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Reclaiming misandry from misogynistic rhetoric

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Introduction

In recent years, misogyny has become a central focus of philosophical analysis as well as an established concept in public discourse and political policy.[1] But where is misogyny's supposed counterpart, namely, *misandry*? Compared to misogyny, the term "misandry" remains in the margins of philosophical thought. In this paper I argue that the term "misandry" ought to be uncoupled from its supposed antonym "misogyny" and (perhaps unintuitively), reformulated and reclaimed as a conceptually robust anti-patriarchal stance. The impetus for this project of reclamation is that "misandry" is most often used as a rhetorical device to silence dissent levelled against the patriarchy. Further, this rhetorical deployment of "misandry" is both epistemically and affectively unjust as it functions to attribute anger, hatred, spite, or other similar emotion to a speaker who calls the patriarchal order into question. The function of this rhetoric is to undermine the speaker's epistemic authority. As the speaker who is labelled a "misandrist" is often a woman,[2] and the rhetorical force relies on racist and misogynistic preconceptions concerning anger and epistemic authority, the term "misandry" is typically (and ironically) found in discursive sites of misogyny.[3]

The weaponisation of misandry stems from the popular usage of misandry to denote a *hatred of men*. In this paper I mitigate this misogynistic rhetorical use of the term by arguing for an ameliorative analysis in which "misandry" should no longer be interpreted as a site of illegitimate

[1] Although Andrea Dworkin's 1972 *Women Hating* may have brought the term into public consciousness, it is arguably since former Australian prime minister, Julia Gillard's "misogyny speech" that 'misogyny' became a key concept for theorising gender injustice (Manne 2019).

[2] Scrolling through news articles, I am yet to find a public incident in which a cis man was accused of "misandry". The label, as far as I have seen, has been directed at cis women, although it is deployed by men and women alike.

[3] In this paper I use "woman/women" to denote female-read person(s) in order to also include people who may identify as trans* but who may be presumed to be a cis woman, whereas "man/men" refers to cis men.

hatred, but rather a politically powerful and ethically legitimate stance against patriarchal norms. Reclaiming misandry in this way can be an important aspect of expressing dissent toward a hierarchical gender binarism, and an effective means of undermining patriarchal (anger-)silencing practices.

To achieve these ends, I begin in section 1 discussing Kate Manne's ameliorative analysis of misogyny in which she argues for a re-interpretation of misogyny as a property of a patriarchal social order. Understood in this way, misogyny is no longer a psychologistic disposition or an individual's attitude, but a systemic phenomenon. In section 2, I turn to the notion of misandry. I argue that in my reading of Manne's analysis, there is an implied dismissal of "misandry" as incoherent if the term is intended to be meaningful beyond its rhetorical force. This leads me to section 3, where instead of condemning and dismissing in I "misandry" as nonsensical, I sketch out the various ways in which an unchecked interpretation of "misandry" is weaponised as a patriarchal tool to delegitimise a dissenting agent's epistemic authority and affective attitude. What follows from this, I argue in section 4, is that misandry ought to be reinterpreted and reclaimed as a legitimate mode of feeling and expressing dissent against the patriarchy. I conclude in section 5 by making the claim that despite its negative connotations, there are sufficient grounds to reclaim misandry from misogynistic rhetoric.

1 – Understanding misogyny

In *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny,* Kate Manne offers an ameliorative analysis of misogyny whereby she demonstrates how we *ought* to understand the term (Manne 2019). Manne's methodology follows Sally Haslanger, who conceives of ameliorative analysis as a process aimed at enhancing our conceptual resources for the purpose of furthering the cause of social justice (Haslanger and Saul 2006, p. 138; Haslanger 2012, pp. 222-5). It involves critically reflecting on one's understanding of a concept and then engineering it so that people's use and understanding of the concept best serve its intended purpose. In her study of misogyny, Manne (2019, p.34 original emphasis) aims to highlight 'misogyny's political dimensions, rendering it psychologically more explicable, and supporting a clean contrast between *misogyny* and *sexism*'. In other words, Manne's project attempts to rescue "misogyny" from what she calls the *naïve conception,* which understands misogyny as:

> Primarily a property of individual agents (typically, although not necessarily, men) who are prone to feel hatred, hostility, or other similar emotions toward any and every woman, or at least women generally *simply because they are women*. (*ibid.* p. 32)

The *naïveté* of this conception lies in its treatment of misogyny as an anomalous individualistic trait rather than a product of the wider (patriarchal-)structural conditions within which it occurs. If we locate misogyny in individual agent's attitudes, it threatens to become epistemically inaccessible to us. Attitudes are often inscrutable, thus making charges of misogyny near impossible. It also provides no explanation as to why misogyny seems to be rife in patriarchal settings (*ibid.* pp. 45-47). In relation to the latter problem, Manne (*ibid.* pp. 47-48) asks, 'when it comes to the women who are not only dutifully but lovingly catering to his desires, what's to hate, exactly?'.

Nevertheless, we find a similarly naïve account of misogyny in David Gilmore's anthropological study of its history, wherein Gilmore (2010, p. 9) defines misogyny as 'an unreasonable fear or hatred of women that takes on some palpable form in any given society' and is 'specifically acted out in society by males'. On the one hand, understanding misogyny in this way makes it personal and decontextualises it from the patriarchal social order in which it flourishes. On the other, it generalises misogyny to such an extent that any expression of respect, fondness, or love for women (or even simply your not being a man) seems to preclude the possibility of acting misogynistically. As Manne explains in detail, even Donald Trump employs women in high-powered positions and has women amongst his friends and family whom he cherishes; what makes Trump a misogynist is rather his patterns of sexual harassment, assault, threats, and insults to women, for the sake of consolidating his position of dominance (Manne 2019, pp. 87-91). Thus, the naïve and individualistic account limits manifestations of misogyny to the margins of gendered violence, thereby ignoring the systemic nature of the oppression inflicted onto women in patriarchal societies.

Rescuing "misogyny" from this naïve conception, Manne (*ibid.* p. 33) argues that misogyny must instead be understood as the: 'system that operates within a patriarchal social order to police and enforce women's subordination and to uphold male dominance'. Rather than being a property of individual agents, misogyny is now understood as primarily a property of social systems as a whole (*ibid.*). A structure of power as historically established and socially pervasive as the patriarchy necessitates mechanisms for its enforcement. As Manne goes on to detail throughout her work, we see misogyny operating as this policing of women through an expansive range of practices, for example: microaggressions in the workplace, domestic abuse, gendered tropes, catcalling, slut-shaming, tone policing, and internet trolling. Understanding misogyny simply as a personally

possessed and indiscriminate hatred is analytically and empirically naïve. It is difficult to conceive of such an indiscriminate hatred being practically or emotionally plausible, and this psychologistic explanation construes misogyny as a kind of irrational phobia or psychopathology (*ibid.* p. 49), rather than a concept intimately tied up with social power relations.

Manne's ameliorative re-conceptualisation of misogyny also allows us to make sense of how misogyny can so easily be perpetrated by women. Although the naïve conception does not foreclose the possibility of a woman being particularly prone to feelings of hatred and hostility towards all other women, on that account it is quite difficult to imagine. As Manne explains at length, the misogynist often shows no sign of fear or hatred but is more precisely motivated by the drive to uphold the self-serving patriarchal order. Contra Gilmore, Manne's structural formulation has the breadth of scope to include instances of internalised, institutional, and overt misogyny, along with misogynistic acts which manifest in the rewarding and valorising of women who conform to patriarchal norms (*ibid.* p. 72). Misogyny, best understood, is tied up in structural arrangements rather than agential attitudes.

2 – Where does this leave us with "misandry"?

In this section, I discuss the implications Manne's discussion of misogyny may have on the term "misandry". Most theorists are inclined to dismiss "misandry" as lacking the requisite social structures which underpin misogyny. Yet in following Manne's analysis, I want to avoid a definition of misandry which is as indiscriminate, psychologically infeasible, and epistemically inaccessible as the naïve conception of misogyny. As Manne points out, even a prolific misogynist does not hate *any and every* woman, especially not those that adhere to the relevant prescribed social roles (*ibid.* p. 47). Leaving misandry to denote a stance correlative to the naïve conception of misogyny would likewise be conceptually redundant.

Nonetheless, difficulties arise when we attempt to map misandry directly onto Manne's 'logic of misogyny'. Understood correlatively to the patriarchy, there is no matriarchal social order within which man's subordination can be enforced, nor is there an established female dominance to uphold. Manne does not engage in detail with the implications her analysis has on an understanding of misandry, except in a footnote where she (*ibid.* p. 67n12) recognises that 'there will be no instances of genuine misandry absent the operation of *matriarchal* norms'. I take "genuine misandry" here to mean misandry which is similarly structural in nature to Manne's ameliorated

misogyny. Such a dismissal of misandry is commonplace with theorists who recognise the salience of a patriarchal social order.

"Misandry" has been denounced as lacking the 'systemic, transhistoric, institutionalised and legislated antipathy of misogyny' (Flood et al. 2007, p. 442), and as being 'utterly tendentious' as it lacks either political institutionalisation and legitimation, or a repressive apparatus to enforce it (Kimmel 2013, p. 131). Gilmore likewise concurs, arguing that misogyny is an *unreciprocated* cultural institution, leaving a term that denotes an institutionalised hatred of men to have little currency (Gilmore 2010, pp. 12-3). To understand misandry as a coherent analogue to misogyny requires the absence of a prevailing patriarchal social order. If we want to avoid the naïve, individualised, psychologistic conception of misandry, then similarly to Manne's work on misogyny, it seems misandry should be understood as being metaphysically dependent on a *matriarchal* social arrangement.

Though controversial, such a position is in fact held by some within the discipline of men's studies. Most notably formulated in Katherine Young and Paul Nathanson's four volumes on misandry,[4] Nathanson and Young argue that misandry is even more pervasive, insidious, and harmful than misogyny. Contra Manne's brief denouncement of misandry, Nathanson and Young argue that there is a matriarchal social order such that 'gynocentrism' is propounded throughout cultural artifacts, religious symbolism, and institutional legislation (Nathanson and Young 2001, 2006, 2011, 2015). In one volume, drawing on selected pop cultural references, Nathanson and Young argue that misandry has become a 'culturally propagated hatred', consolidated by stereotypical depictions of men as inadequate and evil (Nathanson and Young 2001). One of the crucial problems, they argue, is that the feminist obsessing over misogyny has allowed misandry to proliferate without notice. In addition to the cultural propagation of misandry, Nathanson and Young attempt to demonstrate how there is a juridical discrimination against men in US American and Canadian laws, such that men are legally vilified through gender-based discrepancies in issues such as child custody, pay equity, pornography, prostitution, sexual harassment, and violence against women (Nathanson and Young 2006). In centring all four of their volumes on what they deem the 'essentialism' and 'dualism' of ideological feminism, Nathanson and Young have turned a critique of feminism into a detailing of a supposed social, moral, and historical crisis.

Unfortunately, a detailed discussion of Nathanson and Young falls beyond the scope of this paper. To take Nathanson's and Young's claims seriously, one would have to commit to their

[4] *Spreading Misandry* (2001); *Legalizing Misandry* (2006); *Sanctifying Misandry* (2011); *Replacing Misandry* (2015).

Copernican turn whereby men have become the subordinate group and patriarchy a relic of history rather than an enduring set of structures. Sure enough, some of Nathanson's and Young's examples are of men being represented as callous, violent, and sub-human. Yet oftentimes the cultural products Nathanson and Young draw on to substantiate their claims – rather than being evidence of the demonisation and ridiculing of men – are in fact comedic representations of the patriarchy (Kimmel 2013).

A more compelling explanation for the phenomena discussed by Nathanson and Young can be found in Carol Harrington's discussion of how 'neoliberal rationality' (rather than 'feminist misandry') is responsible for the problematisations of masculinity and transformation of gender norms (Harrington 2022, p. 64). Rather than pointing toward the dissolution of patriarchal structures, contemporary caricatures of men are indicative of the installation of hegemonic masculinities which may eschew misogyny and traditional 'toxic' masculinity, but which nevertheless perpetuate patriarchal structures. Thus, the kind of men which Nathanson and Young have in mind are likely those working class and racially minoritized men who are represented as backwardly traditional and hyper-masculine (cf. *ibid.* p. 63). These negative representations of men function 'to create the *appearance* that male-domination is on the decline' (*ibid.* emphasis added), yet beneath the surface is still a cultural landscape which consistently objectifies women, celebrates patriarchal gender roles and which takes for granted a hierarchical gender binary.[5]

A perhaps more meaningful way of approaching misandry, and which requires a significantly smaller degree of controversial commitments, is in bell hooks' discussion of 'man-hating females' within the feminist movement (hooks 2000, pp. 115-6; 2005, p. 97). Hooks does not herself use the term "misandry" but recognises how there is a characterisation of women as 'man-hating' which far outweighs the actual 'man-hating feminists'. Simply identifying oneself as a feminist is enough to be seen as a man-hating woman (hooks 2005, p. 96). There is no smoke without fire, hooks argues, and there is a genuine – albeit, marginal – minority of feminists who refuse to accept men as possible comrades, instead simply despising *any and every man*. However, I want to argue that neither the concern from hooks, nor the dismissals of misandry as conceptually incoherent, are sufficient grounds upon which to expel misandry from the English lexicon. Rather, I want to explore the option of ameliorating misandry such that it denotes a conceptually coherent political stance which neither attests to a matriarchal social order, nor a psychological disposition to 'man-hating'.

[5] Alongside the 'revival of right-wing masculinist politics, misogyny, and anti-feminism' (*ibid.*).

3 – The weaponisation of misandry

In this section, I turn to the ways in which "misandry" is weaponised rhetorically and misogynistically. The term itself is negatively connotated and remains in the periphery of feminist scholarship.[6] This is understandably because so many attempts at thematising and critiquing patriarchal structures provoke immediate backlash such that the critic is deemed to be speaking from 'misandric' motivations. These instances of backlash are not only unwarranted, but they ultimately result in both epistemic and affective injustices. As will be shown, the force of these injustices often relies on the negative and unattractive connotations of "misandry" and what it is taken to represent. Rather than simply motivating a critique of the patriarchy, I want to ameliorate misandry for the purpose of disabling its weaponisation.

3.1. Epistemic injustice

To begin with a paradigm example, and one in which "misandry" is used and endorsed, I turn to Pauline Harmange's 2020 essay *I Hate Men.* Here, Harmange defines misandry as:

> A negative feeling towards the entirety of the male sex … and when I say 'the male sex' I mean all the cis men who have been socialised as such, and who enjoy their male privilege without ever calling it into question, or not enough. (Harmange 2020, p. 9)

Note how Harmange purposely drops the etymological ties to hatred, instead opting for a 'negative feeling'. At risk of propounding a feminist position oft-criticised for impeding the wider feminist struggle, Harmange is careful to demonstrate how she is not simply 'man-hating'. Instead, Harmange's affective relation to unreflecting, uncritical cis men, is one which 'ranges from simple suspicion to outright loathing' (*ibid.*). Moreover, it is a negative disposition toward men who enjoy reproducing obnoxious and harmful behaviours, rather than men *as such*.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Harmange's publication provoked a far greater backlash than either she or her publishing house anticipated (Willsher 2020). The furore even reached national politics when Ralph Zurmély, an adviser to France's ministry on gender equality, threatened the publishers with censorship due to Harmange's book being a hateful 'ode to misandry' (France 24

[6] A Google Scholar search as of September 22nd yields 3,460 results of publications containing the term compared to 158,000 results for 'misogyny'.

2020). I want to draw out two insights from this example which I use to motivate the present ameliorative project. Firstly, the backlash Harmange's publication received (most of which happened on the basis of the book's title and description prior to its publication), is illustrative of how a position which propounds misandry will likely be immediately rejected and silenced. A misandric position is taken to be lacking epistemic authority. Secondly, the large international interest that *I Hate Men* was greeted with is suggestive of a widely supported sentiment that is rarely articulated. Namely, a negative disposition toward men who enjoy the unearned privilege which results from their socialisation as cis men. It could be argued that despite Harmange's essay resonating with many people, the size of the backlash provides sufficient grounds to adopt a less confrontational approach. However, this concern is insubstantial insofar as backlash is an expected consequence of any dissent against the patriarchy; it is not reserved for self-proclaimed misandric dissent.

I now turn to a more interesting example which demonstrates how the response to Harmange was not exceptional, but rather a predictable act of patriarchal policing. Jessica Eaton founded the first male mental health centre in the United Kingdom which has the primary aim of tackling high suicide rates in men and boys. Despite being devoted to the wellbeing of men, the Eaton Foundation has surprisingly been the subject of misogynistic backlash. Most interesting for our present study is that Eaton herself was labelled a "misandrist" for publicly stating that masculine gender roles contribute to high suicide rates in men (Eaton 2018). This more intriguing example offers an additional insight: even if a woman's actions are explicitly for the benefit of men, if they in turn call the patriarchal order into question their actions can be dismissed as being motivated from a place of misandry. In both the examples of Harmange and Eaton, a naïve conception of misandry has been rhetorically deployed to attribute an unjust anger, hatred, spite, or hostility to the speaker. I take these to be instances of epistemic injustice whereby the speaker has had their epistemic authority undermined, and has had their beliefs, knowledge, or insights silenced. We can understand this as a rhetorical *weaponisation* of "misandry" which effects *testimonial* injustices.

As a form of epistemic injustice, Miranda Fricker articulates the harm of a testimonial injustice as occurring when an agent is wronged in their capacity as a giver of knowledge (Fricker 2007). Testimonial injustices manifest in myriad forms. I hereon focus on what Fricker takes to be the central case of testimonial injustice, namely, *identity-prejudicial credibility deficit* (*ibid.* p. 28). Both Harmange and Eaton were wronged in their capacities as givers of knowledge as they suffered credibility deficits by virtue of them being not only women, but "misandric" women. The testimonial injustice experienced by Harmange and Eaton is not of the same severity as the

examples given by Fricker (Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or Marge in *The Talented Mr Ripley*) as the misogyny faced by Harmange and Eaton was far less successful in discrediting them as speakers and givers of knowledge. Nonetheless, the identity-prejudicial aspect is resoundingly present. Unlike incidental cases of testimonial injustice which involve a highly localised prejudice, prejudice that relates to social identity is systematic (*ibid.* p. 27). It could be contested that the case of Harmange was only incidental due to the provocative title of her essay, but I would hasten to suggest that the treatment Eaton received warrants a suspicion toward such an interpretation.[7] Both Harmange and Eaton were characterised and treated as angry hate-filled women whose credibility suffered due to their work standing in explicit opposition to the patriarchal social order. They suffered credibility deficits by virtue of an identity-based misogynistic prejudice.

In both cases, "misandry" was rhetorically employed to inflict credibility deficits on Harmange and Eaton. In line with Manne's exposition of misogyny, we can understand these instances as manifest examples of how 'misogyny's primary function and constitutive manifestation is the punishment of 'bad' women, and policing of women's behaviour' (Manne 2019, p. 192). The credibility deficits are imposed for the sake of silencing those who attempt to publicly undermine the patriarchy. Silencing practices such as these are found across innumerable cases of testimonial injustice (Fricker 2007; Dotson 2011), all of which result in the silenced agent being epistemically harmed. Importantly, and what I now take up in greater detail in the following section, is how the silence effected by the rhetorical use of misandry is intimately tied up with a delegitimisation of feminine anger and hostility.

3.2. Anger-silencing practices

Anger-silencing practices are forms of epistemic injustice which aim at directly managing subordinate groups' angry knowledge (Bailey 2018, p. 97). Alison Bailey argues there are two paradigmatic forms, namely *tone policing* and *tone vigilance*. Both practices force the subject into a space of silence saturated with what Bailey refers to as – following Audre Lorde –a *resistant anger*. Such anger-silencing practices have also been conceptualised as practices of *affective* injustice (Srinavasan 2018; Whitney 2018; Archer and Mills 2019) but let us first keep at what Bailey takes to be the epistemic implications.

[7] I focus on these two examples as their experiences of testimonial injustice involved the actual use of the term "misandry". We can, however, see the same identity-prejudicial practices when the feminist movement is rhetorically characterised as "man-hating" (hooks 2000, pp. 68-69).

Tone policing, for Bailey, silences a marginalised individual by demanding that they alter their tone and subdue their anger for the sake of the listener. If anger communicates a felt injustice and aims to express that a situation ought to be otherwise, then demanding a more amicable tone and silencing this anger effectively tells the injured subject their injury is unworthy of consideration by others (Bailey 2018, p. 97). Tone vigilance, on the other hand, attributes anger to the marginalised subject in a way that pre-silences them, forcing them to be vigilant of their tone if they want to speak with epistemic confidence (Bailey 2018). The predominant role misandry plays in popular discourse is this two-fold epistemic injustice. At one level, misandry is used as a rhetorical device to signal anger (and other negative feelings deemed illegitimate) in the individual, thus making the speaker vigilant of their tone; this then appeals to the practices of tone-policing, whereby one's epistemic authority is rejected by virtue of being perceived as angry, crazy, or hysterical (*ibid.* p. 101).

Of course, the naïve conception of misandry refers to a *hatred* of men rather than an *anger* towards men. However, it is this conflation which exacerbates the injustice in instances when a woman is labelled a 'misandrist' for merely expressing dissent towards the patriarchy. Oftentimes, as in the case of Jessica Eaton, she is neither speaking from a place of anger or hatred, but of genuine concern. The epistemic injustice then emerges from the attribution of insincere motives – typically of hatred – as means of discreditation. Harmange, on the other hand, was a convenient candidate for being misogynistically silenced as her dissent towards the patriarchy is explicitly 'born out of and nourished by anger' (Harmange 2020, p. 48).

Irrespective of the actual motivations or intentions of the speaker; if they are a woman and/or non-white, their anger is either silenced, or falsely attributed *and then* silenced.[8] We can better understand the nature of the harm through Fricker's distinction between the primary and secondary harms of an epistemic injustice. The primary harm is when:

> The subject is wronged in her capacity as a knower. To be wronged in one's capacity as a knower is to be wronged in a capacity essential to human value … the capacity to reason. (Fricker 2007, p. 44)

[8] As the present study is focused on the rhetorical use of misandry, I will not focus on the ways in which non-white men have their anger silenced as this most likely is never done through the attribution of them being a misandrist. Yet, it must not be understated that women of colour suffer the most from anger-silencing practices (Bailey 2018; Manne 2019).

The policing and silencing of anger also produces what Fricker calls *secondary harms*. These are characterised as being either *practical* or *epistemic*. The practical harm could be the loss of revenue from one's publication or film, or perhaps the loss of political votes if you are interpreted as being too angry or crazed to be considered an epistemic authority.[9] The epistemic harm is the ensuing doubt and loss of confidence in the epistemic legitimacy of one's anger. To demand a speaker to express themselves amicably in the wake of a felt injustice suggests that they are over-reacting or that their anger is ill-founded. This tone policing mechanism is particularly damning for women of colour and women in distinctly masculine-coded environments (Brescoll and Uhlmann 2008). Ultimately, the efficacy of this misogynistic tool rests on the patriarchal norm that women's anger is illegitimate and undesirable.[10]

This policing of anger extends into the epistemic injustices that result from *tone vigilance*, as women are both implicitly and explicitly aware of how (not) to articulate their concern or identify an injustice. The epistemic injustice then becomes an *affective* injustice, as not only is being labelled an angry, man-hating feminist, an attempted attack on one's epistemic authority, but also on the aptness of how one *feels* (Srinavasan 2018).[11] A social movement or protest may have its beliefs and aims recognised but then be asked to express their demands without an accompanying expression of anger or rage. In such a case, a kind of 'psychic tax' (*ibid.* p. 135) is levied and the harm of being made to negotiate their emotional response arises, no matter its appropriateness.

Beyond these examples where tone policing and tone vigilance impact the individual, the testimonial injustice also occurs at the level of discourse. This paper lacks the scope to explore this in detail, but one need only look to the discussions surrounding 'post-feminism', 'popular feminism', and 'neoliberal feminism' to see how feminist discourse has also become unjustly vigilant of which kind of tone to adopt (Gill 2016; Banet-Weiser et al. 2019). These are all forms of feminism which have actively directed themselves away from the kind of 'man-hating feminism' to which misandry is attributed.

But what if "misandry" no longer denoted this naïve and epistemically disarming notion of *man-hating*? In the discussion above I have shown how the rhetorical weaponisation of misandry is

[9] See Manne's discussion of Hilary Clinton (2019).

[10] Multiple studies show the disproportionate perception of anger as a rational and emotional response in white men, emblematic of trustworthy and authoritative behaviours, yet in women or Black men as a negative trait, often consigned to emotional irrationality and brash behaviour (Brescoll and Uhlmann 2008; Plant et al. 2000; Salerno and Peter-Hagene 2015).

[11] See also Gallegos' discussion on emotional aptness (2021).

one tool (of many) which enables epistemic and affective injustices. The force of its rhetorical use relies on the assumption that misandry is an inappropriate affect or illegitimate source of epistemic authority, as it denotes a hatred of men. The question now becomes, how can we undermine this assumption, instead turning misandry into a legitimate stance which captures an appropriate response to an injustice?

4 – Reformulating misandry

With the unjust rhetorical weaponisation of "misandry" outlined, I now turn to how we ought to reformulate and *reclaim* misandry through ameliorative analysis. To achieve this, I compare two attempts which have already been made at reformulating misandry before combining their respective merits into a new understanding. First, Gilmore's reformulation is a great improvement on the conceptually ineffective notion of misandry as a hatred of any and every man. Gilmore (2010, p.12) writes that *if* we are to understand an antimasculinist position like misandry (or his preferred label 'viriphobia'), then it only makes sense when it is a 'hatred of men's traditional role, the obnoxious manly *pose,* a culture of machismo'. By emphasising that the object of misandry is the culture of machismo behaviour, rather than men as such, Gilmore's reformulation already goes some way in providing a more structural conception of misandry. However, Gilmore's etymological commitment to the notion of hatred is ultimately impeding. Misandry exists in response to harms, constraints, and oppression that are felt as a direct result of patriarchal social arrangements. The term should capture that it aims to communicate a felt injustice and a desire for change. Correlatively to how there is often no expression of hatred in acts of misogyny but instead a motivation to uphold a self-serving patriarchal order, in misandry hatred is also not required. Instead, there is a desire to undermine, disrupt, and critique the same social order and its normative pre-/proscriptions.

For these reasons, I propose to distance misandry from its etymological ties to hatred. Instead, we can take lead from Harmange (2020, p.9) and replace 'hatred' with 'negative feelings'. More specifically, we can unpack 'negative feelings' into (at least) the feelings of anger, hostility, and fear, as they seem to best capture felt reactions to misogynistic, transphobic, and homophobic practices and overt machismo behaviour. With this in mind, misandry will hereon be understood as *the felt anger, hostility, or fear, toward the patriarchal social order and its valorisation and/or expression in misogynistic and machismo behaviour*. In short, misandry is a reactive attitude felt toward the representatives, advocates, defenders, symbols, and structures of the patriarchy. Just as misogyny 'primarily targets women because they are women in a *man's world*' (Manne 2019, p. 64), misandry

primarily targets men because they maintain the structures and enforce the norms of this very same man's world. I take this to be an ameliorative analysis of the term, sacrificing certain etymological ties for the sake of theoretical and practical utility as well as aims of social justice. This utility being misandry's ability to capture a politically powerful, already present, and ethically legitimate sentiment that undermines its own weaponisation and suppression.

Before discussing the political merits of this ameliorative project, let us further unpack this reformulation. Firstly, as has been widely noted, misandry is not analogical to misogyny, rather, it would be more precise to understand misandry as expressing a reactive attitude provoked by an unjust social and normative arrangement. It is difficult to conceive of misandry – understood this way – without the precursor of institutionalised misogyny. Unlike misogyny, misandry does not seek to uphold and perpetuate any structural conditions, but to undermine, critique, and voice dissent to those already in place.

Related to this first aspect of reactiveness is that secondly, misandry has both communicative and normative functions which have their basis in moral and political emotions such as anger and fear. Misandry aims to communicate a felt (or anticipated) injustice or moral violation, and it serves the normative function of expressing that the cause of this injustice is morally wrong and ought to be otherwise. This twofold characterisation of misandry is developed in line with feminist epistemological approaches to emotion which argue for a critical re-evaluation of the politically and epistemically resourceful nature of anger (Jaggar 1989; Srinavasan 2018, p. 128; Aumann and Cogley 2019, p. 46; Chemaly 2018). Such emphases on the epistemic value of anger – especially when experienced in response to racial or gender oppression – must be clearly distinguished from the destructive character of hatred (Lorde 2019, p. 122). By shifting misandry's constitutive affect away from hatred to other emotions we can come to appreciate the productive goal of change at the heart of misandric feelings.

Thirdly, the primary object of misandric feelings is not men *per se*, nor just the actions and behaviour of traditionally masculine men.[12] Misandry may be felt in response to agents, environments, or practices which serve to uphold and benefit from the patriarchy. This means the object of misandric anger can be a group of men who act misogynistically, a more diffuse collective agent such as a political party, or even a particular place; one can imagine feeling fearful of a local bar which tolerates catcalling, sexual harassment, and homophobia, and so on. Nonetheless, the

[12] I thank the reviewers for bringing to my attention the important discussions which are critical of the concept of "toxic masculinity" – a concept which was prominent in an earlier draft. See: (Harrington 2021, 2022; Waling 2019).

patriarchy is often represented, defended, and valorised by much less explicitly malicious characters. Misandry can easily be directed toward, for example, agents who are reflectively or unreflectively committed to the gender binary, who have ideals of love which make monogamy compulsory (Manne 2019, p. 27), or even toward male intimate partners who fail to share in the 'hermeneutic labour' of a relationship (Anderson 2023). The list goes on.

In addition to being directed at agents who represent a heteropatriarchal status quo, misandry takes environments, rituals, and practices as its objects. One may be angry at one's workplace environment due to the machismo culture it encourages, a sports club feared because of its misogynistic and racist rituals, or one might express hostility toward a governmental party due to its transphobic and homophobic policies.[13] Misandry is therefore in response to both the immediately felt harms that manifest in agential behaviour as well as harms which result from and contribute to wider systemic and structural injustices.

Fourthly, similar to how Manne's reformulation of misogyny allows us to thematise the mechanisms underpinning internalised misogyny (Manne 2019, p. 146), reformulating misandry in this way frees it from being an exclusively feminine-coded stance. Although patriarchal norms lead to much greater harms for women and trans people, there are also differential harms depending on 'what kind of man you are'. Patriarchal structures celebrate an exclusionary hegemonic masculinity. This means that although certain expressions of 'machismo behaviour' may dominate headlines in terms of what a misogynist looks like, such a reduction to individual behavioural types risks diverting attention away from the structural mechanisms which keep the patriarchy in place.[14] Expressions of approval for the patriarchal social order can just as easily be identified in 'masculine heroes' who condemn 'toxically masculine men' (Harrington 2021, p. 349). Machismo, misogynistic, and homophobic behaviour are thus not the only provocateurs for misandric anger, fear, and hostility. It is thus also in many men's interests to undermine and disrupt the delimiting binary distribution of appropriate gender expressions, behaviours, and expectations.

The patriarchy is also a *hetero*patriarchy, such that men who are not cisgender, heterosexual, or who simply deviate from heteronormative expectations, are also subject to policing. The heteropatriarchal binary of masculine-coded norms over feminine-coded norms sets up particular kinds of masculinity as the only expressions of gender legitimately available to men and boys (Waling 2019, p. 363; see also: Harrington 2022, p. 61). It is typically a white, able-bodied, and

[13] A consequence of this is that, in theory, a woman can be part of a wider collective agent which is the object of misandric feelings, such as in the cases of a political party.

[14] I am grateful for a reviewer's comments for this worry.

'elite' form of masculinity which serves as the telos for patriarchal norms, such that expressions of a working-class or Black masculinity can be stigmatised and misconstrued as aggressive, criminal, or "toxic" in comparison to the so-construed "healthy" expressions reserved for white, high-income, heterosexual men (Harrington 2021, p. 348; 2022). On the one hand, this both devalues femininity and androgyny, as we see in practices of misogyny and transphobia, and dismisses, tokenises, and misrepresents Black culture as we see in anti-Black racism and white supremacy. On the other hand, the adherence by men to certain masculine norms, such as self-reliance, assertiveness, and violence, has also been shown to lead to higher levels of suicidal ideation and diminished emotional wellbeing, even for white, high-earning, and heterosexual men (King et al., 2020). Though certain expressions of hegemonic masculinity are too-often celebrated and rewarded, these very patterns of behaviour that benefit cis men are not without corresponding (self-)harms. It is not my aim here to argue that men suffer at the hands of the patriarchy as much as others. Rather, it must be acknowledged that men also have plenty of reasons to feel anger, hostility, and fear toward core tenets of the patriarchy, *especially* when they are not a white heterosexual member of the male 'elite'.

5 – Reclaiming misandry

In this final section I discuss two possible points of contention with the above argument for reclaiming misandry as a productive political stance. Firstly, that misandry, even if admissible, is a politically unappealing sentiment as there are preferable ways in which structural injustices rooted in the patriarchy can be problematised and critiqued. Secondly, even if we deny the first point of contention and take the sentiment to be legitimate and worth advocating, then the same ends could be achieved without use of a term as negatively connotated as "misandry".

In terms of the first concern, we can examine how many facets of activism, lobbying, and protest are expressions of collective anger and hostility, but that these are not *constitutive* of their political efficacy. To enjoin with one another to change the background conditions of something as historically instituted and socially pervasive as structures of patriarchy often also involves diplomacy, restraint, and popular appeal. However, it does not follow from this that misandry cannot also be an effective means for collective action and political change. Misandry, properly understood, is non-ideal.[15] It is made meaningful only in light of a white heteropatriarchy which

[15] Not non-ideal in a *strictly* Rawlsian sense, rather non-ideal in the quite literal sense of lacking the ideal background conditions.

prescribes a binary of feminine-coded goods against and beneath masculine-coded goods. Without this backdrop, misandry would be of little relevance or utility.

By virtue of how much the patriarchy intersects with classism, racism, and homophobia, there is a legitimate worry that misandry, as an affective attitude, will be unequally directed towards individual men who are otherwise socially stigmatised. It is not difficult to imagine fear or hostility which is motivated by racist, classist, or transphobic commitments being misrepresented as a misandric response to supposed misogynistic or machismo behaviour.[16] Sadly, however, such practices already occur only without labelling it 'misandry'. With that in mind, I want to defend this reformulated conception of misandry as a valuable and worthwhile stance even if there are potential drawbacks in some contexts.

What makes misandry more than admissible, is that it directly attempts to undermine patriarchal practices and expectations regarding the expression and legitimacy of anger and assertive behaviour. The practices of tone policing and tone vigilance elaborated on in section three run deeper than the examples given of the treatment of Harmange and Eaton. Norms that are construed as feminine, such as docility and amicability, are so insidiously woven into the social fabric that women are often as guilty as men for enforcing them. Tone vigilance not only applies to vocal tone but can even be seen in the 'tone' of one's facial expression. Studies show women and adolescent girls smile at a higher rate than men and adolescent boys, and the difference in rate corresponds to the salience of gender norms in a given context (LaFrance, Paluck and Hecht 2003). Furthermore, social psychological studies that researched the assertiveness of women's responses to heterosexist and sexist behaviour found that 75 per cent of participants considered assertive responses, but only 40 per cent made them (Hyers 2007, p. 6). Interestingly, non-assertive responders often reported benefiting from avoiding conflict during the incident, but also reported less satisfaction with their response, more desire to respond differently in the future, and less closure due to lingering anger or regret that a perpetrator was left *uneducated* and *unchanged* (*ibid.* p. 9). My aim is not to suggest that women ought to always respond assertively as this comes with its own risks. Rather, Hyers' findings further illuminate the affectively unjust suppression of misandric feelings in women; they are vigilant of their tone and hesitant to defy entrenched behavioural norms.

[16] What I have in mind are racist and classist depictions of poor and/or non-white men as barbaric, potentially violent, absent from families, and unloving (see also Harrington 2022, 48ff). Or, anti-trans but supposedly 'feminist' narratives of transwomen as misogynistic sexual predators.

Rejecting misandry on the grounds of it being too confrontational, alienating, and thereby politically unhelpful, runs the risk of further perpetuating already-existing epistemic and affective injustices. It cannot be denied that such a misandric stance may provoke more backlash and resistance than necessary. But my aim is not to argue that misandry ought to be advocated at the expense of other anti-patriarchal actions. I simply want to suggest that we should be suspicious of its dismissal on 'practical' grounds.

Turning to the second contention – that even if we now concede the theoretical and practical value of misandry, we ought to nonetheless condemn the term "misandry" because of its negative connotations and subsequent weaponisation. I am more sympathetic to this concern, and I will not attempt to deny this is an inevitable risk that reclamation runs into (Herbert 2015). The very point of reclaiming misandry is to reappropriate a negative term into something politically productive and conceptually purposeful. One could rightfully claim that feminine-coded anger and hostility toward patriarchal norms could be achieved without labelling it "misandric". As was shown in section 2, it is theoretically straightforward to disregard the term "misandry" as nonsensical and conceptually redundant. However, if we take this route and fail to provide a more nuanced understanding of the term, then I fear that it will persist in being rhetorically deployed to safeguard the patriarchal status quo. Providing an ameliorative analysis of the term, and reclaiming it as a productive and legitimate stance, is a potential avenue for undermining the appeal of "misandry" as a means of manufacturing silence and epistemic and affective discreditation. Throughout history slurs used by privileged and oppressing groups have been subversively reappropriated to nullify their attraction and efficacy. I believe the same reclamation can be achieved regarding misandry.

In sum, I have argued for the amelioration and redefinition of misandry as *the felt anger, hostility, or fear, toward the patriarchal social order and its valorisation and/or expression in misogynistic and machismo behaviour.* This reformulation took lead from Kate Manne's understanding of misogyny as a more structural property of social arrangements rather than an individualised hatred. Despite the temptation to dismiss misandry as lacking in conceptual value, I argued that this dismissal neglects misandry's current epistemically and affectively unjust rhetorical use. The motivation for ameliorating misandry from its naïve conception stems from its misogynistic weaponisation. The motivation for endorsing its ameliorated formulation, however, is that the valorisation of white, classist, heteropatriarchal norms impacts everyone to varying degrees. Men, for their own sake and others, must also recognise their deep-seated fear of patriarchal expectations, develop an anger towards heterosexism and the normative demands of hegemonic masculinities, and begin to react with hostility toward misogynistic behaviour.

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