

AT: Welcome to the Infinite Women podcast. I'm your host, Allison Tyra. And today I'm joined by Titaś Biswas, a doctoral candidate in sociology at University College Dublin, lecturer in media studies at Carlow College, and a researcher at University College Cork. So you're everywhere is what I'm seeing. And today we're going to explore how the human body has been analyzed in traditional histories, and reframing perspectives with feminist readings. So those are all words. And I am not an academic. So can you please explain what that means?

TB: Yeah, that sounds like a whole lot of jargon put in together. So we're going to have to unpack that. Primarily, I think we could start by saying that, and this was just a conversation I was having with one of my mentors a couple of months ago, where she was saying that as women, we don't take up a whole lot of space. And this was happening when we were editing a CV. And I was a little bit hesitant in terms of it being too long or there having been a lot of details about some particular projects. So connecting that with what we're claiming here, which is that in the body of historical literature, or sociological or political, the arts and humanities or the social sciences, put together or even world literatures, and Susan Sontag had talked about this throughout her life, really. And I think what it does come down to is that women are, and I suppose also anybody who is not a cisgender heterosexual man, is in a way supposed to be the bearer of meaning and not quite a maker of meaning. So what you are then bereft of, what you're then exempt of, what you're not allowed to do, is produce meanings. You're supposed to be carrying what is imposed on you. That actually relates to the kind of body politic women have been embodying. And there is, unfortunately, for lack of a better metaphor, pretty much a master-slave dynamic in there, in which you're supposed to carry the burden. And that is not just constraints within the boundaries of physicality, which it is in the sense of fecundity, and with the rise of far-right extremism the world over at the minute, there is obviously the trend of refocusing on fecundity, hyper-fecundity, where women are supposed to be baby-carrying packets and nothing more. But at the same time, it also bleeds into everyday life practice, which is the scarier part. And I'm sure a lot of people have been watching *Adolescence* on Netflix, which talks about the manosphere and how it basically bleeds into everyday life. So it's really about not allowing women and other queer people to make meanings, to have a say in their subjectivity, to occupy space. And there is a historical connection. So in the body of historical literature, in the body of other kinds of literature, as we see a similar trend. So that would be it.

AT: And I do actually have a whole other episode about the manosphere in the classroom and how those dynamics play out in educational spaces. So anyone who would like to go listen to that one, it's a much deeper dive and it's not fun. Not a fun topic, (TB: Definitely not.) but so there's a lot of different paths to go down and I want us to explore all of them. So I was actually having a conversation with someone about character complexities and the fact that the further you get from being what I call a CHAWM, a cisgender heterosexual abled white man. It's fun to say. The more deviations that you have from CHAWMdom, the less space there is for nuance, right? Because any deviation, any intersectionality takes up space. So a CHAWM character can be well-rounded and interesting and three-dimensional, but that space, if you're not cisgender, if you're not heterosexual, etc., etc., each of those things takes up space and flattens the characters as though the story cannot allow for both diversity and nuance and humanization of that character.

TB: Well, that is really interesting. And I actually really liked the way you talk about three-dimensional versus two-dimensional there, flattening space. Yeah, there are a lot of avenues in that question as well. And I'd like to start by talking about the dehumanization aspect of it. And it's not exactly new and it's not fun to talk about. And it's been there for a while, as both part of historical discourse, but also practice. The practice part is more appealing because it reflects on lived reality and lived experience. So flattening other people's experiences and as a generic academic practice, [Listen to Dr Samantha Schulz on the manosphere in the classroom](#), or [read the transcript](#). or as a generic neuromanticist sort of geometry, mathematical geometry-orientated practices where we turn, people into numbers is

dehumanizing on its own. And, as you were saying as well, in terms of talking about the classroom, in terms of reparative pedagogies, in terms of spaces, emotion, memory culture, particularly talking about repairing memories, repairing memory culture. I think there is a good deal of emphasis at the minute on remembering names. And names are important. And nomenclature is important. Giving it a name, giving our experiences a name, or giving the rise of the far right a name, or giving the manosphere a name, or as you say, it's giving CHAWMdom a name. That's an interesting name.

So I also do think there is a trend, which we see in case of fascism, which is what I particularly study: war, violence, genocide, fascism, all the fun stuff. What we see there is that the old right at the moment, and we'd like to think, many times that it's all about the brown shirts and blue shirts of the 20th century, which was all very trad fascism. But the alt-right is actually quite different in the sense that, as you were saying about pedagogies, but this applies to fascisms as well, that they are coalition bodies. They're actually coalitions of multiple bodies. So they're dynamic, and they are homogenizing in the sense that they want to steamroll and unify and turn everything into one. So literally flatten all the other spaces that we're talking about. But also at the same time, they are not homogeneous ideologies. So in that they're proliferative and they cross-pollinate with other ideologies and that contributes to what they become. So it's complicated, but yes, dehumanization and flattening spaces are very, very important characteristic features of authoritarianism at the minute.

AT: Now, I want to come back to what you were saying about reproduction and fertility and bodily autonomy, because I feel like there are very strong connections between fascism and the authoritarian state controlling people's bodies. So like in the US, we're also seeing this with trans rights and people who are just way too concerned with what other people are doing with their own bodies. And one of the things I find really interesting is that you can always tell the difference between politicians who actually care about the people versus the ones who just want to control others by how they approach children. By which I mean, someone who actually wants people to have more kids in a way that is their choice will make it easier to have kids. They will support maternity and paternity leave, they will support subsidized daycare or free daycare, hey will make it less difficult for parents to receive, whatever form of welfare funding there is in that country. These are all things that make it easier for people to be parents. Whereas, and this is what I feel like I see a lot more of in places like the US, and also Japan is a big one, they're really freaking out about their low birth rate. But the same, typically men who want to outlaw abortion, who want to shame women for choosing not to have kids, regardless of whether abortion is involved, those same men tend not to then make any effort to use their power to take those measures that I mentioned earlier or related measures. They're not actually trying to help parents, they're just trying to force mostly women to become parents.

TB: Yes, that's actually a really interesting take on the subject. And there are again layers to this question. So primarily what what comes to mind is what you were talking about in terms of care translating into somebody's embodied politic and what they say. So at the minute, and for the lack of a better word, there's obviously the brologarchy. There's Trump, there's Elon Musk, there's Netanyahu, there's Erdogan, there's Modi, and there's Bolsonaro. So Rishi's doing that, the whole lot. Boris Johnson. The problem with the brologarchy is that, not the first time ever, but one of those few times where psychologists would actually agree with sociologists is that it is a narcissism problem. And there are malignant narcissists, sociopaths in politics at the minute. And it's also a sociopathic culture, which is something that *Adolescence* tangentially explores, that it's not just about who votes for whom anymore. It's about those practices bleeding into everyday life that is actually scarier than the fact that they're embodied by people who are representing them and the two cross-pollinate again. And one of the other things that connect the two, I think is that in terms of hegemonic practice. So again, I'm going to break the jargon down. So let's go back to Nazi Germany or Franco Spain, or even all the leaders that I just mentioned moments ago, they have all been elected. And there is something peculiarly fascinating with that. It's morbidly funny, but it's also really sad in the sense that, and there's a fantastic book written on, not exactly on the same topic, but why Republicans were struck by Trump's policies, particularly land fracking and the like,

still choose to vote Republican. And it's called *Strangers in Their Own Land*. So it's really interesting in that way. I'd be seeing this again, universally almost as a trend in terms of all these coalitional bodies and how the political bodies, how they interact, but I'll go back to your fecundity question and not to drag this down the other avenues. (AT: So many!) There are so many. So the hyper-fecundity approach is about controlling women's bodies. And there is a lot more nuance to this, of course, there is a lot more psychological, psychoanalytical exploration of the top, but in terms of everyday life practice, in terms of material realities, what it does come down to is controlling women's bodies. And this is associated with labour. So it's essentially a class problem as Marxists have already argued, but it's a new sort of problem in the sense that it's happening also in an otherwise apathetic technocratic attention economy. So there is a paradigmatic shift in terms of how we are looking at the problem metaphorically or exploring it rhetorically.

But yes, it does come down to the issue of power and control. And Ireland for that matter has had its own struggle, as you know, in terms of abortion rights and the infamous mother and baby homes and the infamous struggle of the Catholic Church. And it actually reminds me of Sinéad O'Connor ripping the Pope's photograph in 1992 in response of the Catholic Church's silence around sexually predatory behaviour and child abuse. And I was reading a report two weeks ago that in the UK, particularly in younger men aged between 18 to 25, there's a rising trend to support the far right all over again. And it is associated with this fecundity factor that you get to have a say over what women do with their bodies and women don't all over again. So there we go.

AT: One of the things that came up in a previous conversation with Barbara Winslow about abortion activism, and sort of a then and now and "dear God, why are we still having to fight this battle or having to fight it again?" In the now, one of the things that we were discussing was the simultaneous push for "the right kind of women." So in the US, that's middle class and more wealthy abled white women, essentially, and heterosexual being implied, of course, and anyone else being shamed, or prevented from having children. So of course, in many countries, there have been histories of forced sterilizations of women who were deemed less desirable. And there's a whole eugenics conversation that we could be having, but we're trying to limit our rabbit holes. So it's not just pushing the women that you want to have to have babies. So one of the things that Barbara and I discussed was a lot of folks in the Black community, which forced sterilization was a major issue against African Americans in the mid-1900s. But there was this ideology within African American communities, obviously not held by everyone, but there was this push that abortion is black genocide, essentially. So you had these essentially pro-lifers trying to convince, and I believe again this was largely men, I'm not saying there were no women, but again, largely the men saying, "you having bodily autonomy is part of this genocide of African Americans." So they're using this idea that it is your duty to the community to sacrifice your own bodily autonomy and rights.

[Listen to Barbara Winslow on abortion activism](#) or [read the transcript](#).

TB: Fascinating, very interesting question there. So intersectional feminists and African American scholars, so bell hooks, Angela Davis, they were talking about this from an intersectional perspective, which is why, the question I found it fascinating that we need to talk about this intersectionally all over again. So what they were talking about is the One Million Men March, which was an alt-right, Black-led movement, but which was making very similar claims about, again, controlling non-male bodies and controlling how they perceive. And it actually baffles me that reproductivity is looked at in such a reductive light by conservatives and authoritarians and fascists and the far-right. It always comes down to fecundity, as if women have nothing else or nothing more to produce. They don't have any space or avenues to produce: meaning, paintings, music compositions, film-making, or anything else in everyday life, anything that has an impact on the visual or rhetorical or other spheres other than producing another human body. So reproductivity in the Spinoza, Nietzschean, Deleuzean sense is about reproducing etymologically, which could literally be anything else. But when it comes down to talking about the fecundity and hyper-fecundity practices, which again, in terms of eugenics and race science in in fascist Italy, in Nazi Germany, in Francoist Spain, and at the minute, even in fascist India. And this again

comes back to your point about intersectionality. So it's not just about whiteness or white endangerment and the CHAWMdom problem. It's also very much a manosphere problem and that surpasses any particular race. And it will bring into question anything that it believes it can use in order to expand what Deleuze called its body without organs. So in a sense that it's a cancerous body, it's ever proliferative, it almost feeds off of itself. But at the same time, it's wholly rhetoric, it's wholly theatrics, and that explains its connection with populism.

AT: And we also can't really talk about bodily autonomy without talking about the fact that, again, not to make this all about the US, but we have at least two sexual predators on the highest court in the land as well as in the White House. Among various other ones in prominent positions in the government, there are probably too many for me to actually name. It is obviously not a coincidence that shortly after Trump was elected, we were hearing about these instances of men chanting at women, "your body, my choice." And so when we're talking about bodily autonomy, it's not just your reproductive freedoms, it's also your right not to be sexually harassed and abused and assaulted.

TB: Yeah, definitely. The overrepresentation of rapists and sexual predators in governance at the minute, and again, it's a universal trend. It's not just the States. I think it's deeply concerning and that is only a mild word to use, a mild signifier. It is quite frightening, I believe, for the rest of the lot and is the same, it's quite similar in other parts of the world, beyond the West as well, particularly the Global South. India is a really good example and this reminds me of the chief minister of a state in the Cow Belt, which is the equivalent of the Bible belt in India. It's called Uttar Pradesh. The chief minister, Yogi Adityanath, who's part of the BJP, which represents the prime minister Narendra Modi too. So Adityanath, I think in 2017 or '18, he basically was at an event where he encouraged Hindu men to excavate Muslim women's corpses from their graves in order to rape them. (AT: What?) Yeah, I actually had written an article on this back in the day when it happened. So it's about engaging that sort of necropolitics, but necropolitics is again a term too sophisticated to describe what just happened. But yeah, it was a real thing and his followers were actually doing that at a public event. And there is, a whole lot of statistics in terms of the 300% rise in hate crimes just between 2014 and 2019, which the Amnesty International reported, and then the Amnesty International was ousted from the country. So we don't have as many reports to talk about that anymore.

This overrepresentation combined with everyday life practice. And again, I'd like to not think that things are really as dystopian as we think they are. But I think materially they are just as Orwellian as we think they are. And if you note the Andrew Tate-orientated practice, particularly within the younger generation of men, it is quite quite frightening that people who are exercising maximum degrees of power are actually chanting those things verbally and rhetorically, proudly proclaiming their layers of control over other people's bodies. And this is not just about gender, as nothing ever is. It's also about class and it's also about race. And it's all very frightening. It's a frightening concoction. I think it's important to also talk about, again, desire-orientated practice. So the concept of desire, the lived reality of desire. And the problem with objectification is that it's dehumanizing. So it literally turns you into something that lacks or is thereby not allowed to procure subjectivity. So in that way, as Laurie Penny had written a few years ago, hunger is supposed to be your biggest sin altogether. And hunger for anything as women, hunger for food, for education, for sex, for learning other things, for expanding yourself, for space, for place-making, for memory. That also bleeds into your inability or the fact that there is this invisibilized burden imposed upon you to not desire as well, which we say in case of, if we turn the hyper-fecundity factor, not exactly on its head because there is a coalition between that and removing women from the position where they can desire. But at the same time, if we look at female genital mutilation, which is still a prevalent practice amongst Black communities. And there is an organization working in Ireland called AkiDWA Akina Dada wa Africa, that focuses particularly on female genital mutilation all over the country and educates people on why it's important to talk about it more than it has been talked about through the generations.

AT: One of the things that you look at in your research is how this all relates to the history of what we think of as the family. I might call it the nuclear family. But the origins of that concept and then also tying this into private property. So how does that all play into what we're talking about?

TB: There was actually a book written quite a while ago called *History of the Family's Origins and Private Property* by Friedrich Engels. So he talks about, what we were talking about just moments ago, objectification, but in a historical anthropological sense. So we look at the earliest notions associated with human societies and how women initially were looked upon as, and there's a lot of scholarly debate in terms of timeline associated with this. When did this actually happen? Did it happen with the advent point or where we started practicing agriculture? Did it happen whilst we were still cavemen? But long and short, it comes down to women being exchanged as something that men had claimed ownership over in a barter system. So they were exchanged as property within early communities, within clans that used to exist in nearby villages. So as a sociologist, I do believe that it partly did start with the practice of agriculture, that we had an idea of what surplus was and what the barter system looked like and what could be proclaimed as subjugated ownership, the idea of ownership, and that got transferred to what could be owned. And ultimately it did come down to ownership over women, which is also the reason why if you look at the history of universal adult franchise, women were not allowed to vote for the longest time, or not allowed to own property. So even during the course of the French Revolution, those who were allowed to vote were propertied men. So those who were not allowed to vote were un-propertied men, but also women, because inherently the notion was that they don't really get to own anything. And again, it does come down to ownership of space, but the origin of that can be traced back to ownership of material resources, having no money and having to work for free and having no recognition of that work altogether and becoming objects. So this objectification is associated with propertification of women, which happened a long time ago. So there's a lot of unlearning to do for patriarchy in order to even come to an understanding of what just happened there.

AT: It's interesting that you bring up both Friedrich Engels - which for anyone who's not familiar, he was very closely associated with Marx, so that's the political zone that you're going to find him in - and also the French revolution. And also tying back to what we were saying earlier about a lot of Black Power, civil rights activists and their views on abortion. What draws all these together, at least in my mind, is that many movements that fight for equality for a marginalized group, whether that's the working/peasant class, whether that's a marginalized race, many of these movements not only rely on the unpaid and often unseen labor of women, they are also notorious for leaving women's rights out of the conversation. And so it is very telling to me that you see this pattern playing out over and over again. I don't care if you're a Marxist/socialist, if you are benefiting from women's unpaid and often invisible labor, you need to get your shit together, which is not the academic term for that. I'm sure you can say it smarter.

TB: I like that. I cannot emphasize of how much I agree with you. There are two things that comes to mind, but primarily that in 1992 sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Wacquant had written an article on reflective sociology, but the takeaway from there was that the most radical form of censorship is absence. So what you do to those discourses is that not only do you mistreat them, you don't treat them altogether. You don't talk about them. You don't even tangentially bring up those discourses within everyday life conversation or within academic conversation or within any other kind of conversation. So there is no exchange because it doesn't really exist. It is the most vehement method of denying existence to not talk about it. The other factor about getting your act together, as we know, the manosphere, it does not really care about who you vote for anymore. It doesn't even care about you, and we've seen this in women's forums and in psychology articles and discussions, even in academic circles at the minute, that men who belong to, let's say, more liberal, progressive, Marxist, leftist spaces. Even there, we don't see their academic or intellectual knowledge reflecting in terms of everyday life practice. And there are so many men who would subscribe to more progressive ideologies, but then again,

when it comes down to materialising those, or as you say, from benefiting from women's invisibilised labour, there is little conversation. And there's always somebody within progressive circles who would actually like to like the woman to shut up and look pretty and not talk about what needs to be talked about. So that is a very material problem and there's no going around it anymore or talking in circles. So spot on for bringing that up.

AT: Well, it's also interesting that you bring up "and look pretty," because one of the things that you're looking at, and again, I'm going to use a lot of words that I'm not exactly clear what we're talking about here, so you will need to explain, "reorientating the location, spatial configuration and meaning making process associated with the female body beyond the male gaze." So what does that mean?

TB: Again, breaking down the jargon, it basically means, again, creating nonlinear spaces and places for women to look beyond the male gaze, which again is all engulfing because a significant number of intervention of any kind, particularly intellectual intervention, cinematic, rhetorical, literature, philosophy, all of that is orientated, subscribed to the male gaze. So we're basically looking through men's eyes and Chantal Akerman talks about this, the Belgian filmmaker in one of her interviews or documentaries that most of, even French New Wave, which is something that I teach, which was about experimental filmmaking and breaking down the male gaze and trying to literally look through the camera in different ways. I think the men in there did a good job, but at the same time, it remained a men's club for the large part. So we have Agnès Varda, who became the single most celebrated figure within the movement. But the other women are, and I really, really do admire Jean-Luc Godard's work, but the fact that Anna Karina kind of became only a muse and nothing more. Again, this denial of subjectivity was problematic. So our everyday life, which is messy and imperfect and largely flawed and largely nonlinear and largely not pretty, which needs to be exposed and in an era when we're so focused on superficial appearances, because it's an attention economy. So platforms such as Instagram literally make off a profit from polishing and filtering surfaces and photographs. And architecturally, it shifts how we look at things, through grids, through squares. So the dynamism of actually looking at the world through multiple angles, even through the camera, that takes away that lease of life from it altogether, which is very, very problematic. And again, as we know that the skin is a surface and the screens are surfaces and surfaces interact, and these liminal spaces, they're so, so far beyond the black and white of pretty, and what's not, that kind of demarcation between black and whites.

AT: When we're talking about being pretty, I think there's overlap to be discussed here between fatphobia and women eating. And when it comes down to this idea that women are not supposed to take up space, we mean that in an individual level, women who are tall, or who are fat, women who physically take up space are frowned upon, and even a woman eating in a what I would consider perfectly healthy manner, like not eating daintily, and eating foods that are frowned upon, particularly if you are seen as fat. There are all these overlaps here when it comes to society policing women's bodies, because you are not supposed to take up space.

TB: I fully agree with that. That's an extension of dehumanisation. Again, you're not quite human, so how are you supposed to have any say over how much space you procure or occupy? And why occupy space at all? Because it's also about a certain degree of mindlessness. You're supposed to be an object, almost of the inanimate sort. So yes, there's a lot of discursive engagement in terms of how women are supposed to look, and as we know, it's a bottomless pit, because the industry-imposed standards proclaim that women need to be skinny and not eat, and just go down the rabbit hole of eating disorders and take their bodies and minds through the trauma of being through that. But at the same time, yeah, there's a lot of fat shaming and a lot of fatphobia, and this reminds me of a French writer Colette, who in her late life just refused to age gracefully. She wanted to have nothing to do with society's set standards of how it wanted women to look, and French society at that point in time of course is an important marker of how we're looking at things today, not very differently anyway. And there's also, I think, pretty and beauty, and I'd honestly admit that I was more hesitant to speak

about this even a few years ago and have gradually just started taking over most pace, I'd say. And I think it's a double-edged sword in a way too, that there is a lot of conversation about pretty privilege and that acts against, again, human subjectivity. And for a short, short moment, if I could take off the tag of a sociologist and just be a person, I think there is a point where particularly the CHAWM that you are talking about doesn't, it's not just him, but it just doesn't particularly just depend on specific races, so it could just be manosphere, uncut. It has a habit of looking at beautiful women as nothing more than that. And again, that is a denial of subjectivity at its best. And it doesn't exactly do the same things to what it does not consider beautiful. But then again, it imposes, it's almost like women owe them pretty and when they do, they get their subjectivity taken away and when they don't, they get their subjectivity taken away. So there's no good way to go about it and I think it's important, particularly for younger women, to realize that there isn't much to be extracted from discursive engagement with this repertoire altogether. So the best idea might be the connote road, which is to just disengage and not care about it, if that's possible, that is.

AT: To me, the overarching theme that keeps coming up is women are not supposed to or not allowed to have needs. An object doesn't have needs. When we're talking about politicians who want to force women to have children but not provide them with support, they're not acknowledging that mothers have needs as well, which I would say is a much broader overarching theme outside of politics as well. But when we're talking about people being disgusted by literally just a woman eating normally, women aren't allowed to need food. An object doesn't need to eat. Why do you have needs? We see this in the fact that many professions like nursing, like teaching, are both female-dominated and incredibly underpaid. So that idea that you have to give all of this to your students, your patients, etc., but we're not even going to pay you, a lot of times, a living wage. Again, I think it comes back to that idea of all of this unpaid, unrecognized labor is, you are here to give and you are not allowed to take, even if what you are taking is your fair share and/or something that you need for survival.

TB: Again, it goes back to Laurie Penny's take on hunger being women's biggest sin in a way. You're not allowed to be hungry for anything. That does also transcend to the idea of desire or needs in order for survival, because again, when you're objectified, as you say, the dehumanization doesn't quite allow you to exercise anything beyond remaining within the repertoire that has been imposed upon you to perform the tasks of an inanimate object that you are. For the longest time, patriarchy has conditioned us to believe that women are providers or they're mothers, and I think at the present moment, even therapists. So there's a lot of emotional psychological labor that is invisibilized. I think in the information economy, in the attention economy, there's a very interesting phenomena that we are observing at the minute, where there is this exchange in terms of attention, particularly when we talk about a conversational exchange, particularly. Even something as little as a verbal exchange or a rhetorical exchange, text message based exchange, comments on social media based exchange. Even there, particularly if you delve into the manosphere, which is what I work on, again, working with the far right and fascistic spaces, it's really interesting how the Andrew Tate-osphere talks about this. In a way, it's really interesting in the sense that it's a second round of pornographyization. And we do have a lot of porn at the giveaway, surrounded by porn, there's food porn, there's travel porn. There is a lot of footage about other really massively derogatory, dehumanizing stuff associated with war and genocide. It's just a click away. There's a really interesting couple of experimental films made called *18,000 Dead in Golden Head*, which basically talks about how we perceive 18,000 deaths on the screen before we even turn 16. So that makes us numb in terms of actually encountering that when it happens in real life. And there is a lease of life that rings true for sexuality oriented conversations as well. It's just that the gamification and the pornographyization of any sort of exchange associated with women is also associated with patriarchal conditioning and objectification. So in a way, as you'd see in *Adolescence*, it's that this isn't particularly about becoming friends. The manosphere doesn't encourage you to become friends with women or queer people. You aren't particularly liked as a person. And that's because you're not a person. You're something out of which labor of some kind needs to be extrapolated, which is again reinstating a master-slave dynamic, as Orwellian as that sounds.

AT: It's interesting that you bring up our perception of large groups of people on film as well, because one of the things that I've been thinking about was a report from Geena Davis Institute, which looks at gender in media. And one of their reports found that women only made up 17% of crowds in films. And so she was actually questioning, are we training people to see fewer women in groups, a lower ratio of women as the norm? Are we training people's brains to see that as normal? And it really makes me think about how when there's an unconscious bias that women shouldn't be here at all, any women are seen as too many.

TB: Yeah, it goes both ways. Primarily we have been conditioned to not see women in those spaces because they have been underrepresented because of patriarchy. So it's a teleological cycle. The cause becomes effect becomes cause becomes effect. Then we are used not to seeing women. And as you were saying that where there is a lot of care work involved, like in teaching or in nursing, there is an overrepresentation of women. But in other areas where they do, they have proven that they can excel equally. There weren't equal opportunities present in order for them to be able to express themselves. So we haven't seen them in those spaces for a very long time. And because again, this universal trends where there is a focus on the populist far right, there is also simultaneously, and it's not a coincidence that technology or the fields that I work in, for example, war and violence, it's quite underrepresented in terms of women. And it's interesting, if there are women, they actually work in human rights. But it's like you're allowed to talk about the parts where you can provide care, but not quite engage in discursive or dialogical practice about what is truly happening, which is talking about the causality of why it's happening. And I think that also applies to filmography, that applies to technology. It's just that you're not supposed to be in roles, which allow you to make meaning or add to it.

AT: It's not just physical space when we're talking about occupying space. There's also the common perception that women talk too much. And so again, research from the Geena Davis Institute has produced several reports about this topic in film context in terms of how much girls talk, including when the main character is a girl in a children's film, and the gender disparities that you see there. But in real life as well, there's an academic here in Australia named Dale Spender, who did a study of classroom conversations in university settings. And so after these conversations, she would ask the students, "do you think men talked more than women?" And men in these conversations perceived women as talking for an equal amount of time, when in fact, they had only made up 15% of the conversation. So men were seeing a 15-85 split as equal. And then when the women spoke for 30%, so a 30-70 split, the men perceived the women as dominating the conversation when they were still speaking less than a third of the total amount of conversation. And obviously, this is one example that I feel like we see play out over and over and over again. So it's very much not just physical space that we're talking about.

TB: No, most certainly not. And this also associates with the pornographization of women in a way, even in conversation, in conversational domains. It looks extractive, which is why they feel like the 85-15% split is actually equal. It actually is quite baffling, even after all these academic studies have been conducted, to see that, you know, it keeps pointing towards a master-slave dynamic. Now, the problem with any kind of colonial versus the colonized sort of war or conflict is that it has never actually been balanced on its own, because the colonized decided to have tea in the afternoon with the colonizer and have a conversation about it. And it has been going on for thousands of years and thousands of years of conditioning. So it's really interesting that you pointed it out in terms of discursive or verbal communication as well in terms of taking verbal spaces or talking. And all of those stereotypes in terms of, that women talk more or women talking. It's truly fascinating that even in terms of verbal engagement, I think there is a subdued subconscious desire to extrapolate or extract. So anything that is not extractive, anything that does not profit, that desire is basically extra, which is why the conversation seems more than it actually is. So yeah, it is very transactional and dehumanizing, and it's associated with re-objectification again and again and again. And it must be tiring for women to have to put up with that in everyday life.

AT: I'd like to dig into women having to put up with these things, because it is very easy for someone with a lot of privilege, which I consider myself to be, it's very easy for someone like me to say, "oh, well, I just don't do that." But the simple fact is that in personal relationships, whether that's romantic, whether that's familial or friendships, in workplaces, women are penalized for not meeting these standards that are imposed upon us that are not imposed on men, right? Like talking more. Women have countless stories about how they've been penalized in workplaces for talking too much. Even in these conversations where this whole podcast is founded on, I invite intelligent people, all women to date, I have invited a couple men. So far, none have taken me up on it. But I have had several guests say to me, "oh, feel free to just interrupt me if I'm talking too much, if I'm rambling, if I'm going on." And I just look at them and remind them that the whole point of this exercise, the whole reason that we are both sitting on this Zoom chat, is for you to talk about something that you are very knowledgeable and very passionate about. You talking is the point. And the fact that I would describe pretty much anybody who comes on this podcast as a feminist and someone who is often an academic, or is otherwise very knowledgeable about these topics. And so the fact that even people who should have the confidence that they deserve to take up space, especially in this context, do not have that confidence. And I don't think that's a failing on their part. I think that's how we're socialized.

TB: Yes, as women, we are definitely conditioned to constantly keep ourselves in check. So we are not too much because whatever you tend to do, if it does not end up being a resource that can be extracted from by the other end, which is patriarchy, in this case. It could also be colonial capitalism, it could also be the dating market, it could be the marketplace in general. So as long as they don't get to extract a profit, a surplus value, something that satisfies a certain kind of patriarchal desire, it keeps you in check by inciting this reflexive process of self-gaslighting that is very self-sustaining. So it has a life of its own. And we embody that life because we are conditioned to believe that anything that we do beyond that epicenter is somehow limiting and somehow is perhaps not socially acceptable, perhaps is something that we should be doubtful about. And there is a lot of self-psycho-analyzing, but also psychoanalyzing in general that needs to be done in there. And talking to women as we were talking about, or talking to queer people, or talking to queer people of color, or talking to underprivileged workers, or talking to abused women, talking to people who have been victimized by war, talking to other sides, I think does a really good job in terms of realizing other kinds of subjectivities, realizing subjectivities that don't inherently want to colonize or dominate.

AT: So instead of spending all of your time with people who are as privileged or more privileged, gain greater perspective by engaging with people without your privileges, whatever they may be.

TB: Absolutely. And exchanges, the way we used to talk to our neighbors 50 years ago, human exchanges are particularly not rooted in this very market-oriented, extractive, value extrapolation narrative. We are just used to talking to each other because that's just the way it is. It's nonlinear, it's absurdist, it doesn't make arithmetic sense, it's not about a statistic. It just is like life is out of nowhere. And well, capitalism is only 400 years old, so that's also something we need to think about.

AT: Join us next time on the Infinite Women podcast and remember, well-behaved women rarely make history.