

“Time to Abandon Swedish Women”: Discursive Connections Between Misogyny and White Supremacy in Sweden

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This article explores the discursive linkages between violent misogyny and violent right-wing extremism in the popular Swedish online discussion forum Flashback, which affords anonymous and relatively unmoderated commenting. Empirically, it focuses on the articulations of misogyny and anti-feminism mapped onto extreme right ideology including white supremacism in user comments posted across 16 Flashback threads. To analyze the extensive data set, we first drew on a collocation analysis of user comments ($N = 20,359$) scraped from a strategic selection of threads. From this sample we chose 36 combinations to be considered for a closer reading. In the second analytical step, critical discourse analysis coupled with the Essex School's logics approach helped us unpack the logics of conspiracy and male entitlement, as well as the fantasmatic projections of Swedish women as both "race traitors" and "victims" at the heart of extreme right discourse in and beyond Sweden today.

Keywords: violent misogyny, anti-feminism, far-right extremism, Incel

In international comparisons, Sweden is often represented as a model country for equality close to achieving gender parity and has the highest share of a population that self-identifies as feminists. As home to the world's first self-described feminist government, Sweden is also a country in which state feminism and gender quota policies have shaped society and public life in considerable ways (Freidenvall, 2018). Yet, misogyny

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and anti-feminism increasingly thrive, not least online across the country's extensive far-right alternative media ecosystem, which enjoys sizable publics (Ihlebaek & Nygaard, 2021) and close transnational connections with far-right media ecologies in Europe and the United States (Heft, Knüpfer, Reinhardt, & Mayerhöffer, 2021). This alternative media ecosystem consists of a broad range of highly partisan outlets including news sites, platforms, podcasts, and YouTube channels that are critical of and present themselves as correctives to established mainstream news media. In fact, Sweden was in 2020 identified as a hub for the type of violent misogyny professed by so-called Incels targeting women specifically and ranked top in the list of countries most likely to see terrorist attacks directed at women by actors in this online community (Fernquist, Pelzer, Cohen, Kaati, & Akrami, 2020). Incels, or self-described involuntary celibates, are (overwhelmingly male and white¹) members of an online subculture united by a sense of sexual entitlement to women and women's bodies, a desire to obtain a sexual or romantic partner, and their resentment at their inability to do so. This lack of access to women and sex is construed as not just a personal grievance but an injustice caused by feminism, which calls for a "war on women" to "defend and restore patriarchal order" (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019, p. 5003). Their communication is marked by violence, misogyny, male supremacism, and in some cases racism and white supremacist beliefs (Wilson, 2022). Incel ideology is expressed online in increasingly violent extremist language with studies showing a steady increase in violence against women as a dehumanized outgroup in the main lineage of Incel spaces across the past six years (Baele, Brace, & Ging, 2023). With the subculture being tied to several mass killings committed by men in North America and Europe over the past decade (DiBranco, 2020), violent misogyny is now classified as a security threat in a number of countries including Canada, the United States, and Sweden just as the United Nations recently warned against new synergies among misogyny, violent right-wing extremism, and terrorism (United Nations, 2020). Against this backdrop, misogyny is increasingly considered a "dangerous and underestimated component of extremism" that warrants urgent scholarly attention (Anti-Defamation League, 2018, p. 5). This research seeks to further empirical knowledge on the cross-pollination of such ideas in a specific national context. It adds to debates on topics ranging from the primacy of gender and sexuality to anti-white conspiracism and ideas about racial superiority in contemporary far-right movements more generally by examining how ideas of Sweden-as-nation and tropes around Swedish women in particular are mapped onto violent extremist ideas.

We explore the nexus between male supremacism and white supremacism in the discursive logics of violent misogyny as articulated on the discussion forum Flashback—one of the most popular online spaces in the country, which occupies a key space in the Swedish public sphere today. This article proposes to study the extreme right by capturing key components of extreme right discourse as articulated in mundane online spaces that are not dedicated to or organized by any particular political group or agenda per se. Instead of probing the media of specific actors and their discursive strategies to mobilize or build communal allegiances, we seek to capture key components of extreme right discourse as articulated in everyday online spaces, which users cannot necessarily be expected to visit with the intent to seek out far-right ideas or community specifically. Here, we follow the proposition of Miller-Idriss (2020a), who suggests a new lens with which to study far-right politics by directing attention to the unconventional cultural spaces in which people "may encounter extremist messages and ideas in

¹ Throughout the article, we lowercase the term white when referred to in racial, ethnic, and cultural senses. We do so to avoid signaling alignment with white supremacists' self-designations or subtly conveying legitimacy to beliefs of white superiority.

their ordinary lives” and to the role that “mainstream gateways play in shaping extremist engagement” (p. 4). We take cues from Åkerlund (2021), who calls for research on the “bridging functions” (p. 1814) of Flashback and identifies the forum as a particularly important “gateway” in the country’s online ecosystem in which extreme right ideas increasingly bleed into “the digital mainstream” (Åkerlund, 2022, p. 1) through discussions of seemingly mundane topics.

The analysis explores the primacy of ideas of white supremacy around race and gender across different manifestations of misogyny and anti-feminism in discussions on Flashback. Submerging ourselves in this space, we identified discursive articulations and struggles over core ideas related to gender in contemporary extreme right discourse that are finding their way into public spaces and conversations in unprecedented and unpredictable ways. We propose a dual focus on the flow of discourses and the affordances of the space in which they are articulated. We ask the following question: How is misogyny articulated in this discourse undergirded by logics of white supremacy and ideas of Swedish exceptionalism and purity—and in turn, how then does this cocktail breed the particular kind of violent misogyny that has previously taken on deadly forms in attacks forged by Incels?

We propose the notion of violent misogyny as a way of thinking about the intricate relations between misogyny and violent extremism. They are epitomized perhaps most explicitly by the Incel community but also discernible more broadly, we argue, in the current metamorphosis and mainstreaming of extreme right discourse increasingly circulating far beyond the relatively sealed-off channels of extreme right groups. Manne (2017) distinguishes between naive and systemic conceptions of misogyny: Whereas the so-called naive conceptions of misogyny see the problem as “primarily a property of individual misogynists who are prone to hate women qua women, that is, because of their gender, either universally or at least very generally” (p. 18), misogyny, as proposed by Manne (2017), should be in fact understood as “a property of social environments in which women are liable to counter hostility due to the enforcement and policing of patriarchal norms and expectations—often, though not exclusively, insofar as they violate patriarchal law and order” (p. 19). We follow Manne’s (2017) distinction to understand misogyny as “a socio-political phenomenon with psychological, structural and institutional manifestations” (p. 27)—a system that feeds off and makes sense (only) from the perspective of patriarchal ideology. We thus take a multipronged approach to the data, relying on Wodak and Richardson’s (2013) appeal to turn to texts as somewhat stable records of the “discourse element of social change” (p. 7) to examine the emergence of violent misogyny as part of the process of mainstreaming extreme right-wing discourse. Political discourse theory’s (PDT’s) logics approach (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) then provides the tools to disentangle the ideological, political, and fantasmatic aspects of this phenomenon.

Online Misogyny and Its Intersections With Anti-Feminism and White Supremacy, in Sweden and Beyond

A wealth of studies has examined the production of online misogyny and the continuum of articulations that exist and coalesce in subcultural online communities from the moderate, tepidly anti-feminist, and misogynistic beliefs, which are fairly mainstream and pass relatively unremarked in public discourse today, to the more brazenly radical and even violent forms of misogyny encouraging and glorifying the killing of women (see e.g., Baele, Brace, & Coan, 2019; Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019;

Jones, Trott, & Wright, 2019). Often examining misogyny as a mode of violent extremism in its own right, researchers have focused on the mechanism that makes it conducive to deadly violence in the context of the manosphere, Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), Incels, Pickup artists, and individual men's rights activists and influencers. There is still, however, a dearth of research focusing on the complex ways in which misogyny animates right-wing extremism and vice versa or attempts to conceptualize the overlaps between extremist world views in misogynist communities and those of white supremacists or religiously motivated extremists.

Kathleen Blee (2020) details how gender is integral to virtually every aspect of far-right ideology and practice. While far-right parties and movements may be "male-dominated, promising a homosocial brotherhood of male belonging" (Blee, 2020, p. 417), they also position themselves as "necessary to protect vulnerable and endangered majority-group women (white, citizens, heterosexual, dominant religion) whose childbearing and childrearing is essential to the future of the majority race, nation or religion" (Blee, 2020, p. 419). The women who fall outside these tightly policed boundaries of "good" femininity (and availability, in the Incel worldview) become subject to a violent rhetoric of misogynist denigration, whose violence can spill over into spaces beyond social media. Our research examines the overlaps between male and white supremacy through their portability to and infiltration of online discussions around gender. In Miller-Idriss' (2020b) terms, we seek to gain a better understanding of how "hierarchies of superiority and inferiority transfer across ideologies or create scaffolding that extends dehumanization across domains" (p. 489). This also requires an expanded understanding of the "location" of such ideologies, even as we focus on Swedish-language posts, as it is their very location in virtual communities that enables the linkage of different far-right agendas and discourses across the globe (Blee, 2020, p. 426).

Indeed, new research is suggesting a robust symbiosis between misogyny and white supremacy in online spaces. Recent studies have demonstrated, for example, how the online orbits of men's rights activism act as "a bridge to the white supremacist and anti-Semitic ideology of the alt right" (Anti-Defamation League, 2018, p. 5). Focusing on sites such as 8chan and Reddit, Bjork-James (2020) argues that the male users who visit these sites are "introduced into a conspiracy where—so long as they are identified as white—their gender complaints are framed as a result of an anti-white conspiracy, ideas which in turn serve to racialize misogyny" (p. 178). This calls for further research into the *where* and *how* misogyny, homophobia, and anti-feminism form recruitment pathways into extremism. In the Nordic context, Walton's (2012) analysis of Breivik's manifesto disentangles the intersections of Islamophobia, anti-feminism, and an increasingly mainstream criticism of "political correctness" in the Nordic welfare states with a programmatic misogyny. In Sweden, as elsewhere, the nation is gendered and imbued with specific racial and ethnic characteristics—the latter self-perception to a degree enabled by the country's comparatively late influx of migration from outside the Global North in the 20th century. "Swedishness" becomes associated with characteristics of homogeneity, masculinity, and whiteness (Horsti, 2017)—the latter in turn connected to ideas of racial superiority (Kjellman, 2014). Islamophobic discourses in Sweden engage in a seemingly contradictory categorization of women—one group as white, innocent, victimized subjects in need of protection and the other group as corrupted feminists whose bodies and minds have been marred by multiculturalism and are deserving of rape (Horsti, 2017). This binary thinking is in fact a

form of splitting and boundary policing and is representative of exclusionary discourses more generally, an insight from previous research that we explore further in the analysis.

According to HübINETTE and Lundström (2011), Swedish political debates in the 21st century across the spectrum carry a strongly nostalgic aspect: For right-wing actors such as the party Sweden Democrats, their "longing for 'old Sweden' is expressed as a wish to return to the time when there were no ethno-racial conflicts and no non-Western patriarchal excesses, while what is under threat for the white anti-racists is the image of Sweden"—the image of an anti-racist and feminist country (HübINETTE & Lundström, 2011, pp. 49–50). The backward-looking trend of much contemporary politics then becomes easily instrumentalized by extremist movements to find their way into the mainstream. In the context of this study, this means looking for ways in which the discursive overlaps between misogyny and right-wing thought take place in contentious gender talk by participants of Incel-adjacent discussions on Flashback through the specific factors they posit as affecting their relationship with women and antagonisms affecting society more generally. While there are inevitable echoes of the transnational Incel worldview, the sociopolitical changes Sweden has undergone in the postwar period and the ways these are seen to have shaped Swedish women's status and self-perception (and the forum participants' access to them) offer insight into a uniquely *Swedish* take on the funhouse mirror version of society and social relations offered by Incels. At the same time, these online discussions unfold in the context of a country that has seen a steady rise in far-right extremism in recent years (Ranstorp & Ahlin, 2020; Swedish Security Services, 2020) and the continuous mainstreaming of far-right conspiracy theories including those peddling ideas that ethnic Swedish men are being replaced by Muslim men and other "nonwhites" (Ekman, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

We build on Wodak and Richardson's (2013) approach to studying the emergence of Fascist and right-wing movements, offering our contribution as a way of providing insight into how right-wing thought enters the specific microclimate of gender and Incel-adjacent discussions on Flashback. We supplement this overarching approach with the logics approach, or PDT, as developed by the Essex School of Discourse Studies, to understand how the political, social, and fantasmatic aspects of discourses of violent misogyny are inextricably linked with each other. Our analysis of the synergies between male supremacism and white supremacism as they can be encountered on Flashback looks at the logics governing each of these discourses and how the discursive overlaps between violent misogyny and violent far-right extremism enable such a discursive partnership. Both Wodak and Richardson's (2013) take on CDA and PDT look at macro- (including ideological) and micro-levels of discourse to examine how social and political changes are reflected in discursive practices. PDT specifically turns its analytical lens on "processes of collective mobilization that are precipitated by the dislocation of social relations, and which involve the construction, defense, and naturalization of new social divisions or political frontiers" (Glynos, Howarth, Norval, & Speed, 2009, p. 11).

One such dislocation pertinent to our analysis is that of gender relations. In fact, research on the anti-gender movement in Europe demonstrates how the politics of grievance and resentment are preoccupied with how a weakening of traditional gender roles and gender identities is connected to

greater overall societal instability, constructing a causal relationship between the former and the latter (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017), as well as how gender, or a concern with "gender talk," acts as symbolic glue holding together various political movements and positions on the conservative, populist, and right-wing end of the political spectrum (Kováts & Põim, 2015). Another important aspect of PDT is its attention to "the various conditions which make that practice work or 'tick'" (Glynos et al., 2009, p. 11), both in terms of the narratives that provide (internal) cohesiveness to a discourse and the fantasmatic logics underlying these narratives that provide the key to how the discourse grips subjects. This discursive operation typically involves the "construction of a narrative that promises a fullness-to-come once a named or implied obstacle is overcome—the beatific dimension of fantasy—or which foretells of disaster if the obstacle proves too threatening or insurmountable: the horrific dimension of fantasy" (Glynos et al., 2009, p. 12). Images that are particularly powerful or seductive are those that promise total control (e.g., over women, in this case) or those that convey impotence or victimization (by multiculturalism, feminism, or the sexual hierarchy as perceived by the Incel worldview).

While outlining the possibilities of a Critical Fantasy Studies project, Glynos (2020) also discusses how an "identification with a common form of transgression" (p. 102) takes place, for example, in misogynist communities or movements peddling anti-gender beliefs. The key to a discourse analysis that takes serious notions of fantasy is to identify the source of enjoyment in any attachment. Here, the enjoyment is connected to transgression. In turn, it is the belief in a feminist, anti-male, and anti-white conspiracy that "serves to mobilize and forge identities" (Glynos, 2020, p. 103). However, it is important to note that any use of notions such as belief is not meant to connote complete certainty or full conversion as there is a strong component of cynicism and absurd humor characterizing these online discussions.

Methods and Data Selection

We drew on a mixed approach of collocation analysis and discourse analysis to combine distant and close readings of a large body of texts. In our approach, we followed among others Baele and colleagues (2019) as well as Törnberg and Törnberg (2016), who employed a combination of topic modeling and discourse analysis to engage with the Incel community and its preoccupation with ethnicity and racial superiority and the intersection between Islamophobic and anti-feminist discourses, respectively. Adopting their design, we started with a strategic sampling of discussion threads inductively and in their entirety and then used collocation analysis to search through many posts identifying overlapping discourses and underlying ideologies (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016).

Based on the principles of strategic sampling, we identified a cluster of 16 threads that either mentioned explicit key terms such as Incels, the manosphere/MGTOW (including ideas of "abandoning Swedish women"), or word combinations that expressed misogyny and ideas of male superiority. The selected threads are the following: We who are Incel; Incels—a sign of masculinity in crisis confirming feminist ideas?; The Incel phenomenon—disturbed, trolls or reality?; Time to abandon Swedish women?; Swedish girls are whores; Ten things indicating she is a slut; How come leftwing girls are with Muslim men?; Rape culture or not?; Rape—a natural behavior?; Ridiculously stupid broads getting raped; Women enjoy being raped; Got raped and wore a short dress—don't complain; Feminists are wrong—it is the woman's fault if she's raped; Are men better at everything measurable?; Women get an average

of 4 MKR from men during their lifetime; and “Women are worse off” headlines and articles; The thread where we discuss the scientificity of gender science.² The selection of these 16 threads allowed us to address discursive articulations around a broad mix of ideas straddling male superiority, female inferiority (morally, intellectually), involuntary celibacy and men’s rights and male entitlement, anti-feminism, and anti-genderism. With this sampling strategy we were able to “get at” a wide variety of contentious gender talks (Kováts & Põim, 2015) in Sweden today, to understand how they are related in intricate ways and how far-right ideas and discourse bleed into these issues. The data from the identified discussion threads were first analyzed using text collocation analysis drawing on the *quanteda* package for R programming language. Through this collocation analysis, we identified 135 word combinations that frequently appeared in the material. Of the 135 combinations, we chose 36 combinations that were considered for the next steps of the qualitative discourse analysis. For the discourse analysis, we recontextualized the combinations including the threads and full conversations within which they appeared, the users, and the number of reactions. The analysis then combined the logic of distant reading of a larger data set with a close reading of subtopics.

Understanding Flashback

As a site for gathering insights into the articulations of misogyny in the specific Swedish context, we focused on Flashback, one of the oldest and largest online discussion forums in the country. The forum was created in 1996 and has been growing exponentially ever since. According to the report *Svenskarna och Internet*, with 33% of Internet users turning to the platform at some point, Flashback is one of the most visited websites in Sweden (Internetstiftelsen, 2019). However, users who irregularly visit the platform dominate, while only around 1% of users turn to the platform daily. This confirms the picture that users end up on the platform by chance through, for example, searches for current topics. To post new threads, comment, or even report posts, users need to create a user account, a process that consists of very few steps. Acceptance as a member is immediate although the account only becomes active after three days. To gain full access to the platform immediately, one has to pay 50 SEK (US\$ 6). Once a user account has been created, one can sign up to follow specific topics and threads to receive notifications about new posts. As with other community platforms including Wikipedia, Flashback users need to gather credibility through a lot of activity if they want to climb the ranks from users to moderators and finally administrators. Moderators and administrators are handpicked by other high-profile users and have access to hidden threads where they organize their work. Hence, to enforce community rules, one has to be an extremely active user who has fully internalized the rules of the ecosystem of innocent news threads that exist side by side with controversial posts.

Much like Reddit, Flashback is a “carnavalesque space” (Topinka, 2018, p. 2054) not easily pigeonholed, in which virtually anything and everything is discussed in an often crude and transgressive tone. As of February 2020, the forum had 1.3 million registered members, which does not include visitors

² Some of the titles of the threads in our sample overlap with those figuring on the now defunct *r/incels* subsections of Reddit such as “Women are whores by nature” or “If there were no punishment, how many of you would rape?”—and observations that further established Flashback as a hub for both discussions of and community building around the Incel community in Sweden—or the so-called “Swedecels.”

without a registered account who can lurk on the platform without contributing. The forum is organized around 15 topical sections ranging from data, information technology, and drugs to food, politics, and science and enforces community rules and guidelines through warnings and blocking of accounts. Since Flashback is frequented by a large share of the Swedish population and mixes mundane topics with political discussions, it has been considered a gateway for introducing users to more radical views and ideas. Åkerlund (2021), for example, illustrates this gateway affordance for potential radicalization with a thread that asks for new words that users have learned within the platform, where several users refer to the notion of *culture enricher* that was initially used by the far right as a sarcastic depiction of everything related to immigration, and that has been adopted across the Flashback platform contributing to the term's normalization. The disparate character of Flashback constitutes this specific gateway affordance of mixing seemingly mundane discussions with politicizing and radicalizing terminology. We focus on this aspect in the analysis more explicitly.

It is not uncommon for users in our sample to have avatars that feature Donald Trump or Adolf Hitler or whose usernames reference white-power idioms. Users also frequently post across different threads using the same formulations. Hence, the misogynist threads that we have chosen for analysis form an ecosystem within the Flashback platform that engages overlapping users testing the same arguments and formulations across threads to both engage in several discussions at the same time and increase their posting records that are featured below the avatar together with the registration date. The longer one has been registered with the platform and the more posts one has collected, the higher one's community credibility. The three different logics discussed below thus are afforded by the platform structure of Flashback, which invites anonymous and playful engagement, mixing provocative and transgressive posts with ideas around misogyny and male superiority. In contrast to other social networking platforms analyzed in terms of misogyny, Flashback has a less "geeky" feel than Massanari (2017) has described regarding Reddit and its toxic culture. Instead, Flashback resembles the rudimentary aesthetics of the early Internet fora of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Swedish Women as "Cunt Animals," "Men Haters," and "Race Traitors"

At the heart of the online discussions are contradictory ideas about women, and Swedish women specifically. Militant or radical feminism (also seen to be distinctly Swedish) is contrasted with ideas of white male dominance and superiority and imaginaries of the decline or demise of the white Swedish welfare state—a "paradise lost" to multiculturalism. Discourses of violent misogyny and violent far-right extremism intersect in various ways but perhaps most prominently in relation to the anti-feminism and anti-gender conspiracism occurring in the discussion forum, along the already familiar lines of extreme right meta-narratives that aim to connect the dots between immigration, multiculturalism, a war on whites, "Zionist puppet masters," and women as race traitors with ideas of the vulnerability and demise of men, the defense of men's rights, and male entitlement. There are, however, some key features emerging around the specific image of Swedish women that cut across all these threads and their ideas. As we explore the discursive logics of this trope, it serves us well to remember that what can be read as contradictions in the ideas it conjures up actually strengthen their coherence as acts of splitting tend to shore up boundaries and reinforce the discourses that emerge here.

In our exploration of how the trope connects to extremist, white supremacist discourse and ideas, we identified three discursive logics: the logic of entitlement and deprivation, the logic of rape fantasies, and the logics of conspiracy.

The Logic of Entitlement and Deprivation

The logic of male entitlement, understood here as a key feature of misogyny that prioritizes what men purportedly deserve and dictates what women are obligated to give them, runs through the material. According to such a logic, Swedish women who have been brainwashed by feminism and “cultural Marxism” are actively depriving men of their rights and disturbing “the natural order” of sexual (power) relations and in turn are either (a) responsible for men’s higher suicide rate and socioeconomic demise and/or (b) jeopardizing the future of the (white) nation. Such ideas of Swedish women depriving men of sexual relations are coupled with various tropes of Swedish women as *whores*. Their characteristic as whores is not tied to gender alone but is distinctive to their Swedishness. As a problem, although not unique to Swedish women, it is then articulated by Flashback users as particularly pronounced in Sweden: Their promiscuity and lack of self-respect is a product of feminism gone wrong, representing the dark underbelly of sexual liberation in the country. Over time, commenters believe that it has then given Swedish women a bad reputation abroad. While some consider this shameful for the country and an argument for political intervention and regulation of women’s rights, others argue that “the slutty Swedish woman is our number one export” (personal communication, September 8, 2016).³

In a discussion of whether men and women are entitled to the same degree of freedom in choosing sexual partners and the same number of partners, one user argues: “The difference is that they have unlimited access, we boys don’t. This means we are not entitled in the same way they are, you need to understand this” (personal communication, December 30, 2013). Some users object and argue that “only the wogs with their little dicks don’t like that our girls live like we Swedish Vikings do i.e. having sex and having a good time!” (personal communication, July 2, 2014). On this theme, one user claims, “It is true that these ideas are stronger in the Muslim world. But more and more Swedish guys are waking up and realizing that it is a bad thing for women to behave like whores” (personal communication, June 14, 2019). Such ideas of “waking up” to the dark reality and truth behind men’s deprivation are in turn connected to calls for a “reversed sexual revolution,” the exact meaning and implications of which remain obscure.

In the Incel world in general, the expressed drive to gain access to women goes hand in hand with various rhetorical strategies to deprive them of their humanity (and hence alleged power). These include tactics of denigration, demonization, or comparing them to animals. On Flashback, Swedish women are described as “cunt animals,” sluts, whores, sperm buckets, mattresses, ejaculation holes, cowards, men haters, and gold diggers. Their key characteristics include low impulse control, infidelity, disloyalty, and being retarded, lazy, and ungrateful. The last characteristic is connected to their being indebted to—but also

³ Given the harmful nature of the data and out of ethical concern, all quotes have been slightly altered to ensure they cannot be traced back to individual users. For the same reasons, the analytical sections offer no full reference entries.

unappreciative of—Swedish men, who with their "industrious minds and ambition brought about the wealth of the country and who, only a hundred years ago, gave them their independence and freedom: We welcomed women into society, but all we got was crap in return" (personal communication, April 18, 2014), one user laments in the thread "Time to Abandon Swedish Women." A similar logic is at play in the thread "We Who are Incels," in which a user argues that

there is no getting around the fact that Swedish women have hubris, it is possible to have sex with some of them but being in a serious relationship with a young Swedish "modern woman" is doomed from the beginning, unfortunately. (personal communication, February 23, 2020)

Adjacent to ideas around involuntary celibacy is that of sexual abstinence, which is a core idea in MGTOW, and the manosphere more broadly. We find iterations of this worldview on Flashback as well:

To kill off third-wave or radical feminism, one needs to abstain and refuse all contact with women and maybe even make a couple of pawn sacrifices of Muslim gangraping men under the hashtag #notyourmen. Most importantly the government needs to decide whether they want to turn Swedish men into second-rate citizens in their own country. (personal communication, March 27, 2020)

In this manner, different solutions are proposed: From abstinence (abandoning Swedish women, looking abroad) to a reverse gender revolution, taking down radical feminism, influencing politics or the government, stopping immigration, and, finally, curtailing women's rights and punishment by rape.

The Logic of Rape Fantasies

The logic of entitlement is in turn connected to rape fantasies, that is, an obsessive preoccupation with rape, fantasmatic enactments of rape, and the idea that women enjoy or even ask to be raped:

A lot of women enjoy it, which makes women the single most weird creatures right?
Enough with the moral panics now . . . even I was disillusioned when I realised the truth:
a lot of women like being raped, and/or fantasize about it.
Stand up for this like a man. Women are no angels. (personal communication, July 12, 2014)

This logic most clearly encapsulates the violent aspect of misogyny, whereby the outcome for women is always violent assault, both as an act desired by them and as one they deserve. The rape culture aspect of violent misogyny further means an obsessive preoccupation with women's alleged tendency to engage in false claims of having been raped. The fantasmatic script or "scene" of rape culture precedes Incel discourse, but it has been appropriated by Incels in ways that reduce women to their (deviant) sexuality and corporeality and justifies the violence that is discursively directed at them. The Incel subject position is founded on an inability to have sexual access to women, and all antagonism in society is to a degree connected to the unequal distribution of women among men, with alpha males or so-called Chads inevitably benefitting the most. The solution to this antagonism is violence—and as the currency of this ideology is sex, a form of retribution for

withholding or misappropriation thereof is rape. However, the act of rape does not take place outside of the economy of unconscious desire either as it is assumed that women secretly crave violation too.

In several of the analyzed threads, discussions evolve around how women in general enjoy rape, but, on this topic too, Swedish women specifically are articulated as having distinct features that make them particularly prone to and deserving of rape:

Women internationally . . . not sure. Swedish women . . . absolutely.

Only explanation is intellectual inferiority, alternatively that they know exactly what they are voting for and that rape is some sort of affirmation of their attractiveness (even though 90-year-olds are raped too which means the standards of the import rapists are questionable). (personal communication, June 12, 2014)

Here too a reference to immigration is introduced with the term “import rapists” with their lower standards regarding women in general—rape being another expression of the faux-Darwinian, sociobiological hierarchy that ranks women according to attractiveness, humanity more generally according to racial characteristics (with whiteness as superiority), and white men according to status, pitting the “Chads” of the world against beta males. Törnberg and Törnberg (2016) similarly identify obsession with rape as an important feature of their data. Their analysis identifies a popular criticism of feminists for turning a blind eye to the alleged destruction of values they uphold by this imported, more patriarchal culture. This ties it to the next logic, in which conspiratorial thinking connects the voting patterns of women in favor of more liberal or progressive parties to a hidden desire to be raped.

The Logics of Conspiracy—Swedish Women as Race Traitors

There are several conspiracies at work in the material. However, two key logics of conspiracism stand out: Anti-feminist conspiracies and anti-white conspiracies. First, anti-feminist conspiracism describes the belief that feminists are a malevolent force controlling society at the expense of men, a frame similar to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories regarding Jewish elites controlling the world (DiBranco & Kelly, forthcoming). In the Swedish iteration of anti-feminist conspiracism, the country is continuously referred to as a “hotbed of feminazism,” “the world’s most extreme feminazi country,” or a country under “fascist-feminist rule.” Men have lost power to women, and this is not acknowledged in a world shaped by misandry. This logic intersects with those described above as men are increasingly deprived of sex while successively losing their rights in society at large at the expense of women’s rights. This has resulted in “a bad deal for men in general” (personal communication, September 23, 2018). Women have learned to manipulate and deceive men, with feminism operating as a tool for deception. In this logic, Sweden is a society that systematically oppresses men in favor of women, and in which women are generally valued higher despite being “worse than men at everything measurable.” In the thread “Time to Abandon Swedish Women,” men are continuously encouraged to take action by “putting women back in their place,” “setting things straight,” and “making them obey.” Users urge each other to “stand up for themselves,” not to be curbed, and not to give up hope because indeed “Feminism can be curbed!” (personal communication, April 2, 2020).

Discursively, the way these abovementioned injustices against men are revealed (such moments of revelation being key in many accounts by the commenters) is through techniques that share some commonalities with the consciousness-raising of early feminist work. Men are invited to locate the blame for their (perceived) diminished status in the feminist movement and to find understanding and solidarity in this mutual sense of recognition. An essential part of building these beliefs in a way that is credible and coherent is a shared project of unveiling the hypocrisies of feminist thought and the double standards of those considered to be feminists, for example, by calling out different examples from news clips and videos (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016). Most frequently, feminists' inconsistency or hypocrisy is illustrated by how "Swedish women, on the one hand, fight male chauvinism, but at the same time go to bed with 'misogynist Arabs'" (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016, p. 415).

Second, anti-feminist conspiracism taps into well-known meta-narratives in white supremacist belief systems, including existing conspiracy theories involving ideas of women as "race traitors"—this being one of the most persistent and long-running conspiracy theories in far-right extremism. Whether the topic of the thread is rape, Incels, men's rights, or men's intellectual superiority, the most prominent conspiracism emerging around ideas of Swedish women is that of a white genocide unfolding in Europe, with Sweden at the helm: "tragically we are slaughtering the Nordics—a historically proud and progressive people." This in turn is intimately linked to an anticipation of, and a desire for a race war after which the nation—or a pan-Nordic state—will be rebuilt. The narrative goes: Sweden is already a lost cause, what we are seeing are the final death spasms; "the poison is already in the body, now it's just about waiting around for the patient to finally die" (personal communication, September 30, 2016). Several users suggest, however, that all hope is not lost. For example, one user reasons,

I do believe we have a chance at winning:

1. Electricity will be out, limited access to food and reproduction will not be easy.
2. Swedish women (those who have not gone over to the enemy) will be very loyal and really fight to not become slaves while Muslim women will be more passive. After this victory we will build a new society. (personal communication, January 10, 2016)

When explicit references to extreme right groups and far-right populist parties in Sweden occur in the threads, these are often evoked as sources of hope and a potential solution in "setting things straight" and "getting women back in line":

There are limits to how far treason and gender betrayal can go before enough is enough. I for one can tell you enough is enough. If you do not vote national 2018 then you're automatically committing treason and seriously brainwashed. With national, I am referring to AfS [Alternative for Sweden], NMR [Nordic Resistance Movement] or SD [Sweden Democrats]. SD is going to save women from future Sharia-rule where girls are married off and raped at the age of 9. (personal communication, May 10, 2017)

These parties and groups, SD, AfS, and the neo-Nazi NMR, are presented as a path to redemption and as key to solving the problem: A final solution. This, however, has been sabotaged for years by Swedish women who through their voting preferences have kept them from power:

Do you really believe that men at this point in time are looking for women in our duty to set this country straight? We've had men in anything from SD to AfS to NMR to ND [Nordic Realm Party] and NRP [National Democrats] who have tried to stir things up for decades, but women have actively and with all of their political force counteracted all efforts to resist the madness. (personal communication, February 19, 2019)

Consequently, more radical measures are now needed. Three actors in particular—the SD, AfS, and NMR—are construed as important actors in this urgent yet unspecified reversed gender revolution to come.

In the thread "We Who are Incels," users share their analysis of the links between the fertility rate among men in Western countries and mass immigration as the root cause of the country's problem:

The fertility rate is going down rapidly in all Western countries right now and Muslim men are seen as the answer to populating the world of tomorrow (. . .) In Sweden, mass immigration has led to a male surplus to the extent that there are now 110 boys for every 100 girls in the age span 15–24. (personal communication, November 19, 2019)

Another user explicitly ties voting patterns and the lack of a more considerable public support for the parties at the far-right end of the spectrum, including the neo-Nazis, to the problem of the male surplus and argues that women are not the only ones at fault:

But I agree that girls generally tend to overestimate themselves. But in my world men have gotten worse too. Just the fact that a lot of men vote for something else than SD and AfS says it all. Women do not want cucks. (personal communication, July 30, 2019)

The antagonistic views on women and their alleged complicity in the downfall of the nation not only echo but also reproduce nationalist discourse and nostalgic desire. Indeed, such ideas only make sense if one presumes that there was once a golden age, in which the world was more just and men had fewer obstacles to achieving sexual gratification and related social standing: This golden age is described by Baele and colleagues (2019) as "that of a patriarchal society where monogamy is the rule, traditional gender roles are accepted and followed, women and men marry early, and adultery is prohibited" (p. 1679). In this logic, "all men have thus 'access' to women and their 'entitlement' to sex is never 'denied' by women" (Baele et al., 2019, p. 1679).

Importantly, such nostalgic desires to restore a lost age of native glory are discursively reconstructed as an idealized time before immigration (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2017). Indeed, it is this reliance on prelapsarian fantasies of a Sweden "before" that characterizes the worldview of both the (Swedish) Incel and right-wing extremists and enables a mapping of one narrative onto the other, or an enmeshing of the two. While for the former, it is a world of equal access to women—a more egalitarian, at times precapitalist patriarchy—that is lost, for the latter, it is the fantasy of an all-white Sweden. Internationally, conservative

political projects tend to call for a return to tradition(s) and stability. However, violent misogyny and white supremacy insist that the inevitable conflict between those attached to the "before" and those responsible for, or supposedly benefitting from, the "after" can only be resolved through violent measures.

Conclusion

Misogyny and male supremacy are increasingly considered a form of violent extremism posing a terrorist threat. While Incels and Men's Rights Activists groups within the manosphere have received significant scholarly and public attention, and subreddits like r/incel or r/TheRedPill have been taken down or suspended, spaces that are not explicitly dedicated to these misogynistic actors and ideas, but in which they abound nevertheless, have largely flown under the radar.

In the Swedish context, Flashback can be considered one such space operating as a breeding ground for conspiratorial ideas and in-group/out-group conflicts that bleed into more extremist belief systems, which in turn are at the core of contemporary invocations of both misogyny and far-right extremism, including the intersections between the two manifested in Inceldom. Our analysis has made clear that Flashback threads are rife with articulations of misogyny ranging from the subtle to the brazen, from language denigrating women's intelligence to advocating rape as a solution to perceived political problems. These misogynistic views are laced with racist, white supremacist beliefs through the logics of entitlement and conspiracy, with the two mutually reinforcing and amplifying one another, creating synergies the "effects of which are greater than the sum of their parts" (Wilson, 2022, p. 1811). Hence, the forum provides a window into the very explicit links among far-right ideology, anti-gender movements, and misogynistic discourse and into the specificities of how these partnerships are construed in the Swedish context. We see evidence of these partnerships not only in how "classic" white supremacist conspiracy theories saturate the conversations but also in the very straightforward ways that conversations around men's entitlement and sexual frustration or deprivation cluster around conversations about the SD, AFS, and NMR as "saviors." These actors are construed as key players in the inevitable race war to come, part of which involves a reversed gender revolution in which men take back control and set the gender imbalance straight. Essentially, the race war and the reversed gender revolution are construed as part and parcel of the same transformative political project facing the country.

Flashback is both a laboratory for testing certain arguments in a space that is considered safe and a playground that offsets otherwise strongly regulated ways of communicating. It forms a space in which misogyny is easily mixed with other kinds of divisive and extremist ideologies. It is a site in which the boundaries between violent misogyny and more mainstream articulations of misogyny become increasingly blurred. This usage of the platform is afforded by the full anonymity that is guaranteed to its users. The community rules state that user details will under no circumstances be shared, and the motto of the platform, "Freedom of speech for real," enhances the platform's self-description as a safe haven for free discussion and exchange. Furthermore, to read posts users do not need to create an account. Additionally, Flashback features high in general Google searches, and many users who are merely lurking are drawn into the platform without explicitly searching for it. While some of the most popular segments are current topics covering a spectrum ranging from recent car accidents to celebrity gossip, users are only a few clicks away from more violent and radical materials.

The discursive techniques that we encountered across the three logics identified in our research involve splitting women into “good” and “bad”, with the contradictory aspect of this logic of desire and denigration, in fact, working as a means of boundary policing while simultaneously revealing its irrational core to those not “hailed” by the discourse. Thus, in the logic of entitlement, Swedish women become both withholders of sex (in favor of other men) and nymphomaniacs. However, this does not diminish the fantasmatic power of such tropes, which promise a world of complete control while simultaneously highlighting subjects’ current impotence—in turn helping to shore up anger and calls for retribution. Another prevalent discursive strategy is one that relies on nostalgic ideas of a paradise lost, the outcome of which is a need to identify the agents and victims of these negative societal changes as well as advocate means to potentially return to such a white, monocultural, preeminent age. There are obvious overlaps between these ideas and the more extremist articulations of such positions in neo-Nazi discourse constructing women as cradles of national essence whose primary role is to reproduce the white nation through childbearing and child-rearing (Askanius, 2021; Perry, 2004).

Furthermore, our research illustrates that a commitment to gender equality and feminist politics at the state level such as there exists in Sweden cannot easily dislodge patriarchal structures and thinking. At the same time, a commitment to equality politics regarding gender and sexuality can (un)intentionally lend further support to ideas of white superiority, as has been observed regarding Swedish “homonationalism” (Kehl, 2018). In fact, it would seem the country is facing a considerable feminist backlash and the emergence of a group of citizens who oppose feminism to the extent that they consider it a threat to national security and cohesion alongside military threats and terrorism (Gardell, Wagnsson, & Wallenius, 2022).⁴ Sweden is certainly not immune to the (populist) politics of resentment. Here, state feminism is presented as an elitist project, further serving to disenfranchise the white Swedish man, who, in spaces such as Flashback, can find ways of articulating a more general discontent and potentially allow it to be reinterpreted and rechanneled into a discourse of violent misogyny.

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⁴ This recent survey study indexing security perceptions with trust (in the media, authorities, and politicians) and political opinions indicated that 12% of men consider feminism a security threat. The survey also found correlations between this risk perception and self-reported conservative and authoritarian beliefs among respondents (Gardell et al. 2022).

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