuality, Yoshinaga has also employed different gendered ideologies constructed socially and culturally at the time of writing. This type of ideology has been referred to as myth by Barthes (1957/1991). According to Barthes (1957/1991), myth represents "a false nature" (p.157) and is used to naturalise what is popularly thought to be true but the truth itself. Treating homosexuality as gendered myths, perhaps there is no better illustration for it in the context of contemporary Japan than employing food and food practice. Food carries a communication in itself which constitutes it into a sign (Barthes, 1961/2013) in revealing one's identity (Brillat-Savarin, 1825/1994; Belasco, 2002, 2008; Santich, 2007; Anderson, 2014). Moreover, food and food practice in Japan is heavily gendered in

different ways at different times (Crowley, 2002; Traphagan and Brown, 2002; Cwiertka, 2006; Aoyama, 2008; Rath & Assmann, 2010; Rath, 2016). In her food, cooking, and dining depictions, Yoshinaga has continuously and intensively incorporated homosexual myths of the time of writing. Not to embrace them but to subvert them. In each character through their food choices and practices, Yoshinaga has presented a more dynamic reality in which different modes of gender and sexuality coexist and are constantly negotiate both intrinsically and extrinsically.

In *The Moon And The Sandals*, by domesticating the tall and muscular high school boy Kobayashi Koichi, Yoshinaga has subverted the gendered kitchen and the cooking men ideologies in Japanese culture (Aoyama, 2003, 2015). Albeit Kobayashi is not yet a fully-grown adult (except for the last two chapters of the thereafter stories), his figure denotes that although he is a male figure, he masters the ‘feminine’ cooking space – the domestic kitchen. Also, Kobayashi’s sexuality as a homosexual with the *seme* (top) sex role has made his cooking and caregiving nature even more complex.

Antique Bakery is not a BL manga but a *shōjo* (girl) manga which is so unusual that it discards the female protagonist and contains many BL elements instead. The use of the food-related setting (bakery and kitchen) as well as the food itself (cakes and desserts) is significant as Yoshinaga has employed and subverted many gendered myths upon her depictions to present an alternative reality. In this reality, rigid borders between categories in terms of genders and sexualities have been replaced by many complicated relationships. While Ono is himself a hub of many of these complicated relationships in questioning the meaning of homosexuality, the bakery becomes the environment in fostering such questions. Though Ono appears to be a successful pastry chef and also a legendary gay man who can seduce anyone he likes, by failing to make sense of his own actions, Ono has created a ‘not-as-it-seems’ sense in the whole series.

Considering that homosexuality is now discussed with less irritation and prejudice as it was before, Yoshinaga also adopts Japan's contemporary extension model of (homo)sexuality and masculinity in her latest manga, *What Did You Eat Yesterday?*. In this series, Yoshinaga does not place Shirō and Wataru against any of the old era's cooking men. The complexity of these characters' food/cooking and sexuality are expressed in a spectrum of diverse modes of masculinity and homosexuality. In Shirō's cooking, the thinking of what is to be expected of a man in contemporary Japan (either salaryman, herbivore man, lunchbox boy or gay) have all failed to recognise him and his gender performance (cooking). Shirō cooks and exists on his own terms, suppressed by his fear at being exposed but comfort in his own being. On the other hand, Wataru appears to be what stands for all the homosexual ideologies in Japan. Different from Shirō, Wataru appears to work hard in embracing his gay identity with the 'gay standard' which he seems to adopt from society. His food is carefully put together to be colourful and cute to convey his gayness. Through cooking, the manga is less about the representation of gay men in different platforms but more about the gay identity within themselves and towards gender dynamics in BL manga.

Not Love But Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy!, in addition, has a more salient point. What is significant is the way Yoshinaga employs delicious food in discussing gender equality and the hardship of the gay community in Japan. In the sense of Yoshinaga's feminism and gender consciousness (Aoyama, 2015; Kim, 2016), the consumption of delicious food appears to neutralise Japanese gendered myths and discriminative customs towards gay people (which are represented in the being of A-dō and his 'atmosphere' caused by the appearance of gays). Delicious food becomes the point in which gender equality, and more importantly, gender dynamics are served at its best, because "they all fall to the power of deliciousness" (Yoshinaga, 2010, p. 43).

Though food in Yoshinaga's manga seems to be delicious, it does not simply bring gastronomic pleasure and sexual orgasm as Cavcic (2014) asserted. Instead, the fetishisation of delicious food and sexuality represents a way which one can come to being aware of his gender and sexuality towards a more dynamic spectrum of sexuality and masculinity in modern Japan. Similar to what Parasecoli comments regarding the comic *Chew* in his study (2014), Yoshinaga's characters and their foods "question received wisdom about what being a man means, revealing the performative and relational nature of gender" (Parasecoli, 2014, p. 244).

III. Towards A Postmodern Condition of Gender and Sexuality in Japan Through Yoshinaga Fumi's Gastronomic Boys Love Manga

As discussed earlier, homosexuality in contemporary Japan is still a relatively controversial topic. Portraying the male-male relationship, BL manga, although being celebrated domestically and internationally in decades, have also been considered as 'exotic' and 'controversial'. Its readers, mainly women, are considered perverted and called '*fujoshi*' (rotten girls) (Nagaike, 2015). On the other hand, food is a regular and popular topic employed in manga. *Gurume* (gourmet) manga, an offspring of the *shōnen* and *seinen* genres (for young boys and men), has a long tradition of employing food as its main theme (Brau, 2004; Cavcic, 2013). Food in *gurume* manga is mostly used to convey the protagonist's dominant hetero masculinity (Cavcic, 2013). When food is depicted in BL manga, Yoshinaga's manga, in particular, Cavcic (2013) claimed that it acts as an erotic symbol which can bring orgasm through eating delicious food. However, this study argues otherwise. It has found that the combination of the exotic and controversial homosexuality and the ordinary and familiar food/cooking in Yoshinaga's manga act in a unique way in offering readers space for re-examining many homosexual myths in Japan. This is a step towards a new social condition which, according to Suganuma (2015), is postmodern for suggesting "alternative lifestyles and modes of

masculinities” (Suganuma, 2015, p. 88). Through her critical food and homosexual depictions, Yoshinaga has contributed to the broader scene of gastronomy, manga and gender studies in contemporary Japan by inspiring change, gradually but firmly and progressively.

1. Familiarising and understanding the exotic and controversial homosexuality through ordinary and familiar food

Gastronomy studies food in the wider sociocultural context to gain cultural understanding (Santich, 2007). This is made possible because food carries a set of sociocultural ideologies, known as myth (Barthes, 1961/2013) which signifies different meaning to different people accordingly (Barthes, 1957/1991). Homosexuality, according to Connell (1992, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2003), is a part of the masculinity and gender spectrum, whose expressions are suppressed by the dominant heterosexuality. In Yoshinaga's manga, it can be found that homosexuality, conveyed via food depiction, is treated as a 'different culture' to be understood through the reading of food. By employing daily and ordinary food, Yoshinaga has familiarised the exotic and controversial homosexuality to readers across genres and genders.

In *The Moon And The Sandals*, not only depicting Kobayashi in the domestic kitchen, but Yoshinaga also employs the iconic Japanese lunchbox in conveying such an exotic homosexuality element. Interestingly enough, at the end of the manga, Toyo finally comes out to his supervisor over a lunchbox made by his partner, Kobayashi.

In *What Did You Eat Yesterday?*, in every chapter, Yoshinaga depicts Shirō's cooking at his home kitchen or at his friend's one. Shirō's cooking is down to earth without any flamboyance (of Wataru's gay cooking) and has been his doing as a person rather than as a gay person. His cooking (and the lunchbox) is similar to Kobayashi's in the sense that it conveys the message of love and care in a way to which most people can easily relate.

While Shirō and Kobayashi' cooking is ordinary, what deems it to be exotic is the homosexual identity of these characters and their relationships. As discussed earlier, homosexuality in modern Japan is considered exotic and regularly not acknowledged by the majority in Japan, including those who are queer in nature but afraid to confess (like Toyo). In this sense, *The Moon And The Sandals* and *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* demonstrate a way in which Yoshinaga has employed the ordinary and the familiar to acquaint the exotic and controversial factors in her manga. Also, while Yoshinaga employs the Kobayashi and Shirō' 'mother-like' foods to familiarise the exotic homosexuality to the readers, the kitchen and the dinner table have given the process a boost for people who can identify themselves with such familiar settings.

More importantly, *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* (Yoshinaga's latest manga) does not feature any intense intimacy among the characters, unlike Yoshinaga's fully BL or *shōjo* manga. Love is expressed through Shirō's cooking as he sustains his relationship with Kenji through food and care. Yoshinaga seems to be very clever in using food and cooking to soften the tensions of the exotic BL (or homosexual) element through Shirō's ordinary cooking and the domestic kitchen setting.

Furthermore, Suganuma (2015) asserts that *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* is the first time in which happiness in a homosexual household is depicted in mainstream media. In *What Did You Eat Yesterday?*, not only is familial happiness portrayed in Shirō's life with Kenji but also in his parents' household which he goes to visit once in a while. Shirō has (accidentally) come out to his parents when he was in high school. Since then, they have slowly made peace with the poignant truth about his sexuality (in a comical way) which has been condemned by society in general. Homophobia is not missing from the manga, instead, it appears to remind the readers of the reality. The exotic familial happiness (through the commensal meal) are not used to censor homosexuality or homophobia issues but to offer a better view into the life of a minority in Japan. The power of the

ordinariness characteristic of food in this manga act as a bridging point, a way to make such exotic happiness familiar and relatable.

In *Antique Bakery*, although French pastries are considered exotic, the ordinary element lies in the daily work of the four main characters and the accessibility (daily supplied) of the pastries to the diverse 'casual' customers. Ono Yusuke, his homosexuality, as well as his pastries cannot be separated in the act of fetishising and consuming by the customers. However, he should never be confused with the homosexual representations in Japan's mainstream media where they are desired as an object of simplification and stereotype, neither should other characters in all four series.

2. Towards a Postmodern Condition of Gender and Sexuality

As discussed earlier in chapter four, Yoshinaga Fumi is 'openly feminist' (Aoyama, 2015; Kim, 2016). The author does not conform to mainstream feminism but argues for her own terms which, according to Kim (2016), is not moderated but radical. Kim (2016) assert that Yoshinaga's feminism does not diminish the harsh reality of women in Japan but acknowledges it thoroughly. Similarly, in her manga, the hardship of which gay people must bear is not censored either.

In all four manga, homophobia is apparent and relates closely to each character's food choice and practise. In the first two manga, homophobia is found mostly from the characters towards themselves rather than from outsiders. In *The Moon And The Sandals*, denying delicate and 'sensitive' foods, Toyo presents his fear and denial to his own sexuality. In *Antique Bakery*, Ono chose to be a pastry chef as he believes that the characteristics of pastries as sweet and delicate is a feminine job which would suit a gay man like him. In these characters, homosexuality is presented as a myth whereby the food they choose to consume to signifying their own sexuality. This is an internal and intrinsic process of signification through food consumption. On the other hand, in the other two

manga, both homophobia and signification through food consumption are external. In chapter four of *Not Love But Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy!*, A-dō explains to Y-naga the concept of ‘the atmosphere’ assumingly created by the appearance of male-male intimacy in public. In *What Did You Eat Yesterday?*, homophobia appears strongly and clearly. Homophobic passengers yell at Shirō and Kenji while Shirō is comforting Kenji on their way home from the New Year’s Eve dinner with Shirō’s parents. However, Yoshinaga does not employ homophobia to create drama in her manga. She instead offers an alternative postmodern lifestyle through the characters’ food and cooking. However, this view is not always apparent and clearly portrayed in all four manga but gradually shows over time.

In *The Moon And The Sandals*, Toyo is first in touch with his sexuality by consuming Kobayashi’s broccoli, which he once despised. Then through Kobayashi’s lunchbox which was mistaken by his supervisor as his girlfriend’s production, Toyo finally decided to come out at his workplace. In *Antique Bakery*, Ono has learned to make peace with his past and finally felt grateful for him to be a pâtissier and to work with Tachibana, who once rejected him cruelly. After Eiji and Chikage have left, rethinking about the time at Antique, Ono says, “I’m really grateful to you. Working in this shop is the first time I’ve ever felt glad that I became a pâtissier. That gladness is still not the same as being able to say that I honestly love this job... but I think that’s okay, too.” (Yoshinaga, 2006b, p. 219). In *Not Love But Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy!*, at the end of the dinner, Y-naga gives her apology to A-dō for her commodification and appropriation of gay identity. Through this, Yoshinaga in real life has expressed her point of view upon the ‘representative appropriation’ regarding the production of the BL genre in which no absolute solution is drawn from it but is a radical view of her own.

Significantly, in *What Did You Eat Yesterday?*, Shirō, even different from other gay cooking men in Yoshinaga’s other manga, does not either confront or conform to any

normative, hetero or homo. His freedom in cooking, not to be defined by any rule but of his own, represents his postmodern lifestyle in which gender dynamics are formed in a new BL culture, away from the old BL tradition. What Shirō performs, according to Suganuma (2015), perhaps embraces what Duggan (2003) defines as ‘new homonormativity’, in which the postmodern form of homosexuality “does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions... while promising the possibility of a demobilised gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticised gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (as cited in Suganuma, 2015, p. 96). Similar to Barthes’s assertion (1961/2013) that “food has a constant tendency to transform itself into situation” (p. 29), food in Yoshinaga bears the power to change the pre-established ideologies in society.

Unlike the majority of BL manga artists, Yoshinaga does not idealise, simplify or fetishise gay identity. In her manga, none of her characters possesses any supernatural power or non-human identity or an ideal homonormative life like in many other BL manga. They are living their mundane and ordinary lives in which food is at the centre. Their successes and failures are illustrated without censoring. Their stories entail both sadness and happiness as any ordinary person who deserved Yoshinaga’s telling in her effort of making her reader “understand the happiness that people can get from trying hard, going through the process, and being frustrated” (as cited in Toku, 2007, p. 29). Yoshinaga’s works have pushed the gender and sexuality discourse in Japan to a new phase in which a postmodern condition of one's freedom is sought through her depiction of food, cooking, and dining.

CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSION

I. The Research

The research purpose has been to examine the relationship between food/cooking and male homosexuality in Yoshinaga Fumi's contemporary gastronomic BL manga. It asked two questions:

1. What can be read in the relationship between food and homosexuality in Yoshinaga's BL manga?
2. Within the interdisciplinary academic framework of gastronomy, manga, and gender studies, what is the broader significance of Yoshinaga's work when employing food in the medium of BL manga?

The study first recognised Yoshinaga Fumi for her significant work as a BL *mangaka* (manga artist), someone who successfully employs food themes and homosexuality in her manga across genres, such as BL, *seinen* (for young men), and *shōjo* (for girls). It then discussed four of her manga in which the relationship between food and homosexuality is embodied strongly through each character's food choice and practice (cooking and dining).

Each of these manga was analysed and discussed by employing a semiotic analysis. Combining works by Saussure and Peirce, Barthes (1957/1991) defines semiotics as the study of signs. According to Barthes (1957/1991), a sign can be anything and composed by its signifier (appearance) and signified (meaning). A manga series is a text which is composed of many signs. Reading these manga entails reading the unique signs they contain.

In reading Yoshinaga's manga, this study chose to focus its reading on food as food itself and as its related practice. Barthes, too, has a great interest in food, for, as he claims, it is

“a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour” (Barthes, 1961/2013, p. 24). Not only is food a sign which is itself rich in appearance and meaning (Eagleton, 1998; Belasco, 2002, 2008), food in the context of Japan and manga incorporates many different layers of gendered significance (Aoyama, 2015). At an advanced level of signification where a complete sign becomes another sign’s signifier, and bears a different abstract meaning, myth appears (Barthes, 1957/1991). Yet myth is also ideological, in that it is created by the dominant sociocultural and economic conditions at the time of its creation and consumption (Barthes, 1957/1991). According to Aoyama (2008), food and gender, in the context of Japan’s sociocultural life, is closely related (see also Crowley, 2002; Traphagan & Brown, 2002; Cwiertka, 2006; Rath & Assmann, 2010; Rath, 2016). In terms of gender and sexuality, Yoshinaga has merged many homosexual myths with her depictions of food and cooking – hence the value for this study of Yoshinaga Fumi’s manga.

II. Yoshinaga’s Food, Cooking and Male Homosexuality

Food/cooking in Yoshinaga’s gastronomic BL manga foregrounds gender dynamics in which homosexuality and masculinity are expressed, conformed with, or confronted. In her manga, domestic cooking and dining are performances of not just the personal pleasure of consumption. Nor are they solely expressive of Japan’s food culture. In fact, they affect a political space for a conversation between gender and sexuality, a space where masculinity and femininity can be taken stock of. In each character’s food choice and practice, there are false myths about sexuality to be revealed and subverted. Further, food, including cooking and dining have gradually become expressive of a newer, postmodern freedom in which those characters’ beings are formed by their own doings. However, Yoshinaga does not create an ideal world for her characters, although the world in her manga is, in fact, a softer version in which conflict and debate are resolved one way or another. In her manga, the hardship of a gay man in Japan’s society is also

presented clearly and without censor. Nevertheless, employing the characteristic of *ke* food (daily, mundane) cooking, Yoshinaga's characters express a softer version of the controversial exotic intensity typifying homosexuality life. In her manga, food is home-made and 'mother-like', which helps to align the exoticness of homosexuality with domestic happiness. In addition, even exotic foods (i.e. French pastries or pancakes) are expressed as *kerage* (or mundane) through the way they are made, distributed, and consumed. In this way, what might have been considered strange now becomes desired in ordinary senses, although transformed via new gender norms and freedoms.

Not only are relationships in Yoshinaga's manga rich and diverse, the use of food and cooking in the BL genre to foster changes in society and to express her feminism is significant. For gastronomy is a study about the relationships food sustains in the fabric of life (Santich, 2007). Not only is food a way to sustain one's life, but it also expresses one's identity in the way it is prepared, consumed or perceived. Moreover, food, according to Barthes (1961/2013) holds the power to change the situation it exists within. As food, its political space and practice are heavily gendered in Japan through myths and norms, as such, food choice and practices can be considered a gender performance (see Butler, 1990, 1993) of one's doing and being. By subverting the false nature of homosexual stereotypes through food, Yoshinaga has presented a window able to look into the life of the LGBT community, but also a new model challenging existing gender dynamics. As homosexuality in her manga is contested, discussed, and negotiated via food, Yoshinaga no less combines happiness and sadness, provides conflict and their solution, offers pleasure and discomfort, and allows for challenge and compromise. In short, she pictures the everyday challenges of life for everyone.

III. The Gastronomic Mirror of Male Love

In the beginning was boy love.
Famous woman-haters of Japan.
Lectures on *The Record of the Origins of male love*
(Saikaku, 1687/1990, p. 51)

Writing about homosexuality in Japan, Saikaku Ihara's *The Great Mirror of Male Love* (*Nanshoku Ōkagami*), was originally published in 1687 and then later translated into English by Paul Gordon Schalow in 1990. While *The Great Mirror of Male Love* was a collection of male-male relationships depicting pre-modern Japan, the current BL manga series on the market can be considered, in contrast, as a collection of modern homosexual stories. These modern stories mirror an idealised and unrealistic reflection of the gay world in which homonormativity is presented at an extreme level. For instance, many of them, in depicting male love, have completely discarded the reproductive role of women. Yoshinaga Fumi's manga, on the other hand, present a more realistically recognisable version of modern Japan. In her manga, the issues of homosexual identity and gender dynamics map onto the complexity of food and cooking themselves. Male love, considered as pure and even sacred by the people of the Tokugawa era, is now domesticated and rendered commonplace in Yoshinaga's depiction of daily and ordinary food relations. Consequently, her gastronomic depiction offers a looking-glass through which readers see a more radical world, though not one that is idealised.

The mirror is a metaphor which is "held before us to allow and encourage a better understanding of ourselves through the study of others" (Robertson, 2005, p. 6). Similarly, this study argues that Yoshinaga Fumi's manga work could readily inherit the English title of Saikaku's much earlier book (1687/1990) – the *gastronomic mirror of male love*.

In addition, this study has also found that the gastronomic BL subgenre of Yoshinaga has functioned in its own way, distinguishing itself from the *gurume* (gourmet) manga in which hetero masculinity is regularly embraced, and the regular BL manga in which the controversial same-sex romantic and erotic relationships are focused on. Through Yoshinaga's depiction of food in her manga, homosexuality is foregrounded as a consequence of a move towards postmodern social conditions in which the freedom to all characters is opened up. This seems to point towards the early emergence of a new manga genre, although this needs to be investigated further in future research.

In the end, this research has no better way to conclude than to recite Yoshinaga's own statement about the path that she has decided to take:

I want to depict people who try very hard but don't make it. In boys' magazines people who try hard always win. That is not what I want. I want to show the people who didn't win, whose dreams didn't come true. It is not possible for everybody to get first prize. I want my readers to understand the happiness that people can get from trying hard, going through the process, and being frustrated. The job I got was with a Boys Love magazine, so I decided to show my philosophy through Boys Love. Boys' love stories deal with minorities. I show the pains of gays who can't fit in. Minorities have to deal with society before they can achieve happiness. (as cited in Toku, 2007, p. 29)

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