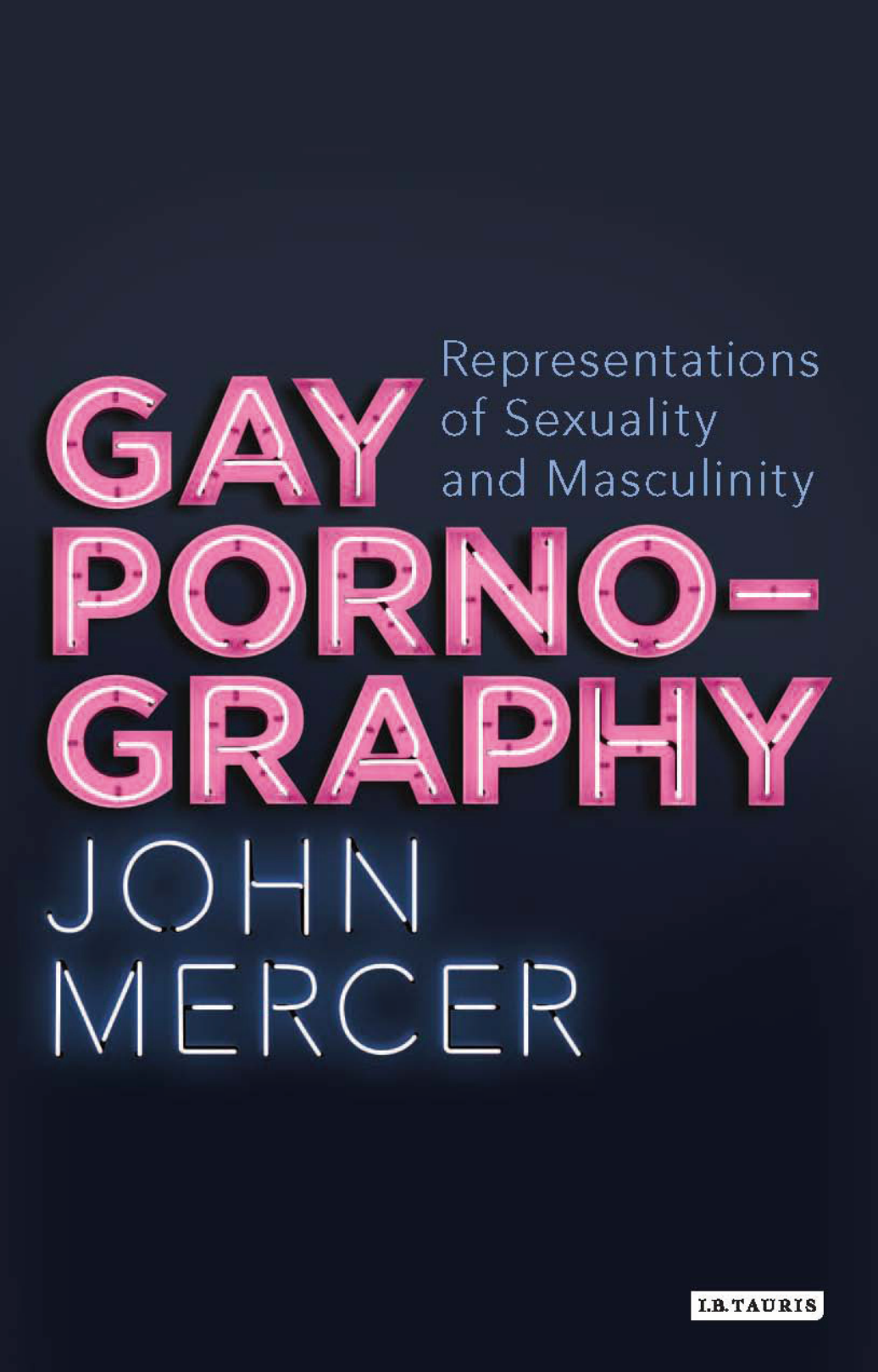
GAY PORNO-GRAPHY
Representations of Sexuality and Masculinity
JOHN MERCER
I.B.TAURIS

John Mercer is Professor in Gender and Sexuality at the Birmingham School of Media, Birmingham City University.

'Mercer's book is dense and erudite, bedazzling in its connoisseurship, rich in the detail of case studies that ring a clear bell or make you wonder how you missed *that* one, as witty as it is weighty. Discerning contemporary gay porn – or any porn for that matter – through the "vortex" of "saturated masculinity" turns out to be immensely productive. It's all here, all of the inhabitants of the pornosphere from the 1970s celluloid twink to the 21st-century postporn amateur "care bear" virtual daddy, situated carefully in the astutely defined dynamics of fantasy and sociality that keep them all alive. Mercer's central place in the still-proliferating field of porn studies across the board is guaranteed.'

—Thomas Waugh, Professor of Film Studies, Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema, Concordia University

'Hugely impressive, the most interesting thing I've read on these areas for years; it will be enormously helpful for scholars of pornography and a real gift to students.'

—Feona Attwood, Professor of Cultural Studies, Communication and Media, Middlesex University

Library of Gender and Popular Culture

From *Mad Men* to gaming culture, performance art to steam-punk fashion, the presentation and representation of gender continues to saturate popular media. This new series seeks to explore the intersection of gender and popular culture, engaging with a variety of texts – drawn primarily from Art, Fashion, TV, Cinema, Cultural Studies and Media Studies – as a way of considering various models for understanding the complementary relationship between 'gender identities' and 'popular culture'. By considering race, ethnicity, class, and sexual identities across a range of cultural forms, each book in the series will adopt a critical stance towards issues surrounding the development of gender identities and popular and mass cultural 'products'.

For further information or enquiries, please contact the library series editors:

Claire Nally: claire.nally@northumbria.ac.uk
Angela Smith: angela.smith@sunderland.ac.uk

Advisory Board:

Library of Gender & Popular Culture

Published and forthcoming titles:

Ageing Femininity on Film: The Older Woman in Contemporary Cinema
Niall Richardson
All-American TV Crime Drama: Feminism and Identity Politics in Law and Order: Special Victims Unit
Lisa Cuklanz and Sujata Moorti
Beyoncé: Celebrity Feminism in the Age of Social Media
Kirsty Fairclough-Isaacs
Female Bodies and Performance in Film: Queer Encounters with Embodiment and Affect
Katharina Lindner
Framing the Single Mother: Gender, Politics and Family Values in Contemporary Popular Cinema
Louise Fitzgerald
Gay Pornography: Representations of Sexuality and Masculinity
John Mercer
Gender and Austerity in Popular Culture: Femininity, Masculinity and Recession in Film and Television
Helen Davies and Claire O'Callaghan (Eds)
The Gendered Motorcycle: Representations in Society, Media and Popular Culture
Esperanza Miyake
Gendering History on Screen: Women Filmmakers and Historical Films
Julia Erhart
Girls Like This, Boys Like That: The Reproduction of Gender in Contemporary Youth Cultures
Victoria Cann
Love Wars: Television Romantic Comedy
Mary Irwin
Masculinity in Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema: Cyborgs, Troopers and Other Men of the Future
Marianne Kac-Vergne
Paradoxical Pleasures: Female Submission in Popular and Erotic Fiction
Anna Watz
Positive Images: Gay Men and HIV/AIDS in the Popular Culture of 'Post-Crisis'
Dion Kagan
Queer Horror Film and Television: Sexuality and Masculinity at the Margins
Darren Elliott-Smith
Queer Sexualities in Early Film: Cinema and Male-Male Intimacy
Shane Brown
Shaping Gym Cultures: Body, Image and Social Media
Nicholas Chare
Steampunk: Gender and the Neo-Victorian
Claire Nally
Television Comedy and Femininity: Queering Gender
Rosie White
Television, Technology and Gender: New Platforms and New Audiences
Sarah Arnold
Tweenhood: Femininity and Celebrity in Tween Popular Culture
Melanie Kennedy

Gay Pornography

Representations of Sexuality and Masculinity

JOHN MERCER

I.B. TAURIS
LONDON · NEW YORK

Published in 2017 by
I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd
London • New York
www.ibtauris.com

References to websites were correct at the time of writing.

Library of Gender and Popular Culture 16

ISBN: 978 1 78076 517 4 (HB)
ISBN: 978 1 78076 518 1 (PB)
eISBN: 978 1 78672 091 7
ePDF: 978 1 78673 091 6

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
A full CIP record is available from the Library of Congress

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: available

Typeset by Out of House
Printed and bound in Great Britain by T.J. International, Padstow, Cornwall

Contents

Acknowledgements

It's taken a long time to reach the stage where writing this book could become a practical reality and there is a very long list of people who have helped me along the way, from my initial postgraduate research in this area, to developing a career as an academic, writing, in part at least, about masculinity and gay porn. This includes many colleagues (and now friends) who have offered help and expressed enthusiasm for the work I was trying to do, back in those days when writing about gay porn still seemed like an odd career choice.

This project would not have been possible at all without the support of the Faculty of Arts, Media and Design at Birmingham City University, an institution which has provided the resources and time that have enabled the research and writing of this book. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Professor Tim Wall, Associate Dean for Research, who has been a regular source of motivation and an invaluable supporter of my work over the years. I owe Tim a great deal.

I also want to thank my colleagues at the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research. A supportive, collegiate and enabling working environment really enables scholars to flourish and I've been lucky to have those kinds of working conditions. Thanks in particular to the centre directors Nick Webber, for working so hard to cultivate those conditions, and Paul Long, for leading the centre and for reading through drafts of this book, and to my research cluster colleagues, especially Inger Lise Bore and my dear friend Oliver Carter.

A special mention must also go to friends and editorial board colleagues at *Porn Studies* and this must inevitably include first and foremost the inspirational Feona Attwood and Clarissa Smith. You both already know how much I value your friendship but now you have evidence in print. Thanks also go to my fellow editors at *Journal of Gender Studies* and editorial board members of *Sexualities*. The Gorizia Spring School has become

an especially important event in the calendar for porn studies scholars as it presents an almost unique opportunity for exchanging ideas, drawing together researchers from across disciplines. So I'd like to thank the Spring School organisers, Giovanna Maina, Federico Zecca and Enrico Biasin, for all of their hard work over the years and for this incredibly important annual event that we have all benefitted from.

Thanks to Mireille Miller Young and her grad student Beatrix McBride for confirming my suspicions, to Kevin Heffernan for making me laugh about Kink.com, to Evangelos Tziallas for locating some hard-to-find references, to Eric Anderson for being so enthusiastic about this project and of course to Richard Dyer and to Thomas Waugh for providing the inspiration to do this work in the first place.

Finally, and as always, my biggest debt of gratitude and the most love goes to Trevor.

Series Editors' Foreword

Since the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Western societies in the 1960s, there has been a gradual mainstreaming of gay culture. As this book highlights, this was interrupted in the 1980s with the AIDS pandemic and associated moral panic that linked it with homosexuality, referring to it as the 'gay plague'. Mercer's book charts the shifts in social attitudes towards homosexuality and associated pornography, linking these with the development of new technologies that have aided access to such material, from VHS, to DVD, to the internet. Other books in this series explore pornography in other contexts (including its earliest manifestations on film), and here Mercer adds to these debates in his discussion of models of masculinity that are extremely diverse and constantly evolving and developing. By defining 'gay porn' as a particular genre that has an assumed primary audience of gay men, Mercer explores the notion of 'fantasy' in film, and thus links it with the wider issues surrounding the film industry that other authors in this series explore. Mercer's conclusion that gay porn has moved into the realms of popular culture is one that makes this book a thought-provoking addition to the Library of Gender in Popular Culture.

Angela Smith and Claire Nally

Introduction: Coming to Terms (Again)

> *Pornography is both a legitimate form of culture and a fictional, fantastical, even allegorical realm; it neither reflects the real world, nor is it some hypnotizing call to action. The world of pornography is mythological and hyperbolic, peopled by fictional characters. It doesn't and will never exist.*
>
> Laura Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged* (1996:163)

In 1994, the American gay artist Bruce Cegur completed a painting entitled *Shop by Male 1-Make Me a Man*[1] that was eventually exhibited at the Kinsey Institute's Juried Erotic Art Show in 2006. Cegur's painting, bearing the influence of the photo-realist style of the Pop Art movement, acts as an ironic comment on the nature of desire in contemporary American gay culture. Imitating the layout of a mail order catalogue, the image presents a selection of idealised male body parts to an imagined consumer; each one is for sale at a 'new low price' with captions extolling their virtues. The artist, an avid gardener, found inspiration for this satirical work in seed catalogues where carrots are categorised by their length and pumpkins by their roundness and plumpness. Buttocks are wittily categorised and given titles – 'Sugar Baby' and 'Champion' – penises as 'Goliath' and 'Jersey Giant', and torsos as 'Olympian' and 'Californian Wonder'. The painting playfully (and perhaps prophetically) suggests a mechanism for organising

and categorising physical characteristics and types that has become one of the staple features of the ways in which porn is presented for consumption online. This is vividly illustrated by the tactics of porn aggregators and the architecture of tube sites. Pornhub, for example, organises gay content into categories that suggest practices but also preferred types, including Asian, bear, black, college, daddy, hunks and twink. Xhamster allows the consumer to browse in a similar fashion, with the addition of more specific categorisation, including types such as emo boys and transsexuals. Gaytube allows for even more detailed search parameters, including genre, number of performers, ethnicity, type, cock, cum, softcore or hardcore, clothing and location. Cegur's painting also suggests the possibility of constructing the ideally desirable man, an objective that is similarly attempted at points in the idealised physical types that populate the world of online gay pornography. It is these idealised masculine types that constitute the iconography of contemporary online gay pornography, their construction and the range of discourses that surround them, that is the concern of this book.

This book is the culmination, at the time of writing, of almost 20 years' research into gay pornography that started when I was a doctoral candidate in the 1990s and that has continued since then. When I first started writing about gay porn it was within a social, cultural and political climate that was in many respects profoundly different to the context in which this book now emerges. I started researching gay porn in the aftermath of the first wave of the AIDS pandemic, and the associated moral panic about the so-called 'gay plague'. The work that I chose to do at that point felt explicitly political and it was motivated by the desire to interrogate and to validate expressions of gay sexuality as they were represented in the material that, I wanted to argue, was at the very heart of anything that might be described collectively as 'gay culture'. The wider social acceptance of gay people, in many Western nations at least, that has grown exponentially in the intervening period means that, on the one hand, representations of gay men are no longer regarded as taboo and also that aspects of gay culture (and gay representation) have become assimilated by the mainstream culture. Indeed just as I will argue that the narrow binarisms of gay and straight sexual identities have become much more porous, so it's evidently the case that the seemingly straightforward distinctions between the mainstream and the marginal are now more vexed than they were when I first

started writing about gay porn. Furthermore I should also note that attitudes towards porn research have changed a great deal over time. During the mid 1990s, researching gay porn at doctoral level was a choice that was regarded as outré to say the least and at worst was met with a mixture of incomprehension and suspicion, and I often found myself spending time trying to justify my research to any number of individuals. Why would anyone want to research material like this? What's your investment in gay porn? What is the point of this 'research' and what is there to say about this material? These were questions frequently asked. Times have, gladly, changed considerably since the mid-1990s. I now regularly meet research students in the UK and elsewhere who are producing PhDs, writing journal articles and delivering conference presentations on a subject that seemed, if not unimaginable, then rather distasteful some 20 years earlier.

Probably most profoundly, technological developments during this period have radically altered the context in which the material that is the subject of this book is located, accessed and understood. I started writing about gay porn before access to the internet was commonplace and my focus was primarily on material available on VHS, and latterly DVD, that was sold commercially in the US and Europe, but had a much less certain legal status in the UK. Now widespread access to porn online and the resulting concomitant set of debates around the so-called sexualisation and/or pornification of culture more widely (and popular culture specifically) mean that the iconography of gay porn can no longer be regarded as a marginal and minority concern. Instead this is material that, I argue, forms the fabric of the ways in which masculinity itself is understood. This then is a study that takes the iconography of gay porn as its primary object of study, but it is as much a book about contemporary constructions of masculinity as it is a work that is a contribution to the ongoing pornography debate. Gay porn, understood as a genre, a style, a mode of address or as a set of industrial practices, is in the business of producing models of masculinity for erotic consumption. My argument in this book is that these models of masculinity are extremely diverse and dynamic, they are iterative and more particularly they are generative; constantly evolving and developing. I am contending that this proliferation of types and modes of masculinity that are vividly illustrated in

the world of gay porn cumulatively provide evidence of a phenomenon (discussed in the next chapter) that I describe as 'saturated masculinity'. This is a contemporary condition in which masculinity, historically tied to binarisms, has become overburdened with a range of meanings, associations and connotation to such an extent that it becomes a category that is increasingly indeterminate and threatens to collapse under the weight of its own hyperbole. Gay porn marshals and deploys a range of discourses that structure and position these iterative and generative models of masculinity, and it is these discourses of generation, orientation, ethnicity and self-hood that inform the organisation of the chapter structure of this book.

The first part of this book provides a set of contexts for the analysis of the paradigm of masculinities and their associated discourses that are discussed in the second part. So in this introduction I will consider the critical context in which gay porn scholarship has emerged and provide a rationale for the research presented in the subsequent chapters. This introduction is followed by Chapter 1, 'Saturated Masculinity', which outlines the conceptual framework for this book and the wider social and cultural context in which masculinities have become problematised and any contemporary analysis of masculinity in gay porn must be situated. In Chapter 2, 'History, Industry and Technological Change', which forms the final section of the first part of the book, I focus on the specific technological and industrial factors that have provided the conditions in which the iconography of gay porn has emerged and the generic conventions that have resulted from this.

In Part 2, 'Models, Patterns and Themes', the chapter structure has largely been derived from an articulation of the most common industrial categories used to describe gay porn for consumers/users. So in order to explore the discourses of masculinity that gay porn summons up, I have self-consciously chosen to draw upon the categories and language that commercial producers as well as the aggregators, mentioned at the start of this chapter, tend to use the most relentlessly. I also, in part, have been inspired by the lucidity of the organisation of chapters in Alan Sinfield's excellent *On Sexuality and Power* and to a lesser degree by Leo Bersani's classic *Homos*. Whilst I disagree with so much of what Bersani has to say, and his recourse to the psychoanalytic paradigm is not a strategy that

I adopt in this book, I admire his daring and uncompromising polemic, and his objective to assert the importance of sex (and especially the subversive power of sex) is a goal that also motivates the research that is presented here.

Chapter 3, 'Generation: The Boy-Next-Door, the Twink and the Daddy', explores the ways in which age is positioned as the locus of erotic investment and the masculinities that are represented as a consequence. Inevitably, given the preoccupations of wider society and the premium placed on youth and its connections to virility across popular culture, the primary focus of this chapter is the ways in which youthful masculinities are represented. However, in the concluding section of this chapter I discuss the figure of the 'daddy' and the eroticisation of intergenerational sex as a way into exploring the ways in which 'mature' masculinities are deployed in the subsequent chapter. In Chapter 4, 'Straight Acting? Heterosexuality, Hypermasculinity and the Gay Outlaw', I discuss the place of heterosexuality in gay porn and the category of the 'straight acting' gay male and provide examples to problematise both of these categories. I also here explore what I describe as gay hypermasculinity and the specific settings in which this version of masculinity is situated, through a discussion of the figure of the Bear, the Leatherman and fetish performance and finally through a discussion of the most controversial development in recent years; so-called bareback porn. In Chapter 5, 'A World of Men: Race, Ethnicity and National Identity', I look at the ways in which ethnic and racialised difference is presented as an erotic spectacle in gay porn, noting that whiteness is, to use Barthes' terminology, 'exnominated' in commercial, mainstream output. I look at the spaces and places in which non-Caucasian and specifically black masculinities are represented in gay porn, the eroticisation of national identity and the emergence of a homogenous 'international style' of sexualised masculinity. In the final chapter, 'The Celebrity, the Amateur and the Self', I focus on the emergence of the 'amateur' and the various manifestations of what is generically described as 'amateur porn' to illustrate that this category is far from straightforward. I discuss the porous nature of the divisions between the professional and the amateur in the digital age by discussing the changing status of the gay porn star and conclude by a focus on the ways in which gay porn may inform representations of the masculine self.

Representing Gay Erotic Fantasy

This book, out of necessity, engages with some contested and vexed terminology: the mainstream, the amateur, heteronormativity, hypermasculinity. Indeed it has become something of a cliché that work in the field of porn studies has to grapple with unpacking (and unpicking) a lexicon that is often either under-theorised or used in uncritical ways, before any engagement with the manifest content of the genre itself can take place. Porn studies has become an increasingly confident field, however, and whilst it is not my intention, nor will I have the space, to indulge in protracted discussions of the implications of each and every term deployed here, there will, at points, be a necessity to define my terms of reference and point to the associated debates. Inevitably, though, a book that, in part at least, deals with the classification and organisation of masculine types needs from the outset to be clear about the types of material that will be interrogated. Consequently it's necessary to clarify what the term 'gay porn' means in the context of this study. Whilst this might seem to some readers as blindingly self-evident, this is far from an inconsequential matter and although the political ramifications that Richard Dyer noted in the essay written 30 years previously, and that inspired the title of this chapter, have become more complicated, the conjunction of the terms 'gay' and 'porn' mean that the material that is discussed here still has textual qualities, modes of address and networks of distribution and consumption as well as a social/cultural/political significance, that mark them as qualitatively different to other eroticised/sexualised representations of the male body that circulate within popular culture.[2] In order to draw my object of study into view, like Dyer I am using the term gay porn to describe a particular genre (or, more accurately still, a collection of subgenres) that address an assumed primary audience of gay men.[3] For the purpose of this study this will include material produced by commercial, gay-owned, web-based, adult entertainment media outlets as well as gay-oriented subsidiaries of corporate adult entertainment conglomerates such as Kink.com, Private and the online broadcaster AEBN. It will also include case studies drawn from specialist porn outlets catering to niche markets, and latterly some examples of artisanal and amateur material.

Fantasy is another term that will loom large over this study and the framing and contextualisation of the analysis that will take place here. In the first issue of *Porn Studies*, Martin Barker's essay 'The "Problem" of Sexual Fantasies' (2014) provides an incisive overview and critique of the ways in which the term fantasy is used in a range of settings, the problems associated with the ways in which interested parties make sense of fantasy, including some of the problems with the way in which sexual fantasy has been conceptualised in the field of porn studies. Barker observes that in popular discourse and scholarship fantasy carries with it a set of largely pejorative connotations. As he notes, 'sexual fantasies are seen as essentially unproductive; at best of limited value; at worst, adolescent, deficient, and dangerous' (2014:148). Barker sets out to challenge here the assertion that any potential harm that porn causes revolves around:

> (the common-sense) idea of 'losing the distinction between fantasy and reality'. This is an illusory notion, made possible simply by a linguistic oddity. One might as well worry if people might lose the distinction between cooking and reality.
>
> (p. 155)

As a corrective to these commonplace arguments and based on the responses of over 5,000 respondents to an online questionnaire and research project organised with Clarissa Smith and Feona Attwood, Barker offers five 'orientations' (ibid.) in order to shift debate away from an uncritical reproduction of the common sense and to provide a framework in order to make sense of sexual fantasy:

1. 'Fantasy' as magnifying glass: a conscious accentuation of a desire.
2. 'Fantasy' as mirror to self: a means to look at our responses to things.
3. 'Fantasy' as emporium: a world of possibilities to be explored and thought about.
4. 'Fantasy' as journey: a visitation to a distant realm of desires and activities.
5. 'Fantasy' as other self: what I might or might not be.

He notes that these orientations are provisional and that they require both more thought and empirical investigation but they nonetheless offer a

useful structure for conceptualising fantasy. The research presented in this book draws on these orientations as inspiration for exploring the meanings and significances of the representations and scenarios at play across a disparate range of texts and as a framework for thinking about how the discourses of masculinity that I identify in my research make meaning in the fantasy context of gay porn.

In concluding, Barker notes that:

> We are creatures who not only desire sex, but can enjoy the idea of desiring. […] In between those responses, our feeling and understanding of them, and the world that delivers possibilities and constraints, is the field of sexuality. This is the zone of knowing and imagining how sex works, rewards and punishes. 'Fantasy' belongs here, in the zone of the relations between bodies, selfhood, and social and cultural permissions and forbiddings. […] This is how and why the utterly explicit in pornography, the 'leaving nothing to the imagination', is at that exact same point the most fantastical. In this sense we might usefully see pornography as being like a huge library, a bookshop, or a film archive. Even to know that it is there, that it has something like a catalogue, is to begin to measure one's sexual self against all that it might offer.
>
> (p. 157)

Even whilst Barker's interests and methods are very different to my own, there is much to take away and make productive use of even in the case of the textually and contextually grounded research that is the basis of this study. In the first instance, he problematises a term that is central to an understanding of what it is that porn (and in this case gay porn) is doing. Secondly, the models of masculinity that gay porn offers and the discourses that surround them must be primarily understood through the framing lens of fantasy, and in this regard Barker's orientations are especially useful as a way into conceptualising the work that such representations are doing in specific contexts. My argument is that the articulations of masculinity that gay porn produces should be regarded as more than merely static and stereotypical (which of course would be to misunderstand the ways in which stereotypes operate in the first place).[4] Neither are they archetypical, unchanging and eternal, even whilst some of the models that I will present

for analysis here (the athlete, the youth, the daddy, for example) seem to be exactly that. They are instead, as I have argued elsewhere, prototypes,[5] and therefore constantly changing, evolving and subject to revision. The iconography of gay porn presents heightened fantasies that articulate the erotic potentials, fluidity and ambiguity of contemporary masculinities. As Linda Williams succinctly notes,

> Pornography on film, video, or the internet is always two contradictory things at once: documents of sexual acts, and fantasies spun around knowing the pleasure or pain of those acts. Pornography studies needs to remember that it must always exist at the problematic site of this limit. (2014:37)

The State of the Field

In an essay published in 2014 in two versions – firstly in the inaugural volume of the journal *Porn Studies* and subsequently in the *Porn Archives* anthology edited by Tim Dean, Steven Ruszczycky and David Squires – Linda Williams provides her diagnosis of the condition of porn studies as a field that, by her own reckoning, she played a fundamental role in establishing.[6] Williams' assessment of the state of porn scholarship is in many respects a rather surprising one, veering, sometimes rather uncomfortably, between an endorsement of a relatively small group of familiar names whose work she considers to be foundational, contrasted with a critique of a newer generation of scholars and what she regards as the lack of a strategic development of the discipline. The essay presents a challenge in two regards: a challenge to Williams' readers, who may well be discouraged by her assessment of current scholarship, and secondly a challenge that she sets for *Porn Studies* as a journal, which she sees as a necessary development for the field in order to raise the standard of scholarship. Williams also strikes a note of caution with regards to the use of language in this essay and especially to the term 'porn studies', revealing that whilst her own earlier edited collection had been marketed with this title, this was in fact as a result of publisher pressure rather than her own preference for the more formal term 'pornography', which she believes 'signals the higher ground of a more scholarly, distanced and critical approach' (2014:34). Unlike Williams, I see no pressing reason to avoid using the term 'porn',

nor do I see any benefit to grandiloquence, and have consequently adopted the compressed and comprehensible 'porn' throughout this book. Putting to one side a debate around what Williams actually considers to be sufficiently scholarly, or indeed the necessity for 'distance', her broad argument is that the development of porn studies has been fairly asymmetrical, with some aspects of the field 'thriving' while 'others remain untended (p. 37). For instance she argues that 'mainstream, heterosexual hard core has been comparatively ignored by all but anti-pornography scholars' (p. 29) and that whilst a 'thriving subfield' of work on gay male porn is evident, even here 'there has been no equivalent to the ground-breaking articles on gay male pornography by Richard Dyer or of Thomas Waugh's' (p. 26). Whilst, as I have already noted, both of these remarks present a challenge and are intended to do so, these are important observations made by a figure whose work has shaped the agenda for the academic study of porn and necessarily informs the contribution that this book is intended to make. Additionally, and in particular, Williams points to a relative absence of monographs on the subject of porn in favour of what she sees as a preponderance of edited collections. She regards this as yet another significant problem for the development of the subject area, demonstrating a scholarly preference for 'dabbling rather than digging into a fertile field' (p. 32). This is not an insignificant point to make inasmuch as it relates to this book, as although Williams notes that gay male pornography has been one of the subfields that has been a particular beneficiary of the growth of porn studies more generally, this has not, in fact, translated into a critical mass of single-authored (and therefore sustained) investigations. Indeed, even if we include both John Burger's *One Handed Histories* (mentioned subsequently, which at 144 pages is scarcely a detailed study) and Tim Dean's *Unlimited Intimacy* (which contrary to Williams' view is not, first and foremost, a book about gay porn), this is only the fifth book that has been published on the subject. Notwithstanding Williams' remarks about a dearth of monographs, there is nonetheless a growing body of scholarship around gay porn to which this book should be regarded as a contribution.

I would argue that the overwhelming majority of research can be seen as taking place within two broad phases. These 'phases' (which are not entirely temporarily bounded in that there is some overlap) can, in short, be described as the pre-web, pre-digital phase of gay porn research, which