Female Eyes on Gay Guys
A study of female fans and their relation to slash fan fiction

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Abstract

This paper takes a look at the phenomenon slash fan fiction. Slash is a genre which often focuses on romantic and sexual relationships between same-sex characters, most of whom are men. It is not unusual that these characters are not homosexual in their original stories. The objective of this paper is to study why some women read and write slash fan fiction, with the focus on slash as a source of pleasure and as a source of identification. While the methodology employed is empirical, the theoretical framework consists of Henry Jenkins and Shoshanna Green as the main researchers on fandom and slash, and queer theory with Judith Butler as the main source. This is a rather small study, consisting of interviews with only four women. The findings suggest that the participants at times do identify with the different characters in slash stories, however they do more frequently take pleasure in just being a bystander and being able to experiment with the gender stereotypes regarding men.

Key words: slash, fan fiction, identification, pleasure, queer theory
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**Introduction**

What is a “fan” considered to be? The expression refers to a fan being a probable fanatic of someone else, meaning that provided there are celebrities, there will be fans who are admiring and enjoying their work. It is also implied that traditionally fans are seen as obsessed, there are however many kinds (Jenson 10). No matter what kind of fan one might be, a large platform for them is the Internet. It provides a stage for large amounts of texts, photos, drawings and other media created by dedicated fans with inspiration from television shows, movies and books. *Star Trek, Twilight* and *Doctor Who* are just a few examples of fans’ targets as they want to feed their favourite fandom with new material to share and enjoy with each other. Plenty of these narratives are love-themed and the majority are written and read by females (Cumberland 261). Fans pair characters together and put them into situations of their own desire; even characters of the same sex are put together, in many cases men who in their original story generally are not homosexual. This phenomenon is referred to as *slash*, which I will discuss more later on as it will be a central concept. The earliest example of this is the fan-pairing1 of *Star Trek*’s James Tiberius Kirk and Spock, the first example of slash fiction published in 1974, in the third issue of fanzine2 *Grup* (Boyd 10). However, fan fiction itself is argued to have emerged earlier, in the shape of literary parodies and sequels to works of Jane Austen, Arthur Conan Doyle and Harriet Beecher Stowe, among others (Cumberland 261).

Posting fan fiction online is stated to have been established as early as 1991, though mainly through emails, making the circulation of slash fan fiction relatively small (Boyd 13). Looking at the fiction written and uploaded on the popular site FanFiction.net, the stories

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1 Characters paired together, as a couple or similar.

2 Also known as “’zines” – fan fiction dispersed in self-published newsletters or magazines (Harris 8).
seem to vary from general, light-weighted romance, “fluff” as some fans describe it, to quite serious erotic BDSM. It is also easy to find narratives or art for almost any book or show.

It is important to emphasise that there are just as many different genres in fan fiction as in ordinary, original literature. However, this essay will cover the genre of slash. Slash can be defined as one of the most prevalent and distinctive genres of fan writing, often focused on romantic and sexual relationships between same-sex characters, most of whom are men (Green et al 9). The aim of this paper is to study why women write and read slash fan fiction. This means looking at the possibility of female pleasure from interacting with slash and their probable or improbable identification with the male characters. Hence, the more specific objective of this paper is to investigate whether female fans tend to identify with the male characters they read and/or write about in slash fan fiction, if they interact with slash only for pure pleasure or if they do both. I have chosen to speak with fans who are or have been active slash readers and writers. My objective has been to not focus on a specific genre within the slash literature, but to conduct more profound interviews with fans. This data will also be compared with existing empirical studies, though with more focus on identification and pleasure than the other studies I have come across.

Earlier studies have focused on both slash as a genre as well as why straight women write stories about gay men. In the latter case, there has been some discussion about whether slash is a heterosexual appropriation of queerness or not, which Green and her colleagues disagree with and claim that both lesbian and bisexual women have always participated along with straight women in slash fandom. Rather than appropriation, Green and her colleagues claim that slash is a common ground for fans of every sexual orientation to explore and share their differences as well as commonalities (11). The material I have gathered is not enough to

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3 Fan slang for lightweight romance, such as snuggle and hugs.
4 Bondage and discipline, sadism and masochism.
5 The participants in the interviews have however chosen to talk to some extent about fan fiction of manga (which in itself consists of numerous of genres).
come to any generalizable conclusions, however I am interested in examining whether my
data corroborates this or not. Rather than solely focusing on the sexual perspective of slash
fiction, I wish to highlight any possibilities of identification or pleasure in relation to the
subject.

In her article, “Male Pair-Bonds and Female Desire in Fan Slash Writing”, Mirna
Cicioni examines the desire among women to write slash fiction (153-178). Sharon
Cumberland also takes a closer look at the female interest in fan fiction erotica in her study
“Private Uses of Cyberspace: Women, Desire and Fan Culture”. Her main focus is on ‘het’
(heterosexual fiction), ‘alt’ (lesbian fiction) and slash (homoerotic fiction). The latter, she
concludes, is by far the largest genre (272). Green, Jenkins and Jenkins give a brief
introduction to the study of slash writing in the article “Normal Female Interest in Men
Bonking: Selections from The Terra Nostra Underground and Strange Bedfellows”. They
argue that slash as a genre is dealing with complex situations, such as breaking traditional
sexual values and gender norms (36). These three studies form the foundation of my
discussion and I will compare them to the results presented later in this paper to clarify
whether the results are similar or different from their findings. While Green, Jenkins and
Jenkins in general will provide the perspective of queer texts produced by female fans, Judith
Butler’s queer theory will be applied in the analysis of the data generated from the fans I will
interview.

**Theoretical framework**

This paper will utilise a queer point of view, analysing and looking more closely at the results
presented later in this essay. The main focus will be on queer theory’s perspective on gender
roles, gender identities and sexuality. I will also try to explain the outcomes by comparing the
data to Butler’s ideas about how gender is performed as she argues that there are binary
hierarchal gender norms in place, and, if there is any, the possible identification between the female writers and/or readers and the male characters depicted in slash fan fiction.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word “queer” in the following way: “The word queer was first used to mean ‘homosexual’ in the early 20th century: it was originally, and usually still is, a deliberately offensive and aggressive term when used by heterosexual people”. This is followed by the history that, in recent years, the word has been reclaimed by gay people in an attempt to deprive it of its negative power. Queer theory is more or less designed to speak about sexuality and gender in society; it accommodates ideas such as how sexual identities do not necessarily need to be fixed. David Halperin offers a wider definition of the term by stating that “queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence” (Halperin 62). In other words, queer can be seen as a sort of umbrella term, covering perspectives and gender identities which may differ from the norm.

Butler argues that genders are flexible and free-floating, that gender is a performance and it is what you do at particular times, rather than a universal who you are (Butler 177). She also suggests that current cultural configurations of gender have come to seem natural in our society, but that it is not necessary for it to be that way. By choosing to put on a gender performance which differs from others, it is possible to change the norms which are controlling gender today (179). Butler also states that sex possibly is the cause of gender, in other words male/female creates masculine/feminine. This causes desire towards the other gender – a kind of a continuum which Butler seeks to break in order to let gender and desire be free and flexible (151). The reason why this perspective of queer theory might be of importance is because of the probable results of the data – is it norm breaking to enjoy reading/writing about gay men in fan fiction? How does gender hierarchy relate to female fans and their interest in slash fiction? Is it a way for women to explore sexuality as part of
their identity and/or for pleasure? This might also be relevant seeing as how fan fiction writers at times tend to experiment with the characters they are writing about, such as changing their behavior from what is typically masculine to a more feminine image. Additionally, it is interesting to look at it as some male characters maintain their archetypal masculine manners and reactions in slash, and yet female readers might identify with them.

In the article “Normal Female Interest in Men Bonking”, Green and her colleagues conduct interviews with several slash writing fans. Among the fans quoted in the article it is easy to define a few perspectives which differ somewhat from one another:

1. There are fans who tend to identify with male characters, rather than female, due to the lack of strong/interesting women who do not use their beauty or seduction to overcome situations.

2. Slash is a result of how women watch television and shape responses to the conventional representation of male sexuality.

3. Some fans reject the idea of identification with the characters and claim their interest in slash to be based on a pleasure of having authorial control over sexy male bodies.

4. Other fans embrace the thought and possibility of rewriting masculinity, breaking the norms and letting the male characters be soft and express emotions as well as intimacy (16-19).

These perspectives will be compared to the interviewed women’s opinions and point of views concerning slash, to distinguish similarities and differences with other studies.

Henry Jenkins will be frequently referred to as he has conducted several studies within the field of fandom and authored books such as Theorizing Fandom and Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture, as well as a number of articles in anthologies regarding fan culture. Jenkins claims that “Star Trek’ fan writing is a predominantly feminine response to mass media texts, with the majority of the fanzines edited and written by women
for a largely female readership” ("Textual Poachers" 214). Jenkins’ statement may concern a very specific fandom, but nonetheless, this can potentially be applied to most fandoms nowadays, which are made up of far more than merely Star Trek fans. The predominant genre which has been studied is however science fiction.

**Method**

The chosen method is interviews which aimed to be open/unstructured, and where the participants were encouraged to speak about what they find important regarding the topic of slash and female reading/writing of slash. The participants are four young women from the youth coalition Ichiban in Växjö, Sweden. Anna, Bianca, Celia and Diana are 18-25 years old and have been writing and reading fan fiction since their early teenage years. I reached out to Ichiban and its members through their Facebook group (before it was replaced by a Facebook page instead), and asked for volunteers to interview, along with a brief explanation of my study. After being contacted by the women mentioned, I proceeded with giving them further information and a short abstract of what type of questions I would be asking them. Some of them I met personally, while others preferred to keep contact by email. The interview questions, both oral and written, were asked in a way that in the majority of cases demanded more developed answers than only “yes” or “no”:

- What kind of fan fiction do you usually read and/or write?
- When you read and/or write slash fan fiction – do you identify with one of the characters or do you consider yourself an observer standing on the side-line? How and why?

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6 The participants were chosen from the youth organisation Ichiban – Japanese culture and subculture in Växjö – as fans of Japanese culture and subculture are often, but not always, related to the world of fan fiction and other fan-created art.
Does it matter that the characters are male? In what way?

Why do you think slash is the largest genre among fan fiction writing and reading?

Do you think erotic slash fan fiction might be popular because it is written text and not film?

They were also informed that they are allowed to cancel their participation at any time and that pseudonyms will be used to ensure their anonymity. Revealing the name of the youth organisation has been judged not to compromise anonymity as there are many members in the organisation and anyone is welcome to join.

The analysis was done by transcribing the oral interviews and then combining them with the written interviews, followed by a close reading of the comments while looking for key words such as identification, pleasure, sex, as well as motives as to why they read and write slash.

I would like to emphasise that this paper may appear quite binary-oriented regarding gender, as it focuses on fans identifying as females and their view on fictional gay characters. Queer theory and Butler argues the existence of a broader, non-binary gender spectrum, however, this perspective will not be discussed in this particular paper. Nevertheless, Butler also brings up perspectives of gender hierarchy, desire, sex and sexuality, among others, which will be of use in this paper.

Slash as a source of pleasure

In this section I will discuss how the participants view slash from a private angle, as a source of pleasure. All of the four participating fans suggest that fan fiction is an excellent method to play around with ones’ favourite characters, by putting them in situations of your own liking, as if playing and making creations in a personal sandbox. Bianca\(^7\) also states that to write fan

\(^7\) As earlier mentioned, all participants have had their names changed to pseudonyms
fiction and receive peer-reviewing has been important for her self-confidence; it has improved her writing skills and inspired her to take her writing further, as she wishes to work with journalism in the future.

As to why they are interested in homoerotic narratives, Bianca replies that it is, to begin with, a break from the heteronormativity which she believes exists in society. She also sees it as a forbidden fruit, as many men she has met in real life tend to be rather afraid about expressing themselves in a way that could be interpreted as stereotypically homosexual; they distance themselves from gay themed acts (hugs and closeness between men), literature etcetera. Butler emphasises the inequality between genders, sexual orientation and similarly mentions heterosexuality as the dominant and normative frame discourse multiple times in her texts, at times mentioning different kinds of sexual taboos in societies where heterosexuality (incest excluded) remains the permitted union (92-93). Within this union a gender hierarchy can be seen between the male and the female, and each one is expected to act according to their gender – men acting in ways branded as gay can be considered deviants (177-178).

Anna argues that fan fiction gave her an alternative to the usual, heteroerotic fiction, and emotionally she found it both exciting and stimulating. She also says that she was surprised at how large this phenomenon is; people value homosexuality and honour it in the form of, among other things, fiction. Anna also believes that fan fiction, particularly the ones with homosexual content, fulfil a need among young adults. According to her there are those who wish that the norms in society were different and more like the ones which can be found in different fandom and fan communities, that people are equally accepted no matter who they are, where they come from or who they love.

Both Bianca and Celia continue that it feels somewhat taboo to read and write slash, not entirely able to pinpoint as to why that is. Their own theory is that they have grown up with only heterosexual love stories, and therefore have not been exposed to other sorts of
sexual unions. This is much like the concept of the heterosexual matrix which Butler
discusses, the dominant idea that a person primarily desires someone of the opposite sex (63).
The participants argue that the characters people write slash about often already have
established relationships with each other, such as being close friends, for example. In such
cases, going from ‘bromance’\textsuperscript{8} to sexual interaction does not seem like such a big step.

When it comes to emotional pleasure involving homoerotic fan narratives, it is not only the feeling of it being forbidden that is present; Bianca states that reading this kind of fan fiction gives her porn she desires, and the more realistic it is, the better. Bianca also says that she sometimes craves the feelings of an emotional rollercoaster, and satisfies this need by reading dramatic fan fiction ranging from angst to love. Curiosity is a key feeling as well, according to Bianca and Celia, regarding whether the interesting characters could pull off having a relationship; what would happen if they had sexual intercourse? These are subjects not always suitable for television, film or other media, which makes fan fiction a way of satisfying the curiosity without exposing it to those who are not receptive to such content. It also creates a common ground in which they share it with other fans who are interested and curious.

Diana states that she considers fan fiction to be her way of knowing more about the characters she has come to know in her favourite television show, manga, literature or other genres. If there is something lacking in the canonical story\textsuperscript{9}, if her favourite character is not getting enough screen time, she searches for fan fiction revolving around this character. Otherwise she creates a story about that character herself:

In one of my favourite manga, my favourite character is not any of the main ones nor is he one of the popular. In Japan the fans often get to vote on their favourite, and thus the most popular ones are more likely to appear in the manga, so my favourite does

\textsuperscript{8} A brotherly/sibling-like love between two men.
\textsuperscript{9} Canonical/canon story – term used among fandoms, meaning “original story”
not get as much attention as the others. I also thought he had a special bond with his male friend, in the manga, as it was told in the story that they had always been together as they went to school together, but their story was not developed further.

As Anna could not find any slash fiction that further developed the relationship she wished to read about, she simply started writing her own story and shared it with other fans. And thus giving life to a desired relationship and satisfying the female fans’ eagerness for knowledge and curiosity concerning, for instance, their favourite characters from a book or a TV show. They do not let the canon story stop the story from progressing, quite the opposite, they often use it as a foundation to construct further on relationships and situations, letting the characters develop further outside their original storyline.

Additionally, Anna believes that female fan-writers are filling a gap regarding porn content; she argues that if you enter a sex shop, you will find regular, heterosexual porn, lesbian porn and maybe a small amount of gay porn. Furthermore, Anna also considers this to be a reason as to why erotic/homoerotic fan fiction is read and enjoyed; she believes that what women like about homoerotic fan fiction is that they get romance, storyline, actual dialogue and eroticism without having to compare themselves to a female character: how the female character acts, what they look like, how they dress and so on. Instead, the women can stand on the side-line and observe men loving men, potentially objectifying them. This is something Bianca also relates to, as she explains that watching a porn scene with a woman in it makes her feel pressured to be like the woman, while slash does not put those expectations on her as she can more easily take on an objective perspective on the situation. The interviewed fans argue that because the pornographic arena is mostly made for the male gaze, slash fan fiction might then be an instrument of levelling the gender hierarchy concerning pleasure. The perspective of the onlooker is also encountered in Green’s study of slash fans – there seem to be fans who have an interest in having authorial control over male bodies which they find attractive (19).
Bianca states that the anonymity of reading fan fiction is a positive aspect. Though her fiancé does not question her interest in slash, she sometimes has a bit of trouble to “unleash her inner slash-monster” when she is around him, making her wait until he is busy playing computer games before picking up the laptop. Both Bianca and Diana point out that it is easy to hide away slash fan fiction as it barely takes any space in the computer, and completely none if they only read it online, and if people passing by glance at their screen they will only see that wall of text, no visual scenes as with pornographic films. Anna adds to this by claiming that written erotic stories are easier to justify than erotic films: “It is still difficult for people to talk about what turns you on, and in which media, without people looking down on you”. She states that written erotic narratives only concern the writer of the story and whoever chooses to read it, which lets the writer do anything they want without having to pay any regard to actors and reality. The interviewed women state that they mostly take the position of being a spectator, watching “their” boys enter situations, relationships and fantasies of their own desire. Smith writes about how one of the women she interviewed, regarding porn for women, found gay porn more arousing as it allowed the reader to enjoy men: “Gay pornography ‘allows’ Laura to enjoy men enjoying sex because it is not tainted, for her, by associations with male power over her” (147). The women enjoying slash or other gay pornography may find it appealing to not have a female body to compare their own to, but solely focus on what they appreciate – male characters/bodies and their relationship to other men.

Furthermore, both Bianca and Celia believe that erotic fan fiction could be suited for people to learn about sex, as well and discovering their own sexuality in a safe manner, suggesting that the reader herself might visualize imagery and only take it to an extent she feels safe with. This is a point of view I have not encountered in my secondary sources, and would therefore be interesting to perhaps look further upon in another study.
Slash as a source of identification

In this section, I take a closer look at the aspect of identification in relation to slash fan fiction. Regarding whether they identify with the characters or not, all of the women participating in these interviews claim that they generally do not identify with the male characters, however it happens occasionally. They appreciate the fact that they can stand on the side-line and observe the male characters engaging in various situations, relationships and fantasies of their own desire, a bit like playing some kind of god or a child in a sandbox. Nevertheless, they do at times imagine themselves being in the situation of one of the males, albeit it seems it is more common to not identify with them. Diana argues that she mainly is a spectator when she reads slash, much like the other women in this paper. Nevertheless, there are times when she imagines herself being one of the characters. Much like visual porn, slash can act as porn and she states that it does occur that she puts herself in the position of one of the male characters. In Diana’s case she prefers taking on the role of the dominant participant of the slash relationship, to some extent because she considers herself a dominant person and also likes the thought of a man not always being a *seme*, a giver, but a receiver. Similarly, Butler discusses gender hierarchy, which is frequently explained as a binary relation between masculine and feminine, masculine being on the top of the hierarchy. Instead of a body simply “being” a gender Butler contemplates the gender as an “act”, a performance with punitive consequences – those who fail to do their gender correctly are punished (177-178). It could be suggested that Diana in this case fails to “do” her gender right; she instead performs an act that differs from the constituted gender norms. Diana does not say so explicitly, nonetheless she seems aware of her own deviation from the norms as she acknowledges the difference between dominant, *seme*, and submissive, *uke*.
Anna states that whenever she watches a porn film, she is a spectator and does not automatically identify with the woman in the film, if she identifies with anyone at all. Depending on what happens in the film, or how Anna feels, she relates differently to the different persons who participate. Her attitude towards identification when reading fan fiction is the same. Bianca says that if it is something that fulfils her own fetishes, she can relate to it and more easily put herself in the shoes of the character that best fits her own sexual orientation. She personally likes to both practice and receive power play (referring to physical strength, mental advantage etcetera), and whenever she gets her hands on well-written slash with these elements, Bianca finds it easier to identify with one of the characters.

What effect does the fact that the characters are men have on the women? Anna argues that it is of no importance to her:

The situation is more important to me than the gender of the person I identify with, and the personal attributes. A woman can be the driving force, but if you look at heteronormative eroticism, this is seldom the case, so long as you not look up femdom\textsuperscript{10}. […] Regarding seme\textsuperscript{11}/uke\textsuperscript{12} it is the same reasoning there, however I want to clarify that I really do not like the heteronormative slash fan fiction, where you simply make a very manly seme and make the uke into a ‘typically female’ character, only difference is that she had a penis instead of a vagina. Again, I have a hard time to relate to that 100 % submissive, naïve and totally non-driving character. It does not matter what gender it is.

Anna continues that there are uke characters with what she describes as ‘driving force’, who make demands and who take up the initiative – characters who are not being exclusively passive and/or submissive. In those cases Anna feels she can identify with that character. She

\textsuperscript{10} Female dominated sadomasochism (BDSM)
\textsuperscript{11} Derivation from the Japanese word "semeru" meaning “to attack”, used in fandoms to define the dominant person in a relationship
\textsuperscript{12} Derivation from the Japanese word “ukeru” meaning “receive”, used in fandoms to define the submissive person in a relationship
argues that it might be because she sees power configurations in relationships as much more complex than only the power of penetration, which she believes many slash fan fiction put too much focus on: the general consensus seems to be that the one who penetrates has the power. This could be considered to be traditionally heteronormative.

Bianca, however, believes that it does matter if the character is a man, especially if she is imagining herself in the role of the receiver, as she as a reader has learnt that the man is the one who is expected to be dominant and that reading this kind of fiction is some sort of taboo. Bianca adds that she would most likely put herself in the position of the *uke*, since she mainly has heterosexual experiences and therefore mostly can identify as the person being “taken”, and additionally she finds herself being more of the submissive kind. However, Bianca states that she may also identify with the *seme*, but she argues that slash generally seems to describe the story from the point of view of the *uke*.

Fans do also seem to create new norms which reside within the different communities, which Anna points out: she believes that fan fiction, particularly fan fiction with homosexual content, fulfils a need among young adults who wish for different standards in society. The fact that the norms of fan communities can differ from the norms of the larger society is not new: Jenkins writes that it is the fan community which shapes the norms found in fannish productions (50 & 90).

However, there are times them the young women do identify with one of the male characters in slash fiction. It could be in sexual situations or simply identifying with a character being on an emotional roller-coaster. Anna clearly states the cases which she imagines herself being one of the male characters: she cannot identify with a submissive, naïve character as it is not in her nature to be like that and she dislikes it. Meanwhile, Bianca argues that, from experience, she knows that position the best and therefore it is easier to imagine the typical *uke* part.
The young women state that they feel a freedom in the slash fan fiction while it is somewhat taboo, that the norms of the society are not necessarily the same in the fan communities. Butler seeks to unravel the links supporting the current norms concerning cultural gender identity (187), while in slash fan fiction, and likely in alt fiction as well, these norms seems to have already been changed or the stereotypical gender roles do not carry the same weight, at least according to some fans. Yet there still appears to be a distinct dominant and submissive part in many of the slash constellations.

Jenkins, as earlier mentioned, states that fannish productions on the other hand are shaped through the norms of society (50 & 90), and therefore often reflect the gender configurations and identities which the fans encounter in their everyday life. Perhaps the reality is somewhere in between; while the women I have spoken to aim to bend and blur the stereotypical gender lines, they are still affected by the norms they have encountered while growing up in modern day Sweden. The seme/take relationships are similar to what Butler says about traditional hierarchy among heterosexual unions. Nonetheless, there does appear to exist a will among the interviewed women to challenge the traditional roles.

Based on the perspectives of the result, slash fan fiction could to some extent be seen as a sanctuary for women who want to help themselves to pleasure in the literary world, as most of the commercial world of pornography seems to distinguish men as their central audience. “Regardless of numbers, however, there is no doubt that women benefit from the ability to explore their erotic fantasies on the Internet, and to share them with enthusiastic and supportive ‘sister’ writers,” states Cumberland. This is because women are given a space where they may explore various topics, such as women’s status in society and blurred stereotyped gendered lines, in a safe zone (265). Even though there may be occasional feuds, there seems to be a common consensus among the writers that criticism should be constructive and phrased in supportive, non-hurtful language. By having a supportive and
nurturing community, more fans gain the confidence to write and develop their ideas and talents, thus keeping the fan fiction community alive and allowing (Jenkins 165).

**Conclusion**

By analysing Jenkins, Green and the data with the help of Butler and queer theory it can be concluded that fans in some cases tend to identify with the characters in slash fan fiction. Still, the most vocalised subject was “pleasure”, whereas identification with the male characters stood back as less common though existent. The slash-interested fans have found an arena where they openly can participate in communities, discuss, read and write about the pleasure of sexy male bodies, much like men dominate the typical pornographic scene. Yet it does seem as if though traditional gender roles keep living on in the fiction, given that the participants identify two accentuated roles – the dominating *seme* and the submissive *uke*. These roles does not seem to differ much from the heteronormative gender hierarchy that the women want to change. On the other hand the male *uke* could be interpreted as a man who defies acting his gender in such ways that heteronormativity traditionally has demanded. This could possibly be seen as a step towards loosening the normative gender roles.

What the women here have said about fan fiction and feelings can be related to the statements of Susan L. Feagin, about how fictional literature in general is often trying to provide some sort of knowledge for the readers: “what it is like to be in a certain kind of situation, or to be a certain kind of person, or [...] what it is like to have a particular kind of experience or emotion” (59). This could probably be said about original fiction as well as fan-written narratives; the writers are occasionally trying to calm the readers’ thoughts or let them
experience something. In this regard slash seems to be similar to any kind of fiction as it contains the potential for identification.¹³

Further perspectives which could be of interest in future studies would be slash, or perhaps fiction in general, as a source of sexual education, which was an unexpected viewpoint mentioned in the data. It would also be interesting to investigate the area of fiction from a non-binary point of view as well as fiction where the characters undergo so called “genderbending”¹⁴.

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¹³ Slash may bring up subjects such as love, death, unrequited feelings, sexual pleasure, everyday life – much like most other fiction might.

¹⁴ Characters who are male in the canon story, but changed in fan fiction to being born with female genitalia instead and vice versa.
Works cited


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**Additional sources**

Interviews with Anna, Bianca, Celia and Diana on 23/2-13, 14/4-13 and 16/4-13

**Further reading about fiction and emotion**