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Still *Fashionably Laid*? Costume and contemporary moving-image pornography

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Abstract

This article analyses the role of costume in contemporary heterosexual hard-core moving-image pornography. Building upon a previous study, it focuses on the representation of youth in a sub-site of the American website *Reality Kings* (2000–present). By drawing on an emergent yet fragmented body of work in this field, it situates the importance of costume and dress in communicating aspects of gendered identity and debates pornography’s use of ‘authentic’ visual strategies. In addition, it problematizes the much-discussed concept of ‘pornification’, arguing for the recognition of an inverse effect in pornographic texts.

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Keywords

authenticity

costume

fashion

pornification

pornography

youth

This article centres on the use of costume in contemporary, non-narrative moving-image pornography. It is both influenced by and a response to a previous study (Church Gibson and Kirkham 2012) that analysed the relationship between costume, fashion and film pornography with a specific focus on John Stagliano's *The Fashionistas* (2002).

Reading back, this chapter now seems dated, as, although published in the last five years, it was in fact first conceived and researched at the end of the previous decade. In the intermediate period, the visual and indeed costuming style of film pornography has seen some radical developments. However, academia has not yet analysed these (as indeed it has barely touched upon the styling of pornographic media at all), and this new study is an attempt to both outline these developments and offer some avenues for future research.¹

Perhaps the most striking aspect of 'Fashionably Laid' was the angle it took with regard to the 'pornification' or 'sexualization' of mainstream consumer culture in the West. These terms, developed within 'Porn Studies' by McNair (1996, 2002), Paasonen et al. (2007) and Attwood (2006, 2010), look at how the hitherto transgressive style of pornography has, in the digital age, become visible in mainstream culture (that is, you can now see the influence of pornography in mainstream fashion, Hollywood cinema, music videos and a whole host of advertisements). In addition, it has simultaneously entered into wider public discourses in that, for Attwood, it has 'become the big story' (2006: 2) as well as a contemporary 'moral panic' (Cohen 1987).

That said, as Sullivan and McKee (2015) suggest, 'pornification' is not an entirely unified term. Indeed, for McNair this phenomenon was a 'pornographization' of an increasingly 'striptease culture', for Attwood a 'sexualization' of the mainstream. Regardless of this though, since 2000 the increasing influence of pornography on popular culture has become a

key element of porn academia. 'Fashionably Laid' adhered to this, concluding with the statement:

The hidden has become visible, the marginalised mainstream – yes, all of the constituent elements of the 'looks' we have examined can be easily obtained in a high-street shop near you. (Church Gibson and Kirkham 2012: 161)

However, since this article we have both started to look at the inverse of this shift: that is, how mainstream consumer culture, and particularly fashion and beauty practices, styles and trends, has started to influence pornographic aesthetics and costuming. This was the focus of an earlier article entitled 'The New Porno-Chic' (Kirkham 2012), which looked at branded merchandise produced by pornographic film companies and focused on something relevant to this article: gendered identity on-screen. But even since then, there have been significant shifts in the relationship between fashion, dress and pornography, perhaps best typified by the following examples.

Parody, fashion and 'pornification'

Figures 1–3² are stills taken from the BangBros website in 2014. The first two are from a sub-site³ titled American Pervert and feature actresses April O'Neill and Lara Brookes with the character Harry Richardson, a fashion photographer who engages in sexual relations with his many models.

Figures 1 and 2: April O'Neill, Harry Richardson and Lara Brookes (BangBros 2014).

American Pervert is an example of a trend in American pornography that has developed over the last few years to subvert and parody the 'pornification' of the fashion industry. The character of Harry Richardson is clearly based on Terry Richardson, the fashion photographer most famous for his pseudo-pornographic collection *Terryworld* (Dian, 2004) and more recently because of standing accused of allegedly coercing models into sexual acts – and the overall visual aesthetic and watermark is a direct pastiche of American Apparel, who themselves are perhaps the primary example, and indeed the popular press' go-to example, of how the visual representation of fashion has become 'pornified'.

Figure 3 is from an Ass Parade (another sub-site of Bangbros) video entitled 'Break the Internet', starring the performer Kendra Lust. Again, the source being parodied is self-evident: the infamous Jean-Paul Goude shoot for *Paper Magazine* featuring Kim Kardashian. Published in September 2014, the intent behind the collection was to combine art and celebrity in a way that halted or 'broke' the Internet, and, although it did not succeed, its impact was considerable: *Paper's* site received in advance of 50 million hits in the 24 hours following publication, roughly 1 per cent of all US online traffic in the same period (Spedding 2016).

Figure 3: Kendra Lust (BangBros 2014).

That pornographic texts parody those from mainstream culture is nothing new: they are often not so much a 'window on the world' as a 'palimpsest' (Stam 1992: 132). To further this reference to the work of Gérard Genette they are also hypertextual, and in order to appreciate such references fully the viewer must be familiar with the text being referred to (in this case called the hypotext); otherwise such quotations have no real significance.

As far back as the eighteenth century, The Marquis de Sade's work referenced and parodied a number of other literary sources, and contemporary pornography follows a similar trajectory. For instance, narrative hard-core films continually reference and twist the intentions of mainstream filmmakers by parodying their biggest hits. They turn *Flash Gordon* (Stephani, 1936) into *Flesh Gordon* (Benveniste and Ziehm, 1974), *The Blair Witch Project* (Myrick and Sanchez, 1999) into *The Erotic Witch Project* (Bacchus, 1999) and *The Brady Bunch Movie* (Thomas, 1995) into *Not the Bradys XXX* (Ryder, 2007), in turn using parody to satirize the sexual limitations of Hollywood cinema.⁴

What is different here are the sources being parodied: the two examples cited above are demonstrative of the fact that 'pornification' is now a two-way street, that while the fashion industry draws on references to pornography in order to provide certain brands or celebrities with a transgressive edge, the inverse is also true. Pornography now draws on popular cultural 'events', key moments and styles. It purposely subverts this intertextual relationship, using 'pornified' fashion imagery to make itself credible, relevant or stylish.

In line with this, it is important to stress that in the contemporary world we are increasingly reliant on or co-opted into image-based communication facilitated or affected by digital online technology. This image communication is more than ever reliant on stereotyping as all 'information' has to be contained within the image to optimize 'correct' reading. This online culture is of course often cited for its facilitation of access to pornography and all issues

associated with this. However, for the purpose of our study we also need to acknowledge how the Internet has made the same generation we fear is being corrupted by pornography more fashion savvy than ever before owing to equally easy access to ‘clothing information’. Like pornography, fashion has never before been this easily obtainable and democratic in its representation. The medium of the computer screen aligns not only their communication but also their consumption, or, to put it bluntly, one can shop and masturbate at the same time.

Aims and intentions

The focus of this article is therefore to look at how costume in film pornography subverts and inverts the idea of ‘pornification’ and uses the fashion industry as a reference point.

Alongside this, we isolated three key areas around which to study the use of costume in these films and assess the impact of mainstream fashion on the style of heterosexual pornography.

These were, first, how costumes in pornographic film ‘depict, give shape to and mould social categories’ such as gender and youth; second, how these costumes, in turn, aid film pornography in exaggerating embodied differences via stereotyping (as with ‘barely legal cheerleaders’) (Paasonen 2014: 136); and finally, how costume adheres to film pornography’s ongoing need for authenticity.

This three-pronged approach places our work firmly within two concepts, which are central to understanding pornography: its ‘realistic’ [*sic*] representation of sex (in the sense that it represents ‘real’ sex that is actually taking place [Krzywinska 2006]); and its representation of gendered, sexual and ethnic identity (Paasonen 2014). In this, we will be looking specifically at the use of costume in relation to how heterosexual hard-core films represent youth, and in doing so we aim to analyse how modern pornographic films deploy elements of

dress and appearance to construct 'immediate' characteristics and also the way in which they 'play' with stereotypical representations.

Although driven by a theoretical framework derived from numerous areas of 'porn studies', the scarcity of specific academic work in this field has meant that our approach relates, while at the same time differing in two crucial respects, to that of the recent study on costume and gay film pornography conducted by Cole (2014). In this, he suggested that 'before nudity or nakedness is presented the "characters" are dressed', and then explored 'the ways in which the "characters" are constructed through their clothing and costuming'. However, a key aspect of his approach, and through which he followed the earlier work of Richard Dyer, was the study of the way gay men used these representations to 'reflect on the reality of the constructions and its relation to their own sexual and social lives' and how the 'experiential education of the body' in the consumption of gay pornography 'contributed to and legitimised the masculine model of gay sexuality' (2002: 14).

This, however, poses a problem for our own approach. The study of contemporary film pornography as a way for young women to 'reflect on the reality of (pornography) and its relation to their own sexual and social lives' would take us towards the oft-cited negative impact of pornification – that is, the increasingly pornified nature of youth sexuality and also young female fashions. Albury (2014) discusses the way in which, on one level, pornography is endorsed by certain researchers as a source of 'positive' educational content for heterosexual adults (Watson and Smith 2012). However, it is also widely considered to be a poor educator for young heterosexuals: pornography has been criticized for 'normalizing' stylized or 'pornified' forms of corporeality and self-representation (Paul 2005; Hall and Bishop in Bishop 2007) In particular, this includes the increased accessibility and popularity of pornography with respect to trends in women's grooming, specifically in shaping or

removing pubic hair (see Wolf 2003; Fitzpatrick 2007; also Jones and Nurka 2016), and representing practices that position female pleasure as subservient to that of males.

In line with this, Jensen (2010⁹) critiques the use of youth-sexualized language and imagery on the covers of mainstream American hard-core films. The former (YSL) is defined as ‘language that sexually objectifies those who look like they might be minors’, the latter (YSI) does ‘not feature underage individuals, but utilises a variety of visual images that reference those who look to be minors and [...] suggest sex with minors’ (2009: 373–74).

While in the same broad area as Jensen’s work, our study differs in several aspects. First, we are analysing the content of hard-core films, not just their surface representation / marketing hook. As a result, we appreciate that such materials are not always, as his work appears to suggest, attempting to position adult performers as children.⁵ Second, we are not analysing the psychological effects of such materials, whether on male or female spectators. This is because, third, our approach does not stem from an ‘anti-pornography’ position: it is rather an acknowledgement that such texts exist and that as a result they should be studied and understood objectively (for instance, while Jensen clearly states that ‘YSL/YSI and child pornography are different categories of sexual communication’, his work is also in a lineage that refers to such representations as ‘pseudo-child pornography’ [Lederer 1995; Jensen 2007]).

In keeping with this approach, ‘Fashionably Laid’ briefly looked at what was termed the sub-genre of ‘Teen’ or ‘Teen over 18’ in film and online pornography. The focus was on Jules Jordan’s 2003 film *Flesh Hunter 3* and its ‘everyday’ representation of actresses Jenna Haze and Aurora Snow. As Tibbals notes, such films have a history as long as modern hard core:

The illusion of youth has been a significant theme in adult content since the 1970s, and it continues to be extremely popular today [... such content] focuses on young-looking women performers. Youth is conveyed via costuming and by the actual age of the performers themselves – women who typically work in this genre are of-age teens (18 and 19 years old) or are in their early 20s. This type of content features women and men co-performers and generally seems to be marketed to heterosexual men viewers of all age groups. (2014: 131)

The choice of teen pornography for this article was therefore threefold in its origin. First, as a sub-genre it has been a constant staple for several decades and still has a prominent, albeit at times controversial, place today. Second, as Tibbals noted, costume and authenticity play a significant role in the creation of a visual identity in such films. Third, we believe that the study of how pornography was ‘fashioned’ would be more pronounced in films that centre on the representation of youth, particularly youthful femininity, a group aggressively targeted by the fashion and beauty industries.

The illusion of youth

Given that our central argument revolves around the recent shift in costuming that has taken place in this porn ‘category’, it is necessary to outline the previous approach to the styling of teen-porn to highlight the said shift. [Ewyn-Peters](#) et al. (2013) analyse the prevalence of teen pornography on larger tube websites such as PornHub, RedTube and Tube8. One of the cues they examine is the visual representation of youth within the videos under analysis: by which they mean the performers’ dress, hairstyle, make-up and wider physical appearance (body

size, breast size) and also related costume props (school books, candy, stuffed animals or toys).

Drawing on a range of previous studies (Jensen and Dines 1998; Heider and Harp 2002; Dines 2009; Jensen 2010), they suggest that ‘the presentation of adult women as children, through both their appearance and behaviour, is not an uncommon occurrence’ in widely available video pornography (2013: 2). However, in concluding, they challenge the belief of Dines (2009) regarding the prevalence of such imagery.

While our article would challenge the validity and specificity of their sample,⁶ the study is undeniably a useful template for compiling and compacting the different visual techniques used to depict youth in video pornography. They found that schoolgirl outfits, knee socks, pigtails, child-like hair accessories, the amount of make-up worn, child-like jewellery (e.g., plastic, colourful bracelets and necklaces) and wider aspects of *mise-en-scène* (such as setting performances in a school classroom) all combined to create an illusion of youth, often with performers who were clearly of adult age.

In the past, ‘teen’ pornography has relied heavily on stylistic stereotyping and exaggeration of youth. Maddison (2012) discussed the example of Max Hardcore, a director whose work played (at least before his 2007 imprisonment for obscenity) on the representation of youth with his female performers. In his films, Hardcore would dress adult females as though they were far younger girls, something not uncommon in modern moving-image pornography: as Evyn et al. note, citing Paul and Linz (2008), in such materials visual cues mean that ‘youthful models older than 25 can often be misidentified as being younger than 18 years of age’ (2013: 8).

Hardcore exploited the set stereotypes of youthful dress in pornography: what Maddison described as ‘a tight pink baby doll top, tight miniskirt, high platform shoes and frilly white ankle socks. Her hair is in pigtails, tied with purple and pink plastic baubles and her face is made up in lurid pinks and purples’ (2012: 119) In a twisted form of the ‘authenticity’ that so concerns pornography, Hardcore also purposely used cheap make-up: in his own words, ‘the low-cost stuff used by teens’ (2012: 121). But importantly in the context of our work, the entire point of this costuming was not to, in any way, adhere to the standards of glamour set by the fashion or beauty industries. It was simply, as Maddison put it, to ‘parody these forms and make the female performers look younger than they are’ (2012: 121).

It relied not on reality and thus by extension not on authenticity, but rather on sartorial feminine stereotypes that were employed not in an attempt to create the illusion of ‘reality’ but exaggerated instead to draw attention to their own artifice. The dialogue anchors this further through its caricatured lines and their distorted performance. This parody of the stereotype positions this work as a form of mimicry as:

To play with mimemesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself [...] to ideas about herself that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make ‘visible’, by an effect of playful repetition what was supposed to remain invisible. (Irigaray 1985: 76)

Maddison’s work is centred on the need for authenticity in pornographic film – that is, on its ‘realistic’ [*sic*] representation of sex. For Hardy, ‘one of the defining characteristics of

pornography as a representational genre is the need for authenticity [... it is] a literal documentation of bodies and sexual activity' (2009: 5–7). However, what is important to remember here is that, in both this and other respects, pornography is a contradiction: while relying on 'authentic' iconography it is also a clearly illusory and staged representation of sex.

Street's (2001) analysis of the use of costume in the British social-realist film *Wonderland* (Winterbottom, 1999) is a useful comparative. She notes that while relying on an 'authentic', real-world *mise-en-scène*, the film is not a 'classical' realist text (following the work of MacCabe [1974]) as it does not create a seamless representation of the world that 'conceals its artifice'. Instead, like many contemporary pornographic texts, it uses 'unconventional formal strategies' that make 'its construction very apparent' (2001: 74).

This article takes as its primary source a pornographic text that seeks to enhance its authentic representation of sex through its use of costume, and there are links here to such use (in particular when compared to the 'spectacle' of standardized clothing such as lingerie or fetish-wear). Corresponding to this, in concluding her analysis of Winterbottom's film, Street suggests that a number of aspects mark the 'authenticity' of its costuming, not least the way in which it uses garments 'that could be bought by anyone', placing an emphasis on 'ordinary, everyday fashion'. She also claims that such costume is 'reflective of social groupings' such as gender and class and that, overall, it is 'used to enhance its claim to show something of the "real" [...] clothes are not used to create a spectacle in themselves' (2001: [82/82](#)).

However, it is important to stress how this is problematized by the fact that not only is pornography obsessed with authenticity (one that ultimately cannot be achieved – the real sex it depicts will always remain a performance), but as Baudrillard (1990, 1997) suggests,

incidentally using pornography as a metaphor, all of our hyperreal culture strives for authenticity. This of course accounts for fashion imagery by companies such as American Apparel putting forward 'real looking' images, starring 'real' people, wearing 'real' clothes in 'real' settings, all the while being a similarly inauthentic a construct as porn. Nevertheless, this is blurring the boundaries between the two 'genres' further and presents an alternative view as to the use of these visual codes: the chasing of authenticity through titillation not for titillation

[t]he key ideas here are therefore the notion of 'illusionism' in costuming and how that relates to the importance of authenticity in hard-core films. For while the representations of youth outlined by Maddison play on well-trying stereotypes that would seem familiar to most understandings of pornography (that is, the 'schoolgirl look'), this is not one that appears with such regularity in contemporary hard core. Contemporary teen porn in fact employs very different stylistic signs, which as our examples will evidence do not exaggerate, or parody, but rather more closely mimic the contemporary representations of youth that litter popular culture, including fashion editorial photography and fashion advertising.

‘Reality’ kings

The Figures under examination in this article are taken from the Reality Kings website, one of the aforementioned ‘big five’ online producers of contemporary heterosexual film pornography. They come from their teen ‘sub-site’ titled TeensLoveHugeCocks.

The company was founded in 2000 and, alongside sites such as Bangbros, is seen to be part of a stylistic development from basic gonzo-style production to what Paasonen (2016: 8) terms ‘the staged and rehearsed authenticity’ of a new ‘reality porn’. The name of the Reality Kings website suggests an inherent desire for authenticity, and both of these sites initially focused on producing material in which the performers were presented as everyday amateurs who were gently coerced into performing sex on camera. However, they have since vastly developed their scope, and Reality Kings is now made up of 46 ‘exclusive’ sub-sites, all of which feature recognizable porn stars.⁷ Along with its competitor Brazzers, Reality Kings was purchased in 2012 by the Global IT Conglomerate Manwin (Sanford 2012).

On the TeensLoveHugeCocks sub-site, this desire for staged authenticity is visualized through the costumes worn by the female performers. Pictured below are five American actresses (Penny Brooks, Noelle Easton, Carmen Caliente, Kiera Winters and Jessa Rhodes), all of whom, while not teenagers, were between 21 and 24 years old when they appeared on the site.

The first aspect to note is that this is not the stereotyped image of youth described by Maddison, but rather a more honest reflection of contemporary, fashionable female teen dress. This is not YSI, but rather ‘ordinary, everyday fashion’ that does not mimic but *is*: the ill-fitting parody schoolgirl outfits, pigtails, garish make-up, lollypops and ankle socks are sidelined as the site strives for greater authenticity in its depiction of youth.

The performers instead now wear a succession of historically ‘credible’ items: hooded tops (Figure 4), sportswear (Figures 4–6), daisy dukes (Figure 6), baseball caps (Figure 7), leather jackets and beanie hats (Figure 8) and even Converse trainers (Figure 6) – the most authentic of the inauthentic mass individuality items of all – all available from an Urban Outfitters or an H&M near you. The actress’s apparel is undeniably sexualized, but in this context, rather than the ‘pornification’ of fashion, what these Figures denote can be better understood as the fashioning of pornography. *This* is what teenage girls wear.

These images therefore draw on a different yet simultaneously symbolically youthful, realistic and authentic aesthetic. They signify low-cost high-street styles – the hooded tops, T-shirts, stylized baseball caps and generic American sportswear could have come from American Apparel – and from the remnants of historic youth culture, such as the use of leather biker jackets. The influence of ‘urban’, hip hop-inspired dress is acknowledged through the overly gendered headphones and trainers. The overly sexualized elements, the daisy dukes and low-cut spaghetti tops (Figure 5), are also widely available and, importantly, low-cost youth-oriented high-street styles.

The styling of these performers is in line with contemporary teenage beauty standards: each has had her eyebrows shaped, they are all wearing foundation, blusher, lip gloss and eyeliner. Their make-up is used to effect their age (to present a perfect, even skin, one unmarked by time) and enhance their natural youthful looks. This is how make-up was used until altered by the impact of early Classical Hollywood Cinema, to highlight beauty, not to distort or shape it. Unlike the previously cited example of Max Hardcore’s films, with their low-cost ‘mimicry of youth’, these images are more reflective of how the cosmetics industry has increasingly made higher-quality products financially accessible to a youth market.

The use of over-sized glasses can be read in relation to a more specific trend in contemporary fashion, that of infantilization through dwarfing. While overall these images do not signify a childified mimicry of youth, it needs noting that the use of over-sized items has been employed both in creating the illusion of or highlighting thinness, itself a marker of youth (as with Nicole Richie's use of over-sized handbags in the mid-2000s to further draw attention to her weight loss and slender frame) and youthfulness through the deliberate distortion of proportions. This awkward play with proportion is reminiscent of a child wearing adult dress or accessories in a bid to look more mature, but like a little girl dressed up in her mother's clothes this action fails and instead uncannily highlights the child's immature or not yet fully mature status.

However, rather than positioning the use of the oversized items as a deliberate strategy adopted by the porn industry to court the illusion of the immature – which would elicit infantilization and thus child sexualization accusations – it is necessary to balance this out with a clear acknowledgement that the use of oversized items to give the appearance of youth is frequently employed by fashion culture and one regularly used by aspirational, luxury designer brands (for instance, Prada, Miu Miu and more recently Gucci [sun]glasses collections) and thus one more likely borrowed from mainstream fashion for its authentic connotations and fashionability rather than anything more sinister.

In mimicking sartorial markers of age, the costuming of these images has completely aligned itself with fashion. This is no longer exaggeration or parody, but rather a heightened aura of authenticity through the way in which the clothes are underplayed. While the former draws attention to clothing, what we see here is more subtle, more downplayed. It is virtually a carbon copy of reality. In this context, costuming no longer sets apart the performer from the teenager: there is no visible distinction. Costume is now fashion and fashion is now costume.

As previously mentioned, the reasons for this adoption of the ordinary, as opposed to the spectacular or the notably artificial, are diverse: the desire by porn to come across as more polished and stylish, a continuation of the inversion of fashion's appropriation of porn aesthetics to highlight the fashion industry's ruthless pillaging of transgressive subcultures, the ease and low-cost of over-the-counter culture and a closer mimicking of the everyday (to achieve a more convincing artifice of authenticity) all play their part. What is most important, and indeed central to our discussion, is perhaps not so much the reasons as to why the shift has occurred but instead what it says about and how it impacts contemporary mainstream teen and tween culture. This is an aspect of the discussion and context that needs closer examination in future work.

Conclusion and avenues for further research

While little work on the costuming of pornography has taken place, the few studies that have tackled the subject agree that 'old-style' teen-porn aesthetics have crossed over into mainstream culture (Church Gibson and Kirkham 2012). However, it needs noting that in order to do so they had to be cleaned up and made acceptable through being executed in more desirable materials (thus, accompanied by high pricing, such as the case of Agent Provocateur), linking to an established brand name and/or through their marketing on conventionally fashionable bodies. They were thus sufficiently altered, either design-wise or through their representation, to maintain the distinction between costume and fashion. The mainstream appropriated elements from the porn aesthetic but made it its own.

Almost a decade ago, Gail Dines wrote around the relationship between an increasingly sexualized visual landscape and its impact on the iconography of the fashion press. She claimed that we were now surrounded by:

a landscape that has become so pornographic as to not warrant even a second glance when we see sexualised childified women, sexualised adultified children, and a whole bevy of sexualised young women whose body language, gaze and (lack of) clothes scream ‘fuck me’ to the spectator. (2009: 121)

The visual representations analysed in this article fall outside of this description. They neither childify adult women nor adultify children; instead, they are honest, both about the intent of these representations (they are produced in order to sexually arouse) and, importantly, about the age of the performers and how this reflects the fashion choices of young women in the real world.

Still, this new vogue for ‘teen’ porn sartorial codes does raise more problematic issues. To return to Albury’s study, the absence of a clear distinction between costume and fashion in these texts legitimately raises the issue that young women now experience a further blurring between the mainstream and pornography. Thus, in turn, these costumes and images might effect a reflection on their own sexual and social lives that is based on a constructed authenticity that increasingly and convincingly mimics their sartorial reality.

While this work raises a set of new questions, what does become evident when studying these ‘texts’ is that the relationship between pornography and fashion, contrary to Dines’ belief, is not a one-way street. Maybe it is exactly because of this two-way influence and the

consequential inevitable blurring of boundaries between youth fashions and pornographic costume that these images/videos elicit such vehement criticism and why they are considered culturally dangerous and a morally corrupting influence on young people, as, more importantly, they highlight the blurring between the representation of 'reality' and that of 'performance' in an age of identity construction through consumption and self-representation on and through digital platforms

This article was researched in a context where the fears of writers such as Dines appear to have gained traction. The fashion industry does have an obsession with youth, and this is often seen to be enhanced by a pornification of its visual representations. Further research in this area could study the types of imagery highlighted by her, in turn moving towards the increased influence of social media sites such as Instagram and Twitter, both now central to dictating trends through the enabling of teen celebrities and other users to create their own performative images that mimic everyday authenticity. In addition though, such platforms are also a site where the type of performers studied in our work further brand themselves and in doing so blur the boundaries between the pornographic and the everyday even further.

While it is both easy and in line with popular narrative to look at pornography and trends within it in isolation, it is, however, unhelpful and misleading/limiting. Our future research will try and introduce a wider debate about this authenticity phenomenon by placing it in the contemporary culture of online hyperreality. By focusing on one aspect ad infinitum (in the popular press the moral panic around pornography seems to suggest that its banning or restriction would cure us of a host of societal ills) one misses the bigger picture, which in this case is potentially far more disturbing and one that is far more important to be discussed. Such conflicts are central to any understanding of the visual landscape we currently find ourselves in, and pornography's definitions thus become increasingly complex.

Figure 4: Penny Brooks (Reality Kings 2014).

Figure 5: Noelle Easton (Reality Kings 2013).

Figure 6: Carmen Caliente (Reality Kings 2014).

Figures 7 and 8: Kiera Winters and Jessa Rhodes (Reality Kings 2013, 2014).

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Notes

¹ The ongoing evolution of 'Porn Studies' has recently seen a heightened focus on performance in pornographic media (Smith 2012³; Sullivan and McKee 2015; Ashley 2016), but is yet to focus specifically on the costuming of these performers.

² These sites offer the consumer the choice of streamed or downloaded video and sets of still images. The images included in this study are all taken from the sets themselves, as they offer a more concentrated opportunity to study the performer's costumes in full (often, the sets will begin with around twenty still images of them fully clothed). It is important to point out, however, that the moving-image versions of these scenes were also analysed.

³ In American online pornography, there are currently five major producers: BangBros, Brazzers, Evil Angel, Porn Pros and Reality Kings. Within these sites are a number of smaller 'sub-sites' that are often based around a specific fetish.

⁴ On the topic of more contemporary 'porn-parodies', Tibbals notes how

during the past five to eight years [...] the practice of being inspired by wider cultural narratives morphed into a full-blown parody craze. Producers throughout the adult industry created whole series of *This Ain't* [inset source material] XXX [...] It's a Parody-type content, spoofing or dramatically rendering everything from classic television and comic books to celebrity meltdowns and cartoons. Even producers who had previously only shot various forms of all-sex content began to explore

feature-form production via parodies. Parody production, however, reached an apparent acme point around 2010/11 and fewer are being shot today. (2014: 129)

⁵ A good example of this is the Anabolic Video production *Bring 'Um Young* (discussed in Kirkham [2012]). While these videos presented female performers as 'youthful' and followed many of the stylistic techniques typical of what Jensen terms 'YSI', they also went to great lengths to emphasize the age of said performers (to the extent that each scene started with them showing their passports to verify that they were adults).

⁶ The writers claim that their sample contains a more 'heterogeneous selection of pornographic content' (2013: 4); however, we believe that in order to analyse pornographic texts *as texts* a more focused selection of primary sources, one that can address the specific context of individual sites and producers, must be followed. In addition, as this study is wholly visual, what Evyn et al refer to as 'textual references' (be they verbal or written) cannot be addressed with the exception perhaps of the site/'sub-site' name.

⁷ Alongside the site under analysis here, Reality Kings also plays host to *Moms Bang Teens*, *We Live Together*, *MILF Hunter*, *Big Naturals*, *Round and Brown*, *8th Street Latinas*, *First Time Auditions*, *In the VIP*, *Mike in Brazil* and *CFNM*.