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GAY PORNOGRAPHIC VIDEOS: THE EMERGENT FALCON FORMULA

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

From the content analysis of 23 “classic” gay porn videos, produced by Falcon Studios, the emergence of the Falcon formula — a pornographic model of sex — is described in this thesis. This formula is analyzed with regard to the feminist critique of pornography and the assertions of gay advocates. Although the Falcon formula supports the feminist perspective with respect to the representations of sex practices, the linkage between femininity and getting fucked, as indicated by Dworkin, was not found in the selected Falcon videos. In fact, Falcon videos subvert this linkage by depicting masculine men fucking other masculine men. And, in accord with the claims of gay advocates, Falcon videos largely represent gay men having sex as opposed to straight men having homosexual sex. The Falcon formula appears to have developed not only in reaction to stigmatizing stereotypes of effeminate gay men and in reaction to the linkage between femininity and getting fucked, but also in response to the fantasy (of gay viewers) of being accepted into an exclusively male community.

RÉSUMÉ

Fondée sur l'analyse du contenu de 23 vidéocassettes pornographiques gaies "classiques", produites par Falcon Studios, l'émergence de la formule Falcon — un modèle pornographique du sexe — est décrite à l'intérieure de la présente thèse. La formule est analysée relativement à la critique féministe de la pornographie et des assertions de partisans gais. Bien que la formule Falcon supporte la perspective féministe en ce qui concerne les représentations des pratiques sexuelles, le lien entre la féminité et se faire baiser, tel que supposé par Dworkin, n'était pas présent dans les vidéocassettes Falcon sélectionnées. En fait, les vidéocassettes Falcon dénoncent ce lien en représentant des hommes masculins ayant des relations sexuelles avec d'autres hommes masculins. Et, en accord avec les revendications des partisans gais, les vidéocassettes Falcon représentent majoritairement des hommes gais ayant des relations sexuelles avec des hommes gais contrairement à des hommes hétérosexuels ayant des rapports homosexuels. La formule Falcon semble avoir été conçue non seulement par réaction aux stéréotypes stigmatisants des hommes gais et par réaction au lien entre la féminité et l'action de se faire baiser, mais également pour pourvoir à la fantaisie (d'auditeurs gais) d'être acceptés au sein d'une communauté mâle exclusive.

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FOREWORD

Although pornography does not necessarily provoke reactions to the same degree that other issues might, it continues to be a charged topic, long after discourses on porn reached their climax in the 1980s. In my conversations about this thesis with friends and acquaintances, the moral intensity surrounding pornography became apparent.

My choice of porn as a research topic provoked a variety of reactions but perhaps because I am a man, no one assumed that I was “anti-porn.” Instead, people generally presumed that I was “pro-porn.” For example, some individuals assumed that I was a libertine and that I undertook this research to undermine a supposed “Victorian” culture, flaunting my pornographic pursuits in the face of Canadian puritanism.

In contrast, others assumed that I was not opposing social norms but was instead working within them in order to achieve my personal goals, namely to view porn. For example, some people presumed that I wanted to watch pornographic videos but was unable to do so without consequence to my social position. They would imply that presenting this thesis as “research” served as an alibi to provide me with access to pornography while overtly maintaining my respectability.

In writing this thesis, I was not motivated by a pursuit of pornography. I do not feel that my personal access to porn is restricted. It is widely and easily accessible. And so, it is comical that others would suggest that I would go through the trouble of

pursuing a Master's degree in order to watch some porn. On the other hand, I was not driven by any political convictions regarding freedom of expression.

My interest was not so much in pornography, but gay pornography. I felt that analyses of straight porn did not necessarily translate directly to the gay context and that they are nevertheless sometimes applied inappropriately. In other words, some analyses of gay porn are generated from a straight frame of reference, and I found this to be disagreeable. It is necessary to consider gay porn from a gay point of view, and that was my intention. Consequently, an important aspect of this thesis is not so much that the subject matter is sexual or homosexual, but that the perspective is a gay one.

By default, discussions of porn and sex are often premised on a heterosexual world. This dimension had profound effects in my dealings with people. Whereas porn seems to invite discussion, homosexuality generally inspires silence, except of course in gay circles. With this knowledge, I sometimes played my cards one at a time, first mentioning that my thesis was about pornography, and then, after some time I would indicate that I was analyzing gay porn. One unsuspecting straight male acquaintance, with a twinkle in his eye, offered to lend a hand with my research by viewing some pornographic videos. He was less enthused, however, when the picture was made clearer.

Porn researchers have generally focused on straight pornography despite the existence of gay porn that is available, in my opinion, in a disproportionately large quantity when compared with the proportion of the population that is presumed to be gay. Though this thesis is not the first venture of its kind (Burger 1995), it seeks to

expand upon the scant literature concerning gay video pornography that is currently available.

INTRODUCTION

The topic of pornography brings images to mind. For most people, these images are of women and men. Consequently, pornography has come to mean heterosexual porn. Most social scientists have taken the same approach; researchers have generally dealt with gay porn as an exception. In fact, most researchers who conduct content analyses of pornography specifically select samples that exclude the depiction of men having sex together. "No incidences of male homosexuality (i.e., two or more males) were observed" (Brosius 1993, 165). "None of the films sampled were targeted at a gay population... Male homosexuality or bisexuality was never represented; these orientations were only portrayed by women" (Cowan 1988, 305). "I will not deal with the separate though related questions of child pornography or gay male pornography" (Manion 1985, 67). Thus, as Arcand concludes, "almost all discussions or debates on the question prefer to ignore the very visible existence of homosexual pornography (for either sex), as if our culture has decreed that it is only appropriate to think about sex as referring to relationships between men and women" (Arcand 1993, 183). In contrast, this thesis specifically focuses on gay pornography.

It has been argued that the consistency of porn provides viewers with a model of sex (Arcand 1993). The concern expressed is not that viewing one porn video will cause people to directly imitate what they saw. "The claim instead is that repeated exposure to pornography somehow leads to a familiarity that gives the model a certain validity, and thereby creates the impression of being normal, acceptable, the direct

result of the deep nature of things, and therefore unchangeable” (Arcand 1993, 74-5). This thesis presents qualitative data to support the existence and evolution of a model in gay pornographic videos and provides details of the nature of this model.

Pornography is about more than sex. In particular, it has been argued that the pornographic model links images of sex practices with representations of masculinity and femininity, and also sexual orientation. The first chapter of this thesis presents an overview of leading theoretical interpretations put forth by gay advocates and feminist critics that touch upon these issues.

Some gay advocates have argued that gay porn provides viewers with positive images of gay men (Weeks 1985). As such, gay porn was considered to be a political tool that served as an antidote to the homophobia that gay men had internalized from their culture at large, including pornography. Specifically, gay porn, which shows gay men having sex together, was in sharp contrast with earlier “all-male” porn, which showed *straight* men stumbling into situational homosexuality, that is, homosexual sex that arises from a lack of female partners rather than the desire of men (Simpson 1994).

The positive quality that gay advocates see in gay porn arises not only from how it signals that the characters are gay (Screen 1992), but also from the depictions of these characters as masculine (Simpson 1994). Gay men have been stereotypically characterized as effeminate and have in turn been ridiculed and ostracized. Thus, representations of masculine gay men are considered to be positive political images that retaliate against stigmatizing stereotypes.

On the other hand, some feminists have argued that straight porn provides negative images of gender relations (Dworkin 1979). Researchers have identified how

straight pornography consistently shows women as subordinate to men and as the victims of men's aggression (Cowan 1988). As such, porn is viewed by these feminist researchers as a patriarchal tool. It normalizes men's hegemony by acculturating viewers to a masculine pornographic value system.

This feminist theoretical interpretation was expanded by Dworkin to encompass gay porn. One performer in gay porn was claimed to play the role of "woman," and gay viewers were assumed to identify with the other performer who fucks this symbolic female. By doing so, gay men and straight men alike were deemed to be participating in a celebration of their dominance over women through the production and consumption of pornography.

To explore these issues, a content analysis of a sample of gay porn videos was undertaken. The second chapter describes the method I used to select the sample of videos. In consultation with the staff at Wega Video, a principal retailer of gay porn in Canada, I restricted my sample to what is considered the most prominent and popular production house, Falcon Studios. Falcon, an American company, has been in business since 1970 and is known, in part, for its uniform style of production. I selected 22 "best-selling" videos produced between 1970 and 1990, which enabled me to investigate whether a consistent formula did indeed exist, the nature of this formula, and how it evolved since Falcon began producing porn videos. The chapter concludes with a description of my method of analysis and the type of data I collected.

With respect to the depictions of sex in gay porn, if Dworkin's interpretation is accurate, then we would expect to see representations of sex in Falcon videos that mirrors straight sex practices with "male" and "female" roles. However, if the

perspective of gay advocates is legitimate, then we would expect to find representations that present the sexual fluidity that is inherently possible in homosexual sex. The third chapter investigates the sex practices depicted in the sample Falcon videos and how these representations of sex evolved and consolidated to form the foundation of the Falcon formula.

In the fourth chapter, evidence from the sample videos is used to examine how masculinity and femininity were represented and linked with the formula of sex practices described in the previous chapter. If the sample videos contain consistent representations of masculine men fucking feminine men, this evidence would support Dworkin's assertions as to the misogynistic quality of gay pornography. Conversely, the absence of this construction would bolster the perspective of gay advocates.

In the fifth chapter, how sexual orientation is depicted in Falcon videos and how these representations evolved over the period of analysis is investigated. If Falcon videos are indeed positive, as gay advocates claim, then we would expect to see characters who are somehow signaled to the viewer as being gay, or at least not depicted as straight.

On the other hand, representations of "straightness" in gay porn were not touched upon by Dworkin, perhaps because they speak to anti-gay sentiments as opposed to misogyny. For example, if straight men are depicted fucking gay men, then Falcon videos may be construed as being anti-gay. Therefore, evidence of this construction in Falcon videos would not provide support for Dworkin's position but would indeed counter the assertions of gay advocates.

The sixth chapter summarizes the findings in the preceding chapters. In conclusion, the potential meaning of the Falcon formula to viewers is discussed and possible explanations are offered as to why it represents sex practices, masculinity and sexual orientation as it does.

**PERSPECTIVES ON GAY PORNOGRAPHY: GAY ADVOCATES AND
FEMINIST CRITICS**

Without doubt, pornography is about sex, but the representations of sex in porn reveal much more than just flesh. For example, gay porn does not simply represent men having sex with other men. Gay porn is directed at gay-identified men and represents gay men having “gay sex.” The emergence of gay pornography is historically specific and intimately linked with the social evolution of gay men, the emergence and adoption of gay identities and the gay liberation movement. Arguments aimed at countering porn censorship have identified this unique social context for which there is no equivalent in relation to straight porn.

In the 1950s and 1960s, before the Stonewall riots and the gay liberation movement, illicit, commercial images of male homosexuality were available in North America, but they were not the most prevalent form of homosexual erotica. “Explicitly sexual photos were rare compared to physique nudes and beefcake, and one surmises that they were sold mostly to trusted contacts and customers and circulated on a largely local basis... Compared to the growing network of commercial physique erotica flooding the above-ground market with increasing impunity in the 1950s and 1960s, illicit production was unorganized, unprofitable (unless for the Mob), and usually hit and miss” (Waugh 1996, 324). In these physique nudes, homosexuality was not depicted and the implication of homosexual desire was not reflected on the viewer. An

alibi of body-building was used to present male nudes commercially without consequence of the stigma of homosexuality for both the viewer and the producer (Waugh 1995).

In the 1970s, despite the growing gay liberation movement, the practice of keeping homosexuality and the emerging gay identity in the closet continued as commercial erotica increasingly made the transition to film. And although commercially available images now showed homosexual sex instead of nude men simply parading and posing, many pornographic film producers continued to hide behind a heterosexual mask, opting for the moniker “all-male” (Simpson 1994). These all-male films depicted situational homosexuality, that is to say, “not gay men having gay sex but ‘straight’ men having [homosexual] sex — or rather men having sex with other men where the absence of women is generally treated as accidental or circumstantial. ‘Straight’ men just blunder casually into sex with other men, find out that they enjoy it and carry on doing it: so called ‘situational’ homosexuality is the order of the day, and not just in terms of the military/penal context: hot work-outs, straight porn (a favourite), swimming, horse-riding, cycling, beer-drinking, bus journeys, camp fires, dope, hot weather, cold weather, and even sleeping, all produce pesky erections that just have to be taken care of — by your buddy (after all, there are no ‘chicks’ around)” (Simpson 1994, 132-3).

However, some more politically motivated producers began to develop what came to be gay pornography. Unlike all-male films, their films are expressly about and directed at gay men (Simpson 1994). They aimed to show gay men having gay sex, not straight men having homosexual sex. As such, the advent of gay porn in the 1970s

reflected a shift in sexual politics and acquired social significance for those who produced and consumed it from its connection to gay political concerns.

The emergence of gay pornography is thus linked to the more general process whereby homosexuality came to define persons rather than acts (Foucault 1978), labeling and stigmatizing persons as homosexuals but also laying the groundwork for overt self-labeling as a retaliatory political act: “in a culture where homosexual desires, female or male are still execrated and denied, the adoption of lesbian and gay identities inevitably constitutes political choice” (Weeks 1985, 209).

Through its links to the emergence of gay identities and gay activism, gay pornography thus has a social significance that straight pornography does not. It intentionally depicts gay men having gay sex. Gay porn could not exist before there were gay men.

As pornography of all kinds became more widely available, debate emerged about its effects on consumers. “What worries people is seeing pornography teaching things that society has elsewhere condemned” (Arcand 1993, 74). Some people opposed pornography on these grounds, contending that pornographic representations of sex for pleasure, homosexual sex, sex outside of marriage and sex without procreation as the objective advocated practices that threaten the monogamous, heterosexual relationships upon which families are predicated. Conversely, others contended that there is no direct relationship between viewing pornography and behaviour.

Defenders of gay porn played both sides of this debate. During the 1970s, they argued that gay porn would not affect behaviour by making the viewer “turn gay”, but

would simply affect the self-image of those men who were already gay. Gay advocates saw gay pornography as a revolutionary force that countered the negative images of homosexuality in mainstream culture with more positive images of homosexuality produced by gay men. "Gay men and lesbians too, have seen in pornography positive aspects which the critics would reject. They argue that gay porn offers images of desire which a hostile society would deny and are therefore real encouragements for a positive sense of self" (Weeks 1985, 235). By providing positive sexual images, gay porn was seen to be an effective antidote to the stigmatization most gay men had internalized.

Gay porn purportedly achieved this positive effect — a sense of gay pride — in part by eliminating the convention of representing homosexuality as situational and also by marking the film as gay, in some way. "In the 1970s, gay porn makers generally tried to give their films a particular style or content to mark them as gay and thus different from films that showed men having sex with each other for the erotic pleasure of ostensibly *heterosexual* male consumers" [my emphasis] (Screen 1992, 34).

Because gay men have been stereotyped as being effeminate, another way that gay porn supposedly positively portrays gay men is by depicting them as masculine (Simpson 1994). Through these efforts to produce pornography that reflected gay culture and thus depicted homosexuality in a positive rather than negative light, gay porn acquired significance for gay men as part of a more general pathway to liberation.

Gay pornography also came to have social significance for the gay community as a source of information about sex, most notably about safe sex practices in an age of AIDS. Because information on homosexual sex is restricted, gay pornography has served as one avenue for disseminating such information.

In the 1980s and '90s, the gay community responded to the threat of AIDS using all forms of communication that it had available to broadcast safe sex information. Although gay and lesbian voices are being heard more often in the mainstream media, information about, and depictions of homosexual sex still remain largely in the realm of porn. Consequently, pornography was used, to a degree, to demonstrate and normalize safe sex practices.

For example, Al Parker, a porn performer turned producer, became a pioneer in the area of safe sex videography. "Parker had already appeared in several safe sex campaigns on the West Coast and had been a vocal advocate for safe sex in the gay media and in a controversial appearance on the 'Phil Donahue Show.' Parker required absolute adherence to ultrasafe sex on his sets and had produced a commercial porn video that was a primer on the use of condoms, surgical gloves (for finger fucking) and plastic wrap (to cover the anus for rimming)" (Screen 1992, 34).

Facing a dearth of public health literature, gay porn advocates inverted the conservative concern about the effects of pornography on behaviour, using this argument to defend and promote gay porn. Rather than focusing on negative learning effects, as censorship proponents had done, gay porn advocates focused on potential positive learning effects. During the 1980s, gay porn was commonly presented as a teaching instrument for safe sex and, in sharp contrast to the arguments put forward a decade earlier, advocates hoped that porn would indeed shape sexual behaviour.

Of the videos selected for analysis in this thesis, condoms were seen only in the most recent video, produced in 1990, just when Falcon performers were beginning, albeit it rather belatedly, to use condoms while performing. Consequently, an

examination of the representations of safe sex practices in Falcon videos is beyond the scope of this thesis (which focuses on 23 Falcon “classics” filmed between 1970 and 1990).

So far this thesis has illustrated how the consideration of gay porn as simply a homosexual equivalent of straight porn overlooks its social significance. In this sense, analyzing gay porn from a straight perspective neglects the relevance that gay porn has for both producers and consumers in validating gay identities, gay sexual practices and disseminating sexual information.

Some recent feminist analyses of porn impose a straight perspective on gay porn in another way, drawing parallels between the representation of gender relations in straight porn and the representation of masculinity in gay pornography. Thus Dworkin contends that “male homosexual culture consistently uses the symbolic female as part of its indigenous environment, as a touchstone against which masculinity can be experienced as meaningful and sublime” (Dworkin 1979, 128). Dworkin “reads” gay pornography as celebrating male dominance and female submission in the same ways that straight pornography does, by expressing gender relations through the sexual practices of fucking (masculine) and getting fucked (feminine). From this perspective, gay pornography contributes to the subjugation of women because the man who gets fucked in gay porn is symbolically female. Dworkin states that “the sex act means penile intromission followed by penile thrusting, or fucking. The woman is acted on; the man acts and through action expresses sexual power, the power of masculinity. Fucking requires that the male act on one who has less power and this valuation is so deep, so completely implicit in the act, that the one who is fucked is stigmatized as

feminine during the act even when not anatomically female. In the male system, sex is the penis, the penis is sexual power, its use in fucking is manhood” (Dworkin 1979, 23).

In the same light, researchers have focused on the depictions of sexual violence in straight porn. For example, Cowan et al. found that “a significant amount of dominance and sexual inequality was found in videocassettes commonly available for rental in video stores. Dominance and exploitation were primary themes in the present sample, comprising together the core of over half the total number of sex scenes. In addition, domination and exploitation were primarily directed toward women; women were infrequently portrayed as dominating or exploiting men. The more blatant indicators of abuse — a full 23% of the scenes containing at least one act of physical violence — were directed toward women... Thus, the fusion of sex and aggression present in these videotapes, including the portrayal of rape, bondage, female submission, and verbal abuse, supports the ideology that sexuality includes domination and abusive treatment of women” (Cowan 1988, 308).

These depictions of sexual violence in pornography are interpreted as an integral feature of porn and a reflection of the nature of male sexual desire. As such, Dworkin asserts that “male sexual aggression is the unifying thematic and behavioral reality of male sexuality; it does not distinguish homosexual men from heterosexual men or heterosexual men from homosexual men” (Dworkin 1979, 57).

Feminist analyses of pornography have very usefully called attention to how representations of sex get linked to representations of gender. However, the issue of *how* this is potentially done in gay porn is a key issue here. Analyzing gay pornography

requires careful attention to how representations link masculinity with sexual practices for men who both identify with and who desire masculinity.

METHODS

Mass-produced pornography was traditionally disseminated in magazine format, but “with the advent of the affordable videocassette recorder, pornographic movies are no longer confined to the adult bookstore or specialty theatres and are now available at the same outlets where general home movies are rented... Videocassettes are now the dominant mode of pornography production” (Cowan 1988, 300). “According to Adult Video News, an industry trade publication, the number of hard-core-video rentals rose from 75 million in 1985 [in the United States] to 490 million in 1992. The total climbed to 665 million, an all-time high, in 1996” (Schlosser 1997, 43-4).

Gay porn has evolved in a similar way. “Pornographic videos now dominate the gay pornography market to such an extent that a majority (57.3%) of gay pornographic magazines in the 1980s consist of scenes from a video and present the story line of that video or a segment of it” (Duncan 1989, 97). Porn magazines are no longer simply a product themselves but are now used as a marketing vehicle for selling video porn, the dominant mode of dissemination.

Situated in the gay quarter in the city of Montreal (or “gai village,” as it is known locally), Wega Video is a business specializing in the sale, rental and screening of gay porn videos. In addition to over-the-counter rentals and sales, Wega’s mail-order business provides porn videos to customers across Canada. Wega also operates a “traditional” theatre where gay porn is presented with regular screening times. And,

customers are able to rent private screening rooms to view a chosen video. Wega has exclusive distribution rights to many gay porn video lines sold in Canada. Consequently, it is a principle player in the Canadian porn industry.

Although Wega is primarily in the gay porn video business, it does not present itself as a gay enterprise. Because some of their customers are not gay-identified, Wega does not want to intimidate these men by projecting an aggressively gay image. At the time of this thesis, the layout of the video rental store reflected this approach. The boxes to straight videos available for rent are placed on racks at the entrance to the store, to ease non-gay men into the space. In other words, closeted or straight-identified customers who are interested in exploring gay porn are shielded from a confrontation with an exclusively gay environment. Ironically, in this gay porn video store, there is a gay section.

Provincial laws dealing with obscenity create an uneven legal environment for Wega across Canada. According to staff at Wega, Quebec and Alberta offer the least restrictive environments in which to do business. (Two other storefront operations have opened, one in Edmonton and another in Calgary.) British Columbia is considered to be the most restrictive, mainly because obscenity laws there cover the audio aspect of film in addition to the images, making distribution more difficult.

Because of client loyalty to certain production houses, the videos for rent were categorized and arranged on the store shelves by producer rather than by subject or theme. Wega's mail-order catalogue is also organized in this manner. Gay porn consumers chose films for many reasons. One factor is the performers featured in the film. However, according to Wega staff, the majority of regular buyers and renters are

loyal to a particular production house. As such, gay porn videos are collected. For example, at the end of one video viewed for this analysis, the following screen title appeared before a preview for another video, "Add this exciting video to your collection!"

Rather than select videos randomly from Wega's shelves, I focused on selecting the most widely viewed videos, best-sellers or "gay porn classics," since these videos would best reflect the preferences of porn consumers. According to staff at Wega, one production house — Falcon Studios — stands head and shoulders above the rest in terms of popularity. Although there are a number of gay porn producers, Falcon Studios, an American company based in San Francisco, accounts for a significant proportion of sales and rentals at Wega. Given their wide appeal and their long history as a business (established in 1970), I decided to restrict my sample to Falcon videos.

There were other advantages to selecting Falcon films. One of the selling features of these videos is their consistency. Buyers can be fairly certain of what they are purchasing. Over the years, Falcon Studios has developed a consistent style. In this sense, Falcon videos present viewers, not just with pornographic images, but with a model of gay sex, as is shown in the subsequent chapters.

Though Wega keeps current rental and sales records, it would have been very difficult to determine the popularity of older Falcon videos. Older videos, which may have been popular at the time of their release, sell less briskly the longer they sit on the shelf. Thus, a selection by the volume of current sales would be biased towards the most recently released films. A selection of "classic" Falcon videos was therefore chosen on the basis of recommendations elicited from interviews with counter staff.

Shortly after these interviews, Falcon launched a sales promotion to celebrate their 25th anniversary in the summer of 1995. Twenty-five "classic" Falcon videos from the 1970s and 1980s were being offered at sale prices. These classics were selected by Falcon Studios, promoted in a brochure and sold through Wega in Canada. The list of classics in the sales promotion was comparable to the titles that the counter staff had indicated. Consequently, I decided to view the films listed in the brochure, but chose to exclude two of the more recent films from the Jocks division of Falcon Studios, leaving the 23 "traditional" Falcon classics in the sample. Jocks is a "new" division of the Falcon enterprise and it produces videos that are distinct in style from the traditional ones.

The selected videos are listed below in chronological order of their production. Each one has a number (designated by Falcon), which is generally used hereafter for convenience, in lieu of the full title. The number is preceded by the initials FVP, which stand for "Falcon Video Pac," i.e. FVP 32.

SELECTED FALCON VIDEOS

- 1 The Other Side of Aspen
- 5 The Crotch Watcher
- 9 Pool Party
- 13 Hayride
- 16 The Biggest of Them All
- 22 Pornstud
- 26 The Brothers
- 30 Biker's Liberty
- 32 The New Breed
- 33 Spokes
- 40 Splash Shots
- 41 Night Flight

- 47 The Other Side of Aspen II
- 48 Spring Break
- 53 Out of Bounds
- 57 Perfect Summer
- 58 Spokes II: The Graduation
- 61 Behind Closed Doors
- 62 Pledgemasters: The Rites of Manhood
- 64 Manrammer
- 65 Deep in Hot Water
- 66 Plunge
- 70 Mission Accomplished

Although contemporary porn videos are shot directly on videotape as single entities, Falcon videos from the 1970s are often re-releases of several distinct film “loops,” combined to form one video. Most likely, these loops were originally shot on Super 8mm or 16mm film. From the “early” videos themselves, it was not possible to know from the screen titles when they were originally made because all were copyrighted in 1984, when presumably these loops were transferred from film to videotape. Loops were combined, usually in groups of three or four, and re-released on videocassette, hence the name Video Pac. This format of having three or four episodes in one video was carried forward even though later videos were shot directly on videotape (as one entity).

In some cases, two versions of the video exist: a rental version and a harder-core version, for sale by mail-order only. In this analysis, the rental versions were screened. The scenes omitted in the rental or over-the-counter version depict extreme anal penetration — with large dildos, or the hand, “fisting.” For example, in FVP 48, the final scene was pre-empted with the following screen title:

"Warning: MASTER'S DELIGHT is presented in the MAIL ORDER VERSION only and is presented as a SEXUAL FANTASY only. This is not recommended activity for inexperienced persons."

The camera pans some S/M gear and Chris Burns in a leather sling (a hammock-like apparatus used to facilitate being fisted). The camera cuts to a screen title again.

"MASTER'S DELIGHT cannot be presented in this retail store version. It is available in its full uncut version by mail order only. For more information, please write: ..."

Although I gathered data from interviews with the staff at Wega, their catalogue of videos and the video-box-covers, the principal data was collected by note-taking while watching the videos. I viewed the videos chronologically (from earliest to most recent) so that my impression of the development in their style and content would be facilitated. I structured my notes using the following sections: performers and costumes (who), settings (when and where), plot (why), and sex scene descriptions (what).

For the earlier videos, performers were not always listed with photos in the credits, so I was required to consult the catalogue or the box-cover (which was on the shelf at Wega) to determine who was who. Later, the credits made it clearer and easier by matching performers' names with face shots at the start of the video.

In the earlier videos, there was a soundtrack throughout, so I did not have to consider any dialogue. In the later videos, which had plot-related dialogue, I noted everything that was said. I did not document the dialogue during the sex scenes though as I considered it incidental to this investigation.

Most of the videos were an hour to one and a half hours in length. Because I was regularly pausing the videotape in order to take notes and sometimes rewinding it to verify my notes, the total viewing time I spent for each film was about three to four hours. Then, after viewing the entire video, I would document my general impression of the video and any trends or patterns that were emerging or evolving.

Because the videos became more stylized and more complex (more detailed plots, dialogue, settings, etc.) the notes I took on the more recent films were lengthier in comparison to those for the earlier videos. As is reflected in my notes, the earlier videos seemed to focus primarily on the sex, whereas the later videos were more “multidimensional.”

Once all of the videos had been viewed, I reconfigured my notes by the sections that I had previously established and then considered each one separately. For example, I compiled my notes on the performers in all of the videos, in sequential order. I felt that this would help me to discern further any patterns that developed over time. This method helped me to tackle the large quantity of notes I had amassed.

TOPS AND BOTTOMS IN FALCON VIDEOS

In the earlier sample videos, one has the impression of watching spontaneous sex. It is unchoreographed and unplanned — as if the director says “action” and all is ad-libbed, though the performers are aware of their overall goal. However, in the middle period, gay-porn sex roles that defined who did what to whom were beginning to emerge. “The reality of the topsy-turvy versatility of gay male relations is denied; in porn, it would seem, gay men demand that the fucker and the fucked remain distinct categories in a way that they often fail to in ‘real’ life” (Simpson 1994, 135).

To a degree, these roles have come to form the foundation of casting in the gay porn industry. They have now become so inflexible that porn personas are built around them. For example, the following performers were consistently either a “top” (and fuck) or “bottom” (and get fucked) in the two or three selected videos in which they appeared.

Tops	FVP No.
John Holmes	9, 16
Kris Bjorn	30, 32
Giorgio Canali	40, 47
O.G. Johnson	41, 47
Chad Douglas	48, 58, 64
Jim Bentley	58, 61
Steve Hammond	62, 70
Rex Chandler	64, 65

Dick Masters	64, 65
Luke Bender	65, 66

Bottoms	FVP No.
Jon King	30, 57
Kevin Wiles	48, 61
Casey Jordan	53, 57
Jack Lofton	58, 62
Brad Mitchell	62, 64, 65
Cal Jensen	65, 66
Mike Gregory	61, 62

In the middle period, though the top and bottom roles were emerging, they were not always consistently applied. For example, Kurt Marshall bottoms in two scenes in FVP 40, yet in FVP 41 he tops Joe Gere. Then in FVP 47 he is both top and bottom in different scenes. In one scene in FVP 33, Leo Ford, a very popular porn star who was generally known as a bottom, swung between top and bottom roles during an extended orgy scene in a barn. Other performers in the scene were less inclined to “step out of their roles.”

Later Falcon videos are much more scripted in terms of sex. In the later period, tops and bottoms are consistently represented and the fluidity that was somewhat apparent in earlier videos disappeared.

The sex performed by tops and bottoms generally flows through four main activities, sucking cock, rimming (oral-anal sex), fucking and cumming (outside the body). This sequence formula was not always or evenly applied: rimming is less often displayed. When strict top and bottom roles are adhered to, the formula is as follows:

the bottom sucks the top's cock, the top rims the bottom, then the top fucks the bottom. The scene usually ends with both partners cumming: the top on the body of the bottom.

Not only did what the performers do become more consistent but so did how they did it. An aura of aggression was increasingly depicted in Falcon videos through aggressive sex. For example, in some instances, revenge or punishment forms the motivation for sex. In FVP 53, Kevin Williams has his revenge on Brad Richardson. Brad's transgression? While driving his motorcycle and passing Kevin who was riding a bicycle, Brad pushed Kevin off the road for no apparent reason. Luckily for Kevin, Brad's wallet fell out during the scuffle, so he was able to find him and mete out his punishment — sexually of course.

FVP 57 was almost entirely premised on revenge sex. Robert and Tom are fishing on a lake and are splashed by Jon who is water-skiing nearby. Jon and the boat driver are made to pay for spraying water all over the other two. In the second scene, Robert (from scene 1) administers punishment again after Chris trips him into a pool. Robert warns, "I told you what I do to people when they do that shit to me." And in the third scene, two bathhouse workers take their revenge out on the owner's (gay) son who forces them to work late and miss "the biggest party of the summer."

In FVP 70, Steve Hammond is "on assignment" to find performers for Falcon's 25th anniversary video — a porn video about making a porn video. Steve enlists Dcota to test a candidate. However, the motive for their sex scene is revenge not business. It is certainly not desire. Dcota is getting back at Lee, the candidate, for complaining about sexual harassment that resulted in Lee's boss being fired. Dcota meets Lee by posing as his new supervisor.

Steve, *"I'm glad you're able to do this for me."*

Dcota, *"Looking forward to it."*

Steve, *"Here it is. This guy Lee works for a construction firm. He got this old guy, who used to be his foreman fired. He said he was sexually harassing him. I wanna see if he feels the same way about a young buck like yourself. Your job is to fuck him down and dirty until he squeals. Now he's working at a garage all by himself..."*

Lee, on his knees, is putting tools in a toolbox. Dcota stands, crotch at Lee's face level.

Dcota, *"I'm your foreman."*

Lee, *"Yeah, right."* He walks away.

Dcota, *"I hear you didn't like the last one."*

Lee, *"No."*

Dcota, *"I don't think I'm gonna like you either. I hear you like sucking dick down at Casey's."*

Lee, *"What?"*

Dcota, *"I hear you take it up the ass too."*

Lee, *"No way."*

Dcota takes off his belt, and opens his pants. He puts the belt around Lee's head and draws his face into his crotch.

Following these set-ups, aggressive sex was depicted. Aggressive sex among gay men is associated with a social type who emerged in the 1970s known as the clone. "The clone role reflected the gay world's image of a doped-up, sexed-out, Marlboro man" (Levine 1992, 69). For clones, casual sex "frequently involved 'deep throating,' 'hard fucking,' and 'heavy tit work.' For example, fellatio often included vigorously jamming the penis completely down the throat (deep throating), which frequently caused gagging or choking. Anal intercourse usually entailed strenuously ramming the penis entirely up the anus while painfully slapping the buttocks (hard fucking). Nipple

stimulation commonly involved robustly sucking, pinching, or biting the nipples to the point of pain (heavy titwork)” (Levine 1992, 78).

“Clone sex” and the sex depicted in the selected Falcon videos are for the most part identical only in style. The exclusiveness of top and bottom roles was probably less prominent among clones in the 1970s. It is likely that clones engaged in less scripted sex than is depicted in contemporary porn videos since clones may have linked the fluidity of sex with sexual liberation. In addition, clones were gay men who had aggressive casual sex for pleasure, not revenge.

Although “fucking” was the standard fare in the selected videos, there were depictions of sexual encounters that were less rough. Gentleness tended to occur in scenes depicting lovers. However, “love scenes” were fairly uncommon. Among the selected videos, love scenes were only found in FVP 41 and 46. These scenes depicted sex within a relationship that was “gentle” and occurring in front of fires in fireplaces.

Given that the sample Falcon videos reveal an emergent formula where tops aggressively fuck bottoms, this indicates that Dworkin’s analysis is accurate in this regard. What remains to be seen, however, is if masculinity and femininity are aligned with the top and bottom roles respectively.

MASCULINITIES IN FALCON VIDEOS

The characters that did appear in the fantasy world of Falcon videos were not the usual stereotype. There were no mincing hairdressers or snide, prissy waiters (although there were flight attendants in FVP 41). "Negative" feminine stereotypes of gay men were absent. As if to counter the stigma of faggotry, gay porn presents an exaggerated, overt masculinity through a cast of masculine characters.

The most ubiquitous character in the films viewed was the jock. In the selected Falcon videos, there were skiers (FVP 1 and 47), tennis players (FVP 40), a surfer (FVP 48), a football player (FVP 61), cyclists (FVP 33 and 58), swimmers (FVP 13), and water-skiers (FVP 57). Notably, the more expressive or artistic sports that are often actually associated with gay men, such as figure skating, gymnastics or diving were absent because of their apparent femininity.

To signal that the character was a jock, athletic clothing was usually worn. Athletic gear or equipment was also displayed. Perhaps the most vital element of the jock's costume in gay porn is the jockstrap, which is popular among gay men for its visually erotic qualities. It emphasizes the crotch and frames the buttocks.

Another masculine character common to gay porn videos was the clone. In the 1970s, clones sported what has in retrospect become a classic masculine gay look. There are many variations on the clone look, but the basic elements are as follows: boots (cowboy, army, biker, etc.), button-fly jeans, a plaid shirt and a leather jacket. A

jockstrap or a cockring is often worn to create a bulging crotch. A thick moustache (goatee or beard) and short cropped hair are *de rigueur*. The clone look and its variations were common in the videos screened. In a sense, the clone is the “average gay man” in Falcon videos.

The leatherman (based on the biker-look) takes the clone to further heights of masculinity. Leathermen appeared in FVP 30 (Biker’s Liberty), 58 and 62. Building upon the clone look, jeans are covered with black leather chaps or replaced entirely with black leather pants. A leather harness takes the place of the plaid shirt. Leathermen sometimes wear leather gloves, leather wrist and arm bands and mirrored sunglasses. Silver studs are often used. There is a glossy quality to the costume which comes from the polished black leather and the reflectiveness of silver and mirror. Tattoos and piercings, especially nipple rings are common additions: “These objects and styles have clear meanings in the wider culture: toughness, virility, aggression, strength, potency — essentially, masculinity and its associated machismo. It seems as if there is an attempt, as with language, to achieve through these objects a differentiation between oneself, who becomes a ‘real man’ in these outfits, and the absurd, condemned and ridiculed role of other homosexuals. There is a celebration of masculinity that allows them to distance themselves from the stigmatized label of homosexual” (Blachford 1987, 96).

Gay leathermen are not an esoteric sub-group of the gay community seen only in porn videos or in S/M bars. Rather, they are regarded as paragons of masculinity and their celebration of hyper-masculinity is well organized in the community. The International Mr. Leatherman Competition, which in some ways mirrors female beauty pageants, is the culmination of many smaller competitions where local leathermen are

selected to represent their city in the final competition. Mr. International Leatherman is not only a masculine idol to be adored by men who desire masculine men, but is also a reflection of the masculine ideology in the gay community (Pleck 1993) — a living testament to how gay men think that gay men *should* be.

In addition to jocks, clones and leathermen, characters with occupations that require uniforms were also seen. Uniforms are highly eroticised in the gay community because they are associated with what are, or once were, all-male organizations such as the police force, the military, etc. Uniforms also represent authority and strength, which are also masculine and sexually potent characteristics. In FVP 30, a sailor dressed in whites is coupled with a leatherman in black leather. In FVP 41 there are pilots and stewards in full uniform and businessmen in suits (passengers). In FVP 53, we encounter a forest ranger wearing a tan uniform.

The most common costume element in the selected videos were boots. They are the male equivalent of the high heel, worn by many female porn performers. And boots are often worn during sex in the same manner that women wear heels in straight porn. In addition to clones and leathermen, a variety of characters in many of the selected videos wore boots. For example, construction workers wore work boots. Army boots were worn by khaki clad men, as well as cowboy boots by farmhands. A scene in FVP 30 clearly depicts the meaningful role of boots in gay costume. The first segment, entitled “Boots” opens with Sky Dawson lying naked on a bed nuzzling a biker’s boot.

Although the gay community is by nature exclusively male, it is not necessarily only masculine in self-presentation. Feminine costumes are not absent. In the gay community, drag queens are to femininity what leathermen are to masculinity. But

while leathermen are plentiful in gay porn, drag queens are not; not one appeared in the selected videos. Since leathermen are masculine/sex icons in the gay community, it is logical that they would populate gay porn. Drag queens are generally clowns and critics, and since there was little or no humour, nor social commentary in the porn videos selected, there was no need for *feminine* drag.

The gay community has been successful at lampooning the feminine. However, when masculinity is taken to extremes, it's not funny, it's sexy. More importantly, in gay porn, the absence of drag queens suggests that the display of femininity, even in its most exaggerated forms would taint the masculine aura of the video. For porn producers, who are responding to their consumers' demands, masculinity is "hot." From this vantage point, the heightened stigma of femininity for gay men with respect to their sexual desirability is evident. Thus, it is not surprising that Falcon exclusively depicts masculine men.

Over time, a "Falcon man" emerged. In FVP 70, Steve Hammond is given the task of casting Falcon's 20th anniversary porn video — a porn video about making a porn video. His directions, which follow, indicate the casting objectives of the studio. "Your assignment is to assemble the finest, most *wholesome* group of erotic *young* men who will execute a sexual feat. Our viewers will accept nothing less." [my emphasis]

A fundamental characteristic among the Falcon performers was their relatively young age. No one appeared to be much older than thirty, with the majority in their twenties. Some even appeared to be in their late teens.

Perhaps, since porn producers in general, gay and straight, have been criticized for exploiting young and vulnerable people (that is, hiring street prostitutes, drug

addicts and run-aways), Falcon has avoided this criticism by casting “wholesome” young men. For example, while some leathermen in gay porn dress like bikers and may have a tattoo, they do not look like the stereotypical biker whose less wholesome body is not so well muscled and is often far more heavily tattooed. Falcon videos present a fantasy version of “tough” men — men who dress in a “streety” manner, but who are middle-class underneath it all. In addition to warding off criticism, this combination of middle-class toughness provides for the viewer safety with the aesthetics of danger.

In the earlier Falcon videos, men with various body types appeared. Slim, almost skinny young men were seen, as were athletic-looking men and some body-builders. As time passed, Falcon aimed at the middle of the gay community in terms of its desire for muscle. Most performers began to look more alike indicating that a Falcon physique evolved, establishing a normal body type — a “gay body” (Harris 1997, 127).

For the most part, porn performers are naked or nearly so. Thus without costume, gay porn performers must continue to appear masculine. This effect is achieved in part by their physique. Big muscles are plentiful in Falcon videos. Most performers had athletic bodies with well defined muscles, though not the size of competitive body-builders.

Many performers also sported tanned bodies. Tanned skin is a part of the Californian image of Falcon performers, but tan lines serve another purpose. They accentuate the crotch and buttocks through the contrast of darker and lighter skin. In a way, naked men with tan lines present a reverse image of themselves compared with when they are wearing their bathing suits. While suited, it is the body which is visible,

the crotch and buttocks are hidden. When naked, it is the crotch and buttocks which appear, while the body is shaded.

Besides being young, wholesome and muscular, performers' bodies appeared to be more "smooth" in the more recent videos. Aside from pubic and underarm hair, body hair was not a common sight. Performers who were naturally hirsute trimmed or shaved their bodies. Since body hair visually hides muscular definition, which signals masculinity and is thus desirable, "buffed" (almost polished) bodies became the norm in Falcon videos.

Hair is important in another respect. The predominant hair colour of the performers changed over time. An increasing proportion of Falcon performers were blonde, or *made* blonde. For example, in FVP 53, six of the nine performers are blonde (67%), compared to FVP 13, an earlier video, where only two of ten were fair-haired (20%). Hair colour can be one of the defining characteristics of a performer. For example, Cory *Monroe*, is unmistakably blonde as his last name implies. Blonde hair may have become prevalent in Falcon videos because it is symbolic of Californians. More directly, it signals sex. "Bombshell blondness is designed for the big effect. It is supposed to detonate in the viewer's gaze. It is designed to turn heads and stop traffic" (McCracken 1995, 64).

The vast majority of performers in the selected films were Caucasian. However, certain ethnic and racial groups were notably represented. There were four Italian men in the films viewed and their background was indicated by their names. Bruno appears in FVP 13, Giorgio Canali in FVP 40 and 47, Tony Marino in FVP 48 and 57, and Joey Stefano in FVP 66. In the gay community, Italians seem a desirable type because there

is a macho mystique surrounding Italian men. Interestingly, this machismo is not necessarily enlisted on the side of dominance. Whereas Bruno and Giorgio were definitely manly, Joey and Tony, as their names suggest, were boyish.

Hispanics were characterized by Melchor in FVP 41, Tony Bravo in FVP 47 and Vladamir Correa in FVP 53. Hispanics may be sexualized in the gay community in the same manner that Italians are, namely because of their supposed machismo.

Three black men appeared in the 23 Falcon films viewed: a nameless black man in FVP 22, Peter Gable in FVP 33, and O.G. Johnson in FVP 41 and 47. Not surprisingly, all three men lived up to the stereotype and had above average endowments. Above all, masculinity among black porn performers manifests itself in a big cock.

One consistent theme to several of the films viewed was size. Although there are many reasons for the emphasis on cock size, it is foremost a measure of masculinity. Like big muscles, a big cock is a physical manifestation of masculinity. Performers in the selected videos, who are known for their big cocks include: Al Parker, John Holmes, Lee "Huge" Ryder, Giorgio Canali, Scott O'Hara ("The man with the biggest dick in San Francisco"), O.G. Johnson, Chad Douglas, Rex Chandler and Dick Masters.

Regardless of the other qualities that project an image of masculinity, a big cock may eclipse the man entirely: the cock becomes symbolic of the man. For example, Jeff Stryker, a recent gay porn performer known for many qualities, most important of which is his big thick penis, has reached porn super-stardom. And the objectification of his cock has catapulted the commercialization of sex to new heights. Jeff Stryker has brought to the sex toy market "a life-like, skin-toned latex dildo cast from his

gargantuan penis and named after him” (Simpson 1994, 131). Not to be outdone, other porn performers have also had their privates replicated in latex for mass consumption.

Masculinity was also represented by the props that surrounded the performers. One surprising location for the sex scenes in some videos was in and around a truck, indicating that gay men have acted out the boyhood dictum of playing with trucks in an unanticipated manner. Four videos had scenes that took place in trucks. In FVP 13, Bruno and a hitchhiker have sex in the flatbed of Bruno’s truck. In the second scene in the same film, two guys have sex in a Toyota Jeep. (Interestingly, the make of the jeep was prominently shown to the viewer. Perhaps Toyota jeeps were popular among gay men at the time). In FVP 22, 47 and 64, it is a pick-up truck.

Each masculine character in gay porn (jock, clone, leatherman, etc.) is not always directly associated with a gay sex role. Often, it is how two characters are related to one another that matters. For example, in FVP 53 a hiker is predictably topped by a forest ranger whose character is vested with authority given that the sex scene takes place in the forest and that the hiker is trespassing.

Conventional linkages, however, were inverted in a few instances. For example, the sexual relationship between porno coach and jock was not always the predictable one, with coaches fucking jocks. For example, in FVP 48, the relationship was reversed. Two college jocks visit their former high school coach in order to seduce him. One student says to the coach, “We’ve learned some things we’d like to teach you.”

When similar characters (for example, two jocks) are cast together in a scene, top and bottom roles are still assigned. Consequently, signaling who is a top or a

bottom in these instances is derived from an array of indicators, including each performer's physical attributes and even their props.

Though a "Falcon physique" emerged over time, the performers were not identical. In fact, differences in their masculine characteristics were increasingly used to signal the gay-porn sex role that they would portray. For example, tops are representations of mature "manly" men. They are generally older, taller, more muscular, hairier and more well hung than their partners. Bottoms, on the other hand, are icons of youth, vitality and athleticism. They are generally younger, shorter, with a more compact build and "smooth." Tops also tend to have dark hair, whereas bottoms are often blonde.

Of the handful of physical axes of differentiation between tops and bottoms (e.g., age, stature, hirsuteness, hair colour, etc.), cock size is the pivotal characteristic that distinguishes tops and bottoms. A big cock is symbolic of manhood and thus representative of the top. Despite other qualities that may indicate that a performer is a bottom, a big cock alone may make him a top. For example, in FVP 9, a high school student and his teacher are coupled. The student, who is boyish but with a big cock, fucks the teacher who is comparatively less well endowed.

In addition, gay-porn sex roles are also signaled through the objects the characters display. For example, cars and trucks are explicitly linked to gay-porn sex roles in gay culture. For example, according to *The Unofficial Gay Manual*, "If a guy drives a truck, he's a top; if he drives a cute car, such as a Nissan 240SX, Mazda RX7 or Mazda Miata, he's a bottom" (Dilallo 1994, 120). Thus, it is not surprising that the

clone in FVP 22, who drives a red pick-up truck, ends up topping another clone who he picks up along the highway.

The significance of masculinity for gay men must be understood from a gay perspective. There is a link between homophobia and sexism in the sense that gay men have long been derogated not only as homosexuals but also as effeminate faggots. To counter the stigma of being derided not only as gay but also as feminine, gay culture indeed lionizes masculinity. And although society still labels gay men as feminine, most gay men consider themselves to be masculine men who desire other masculine men.

Contemporary gay men are attracted to masculinity and commonly shun fags. In *The Unofficial Gay Manual*, the number one turn-off for guys “looking for love” was “femmes.” One respondent to the authors’ informal survey said, “If I wanted a woman, I’d be straight” (Dilallo 1994, 188). As a result, gay culture may present gay men with an even stronger masculine imperative than the broader heterosexual culture does. “...A machismo element is steadily growing in the gay subculture” (Lindsey 1990, 167).

All of this suggests that gay porn serves as a vehicle for the representation of masculinity, but that it speaks to gay men who want to watch masculine men have sex together rather than masculine men “fucking” feminine men. Indeed, Falcon videos provide a significant contrast with heterosexual pornography in this respect. In viewing heterosexual porn, men are consuming representations of men with “man-made” women, produced by men for men. Consumers are thus identified with the masculine men represented, while women are presented as the “sexual objects” of men’s fantasies

(Finn 1996). By contrast, gay porn places consumers in a more complicated relationship to the men represented. They want to “be” masculine (to fuck, in Dworkin’s terms), but they also *desire* masculinity (to be fucked).

In Falcon videos, tops who fuck bottoms are represented with contrasting (but not “opposite”) physical characteristics. The distinction between femininity and masculinity that is emphasized in straight porn cannot be used as an axis of differentiation in gay porn because of the stigma of femininity. “The most salient or important point, then, is that one is simply not dealing with equals through virtue of the same male gender, rather one is dealing with a hierarchy of masculinities” (Edwards 1994, 69). In this regard, the interpretation of gay porn put forward by gay advocates is more apt than that advanced by feminist critics. “It makes no sense to assume, for example, that whenever two men fuck each other they are necessarily trading ‘male’ and ‘female’ roles” (Tucker 1990, 270).

The most obvious divergence lies in the role of the bottom. Getting fucked, from a gay perspective, does not feminize the bottom, as Dworkin asserted but instead establishes his masculinity. Falcon videos (and perhaps gay culture) invert the default (hence straight) meaning of “getting fucked” into a sign of strength and masculinity not weakness and femininity.

Since the bottom is sexually alluring to the top, this indicates that the bottom is sufficiently masculine to be desirable. Therefore, in a gay context, being desirable sexually is a reflection of one’s masculinity. It is affirmed by the top’s acceptance of him and it is through aggressive fucking that he endows masculinity on the bottom. The bottom “takes it like a man,” and consequently becomes more of a man. For

example, “Jerry Douglas’ *More of a Man* (1990) [not a Falcon video]... appears to offer a narrative in which the star not only gets fucked but learns that to be fucked is not shameful but rather a sign of ‘strength’ — hence the title” (Simpson 1994, 137). Given that the bottom is depicted as masculine in Falcon videos and that his masculinity is enhanced by getting fucked (as interpreted by gay viewers), this evidence contradicts Dworkin’s assertion about the linkage in porn between getting fucked and femininity.

As was shown in the third chapter, Falcon videos present a somewhat straight representation of male homosexual sex with tops fucking bottoms. In this chapter, evidence was provided to illustrate that the performers in these two roles were depicted as masculine. Although this masculinity is used to break the linkage between femininity and getting fucked, it reinforces the “straightness” of the characters (assuming one links masculinity among men with heterosexuality). What then is gay about Falcon videos? The next chapter investigates in what manner Falcon videos indicate that the characters shown represent *gay* men and not straight men having homosexual sex, as gay advocates have argued.

“GAYNESS” IN FALCON VIDEOS

The sexual script that developed in Falcon videos is seemingly a very straight representation of gay sex. As Dworkin has observed, the top in gay porn is like a straight male, except that he fucks men as opposed to women. The similarities between the two forms is witnessed by that the fact Jeff Stryker, who performs in gay and straight porn inhabits a similar role in both genres of porn. “In fact Stryker only plays *one* role in both gay and straight films: that of the ‘total stud’, a rutting machine that ‘fucks anything’. But nothing and no one fucks *him*. Stryker’s success in both industries points up how much gay and straight male porn have in common” (Simpson 1994, 132).

The straight underpinning of the top is further witnessed when heterosexual characters appear in this gay fantasy world. As expected, straight men in Falcon videos are invariably tops. For example, in FVP 41, O.G. Johnson portrays a straight man who fucks Joe Gere, a gay man. O.G. says to Joe, “My wife doesn’t want it but you’re gonna get it.” This scene casts gay men as “women,” and reflects the notion that gay men are somehow in direct competition with women for men.

Another scene with straight and gay men unfolds in FVP 48. Chris and David, two presumably heterosexual, young teenagers plan to jump and rape Kevin who is rumoured to be gay. After playing tennis at Kevin’s house, all three go inside to the kitchen. Kevin leaves Chris and David while he goes to the pool-house to get some soft

drinks. Kevin returns and hands canned soft drinks to Chris and David. He puts the remaining cans in the refrigerator.

Chris, *"Everybody's been talkin' about you."*

Chris pats Kevin's ass while he bends over at the refrigerator.

Kevin, *"What do you mean?"*

David, *"Tellin' us what a cock-hound you were."*

Chris, *"Of course we don't believe it, but rumours get around."*

Kevin, *"What do you mean — cocksucker?"*

Chris, *"You know what we mean."*

Kevin, *"C'mon, what have people been sayin'?"*

David, *"It's been goin' around town that you're quite the fairy."*

Kevin, *"I don't know who you've been talkin' to about this but it's not true."*

David, *"I think it's true."*

Kevin, *"Hey guys, I don't do that sort of stuff."*

David, *"I think you do. Besides, I've got this nice piece of meat for you. How could you turn it down?"*

Kevin, *"Suck your dicks? I don't know what people've been telling you — but you won't hurt me if I do, will ya?"*

Chris, *"Don't be afraid, we won't hurt you — much."*

David, *"Yeah not much. Sitting here waiting for you. Go ahead. Wrap your lips on it. Suck on it. Come on. Suck! That's it. Suck it nice. Show us how good you are."*

Kevin, *"Now I'll show you what a cocksucker really can do."*

In the sample videos, the number of scenes with straight characters fucking gay characters is quite small. Falcon videos do not generally cast gay men as faggots, and for the most part, mark their characters as being gay — in a positive way. For example, although the characters in Falcon videos are depicted as masculine, the type of masculinity they display is by its nature gay.

When gay men adopt the costumes of traditional masculinity, a gay aesthetic is added making the individual distinguishable from his heterosexual counterpart. "What adaptations then take place? First of all, the clothes are worn differently in the gay sub-culture from the way they are worn by 'real men.' They are much tighter fitting, especially tailored to be as erotic and sensual as possible. Parts of the body will be purposely left exposed in an attempt to attract others. Some type of jewellery is likely to be worn, including chains on the neck, ear-rings and finger-rings or combinations of these, all of which are unlikely to be found on heterosexual workers or athletes" (Blachford 1987, 101). Consequently, no one would confuse a gay leatherman with a heterosexual biker.

In addition to providing images of gay masculinities, Falcon videos indicate to the viewer that the performers are gay in other ways. In the earlier period, many of the performers were situated in San Francisco. It is through the association with the city that the characters are inferred to be gay. For example, the first Falcon video, "The Other Side of Aspen," takes place in a ski lodge. However, the ski instructor, who remembers the incident through a series of flashbacks, lives in San Francisco. The film begins with the ski instructor jogging in his San Francisco neighbourhood while the voice-over articulates his reminiscences.

The first two segments of FVP 5 also take place in San Francisco. In the first scene, two men are sitting on a bench, talking and looking out at Alcatraz. A third man joins them and they then go off to a residence and have sex. The second segment of this video shows a businessman who drives into San Francisco to the TransAmerica Tower,

where he presumably works. Later he picks up a young man on Polk street, known for its gay porn theatres and sex shops.

San Francisco is the setting of a segment in FVP 22. A man drives down the Pacific Coast Highway, stops near Golden Gate Park and picks up another man there. The city was used as the backdrop for many other films and special locations were highlighted. For example, in FVP 58, Ringold Street was the site of a pick-up. The street sign was focused upon at the beginning of the scene.

Falcon Studios was located in San Francisco and presumably many of the performers lived in the city as well. Thus it is not surprising that San Francisco was used as the setting for many films. However, there are other less pragmatic reasons for this backdrop. Internationally renowned, San Francisco is seen as a gay city. In gay and straight minds alike, the city has a sexuality. If one were to draw a picture of society based solely on the popular media, San Francisco would probably be the only place in the 1970s where gay men existed. It was *the* place where gay sex happened. Everywhere else was, for all intents and purposes, straight by default. Thus, San Francisco was, and still is, a potent symbol of gay sexuality.

Major cities across North America are the final resting spots in the life pilgrimages of many gay men and lesbians. But unlike other cities, San Francisco was considered by many gay men as perhaps a gay Shangri-La (Murray 1992). Not surprisingly, the migration from Smalltown USA to San Francisco portrayed in FVP 64 has a happy ending. The (closeted?) hero, who lives "somewhere in Oregon," picks up a young hitchhiker and invites him home. The next morning, they have sex (again) and it is so good that the hitchhiker is offered to stay while the hero goes to work. Shortly

after being alone in the apartment, the hitchhiker takes some money, jewelry, etc. and leaves. Later, the hero gets fired from his job because he was late for work. Angry, he returns home to find his dreamboy gone, as well as his money and possessions. There is only one way to escape the mess. The voice-over says, "I needed a change, and a new beginning. I'm going to San Francisco." In the city he gets a job — the boss is gay! He finds a place to stay — the roommate is gay! And all is well with the world.

The image of San Francisco changed radically once the AIDS pandemic hit. The positive association between the city and sexual liberation was replaced by an association with disease and death. In the early 1980s, in the public's mind, AIDS was largely linked with San Francisco and New York City, the places in North America where gay men were first diagnosed in significant numbers with what would later be labeled AIDS. Perhaps to avoid the spectre of AIDS, southern California in general replaced the backdrop of San Francisco in later films.

Pools, whirlpools and hot tubs were popular locations in the later period. Films with scenes around water include FVP 9 ("Pool Party"), FVP 40 ("Splash Shots"), FVP 57, FVP 64 and FVP 66 ("Plunge"). Pools and hot tubs are a part of the southern Californian culture. The poolside scenes represent a lifestyle of sun, leisure and sex. Just as *Baywatch* provides an image of California to people worldwide, Falcon has done the same for gay men.

Yet in contrast to this gay fantasy world, earlier Falcon videos sometimes reflected the very real relegation of homosexuality to the margins of society. Anonymous washroom sex was depicted in three films (Humphreys 1975). In FVP 5, Gordon, a businessman who works at the TransAmerica Tower, has sex in a washroom,

presumably in the office tower. Gordon and another businessmen, sit side by side in the toilet stalls, then tap their toes as a signal to one another. Once the message is received and sent back, sex ensues. In a later film, perhaps reflecting increased “liberation,” homosexuality moves out of the corporate washroom. In FVP 64, a boss and his (male) secretary are coupled, and they have sex in the office, not in the washroom.

Sex occurs in washrooms in two other films, FVP 22 and 41. In the latter film, it is an airplane washroom. The lore about sex in airplane washrooms is not confined to gay men. Heterosexuals are a part of the legends surrounding “The Mile High Club.” In part, airplane-sex lore is an outcome of the sexualization of air travel. Through advertising and promotion, dress and behaviour codes, stewardesses are transformed into geishas. The unspoken flip-side to this transformation is the sexualization of stewards. Stewards are usually assumed to be gay, whether they are or not. Thus, regardless of sexual orientation, the airplane is often viewed as a landscape of sexual opportunity by men, gay and straight.

Where sex happens in porn is of note. In his analysis of straight porn magazines, Pratt observed that sex in porn is no longer represented as a “tantalizing, alluring glimpse into another more luxuriant and privileged way of life but instead is represented as being all around: in the office and in the library, in the open, in the privacy of one’s home and so on” (Pratt 1986, 75). Straight and gay porn videos depict a normalized sexual availability readily at hand in such banal locations such as the laundromat. In gay porn, it is homosexuality itself, not just where it happens, that is normalized. No one seems to get harassed, arrested or beaten up in gay porn. Gay men and homosexuality are everywhere. Thus, whereas straight porn sexualizes everyday

spaces, gay porn *homosexualizes* them. In doing so, Falcon videos create a landscape where homosexuality, and possibly gayness, is the order of the day.

No women appeared in any of the Falcon videos selected. The Falcon fantasy world is not surprisingly exclusively male. But whereas earlier all-male films (set in all-male locations, such as prisons) depicted women as desirable but unavailable partners, Falcon videos do not generally consider women at all.

In some Falcon videos, this sense of a gay landscape was created through the device of voyeurism. Watching men masturbate or have sex together was a common theme. For example, in FVP 61, the second scene is shot in classic peeping fashion — through a keyhole. The image was framed in black matting in the shape of an old-fashioned keyhole.

Voyeurism eliminates the need for an initiation of a sexual encounter. For example, if one man is masturbating, then sex has already begun. Sex, which is all around, just seems to lead to more sex. For example, in FVP 13, one farmhand spies on another, first while the second sleeps and then while he masturbates. Later they have sex, which is initiated by the voyeur. In FVP 53, a forest ranger spies with his binoculars on a trespassing hiker who is masturbating. The ranger approaches and they have sex.

The homosexual availability displayed in gay porn normalizes an environment where disclosure of one's gay identity is not only acceptable but in most cases results in a sexual encounter. For example, in FVP 62, the sexuality of two fraternity members is revealed during a room inspection that uncovers a hidden gay porn magazine. The roommates admit their desire to the inspecting fraternity member and naturally sex

ensues. In the porn world, the revelation of one's (homosexual) desire leads to sex. Here, one (straight?) guy has sex with two other guys just because he discovered that they are attracted to men. This however, is in notable contrast to the reality of many gay men's experiences when their sexual orientation is revealed, especially to heterosexual men. Their reactions may include social isolation, even violence, but not a "hot" encounter.

The Falcon formula presents a pornographic gay world that is inhabited exclusively by masculine tops and bottoms who meet one another readily and have (aggressive) sex without recrimination. This formula has come into being because it presumably speaks to some fantasy that gay viewers hold in general. In conclusion, the fantasy that the Falcon formula touches upon is discussed in the final chapter.

CONCLUSION

Although censorship was not a concern of this thesis, debates about pornography are often motivated by pro- and anti-censorship interests. The arguments put forth by gay men who have opposed censorship campaigns have usefully drawn attention to the unique social context of gay pornography. Through its links with the emergence of gay identities and gay activism, gay pornography has a social significance that straight pornography does not. It has been argued that the positive images of homosexuality in porn could help to counter the homophobia that gay men have internalized from their own culture at large.

Regardless of its unique social context, gay porn is sometimes theoretically considered as the homosexual equivalent of straight porn. For example, some feminist analyses draw similar connections between the representation of gender relations in straight porn and the representation of masculinity in gay pornography. But because gay men both identify with and desire masculinity, analyzing masculinity within gay porn requires more careful attention to how representations link it with sexual practices.

From the study of 23 “classic” gay pornographic videos, this thesis identifies and comments on these representations of sex practices, masculinity and sexual orientation. In particular, gay porn attempts to provide viewers with representations of gay men, not just homosexuality. Straight porn videos on the other hand, do not need to represent sexual identity since the heterosexual identity of the characters is assumed by

default. When homosexual sex is presented, the same assumption can not always be made. For example, the fundamental premise of “all-male” films — the predecessor to gay porn — was that the characters were indeed straight, but that they engaged in homosexual sex because of a lack of available female partners.

Starting in the 1970s, gay porn producers made a conscious effort to somehow represent the sexual identity of the performers and to mark their films as gay. In Falcon videos, this was achieved at first by setting many of the scenes in San Francisco. Over time the backdrop of the city was replaced with an image of southern California.

Because of the masculine imperative in gay culture, the characters that did appear in the fantasy world of Falcon videos were not the usual stereotypes of feminine gay men. Instead, Falcon videos present masculine men: jocks, leathermen, men in the military, etc. Their masculinity is not only invested in the characters they inhabit but also in their costumes or uniforms. But because the performers are naked for a large part of the videos, they must somehow continue to appear masculine without the assistance of their costumes. Falcon performers use their bodies as a costume and display well muscled bodies and big cocks — their physical manifestations of masculinity.

Regardless, the broader culture makes no distinction between gay men, labeling all as feminine. However, gay culture outwardly asserts the masculinity of all its members. In this regard, gay culture does not challenge the gendered order of our society but instead attempts to seize hegemonic masculinity that has historically been a male *heterosexual* privilege (Connell 1992). Similarly, gay culture internally apportions degrees or types of masculinity through straight sex practices — by whether

one “does” or “is done unto.” Therefore it is not surprising that anal intercourse is central to the Falcon formula.

The process of masculinization inherent in getting fucked (from a gay perspective) is not only an interpretation of sex practices that counters stigmatizing stereotypes but may also be symbolic of a process whereby the bottom is accepted into an exclusively male community. This is evident by the theme of initiation in several of the selected videos.

Being one of the boys is a missed experience for some gay men. In their childhood and youth, many have felt that they were “different.” Among those different boys, who have grown up and are now gay men, membership in male groups may take on a heightened importance. Although a position in the gay community may fulfil this need, gay men must live in the broader community where their outsider status is reconfirmed. Thus, a desire for a sense of belonging is probably strong in many gay men.

In Falcon videos, the endurance of sexual violence is sometimes depicted as a rite of passage into an exclusively male group. Getting fucked is depicted as the way to become a group member. Thus, the Falcon formula may have evolved in response to fantasies among gay men of (sexual) initiation into, and acceptance by a male community. For example, in FVP 33 (“Spokes”), recruits are initiated into a cycling club. The new members are willing participants in their initiation, they are not raped. One cyclist opens the film by stating to the recruits, “You’ve agreed to this initiation. Now I want you to understand that the rules are anyone of us can do anything we want to you, anyway we want. By tradition, whichever one of us gets our cock hard first will

have a crack at your ass. Now get your clothes off.” The film was popular enough to spawn a sequel, “Spokes II: the Graduation” (FVP 58). In this video, members of a cycling club are initiated into a biker club with rough sex and by getting fucked.

Although the theme of FVP 62 (Plegdemasters: the Rites of Manhood) was generally revenge and punishment, the fraternity house setting creates a feeling of group membership with a strong, loving association. In the sex/discipline aura of the fraternity house romance blossoms. Naturally, a fire is burning in a fireplace in the bedroom where the final scene — a love scene — takes place.

In the final scene, Pledge Collins is being punished for some frathouse infraction by the fraternity President, Steve Hammond. After they have sex, Steve tells Collins that he can stay the night but at the foot of the bed. Collins sleeps on the floor. Steve sleeps in the bed. In the middle of the night, Steve gently carries Collins into bed with him. Collins doesn’t appear to waken. In bed, Collins’s eyes open and he smiles at us, indicating his pleasure in being accepted by Steve. Collins is no longer a pledge. He has been accepted as a fraternity member: he is one of the boys.

By showing masculine tops aggressively fucking masculine bottoms as a part of an initiation in a fantasy male community, the Falcon formula has developed so as to simultaneously counter the stereotype of the feminine faggot, subvert the linkage between femininity and getting fucked, and address the alienation of gay men.

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