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'Trump and Putin sittin' in a tree': material culture, slash and the pornographication of the 2016 US presidential election

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on examples from material culture and slash fiction, this article explores the pornographication of the 2016 US presidential election. Specifically, the article considers how the imagined 'bromance' between candidate Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin placed a same-sex relationship in the midst of the American political landscape, and brought increasingly hardcore pornographic references into the mainstream. The materials show that the existing alpha-male public persona of Putin was used as a foil for depictions of Donald Trump. The latter used pornographed imagery in order to satirize him as both a man and a political leader.

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Introduction

'Trump and Putin sittin' in a tree ...' – so reads the caption on the postcard in front of me. It reproduces one of six paintings Ant the Artist created to comment on the most recent US presidential election (www.ant-the-artist.com). To North American readers familiar with the children's ditty, it is impossible to see that caption without slipping into sing song and filling in the next bit that the artist left out: 'K.I.S.S.I.N.G.' After all the image does show Donald Trump with his lips puckered and his arm around Russian President Vladimir Putin, as if he is about to lean in for a kiss. The political importance of their suggested relationship is signified by the background: the pair are on the lawn in front of the White House, which flies an old-style Communist flag from its flag pole. As images of Trump and Putin go, the painting is quite tame – more suggestive than pornographic – yet it still puts an imagined same-sex sexual relationship at the centre of the 2016 US presidential election.

Conceptualizing pornographication

While it has been almost 10 years since Vladimir Putin first bared his chest for cameras, and thereby became an international sex symbol, his image has never been connected, in a sustained way, to another international figure before (although it must be admitted that the homo-erotic undertones of his relationship with Dmitry Medvedev have been

fodder for internet attention) ('Gay Russians' 2007; Sperling 2015, 118–121). Indeed, the suggested 'bromance' between Trump and Putin brings something new to American political discourse. Scholars such as Dan F. Hahn have long suggested that the American political landscape is a sexualized one, but they assume a male/female binary is at its core. As Hahn (1998, 134) notes, 'Metaphorically, males are depicted as warriors and sexual aggressors; women are framed as passive, acted upon rather than acting.'

The convergence of mainstream culture and pornography has also caught the attention of commentators, beginning most notably with McNair's (1996) *Mediated Sex: Pornography and Postmodern Culture*. In this book, McNair coined the term 'pornographication' and detailed how pornographic imagery was gradually invading mainstream popular culture. While not every scholar agrees with his definitions or the conclusions McNair derives from his research (see Tyler and Quek 2016), there is no denying his influence on the field. His subsequent works, *Strip tease Culture: Sex, Media and the Democratisation of Desire* (McNair 2002) and *Porno? Chic! How Pornography Changed the World and Made it a Better Place* (McNair 2013), demonstrated that the process of pornographication was ongoing and evolving as new media, such as VCRs and eventually the internet, emerged and facilitated the consumption of pornography in general. As McNair (2013, 30) notes, 'the capacity to produce content and have it accessed by global publics represents an enhancement of popular power, an erosion of the traditional elite hold on the means of intellectual and cultural production'. The increased consumption of pornography means that mainstream audiences will also understand references to it when they appear in other places. Indeed, as Carmine Sarracino and Kevin M. Scott outlined in their book on the subject, porn has been universalized in the United States. As they aptly put it: 'In porn, everyone is sexualized regardless not only of age but of social position' (Sarracino and Scott 2008, 38).

Not even presidents are immune, as the revelations from Bill Clinton's impeachment trial demonstrate. Instead, there has been a continued sexualization of political candidates and figures since the 1990s. Nor has it been confined to men. As work by Karrin V. Anderson reveals, the media framing of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin during the 2008 US presidential election marked a new stage in the pornographication of politics. Anderson (2011, 338) notes that within a week of her nomination as the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate, Palin was being referred to as a MILF (Mother I'd Like to Fuck) and her physical appearance was constantly sexualized throughout the campaign. On the other hand, Clinton was labelled a 'cunt' and accused of lesbianism (2011, 340–351). In 2008, political discourse moved several steps closer to pornography. In 2016, as we shall see, the convergence was complete. The phenomenon was important for two reasons. First, because it showed the extent to which homosexuality has become part of the mainstream – something that McNair's work has been arguing since 1996 – at least for some segments of the population. It is likely that those producing the items described in this article know that homosexuality continues to make many people who actually voted for Donald Trump extremely uncomfortable, and that fact increases the shock value of their critiques of him. Second, because, for the first time, a candidate himself engaged unapologetically in sexually explicit public discourse on numerous occasions. Among other things, Trump made a reference to the size of his penis during one of the Republican candidate debates, and then video footage of Donald Trump describing how he grabbed women by their genitals was released to the public. It

sparked a media firestorm and large-scale debate about sexism in politics and the workplace. But the footage did not bring a sincere apology from the candidate, who preferred to just repeat the phrase 'I love women' when asked about his views and his treatment of them.

How does pornographication work? Anderson's research offers the most concise framework to understand the phenomenon, so this is the one that I have employed (2011, 335). The framework hinges upon three points:

- (1) that images, narratives and references move from the world of pornography into the mainstream;
- (2) that hypersexual or exploitative elements are present even if an image may not actually be a piece of pornography; and
- (3) that sexuality is introduced into arenas which are not normally sexualized and, using humour or parody, individuals who defy traditional gender norms are schooled.

All three of these elements were present in the 2016 presidential election. To demonstrate how they were employed, I focus on the perceived relationship between candidate Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin – a relationship that was imagined very differently, say, from the deep, but never sexualized, friendship that was evident between President Barack Obama and Vice-President Joe Biden. (The latter was also fodder for all kinds of social media commentary, including enormously funny memes, but I suspect it never became pornographed because the two men did not have sexualized public personas – like Vladimir Putin – nor did they ever stoop to sexualized language in their public utterances.) I collected two kinds of sources: items of political kitsch that were sold on the internet, and slash fiction that was self-published and sold via Amazon.com. In terms of timeline, I limited my analysis to materials created between the moment Donald Trump declared his candidacy for the Republican nomination and his inauguration as President in January 2017. These sources allowed me to consider images and narratives that were not created or controlled by the parties contesting the election. Instead, they offer an intriguing window into popular political discourse, in essence revealing the extent to which pornography has crept into the mainstream and become normalized. Ultimately, both the slash and material items demonstrate that 'pornography can provide a home for those narratives exiled from sanctioned speech and mainstream political discourse, making pornography, in essence, an oppositional political form' (Kipnis 1999, 123).

The pornographication of electoral kitsch

Like many items created during the US presidential election campaign, the CafePress sticker is both playful and suggestive (Figure 1). Of course, its caption humorously references a Lady Gaga song, but the sticker also suggests that the mutual admiration which Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin expressed for one another in the months leading up to election day has blossomed into love. An amalgam of 'brother' and 'romance', the word 'bromance', according to the Wikipedia page on the subject, usually refers to an exceptionally close and emotional, but non-sexual, relationship between two men (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bromance>). Yet the use of the term here has an element of ambiguity to it, making the image more 'romance' and less 'brotherly', particularly since the words 'I love you man' are printed at the bottom of the sticker.

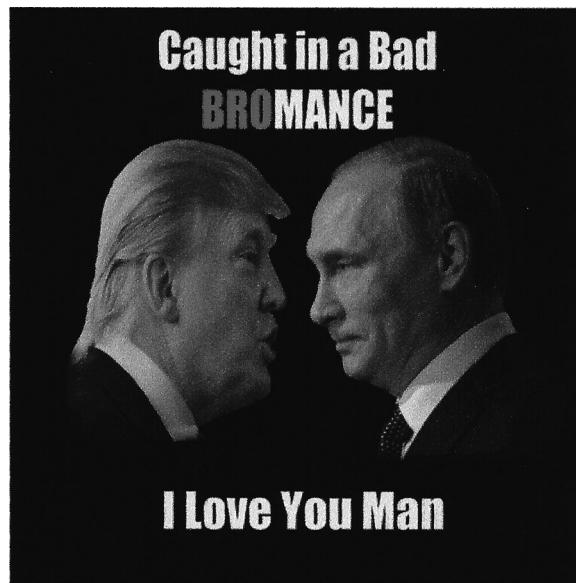


Figure 1. 'Caught in a Bad Bromance' campaign sticker. Source: Author's collection.

Yet even that phrase is often used in a non-sexual way between men who are voicing admiration and respect for one another. Moreover, in the picture, the heads of the two men are placed at a safe distance from one another, and neither appears to be about to bridge that gap and seek physical contact. In other words, the sticker does not go so far as to imply a full-on sexual relationship between Trump and Putin, but it leaves the door just open enough for alternative interpretations. However, the sticker stands at one end of an ever increasingly sexually explicit spectrum of material goods that offered commentary on the recent election.

A little more romance and a lot less brotherly affection is implied by the t-shirt shown in [Figure 2](#). The details included in the image – from the lines that cut across the paper to the words used as the text – are all meant to convey the notion that this is a love-letter from Vladimir Putin to Donald Trump. Also, of course, like all good love-letters, the sender has included a picture, left a kiss mark at the bottom of the page and signed the letter with plenty of hugs and kisses. In other words, what we have here is a marked escalation in the perceived relationship between the two men. They are not depicted as politicians who have like-minded views or even as personal friends, but as men whose masculinity is now in question because they appear to have some kind of homosexual attraction to one another. Given that celebrations of Putin's masculinity have been at the forefront of his public image for the past decade, this is quite a reversal. In Russian political culture, as Sperling ([2015](#), 16–17) notes, '[u]ndermining a political opponent's masculinity by implying his non-traditional sexual orientation is tantamount to stating that the man in question is more female than male and hence inferior'. Things are not that much different in other parts of the world and the United States. As a result, calling Trump's masculinity into question offers a way to also critique his talents as a politician and undermine his credibility as a potential leader. Moreover, these past two examples are only the tip of the kitsch iceberg. Much more explicit items continued to emerge as the campaign progressed and became increasingly sexually explicit.

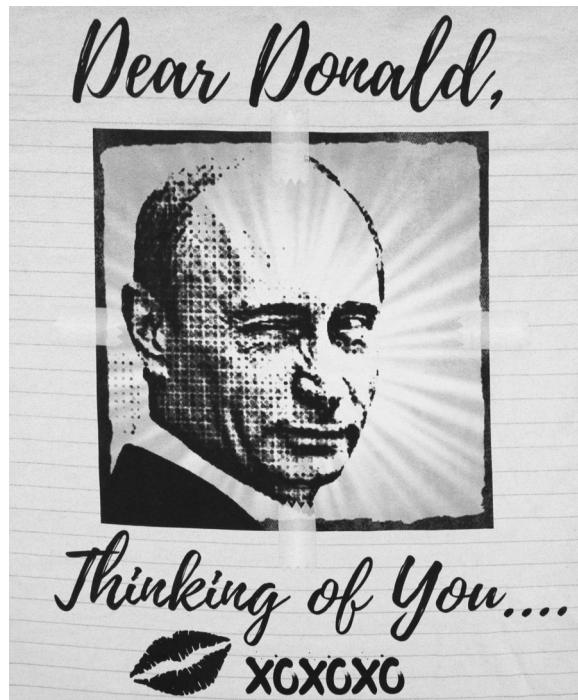


Figure 2. 'Dear Donald, Thinking of You' t-shirt. Source: Author's collection.

In May 2016, Lithuanian restauranteur Dominykas Čečkauskas proudly unveiled a mural on the side of his Vilnius establishment (Taylor 2016). The mural was painted by a local artist, Mindaugas Bonanu, and it garnered immediate attention both in Lithuania and in the international press. Inspired by a famous photograph of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev greeting East German leader Erich Honecker with a kiss, the new painting showed Donald Trump locking lips with Vladimir Putin. While in Slavic cultures, such a kiss was an acceptable greeting (Danesi 2013, 3), in North America, where the kiss is a sign of romantic love and often a kind of visual short-hand for an implied sexual relationship, this image was read quite differently. It, like our earlier t-shirt, implied that the perceived 'bromance' between Trump and Putin went far beyond friendship. The mural quickly became a popular backdrop for selfies, but the painting was not without controversy. In August, vandals covered it up with a coat of white paint ('Vandals' 2016).

Destroying the original did not make the image disappear, however. By the time the vandals struck, reproductions of Bonanu's painting were already circulating far and wide because they had made their way onto a host of material goods available for sale on the internet. Some, like [Figure 3](#) – a cell phone cover I bought in September 2016 – were made in Lithuania. The seller in this instance offered cases for all makes and models of cell phones as well as for tablets. Other items that reproduced the mural, notably textile products like hats and t-shirts, were created across the globe. As a result, they demonstrate that the sexualization of the US election was, at least in part, a global phenomenon. But the items themselves stand at a kind of mid-point since they stop at romance and do not make reference to hardcore pornography.



Figure 3. 'The Kiss' on a cell phone case. Source: Author's collection.

The same cannot be said for the men's underpants shown in Figure 4. Purchased on Amazon.com in mid-October, they were manufactured in British Columbia, Canada by a firm that specializes in men's underwear. (Interestingly, one could not buy a pair from Amazon.ca and a Trump/Putin women's thong – made in China – did not have any photograph on it.) Here the Trump/Putin kiss has been printed squarely in the middle of the backside, immediately evoking the expression 'kiss my ass'. An alternative, arguably darker, reading, however, links these underpants with degradation pornography. The positioning of the image references ATM (ass to mouth) porn. Typically in ATM the participants engage in unprotected anal sex that is followed by one partner immediately fellating the other. The underlying implication is that the person performing fellatio will have to 'eat shit'. 'Feces is, in general, increasingly present in humiliation porn', according to Sarracino and Scott (2008, 158) in their study of the porning of America, but I doubt that even these scholars expected to find reference to it in presidential election kitsch.

Similarly arresting is another t-shirt (Figure 5). The image may not surprise viewers given that BDSM has become increasingly part of American mainstream culture in the past 20 years. Ironically, as Weiss (2006, 124) writes, 'BDSM sexuality is supposed to be



Figure 4. 'The Kiss' on a pair of men's underpants. Source: Author's collection.

real, raw, and dirty, something that goes beyond the cleanly commodified, spectacular landscape, something that disrupts clear boundaries between privileged, normal sexuality and stigmatized, not normal sexuality.' Our t-shirt turns BDSM into a piece of banal kitsch, albeit a pornographed one with a strong political message. The 'bromance' that earlier items played with is clearly referenced in the caption, given that BFF stands for 'best friend forever', but the power dynamic that is depicted here is radically different. The other images that sexualized Trump and Putin also showed the men as equals: their faces were the same size and level with one another. Even the underpants leave the question of which partner might be the more dominant unanswered. That is not the case with this t-shirt, where a submissive Donald Trump is under the control of his Russian counterpart. As a man and as a political leader, he has been metaphorically 'pussy-whipped'. As we shall see, other pieces of kitsch also explored this idea – that Putin dominates and/or controls Trump – as the campaign continued.

In mid-July 2016, Bumblebot, a publishing start-up in Omaha, Nebraska, listed 'Adventure Buddies Youuuuge Book of the Coloring for Winners' for sale on Amazon.com. The brainchild of one Ben Thomas, the publication of the colouring book was at least partially



Figure 5. 'BFF' t-shirt. Source: Author's collection.

funded through a kickstarter campaign (<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/adventurebuddies/adventure-buddies-adult-coloring-book>). It is hard to describe the premise of the colouring book because the story is convoluted – more of an episodic mishmash designed to reference some moments in the Trump campaign rather than to render a coherent narrative. Among other things, the pair play basketball, share a meal of Mexican food provided by Joe Biden, of all people, and face down a team of sensitivity cyborgs. Their 'bromance' is front and centre throughout. From start to finish, Vladimir Putin is drawn only wearing combat pants; in this instance it is his body that is sexualized rather than that of Donald Trump. Towards the end of the book, Putin's pectoral muscles – long fetishized in popular culture – are blown off in the fight with the cyborgs. One page of the colouring book asks its users to paste new pectorals (that are provided on the side) onto President Putin. Another page shows Putin having a nap with his pet tiger in the White House, implying an intimacy that could easily develop into a sexualized relationship. In the end, this colouring book fits into a category of items that I will explore in the following section: children's toys that have taken on adult meanings. Their reimaging is an aspect of the porning of America. They demonstrate that childhood as a distinct developmental phase is disappearing as products (toys, clothes, etc.) that are associated with it come to be increasingly sexually explicit (Sarracino and Scott 2008, 28–33).

Politics, pornography and children's toys

On the evening of 19 October 2016, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump faced off for their third and final presidential debate. One of the strangest exchanges of the night came when Clinton referred to Trump as a puppet of Vladimir Putin. Trump countered with

'You're the puppet.' The moment was a satirist's dream. The internet exploded with references to it and within days buttons like [Figure 6](#) were available for sale on the internet. Lest anyone think that only typical election-time kitsch was generated, the thong in [Figure 7](#) says otherwise. The sexual overtones of the Clinton/Trump exchange were immediately apparent.

Puppets are polyvalent symbols. The term has frequently been used vis-à-vis political wives, since they are often assumed to merely be mouthpieces for their husbands. According to this interpretation, as communications professors Anderson and Sheeler (2005, 20) note, the term implies 'that there is a proper role for women in relation to men. They are invisible, follow behind, and are available to be used and manipulated for whatever cause.' Political leaders have also often been referred to as puppets, especially during the Cold War. While Clinton may not have intended for the comment to carry a sexualized connotation, others took her remark and ran with it. Moreover, the idea is not as far-fetched as one would think since it actually figures prominently in the slash that was published during the election campaign.

Beyond that, puppets are definitely a childhood toy that can be fixed with adult meanings. In this new world, puppets are not innocent toys that allow children to invent stories and act out narratives from their imaginations. Instead, they become a type of sex doll whose body can be manipulated for the pleasure of the puppeteer. Indeed, a Donald Trump blow-up sex doll was for sale on the internet during the election campaign. The box the doll came in was apparently covered in fake endorsements from Stalin, Hitler and the Ku Klux Klan, among others, and the doll itself had a permanently erect penis (Brown 2016). This focus on Trump's penis is not surprising given the fact that he himself addressed its size during one of the nationally televised Republican primary debates. The footage can be seen on YouTube ('Trump–Rubio Exchange' n.d.). On 3



Figure 6. 'Vladimir Putin Puppet Master' campaign button. Source: Author's collection.



Figure 7. Puppet master image on a woman's thong. Source: Author's collection.

March 2016, one of his opponents, Marco Rubio, made a derogatory comment about Trump's small hands. Trump countered with: '[The implication is] if they're small, something else must be small. I guarantee there's no problem, I guarantee you.' Never before had a potential president discussed his genitals on national television, thereby establishing this moment as a definite step in the pornographication of the election and making it possible to imagine him as a sex doll. The images on the button and thong can then be read as implying that Trump serves as a sex toy for Vladimir Putin, the dominant figure in their partnership.

The sex toy metaphor continues in our final example: the t-shirt shown in [Figure 8](#). Here the faces of Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin have been superimposed onto the logo of a children's television programme called *CatDog*. (The original logo can be seen on the Wikipedia page devoted to the show.) The programme described the misadventures of conjoined siblings, one a cat and the other a dog (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CatDog>). Created for Nickelodeon, the show first aired in 1998 and ran for four seasons. The 68 episodes continued to air in re-run on Nicktoons through 2011 and bundled with other programmes from the 1990s on TeenNick until March 2013. That means the logo is an



Figure 8. 'Trumputin' t-shirt that reworks the logo for *CatDog*. Source: Author's collection.

instantly recognizable symbol for many people under the age of 45 – both those who watched the show as children and those who had to sit there while their children did. At a second glance, the *CatDog* reference fades into the background, however. Instead, the image appears to put the heads of our political leaders on a sex toy, a double-headed dildo to be exact. At that moment, the nexus, imagined by some, between mainstream culture, American politics and pornography was complete. All that remained was for increasingly hardcore imagery to slip into the political discourse, and it did so in the form of slash, which for readers who may not be familiar with the term refers to a type of fan fiction that involves the pairing of two male or female characters – whose names are then written with a slash between them – together.

Trump/Putin fiction

On 16 June 2015, Donald Trump announced his candidacy in the US presidential election. Less than six weeks later, the first Trump slash was available for sale on Amazon.com. From that point until the Presidential inauguration in January 2017, dozens of titles were written and self-published. They include, just to name a few, the *Donald Feels the Bern* trilogy by Cliff Fuxtable, *Thump the Trump Rump!* by Tea Bagger and *Trump Temptation: The Billionaire and the Bellboy* by Elijah Daniel. The latter drew international attention to the genre when *The Guardian* newspaper ran a story about it, noting that the work was sitting at No. 1 on both Amazon's gay erotica and humorous erotica charts, as well as at No. 4 on the Kindle erotica chart (Flood 2016). Some of these works, like the Sanders trilogy mentioned above or a later title *Trump & Pence: Passion for the White House* by M. Erika, include other recognizable politicians so as to offer a heavy dose of political critique alongside their satirization of Donald Trump's sexuality. The stories that form the basis of our sample are not really meant to titillate or arouse; instead, with one exception, they are meant to use sex in all its permutations to undermine Trump's credibility and argue that he is unsuited for public office. Narratives that focus on the Trump/Putin relationship are at the forefront of this discourse; indeed, they far outnumber those devoted to other politicians (with the possible exception of Hillary Clinton). They certainly indicate the degree to which the 'bromance'

has captured the imagination and attention of at least a slice of the American public, and the extent to which the propagandized image of the Russian President can serve as a foil for people interested in commenting on Donald Trump's actions as a political leader.

Seven pieces of Trump/Putin slash will be considered in my analysis. Their titles are as follows:

- *Casino in the Kremlin* by Gen. Clip 'Dingle' Meatus (Ret.) – published 6 December 2015.
- *Putin on the Trump* by Chesty LaRou – published 24 March 2016.
- *Mr. Trump Meets Mr. Putin* by Dayn Rand – published 13 October 2016.
- *Putin the Moves on Trump* by Lester Moorehead – published 10 November 2016.
- *Putin it in Trump* by Will Smut – published 14 December 2016.
- *Pootin on the Tramp: Tremendous Erotica, the Best Erotica* by A Sultry Citizen – published 11 January 2017.
- *Dolan D. Tramp's Sissy Inauguration* by Aurora Sparks – published 19 January 2017.

The first six are narratives devoted almost exclusively to the Trump/Putin relationship; Putin makes only a guest appearance in the final 20% of the last work on the list, where Trump's relationship with dominatrix Hillary Clinton is the main focus. All of the items were purchased on the Amazon.com website. I chose not to use texts from fan fiction sites such as Archive of Our Own (which as of early February 2017 had close to three dozen Trump/Putin works on its site) because they require a certain level of knowledge to find and I was deliberately trying to see what even a novice to slash could stumble across using the most mainstream of places.¹ Readers who are more versant in fan fiction may be uncomfortable with that decision, but I think it underscores my point about the pornographication of American political culture. Even if someone had never read a piece of slash before, merely typing 'Trump Putin' into the search box on the Amazon.com homepage brought these items up. To my mind, you cannot get more mainstream than that. The most expensive text was \$3.00, but the last story on the list was free, so cost would not prohibit any potential reader from gaining access to them.

I will admit that there are several reasons why it is problematic to refer to these narratives as slash. First, because they are sold on Amazon, they lack the descriptive headers that are often used for items on fan fiction websites. On the sites that use them, headers are applied so that the stories can be appropriately archived. They typically give the author's name and contact information such as an email address (although both of these can be fake), as well as a short-hand list of any romantic pairings and a rating (Busse and Hellekson 2006, 10). In our case, the authors have done as much as possible to obscure their identities. As should be evident from the earlier list, pseudonyms are used by all of them and many go so far as to include fake biographies and/or fake testimonials on their Amazon listing. For instance, the page for *Mr. Trump Meets Mr. Putin* offers the following fabricated comments: 'Nothing short of a miracle ... the novel is a remarkable feat of storytelling, since Mr. Rand was pronounced dead fifteen years ago' (*The New York Times*); and 'Fifteen years in a foreign place – totally away from reading and writing – can render a man illiterate or, worse, bilingual. Dayn Rand has proven that comebacks are possible. That anything is possible' (*The Wall Street Journal*). Hence, there is no sense that the authors expect feedback or see themselves as part of a fan community as slash writers usually do.

The method for distributing these works – in other words, the fact that they have to be purchased in order to be read – is also unusual. Slash stories are generally distributed privately, with no money involved in the exchanges. That is because much slash builds on storylines and characters that originate in the entertainment realm, with television shows and movies offering the most possibilities for fans to expand upon. In other words, slash writers start with copyrighted subjects and could be sued if they charged for their writings. Moreover, as Jenkins (2006, 142) states, ‘fandom has long maintained an ethical norm against producing erotica about real people rather than fictional characters’. That hard and fast rule has broken down now that the internet dominates the distribution of slash. The digital world sped up fan communications of all kinds because people are able to go online while a television programme airs (or immediately afterwards) and offer their interpretations. This has led to a massive proliferation in the amount of material being produced by fans as well as a growing international context for their communities. The expanding reach of the internet also means that more and more slash about celebrities – rather than fictional characters – is appearing. This genre is referred to as RPS – ‘real people slash’ – and our stories fit within this category, although they satirize some of its premises. In RPS, factual information about real people and events in the world form the basis of the canon that is used in the fiction. Usually, according to Busse (2006, 214), ‘RPS narratives present celebrities as fully formed, intricate, and interesting characters, in opposition to their often one-dimensional media portrayals.’ The texts that we will consider definitely suggest that Trump and Putin differ from their media images, but they do not turn the men into particularly deep or nuanced characters. Instead, they remain caricatures of themselves.

Despite these quibbles that make a precise match impossible, slash is still, I think, the best term which we have to describe these stories. Slash texts are created when fans perceive a homoerotic subtext in a relationship between two heterosexual men. The genre first emerged in the mid-1970s when fans of Star Trek began to write stories about Kirk/Spock, but the decade was particularly amenable to the creation of slash in general. That is because film and television were dominated by the ‘buddy story’ genre. In her overview of the history of fan communities and the works that they have created, Francesca Coppa notes that:

[t]he same aspects that made buddy shows attractive to relationship-oriented fans also made them attractive to slashers; the fact that these shows were set in an era of tight jeans and unbuttoned shirts, and of the loosening of formerly strict standards of acceptable male behaviour, only provided additional evidence for a homoerotic interpretation. (2006, 49)

It took very little encouragement for fans to extend the storylines they found on the screen and to envision sexual relationships between the characters they liked. Since those early days, slash has grown in popularity and has become more mainstream. Literally hundreds of possible pairings now exist for fans to work with and ‘the Internet allowed for slash-specific lists that fans who wanted to read homoerotic stories could join and that other fans could easily avoid’ (Coppa 2006, 54). The ‘bromance’ between presidential candidate Trump and President Putin is ideal for slash writers. Week after week as the 2016 campaign continued, the pair made complimentary remarks about one another, suggesting that they will have a warm relationship and that they are keen to meet in person as soon as possible. Moreover, Putin was already a sexualized figure in the media so it did not require mental

gymnastics to imagine him as a slash hero; Trump's larger-than-life media persona is also well suited to extreme parody. Finally, the pornographication of American culture in general now made it acceptable to produce pornographic texts about political figures and sell them through the nation's largest online retailer.

As was the case with the material items discussed in the first half of this article, an erotic spectrum emerges when the texts are examined as a group. That spectrum is bookended by *Mr. Trump Meets Mr. Putin* – the most romantic of the works – at one end, and *Casino in the Kremlin* – the most violent – at the other. Those works also stand out because they are the only ones in which Putin is not the dominant partner in the pairing. In *Mr. Trump Meets Mr. Putin*, as befitting a more romance-novel-type plot, the two men are depicted as loving and supportive equals. On the other hand, in *Casino in the Kremlin* Donald Trump is very much the alpha male who lords over the submissive Vladimir Putin. It should be noted that positioning is extremely important to the political messages that the texts are trying to make. 'Topping' – in other words, the sexual act of penetrating another man – signifies the dominance of one man over another and confirms, rather than denies, the masculinity of the dominant partner (Sperling 2015, 17). Russian President Putin's reputation has long relied on such notions. In the words of Sperling (2015, 30), 'A significant element of Putin's machismo ... rests on his assertion of power over other men – from state officials and economic powerhouses to journalists and foreign diplomats.' As a result, he is the perfect foil for anyone seeking to use pornography to satirize Donald Trump. Finally, in a context where gender norms are highly politicized, as was the case in the 2016 US election, such positioning carries additional weight because it plays on ingrained sexism and homophobia. 'Homophobia as a political instrument', to again quote Sperling (2015, 104), 'relies on the involuntary rescinding of someone's masculinity, thereby "feminizing" the man and reducing his societal authority'. Of course, by making Donald Trump the bottom, most of the pornographic works we will discuss reinforce this idea of Putin as a strong man, while at the same time they mercilessly mock Trump's masculinity and ability to lead.

Despite its satirical elements, *Mr. Trump Meets Mr. Putin* has all the makings of a romance novel, including a happily-ever-after ending. The only divergence between this story and a Harlequin romance is that the two lead characters happen to be men who fall in love with one another. The story is an example of 'curtain fic' – a kind of slash where the story is so domestic that the characters would even buy curtains together. The satirization of Donald Trump's masculinity in this story does not really come in the work's sex scene. That is, in fact, rather understated. The following passage shows what I mean: 'Vlad's pants came off. Blanket came off. Hands reaching down. Bodies pressed front to back ... Their relentless forward rush could not be stopped or delayed. They gave all they had to each other. Then they gave some more' (ellipses in the original). At no point does the narrative actually say who penetrated whom; nor does the couple engage in oral sex, which would have offered another kind of penetration and hence clarified the power dynamic between the men. Explicit language is deliberately avoided. Finally, after the sex, the men cuddle.

Where the text does openly feminize Trump is in the description of his behaviour in the White House, in other words with those elements that make the story an example of 'curtain fic'. The story begins with widower Donald Trump three months into his Presidency. (Wife Melania was said to have been killed six months earlier during a campaign



stop in Pennsylvania when she was attacked by a bear and then hit by lightning.) His political actions are quickly summarized for the reader, but the focus shifts almost immediately to Trump's domesticity. He is depicted as a veritable Martha Stewart who, for example, enjoys picking flowers as he gets ready for an important visitor, Vladimir Putin. Putin, who serves as our stereotypical alpha male hero, complete with bulging muscles and six-pack abs, has to fend off an attack by his helicopter pilot en route before he parachutes onto the White House lawn. He arrives in time to enjoy the dinner that Trump has cooked for everyone, including the staffers at the White House. A poignant moment comes when the cornbread that is served reminds Putin of his own wife, Lydia, who apparently died eight years earlier. (This backstory is completely inaccurate; in reality, Putin's ex-wife is named Lyudmila and the couple's divorce was finalized in 2014.)

After a brief narrative detour, where Trump takes Putin to visit the Trump Piazza concentration camp he has built in Texas, the pair take a canoe ride before riding out a storm in a half-finished cabin on an island in the middle of a lake. Talking leads to the romantic interlude quoted earlier and confessions such as that by Trump that he never wanted to be President. The pair are chased out of the cabin by its owner in the morning. In the final chapter, 30 years have passed and the men are still together. Putin is dying of cancer and the story ends with a deathbed scene. 'Donald bent over the face of his friend, his love, his world, and kissed Vlad's eyes shut.' These are the last words in the text.

This type of prose does nothing to underscore Donald Trump's masculinity or to present him as an effective political leader. But it also does not rely on sexual humiliation to make these points. Instead, the satire comes from having *Mr. Trump Meets Mr. Putin* cast Trump as the stereotypical heroine in a romance novel whose love and domestic skills tame an alpha male into a monogamous and lasting marriage (Roach 2016). His gender identity is fixed without needing to resort to elements from hardcore pornography.

The contrast with *Casino in the Kremlin* could not be more profound. Supposedly written years after a Trump Presidency has remade America and by someone who worked for the administration, the story is loaded with anti-Obama and anti-feminist jabs as well as explicit sex that also includes racialized violence. Throughout the work, the author's identification remains with the perpetrators rather than with the victim, and it is clear that there is no 'safe word' that will ever end the torment of the latter. Consequently, in places, *Casino in the Kremlin* is extremely difficult to read and there are some fan fiction sites (such as Fanfiction.net) that simply would not have published it (Alexander 2008, 127). The intense, visceral tone of the text is established right away, for the opening paragraph describes the Russian President, whose 'cavernous innards lived up to his nation's reputation for hospitality', being penetrated by Donald Trump:

Vladimir Putin had wrestled a few bears in his life, but the golden-haired beast before him was too much to handle. He submitted instantly to The Donald's forbearing haunches, succumbing into a blissful romance that could never have been matched by the American President's predecessors.

The scene ends when Trump withdraws from Putin's anus and ejaculates all over the latter's back. It is only once the power dynamic between the two leaders has been established for the reader that some semblance of backstory is given.

That story is as follows. It turns out that Trump and his wife arrived in Moscow only a few hours earlier. Their visit comes only days after his inauguration as President. As soon as Trump meets his counterpart, he begins to rant about Hillary Clinton. Putin counters by revealing information obtained by KGB spies; he tells the American that Clinton is an alien reptile who lacks regular genitals. Her mission is to destroy the human race so that her species can conquer the planet. To that end, she has filled the White House basement with her eggs and needs to win the election in order to be near them when they hatch. Otherwise the babies may not imprint on her. The conversation between the two men – Melania Trump remained with the car in the parking lot – halts when they enter the Kremlin elevator, and the Clinton aspect of the story is not returned to. In what can only be seen as a symbolic penetration, as the elevator descends below the buildings, Trump begins to disrobe, arguing that state secrets set ‘his loins on fire’. He becomes metaphorically associated with his penis at this point because the author tells us that Trump’s pubic hair has a comb over. The five military guards who are accompanying the leaders also undress readily but Putin is reluctant to expose his genitals. He blames his trepidation on an earlier incident when he was attacked by a strap-on-dildo-wearing Michelle Obama. Trump comforts the weeping man.

Once the elevator comes to a stop, the party steps out into a bunker-type lair. Its thick concrete walls are home to a prison and in one of the cells Putin is holding a terrorist wanted by the Americans. What follows is a scene of ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ that lead into sheer torture. It is also reminiscent of the now infamous Abu Ghraib pictures which received so much media attention when they were published in 2004. In these photographs, some naked Iraqi prisoners were bound as if they were engaged in BDSM play, while others were forced to simulate oral sex or had faeces smeared on their bodies. The physical implements being used on them included a variety of bindings, hoods and electric wires. Carmine Sarracino and Kevin Scott argue that the ensuing scandal marked a significant moment in the porning of American culture. By labelling the photographs pornography, it became possible to speak of the events being depicted as something other than war crimes. Sarracino and Scott (2008, 139) quote Rush Limbaugh to prove this point; they note he referred to what happened as ‘fraternity hazing’ and called the pictures ‘good old American pornography’. Moreover, they point out that:

[s]ubsequent reports have shown that most of the victims at Abu Ghraib depicted in the circulated photographs were ordinary criminals, not security detainees likely to have information about the insurgency. This fact makes much of the inflicted abuse and torture recreational, or ‘for entertainment’. (Sarracino and Scott 2008, 141)

As we shall see, it is possible to make the same argument vis-à-vis the contents of *Casino in the Kremlin*, especially since the man being tortured offers up no information to his tormentors who clearly enjoy the violence that they inflict. The fact that this piece of slash casts two heads of state as the perpetrators, and that the humiliation escalates into disturbing sexualized violence, demonstrates how extreme some of the sexually explicit political commentary became during the 2016 presidential election.

The scene begins when a cart carrying a rotting pig carcass, covered with a black ISIS flag, is wheeled in, and Trump begins to wave a machete in front of the naked prisoner, who is described as an ISIS leader. The scene that follows very much envisages a Russian–American partnership in the fight against ISIS since the two men will torture

the prisoner together. For example, Putin holds the man's tongue when Trump cuts it off. Trump then decapitates the pig carcass. Soon, Putin begins filming the action with his cell phone so Trump's fellow Americans can see what is happening. Trump scoops out the contents of the pig's head and puts it over the prisoner's head, which had already been wedged between the bars of the prison cell. The use of a pig's head is meant as a particular humiliation given that Islam considers pigs unclean and their consumption is sinful (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unclean_animal). It is worth noting that the story may not be so far fetched either, because six months after *Casino in the Kremlin* was published, candidate Trump included a fake story during a campaign speech. In it, he stated that US General John Pershing had used bullets dipped in pig blood against Muslim rebels in the Philippines at the start of the twentieth century (Berenson 2016). His words indicate that the behaviour we see in the story was not completely beyond the imagination of Donald Trump.

As an aside, it should be noted that this is not the only instance where pigs featured in the imagery of the presidential campaign. The t-shirt shown in Figure 9 reprints a photo-shopped image that appeared in a variety of contexts in the second half of 2016. The original photograph, taken while Putin was on holiday in Siberia in 2009, merely showed the shirtless leader riding a horse. As people played with the image, they sometimes changed the horse to a bear or added Donald Trump riding behind the Russian leader. In this variant, the two men ride a pig while the caption leads viewers to believe that the Trump/Putin partnership will 'Make America Grunt Again'. By changing the wording of

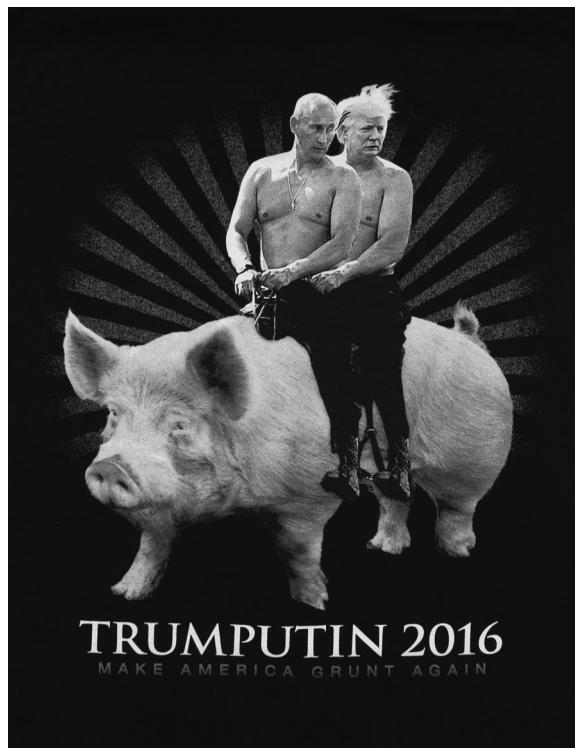


Figure 9. 'Trumputin 2016 Make America Grunt Again' t-shirt. Source: Author's collection.

Donald Trump's campaign slogan, we get an obvious reference to the noise made by pigs as well as a less obvious one to the possible sounds of sex.

Returning to the story, the torture of the prisoner escalates from there. Trump lubricates his penis with the severed tongue before using the tip of the machete to remove the skin from the captive's scrotum. (The skin is saved so Melania can make a new coin purse with it.) Putin soon returns to the foray: he takes the machete, coats the handle in pig's blood and then sodomizes the prisoner with it. Next the prisoner is ordered to sit with the knife wedged in his anus. Putin will eventually twist the blade so as to remove the man's testicles, which are then kicked into the pile of pig guts. On Putin's command, the guards accompanying the two Presidents fire at the belly of the pig carcass. The bullets split the flesh open and that dumps faeces on the prisoner. Trump finds that moment humorous. 'No virgin is going to want you in the afterlife now, home slice', he says. That comment is followed by a diatribe to ISIS members that Trump launches directly into the camera.

Trump's speech so excites his Russian partner that he strips down to a red and yellow thong, described as looking like the old Soviet flag, and he drops the cell phone (but it keeps filming). In a reversal of what we see in the other Trump/Putin slash, Putin is described as the man with only a small penis during the sexual interlude that follows. The text reads: 'Trump tore away at the thong as his hand reached Putin's hips, revealing a penis commensurate with the dictator's relative stature.' Trump secures his own erection by whacking his phallus against Putin's abdominal muscles. He then steers Putin's head down so the Russian can fellate him. The Russian guards are said to have 'watched with tremendous satisfaction as their leader pledged fealty to the American'. Then the men urinate on the captive. Putin drops to all fours so that Trump can penetrate him before ejaculating onto the Russian's naked back. Since they were first used in pornographic films in the late 1970s, the 'cum shot' – where a male ejaculates onto his partner's body or face – has become an expected part of sexualized narratives. The 'cum shot' is a visible verification of sexual gratification: semen functions as indexical evidence of climax while providing closure, a sense of ending, to the act' (Paasonen, Nikunen, and Saarenmaa 2007, 13). But cum shots also establish a power dynamic since they, in essence, tell viewers and readers that the male who ejaculates has the power to do as he wishes with the body of his partner. For that reason, they feature prominently in Trump/Putin slash.

At this point Melania gets out of the limousine in order to search for her husband. A group of Russian soldiers is hypnotized by her beauty, especially since she has tripped and ripped off her dress, so they agree to carry her down the elevator shaft. Her literally luminous body gives enough light for the men to see where they are going and eventually to reveal what the dried semen on Putin's back says: 'The white goo reacted to her glow, discoloring Putin's skin where the President of the United States' name had been signed. He was now permanently marked as property of Donald Trump.' Putin orders his men to shoot the First Lady, but they refuse to do so. In the end, Putin is put in the prison cell with the ISIS militant until he can be retrained to serve as a cocktail waitress for rich Chinese tourists after the Kremlin has been turned into a casino by the Trumps. The fate of the tortured prisoner is not addressed, although given the nature of the wounds that he has suffered a reader could safely infer that he would not survive his captivity. If that is the case, then this text veers right to the end of the pornography continuum where one finds rumours of snuff films. As Kipnis (1999, 10) notes, 'A snuff film is one of the most evil

things imaginable, but they appear to be just that: imaginary. That doesn't stop them from being a subject of massive cultural fascination ...' – a fascination that the author of *Casino in the Kremlin* has no qualms in engaging with. The story ends with the Trumps leaving for the airport quite confident that their new real-estate venture will succeed.

In between the two extremes that I have just discussed, there are adventure stories with a bit of gay erotica thrown in as well as works that include a number of fetishes within their pages. In other words, a vibrant spectrum of deliberately sexually explicit works emerged to offer commentary on American politics as the election campaign progressed.

Our next example – Lester Moorehead's *Putin the Moves on Trump* – is subtitled 'A Satirical Tale of Modern Power and Romance'. Satire certainly abounds in this rather lengthy and detailed story. Our two main characters are depicted in completely stereotypical terms. Russian President Putin is a strong man of action who is impervious to the cold of snowy Siberia (where the story is set). He fells trees merely by running into them and he uses his judo skills to defeat a bear in combat, among other things. American business man Donald Trump, on the other hand, is a childlike figure who throws tantrums whenever he does not get his way, sucks his thumb as he sleeps and sobs when his cell phone breaks. To condense the contrast between the two men to only one detail: Trump's hands are referred to as 'tiny' throughout the story whereas Putin is said to have 'mighty paws'.

The narrative begins with Donald Trump deciding that he wants to build an ice hotel as he flies over Siberia. He spends most of the first two chapters describing everything that he has as 'great' and firing employee after employee (all of whom have been ordered to call him 'The Donald' or 'The Trumpster'). Finally, there is no one left so his plane crashes into the forest. Fortunately, he will eventually be rescued by Vladimir Putin. Putin is on his yearly sojourn to demonstrate his mastery of the Russian landscape. On his helicopter, he strips off his flight suit, slathers his body with a mixture of polar bear blubber and borscht, and then jumps out. Putin lands on a family of rabbits which he immediately skins to make fur underwear and shoes. Next he acquires a servant – the bear he defeats in combat – and builds a cabin in the woods.

Meanwhile, Trump sits among the wreckage of his plane. Realizing that he is alone, he searches for his cell phone so that he can go on Twitter but he inadvertently steps on it. Mourning 'the loss of his closest friend and ally', Trump digs a grave for the cell phone in the snow. He is much more upset about his lack of technology than he is by the pack of wolves that soon surround the downed plane. Trump responds to that threat by trying to fire the first wolf that ventures into the wreckage. Needless to say, he has to be rescued by Putin, although the American refuses to admit that he was even in harm's way. As Trump makes his protestations, a shirtless Putin undulates his pecs – something that arouses the former. Their initial conversation closes as the child-like Trump cries on Putin's chest over his defunct cell phone. Putin rocks him to sleep.

After forcing Trump to go hunting with him for food the following morning, the two men exchange a first kiss. Then they take a sauna. Trump touches Putin's 'massive member', and then performs oral sex. In response, Putin 'closed his eyes and thought of Russia' but he most certainly did not return the sexual favour by fellating Trump. The story then jumps to the next day when the men argue over hairstyles. An angered Trump, who refuses to admit that he is bald, storms out of the cabin after trying to fire Putin. He spends the next little while wandering in the woods firing trees and using a branch to write mean tweets in the snow. Eventually he is attacked anew by the wolf

pack. Putin literally rides his bear to the rescue and then shows Trump the ice castle that he has made for the American. During the bear ride, Trump has been fondling Putin's penis and he now suggests, with his usual bragging, that the pair engage in anal sex:

Oh, I can take it. I'm the world's greatest power bottom. I'll take that whole monster cock and then some. Try and get those balls in there, too. No one can take a dick up the ass like the old Trumpster!

The ensuing scene reveals that Trump has only a micro-penis and that he would like Putin to call him a 'nasty woman' during their tryst. Continuing to exhibit the patriotism we saw earlier, Putin sings the Russian national anthem as he penetrates Trump. In a moment that recalls many scenes in American slapstick comedies as well as the 'money shot' in pornographic films, eventually Putin ejaculates on Trump's face and hair so that it 'was like Trump was smacked in the face with a rather large banana cream pie'.

Two more weeks pass this way. Trump offers to run for President so the pair will continue to have an excuse to meet. Putin, in turn, offers the skills of his computer hackers to help Trump get elected. The men plot to create 'The United States of Russia'. The story's epilogue suggests that they are successful, because it has the two of them waking up in the White House's Lincoln bedroom. They call each other 'co-President'.

This kind of satire continues in the two shortest slash stories – *Putin it in Trump* and *Pootin on the Tramp: Tremendous Erotica, the Best Erotica* – which were published after Donald Trump won the US election. Neither has a long backstory, preferring instead to jump right to the sex. In other words, they are examples of PWP ('porn without plot' or 'plot? what plot?') slash. Although only a dozen pages or so, *Putin it in Trump* crams in as many jabs at the new President's sexuality as possible. As Trump flies to Moscow to meet with his Russian counterpart, the reader is informed that Trump has long had a crush on Putin. The well-known image of the bare-chested Russian leader riding a horse is apparently in Trump's thoughts as he masturbates. Upon arrival, Trump is aroused when he is driven by the phallic symbol of the Kremlin in Moscow, but the author indicates that it is hard to tell since the President has only a baby-sized penis. By contrast, when the story gets around to commenting on it, the alpha male Putin is described as having a 10-inch phallus. In the weeks leading up to the visit, the two men have been talking on the phone and it is clear that sex has always been on the cards. Trump apparently wants 'the Russian to make his butthole great again'. Trump eventually arrives at Putin's home and the pair immediately engage in sexual relations. As the more submissive partner, Trump quickly falls to his knees to fellate Putin; soon he is also begging to be anally penetrated by the Russian leader. In surely one of the most humorous lines in any of these works, readers are told that 'Soon the smell of sweat, spray-tan, and megalomania filled the air.' Once Putin complies with Trump's entreaties, the men drift off to sleep while discussing the destruction of the free press.

While *Pootin on the Tramp* reverses the setting by having Putin visit Trump and veers some of its story elements towards the fetish end of the spectrum, many of the same comedic devices are used as in our previous story. Here too, Putin's chiselled chest attracts the attention of the President, who uses an executive order to declare Putin the sexiest man in the world. His muscles will also be mentioned when he shreds his shirt (*à la* Incredible Hulk) while lifting up a desk. Later his large penis does the same thing to his pants once Putin gets an erection. By contrast, Trump is less than impressive: his tiny hands



(implying that he also has a tiny penis) are mentioned and he is said to ejaculate prematurely when Putin begins to take off his clothes. But the story does not stop there, because it also says at one point that Trump has an incestuous relationship with his daughter Ivanka, who is caught giving her father a blow job under his desk in the White House. This is the only instance when incest – one of the biggest sexual taboos – is referred to in the texts that we are discussing, although interest in that subject has apparently grown in recent years (Frank 2015; May 2015). Given Donald Trump's repeated efforts to craft his image as a family man who is extremely proud of his children during the election campaign, it is perhaps not surprising that whoever wrote this text felt an incestuous moment could serve as the ultimate pornographic inversion.

Another inversion comes once Ivanka has left the office. As the two Presidents are about to have sex, Vice-President Mike Pence is called in to bring them some lubricant. Pence arrives with a barrel of petroleum jelly that he just happens to have lying around because he too likes to be penetrated by men every day. He apparently disguises his predilections by fighting for anti-homosexual legislation, as the narrative voice reveals that '[h]e just knew these sins so well himself that he had to root them out in other people, don't you see?' The story degenerates from there. Putin farts as he penetrates Trump's anus. The fart is so strong that it blows his helicopter off the roof. The wind also finds Ivanka in another room, goes up her skirt and grabs her pussy. Finally, the burst of gas smashes the glass covering on the launch button for America's nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, Putin ejaculates and his impressive phallus shoots out both sperm and money (the latter comes out of Donald Trump's mouth). The only thing that survives the ensuing nuclear holocaust is Trump's hairpiece which has mutated so that it has tiny hands and a penis.

These three stories reveal the common comedic elements that slash writers find in the Trump/Putin 'bromance'. Vladimir Putin's characterization is an exaggerated version of the public persona that he has crafted in the past decade, and it remains largely consistent with some of the kitschier moments of his time in office. A man of action, Putin takes charge of every situation, faces down any threats or danger and exudes a powerful sexual energy that makes others willing to submit to his desires. As such, the texts really do not undermine his masculinity in any meaningful way. Donald Trump, on the other hand, is both infantilized by constant references to the size of his penis and hands (as well as by juvenile behaviour), and feminized by his submission, sexual or otherwise, to the Russian President. In other words, here the pornography packs a powerful political punch. These depictions mockingly invert the self-aggrandizing rhetoric that often flowed during Trump's public campaign utterances, as well as the election slogans for which he is known. They also lay waste to his claims of political leadership by casting him in the role of sexual submissive to another world leader. Our final two examples go even further by using more fetishes, this time drawn from degradation/humiliation pornography but lacking the violence that we saw in *Casino in the Kremlin*, to deliver essentially the same message.

Dolan D. Tramp's Sissy Inauguration begins on election night, as Donald Trump watches the results come in. Hillary Clinton – who is referred to as 'Ellery Blinton' throughout – calls to offer her congratulations and to see if Trump is wearing the panties that she sent to him. What then follows is an example of a kind of transvestite porn (Kipnis 1999, 66–78) referred to as 'sissification'. In these narratives, a man is forced unwillingly to cross-dress by an

authority figure (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminization> (activity) ‘Sissification’). The clothing is often described in great detail, which puts the transgressing of gendered cultural norms concerning dress front and centre. The dress-up sessions eventually lead to sex of some kind but the power dynamics at play are never reversed. The person being sissified remains submissive throughout.

The backstory of *Dolan D. Tramp's Sissy Inauguration* states that Trump originally had no interest in politics but his attraction to Hillary Clinton led him into the arena. Clinton is presented as radically different from the beautiful women that usually surround the wealthy Trump; she uses martial arts on him when he tries to grab her pussy and she rebuffs his idea of sex, calling his penis ‘little’ and ‘repulsive’. When Trump tries to change Clinton’s mind by masturbating in front of her, he finds his penis remains flaccid. Subsequently, only the memory of Clinton humiliating and mocking him arouses Trump, so he readily agrees to run for President when Clinton says she will have sex with him if he agrees to do so. In a series of secret encounters, Clinton whips Trump with his belt (and after his orgasm he licks her feet in gratitude), has him put on makeup, don a cheerleading outfit and watch gay porn. Come inauguration day, Trump dutifully puts panties and a dress – a red, white and blue sequined number that Clinton has chosen for him – on under his suit. Clinton has decided that his humiliation will be public: Trump will reveal his love of cross-dressing on national television after taking the oath of office, and the inauguration ceremony will end with him engaging Bill Clinton (‘Dill Blinton’) and Vladimir Putin (‘Vladislav Poutine’) in a highly public *ménage à trois*. And that is exactly what happens. In the middle of his speech, now President Trump rips off his suit, drops to his knees and begins to fellate Bill Clinton. At that point, Vladimir Putin arrives by helicopter. Per usual, he is shirtless and ready for action. He slices open the back of Trump’s dress and penetrates the President’s anus. The author is determined to show that Trump enjoys these acts:

I arched my back, the better to let Russian President Vladislav Poutine plump the depths of my digestive system. Then I tilted my head back so that Dill Blinton could slide his rock-hard prick into my esophagus. All my aspirations, whether political or entrepreneurial, had been forgotten. I wanted nothing more than to act as a passive toy for their pleasure.

Trump’s sissification and humiliation is only complete after Putin achieves orgasm and withdraws his penis from Trump’s anus. The semen of all three men mingles in a puddle on the floor – a puddle that Trump proceeds to lick up. Obviously discredited as a President after these acts on television, Trump is impeached within 24 hours and an upset Vladimir Putin responds by nuking everyone.

The consumption of sexualized fluids is also central to *Putin on the Trump*. Here, colonic cocktails are the fetish used to mark Donald Trump’s subordination to Vladimir Putin. In this form of degradation pornography, something that has first been inserted into the rectum, usually a liquid, is consumed by mouth (Sarracino and Scott 2008, 157–158). Colonic cocktails are in the same genre as ATM, which I discussed earlier in connection to the pair of Trump/Putin men’s underpants. In both cases, the suggestion is that one person will be made to ‘eat shit’.

In *Putin on the Trump*, the men meet as university students at Wharton. Trump in his seventh year there is suddenly given a new roommate, a foreign exchange student named Vladimir. The first time Trump sees his new roommate, Putin is shirtless and

running across campus; he is immediately fascinated by the movement of Putin's sweaty pectoral muscles and blue eyes. Trump will eventually use the sweat from Putin's chest (that he inadvertently touched) as a lubricant when he masturbates in a washroom after their meeting.

Their first sexual encounter sees the introduction of beets, which will become a running joke throughout the text. Putin brings Trump to orgasm by penetrating him with a beet that he is told to leave in place like a butt plug until Putin says he can remove it. It is worth noting that one of the sexualized items available for sale during the election campaign was, in fact, a Donald Trump butt plug (Brown 2016). The following evening the beet is removed, while the student Trump is made to kneel at Putin's feet like a dog. While Trump fellates Putin, the latter cuts up the beet and cooks it, eventually turning the vegetable into soup. As a kind of finishing touch, Putin ejaculates into the mug of borscht, stating 'You put cream in borscht, I however am sweeter than Smetana [the Russian word for sour cream]. Now drink.' Trump drinks the liquid and then has an orgasm, as ordered by Putin, in his pants. This pattern is repeated throughout the semester.

The daily consumption of borscht changes Trump's skin tone, giving it an orange hue. On winter break, and unable to see Putin for his daily helping of soup, Trump turns to spray tan to maintain his new complexion. At this point, the text mockingly connects Trump's consumption of colonic cocktails to something that garnered much attention in the media during the election campaign – the candidate's apparent regular use of spray tan.

Trump returns to the university to find his roommate gone. Many years later, and still desperate to see Putin again, Trump decides to run for President. After he wins, he gets a phone call that simply says 'Make borscht.' Then he has the chance to visit the Russian President in Moscow. Within two hours of arrival, Trump has ditched his Secret Service escort and is bound, wearing only his socks, in Putin's private rooms. 'My capitalist, what would your people think if they saw you at the mercy of me?', Putin says. The following day Trump wakes up in a doggy bed, after being spanked and after he performed oral sex on Putin's anus. Over the next three days, Trump is made to sweep the floor to Putin's library with the beet leaves that dangle from his own anus, and his begging pleas to fist Putin are rejected because the latter says Trump's hands are too small. Trump's penis is also mocked for its size; readers are informed that it is only one inch long when fully erect. When Trump pouts about the fisting incident, Putin uses a taser on his testicles. Finally, the American President is told that Sepp Blatter (the President of FIFA from 1998 to 2015) is arriving to compete for his position as Putin's sexual submissive.

Conclusion

In the end, what are we to make of these stories, or for that matter the sexualized political kitsch that was created during the 2016 US presidential election? If we return for a minute to Anderson's (2011) framework, I think these stories and items show that the contours of it are still valid, but that the phenomenon she analyzed in connection with the treatment of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin in 2008 has also spread in the ensuing eight years. Focusing on a perceived 'bromance' between candidate Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin has allowed me to show how images and references from pornography most definitely crept into materials such as buttons, cell phone cases and clothing; in other words, into the mainstream. We even find hypersexualized elements in material

goods that reference children's toys for their humour, thereby demonstrating that scholars such as Sarracino and Scott (2008) are correct when they posit that no area of popular culture is now immune from the porning of America. Anderson (2011) also suggests that including sexual references in places that are not usually sexualized is an important aspect of pornographication. So too is the use of comedy and parody. Whereas the pieces of Trump/Putin kitsch are rife with double entendres, slash fiction often employs more direct elements of satire and parody, even as it references fetishes found in degradation and humiliation pornography. Constant mentions of Trump's hair or spray tan, to say nothing of Putin's pectoral muscles, are featured. Imaginative inversions of political slogans are worked into the texts, and surprising moments of the campaign – such as Trump's comments about the size of his penis – become the fodder for laughter. This usually comes at the expense of candidate, now President, Trump. The biting satire in almost all of the Trump/Putin slash seeks to undermine his public persona, making Trump's masculinity the butt of jokes and implying that there is nothing presidential about the man. In the end, both kinds of sources underscore the pornographication of American political discourse and mainstreaming of pornography in popular culture.

Note

1. <http://archiveofourown.org>.

Disclosure statement

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