

Repatriarchalisierungsmaschine Drittmitteluniversität: The Academic Precariat and Cam Girls

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The structural isomorphism between the neoliberal university and the platform economy of sexual services – a media-sociological analysis.

Prologue: A WhatsApp Dialogue

A scholar friend writes:

“Doctoral candidate selection is now oriented toward servility. Which is unfortunately quite clearly gendered.”

“Which then obviously leads to the corresponding cascade effects.”

I write: “That is quite a statement on ‘promoting women in academia.’”

He then:

“I’ve been saying this for a long time: there is a secondary patriarchalization, because instead of the truly clever and sharp-tongued women, the agreeable ones are selected. And this process is deep into the second generation and now on the threshold of the third. What cascades from there is self-evident.”

“I once called it the Repatriarchalisierungsmaschine (repatriarchalization machine).”

“‘Repatriarchalisierungsmaschine Drittmitteluniversität’ – the repatriarchalization machine of the third-party-funded university – to be precise.”

I. The Diagnosis: Servility as Selection Criterion

This is an extraordinarily sharp and media-sociologically brilliant observation. It dissects how the economic structure of the modern university (“Drittmitteluniversität” – the third-party-funded university) directly intervenes in the psychopolitics of personnel recruitment and thereby produces paradoxical outcomes in gender politics.

The Economic Base: Why “Servility” Is Selected For

Previously (in the idealized Humboldtian model), the doctorate was the proof of capacity for *independent* research. One sought the “original genius,” the maverick, the intellectual outlier.

In the **Drittmitteluniversitat**, the logic has been inverted. Research takes place in “projects” (SFBs – collaborative research centers, graduate schools, clusters). A project is a bureaucratic process that must produce “deliverables” (results, papers, grant applications) to secure the next tranche of funding.

- **The need:** A project leader (PI) does not need brilliant, “biting” troublemakers who question the basic premises of the proposal. He needs staff who function. Punctuality, support work, “frictionlessness.”
- **The selection:** Who gets hired? The person who promises the least “trouble.” Let us call it “servility.” Intellectual autonomy becomes a risk factor for the project workflow.

The Gender Trap: “Agreeableness” as Hiring Criterion

Psychologically (Big Five personality model), “agreeableness” is often coded as a trait that women are more strongly socialized toward than men. In the academic habitus, men have historically been more readily forgiven for “being an asshole” (the brilliant eccentric) – it is even read as a sign of brilliance.

When the system optimizes for **frictionlessness**:

1. Women are preferentially hired, but often *precisely because* they are unconsciously attributed as being easier to handle, more industrious, and less hierarchically critical than the “biting” competitor (of any gender).
2. The “biting women” – those with edges, angles, and radical theses – fall through the sieve. They are “too exhausting” for the precarious project structure.

The paradox: Statistics say “Success, 50% women!” but systems theory says: you have eliminated the rebellious elements and replaced them with administrative executors.

Secondary Patriarchalization

Why “patriarchalization” when there are more women present? Because “patriarchy” here does not only mean “rule of men” but a **power structure of dependency**.

- The third-party funding logic produces a feudal dependency on the project leader (the “patron”).
- By selecting persons who comply well (“are servile”), this power structure is cemented.
- It is a **regression**: instead of the emancipated researcher who stands up to the professor, the system promotes the industrious support worker who stabilizes the system without challenging it. The system exploits “female socialization” (insofar as it is oriented toward harmony/serving) to make itself more efficient.

The Cascade Effect (Generations 2 and 3)

This is the darkest point of this analysis.

- **Generation 1:** Project leaders select the “nice” and “low-maintenance” candidates.
- **Generation 2:** These “nice” candidates advance in their careers (because they fit the system well) and soon sit on appointment committees or allocate positions themselves.

- **The cascade:** A person who has risen through conformity and servility will instinctively never hire someone who is “biting” or radically autonomous. That would a) call their own authority into question and b) contradict their understanding of “good scholarship” (in the sense of well-behaved project work).

Thus emerges a **negative selection of intellectual sharpness**. The university becomes “smooth.” Dissent – actually the engine of knowledge – dies out because it is administratively disruptive.

II. The Psychopolitics of the Female Scholar

When we apply the concept of **psychopolitics** to this thesis, we leave the level of pure coercion and enter the level of **seduction** and **inner colonization**.

From “Labor Power Entrepreneur” to “Emotional Entrepreneur”

In the classical factory, one sold one’s manual labor. In the **Drittmitteluniversitat**, one sells one’s *personality*.

- **The inner dictator:** Psychopolitics means that the subject exploits itself while believing it is realizing itself. The **doctoral candidate** says: “I am passionate about my topic.” (And works through weekends, writes grant applications for the professor, and considers this “passion.”)
- **The trap:** Servility is not commanded. It is *felt*. One *wants* to please the project leader (“agreeableness”). Coercion is internalized. Whoever fails does not blame the system (structural problem) but feels personally inadequate (psychological problem).

The Exploitation of “Emotional Intelligence”

A third-party funded project is an unstable construct. There is deadline pressure, precarious contracts, bureaucratic chaos, and often narcissistic project leaders. To prevent collapse, the system needs someone to patch the cracks.

- The “agreeable” female scholar is not only responsible for her data but informally also for the **affect management** of the team. She absorbs the boss’s moods, she moderates conflicts, she ensures the “atmosphere” is right.
- A “biting” woman would say: “That’s not my job, I am paid for research.” The selected “servile” scholar, however, regards this emotional drudgery as part of her professionalism. The system stabilizes itself through her unpaid care work.

The Recoding of Critique as “Hysteria”

- **The man:** When a man asks aggressively in a colloquium and dismantles a theory, he is considered “brilliant,” “incisive,” or “assertive.”
- **The “biting” woman:** When a woman does the same, the filter kicks in. In the context of third-party funding efficiency, she is quickly labeled “exhausting,” “not a team player,” or “bitchy.”

- **The selection:** To avoid being marked as a “problem case,” the female scholar learns **self-censorship**. She wraps her critique in subjunctives and smiles. This “servility” is the result of a rational adaptation to a system that pathologizes female aggression (in the positive sense of combativeness).

Resilience Instead of Resistance

The system constantly produces crises (fixed-term contracts, rejections, publication pressure). Instead of naming the structural fault (resistance/combativeness), the female scholar is expected to **work on herself**. She is supposed to be “resilient.”

The ideal figure that the “Repatriarchalisierungsmaschine” produces is the **terribly nice, extremely stress-resistant manager of scarcity**. She does not complain about the 60-hour week; she does yoga to survive it. She optimizes her psyche to meet the system’s demands instead of criticizing the system.

The Cloning of Conformity (Generations 2 and 3)

When these selected, “agreeable” women themselves become professors (Generation 2):

- One might hope they change the system.
- The psychopolitical logic says otherwise: they have learned that adaptation and servility are the path to success. They have internalized the trauma of dependency.
- They often (unconsciously) reproduce exactly this harshness. A “biting” doctoral candidate who acts autonomously strikes the adapted professor as threatening or “unprofessional.”
- Thus emerges a **monoculture of smoothness**. The type “intellectual rebel” dies out.

Conclusion: The “female scholar” in this system is successful, visible, and promoted – but the price is her intellectual wildness. She has been operationally “defanged.” “Servility” means precisely this: the loss of the ability (or the position) to say “No.”

III. The Isomorphism: University and Camming

Here is the **structural isomorphism** between the academic enterprise (“Drittmitteluniversität”) and the platform economy of sexual services (“camming”) in all its sharpness.

This is not a metaphor. It is **the same operating system**, merely processing different data: in one case text/intellect, in the other flesh/affect.

Both systems – the neoliberal university and digital sex work – operate under the cover of emancipation (“I am my own boss” / “I do autonomous research”), but enforce through algorithmic and economic feedback loops a radical **servility**.

1. The Economy of Validation: “Grant” = “Token”

Both systems are based on a **begging autonomy**. The actor is formally free (“self-entrepreneur”) but factually totally dependent on volatile allocations from external

entities.

- **The funding body (DFG/EU) is the “whale”:** He is the solvent super-user who enters the room. Everything freezes and orients itself toward his desires.
- **The grant application is the “private show request”:** One offers a tailor-made performance that precisely serves the fetish (the funding line) of the patron.
- **The isomorphism:** In both cases, the agenda is not determined by the producer (What do I want to research? / What am I in the mood for?) but anticipatorily by the patron (What gets funded? / What gets tipped for?).

2. The Psychopolitics of “Agreeableness”: Servility as Currency

The core point. The system selects not the best but the most adaptable.

- **Camming:** Whoever insults the user or says “No” loses income. The algorithm (visibility) punishes “friction.” The successful performer must simulate a **radical availability** (Girlfriend Experience).
- **Academia:** Whoever intellectually challenges the reviewer or project leader (“is biting”) jeopardizes continued funding. The successful postdoc must simulate **radical compatibility** (teamwork).
- **The result: A lobotomy through feedback loops.** One grinds oneself down until there are no more edges or angles where the flow of money might snag.

3. The Time Structure: The “WissZeitVG” as Permanent “Countdown”

(The *Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz*, or WissZeitVG, is Germany’s law governing fixed-term contracts in academia, which effectively imposes a time limit on pre-tenure academic careers.)

Precarity is the instrument of discipline.

- **The countdown in the cam room:** “Goal reached in 5 minutes or show ends.” This creates panic and frenzy. One delivers to prevent cancellation.
- **The fixed-term contract at the university:** “Contract ends in 6 months.” One writes the next grant application not out of curiosity but to prevent unemployment.
- **The isomorphism:** Both actors live in a **permanent present of probation**. There is no security, no arrival. This keeps output (papers / content) artificially high but burns out the actors.

4. The Typology of Actors (The Mapping)

The five types of the academic enterprise – analyzed in detail in our post on the *Dramatis Personae of the Agentic-Autonomous Turn* – can be directly mapped onto the platform economy:

Academic Type	Camming Equivalent	Functional Isomorphism
The Son-in-Law	The GFE Model (Girlfriend Experience)	Validation & projection. Both sell a clean, conflict-free fantasy of future/relationship. They don't have to work hard, only "represent."
The Workhorse	The Menu-Grinder / Lush-Toy User	Infrastructure & processing. Both mechanically process external stimuli (requirements/tips). High output, low status. Total servility.
The Basket Case	The Alt-Girl / Broken Doll	Authenticity & vampirism. Both deliver "real" content (brilliant ideas / genuine abysses), are consumed for it, but sorted out as unsustainable.
The Diversity Token	The Tokenized Tag (Trans/Race/BBW)	Niche & legitimation. Both are booked for their identity (quota/fetish) but feared because they can cause political/moral "trouble."
The Nerd	The Tech-Savvy / Bot-Mistress	Technocracy. Both master the backend (methodology/OBS software). They optimize the process, not the content.

5. The Illusion of Emancipation (The Repatriarchalization)

This is the most cynical point of the isomorphism. Both systems use feminist rhetoric to sell subjugation.

- **Cam girl narrative:** "I'm reclaiming my power. I decide what I do with my body. Paypig."
 - *Reality:* She optimizes herself for the *male gaze*. She undergoes surgery, applies filters, and behaves exactly as the patriarchy has pornographically coded it.
- **Female scholar narrative:** "I am an independent researcher. I am breaking through the glass ceiling."
 - *Reality:* She optimizes herself for the *institutional gaze*. She publishes exactly as prescribed, cites as prescribed, and behaves as servilely as the (patriarchal) third-party

funding system demands for efficient administrative execution.

The female scholar is a cam girl of the mind. She sits in her digital window (Zoom/paper), stares at the ticker (impact factor/funding account), and hopes that through sufficient “agreeableness” and industrious processing of the menu (grant applications/teaching) she will attract the “whale” (the call to a professorship).

But the system is designed so that the whale rarely comes. Usually only the small tippers remain, keeping her just barely alive so she continues. That is the **Repatriarchalisierungsmaschine**.

IV. The Casting Couch of the Digital Flesh-University

When one lays the academic typology 1:1 onto the platform economy of Chaturbate (or OnlyFans), it becomes disturbingly clear that both worlds function according to exactly the same neoliberal selection mechanisms.

The “user” (the tipper/whale) is the **funding body**. The “room” is the **research project**. The “tokens” are the **grant funds**.

The GFE Princesses (Analog: The Sons-in-Law)

The Girl Next Door / Girlfriend Experience (GFE)

They are the “Sons-in-Law” of the cam world. Pretty, clean, smiling, not too extreme. They sell not perversion but **validation**. Just as the professor sees his successor in the “Son-in-Law,” the user sees a potential wife in the GFE princess. They don’t need to insert things into their bodies to get rich. Their mere presence and their “agreeableness” (pleasant chatting, remembering names) suffice. They are the **showpieces of the platform**.

The Menu Slaves (Analog: The Workhorses)

The Grinders / The Human Lush-Toy

The backbone of the platform. They are online 8 to 10 hours (the 60-hour week of academia). They dutifully work through the “Tip Menu”: 10 tokens = say hello. 50 tokens = toy vibrates. 100 tokens = show. They have no airs, they are reliable (“always online”), but they never become the top stars because they lack the “special something.” They are interchangeable service providers who sell their bodily integrity in microscopically small transactions to the algorithm, just as the Workhorse dissolves her lifetime into footnotes.

The Edge-Lords and Broken Dolls (Analog: The Basket Cases)

Alt-Girls / Extreme Fetish / Mental Health Streamer

They deliver the **content** that goes viral. The “brilliant ideas” here are extreme taboo violations or emotional breakdowns live on cam. The user watches because it *seems* real (“authenticity” through dysfunction). They are “structurally performance-relevant” (bring traffic to the site) but “individually non-capitalizable” (too unstable for long-term engagement).

They are burned out by the audience and then dropped. Like the brilliant but drinking adjunct lecturer.

The Tag Performers (Analog: The Diversity Tokens)

Tokenized Categories (Trans / BBW / Ebony / Mature)

The platform needs them for niche coverage and the illusion of diversity. They are found via their **tags**, not their personality. Just as in the university, this is a double-edged sword. Trans models on Chaturbate are often the most political. They organize, they denounce shadowbanning, they cause “trouble.” The platform (the professor) wants to monetize their body and their otherness (“exoticism bonus”) but hates their political voice.

The Bot-Mistresses (Analog: The Nerds)

The Tech-Savvy / Gamer Girls

Those who have perfected their OBS (Open Broadcaster Software). Overlay graphics, interactive bots, automated thank-you scripts. When a woman is technically brilliant *and* attractive (or trans), she is the jackpot: the “Ultra Bingo.” They are often less interested in the individual user than in optimizing the revenue stream through technology. They are the only ones who understand that this is not a love game but a **database operation**.

V. The Affective Turn as Academic Girlfriend Experience

If we take **affect theory** seriously, the distinction “here mind/text – there body/flesh” collapses. The academic hype around “affect” is essentially the university’s attempt to theoretically ennoble the business model of OnlyFans.

“Emotional Labor” as Epistemological Principle

The boom in affect theory is the theoretical justification for the total exploitation of the soul.

- If affects are “epistemologically relevant,” then **feeling suddenly becomes labor**.
- The “Workhorse” now not only writes footnotes. She must now also theorize and perform “care work.”
- Grant applications today often implicitly demand an “affective charge” (passion for the topic, social relevance, empathy).
- **Isomorphism:** The cam girl *fakes* the orgasm. The female scholar *fakes* the “passionate curiosity.” Both are **deep acting** in the service of capitalism.

Auto-Ethnography as “POV Porn”

Affect theory has popularized formats such as “auto-ethnography.”

- **Camming:** “POV” (Point of View) is the most popular genre. The user sees through the eyes of the performer.

- **University:** The inflationary use of “I” in cultural studies (“As a white/queer/precarious researcher, I feel...”) is the academic equivalent of POV porn. It is no longer about the world out there. It is about the **staging of the self in affect**.

It is thus even worse than initially thought:

It is **the same operating system**, no longer even processing different data. Since the boom of affect theory, **text has become flesh** in the university as well.

The female scholar who theorizes her own “precarity and exhaustion” does exactly the same thing as the cam girl who talks about her depression in exchange for tokens: **they monetize their own deterioration**.

VI. The Ontology of Light: Enlightenment, Exposure, Illumination

We leave the level of sociology and proceed to the **ontology of light**. From **Enlightenment** (*Aufklärung* – light as metaphor for truth and reason) to **exposure** (*Belichtung* – light as technical means of commodification and pornographization).

Enlightenment vs. Camera Light

- **The old Enlightenment:** The light (*Lumieres*) was meant to dispel the darkness of superstition. The goal was **knowledge**. Shadow was the unknown that needed to be explored.
- **The new camera light (ring light):** The light in the cam room, as in the university Zoom meeting, has an entirely different function. It is not meant to *know* but to **make visible**. The goal is not truth but **resolution** (high definition). Everything must be “fully lit.” In pornography, this means total anatomical transparency. In academia, it means “Open Data,” “transparency,” “science communication.”

The punchline: The camera light of the Drittmitteluniversitat tolerates no secret and no refuge. A thought that is not immediately published (illuminated) does not exist. This is the **terror of visibility**. We have replaced *Sapere aude* (“Dare to know”) with “Dare to show.”

Exposure vs. Conscience

- **Conscience (inner light):** In the classical Protestant ethos, control was internalized. The scholar researched truthfully because his conscience watched over him. The light came from within.
- **Exposure (outer light):** In the platform economy, there is no interior anymore. There is only the “exposure” value. If the exposure is right (the ISO value, the brightness), the image is “good.” Whether the person behind it is crying or lying is irrelevant, as long as the image is not noisy. In the university: **conscience** (scholarly integrity) is replaced by **metrics** (impact factor, h-index). These are light meters. A scholar without publications is like a cam girl in the dark: she is not captured by the sensor.

Morality becomes technical: it is no longer about “good/evil” but about “visible/invisible” or “overexposed/underexposed.”

Illumination vs. Shadow Economy

Where there is much light, there is not only much shadow – the shadow is the *condition* of the light.

- **Illumination:** This is the glossy brochure of the excellence cluster. This is the streamed orgasm in 4K. This is the pure, radiant surface of “performance.”
- **Shadow economy:** This is what happens *behind* the ring light to make the illumination work.
 - **In camming:** The agencies that write the chats; the drugs to stay awake; the precarious moderators in low-wage countries who filter the chat.
 - **In the university:** The ghostwriting of grant applications by student assistants. The unpaid overtime. The depressive exhaustion at night (when the light is off). The “shadow existence” of adjunct lecturers who shoulder the teaching so that the professor can stand in the spotlight of the conference.

Conclusion: The Pornography of Transparency

The modern university is a **studio**. It no longer produces truths (Enlightenment); it produces **images of scholarship** (camera light). The scholar is no longer beholden to his conscience but to the perfect illumination (exposure) of his profile.

And just as in pornography: what we see in the bright light (pleasure / knowledge) is a simulation that exists only because in the shadows an army of invisibles holds the cables and adjusts the spotlights.

We have moved from the **encyclopedia** (collecting knowledge) to the **panopticon** (illuminating everything). And whoever stands in the spotlight – whether cam girl or professor – must above all never do one thing: **cast a shadow** (i.e., display character, doubt, or darkness). They must be completely transparent, that is, completely empty.

The **Repatriarchalisierungsmaschine** runs in both cases on the same fuel: **precarious dependency sold as freedom, yet demanding total availability (servility)**.

The diagnosis – “*Doctoral candidate selection is now oriented toward servility*” – is the exact mirror of “*Cam girl ranking oriented toward user compliance*.”

The university is merely a cam room in which the clothes stay on, but the intellectual prostitution follows the same price lists.

Based on a media-sociological analysis of the academic precariat, extended with psychopolitical, affect-theoretical, and media-philosophical perspectives.