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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

It is a great pride for me to be able to publish two talented and aspirational feminist thinkers in this year's edition of *Aporia*, the Feminist Edition. Each young academic who takes an active interest in feminist philosophy holds immense importance for the field as a whole; they are all part of an inquiry into the kind of philosophy which may prove to be one of the most impactful on our day-to-day lives.

As such, I would first like to thank all those who submitted a paper to us for consideration. The journal, as well as me personally, thank you and applaud you for your passion for the field.

I would also like to extend a massive thank you and a feeling of immense pride to our editors this year. Not only have I been lucky enough to work alongside a brilliant academic and woman, Avery Cohen, who edited this year's analytic edition, but also a hugely dedicated team of editors who volunteered their time and energy during the taxing - and otherwise stressful enough - academic year.

Another brilliant contribution was made by this year's cover artist, Vår Aunevik. She is an old friend of mine who has hugely impressed me with the introspection and commentary her art provides since we first met. It is thanks to her skill we are able to present The Feminist Edition with such a pleasing first impression.

Lastly, I want to thank all the inspiring women in the philosophy society and the general department of Philosophy at St Andrews. It is because of thinkers like you, both past and present, that we are able to pursue knowledge in a field which many dismiss as unimportant.

Looking forward to the next year of the feminist edition!

Yours faithfully,

Christina Landys Herre,
Editor in Chief

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Is aesthetic judgement gendered? – A critical comparison of feminist aesthetic theory and Kantian formalism

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Kantian aesthetic formalism holds that aesthetic judgement is not a matter of knowledge or cognition, nor does it implicate the contexts of the artist or beholder. By contrast, feminist aesthetics maintains that the work of art and the ‘gaze’ of the beholder are gendered and, by extension, politicised: this obliges a contextualist approach to aesthetic philosophy. In this essay, I explore the conflicts between these two approaches, the failures of formalism and the necessity of feminist aesthetics to analyse art in the 21st century.

This essay has a dual focus. Firstly, I will examine the claim that all art and aesthetic judgement is gendered. This claim is fundamental to feminist aesthetics, which I will refer to as an organic whole but with specific focus on the perspectives of Mary Devereaux and Laura Mulvey. Moreover, this essay will also address the points of contention between feminist/contextualist claims and traditional (neo-Kantian) aesthetic philosophy which regards aesthetic worth as something formal, and whether this formalist approach is ultimately undermined by the feminist critique.

In 1971, Linda Nochlin published the article, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* An art historian and Second Wave feminist, Nochlin sought to determine why names in painting like Artemisia Gentileschi are marginalised by Rembrandt and DaVinci, or, in film where D.W. Griffith’s achievements in silent cinema appear to overshadow the pioneering works of Lois Weber, especially since these women’s oeuvres showcase no dearth of artistic innovation nor profound disparity in formal ‘value’. The feminist perspective applies a contextual approach to artistic appreciation to deconstruct the “coded systems at play that [have historically objectified] women in art”¹ and enabled patriarchy by assuming patriarchal power relations within aesthetics. To analyse the gendering of art and artistic appreciation, it seems logical to approach these respectively.

However, as was Laura Mulvey’s project in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* against the ‘representation theory’ of prior aestheticians, the persistence of the “patriarchal-dominated mass media”² and the male gaze throughout the history of art denies “the eye’s innocence”³ in traditional artistic spectatorship, and thus the political division between the artwork and the spectator. While representation theory argued for an empirical criticism – that the artist’s work simply represented the sexism of the world in which it was made – Mulvey’s influential position incorporated neo-Freudianism to dismantle the division between art and appreciator. She argued that all parties involved in the aesthetic (artists and audiences) are entangled in the same system of signs which suppress femininity and undervalue the subjectivity of women. In this sense, the art and the gaze are both products of patriarchy.

In Devereaux’s words, the “notion of the gaze has both a literal and figurative component.”⁴ In the more literal sense, ‘art’ as we understand it has been an overwhelmingly masculine sphere of influence throughout history. One need only tour the Louvre with this assumption to fully realise the immensity of patriarchy’s influence over the production of the innumerable portraits, sketches,

¹Mullins, C. (2019) ‘A Little Feminist History of Art’, *Tate Enterprises Ltd.* p.10

²hooks, b. (1994) ‘Outlaw Culture’. *Routledge.* p.87

³Devereaux, M. (199) ‘Oppressive Texts, Resisting Readers and the Gendered Spectator: The New Aesthetics’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 48, no. 4. p.337

⁴Ibid.

and sculptures of the female body, appropriated as objects of fetishist fascination by male artists. But the curation process within the establishment of the Louvre (arguably an ‘invention’ of the Western canon) exposes the canonization processes which have defined European art, typically enacted by white men in favour of white men – Ruskin and Shaw may be household names, but how many art history students cite Charlotte-Catherine Patin nowadays? The canon typically refers to the artistic products associated with ‘high culture’ or highly valued cultural products; these products achieve this status by being valued highly by the powerful.

Take Mulvey’s filmic examples, usually belonging to the canons of Film Noir or 1950s melodrama (Sternberg, Sirk, et al.): the vast majority of which were directed by white men which position their white male protagonists in active subject positions and reduce female characters to passive plot décor – or, in the case of Film Noir’s quintessential ‘femme fatale’, an object of anxiety when they do in fact influence the film’s events. Films have been regularly canonised throughout the 20th century with films foremost depicting the white male perspective considered the most important – i.e., *Citizen Kane* and *Vertigo* – and including films featuring female protagonists like *Mildred Pierce* primarily conceived by men because theirs was the heterosexual-masculine perspective which critics, curators, and archivists most identified with.⁵ As Devereaux continues: “the Hollywood film reflects and encourages the cultural proclivity to treat the female body... only as [an object] of aesthetic contemplation”⁶ rather than a subject of her own will. Her perspective corresponds closely with John Berger’s arguments about the confinement of women to the phallogocentric desires of the patriarchal order which renders them inactive “appearances” within the *mise-en-scène* of male ego satisfaction. “Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at.”⁷ This is the meta-narrative of artistic representation and power relations that feminists seek to expose.

An analysis of the gaze is incomplete without addressing the psychoanalytic foundation with which Mulvey proposes to uncover “the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured [art].”⁸ In her introduction to *Visual Pleasure*, Mulvey asserts that “phallogocentrism... depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world”⁹, ‘phallogocentrism’ meaning the concept that the male sex organ is the central element in social organization. In this way, the androcentric order which empowers men within the text (or image) is formulated as a product of unconsciously recognising women as lacking the phallic object; Freud and Lacan recognised the oppression of women within the artwork as reactionary to castration anxiety. The reason characters played by Barbara Stanwyck or Marlene Dietrich defy assimilation into positions of powerlessness within their respective diegeses (such as Stanwyck’s iconic turn as the femme fatale in *Double Indemnity*) is because they reclaim narrative autonomy by influencing the events of the plot: they partake in the “narrative division of labour.”¹⁰ This causes anxiety in male spectators because the misrecognition of the female character’s possession of the phallic object (i.e., the misrecognition of their coded masculinity) which links to the fear of punishment for his Oedipal desire in “the signification of [the threat of their own] castration”¹¹ – the fear of that symbolic lack signified by femininity. Therefore, the narcissistic and scopophilic (pleasure in looking) aspects of male-gendered art in which the male-coded spectator self-identifies with his screen surrogate and imposes his sexual desires upon the female as an erotic object – Mulvey uses characters from *Vertigo* to exemplify the divide of looking/being looked at – are justified by a more complex system of signs which underpin unconscious aesthetic judgement and undermine women on an ideological level.

⁵It bears mentioning that the most recent (2022) *Sight and Sound* poll of the 100 ‘Greatest Films Ever Made’, chosen by critics, academics, and industry professionals, listed Chantal Akerman’s film *Jeanne Dielman* in the top spot. This signaled the first time a female director had featured in the top ten, never mind no. 1, and thus progress in the processes of curation and canonization (inc. the deconstruction of the ‘canon’).

⁶Ibid. p.342

⁷Berger, J. (1972) ‘Ways of Seeing’, *Penguin*. p.47

⁸Mulvey, L. (1989) ‘Visual and Other Pleasures’, *Macmillan*. p.14

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Mulvey. p.34

¹¹Lacan, J. (2002) ‘Écrits’, *W.W. Norton and Company*. p.576

Moreover, the severity of this unconscious process is revealed proper when we consider the instances in which art created by women (presumably from a ‘female’ gaze – I will return to this) showcases the same tendencies to cater towards the desires of the heterosexual male-coded spectator. In an essay called *Power to The Pussy: We don’t wannabe dicks in drag*, bell hooks takes the later career of Madonna as an example of the failure of radical feminism in the mass media. Having been stereotyped as a symbol of the female sexual revolution, the 32-year-old Madonna partook in a popular photoshoot for *Vanity Fair* in 1992 which styled her as a sex-kitten particular to the erotic fetishes of patriarchy. hooks locates the reason for this schismatic career move in “the thrill of gaining and holding onto the sustained mass patriarchal pornographic gaze” and remaining relevant a decade following her self-titled *Madonna*.¹² Another example might be the Flapper Films of the 1920s which featured ‘modern women’ protagonists – i.e., employed and sex-positive women characters. These films might seem emancipatory when one sees how many women were involved in production and post-production processes, but a closer look at a film like *It* starring Clara Bow will expose a failure to adequately autonomise female characters who, rather than pursue the objects of power made available to male protagonists, such as money or revenge, chase after handsome men in suits (higher in the corporate ladder than they are) and converse about little else. These films are failures of the Bechdel test twenty-four times per second.

Following Adorno and Horkheimer’s thesis on culture, the “masculinisation of the spectator position”¹³ is reproduced with the mechanical reproduction of both aesthetic styles and standards of taste in the industry; these standards are heteronormative and masculine. Conversely, the so-called female gaze is less predicated on the gender of the artist than the politics and gender critique of the artwork. In the closing remarks of *Visual Pleasure*, Mulvey stresses the imminence of the avant-garde in rescuing female subjectivity: “[feminist avant-garde art] destroys the satisfaction, pleasure and privilege”¹⁴ by self-consciously deconstructing the representation of women. Examples in postmodern art like Martha Rosler’s 1975 *Semiotics of the Kitchen* which satirically comments on female domesticity in their political and media representations, are images of women from the (gender conscious) perspectives of women emancipated from the influence of the male ego by revolutionary politics.

According to feminists, whether produced by patriarchy or an example of this radical feminist avant-garde, art is necessarily gendered. From here, I transition to the mainstays of neo-Kantian formalism and how formalist aesthetics – sometimes referred to as aestheticist approaches – is undermined by the feminist approach. There are explicit contentions between feminist and Kantian aesthetics, not least because feminist theory generally builds upon the post-idealist tradition of materialism as well as philosophies of praxis, whereas Kant’s aesthetics are predicated on his transcendental idealism. While I will not discuss transcendental idealism in toto, it is worth briefly mentioning Kant’s differentiation between appearance and reality. According to Kant, there is a difference between the realm of the appearances (‘phenomenal’) and how things are in themselves (‘noumenal realm’), and we can only know objects as they appear to us, as phenomena, through our cognitive faculties – i.e., we cannot ‘know’ objects, including artworks, noumenally outside our perception. Rather than distinguishing between these ‘realms’, the feminist approach argues that knowledge of an object in itself is possible through our mental processing of phenomena within the world. The world of “representations”¹⁵ which we perceive is the world in itself and can be comprehended: knowledge accrued from perception indicates knowledge of reality proper.

In Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*, with specific focus on the ‘Analytic of the Beautiful’, a series of aesthetic claims are made which appear to contest with the feminist point of view. For Kant, a judgement is aesthetic only if it is “not a cognitive judgement” and does not depend on any contextual or conceptual knowledge of the artwork or artist, even going as far as to maintain that it takes wholehearted “disinterest” in the given artwork to aesthetically appreciate it; in this context

¹²hooks. p.12

¹³Mulvey. p.31

¹⁴Ibid. p.27

¹⁵Kant, I. (2007) ‘Critique of Judgement’, *Oxford University Press*. p.36

‘disinterest’ means finding pleasure in something because we deem it beautiful rather than the other way around.¹⁶ Kant presents a distinction between his preferred ‘free beauty’ and that of ‘dependent beauty’. The latter involves the cognitive faculties and does not appreciate the artwork purely for its representational value (through ‘reflective judgement’), instead treating it as a source of knowledge (the noumenal): this broadly defines the feminist approach. For Kant, “taste in the beautiful may be said to be the one and only disinterested and free delight”¹⁷ - pleasure is the end of taste and even determines the subject’s aesthetic judgement.

First, we must question whether this purely formalist approach and conceptual indeterminacy is realistic. A feminist approach values contextual awareness, which entails conceptualisation and cognitive judgement of historical meta-narratives as well as the dialectic between art/artist and appreciator, over formalism, but there remains an appreciation of the form of the work despite its potentially problematic upbringing – e.g., the antisemitic portrayals of Jews in Richard Wagner’s librettos. Moreover, the concept of free beauty (where the cognitive faculties are totally waived) is arguably flawed. While feminists place emphasis on the unconscious, to appreciate an artwork with cognitive neutrality – to resist any manner of contextualisation and/or conceptualisation – is unlikely as far as aesthetic experience goes. In fact, the unconscious emphasis within feminist theory tends to incorporate the examination of unconscious biases to put into context, or conceptualise, the appreciator’s relationship to the artwork and artworld. Not only do we generally register art via the artist’s oeuvre, and thus in relation to the context of their peripheral works, but in the age of postmodernist art, we are encouraged to learn the histories and theories which underpin form and content to fully understand artistic intention and how it relates to other artworks. This accounts for the goblets of information typically displayed beside artworks in art galleries: Picasso’s ground-breaking style (Cubism) is understood as an attempt to inflect multiple perspectives upon a single canvas which, as the goblet informs us, directly transgressed preceding European art movements. We subsequently see Picasso as an innovator and a genius of his milieu. Knowledge of an artwork’s context is not only part of aesthetic appreciation for feminists, but also something apparently part of the artworld today, and an essential tool for political deconstruction of power structures – in this way, an artwork’s status as an object of knowledge can be considered an aspect of its beauty.

Furthermore, Kant’s second definition of the beautiful reads: “The beautiful is that which, apart from a concept, pleases universally.”¹⁸ An aesthetic judgement is supposedly impartial because it is free of interest and cognition, and so the delight which arises from impartial appreciation of the beautiful is something universal since the experience (while subjective/feeling-based) is felt by all appreciators. There are multiple problems with Kantian ‘subjective universality’. The most obvious is cultural relativism in aesthetic appreciation. For example, a fundamental premise of aesthetic appreciation in Native American culture is ‘interestedness’. Japanese aesthetics places a similar emphasis on “functional objects” and everyday items, such as domestic ornaments like vases: it thus takes conceptualisation of the object’s function as well as its visual content to fully appreciate its beauty, which of course conflicts with Kantian disinterestedness.¹⁹

Another empirical observation which undermines universality in taste could even be the female form itself as sculpted by the patriarchal gaze which has undergone noticeable evolutions throughout the Western canon, not least in the 20th century. For example, a sex symbol like Marilyn Monroe would not have been as desired in the heroin chic 1990s (and vice versa) because the beauty standard, as imposed upon culture by the influence of powerful men, was different. The phallogocentric pleasure at observing the female body has sustained itself as a seemingly universal requisite by adapting the object of desire to changing standards of beauty: in this sense, the delight might be considered universal, but the object of interest (the artwork) is historically determined, relative, and constantly in flux. Mulvey’s conceptualisation of pleasure ultimately undermines its primacy in aesthetic appreciation, exposing its obfuscation of the cognitive and psychological

¹⁶Ibid. p.35

¹⁷Ibid. p.41

¹⁸Ibid. p.51

¹⁹Eaton, M.M. (1999) ‘Kantian and Contextual Beauty’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 57, no. 1. p.12

differences, and so the aesthetic judgements, between genders. Therefore, Kant’s “normative framing of universal claims”²⁰ is problematic because universality remains unjustified, as well as masking the privileges of the white male spectator who has historically represented all spectators in his aesthetic taste.

In conclusion, while offering “a messier conception of art”²¹ than traditional formalism, feminist aesthetics aligns more accurately with the contextualist experience of artistic appreciation in the contemporary artworld and offers sufficient critique of neo-Kantian limitations to critically undermine the approach, proving art to be typically, but not irreparably, gendered.

²⁰Chanter, T. (2017) ‘Historicizing Feminist Aesthetics’, *Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*. p.471

²¹Devereaux. p.345

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The Invisible ‘And’

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Basing itself on Kristie Dotson’s outline and critique of the assumptions necessary to justify the avoidance of intersectional questions, this paper will develop an additional line of criticism separate to the one Dotson provides. In doing so, I will construct the meta-philosophical concept of the “invisible ‘And’ ” to reconcile the failure of the disaggregation assumption with the seemingly prominent existence of singular gender investigations in feminist theory. The “invisible ‘And’ ” is my claim that professedly “gender-only” (singular) inquiries are in reality “gender-and” (intersectional) ones, a fact which remain hidden due to the propensity of dominant social perspectives to falsely pass as neutral and subsequently fail to be mentioned.

1 Introduction

In this essay I will build on Kristie Dotson’s 2016 paper: “Word to the Wise: Notes on a Black Feminist Metaphilosophy of Race” and in articulating her arguments with reference to gender, show the statement “I do gender, not ‘gender and...’ ” to be problematic on multiple levels.

I will develop an angle of criticism different to the one Dotson provides and will argue that the statement illegitimately divorces the concept of gender from other social identities, thereby becoming unrepresentative of the real multitude of gendered experience. I propose my “invisible ‘And’ ” theory in an attempt to reconcile how ‘gender-only’ investigations, despite their irrationality, have seemingly not only been realized but are also of central importance to traditional feminist philosophy. The “invisible ‘And’ ” is the claim that dominant social identities often falsely occupy a neutral role such that mention of their presence is prone to disappearance. I conclude therefore that gender investigations are inevitably of a ‘gender and...’ nature, however hidden under a veil of ‘neutrality’ this might remain.

2 Dotson’s Three Assumptions and Intellectual Slumming

Dotson states how, from a black feminist perspective, an investigation of race as a singular phenomenon is obviously problematic. In analysing what allows this statement to be commonly and comfortably made, she outlines three assumptions, i.e., the disaggregation, fundamentality, and transcendental assumptions, one must make to justify stating “I do race, not gender”.¹

These three assumptions are necessary for any claim with the structure: “I do A, not A and B”, where A and B represent social categories (gender, race, religion, sexuality, class...). This applies to our case of “I do gender, not gender and B”. For most of this essay I will take B to represent race, as this is the case in most of the black feminist literature I will be discussing, though this is not a necessary condition for the validity of my argument.

The disaggregation assumption is the initial and most elementary one and is the focus of this essay. It refers to the notion that social categories can be divorced from one another and fruitfully discussed separately, thus implying that there exist ‘pure’ investigations which are analytically distinct from compound ones wherein multiple social categories are considered simultaneously. Topically, it is the assumption that race exists as distinct from race and gender; that gender, or race,

¹Dotson Kristie, *Word to the Wise: Notes on a Black Feminist Metaphilosophy of Race*, Michigan: Philosophy Compass, 2016

can legitimately stand as concepts in isolation.² Any singular discussion about social categories has necessarily held the disaggregation assumption as foundational, and such ‘gender-only’ discussions are regularly seen in feminist theory.

The avoidance of multifaceted questions, however, assumes not only their distinction from singular discussions, but also lack of utility in them. The disaggregation assumption alone does not suffice in maintaining that the two types of inquiries are not just separate but also conceptually unrelated. The view that ‘race-only’ investigations are irrelevant to ‘race-and’ ones therefore necessitates two further assumptions. First, that ‘race-only’ investigations are more fundamental and conceptually basic than ‘race-and’ ones and, by virtue of that, more centrally important. Second, that ‘race-and’ investigations cannot inform ‘race-only’ ones, while ‘race-only’ inquiries can impact ‘race-and’ ones. Here, a unidirectional flow of information is established. Dotson dubs the former the fundamentality assumption and the latter the transcendence assumption.³

These three assumptions work to create an asymmetric relevance structure by first distinguishing single and compound investigations as analytically distinct from one another, then by deeming single investigations to be more basic and thus more significant than compound ones and finally, by allowing only one investigation to inform the other.⁴

Dotson criticises the fundamentality and transcendence assumptions due to their propensity to promote ‘intellectual slumming’ and in doing so undermines the “I do race, not gender” statement. Intellectual slumming is used in reference to when a project which, despite using fewer intellectual resources, retains its central importance in the field of study by merit of being conceptually basic.⁵ Intriguingly, in choosing this path to criticism, Dotson neither directly attacks the validity of the assumptions themselves, nor the development from one assumption to another, but rather highlights the detrimental consequence of the persistence of said assumptions. I posit that this unorthodox method intentionally leaves other, perhaps more conspicuous, objections open for future development. I will now provide one such alternative criticism by focusing on the disaggregation assumption.

3 Intersectionality, Neutral Forms and the “Invisible ‘And’”

A strong base for the denial of the disaggregation assumption can be found in the writings of Kimberlé Crenshaw, a feminist thinker who coined the term intersectionality. Crenshaw rejects any homogeneous account of women’s experiences. She identifies the way in which social identities intersect and interact to create new accounts of womanhood by describing how each constituent component of one’s social identity is inevitably experienced through the intermeshed whole of all one’s other social identities.⁶ It is impossible to study gender separate from race because gender simply does not exist separate from race; hence to “do gender, not ‘gender and race’”, is to not provide an account of the gendered experience at all.

However, it seems that one of the most foundational pieces of feminist philosophy, namely ‘The Second Sex’ by Simone de Beauvoir, could be pointed at as a prime example of a “gender-only” investigation. Herein I see a contradiction, as one cannot simultaneously maintain that ‘The Second Sex’ is a sound and “gender-only” investigation and that it is unsound to conduct “gender-only” investigations. From this we can deduce that, either ‘The Second Sex’ is not a sound and “gender-only” investigation, or that “gender-only” investigations are indeed possible and are able to inform on gendered experience. The later, as shown above, does not hold due to the failure of the disaggregation assumption. It must follow therefore, by disjunctive syllogism, that ‘The Second Sex’ is not a sound and “gender-only” investigation, in other words (by DeMorgan’s laws), that ‘The Second Sex’ is either unsound or a not “gender-only” investigation, but rather

²Dotson, *Word to the Wise*, 70

³Dotson, *Word to the Wise*, 70-71

⁴Dotson, *Word to the Wise*, 71

⁵Dotson, *Word to the Wise*, 71-72

⁶Crenshaw Kimberlé, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics* Chicago: University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989

a “gender- and” one. Claiming the entirety of one of the most influential and decisive pieces of 20th century philosophy to be unsound based on this limited evidence would not only be bold but largely unfounded. Therefore, it is my thesis that even in texts which might be intended as singular investigations such as ‘The Second Sex’, there will always be an element of a, perhaps unconscious, intersectional analysis. I dub this unseen element the “invisible ‘And’”. To elaborate on my concept, I will use the notion of neutral form found in “The Second Sex” itself.

Simone de Beauvoir argues that it would be inaccurate to describe the terms ‘man’ and ‘woman’ as a symmetrical, equivalent, pair. In truth, ‘man’ often occupies also the neutral position, while ‘woman’ is defined only by its difference to ‘man’. Beauvoir details how in a patriarchal society to be a man is to be the norm, it is to be objective, to be nonaligned, unbiased, while to be a woman is to have to continually justify one’s being and perspective. She provides particularly pungent examples of this from Aristotle’s definition of female by virtue of “lack of qualities” to the biblical story of Genesis where Eve is, contortedly, born of Adam’s superfluous bone.⁷

Simone de Beauvoir recognises that traditional philosophy, while claiming to conduct singular investigations on human experience, has in reality often conducted ones on the “human and male” experience. In an attempt to correct this, she highlights the experience of women. However, in doing so she fails in extending the recognition of false neutrality to elements of her own identity which are commonly falsely considered neutral as well (such as heterosexual or white).

While “The Second Sex” does mention the oppressive forces black people were and are subjected to by making references to segregation in the United States, she does so to draw an analogy between racial and gendered oppression. In analogising the two she is working on the assumption that the oppressive structures while similar are separable and separate, thereby conducting a “gender-only” analysis which, for instance, problematically excludes the unique experience of black women.⁸

Audre Lorde uses the term ‘mythical norm’ to outline the set of identities which have been established as dominant within our societal framework. The ‘mythical norm’, as described by Lorde, includes “white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure”.⁹ While not necessarily exhaustive, I am of the opinion that the ‘mythical norm’ can be used as a rough list to expand de Beauvoir’s recognition of the false neutrality of the male perspective to the perspectives of other dominant identities. The perception of these identities as neutral directly leads to the problem of the “invisible ‘And’” wherein authors fail to recognize the intersectional perspective from which they are writing and claim their investigations to be singular ‘gender-only’ ones rather than compound ‘gender-and’ ones.

The “invisible ‘And’” can be considered a lifeline to works of traditional feminist philosophy to the extent that it saves the content of many authors from the disaggregation fallacy i.e., from having written a text on the real-world experience of a non-existent person of one-dimensional identity. For, according to the “invisible ‘And’”, when someone claims to give a singular account of gender, they are not wrong because it would be wrong to do so, they are wrong because they are not doing so at all. The content of their writing, while mislabelled, is not necessarily incorrect or unsound. Additionally, it is not as if the experiences of women (though varying significantly) are completely estranged from one another; women not directly represented might still, from the margins, find value in the analysis.

In response to any objection on the degree to which this problematic (if it is indeed limited to an issue of labelling) I would like to make clear the central role that neutral forms and their consequence of the “invisible ‘And’” have played in the exclusion of diverse voices in gender discussions. Having a majority of writing be from the dominant perspectives marginalises that of all others, doubly so if it is falsely accepted as providing a general account rather than a specific one. The “invisible ‘And’” stays true to its name on two levels: First the invisibility of the normative identities which cause it, and second, the invisibility constituted by the marginalisation of minority perspective which it perpetrates.

⁷De Beauvoir Simone, *The Second Sex*, London: Lowe and Brydon, 1949, 13-15

⁸Gines T. Katherine: *A Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2017

⁹Lorde Audre, *Sister Outsider*, 111

4 **Conclusion**

In closing, a statement of structure “I do A, not A and B” (when discussing social categories) is problematic due to its wrongful and harmful separation of the elements of one’s social identity. Any legitimate analysis of gender is evidently only ever intersectional. Arguably, those who claim otherwise have been deceived by the “invisible ‘And’ ”. The “invisible ‘And’ ” in as much as it highlights the falsely neutral perspectives hidden in traditional feminist theory thus not allowing such investigations to pass as a ‘gender-only’, aids feminist theory to more effectively address women, all of whom possess intersectional identities.

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