

Deconstructing Internet Trolls:
An Examination of Incel Culture through Dorian
Electra's album, *My Agenda*

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INTRODUCTION

My Agenda is the second studio album from one of the most prolific voices in the LGBTQ+ community, Dorian Electra (they/them). With an 11 track runtime of just 26 minutes, the album explores a broad range of subject matter portrayed through various characters of differing ideologies. *My Agenda* sees Electra delving into sexuality, toxic masculinity, incel culture, and far right conservatism. The project features an array of queer icons such as The Village People, Pussyriot, and GAYLORD, paying homage to the artists who helped seriously progress queer music. Electra was assigned female at birth but has since self identified themselves as gender-fluid and non-binary. This album marks an important site of communicative study as Electra's perspective as a non-cisgendered individual along with the contribution from other queer musicians gives important insight into the explored topics. Electra provides a queer lens from which we can examine societal facets such as incel culture which features an ideology historically damaging to women and LGBTQ+ individuals. *My Agenda* is an important site for queer study as it is an exceptionally queer text engaging current societal issues.

My Agenda works analytically to dissect its subject matter, utilizing Electra's history in educational music to build a structure of songwriting. The subject matter of the album seems to address both queer and feminist ideologies as Dorian deconstructs toxic masculinity through queer storytelling. Queer music is certainly nothing new, as examples of similarly voiced albums can be found by many of Electra's contemporaries. We will address how Electra makes this project unique in relation to queer theory and takes an alternative approach to tearing down toxic masculinity. Utilizing a satirical approach to address satirical ideologies, Electra deconstructs incel and incel-adjacent ideologies through queer songwriting.

WHO IS DORIAN ELECTRA?

In 2010, Dorian Electra attended Shimer College in Chicago which they cited as the main formative experience for their progressive ideology (Beaumont-Thomas, 2019). Electra went on to use the analytical skills and base of knowledge they found in college to start making economic-parody songs such as "*I'm in Love with Friedrich Hayek*." Electra followed this path up until 2016 when they released their first breakout single, "*Ode to the Clitoris*," where Dorian gives a full history of the clitoris and aims to normalize the term within the mainstream lexicon. Regarding the methodology of their work Electra claims, "I wrote them like an essay: the thesis becomes the chorus... it's easier for me to make a song like that than it is for me to be like: let's dig deep into myself, and pull out some subconscious association and poetry" (Beaumont-Thomas, 2019).

On July 17, 2019, Electra released their first official studio album titled *Flamboyant* with breakout singles *Career Boy*, *Daddy Like*, and *Man to Man*. This project sees Dorain in peak form, delving deep into societal constructions of sexuality, gender, and masculinity. On *Flamboyant*, Electra seeks to reclaim a term used derogatorily towards homosexuals and returns the phrase to its roots in French gothic architecture. Throughout the project we see Electra posing questions such as "are you man enough to soften up?" and "are you tough enough to soften up?" to the listener. Electra has a strong history of methodical, analytical songwriting that tackles societal issues. Since the release of *My Agenda*, the album has received positive attention from artists, everyday listeners, and critics alike. Anthony Fantano, a notoriously ruthless music critic, gave the album an 8 out of 10, leaving only the criticism that he "wished the project were longer" (Fantano, 2020). Electra has largely received praise for their unique sound selection, catchy lyricism, and forward thinking subject matter, addressing issues relevant to our society.

HYPERPOP

My Agenda features a sonic landscape unlike any other, melding aspects of trap, dubstep, death metal, medieval-English, and pop. However, the project has been generally categorized into a currently-blossoming genre known as “hyperpop,” along with many of Electra’s past works. Hyperpop began in the mid-late 2010’s, influenced by nightcore, a style of music featuring high, pitch-shifted vocals, fast tempos, and a sonic landscape akin to an 8-bit video game soundtrack. This wave of music happening in the depths of Soundcloud went on to inspire the sound of artists such as Laura Les and Dylan Brady of 100 Gees, A.G. Cook, SOPHiE, and Charli XCX. On March 2, 2015 a U.K.-based music label known as PC Music (founded and led by A.G. Cook) released their debut collaborative album, *PC Music Vol. 1*, which would go on to further sonically define the genre that came to be known as hyperpop through sugary pop melodies and glitchy EDM transitions.

The influence of LGBTQ+ culture can be felt throughout the genre as central artists such as Laura Les, SOPHiE, and Dorian Electra (among many others) all identify as non-binary, genderfluid, or transgender (Marsh, 2020). Fraxiom, a proven star in the current landscape of hyperpop, has said that “queerness and hyperpop are inseparable” because “most of these sounds wouldn’t exist without Sophie, Laura Les, That Kid, Dorian Electra, [and] me, I guess” (Enis, 2020). Hyperpop has also been known to feature satirical songwriting that takes common tropes of pop songwriting and pushes them to the extreme, taking something old and reimagining it through a queer lens (along with 10 decibels of distortion). The genre of the album is important not only to its sonic construction but also to the cultural context surrounding the project.

Hyperpop is a style of music founded in queer culture, lending itself to construct an album both by a queer artist and portraying unconventional characters.

INCEL CULTURE

Incel, meaning “involuntarily celibate,” is a term that has been floating around the internet for the past several years to define a cultural phenomenon found on the early message boards of 4Chan and Reddit’s, r/gamers. Self-proclaimed incels are known to engage in internet trolling, where they post edgy, intentionally controversial, and often offensive comments in order to provoke anyone who happens to scroll by. Incels are further defined by a profound sense of loneliness and alienation from society which has been cited as a common motivator for the unindoctrinated to join the culture (Crispin, 2020). While some mildly offensive internet humor and a strong sense of loneliness does not sound particularly harmful, incel culture has been known to produce toxic masculinity and negative views of women to an extreme degree. In some cases, radicalization brought about by incel culture has inspired horrific acts of violence, such as the 2019 incident where a self-proclaimed incel drove a van into a group of people. The assailant killed 10 pedestrians, “saying he drew inspiration from other men who used violence as a form of retribution for ‘being unable to get laid’” (Cecco, 2019). The perpetrator went on to encourage others in similar situations to act out similarly, solidifying a clear problem within incel culture.

Incel culture was (quite ironically) founded by a woman in the 1990’s named Alana who had experienced a large degree of loneliness in her life and decided to create a website to offer help to others in her situation (Beauchamp, 2019). This birthed “Alana’s Involuntary Celibacy Project,” a message board acting as an online haven for the lonely. Alana eventually realized she could not offer meaningful advice to these people and ceased her engagement with the site

around the turn of the century. From this point, the moderation on the website began to decrease in strictness as more post engaging misogynistic viewpoints were allowed to remain up. The largest internet collectives of incels now reside on Reddit under r/foreveralone and r/braincels. The community, r/incel, was active on Reddit for many years before ultimately getting banned during a crackdown on content that promoted violence during late 2017 (Hauser, 2017).

Incel ideology has been largely linked to alt-right conservatism due to members of both groups favoring far-right neoliberal views and overlapping feelings of male-grievance. The perceived disempowerment of men's sexuality has been highlighted in both alt-right and mainstream media" and was reinforced by part of Donald Trump's commentary that it is "a very scary time for young men in America. . . [but] women are doing great" (Newsom, 2020).

INTERNET TROLLS

The internet is a place of unregulated freedoms and unparalleled anonymity. The difficulty associated with discerning the true identity of an online persona is daunting, especially if the individual *wants* to remain anonymous. The lack of sufficient regulation or presence of authority figures across the internet turns the virtual space into international waters. Individuals who relish in this invisibility and abuse it to incite conflict with strangers on online forums are commonly referred to as internet "trolls." While there are genuinely countless examples of internet trolling, trolls have been linked to a surge in comments "on Facebook memorial pages of recently deceased users [mocking] their deaths" in 2011 and, in 2012, a string of controversy targeting women in the video game industry (which later became referred to simply as "Gamergate") (Stein, 2016). Trolls are further defined by their specific brand of humor, typically

posing as another individual to tell offensive jokes. This humor is commonly known as “edgy” humor and those who favor this style of comedy are consequently labeled “edgelords.”

LGBTQ+ IN AMERICA

The LGBTQ+ community has historically and continually faced discrimination from the United States legal system and conservative party. Even Fox News, the most popular (and one of the most moderate) conservative news station in America circulated a wealth of anti-gay rhetoric leading up to, and after the fact of, the Supreme Court’s decision to federally legalize gay marriage as a civil right in 2015. In response to the Supreme Court's decision, Pastor Robert Jeffress, under the publishing title of Fox News, claimed that the decision would have “legal, sociological, and spiritual consequences for years to come” (Jeffress, 2015). Homosexuals, transgender people, and non-binary individuals have been painted as sexually deviant degenerates with a malicious agenda aimed at the largely Christian-faithed conservative right.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Within the analysis of *My Agenda*, I will focus primarily on the portrayal of the subject/character within four specific songs: *My Agenda* (the title track), *Gentleman*, *M'lady*, and *Edgelord*. I will employ a strong textual-musical analysis to address matters of masculinity, satire, and queer aesthetics. While *My Agenda* is a strong statement on incel ideology and harmful traits of toxic masculinity, not every song off the album is in direct relation to these themes. Tracks like *Barbie Boy* and *Give Great Thanks* focus more directly on gender abolitionism and sexual liberation. The four tracks I will examine all depict aspects of incel ideology, some making further connections to alt right ideologies (which are further examined in

tracks such as *Iron Fist* and *Ram it Down*). Within the analysis I will utilize theoretical concepts of satire, queer theory and aesthetics, and hegemonic masculinity.

As far as I am aware, no scholarly work exists regarding *My Agenda* nor Dorian Electra, likely due to the newness of the album and the relatively small-scale cultural impact Electra has had up until this point. Substantial scholarly work exists regarding the conventions of satire as a means for political activism but no scholars utilize incel culture as a research object for such analysis. December Maxwell has recently published an article linking incel ideology to ironic axioms (Maxwell, 2020), which we will touch more on later. An examination of the use of satire as means to portray incel ideology would likely contribute meaningful analysis into a group who has been known to commonly engage in internet “trolling,” a form of satirical portrayal.

Electra’s work further merits investigation due to the queer nature of the text, as Electra is gender fluid and hyperpop has been a historically queer genre. This connection allows us to engage with toxic masculinity and incel culture in terms of queer aesthetics and camp. Not only is there something to be said for the value of acknowledging queer voices regarding issues of masculinity but also the possibility that satire can act as a method of queer rhetoric. Furthermore, Electra’s history of analytical songwriting regarding constructions of gender and masculinity (seen in their past work on *Flamboyant*) shows they are already thoughtful, experienced authors of such texts.

SATIRE

Satire has historically been used to portray an oppositional party in a negative light as “the targets of satires are objects of criticism or attack; satire is intended to lead the reader into adopting or reaffirming a critical attitude toward the target” (Oakes, 1995). Kenneth Burke, in his

constructive definition of the poetic frames of acceptance and rejection, identifies the satirical frame as a lens in which one portrays the subject they intend to criticize, creating a unique relationship where “the satirist attacks in others the weaknesses and temptations that are within himself” (Burke, 1937). Other authors have expanded the definition of satire to extend past the portrayal of an oppositional subject, suggesting that “satire does not only set out to critique, but also to entertain[, as] something is entertaining when it provides aesthetic experiences which are fun and divertive” (Declercq, 2018). Satire is inherently meant to entertain and therefore the method that satire is delivered in is important. Music has been known to produce narratives of identity exceptionally well. As critical communications scholar, Jodie Taylor, puts it, “music is a well-established tactical device in the production, transmission, and maintenance of self-narratives, genders, sexualities, and other forms of identification such as race, ethnicity, class, age, and locality” (Taylor, 2012). Esti Sheinberg has posited a set of qualifications for identifying satirical discourse in music specifically citing stylistic incongruities within one's governing style, the composer's belief set, and meta-stylistic norms as common indicators of satirical music (2000).

The effectiveness of satire as a political motivator has been discussed thoroughly through communications studies resulting in varying outcomes. Some scholars have assessed that satire does little to provoke meaningful change in their depicted subjects (and can even cause a negatively associated reaction from the audience) (Gruner, 1965), while others “argue forcefully that the type of discourse political satire offers is itself a civic virtue that citizens would do well to emulate” (Holbert, 2013). Furthermore, some scholars have posited that “a more productive turn to political humour can be figured if one does not hope to find in it a possible trigger of social change, or even of a change in attitudes,” acknowledging a positive outcome of political

satire when the audience has a specific set of expectations (Brock, 2018). Regarding ways in which the satirical author has power to ensure a meaningful impact, “perceived credible messages in popular culture may help the audience relate to certain circumstances outside their perspective” (Peters, 2007). It appears that the metrics of understanding and method of delivery are important regarding satirical depictions for both the audience and author.

QUEER THEORY & AESTHETICS

Queer theory is a broad category of communicative and sociological study and, like satire, tends to be hard to constrain to one definition. Queer critics tend to believe that identity is a performative construction and the act of queering an object or text is to characterize “a form of cultural spectatorship and production that locates and celebrates non-normative expressions of gender and sexuality” (Fox, 2019). Queer studies often seek to challenge aspects of hegemony present in society, commonly “troubling” our conceptions of gender, sexuality, and identity.

Theresa de Lauretis introduces the concept of “troubling gender” as such:

“Addressing the kink in sex — the perverse, the infantile, the shameful, the disgusting, the ‘sick,’ the destructive and self-destructive aspects of sexuality that personal identity seldom avows and the political discourse on gender must elide or deny altogether” (de Lauretis, 2011).

It is in this shame that hegemonic systems of inequality continue to be understated and often flat-out denied by those in power. Hegemony extends far and wide into our culture affecting nearly everything imaginable, including aesthetics. Standing in antithesis to the hegemonic replication of the same aesthetics of being, is “camp” (Colebrook, 2011). Beauty has historically “[been] linked to a proper and normative way of being” and therefore so have aesthetics. Camp is yet another difficult-to-define term, largely due to the lack of serious connections between

instances of camp except for a general theme of ‘exaggeration’ or ‘excess’ and possibly due to the aggressiveness in which academia has searched for a definition. In an attempt to remedy this discussion Mark Booth provides a broad-spanning definition, claiming “to be camp is to present oneself as being committed to the marginal with a commitment greater than the marginal merits” (Booth, 1999). Acknowledging camp as an aesthetic device allows us to better decode queer texts as we better understand queer uses of aesthetic.

TOXIC MASCULINITY

One of the most studied aspects of hegemony within queer and feminist studies is hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is the dominant way of performing masculinity within a given culture. In the United States, hegemonic masculinity is found in the cis, heterosexual, white male, stressing aspects of “physical strength, virility, self-reliance, and self-confidence” (Rome, 2021). The negative aspects of hegemonic masculinity, such as tendencies towards aggression and the portrayal of women as something to be conquered, are often referred to as ‘toxic masculinity.’ This trait has often been used to describe incel culture as it produces negative affect in the masculinity of those who hold the ideology. The way toxic masculinity manifests itself in incel culture is slightly different than that of in the standard hegemonic masculinity as the vast majority of men are not incels (despite the fact that there is a significant amount of overlap between incel ideology and standards of hegemonic masculinity). An analysis of an incel community on Reddit found that commenters “believed that women were hypersexual... capable of manipulation given their lack of depth and intelligence” and that “society is structured in a way that allows women to get away with their evil treatment of men” (Maxwell, 2020). This description solidifies incel ideology as portraying aspects of toxic masculinity.

ANALYSIS

My Agenda is an album that actively resists being confined to one way of being, as is often the case for a queer text. How Electra addresses different facets of incel ideology changes from track to track. The title track finds Electra singing from the perspective of a LGBTQ+ individual with a plan to take over the world. In *Gentleman* we see Electra playing an incel who puts himself on a chivalrous pedestal. On *M'Lady* we again see an incel perspective, but this time addressing how he views women. Finally, *Edgelord* finds Electra taking the role of an internet troll as they reach their breaking point. Much like the perspective, the sonic landscape of the album is in a constant state of motion, not resting in any one aesthetic for too long. Electra uses their eclectic list of guest features purposefully, making the presence of featured artists a statement in itself. The shifting perspectives and sonic landscapes found in this work will be shown to stand in ironic contrast to one another as Electra addresses issues of masculinity and incel culture by embodying the irony within their ideology. Electra embodies this resistance to definition in her own life, not being held down by any set of gendered ideals or sexual labels. This position as a queer artist allows them to address issues of toxic masculinity within these cultures by meeting them on their own terms. The subjects of such songs appear to be addressed with vulnerability and genuine curiosity as Electra, in a way, positions themselves as members of these communities, trying to gain insight.

MY AGENDA

The title track, *My Agenda*, is a satirical portrayal of how alt-right and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric constructs an extreme and unrealistic version of the queer community. On the chorus, Electra writes, “my agenda, might offend ya, out here flexing in my, rainbow suspenders, my

agenda, will infect ya, out to getcha” (Electra, 2020). Within these first lines Dorian constructs the character as a member of the LGBTQ+ community with a terrible, infectious plan for the world. Electra makes subtle reference to conservative ideology through emphasizing the offensiveness of their plan. Conservative and incel cultures have both been known for their criticism of the politically correct left as being easily offendable. Electra reverses this rhetoric back onto the right by pointing out how they take offense from queer culture and demonize the LGBTQ+ community. The imagery of “rainbow suspenders” is an allusion to the LGBTQ+ movement which has been closely associated with the rainbow flag.

The track features two guest vocalists, The Village People and Pussyriot. The Village People’s breakout hit “YMCA” (I am sure you have heard it) subtly addressing issues of toxic masculinity. Furthermore, the song has been adopted as an anthem for queer people all over the world, despite the original writer of the song denying any homosexual undertones (Padget, 2020). Pussyriot is a Russian feminist punk rock band who have been extremely involved as political activists over the last 10 years. Members of the group have even been arrested on several different occasions for protesting Vladimir Putin and disrespecting the Orthodox Catholic church (Smith-Spark, 2012). These two artists have been praised for their status as queer icons in mainstream culture and help establish *My Agenda*’s satirical tone as they sing about queer stereotypes.

Throughout the next two verses, we see Electra depicting their character as politically powerful through lines such as “have you seen my army marching down to city hall?” and sexually deviant through self-identifying as having a “freaky gender.” Electra concludes the track by directly referencing a event that occurred in 2017 where an alt-right talk show personality, Alex Jones, was outraged by a 2010 study that cited examples of pesticides turning male frogs

into females, claiming that it was a government conspiracy to put homosexualizing chemicals in the water supply (Tait, 2017). Regarding the event, Electra writes, “poison in the water, you lap it up... we’re out here turning frogs homosexual.” This event stands as one the more ridiculous conspiracy theories regarding queer culture and contributes to Electra’s characterization of alt-right fears.

The subject of Electra’s criticism is hidden through layers of satirical portrayal. Dorian is not portraying the party which they intend to criticize but a facet of their ideology manifested as a fear-inspiring homosexual; it is a portrayal of a portrayal. Electra uses a direct example of anti-queer rhetoric in the form of alt-right conspiracy theories to further portray their character as gay, dangerous, and not based in reality.

GENTLEMAN

Gentleman released as one part of a two part single prior to the album’s release along with the following track, *M’Lady*. Here we find Electra changing pace to portray an incel, establishing how incel culture forms their male gender roles. *Gentleman* starts off with an old-English style melody played by an acoustic guitar and flute with Electra’s accompanying vocals singing, “I am the last living gentleman” (Electra, 2020). Confirmed by the medieval music video, this choice of sonic aesthetic is likely meant to allude to times of old where men were men and chivalry and etiquette were important social customs. The emphasis on chivalry has long been critiqued by feminist scholars who find the custom to put women in a place where they are treated as weaker and in need of a man's help. Incel culture has been known to value things such civility, etiquette, and “proper” ways of being (Maxwell, 2020). Incel culture often

uses these terms both to depict women as something to nurture and to paint themselves as the savior “gentleman.”

After the medieval introduction, *Gentleman* breaks down into a catchy hyperpop club anthem featuring a main saxophone melody that Electra describes as “the coolest, lamest, weakest, most powerful sound you could get.” The chorus is simple and direct, reading “I’m a gentleman, take my gentle hand, off to a gentle land.” In the first verse our incel character says, “up top, bow down, rock it to the side when you tip that crown, fedora real tight, slow down, pinky up high, it ain't never comin' down.” A fedora is a special kind of hat which has been commonly identified as a large part of incel aesthetics (Jennings, 2018). Here we see Electra compare a fedora to a crown, implying a sort of royalty bestowed upon incels as they position themselves on the moral and societal high ground. In addition, drinking with one’s pinky up has long been a symbol of high class or projected Anglophilic fanciness in the United States, cementing the characters views of themselves as societally proper.

The second verse finds Electra foreshadowing the dark aggression found in the incel’s construction of women. Electra writes, “I pick you up. I put you down,” alluding to incel cultures' tendency to conflictingly both obsess over women while simultaneously degrading them through acts such as negging. Electra continues, “I’m [lighting] you up, throw you around, this is a conquest, a war is going down.” These lyrics employ more violent imagery of someone being “thrown around,” utilizing language such as “war” and “conquest” to portray the view that women are something to be conquered as a larger “war on women” being waged by incel ideology (Hauser, 2019). *Gentleman* is filled with instances of ideological contrast through the continuous juxtaposition of the terms “up” and “down.” Throughout two verses Dorian

establishes the male character as considering themselves to be of high moral standing, which they justify through chivalrous etiquette.

M'LADY

If *Gentleman* is the glossy exterior to incel ideology, *M'Lady* is the sinister underbelly driving the machine. This song depicts the unattainable expectations of femininity and womanhood embodied into an abstract conception of women: the lady. The term “m'lady” has commonly been associated with an internet meme picturing a fedora wearing man with a considerably sized neckbeard; commonly with accompanying text reading “*tips fedora*” or “m'lady” overlaid on the image. The term has been associated with incel culture due to the significant overlap of those found to portray the image; the “mute representative of every alienated, woman-hating, "friendzone"-marooned isolate ever to kill time on 4Chan” (Kolitz, 2019). Furthermore, the term “lady” within itself has historical connotation of medieval times when members of the nobility were labeled as “lords and ladies.”

The beginning of the track features a comparable introduction to *Gentleman*, utilizing medieval-style lyre and an eerily similar melodic composition to the previous track. The introduction on *M'Lady* is distinguished by an increased tempo, a busier melody, and pounding kick drums. The song breaks down into a droning 808 bass drum pattern for the first verse. Electra further cements the connection to *Gentleman* with the opening line, writing, “m'lady is *gentle*, m'lady is kind,” leading us to believe that this lady is being held to a similar standard as the male narrator (an assumption which will be short lived) (Electra, 2020). Our incel character continues to claim that “m'lady, she's mine” and “m'lady is sexy,” establishing both an obsessive possession over the lady as well as her notable physical attractiveness. From here, Electra writes,

“m'lady is chaste, m'lady's a whore,” where we are met with the first major contradiction of the track. Women are seen as both objects of purity, playing off of medieval-Catholic conceptions of chastity, yet simultaneously provocative instigators. As the character praises the value of the woman's attraction, they condone the woman for taking action on similar feelings.

The chorus features a short instrumental breakdown with the only sign of Electra being some rhythmic, heavy breathing. The heavy breathing, in this case, likely refers to the term “mouth breather” which has commonly been associated aesthetically with gamers, fedora-wearers and, consequently, incels. The breathing sequence reads as obsessive and dark as the character struggles to gain their breath in the awe-striking presence of the lady.

The second verse finds the incel character returning to their values of etiquette as they say, “m'lady has manners, m'lady has grace.” This implies the depicted lady sharing a sense of formality and civility that was so heavily emphasized on *Gentleman*. The ideological creation of the woman is undeniably based in the ideology of the creator. However, the character later says, “m'lady has style and a very small waist,” reinforcing the importance of conventional standards of beauty. They follow the statement with, “m'lady like men with a perfect face.” Within this statement the incel acknowledges their own preference towards normative ideals of body image and attraction, projecting that onto the woman. With the primary facet of incel ideology being the shared experience of involuntary celibacy (largely credited by incels to their own levels of attraction), one would think some grace be allotted to the same set of standards they claim is keeping them celibate.

The third verse finds Electra using more lyrical juxtaposition to expose the contradictions between conceptions and expectations of women. The lady both “is soft” and “supple” while she also “goes hard.” Furthermore, the character claims that the lady simultaneously “goes quiet”

and “is a star.” There is a clear contrast between terms such as soft and hard and a more subtle difference between going quiet and being a star. The woman here is expected to be submissive and vulnerable, acting carefully not to talk over the character. Conversely, the woman is expected to be energetic, lively, and highly accomplished in their respective field. The acceptable behavior of women is defined as submissive in the face of our male character yet dominant when facing the outside world.

The concluding verse finds Electra coming face-to-face with the unachievable standard set for women. Electra writes, “m’lady, can’t find her, m’lady’s not real, m’lady’s a dream.” The character begins to acknowledge the reality of their own situation as they realize the lack of reality present in their standard of women. Electra continues, “m’lady’s a deal, a deal with the devil, a very good price, the price of my soul, my heart is like ice.” In this climax of the song we find the incel facing their literal demons as Electra points to the dark mental health toll such a belief set can cause. Within these last few lines the term, “m’lady” seems to shift from a constructed image of what women ought to be to represent the damaging negotiation of gender roles present in incel ideology.

EDGELORD

In *Edgelord*, we see Electra confront online trolling and point out inconsistencies within this behavior. The track features mind-bending production and a guest verse from none other than Rebecca Black. Yes... *that* Rebecca Black. Black rose to fame when she was just 13 after releasing her debut single, *Friday*, in 2011. The track quickly gained unprecedented amounts of internet virality when it circulated around the internet as the butt of countless jokes. Black was

the victim of some of the most brutal internet trolling seen (at the time), making her perspective on the topic especially critical.

Edgelord features a warping, flute melody, trap drums and drum patterns, and a growling 808 bass distorted beyond recognition. Apart from some hard rock guitar acting as a transition-aid, this track sticks to relatively typical hyperpop production. The track opens with a shortened version of the main chorus, reading, “I’m your edgelord, I’m your edgelord, I’m so edgy, wanna F me?, okay, F you, I don’t need you, pushing me right to the edge” (Electra, 2020). This string of lyrics describes a situation in which someone asks for and is denied of sex, causing the narrator to lash out at the person who rejected them as well as the world around them.

Beginning the first verse, Electra writes, “we live in a society, that’s always lashing out at guys like me, they pushed me to the edge, you see,” confirming the suspected self-victimization the character undergoes to make sense of their own mental well-being. The phrase, “we live in a society,” makes direct reference to a popular internet meme closely related to “neckbeard” aesthetics. The phrase is often used to satirize certain political takes and point out “obvious” facets of society (Don, 2017). The meme is commonly circulated in video game-related communities and often pictures *Batman*’s The Joker. Electra cements a connection to the meme by writing “one question, why so serious? Did I offend you? I’m so curious.” The phrase “why so serious” is a direct quote from Heath Ledger’s portrayal of The Joker in *The Dark Knight*. Incels and incel-adjacent groups have been archetypically compared to fictional villains and anti-heroes (such as The Joker) due to their perceived instability and nihilistic outlook on society. Furthermore, the distinct use of “offend” again makes reference to right wing rhetoric regarding political correctness; another trope commonly associated with trolling culture. Black chimes in on the second verse to expose the lack of vulnerability found in internet trolling. As a personal

victim of such action, Black sings, “edgy life, easy life, walking on air, bet that I’ve been doing this since daycare.” These lyrics emphasize how internet anonymity largely protects you from consequences regarding your actions (an “easy life”) and establishes Black’s credibility in dealing with such perpetrators as she has faced internet trolls since her viral breakout in 2011.

The second chorus finds a change in lyrics, now reading “I’m your edgelord, on the edge now, 'bout to jump down, watch me jump down, taking you down, pushing you right to the edge,” accentuating the instability of the character as well as the characters ability to incite harm onto the world around them. Such lyrics are eerily reminiscent of the mindset seen in highly radicalized individuals such as Alek Minassian, the incel-perpetrator of the 2019 van massacre.

Edgelord tells the story of a lonely internet troll at their breaking point. Feeling cast aside by society, our character lashes out at the world around them (and more commonly the women around them). Regarding this type of interaction, Electra has said that “there’s so much in incel culture where it’s like, ‘Well, this f**king bitch won’t put out. She’s not going to have sex with me.’ But then also it’s like, ‘Oh my God. But she’s a whore,’” exposing the double standard of expectations as well as the aggressive response to rejection (Electra, 2020). Contradiction can further be found in the song as the character portrays society as weak and easily-offendable while allowing themselves to be emotionally destabilized by the exact thing they criticize. The character depicted in *Edgelord* is both aggressive and unstable, obsessed with sexual gratification yet perpetrating acts of sexual shaming. Trolling is exposed as a defense mechanism to protect those hiding behind the screen from the flaws in their own beliefs.

CONCLUSIONS

My Agenda is a multi-medium aesthetic experience that appropriates styles from as old as medieval times and contrasts them with new-age electronic trends. Contrast is seen in nearly every aspect of this album as Electra juxtaposes the most unlikely subjects. However, we must recognize that this album does not function within a binary by any means; to create contrast is to emphasize differences in subjects, not to stand them in inherent opposition. Through juxtaposition Electra emphasizes irony and contradiction as a means to deconstruct toxic masculinity in an unconventional way. When portraying different characters, Electra works on several layers of satire and irony. Within the title track we see Electra exposing the hypocrisy of right-leaning individuals taking offense at queer culture (one layer of irony) by they themselves portraying a world-dominating homosexual (two layers of irony). *Gentleman* and *M'Lady* work hand in hand to expose the two sides of the same hypocritical coin that is incel gender construction. Finally, on *Edgelord* we see Electra exposing the irony in online trolling as society is both easily offended and highly offensive, doing so by featuring a notable victim of online harassment.

As satire is intended to criticize the character being portrayed, Electra takes an alternative approach to satire. By infusing the sonic aesthetics of the album with chivalrous old-English melodies, video game-style synth leads, and constant references to internet culture, Electra shows a seemingly genuine appreciation for incel aesthetics. Furthermore, when taking into account the visual aesthetics of the album, we see Electra fully embracing the look of an internet troll, fedora and all. Electra does not mean to misrepresent their subject by any means. Incels are first and foremost self-described outcasts of society, a feeling Electra surely relates to as a queer artist in America. Here we see Burke's satirical frame come into play as Electra, at some odd

level, relates to the subject they depict. By approaching the situation with some level of empathy and curiosity, Electra opens the door to new means of handling toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity is presented as incredibly damaging not only to the LGBTQ+ community and women in general but also the very men who reinforce such standards. Electra highlights the harmful aspects of incel culture that work to create a set of standards incels claim to hate. The only thing you can expect from this album is for it to subvert your expectations. There is no black and white, even when addressing the flaws in incel ideologies.

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