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## Hailing, Voicing, and Masturbation Abstention

### *NoFap's Role in Socializing Young Men into the Right-Wing Politics of Ressentiment*

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**Abstract:** *Digital ethnographic and linguistic anthropological analysis of the far right is an invaluable resource for explaining the gradual processes of socialization through which individuals are recruited into right-wing extremism. This article examines online masturbation abstention programs in three linguistic contexts (English, Japanese, and Brazilian Portuguese) as potential sites that mobilize gender and sexual norms to draw subjects into anti-feminist and racist sociopolitical visions. NoFap (known as nōfappu or onakin in Japan) is a fairly popular trend that is understood to help men regain the focus, vitality, and energy they have lost to pornography addiction. By analyzing the ways figures of personhood are constructed through the enregisterment of disparate semiotic materials in these very different contexts, we argue that the right-wing abstemious masculine subject is produced through tensions between neoliberal generalized competition and the imagined authority of a “tradition” associated with restrictive gender and sexual norms.*

**Keywords:** register, NoFap, masturbation, *onakin*, masculinism

Discourses of hate and exclusion have taken root around the world, capturing the imaginations of countless new adherents. What was unsayable in the post-World War II order may again be expressed without shame (Wodak 2021). There is, however, no consensus on what is driving the expansion of the *sayability* of oppressive and reactionary discourses (Baran and Tebaldi 2023). While (white) men's rage against deindustrialization and the erosion of job security in the developed world has found

its scapegoat in progressive politics (Kimmel 2017), many of those who swell the ranks of the far right are neither working-class nor experience economic or status frustration (Skoczylis and Andrews 2022). Their “cultural backlash” (Inglehart and Norris 2016) against progressive values has furthermore been turbocharged by the Internet, where extremist worldviews and practices proliferate in online and social media spaces (Cesarino 2020; Baeyer 2021). Media studies scholars have shown that rather than experiencing a “radicalizing” event online, people tend to shift further and further to the right through a gradual *process of socialization* (Marwick, Clancy, and Furl 2022; see also Burnett and Tebaldi, forthcoming). The process through which hateful ideas become sayable in online social settings is thus the focus of this article. Our aim is to show how, in three disparate contexts, right-wing subjectivity is molded through the creative use of *voice*—a key concept in anthropological and sociocultural approaches to discourse analysis. We demonstrate that close attention to voice helps explain why young men affiliate with increasingly extreme ideologies.

Our approach to analyzing far-right practices of voicing (which interacts with subject formation, or *hailing*, as we explain below) is to conduct digital ethnography of the language of online “ideological entrepreneurs” (Dardot and Laval 2017; Finlayson 2021) who adopt discursive strategies they believe will resonate with their audiences. In her analysis of one such entrepreneur, Janet McIntosh (2020, 2) argues that Donald Trump uses “language—from word choice to less obvious interactional oscillations—to enlist members of the public in his distortions, breeding new social dynamics.” We want to describe how this “enlistment” works. Linguists have shown how a shared vocabulary undergirds the spread of political affects through transnational networks, as for example in constructing “gender ideology” as a threat to society (Borba 2022). In this case, the words that are used to name and describe the threat, as well as nonverbal signs and practices, come to constitute a specific way of acting and speaking—a specific *register*, a notion closely related to voice—which may then be shared by members of a political collectivity. But which factors influence this uptake?

As we argue below, one factor is the *semiotic capital* of voice, which interacts with preexisting ideological substrata related to social status, such as class, race, gender, and sexuality. Adherents of white/male supremacist ideologies are largely though not exclusively (Tebaldi 2023, 2024) white, heterosexual, male, and middle-class (Davidson 2015). The ideological entrepreneurs who seek to enlist young men in far-right politics mobilize an “affect of besiegement” (Strick 2020, 211) that confers a special status on this (objectively privileged) group, constructing it as wronged by progressive forces in society. Their self-declared—and self-imposed—underdog status gives license to what Wendy Brown (2019, 177) calls a politics of *ressentiment*: “a permanent politics of revenge, of attacking those blamed for dethroned white maleness.” This politics typifies the “manosphere”—a constellation of anti-feminist online channels, blogs, and social media accounts that is associated with a range of novel and sometimes extreme masculine subject positions (Ging 2019). While primarily a site of exclusionary and hateful discourses, much of the manosphere is oriented toward neoliberal self-help and

personal development strategies that promise to empower men with the knowledge and skills they supposedly need to fight back against the progressive onslaught (Elley 2021; Strick 2020; Trancoso and Burnett, forthcoming).

One such strategy is NoFap, a masturbation abstinence program that promises practitioners greater self-efficacy and control over their lives (Burnett 2022b). NoFap is an excellent site for a digital ethnography of right-wing influence as it constitutes a paradigm case of the involvement of ideology and material practice with subject-formation as a “technology of the self” (Foucault 1988a; developed in Hartmann 2020). The subject hailed into being by NoFap is a composite model of speaking, acting, and reacting—a register with its own moral structures and values—that is connected to a specific *type* of person for young men to aspire to who want to be better, stronger, harder, happier, and manlier. It is through analysis of the interaction of voice and subject formation, we argue, that we can understand the gradual process of affiliation feeding into the contemporary far right.

We will proceed as follows. First, we offer some background on NoFap and on the three linguistic contexts we address: the (broadly Anglophone) manosphere, the Lusophone *machosfera*, and their Japanese-speaking equivalent. We then turn our attention to defining key concepts such as voice, register, and hailing. The analytical section that follows zooms in on the three linguistic domains in the first three parts, before teasing out some of the similarities and differences between masculine icons and their opposites in the fourth. In the final section, we argue that strategies for recruitment into masculinist and/or ethnonationalist thinking rely on mobilizing the semiotic capital associated with speech registers through acts of voicing that respond to the specific historical and political dynamics of national and/or linguistic communities.

### NoFap Goes Global

While NoFap is a relatively new phenomenon, masturbation has been the focus of censure and anxiety in many human cultures through the ages. Because ejaculation occasions the release of sexual tension, it has been thought of as a “loss” of energy. Galen of Pergamon, for example, claimed that after orgasm “all parts of the animal find themselves robbed of their vital breath” (Foucault 1988b, 109). The conservation of this energy for procreation makes masturbation abstinence a priority in religious and pronatalist cultures. And even in less restrictive contexts, the idea that men should always be “up for it,” so common in hegemonic constructions of masculinity (Terry 2012), makes the waning of sexual desire a common preoccupation (Farvid and Braun 2006). When male ejaculate is imagined as “vital breath” in patriarchal contexts, being a “real” man means saving it for important occasions.

The term “NoFap” originated in the Anglophone context. “Fap” is an onomatopoeic colloquialism for male masturbation popularized in North American English. “NoFap,” in turn, refers to abstinence from “fapping.” While the origins of NoFap are obscure, it is now most commonly associated with the NoFap brand, which comprises (among other

digital properties) the r/nofap subreddit, created in 2011 and with over one million members, and nofap.com, its official website. NoFap (the brand) ostensibly promotes periods of abstinence from masturbation as a tactic to fight addiction to pornography. Its marketing materials state that the symptoms of porn addiction include erectile dysfunction, lack of focus, low self-esteem, and brain fog. These problems may be solved by “rebooting” the brain through a regimen of abstinence from porn, masturbation, and orgasm (PMO), which helps to break the cycle of dependence. This treatment is said to help members have the strong erections, the attention and focus, and the confidence they need to engage in “primitive sex” with real women, as well as succeed in other aspects of their lives (“Porn Addiction,” n.d.).

While official NoFap materials are at pains to explain that the movement is secular, nonpartisan, and grounded in what is framed as “good science” (“What Is NoFap?,” n.d.), scholarship from a number of disciplines has noted the prevalence of misogynist, racist, and pseudoscientific claims in NoFap forums. A quantitative study of young men who had completed a NoFap “reboot” program found that the program potentially exacerbated, rather than treated, psychological and sexual problems while also exposing participants to high levels of misogyny and homophobia (Prause and Binnie 2023). Taylor and Jackson (2018) showed that NoFap’s opposition to pornography is largely due to its destabilization of the patriarchal order. Masturbation is constructed as emasculating, and winning back one’s masculinity something that can only be accomplished through “real” heterosex” (2018, 629). Hartmann’s (2020) analysis of the formation of NoFap subjectivity in canonical YouTube videos revealed how a continent, self-contained, rational (male) actor is constructed in opposition to femininity, understood as a degenerative force. She argued that NoFap advances the notion of “meritocratic heterosexuality” (2020, 16), where the reward for men’s abstinence is the sexual pleasure owed to them by women. Burnett (2022b), meanwhile, found extensive evidence of antisemitism in NoFap discourse on Twitter, where the pornography industry was constructed as part of a Jewish plot to enervate “Western” men so that they could be “replaced” globally by a miscegenated racial *mélange*. As recently observed by Beatty (2024), sexual anxieties permeate historical and contemporary antisemitism. Burnett’s (2022b) study found that NoFap adherents express discrete but overlapping social visions, which ranged from violent misogyny to subtler forms of sexism and racism. While not all NoFappers are committed to right-wing politics, the program provides a space of homosocial solidarity where everyday chauvinism might be cultivated into more extreme forms.

In contrast to the growing English-language literature on NoFap, to date only the equivalent phenomenon in China, *jiese*, has received scholarly attention (Zou, Zhang, and He 2023; Liang 2024). The interviews by Zou, Zhang and He (2023) with thirty-two *jieyou* (people who practice *jiese*) revealed that their motivations for participation involved patriotic and socially conservative ideologies, and that their legitimization strategies explicitly connected to traditional Chinese culture. The association between masturbation abstinence and right-wing ideology thus appears to hold across these

cases. There are, however, many linguistic and cultural contexts that have not been studied. Burnett's (2022b) analysis of a corpus of 200,285 unique tweets from 28,580 accounts using the term "NoFap" revealed that about 40 percent of tweets were in languages other than English, with the most common being French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish. As three scholars of language, gender, and sexuality familiar with the linguistic norms and social dynamics of English-speaking (Burnett), Brazilian Portuguese-speaking (Borba),<sup>1</sup> and Japanese-speaking (Hiramoto) online spaces, the authors of this article are thus well placed to conduct multilingual and comparative analysis of transnational advocacy for masturbation abstinence in online spaces.

Online masculinity and anti-feminism have been documented in Japanese-speaking and Lusophone contexts, though relatively little is known about the local prevalence of trends such as NoFap. The Brazilian scholars Vilaça and d'Andréa (2021) identify the existence of a Portuguese-speaking manosphere—a *machosfera*—but do not report the practice of masturbation abstinence in this space. Brazilian engagement with the *machosfera* must in turn be understood against the backdrop of Bolsonarismo, an "ultraconservative worldview, which advocates the return of 'traditional values' through a nationalist and 'patriotic' rhetoric profoundly critical of anything that may be roughly associated with the left or with progressivism" (Freixo and Pinheiro-Machado 2019, 19). Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil's president from 2019 to 2023, is known for having built his political persona from militaristic and other staunchly "masculine" elements. While the profile of his voters is complex, Kalil (2018) shows that men who articulate masculinist thinking, including nerds, gamers, and hackers, are prominent. And indeed, the multiplatform communities that constitute the *machosfera* have been identified as driving forces behind far-right politics in Brazil (Vilaça and d'Andréa 2021).

In Japanese-speaking contexts, masturbation abstinence goes by the name of *onakin* or *nōfappu*. Though *onakin* is discussed and promoted online, the existence of a Japanese "manosphere" has not yet been suggested by scholars. In his review of the twenty-first-century *bakkurashu* (backlash) against feminism in Japan, Kawasaka (2023) outlines how anti-feminism was able to dominate an online space that feminists were slow to see as a strategic place for discursive battle. And while the political dynamics of Japan are substantially different to those of Brazil, a similar overlap between anti-feminism, racism, and homophobia is instantiated in political formations such as the Action Conservative Movement (ACM), whose messaging spreads through the sharing of online videos and memes (Yamaguchi 2013, 2018). One of the key issues for the ACM and the broader *bakkurashu* is the defense of imperial Japanese honor against the claims of survivors of World War II-era sexual exploitation (so-called comfort women), as well as against the activism of Indigenous (e.g., Okinawan) and ethnic (e.g., Korean) minorities (Kawasaka 2023).

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1 There are roughly twenty times more speakers of Portuguese in Brazil than in Portugal, and speakers of Brazilian Portuguese account for over two-thirds of Portuguese first-language speakers worldwide.



It would be a mistake to treat these linguistic and political communities as hermetic. In an age of globalization, and particularly in online spaces, what is required is a “linguistics of xenoglossic becoming, of transidiomatic mixing, and communication recombination” (Jacquemet 2005). The global surge in far-right thinking does not have a single point of origin but rather emerges from transnational flows of meanings, where influence is diffuse and operates across national and linguistic boundaries. In bringing these three contexts into focus simultaneously, we are able to observe at least some of this flow and how global dynamics interact with local ones in forming far-right subjects. We will now lay out some of the key concepts required to study this process in detail.

### **Voice, Subjectivity, and Status**

Ways of speaking—much like styles of dress and other meaningful modes of human behavior—mark differences between people, such as social class or gender, ethnic or religious identity, or geographic origin. These outward signs are in turn connected with ideological formations that assign value, often hierarchically, to gender, class, or ethnic differences. Sociocultural linguistic approaches to the production of these differences focus both on the propositional content of language (and other forms of meaning making) and on the formal regularities, or patterns, in which such messages are packaged. For any language community there will be patterns of pronunciation, vocabulary, or styles of speaking that mark differences within it. In the well-known case of the “received pronunciation” (RP) of British English, for example, the language of a socially dominant group became accepted as the “standard” and correct way to speak the language, lending negative associations (such as being uneducated or unrefined) to other ways of speaking (Agha 2003). In Japanese, on the other hand, the “softness” of women’s language has been understood to reflect the delicacy and submissiveness of their expected role in a patriarchal gender order (Hiramoto 2021; Nakamura 2020; see Tebaldi 2024 for a case in American English).

Over the past two decades, sociocultural linguists have significantly refined the theoretical apparatus for understanding how these distinctions emerge and change over time, and what these developments mean in relation to social difference and value. While it is not possible to lay out all of these developments in detail here, the core idea is that power relations are (re)produced in social interactions where participants enact stances toward discourse topics and other actors through their use of voice. The notion of voice encompasses the “voicing” of other people or types of people, as well as the development of distinctive speech styles and registers. The essence of style is *difference* (Eckert 2016, 75), and individuals or groups may stylize their speech or other aspects of their self-presentation in ways that distinguish themselves from one group and identify themselves with another. These distinctions are often at the heart of societal struggles over what is valued, and what is not. When a particular style achieves broad recognition, it is termed a register (76). Registers are “distinctive sets of linguistic and other semiotic signs that get indexically associated with different types of person, group,

activity or situation” (Rampton 2021, 43). They function as “cultural modes of action that link diverse behavioral signs to enactable effects, including persona, interpersonal relationships and types of conduct” (Agha 2007, 145). The personae associated with a register are organized as “characterological figures” (Agha 2003, 243) that encapsulate various social, sensuous, and moral characteristics. Most participants in Western Anglophone culture, for example, will be able to distinguish the “Surfer Dude” from the “Posh Brit” (Eckert 2016, 76): the former is a laid-back, suntanned (i.e., probably white) male, with plenty of leisure time, while the latter is (similarly) white, tightly wound, refined, educated, and probably upper-class. Every member of a speech community does not have to understand the register in precisely the same way for it to function as a patterned regularity of putting semiotic material in its (ideological) place in daily interactions. And it is clear that these kinds of voices are not limited to the verbal but include an array of material, embodied, and semiotic modalities.

Registers—and the process of forming a register, termed *enregisterment*—have attracted a considerable amount of scholarly attention as they pick out how hierarchies of value are produced and renewed. They offer a way of understanding the relation of everyday micro-level semiotic interactions to how a society is structured at the macro level. Our practices at the micro level, however, may include idiosyncratic, stylistic, parodic, and unsuccessful instances of voice, and so it can be helpful to take a step back from big-picture registers when analyzing social interaction. When speaking we may voice a particular (biographical) person or a general (social) persona in official, parodic, imitative, or ironic modes that might be knowing or sincere to varying degrees (Agha 2005; Gal 2016). To interact at all, humans require in their daily contacts a shared understanding at a cultural level of a variety of social types and personae. In these interactions, we conduct our performance of self by voicing elements of (broadly understood) registers or (more narrowly practiced) styles in order to achieve interactional and ideological goals.

The journey of a semiotic pattern from an individual voice to a style or register is a complex one. The linguistic anthropologist Sue Gal (2018, 2019) has proposed three distinct “moments” of enregisterment, which she calls clasping, relaying, and grafting (for an application, see Borba 2022). All three are metaphors of power. When a voice is “clasped” to an institutionally sanctioned register its recognition is facilitated by the power of that institution—as in the case of the dissemination of RP as standard English through the British Broadcasting Corporation. If we think of ways of speaking English as connected to competing ideological projects, this moment of media power determines which set of semiotic resources will come to stand for high status, and which not. In a moment of “relaying,” on the other hand, the power from an existing register moves like an electrical charge into a different one. A relay is in evidence when Big Tech positions its CEOs as pursuing knowledge and innovation in the interests of humanity. The characterological figure of the inventor, visionary, or even the nutty professor sparked in scholarly registers is relayed into the corporate setting, and the ruthless pursuit of profit given a noble, even likeable sheen. Grafting on the other hand



is a horticultural metaphor, where a cutting draws sap from and combines its genetic material with an existing plant. A paradigm case of grafting is Hindutva ideology, which has grafted itself onto the seemingly progressive and liberatory discourse of decolonial theory (Menon 2022). Though its exclusionary, Islamophobic, and Hindu-supremacist social vision is a simplistic reprise of colonial white supremacy, the “sap” of decolonial registers authorizes its adherents to position themselves as motivated not by hate but by liberation from “foreign” domination.

What moments of clasping, relaying, and grafting share is the notion that registers are repositories of power and status, and that these resources are drawn on in voicing events. In the analysis below, we follow Asif Agha (2005) in thinking of this power as semiotic capital. Using a register proves an actor’s ability “to perform an image of social personhood as one’s own image and to perform it in a register-dependent way” (2005, 55). The successful performance of legalese, for example, enables some to practice law, and others to convince interlocutors that they are knowledgeable enough about the law to be not worth messing with. While this capital is evident in interpersonal interactions, the performance of authoritative voices is not merely for the sake of others but ultimately constitutive of what we think of as the self. Subjectivities come into being as social actors construct personae from available biographical references and socially established characterological figures.

This insight is key to understanding how individuals are socialized into political projects, including far-right ones. Louis Althusser famously argued that ideology is only possible through the subject, and that it is the function of ideology to constitute “*concrete individuals as subjects*” (1971, 160, emphasis in original). We become subjects in the moment we recognize ourselves as being hailed (“Hey, you there!”) by an ideology (1971, 163). This moment of hailing is imagined not as a deliberative or reflective one but as a flash of recognition. What individuals respond to is a fragment of a larger whole, which may surpass their comprehension. What is relevant to our project here is the salience of *voice* to instances of *hailing*. Voices, including styles and registers in their multiple modalities, are not merely empirical objects but *ideological* ones (Johnstone 2016, 424). Instances of voicing constitute one’s own subjectivity while hailing others—and ideology is thus an intersubjective accomplishment.

While using the word “voice” to refer to a wide range of nonspoken texts and practices can make it “too thin to be usable” (Agha 2005, 39), we find the concept useful in theorizing online influence, which is always mediated, and where it is often futile to attempt to draw distinctions between whether a given ideological element is uttered in speech, shown in practice, or both. To spend time online is to expose oneself to billions of different voices, all vying for one’s attention. When this attention is invested in a particular platform or figure, ideology emerges intersubjectively.

## Giving Voice to Abstemious Masculinities

We will now analyze how NoFap influencers address their audiences in three distinct contexts, focusing on how the abstemious masculine subject is constructed. We identify two distinct but dialogically interrelated parts: the formation of an ideal characterological figure, and the construction of its antonymic other (Padgett 2020). We show how voicing enregisters specific practices into iconic masculine figures, where abstention is associated with masculine self-control and success, and masturbation to pornography with the abject and degenerate.

We selected paradigmatic cases of NoFap “manfluencers” (Burnett 2023)—one English-speaking and one Brazilian Portuguese-speaking—and an array of representative blogs, Twitter accounts, and YouTube channels in the Japanese context. For online influencers, establishing one’s authority and status with respect to a particular audience is intimately bound up with the stylization of one’s semiotic performance (Burnett 2022a) and the cultivation of a positive self-image (Burnett 2023). Attempts at online influence may be met with credulity, admiration, bemusement, or ridicule, which set the market value of the discourse of individuals competing in online attention economies. Voice is thus intimately tied to the authority to influence. We will now examine how these dynamics play out in each of the contexts under examination.

### *The Golden One: Marcus Follin’s World of Fascist Fantasy*

Marcus Follin is a Swedish nationalist, bodybuilder, gamer, and self-help guru who markets himself as “The Golden One” (Strick 2020; Trancoso and Burnett, forthcoming). With around 130,000 subscribers on YouTube,<sup>2</sup> and tens of thousands more across Twitter, Telegram, Instagram, and elsewhere, he has carved out an online niche combining fitspiration, self-help, mystical neo-Nazism, paganism, and positive thinking, where the promotion of NoFap has been a recurring theme. His YouTube channel currently lists 736 videos,<sup>3</sup> all of which are in English, as are the bulk of comments on them. Follin’s free social media properties serve as marketing opportunities for various online businesses, which include personal training, fitness nutrition, Gyllene Kaffekompaniet coffee, and Legio Gloria athletic clothing. Follin regularly discusses these businesses on his channel. His articulation of a neofascist political vision that aligns with Guillaume Faye’s *Nouvelle Droite* (Maly 2021) is seamlessly interwoven with his persona as a fitness entrepreneur. Follin is an experienced bodybuilder, and

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2 See Follin’s YouTube channel (@TheGoldenOne) at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN0-RRaxMgh86eOwndAklxw> (accessed January 4, 2025).

3 Data as of January 4, 2025. The first author has been monitoring this channel for about six years and notes that, in order to adapt to YouTube’s content moderation policies, Follin has deleted old videos with extremist content.

his “body fascism” (Gottlieb 2011) is not only a professed ideology but a lived one, the proof of which can be seen as he flexes, scantily clad, in classical poses (figure 1) or jiggles his pectoral muscles under a vest with neo-Nazi insignia (figure 2). While much of the manosphere cultivates negative affect, Follin “asks his audience to overcome the negative thinking and depression induced by feminism and multiculturalism” (Strick 2020, 225) and to focus on the positive: to stay motivated, to fill your heart with love for your family, nation, and fellow masculine nationalists, and to revel in the glory of “Western civilization.”



**Figure 1:** A typical pose adopted by The Golden One in his training videos (E1).<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 2:** The Golden One wearing neo-Nazi clothing brand Thor Steinar, whose logo features a deconstructed swastika, along with the Thor’s Hammer pendant, another popular far-right symbol (E2).

The Golden One is a pastiche of digital role-playing game characters and the heroes of fantasy and historical fiction, volumes of which line the wall of the room that Follin occasionally uses as a YouTube studio. In character as The Golden One, Follin

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<sup>4</sup> Sources identified by letter and number in parentheses are available under online primary sources in references.

adopts the elevated, adjective-rich repertoire typical of the fantasy genre, instructing his followers to listen to his “teachings” about NoFap in order to “honor this magnificent lion,” that is, himself (E2), while claiming that “the levels of wisdom and knowledge I harbor is [*sic*] truly remarkable” (E4). The hyperbole, wordiness, and intertextuality of white geek culture (Bucholtz 2001), combined with Follin’s particular performance of Swedishness, his muscular physique, and his long blond hair, has been characterized as “Nordic kitsch” (Strick 2020). Archaisms such as referring to a desired woman as a “fair maiden” (E5) contrast starkly with the violently misogynistic repertoire of other corners of the manosphere (Jane 2014). And yet the “maiden” in question is a passive figure, lacking agency or choice, and presented as the just reward for the “questing knight,” whose abstention from self-pleasure entitles him to her body.

Follin’s Swedishness is frequently made salient on his channel. He works out in a ruined building near a prominently displayed runestone; he discusses Swedish history; he uses a Swedish flag as the backdrop for some of his videos (see figure 2). He wears the Hammer of Thor around his neck and frequently refers to Norse gods, legends, and other Nordic semiotic materials in his videos. He shows some self-awareness of his exaggeratedly modulated pronunciation of English words. This voice is an ideologically rich choice. Blond-haired Vikings with beards and rippling muscles are a perennial fixation of the far right, for whom the northern territory of “Hyperborea” is imagined as the origin of the Aryan race (Habel 2011). While Nordic countries are thought of as whiteness’s ancestral home, they are also frequently constructed as being on the frontlines of the “invasion” of Europe by immigrants (Milani 2020). This is a theme Follin takes up to argue that there are attempts to “replace” the native population (E7).

While Swedishness is an important part of Follin’s performance, he targets a nonstandard British accent in certain words and phrases in his spoken English, for example by referring to his biceps as “fockin’ massive” (as opposed to “fucking”) and referring to his followers as “lads” or (in a clumsy and comical neologism) “laddingtons” (E10). “Laddishness” is associated with a particular form of hegemonic masculinity that affects ironic detachment while reproducing reactionary and anti-feminist discourses (Benwell 2004). Deviation from RP is often indexical of rugged, authentic masculinity (Beal 2009). Even fantasy genres replicate the social indices of regional varieties, as for example in the construction from the contemporary United Kingdom’s sociophonetic materials of a north/south ideological and characterological divide in the fantasy TV series *Game of Thrones* (Viollain and Chatellier 2020). A similar voicing practice is evident in the founder of the Proud Boys, Gavin McInnes, who while typically speaking fairly standard North American English, emphasizes his British roots through calling NoFap “NoWanks” and adopting nonstandard orthography in social media posts to make them “sound” vaguely working-class and British (Burnett 2022a). These speakers are arguably targeting the figure of the “hard man” (Lawson 2023, chap. 4) as represented in British crime dramas (e.g., the films of Guy Ritchie), where nonstandard British English acquires the “moral flavor” (Gal 2013) of masculine toughness, hyperviolence, working-classness, outsider status, and (heterosexual) homosociality.

Follin's extremely muscular physique, typically on some form of display on his YouTube channel, is often shown in action in workout videos set to a heavy metal soundtrack. His "toughness" is also on display in training scenes in forests and at historical sites. Many of Follin's most recent videos have been outside of his YouTube studio, walking through the Swedish countryside. In one, he claims to be in "Mirkwood in Middle Earth" (E8)—a reference to a forest in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* fantasy novels. In others, he talks about the changing seasons and the beauty of the land. He refers to pollution as "blasphemy" and "heresy against Mother Earth" (E6). In the version of blood-and-soil nationalism that Follin espouses, this combination of the warlike with the fantastical and the ecological completes the sketch of the figure of the land protector, whose connection to the soil of Sweden demands he fight against invading Others.

Follin's white nationalism is articulated with his obligation to his ancestors through the practice of NoFap. In "Your Ancestors Are Watching—The Meaning and Purpose of the Concept," he asks his followers to imagine a conversation with the "sailors, fishermen, soldiers, and farmers" who were Follin's forebears:

They would ask . . . "What's going on with Sweden?" I would say . . . "I'm doing my part to make it better." . . . They would say "we can see that a lot of other Swedish men aren't doing their part, they should be ashamed!" (E9)

He then shifts his focus from his forebears to an imagined conversation between his followers and their ancestors:

If they ask you, "What are you doing, we can see that the streets in Western Europe and America they are very unsafe, are you taking measures to make sure you can protect yourself?" Then you say to them, "Yeah I'm doing my deadlifts, I am training my boxing, I am training my firearms training." (E9)

This switch voices Follin's (ideal) followers. Though they may not be Swedish—but from the "streets of Western Europe and America"—they have conversations with their ancestors and explain to them how they are protecting their own homelands. In this way, they may borrow some of the status from their own imagined fierce, manly, and warlike ancestors, analogous to (though not necessarily identical with) historical Vikings. The ancestors are imagined in interrogatory mode, concerned chiefly to equate the strength of the country with the strength of its men. This dialogue with the ancestors is ultimately in service of taking them on as guides for one's everyday behavior, as Follin proceeds to explain:

If you still can't stop watching porn then imagine . . . your ancestors and me were watching down and looking with disgust if you are fapping to porn. . . . It's about living in a way that you can talk to



them, look them in the eye . . . and say, “Yes, I am making the most out of the wealth you have created, I’m making the most out of the life you have given me.” (E9)

In this conclusion, the voice of the ancestors has become their gaze, which they share with The Golden One, who is “watching down” on his followers as they masturbate to porn. The hailing in the second person has become even more graphic. Much like Foucault’s panopticon, the point is not that somebody is actually watching but that one takes the perspective of the watcher as a model for one’s own self-policing. The authoritative characterological figure of the ancestor is now combined with the fantastical one of The Golden One, and their disgust at masturbation confirms that in the “good old days” of heroic achievements, men were engaged in populating their homelands with offspring. They focused on various projects of ethnic supremacy and nation building, while the latter-day degenerate wastes his energy (and his sperm) on pornography. This advice to his followers is calculated to invoke self-disgust, and to install the voice of the imagined “ancestor” as a model of subjectivity for young men to adopt. In a typical mix of the fantastical and historical, the man that Follin hopes his followers will become is the “questing knight,” who must make a “vow” to quit “porn and [other] addictions” (E9).

### ***Living the AlphaLife with Dr. Love: Matheus Copini***

From a crowded field of Brazilian manfluencers in the *machosfera*, we chose to focus on one of the most successful and mainstream: Matheus Copini. At the time of writing, his YouTube channel has more than 862,000 subscribers and his Instagram page over 497,000 followers.<sup>5</sup> Started in 2018 (the year Bolsonaro won the presidential elections), his YouTube channel has around 671 videos, twenty-eight of which discuss NoFap. On Instagram, Copini presents himself as a “treinador” (trainer) for “adventure, art, personal growth, and stoicism.”<sup>6</sup> Much like Follin, his free YouTube videos are used as marketing tools for businesses: the Lover Academy,<sup>7</sup> where Copini serves as “Dr. Love,” and AlphaLife,<sup>8</sup> which claims thirty-three million alumni, a number the company uses to assert that it is “the biggest school of personal growth in the country.” Whereas Lover Academy features content typical of the “pick-up artist” (PUA) genre (Hambling-Jones and Merrison 2012), to which much of Copini’s YouTube channel is

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5 See Copini’s YouTube channel (@Copini) at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGPYMhoHjh3EyKUHuiNq0jA>, and his Instagram page (@copini\_alphalife) at [https://www.instagram.com/copini\\_alphalife/](https://www.instagram.com/copini_alphalife/), both last accessed January 4, 2025.

6 Translations from Brazilian Portuguese to English are by the second author.

7 See the Lover Academy website at <https://loveracademy.com.br/> (last accessed January 4, 2025).

8 See the AlphaLife website at <https://alphalifeplus.com/> (last accessed January 4, 2025).



oriented, AlphaLife offers, in addition to Copini, a plethora of trainers who specialize in topics such as finance, fitness, or relationships. Both Lover Academy and AlphaLife offer access to content through monthly or annual subscriptions, and a *plano infinite* for R\$997 (US\$193) per annum, which gives subscribers access to both services. Copini's free YouTube services, which direct customers to his paid sites, tend to consist of intimate and relaxed conversations with his audience, where he speaks from a position of expertise about how he has achieved success in life and love (figure 3). Like most YouTubers, the eye-level camera angle establishes relations of equality with the viewer (Leeuwen 2008, 139). In this shot, Copini's gaze is directed downward and his hand raised in a gesture of explanation, a typical pose for the thoughtful, deliberate, and pedagogical tone he sets in his videos.



**Figure 3.** Matheus Copini explains how to quit pornography addiction forever (BP5).

While Copini is Brazilian and not Swedish, his blond hair and full beard are also ideological choices that index the kind of Nordic masculinity popularized in television shows such as *Vikings* (2013–) or films such as *The Northman* (2022). Some of Copini's videos are shot in Western Europe, with careful attention paid to architecture and historical sites, semiotically linking him to the Old World rather than the New. These references are especially relevant in the Brazilian context, where proximity to whiteness is highly valued on the political right. Elements of Old Norse aesthetics are frequently cited by right-wing figures around the world for their ideological connection to Aryan imaginaries. The “QAnon Shaman,” Jacob Chansley, for example, donned animal horns and a fur cap reminiscent of a Viking helmet, combined with Native American and white settler symbols, while storming the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021. While Copini is an altogether more subdued and hipster-ish version of Chansley, and far less involved in geek culture than Follin, he successfully combines distinct signs from the indexical field to build his own unique characterological figure of white masculinity. The clasp together of disparate elements (i.e., a traditionally cosmopolitan hipster-Viking) becomes central to the way he styles himself as a beacon of manliness and stoicism.

Like Follin, Copini frequently presents himself as close to nature. His connection with nature is, however, far less fantastical than The Golden One's references to "Mirkwood." Two of Copini's most popular NoFap videos feature him talking while walking through a misty, wet landscape on a trip he made to Ireland (figure 4). These chilly northern climes index the Hyperborean, Bronze Age imaginaries semiotically tied to notions of white ancestry and a glorious European past. In addition to these historical allusions, the performance of ruggedness and closeness to nature invokes the figure of the romantic hero, and bolsters Copini's assertion of the "naturalness" of his masculinity. The "truthiness" (Lakoff 2017; Milani 2020) of Copini's discourse is thus grounded in this connection, which backs up his claims of knowledge about what "natural" masculinity is.



**Figure 4.** Copini explains NoFap in his “natural” environment (BP1).

Copini's approach to masculine well-being can be characterized as “alt-health” (Baker 2022), which relies on mainstream scientific discourse only opportunistically and typically constructs academic institutions as captured by elites. Copini's opposition to pornography and masturbation is articulated using this “natural” scientific register. He states matter-of-factly that “science has already proven that pornography affects your brain the same way cocaine does” (a ciência já comprovou que a pornografia afeta nosso cérebro da mesma forma que a cocaína) (BP1). He explains that

research shows that masturbation does not prevent prostate cancer. However, ejaculating prevents it. . . . Men have to ejaculate. We cannot go without orgasm. This is the whole purpose of sex. (pesquisas mostram que a masturbação não previne câncer de próstata. . . . Homens precisam ejacular. Não conseguimos viver sem orgasmo. Esse é o objetivo do sexo.) (BP1)

This is, of course, a confusing statement if read purely as a claim of scientific fact: after all, if ejaculation prevents prostate cancer, why would not ejaculation through

masturbation? What makes sense of his claim is the appeal he is making to the *nature* of men: that they *naturally* need sex to achieve orgasm, and that the absence of “real heterosex” cancels the health benefits of ejaculation.

Copini’s use of this natural science voice also incorporates elements of social critique, where he asserts that what is natural is being denied by society. An example he gives is premature ejaculation, which, according to Copini,

is a myth created to make men feel inferior to women. Men’s time to climax is shorter than women’s. This is the natural order of things. Our body was made this way. But men feel vulnerable when they come before women. (é um mito inventado para fazer os homens se sentirem inferiores às mulheres. O tempo que o homem leva ao clímax é mais curto que o da mulher. Essa é a ordem natural das coisas. Nosso corpo foi feito assim. Mas os homens se sentem vulneráveis quando gozam antes da mulher.) (BP5)

In Copini’s telling, society is working to emasculate men for something outside of their control. This is not only unfair but actually contradicts nature: it is society that is unnatural and out of sync with the “science.” Copini’s alt-scientific diatribes reassert a primitive form of masculine knowledge of what our bodies were “made” for. His self-presentation as a kind of Nordic hipster in tune with rugged nature authorizes his frequent claim that “society is sick” (a sociedade está doente) (BP2)—as though he were standing outside of society, a hermit or sage in the great outdoors.

It is as part of this societal critique that the voice of Copini the pick-up artist emerges. Society is sick because of the (unnatural imposition of) women’s rights. According to him, “women only want to have sex with men who are able to exercise power over them” (mulheres só querem transar com homens que conseguem exercer poder sobre elas) (BP3). The promise of his training is that he will teach men how to achieve this power over women: a kind of unhinged, unapologetic masculinity to which women are imagined as responding positively. It is in this context that NoFap emerges as a key practice. When men turn to Internet pornography and masturbation instead of retaining their masculine energy in order to be able to overpower women and copulate with them, nature is denied. Because of their inability to access modern “empowered” women, men get even weaker as they sink deeper into the cycle of fapping to porn and emasculating themselves. The only way to break this vicious cycle is to eschew pornography and masturbation entirely.

While Copini’s voice is intimately linked with the natural, he also uses the language of online clickbait. NoFap is thus a “hack” to achieving a more powerful masculinity. The idea of “hacking” the body is a metaphor from computing, which makes the human a kind of machine that can be mechanistically tinkered with (Burnett 2022b). He also takes on elements of a philosophical register to establish his authority to advise young men not just on what is natural, but also on what is noble and right. In Copini’s view,

men's unbridled will to have sex is exemplary of their "metaphysical destiny" (destino metafísico) (BP4). The male sexual appetite thus epitomizes "Nietzsche's potency, Freud's libido, Schopenhauer's will" (a potência de Nietzsche, a libido de Freud, a vontade de Schopenhauer) (BP2). Needless to say, in the Alphalife Academy, clients can find courses on both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

These natural, (pseudo)scientific, and philosophical registers combine with entrepreneurial elements into a distinctive voice that is aimed at a general young male audience in the manner of an older brother giving his younger sibling advice about life, love, and success. In the mechanistic model of how the male libido works, spending seminal fluid through masturbation means losing masculine power. In neoliberal rationality, the individual is called on to be an entrepreneur of themselves in constant competition with others (Dardot and Laval 2017). Self-discipline is thus a key practice for "winning" (vencer) at life (BP1). According to Copini, not

masturbating or watching porn will help you transmute your energy for other things such as exercising, opening your business. It will take you to a path of self-improvement and you'll become the best possible version of yourself. (se masturbar ou assistir pornô vai ajudar você a transmutar sua energia para outras coisas como fazer exercícios, abrir seu próprio negócio. Vai te colocar num caminho de auto-aproveitamento and você vai se tornar a melhor versão de si.) (BP2)

Adhering to a neoliberal register of self-cultivation and self-fashioning, NoFap reanimates ancient discourses according to which men's livelihoods and strength depend on keeping the seminal fluids inside the body. In the NoFap register, this view is reactualized as a technique of the self through which NoFappers will become more competitive on the job and sexual markets.

### ***Onakin Supremacists: Beautification and Manly Decorum***

The term *onakin* is a clipping of two words, *onani*, which is a loanword from the biblical book of Genesis and means "masturbation," and *kin*, commonly used as a decree to prohibit something, especially in signage (as in *dokin*, "no shoes allowed"; *dekin*, "no entry"; or *chūkin*, "no parking"). It is hard to establish when *onakin* began spreading in Japan. According to one *onakin* blogger, the movement first appeared in 2000 in a popular forum for single men. Since then, it has become an online subculture. The term *nōfappu* (from English) has been used as a synonym for *onakin* since around 2018, while advocacy for *onakin* has been prevalent online since at least 2004. Advocates portray practitioners of *onakin* in a positive light, presenting them as embodying a distinct persona that typically emphasizes enhanced emotional and behavioral traits culturally associated with masculinity.

In line with the cases observed in Portuguese- and English-speaking contexts, a number of Japanese manfluencers who advocate for *onakin* also offer life coaching services. Tesuo, for example, styles himself “a professional masculinity developer” (otokomigaki no puro) on Twitter,<sup>9</sup> while Leon Moteki sells Kindle books in a series called “Power of Onakin.”<sup>10</sup> Riima’s YouTube channel is devoted to learning “abstinence” (kinyoku),<sup>11</sup> while Zin’s blog is entitled “The Blog of the Onakin Supremacist” (Onakin shijōshugisha no burogu).<sup>12</sup> These examples represent typical Japanese *onakin* manfluencers, and the data analyzed below are sourced from a wide range of sources to give a broader view of the *onakin* phenomenon than is possible through focused analysis on only one figure.

In Japanese-speaking contexts, the power of masturbation abstinence is constructed as originating in holistic mind-body-spirit relations, which are analogized through references to the ludic world of anime. And while the benefits of *nōfappu* promised by *onakin* influencers are organized around the achievement of real heterosex, in a similar fashion to the claims made in Follin’s and Copini’s videos, they are focused to a far greater extent on the beauty and courteousness of the men themselves. *Onakin* is said to make men more physically attractive than before, and not just because they are more confident or work out more. The “*onakin* supremacist” Zin, for example, lists “improved skin tone/texture” (J1) as a key benefit. “[*Onakin* men’s] skin became more beautiful” is listed as the first of five key benefits of *onakin* by Hideto Matsugasaki in the Volstanish online magazine (J2), while benefit number two is “[*onakin* men] became more manly.” The third benefit is “I was full of motivation.” Benefit number four is “[m]emory has improved,” and benefit five is “[i]t became easier to gain muscle.” Each benefit is illustrated with infographics. We illustrate the first two alleged benefits below (table 1).

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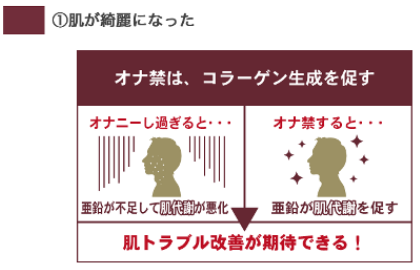

9 See Tesuo’s Twitter feed (@kensukekintore) at <https://twitter.com/kensukekintore> (last accessed January 4, 2025).

10 The series can be viewed on Leon Moteki’s website: <https://www.leon-moteki.com> (last accessed January 4, 2025).

11 See Riima’s YouTube channel (@りーま禁欲チャンネル) at <https://www.youtube.com/@りーま禁欲チャンネル> (last accessed January 4, 2025).

12 Zin’s blog is available at <https://onakin-supremacist.com> (last accessed April 30, 2024).



Original	Translation	
<p>①肌が綺麗になった</p> 	<p>“[Onakin men’s] skin became beautiful” (Hada ga kirei ni natta)</p>	
	<p><b>“Onakin promotes collagen production” (Onakin wa korāgen seisei o unagasu)</b></p>	
	<p>“Excessive masturbation can lead to zinc deficiency and worsen skin metabolism” (Onanī shisugiruto aen ga fusoku shite hada taisha ga akka)</p>	<p>“When you refrain from masturbation . . . zinc promotes metabolism.” (Onakin suru to . . . en ga shinchintaisha o unagasu)</p>
<p><b>You can expect to improve your skin problems! (Hada toraburu kaizen ga kitai dekiru!)</b></p>	<p>“[Onakin men] became manly” (Otokorashiku natta)</p>	
<p>②男らしくなった</p> 	<p><b>“Onakin produces pheromones” (Onakin wa feromon o hassei saseru)</b></p>	
	<p>“Men with a lot of testosterone look more attractive” (Tesutosuteron ga ōi danse miryokuteki ni mieru)</p>	
	<p><b>“Increases masculinity!” (Otokorashi-sa agaru!)</b></p>	

**Table 1.** The first two benefits of *onakin* (J2).

The voice adopted here by Matsugasaki is closely linked to that of cosmetic advertising. As is the case around the world, the Japanese cosmetics industry relies heavily on the deployment of language that *sounds* scientific, combined with the enforcement of strictly gendered beauty norms, to sell its products (Lestari 2020). The promise that men will be more handsome and masculine compared to their *pre-onakin* days is vividly illustrated in the first infographic: in the left-hand image, the skin is visibly pockmarked and threatening vertical lines seem to be raining down on the excessive masturbator, perhaps bringing down his zinc levels, whereas the *onakin* man on the right has skin so clear and bright it twinkles. This hyperbolic and binary world is another familiar indicator of cosmetics advertising. In the second infographic, it is noteworthy that “increases masculinity” is visually connected to a man with dark slacks and a white shirt, jacket slung over his shoulder. The figure of the “salaryman” indexed in this image has been a key characterological figure associated with hegemonic



masculinity in Japan (Hidaka 2010). The figures of the schoolgirl-like women in the background, whose attention is all focused on the salaryman, are unable to control their love for him (evidenced by the outpouring of heart symbols) as he is exuding a masculinity characterized by the biological terms “pheromones” and “testosterone.” Though the arrows in both infographics index simple cause-effect relationships between masturbation abstinence and increased attractiveness, these claims are not backed up by any scientific citations; they are mobilized simply for the semiotic capital of the scientific-sounding language.

Other *onakin* influencers claim that *nōfappu* results in hair growth and prevents balding while reducing facial and body hair and eliminating body odor. These appealing qualities are highly sought after in Japan, where men with smooth skin, no facial hair, a full head of glossy straight hair, and no body odor are considered ideal. These physical signs are imagined by practitioners of *onakin* as part of a broader suite of characteristics they develop through abstinence from masturbation. These include self-presentation as polite and decorous. Not only would it be impolite to consume porn and thus develop distorted (i.e., sexualized and objectified) notions about women, but abstainers such as this one, on the Go-Chan-Neru online forum, construct masturbation as unhygienic too:

Someone said that *onakin* is a real etiquette for women. Acting on real women without forbidding masturbation is the same as going to the proctologist with poop in your butthole, or going to the dentist without brushing your teeth and having them covered in plaque. (Dareka ga ittakedo, onaero-kin tte genjitsu no josei e no echikettoda yo na. Onaero kin sezu genjitsu no josei to tai suru no wa kōmon-ka iku no ni oshirinoana ni unchi tsuketa mama ittari, haisha-san iku no ni ha o migakazu, shikō-darake de ittari suru no to onaji kotoda.) (J3)

Having masturbated to porn is presented here as being something putrid—like fecal matter or dental plaque—knowledge of which should be profoundly embarrassing to a man who values his reputation in the eyes of women. Much in the same way that one would not inflict one’s feces on a proctologist or plaque on a dentist, one would not embarrass oneself by being a masturbator having sex with a real woman. There is a clear echo here of worries about body odor. While *onakin* discourse is not as explicitly connected to masculinist and right-wing ideology as in other contexts, some influencers position women as lacking agency and serving the sole purpose of satisfying male needs, which men become entitled to due to their *nōfappu* practice.

Similar to The Golden One’s voicing of characterological traits from gaming cultures, *onakin* uses the repertoire of digital gaming to transfer semiotic capital to masturbation abstinence. In repeated references to the Dragon Ball anime media franchise, experienced practitioners of *onakin* refer to the practice as turning them

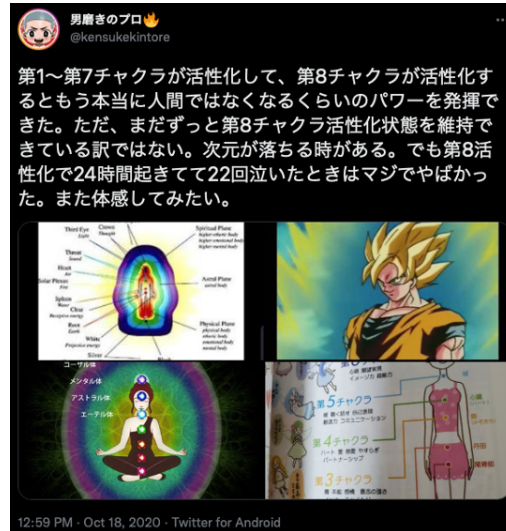
into “Saiyan” warriors. This fictional “race” of warriors is valued for their love of battle and unique martial skills. In a post where he professes to have not masturbated for 124 days, Yukito claims to have achieved the “Super Saiyan effect” (J4). He explains that when practicing abstinence, “the body is literally a Saiyan, but the mind is like a Bodhisattva” (*karada wa mojidōri Saiyajin, shikashi kokoro wa Bosatsu no yō ni nari*). The combination of physical strength and fierceness with an enlightened consciousness is illustrated by Yukito with an image that has been reproduced all over the Internet in various contexts from bodybuilding to Christian sites (figure 5). In the image, we see the naked torso of a young man who appears to both be filled with and surrounded by flames. At the focal point of his clenched fist, a process of physical disintegration evinces both the enormous power that is coming from within him and his ability to overcome the separation of mind and body.



**Figure 5.** “Super Saiyan” status as represented by Yukito (J4).

This mystical-fantastical image of the “superpowers” that are unlocked through NoFap is typical of the “role-player” myth motivating masturbation abstinence (Burnett 2022b). What is distinctive in the Japanese-speaking context, however, is the extent to which the mind-body-spirit interaction is theorized using the scientific and esoteric traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism, including references to *ki* or *chi* (“energy” in Japanese or Chinese), chakras, and practices such as yoga. In his tweet (figure 6), for example, Tesuo states:

When the 1st to 7th chakras were activated, and the 8th chakra was activated, I was able to exert such power that was beyond human ability. (*Dai ichi ~ dai nana chakura ga kassei-ka shite, dai 8 chakura ga kassei-ka suruto mō hontōni ningendewa naku naru kurai no pawā o hakki dekita.*) (J5)



**Figure 6.** Activating all of the chakras (J5).

Tesuo's first-person testimony of the benefits of *nōfappu* is combined with drawings of the chakras and a still from *Dragon Ball* of a Saiyan warrior. In other *onakin* online spaces, a quote from the famous Hindu guru Sri Swami Sivananda is reproduced:

One drop of semen is made from forty drops of blood. The energy expended in one act of sexual intercourse is equivalent to the energy expended in 24 hours of intellectual work, and comparable to the energy expended in 3 days of physical labor. (Itteki no seieki wa yonjutteki no ketsueki kara tsukura reru. Ikkai no seikō de tsuiyasu reru enerugī wa, nijūyōjikan no chiteki sagyō de tsuiyasu enerugī ni hitoshiku, mikkakan no nikutai rōdō de tsuiyasu enerugī ni hitteki suru.) (J6)

Meditation, yoga, and breathing techniques are all advocated as part of correct *onakin* practice. The status and authority of figures such as Sivananda, as well as the ancient scientific traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism, are thus deployed to infuse the discourses of the *onakin* influencers with a guru-like power rooted in anatomy, medical science, and quantification. The precise equivalences between drops of semen and drops of blood speak to a precision of knowledge, and to what every masturbatory act actually costs. The voicing of the guru is however combined with the pop-cultural references of anime and manga, which establish the guru as a peer whose guidance may be trusted as coming from a “player” facing similar life challenges to other young men.

### Visions of Abjection: Monkeys, Castrati, and Beta Leftists

The figures of masculine personhood that NoFap and *onakin* influencers hail into being are *iconic signs* in that they do not merely point to the ideal man (as *indexical signs* do) but resemble or compose him (Gal 2016). The icons constructed by Follin, Copini, and the *onakin* influencers are similar but not identical; they also share similar and nonidentical *antonymic icons*. This is a class of signs whose “main semiotic force is to invoke iconic opposites” (Padgett 2020, 431) for moral and ideological projects, and thus for the elaboration and clarification of the desired icon. The abstemious man has what his opposite does not. In NoFap registers, men who masturbate are central and oppositional characterological figures. It is precisely masturbators’ weakness, their sickness, their addiction, their failure, and their moral abjection that position manfluencers as experts able to cultivate and channel their pure masculine power. An Althusserian flash of recognition in the construction of this figure is targeted. It is precisely because young men *fear* that they might be or become this abject figure that they pay attention to advocates of masturbation abstinence.

The world of The Golden One is built out of a stark contrast between the “questing knight,” who follows his teachings, and the “beta leftist,” who rejects them. The former is on “the glorious path,” while the latter follows the “path of infamy” (E3). In fapping to porn, he has placed himself “in the metaphysical position of a cuck” (E4). “Cuck” is a common term in the manosphere and refers to failure to prevent the (female) object of one’s desire from having sex with somebody else—and thus to masculine failure more broadly conceived.<sup>13</sup> The voicing of ancestors in implicit, and explicit instances of hailing invoke shame at being “beta” (a substandard man), “leftist” (not protecting the homeland), and a “cuck.” This combination of the manospheric lexicon with the language of fantasy role-playing games and historical fiction relies on the familiarity of the audience with these worlds, and their emotional investment in games and epic narratives. The charge from these fantasy and archaic registers and the register of the transgressive world of the manosphere is relayed into a mode of action that includes NoFap. Relays from these registers build Follin’s authority to speak about how the world looks to young men who spend a lot of their time behind their computer screens, and who long to have the muscled body and (apparently) stable and comfortable family life he has.

As Copini puts it, “masturbation and pornography transform you into the kind of man they want you to be: a castrated one” (BP2). In this typical gesture to a shady “they” working behind the scenes to undermine (Western) men, Copini invokes castration anxiety, attaching the practice of masturbation abstinence to a reclamation

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13 As Kosse (2022) explains, “cuck” is also a highly racialized term—the person being cucked is typically constructed as white, and the man having sex with the desired woman as Black.

of the phallus. As his voice is constructed almost entirely from elements that speak to masculine anxieties about success in life and love, this invoking of a conspiratorial register in constructing the antonymic icon of the eunuch offers an explanatory structure to his followers that confirms the figure of the “natural” scientist and Nordic hipster. Avoiding castration (by “them”) enables a reclamation of our “natural” masculinity. *Onakin* manfluencers, on the other hand, commonly criticize individuals who fail to practice *onakin* as *onazaru* (masturbating monkeys). Given the reliance on grafting *onakin* discourses onto cosmetic and decorous registers, the fear invoked here is clearly that of being the degenerate subhuman monkey, who has bad skin, body odor, poop in his buttock, and plaque on his teeth. These (all-too-human) failings speak to anxieties about the body not uncommon in young men. Moreover, the category of the *onazaru* is a proto-supremacist one in that it classifies men who do not practice *onakin* as occupying a less-than-human position on the status hierarchy.

What is clear in all three cases is that manfluencers mobilize the semiotic capital of existing registers in ways that establish their authority with their audiences, who believe they will help them address their masculine insecurities. The Golden One stands in the world of role-playing games and fantasy novels while flexing his impressive physique, instantiating the desired figure for geeky young men alienated from mainstream representations of masculinity. Copini walks or sits with his followers like an older brother, explaining to them that if they cannot have sex with the woman they desire, it is because of shady forces ranged against them. And *onakin* influencers focus on building the beautiful and decorous figure of the salaryman, fighting against feared degeneration in the figure of the *onazaru*.

## Conclusion

Gal (2021) argues that moments of enregisterment reveal the *authorization* of far-right discourses in everyday interactions. We suggest that such authorization relies on interlocutors’ shared cultural knowledge of the location of desired semiotic capital. While masculine insecurities about sex, relationships, and occupying hegemonic masculine roles can be taken for granted across many contexts, knowledge of the specific anxieties of role-playing fantasy geeks, young white Brazilians, or Japanese anime fans is required by online influencers to engage in the work of composing a desired figure of personhood and its antonymic other. This work of composition consists of the performance of *voices*—multimodal styles, registers, and biographical idiosyncrasies—that cohere into the opposite poles of desire and revulsion. It is in this starkly binary approach, and in the mobilization of affects of desire and disgust, that masturbation abstention is a particularly interesting and powerful practice.

In her online ethnography of chatrooms and forums where racist content (from memes to acts of terror) is shared and discussed, Melody Devries (2021, 239) argues that “participatory action—regardless of intent—leads to the construction of political identities that script further violent or racist action.” People may thus start out seeking



community or discussion, and through their participation construct identities far different from those they had previously. We would argue that NoFap is exemplary of participatory action (even if it is action to avoid masturbation), which involves young men who desire a muscular physique or sexual success, and whose anxieties about masculine failures evolve into a masculinist and/or racist subjectivity. This desire is made possible by the construction of figures of personhood by online manfluencers, and the gradual process of enlistment into far-right subjectivity that these figures enable forms the basis for the rapid expansion of the sayability of far-right discourses in the contemporary moment.

## References

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## Online Primary Sources

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*English Data*

Code	Platform & Influencer	Page Title	URL	Date
E1	YouTube (The Golden One)	Eternal Glory	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e86WvAX26dM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e86WvAX26dM</a>	Oct. 18, 2014
E2	YouTube (The Golden One)	The Pornography Question. The Solution—Easy Decisions vs Hard Decisions	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbnVlx0t1-Y">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbnVlx0t1-Y</a>	May 1, 2017
E3	YouTube (The Golden One)	Why I Hate Porn and Why You Should Stop Watching It	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guc9gUOlls">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guc9gUOlls</a>	June 14, 2017
E4	YouTube (The Golden One)	Big Man Tyrone and The Golden One Have An Important Message. No Porn	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpiZdjByWmo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpiZdjByWmo</a>	Aug. 29, 2018
E5	YouTube (The Golden One)	Incels: “I Don’t Look Good Enough To Get A Girlfriend”—It’s Not Primarily About Your Looks, Brahs	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Myg8G3QadgM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Myg8G3QadgM</a>	May 1, 2019
E6	YouTube (The Golden One)	I Cannot Endorse This Barbarism With My Silence—Heresy Against Mother Earth	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_qGqlHorIg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_qGqlHorIg</a>	Feb. 19, 2019
E7	YouTube (The Golden One)	Is Europe Lost? How Can Europe Be Saved?	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbPhMfNY6rY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbPhMfNY6rY</a>	Apr. 10, 2020
E8	YouTube (The Golden One)	Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter. Slave Morality and Self-Improvement	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsitSdRz1N0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsitSdRz1N0</a>	May 1, 2020
E9	YouTube (The Golden One)	Your Ancestors Are Watching—The Meaning and Purpose of the Concept	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNl8rtOU5p0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNl8rtOU5p0</a>	June 20, 2020



E10	YouTube (The Golden One)	No Drink December—Are You In? A Note on Alcohol and Drunkenness	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUA1vjZ8B30">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUA1vjZ8B30</a>	Dec. 1, 2020
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***Brazilian Portuguese Data***

Code	Platform & Influencer	Page Title	URL	Date
BP1	YouTube (Matheus Copini)	NoFap   The Greatest Energy Hack Ever Studied	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_Dhk6KfdXI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_Dhk6KfdXI</a>	Apr. 4, 2019
BP2	YouTube (Matheus Copini)	NOFAP   Understand The REAL REASONS FOR THIS PRACTICE	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAtArwL0KR4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAtArwL0KR4</a>	July 4, 2019
BP3	YouTube (Matheus Copini)	ESSA IDEIA ESTÓICA MUDOU MINHA VIDA PRA SEMPRE   ep.370	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iK2gQtFivE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iK2gQtFivE</a>	Apr. 28, 2022
BP4	YouTube (Matheus Copini)	SEUS T3ST1CUL0S ENCOLHEM toda vez que tu faz isso . . .   ep.373	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_s4PBzLSXrQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_s4PBzLSXrQ</a>	May 15, 2022
BP5	YouTube (Matheus Copini)	COMO LARGAR PRA SEMPRE O VÍCIO EM VÍDEOS ADULTOS (parte1) ep.402	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnZs1Z-_Q9o">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnZs1Z-_Q9o</a>	Sep. 4, 2022

***Japanese Data***

Code	Platform & Influencer	Page Title	URL	Date
J1	Onakin Supremacist (blog)	Homepage	<a href="https://onakin-supremacist.com">https://onakin-supremacist.com</a>	—

J2	Volstanish (by Volstar brand)— Hideto Matsugasaki (online magazine)	Summary of benefits, methods, and tips for refraining from masturbation! Become a “popular man.”	<a href="https://volstar-official.jp/media/column/masturbation-prohibition-skill/">https://volstar-official.jp/media/column/masturbation-prohibition-skill/</a>	Jan. 1, 2020
J3	Go-Chan-Neru (discussion forum)	Let’s seriously investigate the effects of no masturbation in the summer of 2021	<a href="https://fate.5ch.net/test/read.cgi/keihatsu/1627137125/">https://fate.5ch.net/test/read.cgi/keihatsu/1627137125/</a>	Aug. 7, 2021
J4	Rabit-mask-On-akin—Yukito (blog)	[124th day of masturbation ban] Summary of what we currently know about the conditions for obtaining the Super Saiyan effect	<a href="https://rabitmask-onakin.hatenablog.com/entry/bonus-game">https://rabitmask-onakin.hatenablog.com/entry/bonus-game</a>	Dec. 12, 2017
J5	Twitter (@kensukekintore)	n/a	<a href="https://twitter.com/kensukekintore/status/1317691671677530112">https://twitter.com/kensukekintore/status/1317691671677530112</a>	Oct. 18, 2020
J6	NoFapJapan (blog)	In fact, the author, who has been using NoFap for 6 months, has summarized “What is NoFap?” using NoFap Power	<a href="https://onakinjapan.wordpress.com/ブログ/">https://onakinjapan.wordpress.com/ブログ/</a>	Feb. 25, 2018