

The Logic of Misandrogyny

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0. Introduction

Unlike those drawing on misogynist ideology to punish women for “stepping out of line”—for aspiring beyond their place, as it were—the hostile enforcer of gender conformity relies on the ideology of gender binarism to insist that the gender non-conforming person is entitled to no space, no place, no existential entitlement. There is no place for the gender non-conforming person to retreat and exist as such. Retreat—conformity to the gender binary—entails annihilation, non-existence. (Watson 2020, 240)

Lori Watson is here describing what she calls “misandrogyny.”¹ This paper gives an account of misandrogyny as a system of mechanisms and centers attention on misandrogyny’s targets, not its perpetrators or their psychologies. In these ways, the account is modeled after Kate Manne’s account of misogyny in *Down Girl*.

Manne’s account centers attention on its targets rather than its perpetrators, and it characterizes misogyny as systemic rather than psychological. Rather than suppose that misogyny requires its perpetrator(s) to loathe women, Manne proposes that misogyny is the “law enforcement” branch of a patriarchal order, which has the overall function of *policing* and *enforcing* its overall ideology” (Manne 2019, 63). The ideology that misogyny enforces is constituted by patriarchal norms and expectations that call women to give feminine-coded goods to men: “[B]y the lights of patriarchal ideology, a woman is often expected to play the role of a man’s attentive, loving subordinate” (ibid., 57). Feminine-coded goods include sex, attention, care, epistemic deference, and sympathy. When women don’t provide these goods, the mechanisms of misogyny put them back in their patriarchal

1. Watson acknowledges that the term is suboptimal in that it suggests that all gender non-conforming persons are committed to androgyny. The term, however, captures “the hostility, both interpersonal and structural, that gender non-conforming persons face” (Watson 2020, 237). I follow Watson in using the term for these reasons while rejecting “the implication that gender non-conformity entails androgyny” (ibid., 237).

place with hostility, threats, and violence (ibid., 47). Misogyny targets women because they are *women in a man's world* (not in a man's mind), and it maintains the patriarchal gender hierarchy by keeping women in their subordinate place in a man's world.

On the account of misandrogyny developed here, it is likewise a law enforcement branch of a patriarchal² order, not a psychological disposition. Where misogyny enforces the patriarchal gender hierarchy, misandrogyny is a system of mechanisms that together police and enforce the gender binary of a patriarchal order. The gender binary is constituted by norms that preclude the existence of persons who aren't consistently "read" either as a man (and only a man) or as a woman (and only a woman). Misandrogyny thus polices and enforces exactly the *nonexistence* of people who are neither women (only) nor men (only). I'll use "gender non-conforming folks" or "GNC folks" to refer to these targets of misandrogyny. (I'll elaborate on the term below.) Whereas misogyny targets women because they ought to be subordinate according to dominant gender structures, misandrogyny targets GNC folks because they ought not to exist according to dominant gender structures.³ Whereas misogyny pushes women down into their subordinate place, misandrogyny pushes GNC folks out of existence—either by pushing its targets out of literal or social existence or by pushing them into binary gender positions.

Giving this account of misandrogyny reveals the unity in a number of processes that target GNC folks, thereby pointing to the workings of a system that polices and enforces the gender binary. Misandrogyny, like misogyny, is best understood as a system that targets people who are distinctively positioned in a gendered system. Rather than focus on the psychological motivations of those who perpetrate it, it's better to uncover the systems that victimize GNC people, that cultivate

2. I intend to follow Manne's use of "patriarchy" and its cognates, according to which it refers, broadly, to a system of gender-based dominance that divides persons into binary genders (men and women) and privileges men.
3. Thanks to a referee for this journal for suggesting the latter clause in this sentence.

psychological dispositions that encourage targeting GNC folk for violence, and that erase GNC folks from view.

In the remainder of this section, I develop a few preliminary points that put the analysis in context and address some questions. Sections 1–3 describe three kinds of misandrogynistic mechanisms. I divide the mechanisms according to the different ways that they push GNC folk into nonexistence. *Mechanisms of assignment* push individual GNC folk into one patriarchal gender role or the other—typically (but not always) the role associated with their sex assigned at birth. *Mechanisms of assimilation* make it so that GNC folk can't access basic necessities or other goods unless we cease to be GNC and assimilate into the gender binary. These mechanisms push GNC folk into some place, any place in the gender binary.⁴ *Mechanisms of annihilation* aim to bring it about that GNC folk are nonexistent. They push GNC folk out of literal, social, legal, institutional, or epistemic existence. In describing mechanisms of annihilation in section 3, I focus on mechanisms that target GNC folk for literal, physical death. It would take separate papers to fully develop the ideas of social, legal, institutional, and epistemic nonexistence, and I won't attempt it here.

0.1 Preliminaries

Who are GNC folk?

I use "GNC folk" to refer to misandrogyny's targets. A person is GNC in this sense just in case they are not consistently situated among patriarchal norms as either a man (only) or a woman (only). Loosely, "GNC folk" refers to everyone who isn't either a man or a woman *according to patriarchal norms*. Patriarchal norms not only call for women to give feminine-coded goods to men; they also determine whether one is (situated at a time and place as) a woman, a man, both, neither, etc. In making sense of this, it can help to think that there are

4. These mechanisms do not necessarily push one to conform to the gender assigned at birth. They structure the world in ways that make various necessities and resources unavailable unless one assimilates to the gender binary. Section 2 clarifies this point further.

two “levels” of patriarchal norms. The norms that Manne describes, the norms that demand feminine-coded goods from women, are at a “higher” level. The “lower-level” patriarchal norms determine how people are situated in that hierarchy (if they’re situated in it at all).⁵ For example, the lower-level norms in the contemporary United States make it so that (with a lot of qualifications and caveats) a skinny White person with shoulder-length hair is more likely to be read as a woman. These lower-level norms determine which parts of human bodies *matter* to determining gender in which contexts,⁶ which behaviors are to be read as relevant to gender and how, which clothes and accessories, which jobs, which kinds of friendship, etc. etc. *ad nauseam* (cf. Ásta 2011; Butler 1990; 1993). Some people are situated among these norms such that they are consistently taken to be gender-conforming women. Others are situated such that they are consistently taken to be gender-conforming men. “GNC folk” refers to everyone else.

There are three important points to keep in mind about how I’m using “GNC folk” here.

First, note that my characterization is based on how persons are situated among patriarchal norms—it is not based on self-identification, chromosomes, or genitalia. For instance, if Ze identifies as gender-queer, then there’s a case to be made that Ze *is* genderqueer; but if Ze is consistently situated among patriarchal norms as a man, then Ze is not in the extension of “GNC folk” as I’m characterizing it here. Similarly, if Chitra identifies as a cis woman, but she isn’t consistently situated as a woman among patriarchal norms, and she isn’t consistently situated as a man among patriarchal norms, then Chitra is GNC as I’m defining it here. Thus, “GNC folk” as I characterize its extension includes many

5. This level of norms is “lower” in the sense that it is prerequisite to the higher-level norms. The lower level sorts us into the gender binary, and then the higher level establishes a hierarchical ordering of the two sorts. Thanks to a referee for this journal for pushing me to clarify the higher/lower metaphor here.

6. For example: hair, chest, and shoulders in many contexts but perhaps not at elite weight-lifting events; musculature in the hands but not the feet; hair on faces, arms, legs, and chests, etc.

people who do not and would not identify as gender non-conforming, and it excludes some people who would identify as non-binary, agender, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, etc. It includes many (but not all) cis people, many (but not all) transpeople, and many (but not all) people who identify as non-binary, GNC, genderqueer, etc.

That’s because my aim in the paper is to articulate a system that enforces patriarchal norms. What makes one a target of that enforcement is how one is situated among patriarchal norms. Similarly, Manne’s account of misogyny is about how people are situated in hierarchical patriarchal norms and how they’re targeted by patriarchy’s mechanisms of enforcement. On the analogous view offered here, misandrogyny is about how people are situated in patriarchy’s gender binary norms and how they’re targeted by its mechanisms of enforcement. Self-identification, chromosomes, and genitalia may affect how one is situated among patriarchal norms, of course, and when they do, they will affect whether one is GNC or not. So self-identification, chromosomes, genitalia, gender presentation, etc. can affect whether one is GNC or not on the characterization given here. But they matter only insofar as they affect one’s positioning among patriarchal norms.

Second, keep in mind that one’s positioning among patriarchal norms is influenced by various ideologies, stereotypes, myths, and cultural tropes. As Robin Zheng (among others) has pointed out, races are often “gendered,” so that “Asians as a racialized group are stereotyped as feminine,” and “Blacks as a racialized group ... are stereotyped as masculine” (Zheng 2016, 405–6). Such stereotypes plausibly contribute to how one is gender-positioned in various institutions: Angela Davis suggests that conceptions of femininity centering Whiteness led to Black and Indigenous American women being incarcerated in men’s prisons in the nineteenth century (Davis 2003, 72). Similarly, insofar as gender conceptions in the West often center wealthy, young, non-disabled, White, straight, cis people, they make it so that class, age, ability status, race, sexual orientation, and gender identity, among other things, affect how one is positioned among patriarchal gender norms. Patriarchal norms interact with norms of classism, White

supremacy, ableism, ageism, heterosexism, and others to determine whether or not one is GNC.

Third, I said above that misandrogyny targets anyone who isn't consistently read as either a woman only or a man only. That's a convenient shorthand, but "read" has stronger psychological connotations than is appropriate here. Being read as neither a man (only) nor a woman (only) will often correlate with being a target of misandrogyny, but the basis for being a target of misandrogyny is how one is situated among patriarchal norms, not how one is read (although of course the two are strongly correlated).

Are there GNC-coded goods?

There seems to be an obvious disanalogy between misogyny on Manne's account and misandrogyny as I've described it. Misogyny targets women in order to police and enforce patriarchal norms that call for women to give feminine-coded goods to men. Misandrogyny, I've said, targets GNC folk in order to police and enforce norms that constitute the gender binary. The most straightforward way to push this analogy would be to say that there are GNC-coded goods and patriarchal norms that call for GNC folk to give these goods to men (or perhaps men and women). But are there any GNC-coded goods? If patriarchal norms give no place to GNC folk, isn't it dubious that they also mark some goods as GNC-coded? Rather, there should be no such marking under patriarchy.

For the reasons just suggested, I'm going to proceed as though there are no gender non-conforming-coded goods under patriarchy. (Which isn't to say that there are no GNC-coded goods! Just that patriarchy doesn't recognize any.) But I think the question is worth taking seriously. Although it's useful to describe the "logic" of oppressive systems when we're articulating them, there are good reasons to think that they can be self-contradictory. Women, for instance, are expected to be both sexually available and chaste. It is not out of the question that GNC folk may be normatively positioned as both nonexistent and givers of some goods. It is worth considering, for instance, whether

settler-colonial White supremacy situates Indigenous American non-binary gender systems and the non-binary persons in those systems as having some distinctively GNC-coded goods in some cases.

That said, the account of misandrogyny given here doesn't require that there be GNC-coded goods under patriarchy. The analogy turns on the enforcement of patriarchal norms. Where misogyny enforces the norms of the gender hierarchy, misandrogyny enforces the norms of the gender binary. Where misogyny polices and enforces women's role in the gender hierarchy, misandrogyny polices and enforces the nonexistence of GNC folks in the gender binary. Misogyny pushes women down into subordinate gender roles; misandrogyny pushes GNC folk out of existence.

If there aren't GNC-coded goods, what are gender binary norms like?

In my view, there are three broad kinds of patriarchal norms that get enforced by three kinds of misandrogynistic mechanisms. I sketch them here and return to them in the sections below. The relevant norms are unified in that they call us to expect and endorse the nonexistence of GNC folk. They do this in different ways. In some cases, they call us to conform to our assigned birth genders and to expect that others will do the same. In other cases, norms of the same kind call us to conform to *one binary gender or another*, if not to one's birth assignment. Remove bodily hair to be a woman; don't remove it to be a man. Grow long hair to be a woman; don't to be a man. Build upper body musculature to be a man; diet to be a woman. And so on. These norms call us to rid ourselves of features that would make us gender non-conforming, whether the gender we conform to "matches" one's sex assigned at birth or not, and they call us to expect that others will likewise render their gender non-conformity nonexistent. I call these "norms of assignment."

In addition, patriarchal norms call us to endorse and expect that every person is either a man or a woman, no one is both, and no one is neither. These norms are evident in how readily we accept, for instance, gender binary bathroom options. In taking it that it's acceptable

(under patriarchal norms) for a school or public space to have gender binary bathroom options, it's accepted that everyone is either a man or a woman and no one is neither. In accepting that there won't be any men in women's rooms and there won't be any women in men's rooms, it's accepted that no one is both a woman and a man. The same considerations apply, *mutatis mutandis*, for gender segregated prisons, schools, dormitories, sports, and shelters, and for gender-markings on government identification, gender-marked school uniforms, and gender-marked professional dress. These all evidence what I call "norms of assimilation."

In some of the more jarring cases, patriarchal norms call us to endorse and expect that GNC folk have no place in society. These expectations are plausibly entangled with the two kinds of norms noted above. Expecting that everyone will eradicate features that don't conform to one of the two binary genders can have a hint of the expectation that *if we don't eradicate those features*, then there will be no place for us: we will be socially unwanted, undeserving of attention and care, without standing in economic, educational, political, and social spaces. And accepting that gender binary bathrooms accommodate all persons can give us the impression that not only is there no place for GNC folk in society but that's how it ought to be—there ought to be no place for GNC folk. Similar expectations show up in how normal it feels to many people that GNC folk are marginalized economically, legally, socially, and institutionally. I'm not convinced that there are distinctive patriarchal norms that underwrite these expectations; they may be grounded in the kinds of norms noted above. But there are distinctive mechanisms that aim to bring it about that GNC folk have no place in society; I call them "mechanisms of annihilation."

Is this analysis intersectional?

Some commentators have criticized Manne's account of misogyny on grounds that it fails to be intersectional. For instance, Nora Berenstain charges that while Manne "makes room" for insights about intersecting oppressions and includes examples involving women who are

not rich, White, hetero, cis, or otherwise privileged, that's not enough. An intersectional analysis should also "theorize misogyny and other forms of oppression as structurally interdependent," and discussion of examples should include substantive analyses of the roles that other forms of oppression play (Berenstain 2019, 1367). Insofar as the present analysis is modeled on Manne's, it is reasonable to ask whether the account given here also fails to be intersectional.⁷

This section gives reasons to think that the analysis in this paper is intersectional. I'll point to influential accounts of what makes an analysis intersectional and to parts of the present paper that exhibit the relevant intersectional-making features.

Kimberlé Crenshaw is most often credited with coining the term "intersectionality." Crenshaw makes the case that analyses of oppression in terms of just one "axis" or issue—racial oppression, say—tend to focus attention on the most privileged members of an oppressed group (e.g., class-privileged Black men, class-privileged cis White women) and obscure (or at least leave unanalyzed) the mechanisms that target the most vulnerable (e.g., poor Black women). (See, e.g., Crenshaw 1989, 151–152.) In order to avoid theorizing that further entrenches privilege and obscures vulnerability, we should offer analyses that acknowledge multiple axes of oppression and focus on those who are disadvantaged by multiple axes—those who are situated at the intersections of multiple axes of oppression. Thus, I focus on those who are situated at the intersections of multiple axes of oppression. For each mechanism of misandrogyny described below, I provide examples illustrating the mechanism working in concert with other axes of oppression.

But as Berenstain points out, it's not enough merely to give examples that focus on persons disadvantaged by multiple axes of oppression; we should also provide substantive analyses of those other forms of oppression. Each section below includes substantive (but of course brief) discussions of forms of oppression that intersect with

7. I'm grateful to a referee for this journal for pressing me on this point.

misandrogyny. In discussing mechanisms of assignment, for instance, I appeal to Angela Davis's analysis of how women's prisons reinforce gender, race, and class hierarchies. The section on mechanisms of assimilation engages with analyses of the war on terror and colonialism. Section 3 discusses mechanisms of annihilation in conjunction with analyses of transphobia, White ignorance, and settler colonialism.

One reason that intersectional analyses include substantive discussion of various forms of oppression is that, as Berenstain says, they "theorize misogyny and other forms of oppression as structurally interdependent." Patricia Hill Collins says intersectional analyses draw on the insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. operate as "reciprocally constructing phenomena" (Collins 2015, 2). Similarly, Vivian May says intersectionality approaches "systems of oppression as enmeshed and mutually reinforcing" (May 2015, 3). Accordingly, this paper presents misandrogyny as interdependent and mutually reinforcing with patriarchy, White supremacy, colonialism, heterosexism, imperialism, and other systems of oppression. In section 2, for instance, I make the case that mechanisms of assimilation are mutually reinforcing with colonialism, White supremacy, and the targeting of undocumented immigrants. Each section discusses interdependencies between specific mechanisms of misandrogyny and various other forms of oppression.

Ange-Marie Hancock proposes that, among other things, intersectional analyses identify four "playing fields" upon which race, gender, class, etc. interact: "the hegemonic (ideas, cultures, and ideologies), structural (social institutions), disciplinary (bureaucratic hierarchies and administrative practices), and interpersonal (routinized interactions among individuals)" (Hancock 2007, 74). This paper identifies intersections in each of these playing fields: we saw above that various ideologies interact in determining the extension of "GNC folk." We'll see below that misandrogyny interacts with White supremacy, colonialism, and sexism on the structural playing field, with White supremacy and the war on terror on the disciplinary playing field, and with racialized social power, White conceptions of queerness, transphobia, homophobia, and racism in interpersonal interactions.

It would be fruitful to identify more interactions on the various playing fields Hancock mentions, and perhaps it would help to consider other accounts of intersectionality, but I hope this suffices for this relatively short piece.

Misandrogyny and transphobia

Many GNC folk who are targets of misandrogyny are trans. According to a common misconception, every trans person has a binary gender: they have had medical interventions to transition away from one to "the other" binary gender. But this conception conflicts with one of the more influential definitions of "transgender" in trans studies, namely, that given by Susan Stryker: "any and all kinds of variation from gender norms and expectations" (Stryker 2008, 19). (The common misconception, of course, illustrates the invisibility of GNC folk.) If we take "gender norms and expectations" in this definition to refer to patriarchal norms and expectations, then it would seem that everyone who is GNC is also transgender and vice versa.⁸ This overlap suggests a question: Why say that what I'm describing here is misandrogyny rather than transphobia?

Scholarly and popular usage most often take "transphobia" to refer to psychological biases and negative attitudes that target transpeople. Take, for instance, Talia Mae Bettcher's use: "I use the term transphobia not necessarily to imply the fear of transpeople, but simply any negative attitudes (hatred, loathing, rage, or moral indignation) harbored toward transpeople on the basis of our enactments of gender" (Bettcher 2007, 46). As Bettcher notes, such attitudes likely "lie at the root of much violence against transpeople" (ibid.). This, I take it, gives us reason to maintain a use of "transphobia" that refers to negative psychological attitudes.

8. Keep in mind, however, that there may be cases in which a person identifies as trans but is consistently situated among patriarchal norms as a woman only or a man only; in this case, I take it that the person is trans by virtue of their self-identity, but they are not GNC on my definition because they are not positioned among patriarchal gender norms and expectations as neither a man only nor a woman only.

This does not imply (and I don't take Bettcher to be saying) that there aren't systems of mechanisms—in addition to individual psychological attitudes—that target transpeople for violence. There are. In my view, these mechanisms overlap considerably with the mechanisms of misandrogyny. Mechanisms of misandrogyny target anyone who doesn't conform to the gender binary, i.e., GNC folk. Many transpeople are GNC folk and vice versa. Accordingly, the mechanisms I describe here overlap considerably with mechanisms that target trans folk. But rather than repurpose the term “transphobia” to refer to these mechanisms, it is preferable to retain the term that refers to negative psychological attitudes toward transpeople. It's important to have a term with that referent. Moreover, Lori Watson has introduced the term “misandrogyny” for the purpose of referring to mechanisms that target gender-non-conforming people. Since the term “transphobia” is already in use for a different important purpose, and since “misandrogyny” is already used to refer to mechanisms that target GNC folk, I use misandrogyny for that same purpose here, and I refrain from repurposing “transphobia.”

In addition, as a dominant binary trans narrative has emerged, it may be that patriarchal norms that situate binary transpeople *qua* trans have emerged as well, and these may be accompanied by distinctive mechanisms of enforcement. An adequate account of transphobia as a system of mechanisms should determine whether these possibilities are actual at present. That's not my aim here. Consequently, the account here would plausibly be inadequate as an account of systems of transphobia, and I discourage readers from thinking of it as one.

So much for preliminaries. In the following sections, I've divided the mechanisms that enforce misandrogyny into three kinds. I suspect there are more, though, and I wouldn't be surprised if there are better ways to classify the mechanisms. I propose the following as a point of departure.

1. Assignment

Norms of assignment call us to rid ourselves of features that would make us gender non-conforming and to expect that others will do the same. Mechanisms of assignment enforce these norms. They enforce the placelessness of GNC folk by assigning each of us to a specific position in the gender binary.

We're subject to mechanisms of assignment at least from birth. In many hospitals in the United States and Europe, patriarchal gender norms dictate that a newborn's gender is fully determined by their genitalia and hormones—these are the only features available to situate a newborn among patriarchal gender norms. Consequently, patriarchal norms don't distinguish between a person who is intersex and one who is gender non-conforming at this stage of life; intersex newborns are often situated as gender non-conforming, and as such, they are subject to mechanisms of misandrogyny. Their bodies are made to conform to the gender binary through sex assignment, surgeries, and hormone treatments.

As Anne Fausto-Sterling (among others) has described, it is shockingly common for practitioners to perform medical interventions on intersex newborns, altering their bodies so that they conform to the gender binary. Upon the birth of a child whose genitalia are “either/or, neither/both,” as Fausto-Sterling puts it, “the attending physician ... consults a pediatric endocrinologist and a surgeon, and they declare a state of medical emergency” (Fausto-Sterling 2000, 45). They tell the parents that they can and will “identify the ‘true’ sex that lies underneath the surface condition” (ibid., 50). Once they do, they'll use hormonal and surgical treatments to alter the child's body to conform to the gender assignment. As research shows and as intersex activists point out, such medical interventions are plausible violations of patient agency and likely contribute to later psychological distress (Ferrara and Casper 2018, 3). In addition, in order to maintain the presumed “naturalness” of the binary gender position to which a child has been assigned, many parents and physicians don't tell the child about

the medical interventions they've undergone. Monica Casper reports that when she was the executive director of the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA), "she was told repeatedly by activists that learning they were lied to by their parents and physicians was 'far worse' than any physical alteration to their bodies, although these too were seen as damaging" (ibid., 3).

Throughout life, one is routinely punished for gender non-conformity in ways that push one into a gender assignment. These punishments range from everyday gender policing to violent attacks. Everyday gender policing includes bullying, taunts, nudges, and corrections whenever one steps out of gender conformity. In these cases, one is often read as a failed or unruly man or woman (cf. Watson 2020, 240). Bullying and taunts target one for being a failure; nudges and corrections aim to help one overcome one's gender failures. Bullying and taunts for gender non-conformity are likely familiar from most readers' personal experiences—as recipients, witnesses, and/or bullies. It's little surprise that gender non-conforming children and adults are more likely to be targeted for bullying, harassment, and name-calling than gender-conforming peers (Clarke 2019, 910).

Nudges and corrections often come from parents, teachers, coaches, and friends. Children who wear the "wrong" clothes, play with the wrong toys, play the wrong sports, play too aggressively or too passively, speak in the wrong ways, walk in the wrong ways, etc. etc. are often thereby situated among patriarchal norms as gender non-conforming. They are then subject to mechanisms of assignment that push them back into a gender assignment by disapproving looks or remarks; by having toys, activities, or clothes hidden or taken away, by pressure to join gender-conforming activities, sports, friend groups, and so on. Meanwhile, teens and adults, especially those read as AFAB (assigned female at birth), might receive humiliating nudges or corrections that push them toward their perceived gender assignment: advice on makeup, clothes, hair styles, social passivity, etc. or for those read as AMAB (assigned male at birth), exhortations to be more aggressive, dominant, muscular, etc.

Adult conversation often involves subtle mechanisms of assignment. Z Nicolazzo describes cases in which Black non-binary trans students are pushed into binary gender assignments by subtle dismissals from predominantly White queer student groups. These dismissals tend to characterize the Black non-binary students as not "trans enough," leveraging racialized social power to police what is and isn't "trans enough," and illustrating the dominant conception of queerness as *White* queerness (Nicolazzo 2016, 8–10; Logie and Rwigema 2014; cf. Clarke 2019, 911). One case focuses on Silvia, a Black non-binary trans college student who identifies as agender and multiply disabled, and who uses "she/her/hers" pronouns. Silvia is talking to a binary trans man in the mostly White student group TransActions, which focuses on trans issues and gender activism. As Silvia describes a date she's been on, the other student says, "This conversation really proves that I'm not a woman" (Nicolazzo 2016, 10). The implication is that Silvia *is* a woman, and the differences between the speaker and Silvia revealed in the story suffice to establish that the speaker is not a woman.⁹ But Silvia isn't a woman either. She's agender. Nonetheless, when she tried to describe aspects of her life to a predominantly White trans group, she was subtly pushed to interpret her experiences as those of a cis woman. *Prima facie*, binary gender norms and racial norms that position queerness as White conspired to preclude the possibility of Silvia's being Black, trans, and non-binary. When she tried, she was assigned to cis womanhood by her White peers' subtle dismissals—dismissals deriving their power partly from mutually reinforcing mechanisms of misandrogyny, White supremacy, and ableism.

Because these mechanisms push us into being either a man (and not a woman) or a woman (and not a man), they often differ in how they push us: the ways they push one to be a man differ from the ways they push one to be a woman. This is manifest when mechanisms

9. If it helps, you can think of Silvia's conversation in terms of Mary Kate McGowan's *conversational exercitives*. Silvia's peer makes a conversational move that is "fair play" only if Silvia is a woman. If no one objects, then it is subsequently permissible in the conversation to take it that Silvia is a woman (McGowan 2009).

of assignment are violent. Katherine A. Rimes and colleagues (2019) compared victimization experiences of non-binary and binary trans youth according to sex assigned at birth. They found that AFAB study participants, both binary and non-binary, were more likely than non-binary and binary AMAB (assigned male at birth) participants to experience sexual abuse. Rape and sexual abuse push one into a woman's patriarchal position by extracting feminine-coded goods. They "make" their targets women by forcing a "failed woman" or a "disobedient woman" into the patriarchal feminine sexual role (Rimes et al. 2019, 237). Meanwhile, when mechanisms of assignment violently push one into a man's role, they often aim to provoke one into enacting patriarchal masculinity. They try to goad the target into violence, dominating others, or sexual abuse of women. This may explain why Rimes and colleagues found that AMAB study participants, both binary and non-binary, were more likely than non-binary and binary AFAB participants to experience physical assault (ibid., 237).

Much work on early women's prisons reveals both (i) how they enforced the gender binary and (ii) how misandrogyny can be mutually reinforcing with misogyny, White supremacy, and class domination. Angela Davis characterizes AFAB convicts in a way that resembles Lori Watson's remark that presumed AFAB GNC folk are seen as "failed women": "According to dominant views [during the nineteenth century], women convicts were irrevocably fallen women. ... [F]emale criminals were seen as having transgressed fundamental moral principles of womanhood" (2003, 70). Prison reformers didn't challenge the idea that women convicts were fallen women but that they were beyond redemption. As a path to redemption, reformers proposed prisons that would push criminalized AFAB persons to assimilate to White, middle-class domestic roles. Reporting on a prison described by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Davis says their regimes were "based on the assumption that 'criminal' women could be rehabilitated by assimilating correct womanly behaviors—that is, by becoming experts in domesticity—especially cooking, cleaning, and sewing" (ibid., 63). As Joanne Belknap put it, "[A]n important role of the reform movement

in women's prisons was to encourage and ingrain 'appropriate' gender roles, such as vocational training in cooking, sewing and cleaning" (1996, 95; cited in Davis 2003, 71). As institutionalized mechanisms of assignment, such regimes pushed AFAB persons into binary feminine gender roles.

In addition, by pushing "fallen women" into training that emphasized domestic labor, women's prisons reinforced gender, race, and class hierarchies. They prepared more affluent women for domestic lives of financial dependence on husbands, and they "steered poor women (and especially Black women) into 'free world' jobs in domestic service" (Davis 2003, 70). Moreover, since Black and Indigenous American women were often segregated from incarcerated White women, sentenced to men's prisons, or exposed to the convict lease system, these "feminized" women's prisons reflected and reinforced conceptions of femininity that center Whiteness (ibid., 72).

Although mechanisms of assignment often push GNC folk into their assumed birth assignment, they don't always enforce conformity with one's birth assignment; they enforce conformity to the binary, whether one is pushed to conform to one's birth assignment or to the so-called opposite gender. Dean Spade describes how medical institutions enforce and stabilize the gender binary by making conformity to binary gender norms and dominant binary trans narratives prerequisite for access to gender-affirming surgeries or hormones. "The 'successful' daily performance of normative gender is a requirement for receiving authorization for body alteration" (Spade 2006, 319). In some cases, one is expected to "live in the new gender role ... for 1 to 2 years in order to experience life in the new role and develop appropriate role behaviors" (Shore 1984, 277). In most cases, one must acquire letters from two mental health experts and document persistent gender dysphoria.¹⁰ Take these points in the context of surgeries that

10. One is often also required to rehearse a dominant narrative according to which one identified with "the opposite gender" from a young age. As Spade points out, this both (i) reinforces the invisibility of non-binary transpeople and (ii) makes it seem as though only people who have identified with "the opposite gender" from a young age experience gender dysphoria in a way

affirm the genders of cis women or men: breast augmentation, plastic surgery, hair implants, and so on. As Spade points out, one doesn't need letters from two psychiatrists or to live "as a small-nosed woman" for years before being granted access to rhinoplasty (Spade 2006, 315). There are no restrictions on medical interventions that contribute to gender conformity, and they are often covered by medical insurance (Spade 2011, 148–149). But similar interventions are denied unless or until it's proved that they won't contribute to gender non-conformity. In these cases, mechanisms of assignment punish GNC folk and push us into gender conformity by inhibiting access to medical services and making gender conformity a necessary precondition for treatment.

2. Assimilation

Mechanisms of assimilation push GNC folk into the gender binary by making basic necessities and goods available only to persons who assimilate to some binary gender. Whereas mechanisms of assignment push us into some assigned place in the gender binary—usually the gender associated with one's presumed birth assignment—mechanisms of assimilation push us to be *somewhere, anywhere* in the gender binary. Mechanisms of assignment enforce the placelessness of GNC folk by assigning individual people into binary gender roles; mechanisms of assimilation enforce the same by pushing GNC folk to assimilate into physical, institutional, legal, and social spaces that allow only for binary gender roles. Mechanisms of assignment push triangular (oval, rectangular, trapezoidal, etc.) blocks into round holes or square holes. Mechanisms of assimilation produce lids (for buckets of blocks) that have only round and square holes.

Readers are likely aware that the organization of physical, institutional, legal, and social space is such that there is often no place for GNC folk *qua* GNC. Gender segregated bathrooms, schools,

worth taking seriously. Consequently, when any person P experiences discomfort with their assigned gender role (as most people do), the dominant narrative tells us to ask whether P identified with "the opposite gender" from a young age or not. If so, then P is binary trans. If not, then P is not trans at all and should "remain" in their assigned binary gender role.

dormitories, sports, prisons, shelters, and recovery centers are common. They organize physical, institutional, legal, and social space in ways that make appropriate places for people who are men (and not women) and appropriate places for people who are women (and not men). If you are both or neither, then patriarchal gender segregation organizes the world such that there is no place for you. If you want to use the bathroom, live in a dormitory, play a sport, or access a shelter for homelessness, addiction, or to escape abuse, then you will often have to assimilate into the gender binary; this means you must stop being both/neither, conceal your gender non-conformity, or let others overlook it. If you are incarcerated or sent to a gender segregated school, shelter, or care facility, you will be presumed to be (only) a man or (only) a woman. Gender segregated spaces serve to enforce the nonexistence of GNC folk and push us into the gender binary.

More and less official gender binary markers also push us to assimilate. Government identifications and applications for jobs, schools, scholarships, etc. often require one to choose a binary gender. (At present, seventeen countries, eighteen US states, and the District of Columbia allow non-binary gender designations on at least some official documents.) Many schools that aren't gender segregated have gender-marking uniforms. If Ze is neither a boy nor a girl or both a boy and a girl, then there is no appropriate uniform for Ze to wear. It is currently legal for employers to prescribe sex-differentiated dress codes (Clarke 2019, 978), and, in any case, "professional attire" is often relative to the wearer's presumed binary gender. If one is neither/both, then one is less likely to be read as "professional" during interviews or other formal interactions for jobs, schools, scholarships, court hearings, etc. Gender-coded identification, dress, and customs exclude GNC folk and reinforce our placelessness.

Things have improved in some cases—some universities, airports, shopping malls, restaurants, etc. have all gender or single-occupancy bathrooms, for instance, and there are ongoing attempts to recognize

non-binary genders on US passports.¹¹ But the fact remains that patriarchal gender binary norms call for accommodations that exclude GNC folk. Where they do, mechanisms of assimilation make it so that there is no place for us unless we assimilate to some binary gender. As Lori Watson puts it, we must “adopt a gender or fail to have a social existence” (Watson 2020, 240). Assimilating to the gender binary is necessary not only for accessing resources but for having a social existence at all. If you fail to satisfy binary gender norms, you won’t have a social identity, and you won’t be recognized as intelligibly human (cf. *ibid.*). Mechanisms of assimilation structure the world so that social standing, respect, recognition, and moral worth are distributed in ways that exclude GNC folk.¹²

When mechanisms of assimilation push GNC folk into the gender binary, they sometimes push a single individual into different binary positions in different cases; when they do, they are especially punitive, and they often reinforce (and are reinforced by) other mechanisms of oppression. Dean Spade gives an example.

[F]or example, one person born in New York and living in New York might have a birth certificate she cannot change from “M” to “F” because she has not had genital surgery; a driver’s license that correctly reflects “F” because she got a doctor’s letter; Social Security records that say “M” because she cannot produce evidence of surgery; a name change order that shows her new feminine name; and a Medicaid card that reads “F” because the agency had no official policy and the clerk felt the name change order and driver’s license were sufficient. (Spade 2011, 145)

Whether this person identifies as binary or non-binary, she is situated among patriarchal norms as gender non-conforming, and thus she is

11. See H.R. 5962 for federal legislation that would allow a non-binary gender identification.

12. Thanks to a referee for this journal for suggesting that I expand on this point in this way.

a target for mechanisms of assimilation. Moreover, the ways that she has been assimilated in different cases combine to make for another violation of patriarchal gender norms. Binary gender norms preclude the possibility of persons who are “M” in some cases and “F” in others, and yet this is what her records show. Consequently, those who consult her records in the light of patriarchal gender norms may target her for further exclusion, marginalization, or violence. This includes employers who do background checks or who require documentation that confirms information on one’s job application; it includes police, officials checking documents for travel, and bureaucrats involved in processing applications for other official documents. As Spade points out, in the context of the war on terror, when such discrepancies show up in the gender records of persons already subject to increased surveillance—thanks to their race or immigration status—it can make them a target for interrogation, detention, and violence (Spade 2011, 146). Similarly, in the case of Black, Brown, and Indigenous persons already targeted for incarceration and violence by state systems, discrepancies in one’s gender records offer an occasion for incarceration and state violence.

The dangers of “inconsistent” records have increased as the United States has increasingly targeted undocumented immigrants. In efforts to identify undocumented immigrants, US government agencies that collect identifying data now regularly compare their data looking for “mismatched” information on individuals. (Previously, data had been shared only during specific investigations.) When they find it, they might threaten to revoke the individual’s driver’s license, pressure their employer to rectify the “discrepancy,” etc. (Spade 2011, 151). These new policies expose immigrants and anyone whose gender records “conflict” to harassment and exploitation by employers, violence from police or ICE, and loss of access to government services and benefits. Here, misandrogyny facilitates surveillance of undocumented immigrants while the targeting of undocumented immigrants for harassment, exploitation, and violence exposes GNC folk to the same.

Mechanisms of assimilation have played significant roles in colonialism. Colonial efforts to assimilate Indigenous peoples, for instance, often included enforcing binary gender norms on communities that had recognized non-binary genders for generations (see, e.g., Morgensen 2010, 111–116). Moreover, Indigenous violations of binary gender norms were often taken as justification for forced assimilation. Mark Rifkin shows how “policies aimed at assimilating Indians ... figured Indian cultures as other than heteronormative in order to reinvent and assimilate them as straight, private property-owning, married citizens.”¹³ Andrea Smith has argued that sexual violence and “the imposition of European gender relationships on Native communities” even *enabled* European colonization of Native peoples (Smith 2005, 139). Ifi Amadiume describes how, prior to colonialism, the gender system of the Nnobi society in southeastern Nigeria allowed for what Amadiume calls “male daughters” and “female husbands.” But under colonialism, the institutional and social structures supporting these gender positions were condemned, abandoned, and reinterpreted in order to assimilate the culture to the patriarchal gender binary (Amadiume 1987, 123). In these cases and others, mechanisms of assignment, assimilation, and annihilation work in concert to serve the purposes of colonialism. Cultures that recognize more than two genders or that allow more gender non-conformity were forced to reorganize themselves to fit the patriarchal gender binary. Individuals who were non-binary were subject to mechanisms of assignment—“gendered and sexual reeducation” (Morgensen 2010, 114). Individuals and communities who didn’t assimilate were subject to mechanisms of annihilation (ibid., 111–117; Smith 2005, 178). The mechanisms of misandrogyny in these cases conjoined with racist, religious, and Eurocentric ideologies to enact and justify genocide and exploitation. Meanwhile, the need to legitimize colonial genocide and exploitation

plausibly helped reinforce binary gender norms and mechanisms of misandrogyny.¹⁴

3. Annihilation

Mechanisms of annihilation aim to bring it about that GNC folk are non-existent. They push GNC folk out of literal, social, legal, institutional, or epistemic existence. If mechanisms of assignment push triangular (oval, rectangular, trapezoidal, etc.) blocks into square and round holes and mechanisms of assimilation produce systems that have only round and square holes, then mechanisms of annihilation discard, discount, and destroy blocks that aren’t round or square.

Readers are probably already aware that fatal violence against trans and gender non-conforming people is rampant. According to numbers compiled by Transrespect Versus Transphobia Worldwide, at least 350 trans and gender non-conforming people were murdered from the beginning of October 2019 to the end of September 2020; disproportionately many were Black women or women of color, sex workers, migrants, and/or poor. Although many of us mourn these murders annually on Trans Day of Remembrance, patriarchal norms that call for the nonexistence of GNC folk often position them as justified—it’s *supposed to be* that we don’t exist. In recounting the 2008 murder of Latisha King, Gayle Salamon makes the case that “in many instances of violence against gender-nonconforming people and transpeople ... violence justifies itself by characterizing non-normative gender as itself a violent act of aggression and reading the expression of gender identity *as itself a sexual act*” (Salamon 2018, 5). The defense in the Latisha King murder trial pursued a “gay panic” defense, in which a man presumed to be straight claims that he was thrown into a panic by a gay man’s sexual advances and thereby led to allegedly justified violence. Salamon attended the trial and reports that the defense team offered “no evidence of explicitly sexual aggression on Larry’s [Latisha’s] part,” but that instead, “no sexual provocation was required *because*

13. Schneider 2007, 606–607, referring to Rifkin 2006. Cited in Morgensen 2010, 108.

14. Thanks to a referee for this journal for pointing this out.

Larry's feminine gender was already a panic inducing provocation" (ibid. 5, emphasis in original). According to the logic of a gay panic defense, a man seeks to exculpate himself from violence by appealing to the revulsion and rage of being the object of a gay sexual advance. On these lawyers' extension of that defense, an AMAB person's mere expression of a feminine gender is similarly threatening and similarly an excuse for violence. Their case, in short, was that Latisha's mere gender non-conformity justified her being the target of violence. The violence justifies itself, as Salamon says. Talia Mae Bettcher describes much the same in the murder of Gwen Araujo and her murderers' appeal to a "trans panic defense" (Bettcher 2007, 44).

The case of Latisha King illustrates one intersection of mechanisms of annihilation and mechanisms of White supremacy. Latisha King was biracial and identified as Black; in one pretrial hearing, a gang expert testified that her murderer, Brandon McInerney, was affiliated with a White supremacist group (Salamon 2018, 39–40). One would expect these facts to inform public understanding of the murder and subsequent trial. But media reporting and the trial focused on King's gender non-conformity (ibid., 25–37). The press seemed to ignore the relevance of White supremacist violence to the murder. On the one hand, the focus on King's gender non-conformity—rather than on her murderer's White supremacy—bolsters Salamon's claim that according to patriarchal norms, King's own gender expression was the cause and justification of the murder. On the other hand, the refusal to acknowledge the role that White supremacy might have played in the murder is plausibly a consequence of what Charles Mills calls "White ignorance," wherein epistemic norms warped by a White supremacist political system call knowers to ignore the causes and consequences of racial oppression (see Mills 1997; 2007; see also Medina 2012 35)

Mechanisms of annihilation are also manifest in medical neglect, abortion of intersex fetuses, and genocide. In August 1995, Tyra Hunter was in a car accident that left her badly injured; when EMTs arrived and uncovered her genitalia, they stopped treating her for 5–7 crucial minutes while they made transphobic jokes and used racist and sexist

slurs. When she arrived at the hospital, some doctors refused to treat her and some assumed she was HIV+. She died about an hour after arriving at the ER.

As noted above, intersex newborns are often positioned as GNC folk at birth and targeted by mechanisms of assignment. Intersex fetuses, meanwhile, are often targeted by mechanisms of annihilation. Kwon Chan Jeon and colleagues report on the regularity with which intersex fetuses are targeted for termination (Jeon et al. 2012).

As noted in the previous section, mechanisms of annihilation are often mutually reinforcing with colonial oppression. Scott Lauria Morgensen points out that "[c]olonists interpreted diverse practices of gender and sexuality as signs of a general primitivity among Native peoples. Over time, they ... framed Native peoples as *queer populations marked for death*" (Morgensen 2010, 106, emphasis added). He reports, for instance, that when European-descended explorers encountered non-binary Indigenous peoples in North America, their response was less often to single out the non-binary individuals for violence and more often to subject their communities to "military attack, containment, or removal" (ibid., 113). In conjunction with settler colonialism and racism, mechanisms of annihilation targeted entire communities for nonexistence.

In addition to taking away the physical lives of GNC folk, mechanisms of annihilation also target us for social, legal, institutional, and epistemic nonexistence. One would like a precise definition for each of these "kinds of nonexistence," but I won't provide any here. Nonetheless, I take the general idea to be relatively straightforward: when mechanisms of annihilation aren't literally destroying GNC folk, they serve to marginalize us to such a degree that we have no social, legal, institutional, or epistemic standing. As Lori Watson says:

Gender non-conforming persons ... are perceived as occupying a space of contradiction: human and not intelligibly human. Their bodies and self-presentation do not fit within the schema of intelligible humanity. Normative

notions of humanity carry with them the gender binary. One is never simply a human. They are a *kind* of human, a man, a woman, a member of a racial group, and so on. (Watson 2020, 240)

When we're situated among patriarchal norms as "not intelligibly human," we don't have social, legal, institutional, or epistemic standing. The mechanisms that enforce those norms see to it.

4. Conclusion

Misandrogyny is a system of mechanisms that—together with other systems of oppression—enforces the norms that constitute the patriarchal gender binary. According to those norms, everyone is either only a man or only a woman; GNC folk don't exist. Misandrogyny enforces this nonexistence by (i) assigning GNC folk to a binary gender and punishing non-conformity to that gender, (ii) assimilating GNC folk and cultures into the binary gender system, and (iii) eliminating GNC folk and cultures. Although much has been written on gender policing, binary gender norms, transphobia, and other topics related to misandrogyny, we also need to appreciate that misandrogyny is a system of mechanisms that punishes those who violate binary gender norms. Future work should elaborate further on how misandrogyny intersects with other systems of oppression, including misogyny, transphobia, White supremacy, ableism, classism, and settler colonialism; and it should spell out how mechanisms of annihilation bring about social, legal, institutional, and epistemic nonexistence.

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