

APPEARING A VICTIM: POLITICAL LIVES OF INVOLUNTARY
CELIBACY

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ABSTRACT

Lying at the intersection of affect scholarship, anthropology of victimhood, and feminist theory; this paper explores the boundaries of what it means to turn ontologically towards hateful others. Teasing out meanings of sexual frustration, this paper looks at an alliance of young heterosexual men who self-identify as involuntarily celibate – ‘incels’. Unable to fulfil their desires for romantic or sexual partners, they escape to online forums in search of solidarity. Through mutual recognition of sexual frustration, extremist misogynist ‘ideology’ is both rationalised and encouraged. In understanding sexual liberation, I move beyond the transformation of intimacy to demonstrate that incels’ own experiences of sexual precarity set forth the political hierarchisation of sexual desire. Thinking through intimacy as yet another site of the externalisation of regulation onto the neoliberalised subject, I suggest that the Good Life imaginary vacates the future and warrants incels’ struggle for agency within the constraints of gendered discourse. Using incels’ stories of suffering to examine the productivity of claims of victimhood, I suggest that the affect that inhabits victimhood serves as a currency to displace sexual perversity and allows for the moral purification of brutality. I argue that victimhood work is deeply productive, not despite its contradictions – as it enacts both universality and contextuality, both agency and impotence – but because of them. As incels gather to reject socially induced precarity in online forums, they transform a public assembly and create a space where their otherwise invisibilised sexual suffering is recognized. Borrowing Butler’s take on ‘spaces of appearance’, I argue that incels’ victimhood lacks recognition in a postfeminist society. Interrupting their nonappearance, they reconfigure the ‘conditions of appearance’ through the spectacularisation of violent acts. This victim both resists and proclaims its victimhood through becoming the violent perpetrator while simultaneously using the same victimhood to moralise said violence. Our epistemic approach reaches a deadlock. In the end, I utilize the ‘discomfort’ inherently present in studying the ontology of hate to stress the limitations of ontology as a method and refuse to seize engagement with the intolerant to reassess anthropological universalisms.

KEYWORDS: incels, victimhood, spaces of appearance, misogyny, ontology

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This article explores symbolic and expressive dimensions of violence. It contains information about sexual violence and suicide, and references events and articles which may be triggering for survivors.

INTRODUCTION: TWO STORIES OF SUFFERING

Prior to the interview, Vice journalist Elle Reeve advised Joey (23) not to be nervous, to just be himself. Joey, chair-bound and chain-smoking in his empty rental, laughed the advice off (Vice News, 2018: 04:26).

Joey: The joke was like, you know, here is some skinny loser and Chad does something awesome and he goes “Hey man, how did you do it?” and Chad goes: “Just be yourself, man.” Chad doesn’t realize that, you know, his good looks or his muscles or his financial status or his social status are what make him successful and what get him friends, he thinks it’s just his personality that does that. It’s just the virtue of him being him.

Diagnosed with agoraphobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder and social anxiety, Joey self-identifies as an incel, an abbreviation for involuntarily celibate. Unable to form relationships within singular spacetime, he escapes to the homophilic online spaces of 4Chan, Reddit, as well as more far-out forums. The world was introduced to these toxic assemblages of young heterosexual men, ‘one of the internet’s most dangerous subcultures’ (Beauchamp, 2019), after the 2014 Isla Vista killings. The story behind these killings offers a very different window into an incel’s life from timid, diagnosed and witty Joey.

Sitting in his BMW, face covered in late sun, Elliot Rodger, shares an account of sexual deprivation (The New York Times, 2014: 00:25).

Elliot: For the last eight years of my life, ever since I’ve hit puberty, I’ve been forced to endure an existence of loneliness, rejection, and unfulfilled desires. All because girls have never been attracted to me. [...] I am 22 years old and I am still a virgin. It has been very torturous. [...] I don’t know what you [girls] don’t see in me. [...] I am the supreme gentleman.

This scene is from “Elliot Rodger's Retribution”, uploaded to YouTube by Elliot between murdering three men in his apartment, and driving into the ‘hottest sorority’ in UC Santa Barbara, where he killed and injured others. Police found him dead shortly after, having shot

himself in the head. Incel forums are full of memes with his face photoshopped into Christian iconography; Elle, the journalist, wondered how far misogynistic terrorism, for which incels use the slang ‘going ER’, goes. When she asked Joey if incels are violent, he remarked that while they might ‘joke about killing women’, ‘these are docile men’. (Vice News, 2018: 02:45). Even though there is no rigorous demographic research into incel communities - as they are hostile to outsiders - Zack Beauchamp, a Vox reporter, shows that the majority of incels are under 30 and from predominantly-white countries. Counter-intuitively, only 55 percent of them are white, with significant percentages of those self-identifying as East Asian, South Asian, Black, and Latino (2019).

The manosphere, an informal grouping of anti-feminist men’s spaces online, adopted an analogy from the Wachowski sisters’ *Matrix* to name their ‘ideology’ – the Red Pill. As Neo chooses the red pill to walk out of Plato’s cave into the Real, the incels dose the red pill to wake-up into the ‘true’ world dominated by female sexuality. Elliot too was unable to acknowledge the systematic politicisation of desire and warping of late capitalisms that have shaped his marginalisation. Instead, he directed vitriol towards women in general. Or to use words from his manifesto “My Twisted World” (Rodger, 2014: 132): ‘hot, beautiful, blonde girls ... spoiled, heartless, wicked b*tches’. In short, the Red Pill ‘ideology’ collaged from neoclassical economics and evolutionary psychology (Van Valkenburgh, 2018), marks women’s emancipation as a stimulant of inherent female hypergamy, (from hyper - ‘above’ and Greek *gamos* - ‘marriage’), a term used to inflate a semi-scientific veneer to existing misogynistic narratives of gold-digging. Women distribute sexual resources to a minority of alphas, otherwise known as Chads, on the basis of this hypergamy. The majority of men are called betas or normies, who practise sex on a sporadic basis. At the bottom of the Red Pill sexual pyramid are omegas or incels. As Joey has put it: ‘It is something you are. [...] You have tried many times and failed’ (Vice News, 2018: 02:00).

Do those who embody everything we despise ‘deserve our empathy?’ (Rosin, 2019). Johannes Fabian (2014) famously sketches fieldwork as an immersion into the intersubjective Time in order to obviate schizogenic use of time – a situation where one party privileging from historicity interprets the other party’s culture as homogenous, coherent and void of temporality. After all, anthropology’s core value is expanding the conception of human community; it calls for taking interlocutors seriously. Are we, as anthropologists, required to relate to their suffering? Disputes on theoretical roots of the ‘ontological turn’ might help approaching this question.

In Viveiros de Castro's critique of Graeber's work on *fanafody*, a 'medicine' of the Merina people, he argues that by regarding power as something which exists only if other people think it does, Graeber 'went behind native's' back' (Viveiros de Castro, 2015: 15). For Graeber, *Ravololona*, a hail charm, 'cannot *really* prevent hail from falling on anyone's crops' (Graeber, 2005: 430, emphasis mine). However, Viveiros de Castro argues that this assertion denies the legitimacy of Merina people's distinct perception of the world, which Graeber simply replaces with his own Marxist analysis, thus failing to problematize his own Western theoretical assumptions. Graeber has reacted to Viveiros de Castro's critique by accounts of members of the Merina community themselves doubting the absolute power of *Ravololona* (Graeber, 2015). For him, regarding Merina's ontology as something quite distinct is essentializing.

Coming back to Fabian, I wonder, if the questions of whether the hail charm is *real* or not, or whether Elliot's life 'has been very torturous' or not, might themselves be schizogenic and to what extent are these good questions. Instead I propose a stance that is both epistemic and ethical. This article will side with Viveiros de Castro and aim at careful attention to incels' struggle for rights to ontological self-determination. As Srinivasan has put it in her account of intersectionality: 'A feminism that trades too freely in notions of self-deception is a feminism that risks dominating the subjects it wants to liberate' (2018). For that reason, I intend to avoid debunking the Red Pill 'ideology' (for that see Nagle, 2017; O'Neill, 2015). Nonetheless, this article will also side with Graeber and adhere to the refusal of divorcing the incels from the norm. Ascribing exceptionality to their perspective might even provide a platform for our own moral detoxification. As if the rest of us are not socialized in a world hailing reproductive heteronormativity.

This paper contributes to the wider confrontation of the white feminist displacement of patriarchy onto the Rest; it turns the anthropological lens inwards to consider the violent realities of gendering. Incels, as an extremity, offer a unique window into the society, as they actively select which of the existing norms to accelerate, which of them adjust and which to abandon. The question is not so much about their deservingness of empathy, or even the realness of their pain. It is rather to consider what it means when bodies of privilege claim suffering. Via the case of incels, I aim to uncover what work victimisation does. I situate my approach within philosophies of the human condition as I follow Judith Butler's intervention in Hannah Arendt's notion of 'space of appearance'. Being guided by both, I ask: who is recognized as a human and who is a threat to humanity? As I move on to analyse the

productivity of victimhood as it is embodied by intolerant others, the paper will explore the scope of making ontology a methodological project.

I intend, with Pfeil, to destabilise the essentialization of misogynistic communities as ‘a single, straight, monolithic, absolute evil, against which an interminable struggle for turf and power must be waged’ (1995: xii). For that reason, the paper will firstly place incels’ victimhood within structural trajectories of economic and social precarisation. The second section will discuss ethnographic figurations of victimhood and will use the particularity of incels’ suffering to illuminate the general. I conclude by considering the role of encountering technology in shapings of alliance; by intervening Butler’s work, I will suggest that the incel forums transform the physicality of the body politic as they form a unique haven of being and appearing.

RESTRUCTURING INTIMACY

A unilinear transformation of that ‘which goes without saying because it comes without saying’ (Bourdieu, 1977: 167) is a predicament for incels’ self-victimisation. Let’s go back to the conversation of Joey and Elle to illustrate the diverse ways subjectivity adopts, adapts and abdicates parts of ‘newly’ emerging paradigms (Vice News, 2018: 05:00).

Joey: Women who have had sex with, you know, hundred plus men, and now they are kind of ostracized from their own communities. And they feel that they were kind of lied to by a feminist progressive society that told them it’s okay to form your sexuality.

Elle: But that just seems kind of like a cartoon to me. I don’t actually know in my personal life many women who have slept with hundreds and hundreds of men.

Joey: You don’t? You should interview girls [that are] 22, 23 right now and ask them how many partners they have had.

While Joey is aware of the structural rearrangements of sexual politics, he is rather generous with ascribing power to the ‘feminist progressive society’ as the sovereign ruler, telling subjects what is ‘okay’ and what not. In this section, I will analyse some anthropological, sociological and feminist interventions into the economic and structural genealogies of gendered discourse and set them side by side with accounts of incels’ precarisation of the human condition. In the end, I will offer some preliminary thoughts on how the neoliberal self-regulation operationalizes the Good Life imaginary to ‘cancel the future’ and turn sexual anxieties into ‘debt’.

Let a brief note of a few scholars questioning if patriarchy *really* is in decline and how would we even know, set the scene. Barbara Ehrenreich in her article “Decline of patriarchy” (1995) asserts that while decline of *patria potestas*, the intimate male dominance within the household, may be supported by statistics of male unemployment, decline in (white) male wages or rising number of single mothers, there is no causal effect to the decline of gendered discrimination. On the other hand, anthropologists have long argued that the normative model of a household (as consisting of a male breadwinner, stay-at-home female carer and children) as an economic and moral unit of and for a nation-state never accounted for the lived realities of the rhizomatic kinship structures (i.e. Harris, 1981; Yanagisako, 1979). However, the factuality of this ‘kinship shift’ is irrelevant to the argument presented by Messner (2016), that the current gender-political conjecture has been facilitated through three changes: through institutionalization and professionalization of feminism; through the emergence of a

widespread postfeminist cultural sensibility; and through deindustrialization and increasing marketization of the state. As will be indicated later, it is the misrecognition of the two former for the latter that allows for incels' particular affective claims.

Economic anthropology has highlighted the visceral nature of the post-Fordist re-imagination of masculinities; from groundwork of Gutmann (1996) on intricacy of Mexican 'machismo' to current research of Mattioli (forthcoming) on speculative masculinity amongst affectivization of labour in Macedonia. In "Severed in neoliberal South Korea" (2015), Jong Bum Kwon shows how state-led restructuring of the economy in the 2000s has generated a disturbing connection between unemployment and deteriorating physical health. Seeking clarification on why laid-off middle-aged male Daewoo Motors workers self-identify as 'byongshin' (a term for a cripple), Kwon approached a charismatic union leader who pointed out the lack of college degrees and technical skills: 'Laborers have nothing but their bodies' (422). Disassembled bodies were made disposable in a regime that no longer valued industrial bodies; the term 'byongshin' is itself gendered and associated with lack of social standing, autonomy and sexual potency. While there is no research on the socioeconomic status of incels, there is still resemblance between the two cases: they both present figurations of negotiations of gendered selves in a moral framework emphasising self-sufficiency under conditions when self-sufficiency is structurally undermined. Furthermore, both cases couple status with sexual activity and both the terms 'byongshin' and incel are also self-appellations of being and appearing.

To further understand the contours of economic and emotional self-sufficiency, I propose to look at Berlant's concept - 'cruel optimism' (2011). As fiscal policies produce stark economic consequences, the promises of the Good Life - upward mobility, job security, political and social equality, and durable intimacy – although unachievable, are still desirable and appear within a grasp to those who toil. As Butler (2018) noted, precarity is not only about who counts as a human, but also whose lives are worth making liveable. Deleuze and Guattari call this strive for liveability within a system that is unable to grant it 'desire for oppression' (1977). Tied to oppression by affect, we live as if we were free. Looking at what might happen when those promises are uneven, Ho (2018) talks of misrecognition. Like other social scientists studying white masculinities (Carroll, 2011; Kimmel, 2015), Ho spotted the confusion of the injured 'common man' as he directs *reaction* towards rising visibility of already othered communities instead of towards systematic truths of oppression.

The reactionary populism, then, that has led to Trumpism arose out of real grievances against neoliberal financialization and globalization yet has conflated the policies and practices that benefit the financial elite with the demands of marginalized and minoritized groups (Ho, 2018: 148–9).

If the Good Life imaginary is linked to neoliberal optimization of the human subject and as such hinders recognition of the brokenness of the system, what happens when its promises are not fulfilled? Linking Ho's and Berlant's argument, I ask to what extent does the affect glued to the future inevitably propel subjects to search elsewhere for bodies to blame.

Incels' attachment to the future varies; some of the more extreme forums have taken the manosphere's Red Pill and extended it into the Black Pill. To dose a Black Pill makes one not only realize that there is something wrong with a society where women do not give men sex but, furthermore, that any positive state, any hope, is a dangerous illusion. The derogatory term, 'hopecel', describes anyone who departs from such fatalism. Incels.wiki, a website imitating Wikipedia, provides an elaborate set of pseudoscientific articles and encyclopaedic glossaries; one equates evacuation of hope to emancipation (Incels.wiki, 2019a):

A positive effect of taking the blackpill is that it liberates you from false hope, which in the dating scene would mean no longer spending so much time and effort for what is, in essence, a futile goal.

The pointlessness of the future is relative to narrating the past as free of equality work. In opposition to that past, the present is narrated as governed by feminist 'ideology', which then disciplines marginalized bodies and reformulates social hierarchies. For example, Incels.wiki depicted #MeToo as the declaration that 'autistic and socially isolated ugly men who can't read social cues should be locked up or ridiculed as much as rapists' (2019b). Here, the co-optation of equality work discourse is evident. Turning the tables, the potency of this description of the movement lies in obscuring the audience's ability to distinguish between a victim and a perpetrator. When describing the anti-feminist backlash, a question like that of Guardian reporter, Raisin, gets often spotlighted: 'Is masculinity in crises?' (2017).

The emergence of critical masculinities studies goes back to the 1970s to work of Raewyn Connell (i.e. 2005) who was central in approaching male bodies as subjects performing gender within intersections of their lives. Half a century later, the 'crises-talk' (Roberts, 2014) seems to be here to stay. Centering this 'phenomenon' by academic works as well as popular press alludes to the permanence of the 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005).

Furthermore, the talk of transformation and articulation of loss of white male privilege might serve to re-instate its normalcy (Ging, 2017: 11). Collective consensus of what constitutes a violation of a person's humanity and the nullification of being renders suffering work a matter of collectivity rather than subjectivity. Hastrup approaches this split in a Bakhtinian manner, when she says: 'Violence is always a social act' (2003: 309). Since anthropologists attempt to understand people's life-worlds experientially, they came to realize that violence is not external to the human condition and it does not just 'happen'; but rather that the norm of reality itself is one of disorder. This is what Davis (1992: 152) has meant by 'social organization hurts'. This permanent (re)deterritorialization, destruction of all forms of identification and continual return to specific constructs of the past, turns the term 'crises of masculinity' into a canvas. As identity formations depend on memory, the past is in constant flux. To apply this poststructuralist perspective on knowledge work to online misogyny: the antifeminist sentiment unites the otherwise scattered manosphere and the nostalgic retreat to 'traditional' gender arrangements lies at its core (Ging, 2017).

One of the most influential theories discussing shifts of love is the 'transformation of intimacy thesis' presented by Giddens (1993), Beck (1995) and others. They argued that the technological global transformation and flexibilization of capitalisms of the last 50 years has directly impacted intimacy, gendered division of labour and the private-public split. Partially vacating reproductivity from sexual relations has the potential to transgress the sex-gender equation; for example, a reproducing cis female body is, due to new reproductive technologies, no longer crucial for performances of womanhood. The state of being 'free to choose' (Friedman & Friedman, 1980) one's sexuality is meant to democratise all sorts of social and political life and it is 'the characteristic trend of modern societies towards [its] realisation' (Giddens, 1993: 188). Yet, their optimism of dissolution of kinship ties may be countered with the increasing precarisation and commodification of the self. Expectations of multiple partners over the life-cycle expanded the beauty-myth onto formerly immune bodies as the demand for self-making rose.

Here, I will offer a critique of Giddens' democratization of love by positioning it in dialogue with Shawn P. Van Valkenburgh's (2018) study on individual navigation of sexual precarity. He carried out a unique qualitative analysis of a sidebar of Reddit's Red Pill thread and archived (now inaccessible) sites. Since Reddit's official policies reject hate speech and incentivization of violence, the thread was shut on November 7 2017, when the community

had 40,000 members.¹ Van Valkenburgh talks about how incels abstract socialites into legible numbers, as they measure physical attractiveness and hence potentiality for physical intimacy by Sexual Market Value – SMV. The SMV scores resemble currency as they ‘greatly level’ (Simmel, 1900/2004) bodies by turning them into objects commensurable in a sexual marketplace. The *ideal*, in a Platonic sense, is assembled through hyper-stimulation with a sexualized media imaginary and pushes for new spaces of demand formed through advertising unrealistic social standards of physical beauty (Wolf, 1990).

The difference between Chad and non-Chad (incel) is literally a few millimeters of bone.



Figure 1. Meme, a variable image circulating through media 2.0 for humorous purposes, showing the inadequacy of an incel's bone structure (Incels.wiki, 2019f).

The tendency to approach one's physical presence as a commodity can be illustrated by this image. The profile of an incel's face is compared to Chad's, both are photoshopped. This meme's modularity allowed its circulation in diverse forms amongst and beyond the incel community. What work does the image do? (Silverman, 2011: 347) The straightforwardness of the self-deprecation primarily functions to amuse. The image equates structures of a 'male skull', a sloped forehead with strong brow and a robust jawline, to physical attractiveness, to sexual life, to well-being. In *Image, music, text*, Roland Barthes gestures towards a 'third meaning', one that is 'a signifier without a signified' (1977: 61). After identifying the

¹ The debates on whether closing the cyber-hate platforms is effective vary. Pushing these conversations into even darker corners of the web lessens moral and legal culpability (Ging, 2017: 6). The mere ban of these sites also might seem more like a band-aid rather than a systematic solution.

informational and the symbolical totality, he asks about the image's animating potency to open possibilities. Twisting Barthes' third meaning, I question the meanings that the image closes. Here, the biological determination, again, feeds in fatalism and hinders any alternative imaginings of the future – as if the image was saying: 'A life of a man without strong jaws will never be as fulfilling as a life of a Chad.'

The inanimacy and unchangeability of the skull makes it a potent symbol of an intrinsic and permanent state of misfortune. Furthermore, the histories of instrumentalization of affect assigned to the anatomy of the skull are interwoven with the naturalization of social hierarchies, such as the genesis of scientific racism (e.g. de Sousa Santos, 2014). The body is no longer regarded a vessel for political and social life but, rather, its mere appearance is already political. 'Passing' – a concept from queer studies – might be helpful here to grasp the embodiment of abject existence. The ways in which an appearing body is being read, as one 'makes oneself readable' (Tudor, 2017: 21), determines how and if its performance passes the societal gaze. Misreading gender and sexually nonconforming bodies exposes them to limits of recognizability. As Butler (2018: 40) has put it, the radical deprivation of one's recognition threatens the social ontological conditions of one's existence.

By equating the physicality of a body to potentiality-for-Being, to borrow Heidegger's term (1927/1995: sec. 378), incels offer a critique of modernity. If, as Giddens saw it, autonomy facilitates 'confluent love' (1993: 61–64), how come are the cycles of individualism not available to everyone? What bodies are left behind? In her essay "Does anybody have the right to sex?", Amia Srinivasan (2018) asks if sex can be perceived as a fundamental human right. The short answer is no. In her paper, she critically considers sex-positive movement's emphasis on consent, as a juncture of two or more liberal subjects, who come as equals into social contract. However, for Srinivasan, applying norms of a market exchange onto sex threatens to cover for racism, ableism, transphobia and other forms of bodily discrimination. To oppose 'consent talk' with ethics of care: the shapings of desire reside in the public realm; who we have sex with and how is primarily a political question. While there is no right to sex, to say to a disabled queer body of colour 'No one is required to have sex with you' is to fall into the illusion that personal preferences are *just* personal. Srinivasan concludes with pointing out the irony that movements of Black and overweight women call for radical self-love and transfiguration of our desires, while men with weak jawlines confine themselves to digital self-harm and misogynistic terrorism.

By jumping back to Berlant's cruel optimism, I want to make a clear link between Srinivasan's attention to the political nature of sex and incels' biological determinism. The idea of being sexually active becomes another promise of the Good Life, which while not attainable, still is desirable. As the promise fails, one searches for bodies to blame, and, counterintuitively, their own loveless and sexless bodies become vulnerable scapegoats. Lines between hatred of the self and of humanity become blurred. The ways in which the incel community embodies rejection is manifested in high suicide rates.² As Elle asserts after interviewing Joey (Vice News, 2018: 06:17): 'Joey says [the self-loathing] is therapeutic, but four of his friends have killed themselves.' Why does Joey and his peers prefer individual emotional pain over collective political action? As Giddens (1993) would put it, the flexibilization of capitalisms freed us and allowed for the self-governance of intimacy. As Foucault (1979) would put it, this flexibilization warrants the privatization of profit and pleasure, and externalization of regulation onto bodies themselves. In a Panoptikon, dreaming is pointless and results in one being called 'hopecel', therefore incels self-govern and self-harm their sexed bodies.

As intimacy is restructured, consent to self-govern one's own sexuality is manufactured. Van Valkenburgh (2018: 6) shows that the primary objective of incels' narratives is not reconfiguring the gendered discourse our bodies inhabit but rather (re)gaining agency within its constraints. This meritocratic vacation of beliefs is what Fisher (2009: 11) meant by the 'dark potentiality of capitalism'. Drawing on Jameson (1991) and Deleuze and Guattari (1977), he views the 'cancellation of the future' as a cultural logic of late capitalism. While incels' victimhood is assembled through intimate links between constructions of time and sexuality, the fact that their lives are not what they were promised influences aggrieved entitlement. Srinivasan talks of a 'certain kind of sexless man: the kind who is convinced he is owed sex, and is enraged by the women who deprive him of it' (2018).

² Amongst the more far-out forums, several of them are specifically catering to suicidal incels, i.e. www.suicide.is

POLYVALENCE OF VICTIMHOOD WORK

Elliot's manifesto is a complex 107,000-word memoir of a *good* life. Being a middle-class, white passing, able-bodied man with a supportive family and a psychiatrist, but also, shy, short and effete; he only identifies the realities of his life as monopolized by pain (Rodger, 2014: 70).

I couldn't stand seeing that damnable couple in my class anymore. I never understood what that pretty girl saw in her brute of a boyfriend. That guy was able to experience his college life with his beautiful girlfriend by his side, while I was all alone. It made me feel so inferior. I had to watch them together, every single day. The torture was unbearable. When I got home from college one day, I dropped my class in a rage.

How does the very idea of a victim come into play in society? The term is already imbued with affective generosity as the signified is one who is reduced or destined to suffer under some oppressive or destructive agency. One who is taken advantage of (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019). This definition distances itself from the fact that 'a victim' has many faces. Anthropology has grappled with the paradoxes of both self- and external appellations of victimhood. Positioning these studies into a dialogue with stories of injuries, such as that of Elliot, I delve into the polyvalence of victimhood work and show how incels' political existence exposes the sedimented-ness of morality.

Firstly, I will present some figurations of what it means to call another subject 'a victim'. Benson noted anthropology's complicity in victim construction; she suggested that anthropologists first establish who is a victim and who the perpetrator and then tailor their analytic methods to this moral verdict (Benson, n.d., cf. Jeffery & Candea, 2006: 289). Besides this insight, there is a multiscape of academic work probing operationalization of victimhood to tame gendered and sexualized corporealities. Exposing the Orientalism behind human right discourse' obsession with honour crime as a white feminist's burden, Abu-Lughod (2013) shows how prescriptions of victimhood shape and are shaped by power asymmetries and stick particular affects onto Muslim women. Also centering affects of passivity, Cojocarú posits her own experience with sex-trafficking to the narratives of NGOs and policy makers. For her, these narratives police the intimate link between sex work and migration by fetishizing women who cannot think, cannot act, cannot make decisions, into 'titillating spectacle' (2015: 185). While the religious, regional and rhetorical contexts differ,

both authors argue that constructing someone else as a victim is a process producing subjects depleted of agency, temporality and awaiting salvation. Who is in the position to call someone else a victim? Who speaks and for whom? The mere act of appearing, representing and voicing concerns is one of metaphysical ascendancy, because of that, external appointment of suffering is inherently clouded in questions of power and morality.

Another framework through which victimisation is articulated and studied is of imagined communities (Anderson, 1983). In this case, self-victimisation mediates moulding and preserving community's identity. Ballinger calls it 'exclusive victimhood' (2004). In her study of the city of Trieste, Italy, she shows how 'divided memory' of World War II allowed both the Slovene minority and the Italian majority claims of being victim of the other group's genocidal affliction. The 'exclusivity' here stands for the inability to recognize overt atrocities perpetrated by members of one's own group. Similarly, Candea's (2006) study of Corsicans 'resisting victimhood' brings to light the layers of suffering. While the islanders assume victimhood mainly towards the French state and its derogatory representation of Corsicans as racist, there is a contemporary upsurge of racism towards Franco-Maghrebians and of far-right Corsican nationalism. Statements of passivity rearticulate lines between a victim and a perpetrator, while at the same time, they establish a space for agency. One instance of this double-movement is elucidated by Ochs (2006), when she notes that the Israeli nation-state's monopolization of Jewish victimhood downplays the weight of Palestinian suffering. Mack's (1990: 125) phrase 'the egoism of victimisation' epitomizes these instances. What he meant by it is the narrowing of possible solidarity which directly results from nation's own historical trauma.

The political potential of victimhood work depends on grand narratives of morality. Arjun Appadurai's famous quote 'One man's imagined community is another man's political prison' (1996: 32) was a direct attack on the contradiction which nation construction inherently produces – it is inclusive as much as it is exclusive. In a like manner, victimhood work too is occupied with paradoxes. Declaration of victimhood might foster humanisation; it breaks one out of the 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998) and actively produces empathy. Elliot's line 'The torture was unbearable' is one inducing attention and solidarity: a call to be seen. However, this humanisation does not necessarily rely on space or time. The victimhood work's success lies in prior moral conditioning; we already know how we are supposed to feel about a victim without knowing any context. In "Affective Economies", Sarah Ahmed (2004) approached affect as a contagious entity securing sedimentation of social meaning. For her,

affect is like a gum, circulating through racialized and sexualised histories and sticking meanings onto some bodies rather than others. The valence of affective claims lies in its transferability; thus, it can be used as a form of currency. Applying Ahmed's theory onto our case: the sticky meanings of 'a victim' allow those who claim it to actively establish seemingly a-contextual political space.

At the same time, claims of suffering inherently provide enactment of elastic passivity. By elastic here, I refer to the adaptability of morality; regardless of it being instrumentalized to describe oneself or others. Abu-Lughod (2013) and Cojocaru (2015) both view passivity as a prescribed state rather than a lived experience of sexually marginalized bodies. Ballinger (2004), Candea (2006) and Ochs (2006) see a community's claims of passivity as a way of obscuring their agential power. As established above, the question of whether this passivity is real or an illusion, is a misleading one. Systematic dichotomization of reality-illusion has been contested and opposed by many anthropological interventions, because it obscures the *real* power of illusion and the *illusionary* character of reality. Puzzled by the active-passive dilemma, Jeffery and Candea (2006) locate an epistemic deadlock within victimhood work. They borrow Ferguson's concept, 'anti-politics machine' (1990), to point out that this depoliticization is itself a political performance. In this way, both politics and victimhood assert 'ontological primacy' - the inability to claim victimhood without prior understanding of power relations and vice versa (Jeffery & Candea 2006: 290). The strength of such an act thus lies in its polysemy; simultaneous performance as a de-political and a political entity.

These discussions on the paradoxical nature of victimhood can be further developed by Ahmed's emphasis on bodily presence. She asks: 'How do emotions work to align some subjects with some other and against other others?' (2004: 117). Sissel Rosland's study of the ambiguous nature of performances of victimhood in the debates on internment in 1970s Northern Ireland calls for historicization and subjectivation of victimhood. While republicans and moderate nationalists managed to build empowerment through 'a cult of sacrifice' (2009, 295); loyalist representations of suffering revealed a sense of isolation and despair. Perceiving 'a victim' as an already gendered and racialized framework, she incorporates a section in her paper probing female victimhood. Rosland's analysis shows that women's suffering was narrated through motherhood (see also Helms, 2013). It could be concluded that, victimhood is not only inhabited by both agency and impotence, both universality and contextuality; its instrumentality is also heavily reliant on what particular bodies it is attached to and where on the crossroads of power these bodies are found.

The strength of such an intersectional approach that considers layered oppressions is in uncovering the management of morality. Who is able to call oneself a victim? One already needs to be seen; they need to appear; they need to be recognized as a human rather than a threat to humanity. To further understand the role of operationalization of affect for manufacturing consent, Ahmed (2004) uses a story from Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon's story is of a white boy who sees a Black man shivering with cold. But mistaking him as trembling with rage, 'the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms' (1986: 114). Ahmed employs a psychoanalytical approach to displacement as the form or language of the unconscious to argue that the circulation of fear leads to 'containment for some, and movement for others' (2004: 127). In other words, displacing fear onto the body of the Black man is connected to moral cleansing. Minding histories of symbolic and physical brutality that people of colour endure, the question of who *really* is fearsome, remains a rhetorical one.

A following excerpt from a far-out forum 'Raping Girls Is Fun' resonates with Ahmed's understanding of displacement of morality. It is a post by a member called 'Surreal' under a thread 'Rant: When it comes to some foids, rape without murder is like gin without tonic' (rgif.is, 2019). The post uses the term 'foids', explained by Incels.wiki: 'Femoids, or, foids, short for female humanoid organisms, are flaky creatures who have bullied or ignored you your entire life' (2019c).

Foids know how much we suffer as a result of heartbreak, and yet some 90% of relationships are dissolved by foids. I just want to point out that rape (alone) is too kind a punishment for them; they deserve nothing less than to be snuff-executed, e.g., drowned in a cage underwater, subsequently to the rape. When particularly cuntly foids are made an infamous example of, that might deter the rest of foidhood from taking anti-family measures. Moreover, it's a morally just retribution; murdering the bitch who left you is the fulfillment of the Biblical injunction, "An eye for an eye." The time of male-female romanticism is officially over; it's now time to inflict as much pain and damage, psychological and physical alike, on foidhood. It's no longer an ideological war only - it is a zero-sum game in which the most barbaric tERrorism is a legitimate tactic; and in which hurting foids is an end as much as it is a method.

Even though this stance is not an ultimate epitome of what incels stand for, as their networks are heterogenous and divergent, analysing its blunt utilization of morality might offer possible figurations of political lives of victimhood. Similarly to Joey's commentary on the number of

partners young women have, 'Surreal's' post too understands female sexuality as something that got out of hand. Queer theorists have been early champions in recognizing the immense power of moralisation of sexuality in naturalising gendered and racialized oppressions (i.e. Sedgwick, 1991; Spivak, 2008). The use of this derogatory term 'foid' is a way of classifying female bodies as subhuman. The sexuality of such a subhuman is no longer understood as formed by sex acts, instead it is read as a personality trait – creating 'new species of individuals' (Halperin, 1998: 98). This essentialization of being is coupled with sedimentation of meaning. One might observe a pattern within incels' ontology, this sedimenting yet again breeds into the singularity of the prevalent status-quo.

While incels' view of rape as a social construct and a legitimate way to interrupt perpetual virginity might produce discomfort, the fact that marital rape was perfectly legal in USA until 1993, puts our judgement of incels' morality in perspective. Remembering Emma Goldman's (1910/1990) radical analogy between marriage and sex work, I question the extent to which incels' self-victimisation is linked to terminations of mandatory sexual reciprocity within kinship ties. A parenthesis on influential anthropological debates on whether kinship is organized by materiality or morality allows to embed 'Surreal's' normalization of rape into the rhizome that is society. In reaction to Leach's study of Pul Eliya, Sri Lanka, in which he argues that 'kinship systems have no reality at all except in relation to land and property' (1961: 305), Meyer Fortes introduced a notion of 'axiom of amity' (1970: 219–249). Basing his analysis on an ethnography among the Tallensi, Ghana, he disputes Leach by regarding 'prescriptive altruism' an explanation for binding force of kinship. For him, the moralization of reciprocity makes kinship the jural basis of society. His theory is echoed in feminist anthropology's rejection of invisibilization of reproductive labour by ascribing kindness and generosity to womanhood (e.g. Moore, 1994). Extending Fortes' terminology, the male control over social networks has been deprived of 'prescriptive sexual altruism'.

Let's go back to 'Surreal's' statement to uncover what work incels' self-victimisation does. 'Surreal' claims injury, suffering and expresses anger over feeling rejected. What's more, he calls for punishment and utilizes these assertions of sexualized victimhood to perform integrity. When he says, 'an eye for an eye', claiming the universal right to being right, he creates a space of justice. The employment of comparison to negotiate morality is equally seen in Incels.wiki post about rape: 'Involuntary celibacy is much more painful for men than rape is for women' (2019d). Incels think of female sexuality as something perverse, morally deviant, something to be feared and something that causes them pain. With Ahmed's

interpretation of Fanon in mind, I suggest that aggression has the quality of being reciprocal – ‘the thought that others might do, as I propose to do, or that others might do to me what I propose to do to others, proves to be an unmanageable thought’ (Butler, 2016b: 33:05). The self-appointment of ‘a victim of female sexuality’ works as Pilate’s soap, washing hands over lived or potential gendered violence executed by these victims themselves.

The political potential of victimhood is assembled through and within spillage of power. As the ethnographies of both pacification of sexualized subjects and rounding up community’s identity have shown, questions such as who perpetuates, who victimises, to what ends, and what bodies are exposed to victimisation, remain decisive. This case of incels finds itself on the intersectional foci of these studies: firstly, incels themselves are sexualised subjects, secondly, they gain agency through claims of passivity. Lastly, their community’s identity too is formed through schismogenesis, as it is defined through and against an other (Bateson, 1980: 171–197), in our case – women’s liberation. Through objectification of their own bodies and displacement of sexual violence, they generate specific political territory. Allow me to stretch Fabian’s adjective describing Time into a verb: they are schizogenizing themselves, creating an atemporal space of innocence. What work does incels’ self-victimisation do? While one might struggle to extend tolerance onto those who aim at intolerance, the incels utilize prior moral conditioning to destabilize our understanding of who is a victim and who the perpetrator. In other words, their politics expose the sedimented-ness of moralisation of categories of humanhood.

SPACES OF APPEARANCE

Since Joey dropped out of school and is jobless, he spends his days in a chair, smoking and running chatrooms. ‘These are my friends,’ he shows to Elle by pointing at the screen (Vice News, 2018: 02:32).

Joey: Honestly, I feel more real here, sitting in front of the computer. When I go outside, I almost depersonalize a little bit... and feel like I am playing a videogame. I don’t know what that is, it’s a just state of mind. It’s probably just a side effect of isolation.

Joey’s questioning of the metaphysical nature of reality is an ingenious commentary on contemporary anthropology of virtual worlds. Tom Boellstorff’s influential work is not coy about its conceptual disgust of the tendency to oppose the *virtual* and the *real* (2008). The materiality of the computer is not only a medium for Joey’s social realities, but more importantly, a vessel through which incels’ ontology is shaped. In this section, I will build on three theories of marginalization of discourse to intervene Butler’s take on Arendt’s ‘space of appearance’ to suggest that it is by reconfiguring conditions of appearance through violence, that incels resist their unrecognisability.

The potentiality of encountering new technology is crucial. The incels forums are full claims of anxieties, neuroatypicalities and other diagnoses (Beauchamp, 2019). As they are unable to meet in person, politics are formed through new media’s ability to compress both time and space. However, I depart from technological determinism to consider civic engagement through network media with Deleuze and Guattari in mind (1977). Reading with and against both Freud and Marx, they turn away from default humanism to suggest desiring-machines actualize virtuality into life, generating political change through connections of those desiring-machines. Zizi Papacharissi in *Affective publics* rejects the idea that net-related technologies are ominous ‘forces that bring about change’ (2014: 121). Instead, the media 2.0 is another desiring-machine. And as it encounters other desiring-machines, like Joey himself, his friends, or even the rising feminist sensibility, the door to new perspectives opens.

The affordance of new online environments is vital for reproduction of incels’ ontology. In ‘prosumer’ spaces, knowledge is no longer distributed top-down from a single broadcaster, but rather produced and consumed by nets of users, which are shaping and

shaped by ‘participatory culture’ (Jenkins, 2006). ‘We are all broadcasters, we are all witnesses’, implies Bifo Berardi (2015: 42) as he turns to how mass shooter Pekka-Eric Auvinen meticulously prepared the medialization of his crime. That is why Berardi named his book *Heroes*; Auvinen’s much-watched YouTube diatribe, wearing a ‘Humanity is overrated’ T-shirt, has, as with Elliot’s content, consolidated and amplified his manifesto. Debbie Ging’s (2017) emphasis on exclusivity nuances Berardi’s nod towards collective presumption. For her, the anonymity and niche-character of these forums facilitate extreme and ‘illegal performances of masculinity’ (5). To employ Bourdieu’s ‘universe of possible discourse’: the boundaries of the unsayable and the unthinkable are policed (1977: 169). As extreme misogynist sentiment finds it more difficult to enter the public sphere, the grey web provides a haven for particular forms of texture. Accounts like ‘Surreal’s’ justification of rape and murder no longer have a legal right to appear in major media outlets.

The incels’ forums are a digital encampment of hate. Joey’s explanation of the codes of interaction in incel chatroom echoes what I mean by this: ‘This is just how we talk though, you know, this b*tch, that ni**a, this that.. You know, it’s just vulgar. And you can call that toxic, but we are all desensitised to it’ (Vice News, 2018: 00:47). ‘What is the form that publics take on as they are called into being through connective structures of feeling?’ asks Papacharissi (2014: 117). Basing her analysis on digital manifestations of dissent, namely the Twitter presence of Occupy Wall Street and Arab Spring movements, she coins a term ‘affective publics’. She distinguished three common threads of the movements: promises of visibility to previously marginalized voices, expressions of discontent with regimes of truth, and algorithmic materiality. Additionally, the permanent liminality and granularity allow these publics to be convened around affective commonalities, connecting and disbanding around affective consensus formed through stories of suffering. The collaborative discourse of incels’ far-out forums starkly resembles the affective publics of Occupy or the Arab Spring as it too uses affect to disrupt dominant political narratives and to ‘supersede logic and evidence’ (130).

As liberation from ‘older models of political consensus and rational debate’ (Ging, 2017: 16) accelerates discourse of the incel forums, links to other extremist sites are set. Here, I refer to the Dark Enlightenment, which is the theoretical branch of the alt-right, an ‘acceleration of capitalism into a fascist point’ (Noys, 2014), and is too characterized by transgressions of what counts as knowledge (Hastrup, 2003). During the plenary session of European Parliament in 1991, Douglas Holmes (1993) conducted an interview with Bruno

Gollnish, a member of Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front. Rather than diagnosing overt racism, Holmes alternatively considers the ways and extent to which Gollnish's forms of appearing, aim at re-negotiation of boundaries, rituals and languages of political struggle, rather than at starting a revolution. He terms such discourse as illicit. When Gollnish states: 'We were brave enough to talk about immigration even though it *exposed* us to the attack of being racists' (265, emphasis my own), he redefines the normative by positioning his political presence as marginal. The signifier 'illicit' is a telling metaphor: as if Gollnish's 'talk about immigration' surfaced in the public realm of knowledge, exposing him to patrols that wanted his 'talk' to be pushed back into the private darkness.

Michael Warner's (2002) investigation of the multiformity of publics offers another perspective on this two-way enactment of both dominated and dominating subjectivity; or in a vein of Jeffery and Candea (2006), both de-political and political appearing. For Warner, a defining feature of 'going public' is making oneself vulnerable for others to 'scrutinize, ask, reject, opine, decide, [and] judge' (2002: 123). This process of being read then fragments public into 'counterpublics'. This term, borrowed from Fraser (1990), describes discursive arenas that invent and circulate their own interpretations of the human condition, as they escape the tyranny of the normal. Throughout this paper, several terms from the Red Pill lexicon were introduced, from 'foid' and 'hopecel' to 'going ER'; the glossary on Incels.wiki contains over 350 concepts with definitions (2019e). Apart from creativity of expression (Ging, 2017: 16), these modifications of terminology evidence Warner's thesis: the invention and circulation of oppositional political language. As a white man is no longer a normative default but rather becomes tangible as a subcategory of what it means to be a human (Frankenberg, 1997) and talk of male dominance cannot appear in the public light, subjects assemble in marginal spaces, where subaltern (re)enactments of legibility thrive.

The ways in which Hannah Arendt privileges the political potentiality rising out of acting and speaking together has made *Human Condition* re-find its relevance in contemporary philosophy. For her, it is the power of potentiality of being together in a space of appearance that brings politics about – in turn, politics require a space of appearance. She defines it as 'the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly' (Arendt, 1958/1998: 198-199). Rethinking Arendt's oblivious approach to the public realm as sustained without the private, Judith Butler (2018) elaborates on Arendt's thinking on political life to visibilise the link between precarity, assembly, performativity and gender.

... when bodies gather as they do to express their indignation and to enact their plural existence in public space, they are demanding to be recognized, to be valued, they are exercising a right to appear, to exercise freedom, and they are demanding a livable life. (Butler, 2018: 26)

Deromanticising Arendt's inherent equality afforded by spaces of appearance, Butler thinks through the differential distribution of precariousness of ways in which 'I appear to others as others appear to me'. She locates her argument in two interrelated dimensions, both relevant to my argumentation.

Firstly, she intervenes the body politics offered by Arendt by positioning it in dialogue with the contemporary forms which bodies in alliance take on to protest social conditions. In 2006 Los Angeles, undocumented workers have gathered in what became known as *La Gran Marcha* to enact political change by merely appearing. Consulting a lawyer to 'become legal' or just walking the streets - these expose those with precarious migrant status to arrests and deportations. The mass demonstration then was a claim to 'right of assembly and of citizenship without being citizens, without having any legal right to do so' (79). A different example: on August 9 2014, the mere appearance of Michael Brown Jr.'s Black body in the streets of Ferguson, Missouri, exposed him to state-sanctioned death. And that gave impulse to mass movement demonstrating that Black lives indeed do matter. In both instances, the subjects were finding the right 'conditions of appearance' (41) as their bodies were speaking politically: 'This is a body that ought to be recognized as a human with rights for liveability'. However, as not all bodies have the 'freedom to appear' (82), in these two cases, they were inherently exposing themselves to state violence and death.

Secondly, Butler is queering Arendt's approach. Even as 'I appear to others as others appear to me'; the sphere between us allows us to appear and resides within the norms of recognizability (38). Tudor's theorization of the terms 'passing' also echoes the reliance of those gazing 'on conventionalised habits of reading, seeing and perceiving' (2017: 21). As for Berlant, the Good Life is never reachable but still yearned for (2011), for Butler, there is a 'phantasmic dimension to cultural norms of gender' (Butler, 2018: 30) as emerging humans seek to reconcile their efforts of embodiment with the imperative *ideal*. Yet, if one's reconciliation proves impossible, one is exposed to limits of recognizability. Anthropology too has been occupied with what it means to be legible towards the State and how this (i)legibility is operationalized for necropolitical techniques (Scott, 1998). The histories of

state and non-state violence against trans people, predominantly trans people of colour, are just one evidence of how the ways one appears are *policed* (Butler, 2018: 56). Here, Red Pill ‘ideology’ is very much aligned with Butler’s recognizability, as suffering brought about by never truly reaching the *ideal* performance of ‘a man’ lie at its heart.

I began this article with two figurations of involuntary celibacy: Joey’s refusal of the idea that one can ‘just be themselves’ and Elliot’s “Retribution”, where he revolted against not being seen. I would like to ask the reader to keep these scenes in mind as I move on to discuss how incels’ negotiation of (non)appearance revises Butler’s proposition. As incels gather to reject socially induced precarity in online forums, they transform a public assembly into encampments of resistance, which Papacharissi would call ‘affective publics’ (2014), Holmes ‘illicitudes’ (1993) and Warner ‘counterpublics’ (2002). When Elliot’s says: ‘I don’t know what you [girls] don’t see in me’ he uses his body to broadcast a political message: ‘This is a body that ought to be sexually and emotionally fulfilled.’ However, the realities of patriarchal system fail to provide the conditions under which such a claim is even registered as a claim. Not being qualified as a subject of recognition, as a victim, he seeks out homophobic spaces where he can appear and openly protest his nonappearance in a postfeminist society.

What I am trying to picture here, is how one might claim to be a victim of the failure to be recognized as a victim. A return to the meme ‘The difference between a Chad and a non-Chad (incel) is literally a few millimetres of bone’ and its closure of the possibility for a liveable life illustrates the collectivization of consciousness, in a Durkheimian sense. It is through plurality of the body politic that individuals actualize this consciousness – and vice versa, the sharing of specific languages and specific moralities unifies diverse lives of sexual precarity. For as Arendt would have it, space of appearance and politics are metaphysically intertwined. What work does the meme do? As if the image was answering to Elliot’s frustration for not being seen: ‘It is alright, you don’t appear, but we don’t appear either.’ Digital self-harm, biological determinism, fatalism – they assure each other that they do not appear by appearing to each other. The individualized abjection is mended through solidarity mediated via far-out online spaces of participatory culture. While for Arendt plurality of corporeal presence animates politics, assembled voices of the grey web doubt her argumentation. Only through new technologies does ‘my sexual suffering appear to others as their sexual sufferings appear to me.’

Incels, however, resist their nonappearance by reconfiguring the ‘conditions of appearance’ through violence and becoming ‘heroes’ (Berardi, 2015). Elliot’s violent act and its spectatorialisation was a direct resistance to not being seen. Paradoxically, while the suicide-ridden online presence of involuntarily celibates goes back to the 90s (Beauchamp, 2019), they have ‘gone public’ (Warner, 2002) only through medialization of violence, regardless of whether they have appeared as a human or rather a threat to humanity. Furthermore, the physical brutality of the misogyny they advocate is illegal, and like the undocumented workers in LA, their exposure demands the right to have rights. Victimhood claims here form yet again an epistemic deadlock. If one is not seen as a victim, new strategies to appear are formed, in the case of incels, it is through violence. The dominated becomes the dominating. However, at the same time, the victimhood work is used to wash hands over these violent acts. In the first section, I mentioned Hastrup’s sentiment, that violence is always a social act. I conclude with her in mind, that incels’ collective consensus of what counts as violence and who is the hero allows for this epistemic deadlock to thrive.

CONCLUSION: SAFEGUARDING TOLERANCE

If feminism was meant to bring sexual liberation, why are certain bodies more vulnerable to unlovability than others? If neoliberalism was meant to bring liveable lives to everyone, why is precarity so starkly distributed? Positioning my argument on theories of panopticonisation of governance, I argue that the sexualised Good Life imaginary tames neoliberalised subjects into perpetual endeavour for a phantasm, that while never graspable, serves important task - foreclosing possibilities. Sex is owed; future is cancelled. Building on ethnographies of victimhood, I conclude that demands for appearing as a victim, both one made by oneself and others, are deeply productive. In the case of incels, self-victimisation displaces sexual perversity to establish atemporal space of innocence. In this way, sedimented-ness of innocence is both relied upon and recreated. Marrying works on self-subalternation of discourse with Butler's differentialising take on 'spaces of appearance', I investigated how incels radically alter the ways 'I appear to others as others appear to me'. I ended with operationalization of violence to interrupt nonappearance and simultaneous appropriation of innocence, which moralises said violence.

If one logically follows my last proposition, a question arises. If they are victims for not being recognized as victims, does that mean that if the public light was not to question whether their lives *really* are 'very torturous', their violent ways of performing gender would be prevented in the first place? Who is a human and who is a threat to humanity? Butler bases her anti-Hobbesian proposition on the plurality of human cohabitation, when she calls for universalisation of grievability (2016a). In other words, a utopic extension of solidarity onto the intolerant is meant to hinder such intolerance. Would Elliot do what he did, if he was not feeling emotionally and socially marginalized? If we are not to 'dismiss informants' accounts as imaginative *interpretations*' (Henare et al., 2007: 1) but rather engage with the alterity fully, grievability might be extended even onto bodies we despise.

I started with a quarrel of Viveiros de Castro and Graeber, setting out a resolution to, rather than illuminate human phenomena, ask how the phenomena in question themselves may offer illumination. I have tried to think *through* meanings encountered 'as they present themselves, rather than immediately assuming that they signify, represent, or stand for something else' (ibid.: 2). For Viveiros de Castro and other 'ontological turners', it is through making ontology a methodological project that we might be able to unsettle Western analytical universalisms and 'problematise the very idea of an anthropological discipline' (2015: 6). However, I have struggled to live up to that resolution. Jeffery and Candea

addressed this challenge, when they considered the ‘discomfort’ inherently inhabiting relationality towards victims: ‘There is no comfortable mode in which to do the anthropological analysis of the politics of victimhood’ (2006: 290).

However, in this case, the methodological approach is not only one towards victimhood but, more hesitantly, towards hatred. Popper’s paradox of tolerance suggests, that ‘in order to maintain a tolerant society, the society must be intolerant of intolerance,’ (1945/2011). For him, once the checks of public opinion fail to suppress intolerance, tolerance must be prepared not to tolerate intolerance. What Popper proposed, Holmes reminds us, when he stresses the ways voicing the unspeakable re-borders the collective senses of morality (1993). In the interview, Gollnish negated the ‘cultural architecture of the modern world’ (256), and as he posited himself in the realm of truth; he, the party, and its electorate, actively transform normativity of the thinkable. Similarly, as incels interrupt their nonappearance through expressive agency, they contribute to the greater narrative and mandate the ascendancy of misogyny.

I have shown ways the particularity of incels political lives speaks to wider turns of privileged bodies towards victimhood, instrumentalization of morality, or algorithmic formations of alliance. I refuse, however, to ‘seize on these engagements’ (Henare et al., 2007: 1) of expressive brutality towards women to ‘radically reassess our assumptions about the nature of knowledge’ (26). ‘There is by now almost as substantial a body of literature devoted to critiquing the ontological turn as there is to describing what it means,’ as Heywood sums up (2017: 7). Putting Butler and Popper in dialogue, I encounter another limit of the ‘ontological’ utopia. The practical universalisation of grievability onto bodies until now not exposed to qualities of humanhood is not in opposition but reliant on active safeguarding of tolerance. If we are to defer the rhizomes of reproductive-heteronormative oppression which incels are brokering and restrict further precarisation of the spaces of appearance, anthropology indeed should be wary of letting alterities of hate ‘radically reassess our assumptions’.

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