

OnlyFans and the Plebeians: Emancipatory moments in contemporary Indonesia

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Abstract

The online platform OnlyFans has attracted a lot of attention in empirical research in recent years. In this analysis, we use a special approach that connects concepts from political philosophy and empirical research. First, we provide a detailed explanation of Jacques Rancière's notion of the "distribution of the sensible". Rancière's example of the plebeians serves to illustrate how certain groups are excluded from participation. Rancière's philosophical perspective on emancipation in Indonesia is of added value because it links the embodiment of roles, which has already been addressed many times in research, with political moments. Secondly, we examine empirical data to explore how OnlyFans is perceived in Bali. By doing so, we trace how narratives surrounding sexuality, morality, and digital labor intersect with local cultural and social frameworks. These insights allow us to identify emerging tensions that reflect deeper structural issues within the social fabric. Thirdly, we argue that these tensions can be read as disruptions of the current social order — ruptures that may reveal emancipatory potential. We interpret them through the lens of Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction. Our aim is not to reconstruct or stabilize social orders, but to highlight the fractures, inconsistencies, and instabilities that reveal the possibility for change within an existing system.

Keywords: OnlyFans; Indonesia; Jacques Rancière; Emancipation; Distribution of the Sensible

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Introduction

Various studies show that today's consumption of sexual material is increasingly digital (Easterbrook-Smith 2023; Ji and Li 2025; Muning and Rosando 2024). In the course of this, as a result, the online platform OnlyFans has also become the focus of sociological research in the recent past. (Juditha 2021; Usman and Budiman 2023; Wirawan et al. 2022). The digital revolution has driven the popularity of a platform called OnlyFans, which emphasizes sexual interactions and transactions through two key actors: fans and content creators (Nawang Sari 2024). Fans can directly "like" and comment on various posts, including photos, videos, audio, livestreams, text, and interactive features (emojis and GIFs) (Ghaita et al. 2021), including tipping their favorite content creators with substantial amounts (Ji and Li 2025). Therefore, although fans interact directly with content creators, sexual services and payment systems are digital and dependent on OnlyFans (Gorissen 2024). Furthermore, the OnlyFans platform design supports sexual services by content creators, such as through features like Sexting, Video Call Sex, Rate Dick Pict, Content Request, and others, assuming that work conditions involving sex are in fact inseparable from macro-social issues (Nawang Sari 2024).

Sexual content on OnlyFans is narrowly perceived as pornography, which is perceived by most Indonesians as a moral threat (Muning and Rosando 2024) In this article, we aim to base the contemporary context of Indonesia, focusing on the societal debate surrounding OnlyFans content creators on a theoretical foundation of Jaques Rancière's philosophical request on social orders. Rancière's philosophical perspective on emancipation in Indonesia is of added value because it links the embodiment of roles, which has already been addressed many times in research, with political moments. (Quintana 2019) The conservative social order in Indonesia promotes traditional moral values and publicly condemns platforms like OnlyFans. However, contradictions emerge when this moral stance conflicts with the realities of economic participation, digital expression, and the lived experiences of those involved. By examining these inconsistencies, we argue that they reveal an underlying emancipatory potential. In his theoretical framework, Jacques Rancière argues that perception is shaped by a "distribution of the sensible," a social order that

determines what is visible, sayable, and thinkable within a given society. This order not only defines the boundaries of what is acknowledged but also implicitly contains its own negation — elements that resist or contradict the dominant narrative, which are normally unseen. Every social structure, therefore, harbors within itself the potential for disruption, transformation and contingency. Rancière illustrates this concept with the example of the plebeians in ancient Rome, who challenged the established social order by asserting their right to speak as equals, thereby disrupting the perception of who was entitled to participate in public discourse. Similar to the plebeians' challenge in Rome, the presence of OnlyFans creators within Indonesian society disrupts established norms, opening a space for rethinking social hierarchies and norms in line with Rancière's notion of emancipation through the reconfiguration of the sensible. We thus follow up on existing studies on the stigmatization of OnlyFans users and point out contradictions in the social discourse. (Bonifacio et al. 2025) We aim to offer here a trans-disciplinary approach at the interface of sociology and philosophy, to study the social relations between individuals and social groups. This derived from the fact that one of us has a background in philosophy of education, the other in sociology. We present our two disciplinary backgrounds giving us what we want to call as a unique selling point of being trans-disciplinary that can be scientifically discussed and justified from both sides.

To understand what Rancière means by a "Distribution of the Sensible", let's take a brief journey through time: In 449 BC, a remarkable event takes place in Ancient Rome: the plebeians, the working population of Rome, raise their voices against the wealthy patricians. They no longer wanted to accept their subordinate role and gathered on the Aventine Hill (Mon Sacer) to vote together on a new social order. Naturally, this provocation was not tolerated by the patricians. The provocation consisted in the fact that the plebeians set themselves up as political opponents, although no political role was intended for them. Plebeians cannot form a proper society because their lives are role-less – but they meet on the Aventine and assign each other political roles. (Rancière 1999, p. 24-25) Plebeians cannot speak because they have no political voice – but they actually speak and they discuss with each other (Rancière 1999, p. 24-25). Because the patricians do not tolerate this attack on the social order, they address the plebeians and want to urge them to return to Rome, to

return to the old order. And at this moment, something unimaginable happens: for a fraction of a second, the patricians of Rome abolish their own order. They abandon themselves to contradiction. They lead – for a moment – their own order to the scaffold. Why? They want to bring the plebeians back into an order in which they are never the speakers – but in order to do this, they address the word to them. It is they who unintentionally turn the plebeians into speakers – even if only for a moment. But this brief moment contains a revelation of their own order, which is assumed to be absolute: the patricians deconstruct their own order because they demonstrate its immanent contradictions.

This remarkable story is used by the French philosopher and democracy theorist Jacques Rancière to show that within a social order, a collective consciousness decides what is perceived and what is not. He describes such an order as a “distribution of the sensible”. It “reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community” (Rancière 2004, p. 12). It also “determines the ability or inability to take charge of what is common to the community” (Rancière 2004). “[I]t defines what is visible or not in a common space, endowed with a common language” (Rancière 2004, p. 12-13). What does that mean? At first glance, the example of the plebeians rebelling against the patricians seems like a political dispute. There are two parties who disagree about the politics of society. But Rancière is concerned with something else: he uses the plebeians to show that social orders organize perception. The plebeians could speak as much as they wanted, but it always remained noise in the ears of the patricians. Because they occupy a place outside the sensually perceptible, they cannot be perceived. Rancière is therefore not interested in showing who has the power to speak. He goes even further: it is not enough to speak in order to appear as a speaker in a certain order. Rather, it also requires a perception that makes my speech act appear as such. By nature, there are only sounds. A constructed order decides which of these sounds is noise and which is voice.

Rancière is therefore not designing a model to describe power, but perception. The crucial point is that the dividing line between the invisible and the visible, between noise and speech, is a contingent, historical and changeable order that is by no means natural (Biesta 2010). But what Rancière also shows us is that the possibility of deconstruction is inherent in every order. The order of the patricians is not without contradiction. The contradiction

lies in the fact that the patricians address the plebeians, thus perceiving them as speakers, in order to put them in their place within a social order, in which they are not speakers. They call the nameless by name to remind them of their namelessness. This contradiction has always been inherent in the order. But it is only through the subjectivization of the plebeians, through their occupation of a place that is not intended for them, that the immanent contradiction becomes apparent. They strip the order of its supposed transcendence and instead reveal its biased, constructed and contingent immanence. This is what Jacques Derrida understands by the method of deconstruction in *grammatology* (Derrida 1995). We want to apply the method of deconstruction to OnlyFans models in Indonesia in order to bring up contradictions of the order that were probably not seen before.

Methods

Our research employs a qualitative data collection with an interpretive methodology that draws from both a textual analysis and a philosophical theory. Our core aim is to critically examine the discursive and social positioning of content creators on the OnlyFans platform in Indonesia. We approach this inquiry from a perspective that foregrounds visibility, subjectivation, and emancipation — primarily informed by Jacques Rancière's (Rancière 1999) theoretical framework. We use particularly his concept of the distribution of sensible (Rancière 2004) and political subjectivity to look into how Indonesian content creators on OnlyFans navigate their identities.

Data Collection

This study presents the life stories of three OnlyFans content creators in Bali. The data derive from a series of recorded talks with randomly selected three OnlyFans content creators residing in Bali in 2022 and 2023 (Nawangsari 2024) The in-depth interviews were conducted on questions about the informants' life experiences, ultimately promoting gender and sexual diversity. The interviews were operated flexibly. In addition to the empirical primary data, this study also includes secondary data obtained from journals, websites, news, articles, and books for further review.

Analytical Techniques

To analyse the firsthand narratives from Indonesian OnlyFans content creators, we employ Jacques Derrida's deconstruction (Derrida 1995) to treat such empirical data not in a positivist sense, but as texts that are rich with meaning, contradiction, and potential for a new theoretical insight. Deconstruction is here used to interrogate the binary oppositions inherent in public discourse surrounding OnlyFans — specifically the overlapping dichotomy between “entrepreneur” and “prostitute” (Vickers and Brooks–Gordon 2023). We aim to reveal the internal contradictions and instabilities within these categories.

Reflexivity and Limitations

As researchers, we acknowledge our own positionality and the limitations of speaking *about* a community to which we do not belong. Our intent is not to define or speak *for* the sex workers, but to highlight how their own words and actions already disrupt and complicate the frameworks imposed upon them. Therefore, by mutual agreement, we have anonymized the identities of key informants, their photographs, and other information. The analysis is speculative and theoretical in nature, meant to provoke rethinking rather than to offer definitive conclusions.

Data analysis and visualization

We tried to understand the complexity of the work done by OnlyFans content creators in Bali, Indonesia. We experienced OnlyFans as a platform where life still seems to involve various considerations of fear, anger, self-confidence, and the lure of a better life. Not only that, we saw young people as if they found themselves feeling less safe, increasingly isolated, and intimidated. Our informants explained why they chose OnlyFans, a platform where they are paid for sexual content. The data gave us an insight into the motivation and self-perception of content creators which also revealed new perspectives in previous studies (Hamilton et al. 2023). Initially, OnlyFans was interpreted by D as a place for people to share premium content because it was subscription-based and not free. The presence of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 caused people to start selling their sexual content on OnlyFans. In fact, D called OnlyFans a prostitution platform. However, D denied that content creators who

provide sexual content are sex workers. D responded to this through a critical argument about how he interpreted sex workers as people who like to change sex partners, which he explained as follows:

D: “I used to see OnlyFans as just a place to share premium content. But, over time it has become a prostitution platform. I can say that now OnlyFans is better known as a place for prostitution. I used to only make sex content if I had a sex partner, you know! Not a boyfriend! I only had two sex partners. Not always changing sex partners like Hoe!”

The shift that D made seemed to assume a mindset that still considered public discourse. Based on further investigation, most people view OnlyFans as a prostitution platform, especially because this platform allows and facilitates the buying and selling of sexual content. Such news certainly did not surprise some of Z's non-heterosexual informants. Z told about her experience of wanting to have paid sex. However, Z's desire was rejected by the client because she refused to pay for sex. Z, who had officially joined OnlyFans, found herself feeling ashamed. However, Z still thought that OnlyFans was not as bad as people said. Z reflected the view that sex should be done on the basis of mutual consent. According to her, sex that is only oriented towards money makes us feel bad, so the criteria for partners, pleasure, and enjoyment need to be the focus in carrying out sexual activities.

Z: “Once wanted to try having sex and asked people I met if they would pay me. They refused. At that point I felt embarrassed and said that I just wanted to have fun and didn't need their money. I felt inferior to those who could do that, but I realized I wasn't meant to be a sex worker. I felt bad if I did sex just for money.”

Z and D's experiences seem to provide new truths that are hard to find in the media that speaks one-sidedly. Apart from Z and D, R spontaneously told the truth about bitter memories because of the words of people who insulted her in her hometown. R assumed that the people who insulted her were people who were not close to her at all. They only knew R

through their friendship on Instagram. While R often posted sexy photos, she actually got insults or labeled as an immoral woman. R said that she used Instagram as a place to brand herself for OnlyFans. In more detail, R still felt that sexual freedom was not really free. R still believed in religious values and admitted to being afraid of the afterlife. R said:

R: "My life is very sad. Before OnlyFans, I used to work in the village and earned a salary of 600,000 per month. I feel hurt if I only get a salary of 600,000. Meanwhile, people don't know how much money I make now. I'm trying to get a better life and live in a different place. They think this job is easy? I still think about hell. I'm still afraid of sin even though I like sex! but at least I'm not as bad as a drug user. I'm not saying being a sex worker is sad or disgusting. I just limit myself from being a sex worker because I want to have fun."

R gave a clear argument about her difference from sex workers. She said she still had the power to control her body on OnlyFans. R's previous experience of paid sex felt more detrimental both physically, mentally, and financially. On the other hand, R argued that OnlyFans was trying to limit the unwanted things that are commonly experienced by sex workers in general.

R: “The photos and videos depend on whether we are naughty or not. I prefer soft sex only, not choosing to show my vagina unless he wants to pay me a lot. Let’s think again, if I become a sex worker and get paid only one million rupiah. To be more precise, I have to pay for several things starting from a taxi, having to look beautiful and fragrant. That is an analogy of one million rupiah, so what if I only get five hundred thousand rupiah? Especially if he penetrates from the inside and makes me have to buy pills to prevent pregnancy. On OnlyFans I only need to show a 3-minute video, they pay me 600\$. Even if I have to make a sex video with someone, I make sure that I only do it with people I like. Therefore, following sin or not, life is complicated.”

Not only R, D has a similar view that OnlyFans is able to provide a space for him to express himself totally. D admitted that he did not really care about the issue of income on OnlyFans, but only wanted to produce something (sex content) that he really liked, there was no coercion, and people still subscribed. D was happy when fans liked all of his chosen works, as conveyed by D:

D: “In my opinion, OnlyFans income is mediocre. I still remember, the process of immortalizing this content was really taken from the perspective that I like. These videos were not taken carelessly. We all understand that humans know which body parts we like, whatever they are! At least, when there are people who still subscribe to my account, it means the same as giving me validation that I am “hot”! I only highlight the parts that I like. The result? yes, definitely something I like. Just look! people are still subscribing and I feel happy.”

An interesting confession about self-confidence was also conveyed by Z, where OnlyFans really supports his hobby of creating sex content in various positions. For example, short oral content is only done with certain types of men. Z really prioritizes the good looks of his sex partners, such as oriental-faced people, for example. According to him, good looks can refresh and please the eyes of fans. Z admitted that he felt more confident in immortalizing oral sex content with handsome men.

Z: "I'm not a very successful OnlyFans. I just feel happy collecting those things (sex videos). If I miss them, I can watch them again and again on my cellphone. I still remember, when I made these videos, I really used a camera to be more professional. I feel a certain pleasure when seeing sexual activities in various positions. Moreover, these videos are with handsome men so I am more confident when posting them on OF. I prefer oriental-faced men. I emphasize here, we prioritize pleasure and do not plan to seek a serious relationship. I never share full sex videos there, I prefer to post oral sex videos and because they are handsome so it is not too embarrassing if I share them with my fans."

Z and D still prioritize personal and fan pleasure, but do not ignore the commercial aspects of OnlyFans' design. In Indonesia, OnlyFans is indeed included in the pornography category. The Indonesian government has officially suspended this platform because it is considered contrary to religious norms, decency, and morality. However, R stated that people do not need to worry because they only need a VPN for their internet access permission. R briefly explained the steps for fans who want to subscribe and showed the account price rates that have various options and prices.

R: "First of all, you are required to enter the OnlyFans site first. Oh yeah! You have to use a VPN, yes! because it is prohibited here, sometimes I am still afraid if someone asks this. Through the OnlyFans settings, I have changed all my identities and my account cannot be accessed by people in Indonesia. I can describe that the appearance of the OnlyFans account is similar to Instagram which is private or locked. You only need to pay to get access to my feeds. There I provide several options starting from a 7-day free trial for new users, one month, three months, six months, and one year. OnlyFans has this feature varies from custom, rate dick pict, photo set, sexting, and vcs. Even some of them just want to chat without involving sex elements."

It should be noted, R does have different settings compared to other informants. He admitted to choosing to use agency services to increase the number of fans and income. However, R still participates in creating certain content independently. He feels that when he creates content he feels like he is still working. Behind his hobby of creating content, R

revealed that there are various physical and emotional challenges when having to respond to various fan requests. Not to mention, OnlyFans income has no certainty about the nominal amount and is very dependent on demand.

R: “I have an agency that runs my OnlyFans account. My agency has this has two models so the total team is 8 people. Because I employ 3 people, so the total income will be divided by 4 people including me. I emphasize once again! I don't want to reply to those lecherous men's messages, I feel disgusted if I have to act cute and cheerful to ask how they are. Can you imagine, even though I have a lot of problems, I still have to look cute in front of the camera to meet them. But speaking of meeting? We've never met in person. I really need the agency's hands for this. However, when someone asks for special content, I just think of them as my boyfriend. But the challenge is if the content I make doesn't match the request, the agency tells me to make it again and again, it's annoying! Plus the unstable income makes me even more afraid that I won't have savings for the future.

Results

The empirical material basis - qualitative interview excerpts with content creators on OnlyFans in Bali - is described and analyzed along the categories of “Perception by others”, “self-perception” and “contradictions and inconsistencies”.

Category 1: Perception by others

The informants reveal a persistent tension between their own understanding of their work and how they believe they are perceived by others. This perception by others – how they are seen by the outside world – often carries stigma, moral judgment, and misinformation. D openly remarks: *“I used to see OnlyFans as just a place to share premium content. But, over time it has become a prostitution platform.”* This shift in perception illustrates a broader societal reframing of digital sex work—from content creation to what is often pejoratively labeled as prostitution. The use of the word “prostitution” here reflects

not necessarily D's own internal judgment, but rather a recognition of how the platform has been socially rebranded. R adds: *"They think this job is easy?"* This rhetorical question suggests frustration with external trivialization of their labor. R's statement reveals that the perception of digital sex work as effortless or morally bankrupt neglects the emotional, logistical, and psychological labor involved. Additionally, R reflects on broader cultural and religious judgment: *"I still think about hell. I'm still afraid of sin even though I like sex!"* Yet, informants also resist these external judgments. R tries to negotiate her place on a moral spectrum, asserting: *"At least I'm not as bad as a drug user."* Here, moral self-positioning functions as a defense mechanism—creating a relative moral justification in the face of stigma.

Category 2: Self-Perception

The participants' self-perception is not monolithic. Instead, it fluctuates between empowerment, shame, pleasure, economic necessity, and boundary-setting. Z recalls: *"I realized I wasn't meant to be a sex worker. I felt bad if I did sex just for money."* This is a clear moment of identity demarcation. Z makes a distinction between sexual agency for pleasure and the transactional nature of sex work, suggesting a moral-emotional boundary that is significant in their self-perception. D, by contrast, finds validation and confidence in content creation: *"At least, when there are people who still subscribe to my account, it means the same as giving me validation that I am 'hot!'"* This is not merely about income—it is about visibility, desirability, and recognition, all of which are essential in the formation of D's self-image. Z similarly reflects: *"I just feel happy collecting those things (sex videos). If I miss them, I can watch them again."* This illustrates a sense of ownership, nostalgia, and aesthetic pleasure. The videos are not just commodities but personal archives of desire and empowerment. Z further emphasizes control over representation: *"I prefer oriental-faced men... so it is not too embarrassing if I share them with my fans."* Here, aesthetic and racialized preferences contribute to shaping a curated self-image that balances exposure and pride. R's statements further illustrate an ambivalent self-perception. While she demonstrates agency in setting boundaries (e.g., only making videos with people she likes), she also speaks of emotional exhaustion: *"Even though I have a lot of problems, I still have to look cute in front of the*

camera.” This double consciousness—being emotionally distressed yet performing joy—highlights the emotional labor involved in digital sex work. Moreover, she acknowledges the economic interdependence of her role: *“My agency tells me to make it again and again... it's annoying!”* While she asserts creative control and emotional boundaries, her reality is one of partial control within a commercialized structure that demands repeatability and customer satisfaction.

Category 3: Contradictions and Inconsistencies

A core analytical insight lies in the fractures and contradictions within the informants' narratives. These are not failures of logic but reflections of complex moral negotiations and shifting subjectivities. A major contradiction emerges in the moral positioning of sex work. Informants engage in sex-related labor while simultaneously resisting the identity of “sex worker.” Z admits: *“Once wanted to try having sex and asked people I met if they would pay me... I felt embarrassed.”* Z simultaneously explores the possibility of sex work and recoils from it, suggesting internal conflict between curiosity, economic pressure, and moral discomfort. Similarly, R acknowledges the financial logic of digital content creation, even breaking down the economics: *“To be more precise, I have to pay for several things starting from a taxi, having to look beautiful and fragrant...”* She later contrasts this with the efficiency of OnlyFans: *“On OnlyFans I only need to show a 3-minute video, they pay me 600\$.”* However, this efficiency does not eliminate stress. R reflects on the emotional and moral consequences: *“I still think about hell... life is complicated.”* This represents an unresolved contradiction between economic rationality and religious/moral anxiety. D, too, exhibits internal tension. She describes her content creation as intentional and empowering, stating: *“These videos were not taken carelessly... the result? Yes, definitely something I like.”* But this empowerment sits alongside her earlier claim that OnlyFans has become a “prostitution platform.” Thus, her empowerment is nested within a framework she partially discredits. R's relationship with her agency also reveals a contradiction: she is both dependent on their assistance and frustrated by the creative constraints they impose: *“The challenge is if the content I make doesn't match the request... the agency tells me to make it again.”* This tension illustrates the ambiguous agency that exists in platform-based sex work. Creators may appear

independent, but are often embedded within quasi-corporate or collaborative structures that limit autonomy

Both are assigned a role by society

Following the analysis, we make a thought-provoking offer as an outlook: We take up Rancière's philosophical reflections on emancipation to show that there are superficial parallels here that would be worth pursuing further in the form of further research. The plebeians in ancient Rome and the OnlyFans content creators in contemporary Indonesia – how do these two stories fit together? The answer lies in the emancipatory potential of the two stories. In both stories there is much more than a political dispute, namely an emancipatory performance, a form of subjectivation. We claim that an emancipatory subjectivation can be observed both among the plebeians in ancient Rome and the OnlyFans content creator in today's Bali. This subjectivation can be seen in 3 characteristics: Firstly, both are assigned a role by society. Secondly, both occupy roles to which they are not socially entitled. Thirdly, by subjectivizing they reveal immanent contradictions of the social order. For the patricians of ancient Rome, the matter is clear: “[T]here is no place for discussion with the plebs for the simple reason that plebs do not speak.” (Rancière 1999, p. 23) The Roman distribution of roles provides for a distinction between political and non-political roles. The former was held by the patricians, the latter by the plebeians. Expectations are associated with this role: The former engage in political discourse, the latter do not. The former are aristocrats, the latter are not. Because the former do not belong to the labouring population, this task must be assumed by the plebeians. But this task is not a politically relevant one. The plebeians are arbitrary and therefore interchangeable: „Plebs live a purely individual life that passes on nothing to posterity except for life itself, reduced to its reproductive function.” (Rancière 1999, p. 23) The same logic can be applied to the OnlyFans content creators in Bali: society assigns them a label based on their work. They are labelled as sex workers. D has had this experience: *“I can say that now OnlyFans is better known as a place for prostitution.”* Even when R talks about how he thought about starting OnlyFans, we can hear the social labelling: *„Let's think again, if I become a sex worker and get paid only one*

million rupiah“ As prostitutes, they play the role of the morally reprehensible. They feel the moral condemnation of her fellow human beings when she moves to Bali:

“[...] If on Instagram, my neighbors and friends definitely like to comment badly on my appearance like: 'look at her! since moving to Bali her style of dress has become like that'. They seem to see me as a very sinful person.”

We can see from the narrative that the social order is linked to a moral order: the social role ascription of the sex worker is also linked to a moral judgement, namely that this role is reserved for the reprehensible and sinful, who themselves have no moral decency. It is important to understand that we are not reconstructing a social order here, but rather observing a perception that is determined by this order and in turn confirms the order. Due to the social division of roles, the patricians have a clear idea of what they have to expect, hear and see from the plebeians: “They do not speak because they are beings without a name [...].” (Rancière 1999, p. 23) As a result, the order not only determines who has to do and say what, but also how it is perceived. This logic can be applied to the situation in Bali. What we see here is a social perception that determines which identities in a society can be recognized by others and which cannot.

The label of prostitute is associated with an expectation: Like plebeians, they are dependent on their circumstances, they are molded by precarious external circumstances and are in no way shapers of themselves. They seem to say so themselves: *“My life is very sad. Before OnlyFans, I used to work in the village and earned a salary of 600,000 per month. I feel hurt if I only get a salary of 600,000.”* Because in this perception they are mere dependents and not subjects, their work is perceived as unambitious and devoid of any form: *“They think this job is easy?”* Of course, like the plebeians they are part of society, but they are only part of it under the condition of their dependence on the patricians. Only in this form are they entitled to form an identity. (Rancière 1999, p. 23-24) Only within this countable proportion can they be counted as part of society, namely as peasants, craftsmen or merchants – at any rate as non-aristocrats. The situation is similar with the content creators: they certainly have sexual identities and therefore represent a countable proportion of society. But this

countable proportion determines which identities are perceptible: Men and woman (Turner 2008, p. 20). It can therefore be said that in both cases – both in Ancient Rome and in contemporary Indonesia – there are certain divisions of the sensual that suggest certain perceptions from the outset and exclude others.

Both occupy a role to which they are not entitled

The plebeians of Ancient Rome thus have in common with the OnlyFans creators that they belong to a social order that determines the roles in which they can and cannot appear. But there is another important thing they have in common: both occupy places that they are not socially entitled to. As we have learnt, the plebeians retreat to the Aventine to do something unspeakable: they behave like politicians. They discuss with each other, assign roles to each other and vote on their social coexistence. What an outrageous thing this must have been from the patricians' point of view: the non-political imitating the political. But there is more to it than that. By behaving like politicians, the plebeians became political. The patricians don't realize this, of course. For them, what is happening on the Aventine is total chaos because they are unable to recognize the plebeians in the roles they are taking on. This is exactly what we can observe in Bali today. OnlyFans Creator are seen as sex workers. But they emphasize that their work is not always about sex: *“Even some of them just want to chat without involving sex elements.”* Furthermore, they speak of sex not only as work, but also as pleasure:

“Once wanted to try having sex and asked people I met if they would pay me. They refused. At that point I felt embarrassed and said that I just wanted to have fun and didn't need their money.”

Supposed sex workers claim that their work is neither limited to sex nor to working. It would be expected that sex workers would accept their role ascription or defend sex working. But they do not. They argue from the perspective of their own critics. They argue as subjects, because they speak of their personal preferences:

“I'm not a very successful OnlyFans. I just feel happy collecting those things [sex videos]. If I miss them, I can watch them again and again on my cellphone. [...] I feel a certain pleasure when seeing sexual activities in various positions.”

It would be expected that they would either accept this branding or defend themselves against it. But they do neither. Instead, they also condemn sex workers: *“I realized I wasn't meant to be a sex worker.”* A sex worker claims that he is not meant for sex work. By saying this, he is not defending his role as a sex worker. Instead, he is questioning what it even means to be a sex worker. By condemning sex working, he is demanding his social share of a part that is not meant for him. This practice not only blurs the “lines between fantasy and reality” (Tynan and Linehan 2024) but also calls into question a social order, making the boundary between reality and fantasy questionable. No matter if they are seen as sex workers or not – they start to embody the role of the people that judge those sex workers. As the plebeians already did – the content creators start to be aristocratic. They start to be patricians of their own Indonesian society. Now a paradoxical situation arises: The role of the sex worker coincides with the role of the non-sex worker. By embodying the latter role, they dissolve the absoluteness of being. They shake up the transcendence of the sex worker concept and transport it to the level of contingency. They take the concept of the sex worker and simply make it their own, after which they no longer count to the group of sex workers.

As we have seen, sex workers are morally condemned by society. It would now be expected that they would accept the moral condemnation or reject it in order to defend themselves. But the content creators do something else. They are not defending themselves, but are beginning to condemn prostitution as well: *“I used to only make sex content if I had a sex partner, you know! Not a boyfriend! I only had two sex partners. Not always changing sex partner like Hoe!”* When alleged prostitutes condemn prostitution, they are not defending the role of prostitutes. They are doing much more: they are putting up for debate what prostitution is, and in doing so they are putting an entire society up for debate. By doing so, they are taking on a role that is not intended for them: they are emancipating themselves from the morally condemned to the condemners.

Like Rancière's plebeians, they constitute themselves as "speaking beings sharing the same properties as those who deny them these." (Rancière 1999, p. 24) As immoral beings, they are not entitled to ponder moral questions. It is tautological that the immoral do not ponder morality. Yet that is exactly what they begin to do: *"Even if I have to make a sex video with someone, I make sure that I only do it with people I like. Therefore, following sin or not, life is complicated."* Instead of defending themselves against the accusations from their environment, they adopt the performance of accusing. In doing so, they suggest that they belong to a part of society for which they are not intended. They do not discuss whether what they are doing is a sin or not, but question what a sin is: *"I still think about hell. I'm still afraid of sin even though I like sex! But at least I'm not as bad as a drug user."* Furthermore, they are not seen as acting independently, but as victims of their adverse circumstances, but they behave like entrepreneurs:

"I have an agency that runs my OnlyFans account. My agency has this has two models so the total team is 8 people. Because I employ 3 people, so the total income will be divided by 4 people including me. I emphasize once again! I don't want to reply to those lecherous men's messages"

It does not correspond to the idea of an addict that he builds up a company by being the boss. By behaving like entrepreneurs, content creators become entrepreneurs to a certain extent. They also adopt the habitus of professionalism: *"I still remember, when I made these videos, I really used a camera to be more professional."* In the perception of others, they are the chosen ones. Sex workers work for others. They are chosen by others. But they adopt the habitus of the chosen ones: *"I prefer oriental-faced men. I emphasize here, we prioritize pleasure and do not plan to seek a serious relationship."* By behaving like politicians, the plebeians became political, regardless of what the patricians saw in them. This is a form of subjectivation, because here we see people appropriating a role. In the division of the sensual, they have an inscribed status. By leaving this status, they become subjects. The focus here is clearly on performance. This is what Deleuze and Guattari mean when they explain what it means to become minoritarian: "That is why we must distinguish between: the

majoritarian as a constant and homogeneous system; minorities as subsystems; and the minoritarian as a potential, creative and created, becoming.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 105-106) Minoritarian becoming is characterized by its performance. We find the same performance in the OnlyFans creators: they do not simply create a new, contradictory order out of nothing. Rather, they appropriate the given order in order to construct something of their own from it. They begin to behave like those they criticize. But it should not go unmentioned that this subjectivation is not entirely free. In order to subjectivize themselves, they cannot establish themselves in the midst of the existing order. As a consequence, they withdraw into the peripheries, into the shadows of perception, and thus remain invisible in the existing order:

“First of all, you are required to enter the OnlyFans site first. Oh yeah! You have to use a VPN, yes! because it is prohibited here, sometimes I am still afraid if someone asks this. Through the OnlyFans settings, I have changed all my identities and my account cannot be accessed by people in Indonesia.”

The plebeians had to retreat to the Aventine Hill in order to subjectivise themselves in roles that did not belong to them. This is not insignificant for history, because the Aventine is outside Rome, it is outside the city, in nature. It is in this space, which hardly enjoys the attention of the city dwellers, that they can become city dwellers, which is highly paradoxical. It's similar with the Content Creators: they can occupy their own roles, yes. But in order to do so, they have to retreat to a platform that is only peripherally part of the public space. Bertolt Brecht writes in the famous Threepenny Opera: “For some are in the dark and others are in the light. And you see those in the light, you don't see those in the dark.” (Brecht 1964, translated by the authors) In Brecht's sense, the Aventine and the OnlyFans platform are such darkness, which we are trying to illuminate here.

By subjectivizing themselves they reveal contradictions of order

What we are describing here is not a political conflict between two orders – the conservative order and the self-perception of content creators. According to Rancière, this

would not even be emancipation, because it would suggest that the common political stage would already exist (Rancière 1999, p. 43). The emancipatory act consists in the fact that they incorporate the existing order, even begin to embody it, in order to create something of their own, something new. Emancipation begins where a new common stage is created, because the uncounted parts begin to be counted among the counted parts (Rancière 1999, p. 123) The plebeians exhibit the same political behavior as the Roman patricians. They adopt the same behavior of the political – regardless of whether they are entitled to it from the patricians' point of view. They are political, they are speakers, they are aristocratic. By simply being all of this, they question the claim to absoluteness of “being” and tickle the contingency of the concept of being out of it. They embody the existing patrician order in order to appropriate it, indeed to make it plebeian. We can say the same about the content creators in Indonesia: Although they live their self-created roles, they are not recognized in these roles. But in ancient Rome there were “atypical patricians” (Rancière 1999, p. 25) who wanted to bring them back into the order and addressed them. And so there are also atypical perceptions in the current order of Indonesia, those who – maybe only coincidentally – hear a voice. Our article is such a coincidence. The curious atypical patricians who wanted to take a closer look at the supposed chaos on the Aventine, „observe this incredible phenomenon: the plebeians have actually violated the order of the city. They have given themselves names. They have carried out a series of speech acts [...]“ (Rancière 1999, p. 25) We have also observed the same thing: There are moral reprobates who do indeed claim a moral register for themselves. The plebeians are not entitled to the role of patricians in the polity. That is why the patricians want to send the plebeians back to the place where they belong. They try to do this with a tale.

The apologia implies an inegalitarian partition of the perceptible. The sense necessary to understand this division presupposes an egalitarian division that puts paid to the former, but only the deployment of a specific scene of revelation gives this equality any effectiveness. (Rancière 1999, p. 25) The contradiction was already inherent in the order itself. The emancipatory act consists in the visualization of this contradiction: By becoming aristocratic, the plebeians release the fixed roles of plebeians and patricians to contingency. When the content creators in Bali, as supposed sex workers, begin to act like those by whom

they are condemned, they release the seemingly fixed roles of contingency. They make uncertain what seems certain. They question what is seemingly beyond question. The actual emancipation of plebians and content creators consists precisely in showing that every order is contingent. In Foucault's sense, this is eventalization. Foucault means the visualization of contingency in such certainties, where the temptation is great to assume their eternal universalism (Foucault et al. 1991). Through this act, they show that every order has its own negativity, its own immanent critique. The stronger an order is, the less its inherent negativity is visible, but even if it is epistemically suspended, it always remains ontologically.

Conclusion

Through the previous discussion, OnlyFans content creators seem to be practicing a role of what Rancière calls plebeian. OnlyFans content creators who are considered to have no political role hint at their exchanged lives. The disruption that content creators experience in the disorganization of the space of speech affects their sense of what can be seen, who can be heard, and what can be expected in everyday life. OnlyFans content creators still show the intensity of polyrhythmic life by creating situations where their words can still be heard, they become visible, and recognized. Furthermore, plebeians and OnlyFans content creators may find similarities in the roles they play. However, OnlyFans content creators also display behaviors like those of traditional societies that claim to follow social norms correctly. The various negative accusations leveled against OnlyFans content creators have the potential to identify higher bids that become important resources, where power institutionally produces forms of regulation, disempowerment, and even democracy that still serve the emancipatory goals of OnlyFans content creators who are consuming their activities. They build on the still fragile gains of sex work showing those who still fundamentally need protection from capitalism and the violence of everyday life against the different. As such, what passes for emancipation has long been established through existing political platforms.

Traditional society could have maximized the response to OnlyFans content creators sharing sexual content as marginal, deviant, sinful, immoral, so that traditional society's

anger could be accepted instead of wisdom and claims to a shared norm. Meanwhile, OnlyFans content creators who speak out like politicians presuppose a way of incorporating various old existing orders, then re-presenting them as something that is claimed as their own, especially questioning a life that often demands answers without being questioned. What we can learn from both stories is that social orders carry their own negativity within them – but this opens up new perspectives because both orders may have their contradictions and indicate that e.g. a consideration of the platform beyond moral evaluations could lead out of both contradictions which ties in with current considerations (Bak and Nocella 2023). Contradictions are omnipresent – the question is whether they are visible or not. When contradictions are made visible, then something political is going on. Not only in major revolutions, but even in the smallest hints of everyday life. We have seen that the statements of the OnlyFans content creators in Indonesian Bali alone carry emancipatory potential. The question is who is prepared to listen to and perhaps one day even to understand them.

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