

Mark McLelland, who died in Wollongong, Australia, on the 18 November 2020, was a brilliant researcher in fields including Internet studies, Japanese studies and sexuality and gender. He was also my friend. He was a queer from a working-class background in the UK, and I bonded with him through conversations about being outsiders in academia with shared interests in sex and porn. He was, however, much nicer than me. This is important for understanding his work and his legacy.

Mark did very well by the typical standards of academic success. He was awarded a prestigious Australian Research Council Future Fellowship, was a member of the College of Experts, was inducted into the Australian Academy of the Humanities, and in recognition of his immense contribution to the University of Wollongong was appointed an Emeritus Professor in late 2020. But he never defined himself or his life through these achievements.

In the realm of porn studies, I will remember Mark for being unconstrained by academic or social norms. He worked on the edgiest aspects of culture but managed never to be offensive. His combination of razor-sharp brilliance, a polymath's extensive knowledge across disciplines, and a kind of sweet bafflement that anybody could even be offended by these things offset the fact that he was writing about, for example, how to ethically present child pornography in your teaching. His informed, detailed history of Japanese *hentai* made the study of tentacle porn seem entirely reasonable and proper. Personally, the piece of Mark's work that I cite most often – and with most glee – is his 2002 article about having sex with research subjects as a form of data gathering. Like all of his work it is rigorous, thoughtful, innovative – and its calm, reasonable tone ensures that it doesn't come across as shocking:

The ways in which [Japanese gay websites] sites invite participation are too numerous to detail but ... include online questionnaires on any number of topics including age of first masturbation, ejaculation and same-sex contact, and, one of my favourites, sites featuring discussion of famous men's cock sizes (McLelland 2002)

The fact he could do such groundbreaking work without causing moral panics was helped in part by his cheekiness – “Why are Japanese girls' comics full of boys bonking?” asked one article title. And this will be, for me, Mark's biggest impact on porn studies – modelling how to be unabashed in exploring controversial culture in a way that doesn't put people offside. That articles starts:

When I casually mention that the most frequent representations of male homosexuality in Japan (outside the pages of the gay press) appear in manga (comics) written by and for women, I am usually met with an incredulous ‘Why?’ This always strikes me as odd (McLelland 2006)

He placed himself in his work, and the self he placed there was genuinely likeable and honest. As I noted above, Mark's work was extensively interdisciplinary and he made important contributions to a number of fields. I don't want to give the impression that all of his academic work was joyously perverse. But that is the work that I think has secured his place in porn studies.

I started by writing that Mark had “died” rather than “passed away” and this is a deliberate choice. Mark was a practising Buddhist (he built a beautiful meditation space in his back garden) and he faced death without flinching - not as simply unavoidable, but as a necessary part of life. He was profoundly thoughtful about the nature of a good life, and as part of that

the question of what makes a successful academic career. When we look back on our lives, what do we want to say that we've accomplished? He valued what we do as academics, and wholeheartedly believed in the importance of generating and disseminating knowledge. But he had no interest in the trappings of success that might accompany it. It is no coincidence that many people's memories of him are of his generosity, of mentoring and supporting students and emerging researchers.

As queers, we are not trapped in biological families. We have the privilege of what Armistead Maupin calls "logical families" – our families of choice - and Mark chose his family well. A small band of academic colleagues, the "Friends of Mark", cared for him over the duration of his illness and up to his peaceful death. He is also succeeded by two cats, Iggy and Sasha, who will be well looked after.

He laughed often, and at the right things. He was, and remains, an inspiration to me.

McLelland, Mark. 2002. "Virtual ethnography: using the internet to study gay culture in Japan." *Sexualities* 5 (4):387-406. doi: 10.1177/1363460702005004001.

McLelland, Mark. 2006. "Why are Japanese girls' comics full of boys bonking?" *Refractory: A Journal of Entertainment Media* 10.