

Helen Butcher, *University of Chichester, United Kingdom*

**“Larry the Freedom Fighter is Dead and Larry the Business Man is Alive”:
Commercial Identity and Discourses of Self and Other
in the Contemporary Porn Industry**

H.Butcher@chi.ac.uk

The realm of the pornographic has long been associated in the popular imagination with the transgression of cultural taboos surrounding sexuality. Indeed, the adult entertainment industry self-consciously exploits its reputation as transgressive, often seeking to characterize itself as a sexually dissident, even revolutionary, area of visual culture. In this paper, I will explore how and why the contemporary porn industry utilizes ideas of taboo and transgression to mobilise a dynamic of self and other. This dynamic, I will claim, is not only characteristic of the relationship between pornography and the mainstream, but is also operative within the porn industry itself. This will be demonstrated via an analysis of a recent dispute between two high-profile figures – the controversial pornographer Robert Zicari and Hustler’s Larry Flynt. In a series of public remarks in which each accused the other of violating industry taboos, both Zicari and Flynt attempted to affirm a legitimate business identity via the projection of shocking or reprehensible attitudes towards sexuality onto their commercial other. This paper will suggest, then, that the porn industry, so frequently positioned as the transgressive other to normative culture, is itself reliant upon internal discourses of otherness and transgression for its sense of commercial self.

Helen Butcher is an Associate Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Chichester, England. She holds Masters degrees in Sexual Dissidence and Cultural Change (University of Sussex) and Creative Writing (University of East Anglia), and is currently engaged in doctoral study. Her research interrogates the intermedial nature of pornography and examines the manner in which contemporary legal, academic and pornographic discourses can be seen to intersect and interact.