

Ain't I a Feminist?

Celina Romany[†]

I want to recover my faith in feminism during the 1990's. The feminism that gave me the strength to understand the story of a woman born and raised in a colony who migrates to the metropolis, feminism as a liberation project. The feminism which launches a multi-faceted attack on legal institutions that perpetuate substantial inequities.

The current state of feminist legal theory makes me wonder if I am still a feminist. The feminism I see myself associated with has a capital F. That which aims at eradicating the various forms of oppression that affect all women, a project overlooked by "small-town" feminism. I am willing to risk being outside current postmodern theoretical trends by supporting capital letters. My capital letters connote expansion, breadth and inclusion. Far from claiming privileged access to truth with a capital T, feminism with a capital F thrives in a room with a great view of narratives about intersections.

Feminist legal theorists belong to a norm-forming group involved in what Robert Cover has described as the creation of new legal meanings.¹ As he suggested, we need to examine the juris-generative operation of such a group and how the process of creating new legal meanings depends on sustaining narratives. Narratives that define both the vision of the juris-generative group and its location in making its work a viable alternative.

Today, I'd like to critique the feminist narratives that sustain the creation of feminist legal theory as new legal meaning. My principal claims are: 1) that the feminist narrative deployed as a foundation with its monocausal emphasis on gender falls short of the liberation project feminism should be about: the emancipation of all women, 2) that feminism so defined cannot adequately address the shortcomings of liberal legalism and 3) that postmodernism, although helpful in counteracting feminist essentialism by giving space and voice to a multiplicity of accounts, nevertheless lacks a material analysis of macrostructures of inequality and thus lacks translation potential for social change.

Feminist legal theory needs to allow room for the destabilization of gender as both a conceptual and practical tool of analysis. Feminist legal theory moves

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1. Robert Cover, *Foreword: Nomos and Narrative*, 97 HARV L. REV. 4 (1983).

in the right direction when it pursues the humanist project of agency and subjectivity and attempts to redefine subjectivity to redress gross gender-related exclusions. Yet, it needs to move beyond. The feminism with a capital F which I want to recover in the context of legal theory is that which redefines subjectivity in light of the key variables of subject formation: race, ethnicity, class and gender. A feminist theory of subjectivity can adequately elaborate an alternative vision to the liberal self by showing the centrality of the political and cultural history in which the subject is born; a context of personal and social de-legitimation. Through this route, the elaboration of feminist subjectivity can plausibly seize the deep meanings of difference, subordination and oppression. By not filling this gap, we only catch a glimpse of meaning and experience exclusion. Universalist assumptions deny intersubjectivity any opportunity to liberate us from the appropriation and objectification of *others*, to pave the way for a real recognition of differences and commonalities and to serve as a reminder that "the *other* is just as entitled as I am to her/his humanity expressed in her/his cultural reality."²

What is the special claim of feminism in challenging core assumptions of liberalism? The emergence of what is currently characterized as many feminisms or postfeminism makes the project of identifying its unique contribution to the challenge of liberalism much more difficult. The liberal system which is so fond of binary oppositions contained in the separate public/private arenas is endorsed by the allegedly neutral, objective and procedurally fair rule of law. In spite of the different twists and turns of feminism, we can recognize that both methodologically and substantively it has put on the table the subordination, oppression, and second-class citizenship brought about by the devaluation of the personal and the so-called domestic sphere. It gave personal experience epistemological standing, offering counternarratives which have served as critiques of the values and assumptions lying beneath our social and political organization, social contract included. It challenged male norms. As Teresa de Lauretis correctly points out, feminism defined subjectivity as the very site of the material inscription of the ideological.³

However, such material inscription of the ideological has insisted on the preeminence of gender subordination at the expense of other forms of oppression, missing a basic point. If feminism was to be about freedom for all women, it had to consequently address multiple experiences—not an easy task both for theoretical generalizations and for political strategy. There are historical and sociological explanations for the essentialism of the woman standpoint. First, there is the interplay of practice and theory: the cross-

2. See Marnia Larzreg, *Feminism and Difference: The Perils of Writing as a Woman on Women in Algeria*, 14 FEM. STUD. 81, 98 (1988).

3. Teresa de Lauretis, *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies: Issues, Terms and Contexts*, in FEMINIST STUD./CRITICAL STUD. 1 (Teresa de Lauretis ed., 1986).

fertilization between the political practice generated by the feminist movement and its theoretical conceptualizations. bell hooks and other women of color have done excellent work in documenting the schism existing between women of color and white women in the context of the feminist movement, and the influence of color and class composition on these conceptualizations.⁴ Second, there is a history of frustration brought about by the political left's inability to grasp the centrality of gender subordination, as shown by the many indictments against feminists' alleged misunderstanding of a class analysis.

Although solidarity, empathy, altruism, and collective attachments are dimensions increasingly explored through the acquisition of a feminist consciousness, the power dynamics generated by institutions creating and perpetuating the cultural and psychological manifestations of racism and classism are left intact. The elaboration of theoretical arguments exclusively resting upon gender sustains the narratives emerging from such feminist consciousness. Race, ethnicity, and class are viewed as diluting the thrust of gender oppression. The biggest irony is that just as gender is dismissed by reductionist Marxist critiques, race, ethnicity, and class are assigned by essentialist feminism to maximum security and isolated confinement. They are allowed to join the general prison population only for good behavior: when the race, ethnicity and class categories learn to stay where they belong, when their subsidiary explanatory power is understood, when basic rules of grammar are comprehended and the auxiliary nature of the conjunction "and" is fully grasped. Bear in mind the by now familiar descriptions: gender *and* race, gender *and* class, gender *and* ethnicity.

I have critiqued elsewhere the essentialist and universalist character of feminist theorists,⁵ with their substitution of the view from nowhere with the view from womanland. I have specifically targeted the work of Carol Gilligan and her reliance on Nancy Chodorow's essentialist account of reproduction and motherhood. My critique has focused on those feminist legal theorists who have uncritically and enthusiastically adopted some of her limited findings as the basis of their work. Likewise I have critiqued radical feminists' reductionist accounts of sexual oppression. Four examples follow.

1) Robin West, in trying to reconcile or at least understand the "fundamental contradiction" between cultural feminists largely defined by Gilligan and radical feminists largely defined by MacKinnon, asserts that women want to mother in spite of the compulsory nature of institutional motherhood and that women strive for intimacy even though they are oppressed

4. See generally BELL HOOKS, *FEMINIST THEORY: FROM MARGIN TO CENTER* (1984); *TALKING BACK: THINKING FEMINIST, THINKING BLACK* (1989); *YEARNING: RACE, GENDER AND CULTURAL POLITICS* (1990); *AIN'T I A WOMAN* (1981, 1984).

5. Celina Romany, *The Intersection of Race, Gender and Class in the Critique of the Liberal Self*, presentation at the Critical Legal Studies Conference (1988) (unpublished manuscript on file with the *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*).

by it.⁶ She uses Gilligan in a structuring way although Gilligan's work is more of a descriptive mechanism than a theoretical model. Thus, West ends up using a Gilliganesque model without rigorously examining the assumptions behind her positing of gender-specific characteristics.⁷

2) Martha Minow provides a sensitive discussion of the dilemma of difference, yet she also implicitly integrates Gilligan into her analysis when she concludes that by acknowledging and struggling against one's own partiality and by making an effort to understand the reality of others we will all move towards comprehending reciprocal realities.⁸ In proffering such advice, Minow risks falling into a Gilliganesque model of problem solving, i.e. an examination of competing values and views. But where does her acknowledgement of differences take us? Were she to develop the power imbalances underlying "reciprocal realities," she could perhaps escape the criticism that simply talking to each other does not necessarily mean that we can hear one other.⁹

6. See Robin West, *Jurisprudence and Gender*, 55 U. CHI. L. REV. 1 (1988).

7. Other feminist jurisprudence scholars also make gender-based assumptions without sufficient analysis of the complex factors shaping gender. See Christine Littleton, *Restructuring Sexual Equality*, 75 CAL. L. REV. 1279, 1296-97 (1987). Even Elizabeth Schneider, who acknowledges the critique of Gilligan's work for "its insensitivity to race and class differences, and its disregard of historical context," believes that it is possible to set aside the problematic elements of Gilligan's analysis and assumptions. She concludes that "for my purposes, however, the significant aspect of her work is her insight into the way in which rights claims can be an aspect of psychological and social transformation—a moment in a dialectical process of change—and the way in which rights claims asserted as part of that process might be different." Elizabeth Schneider, *The Dialectic of Rights and Politics: Perspectives from the Women's Movement*, 61 N.Y.U. L. REV. 589, 617 (1987).

8. Martha Minow, *The Supreme Court 1986 Term-Foreword: Justice Engendered*, 101 HARV. L. REV. 10, 76 (1987).

9. Catharine MacKinnon has critiqued Carol Gilligan in this regard for not taking into account powerlessness in her work. In an informative conversation between several prominent figures in feminist jurisprudence, the following exchange between Catharine MacKinnon and Carol Gilligan illustrates this problem in a discussion of Menkel-Meadow's hypothetical mediation session between Jake and Amy:

CM: Power is socially constructed such that if Jake simply chooses not to listen to Amy, he wins; but if Amy simply chooses not to listen to Jake, she loses. In other words, Jake still wins because that is the system. And I am trying to work out how to change that system, not just how to make people more fully human within it.

CG: Your definition of power is his definition.

CM: That is because the society is that way, it operates on his definition, and I am trying to change it.

CG: To have her definition come in?

CM: That would be part of it, but more to have a definition that she would articulate that she cannot now, because his foot is on her throat.

CG: She's saying it.

CM: I know, but she is articulating the feminine. And you are calling it hers. That's what I find infuriating.

CG: No, instead I am saying she is articulating a set of values which are very positive.

3) Catharine MacKinnon's critique of Gilligan also adopts the essentialist standpoint of the silenced woman, without elaborating the multi-layers of oppression vividly represented by women of color. For MacKinnon, there is no female subjectivity, as women are defined by men. In effect collapsing all forms of oppression, she views sexuality as a "pervasive dimension of social life, one that permeates the whole, . . . a dimension along which other social divisions, like race and class, partly play themselves out."¹⁰ Her totalizing theory of social reality based on sexual oppression does not admit to a concept of identity, and therefore, cannot account for the multilayered experience of women of color.¹¹ Symptomatically, even in her acknowledgment of the contribution of writings of women of color, in her most recent book, MacKinnon implies that these works lack a theoretical framework and, as such, others will have to build upon those writings in the coming years.¹² The experience of women of color seems to be viewed as the anecdotes that will unfold, with the passage of time, grand theoretical discoveries in sync with MacKinnon's overarching theory of sexual oppression.

4) Carrie Menkel-Meadow has explicitly used Gilligan as a starting point for her discussion of women's lawyering process. Despite the limitations of Gilligan's description of women's experience, Menkel-Meadow uses Gilligan's description to structure her analysis of the way in which women's values can inform their lawyering process. She assumes that if parties speak "directly to each other, they are more likely to appreciate the importance of each other's needs."¹³ However, Menkel-Meadow's observations fail to explore the effect of power imbalances on mediated solutions. She has also discussed the

CM: Right, and I am saying they are feminine. And calling them hers is infuriating to me because we have never had the power to develop what ours really would be.

Ellen C. DuBois, et al., *Feminist Discourse, Moral Values and the Law: A Conversation*, 34 *BUFF. L. REV.* 11, 74-75 (1985). See also Ann C. Scales, *The Emergence of Feminist Jurisprudence: An Essay*, 95 *YALE L.J.* 1373, 1381 (1986) (arguing against lawyers' simplistic use of Gilligan's work to graft women's different voices onto rights-based system).

10. CATHARINE MACKINNON, *TOWARD A FEMINIST THEORY OF THE STATE* 130 (1989).

11. Marlee Kline's excellent critique of MacKinnon points out the tension in MacKinnon's work between her recognition of the multiplicity of race and class differences that exist among women and her emphasis on women's gender commonality. As Kline states "[e]ven where MacKinnon provides an in-depth analysis of the particular experiences of women of color, she does not allow those experiences to challenge the premise of her theory. . . . Thus, it is not surprising that about half of MacKinnon's examples of the particular experiences of women of color in *Feminism Unmodified* refer to racism only in the context of pornography or rape. The other examples of the particular experiences of Black women and First Nations women are confined to brief comments or footnotes." (citations omitted). Marlee Kline, *Race, Racism and Feminist Legal Theory*, 12 *HARV. WOMEN'S L.J.* 115, 138-39 (1989). Kline further argues that MacKinnon's "construction of the feminist project [is] limited in its capacity to capture the complex impact of racism in the lives of women of color" and "neither the differences in interest and priority that exist between white women and women of color nor the unequal power relationship between the groups are confronted or dealt with in her work." *Id.* at 140-41.

12. MACKINNON, *supra* note 10.

13. Carrie Menkel-Meadow, *Portia in a Different Voice: Speculations on a Women's Lawyering Process*, 1 *BERKELEY WOMEN'S L.J.* 39, 51 (1985). See also Carrie Menkel-Meadow, *For and Against Settlement*, 33 *U.C.L.A. L. REV.* 485 (1985); Janet Rifkin, *Mediation from a Feminist Perspective: Promise and Problems*, 2 *LAW & INEQ. J.* 21 (1984).

“epistemology of exclusion.” She remarks: “It has become too easy, I think, for those who have been excluded by the ‘white male club’ to be lumped together in exclusions. One bit of knowledge we have gained from feminist knowledge is the contextual particularity of our experiences.”¹⁴

In support of this principle, however, she cites Gilligan, who has notably failed to particularize realities in terms of race. She later states: “Thus the knowing that comes from exclusion is based not on intrinsic characteristics, but rather on perverse oppositional knowledge that may be necessary for survival and adaptation to exclusion. The parallels to exclusion based on race and class should therefore be obvious.”¹⁵ Menkel-Meadow fails to spell out what she calls the “obvious” implications of this model for a subject considered to have a race and class as well as a gender. Furthermore, she concludes that although exclusion may create certain characteristics, we needn’t reject those characteristics.¹⁶ This position has dangerous implications for a truly feminist lawyering process in that a socially-constructed definition of women’s skills and values becomes the norm for all women.¹⁷

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Do feminist legal theory’s sustaining narratives have the breadth required to challenge different strands of oppression within liberal legalism, as experienced by all women? Can this work, as Robert Cover suggested, offer a viable alternative? Think about the critique of rights, their affirmative and negative character, ascription of rights, the instrumental value of rights, the nature of adjudication, core principles such as property, the exchange of commodities (personal included), demarcations of the public and private, boundaries for state intervention and non-intervention, the discrimination principle, conflicts among different sources of discrimination, and reflect on the limited potential a gender-essentialist analysis has for a thorough analysis of these core institutions.

I am skeptical of the ability of a feminist legal theory based on exclusive gender narratives to deal with the overall challenge. Essentialist narratives overload feminism as a key tool in the critique of the liberal project and utterly fail to offer a comprehensive critical framework for liberal legal institutions. The paradigm selection process (the architectural design, selection of building materials, objectives, aesthetics) is informed by that limited experience. At

14. Carrie Menkel-Meadow, *Excluded Voices: New Voices in the Legal Profession Making New Voices in the Law*, 42 U. MIAMI L. REV. 29, 31 (1987) (footnote omitted).

15. *Id.* at 43.

16. See also Littleton, *supra* note 7, at 1296-97 (1987) (advocating “acceptance” model to grapple with difference which is attentive to “consequences of gendered difference, and not its sources”).

17. See, e.g., *EEOC v. Sears Roebuck & Co.*, 628 F. Supp. 1264 (N.D. Ill. 1986), *aff’d*, 839 F. 2d 302 (7th Cir. 1988).

their best these narratives offer partial critiques with partial and insular results: small-town feminism generating small-town feminist theory and politics.

To the extent that a racial/ethnic/class "minority perspective" gets incorporated into the feminist redefinition of subjectivity, the latter's critique of rights and fairness also undergoes revision. The normative intuitions that are to guide such an analysis are "different." As the "minority" critique of critical legal studies scholarship points out, the evaluation of rights stems neither from what a critical legal scholar would describe as an alienating experience originating from the fear of connection, nor from what a feminist legal scholar would characterize as a gender experience of connection that spells solidarity and responsibility to others in lieu of atomized individualism. The intersection of race and gender in the redefinition of subjectivity and intersubjectivity points to a different legal consciousness. Rights that "separate" individuals also trace boundaries of mutual respect in such separation and (no matter what amount of false consciousness is involved) can strengthen identities.

If feminism, and feminist legal theory in particular, is to remain a liberation project, it needs to come to grips with its cognitive distortions and self-idealized universal discoveries. Feminism needs to put forth sustaining narratives that capture the centrality of intersections in the intersubjective formation of identities. In the meantime, we could use a heavy dose of modesty, giving pretentiousness a deserved vacation and publicly announcing the incorporation of the project as "Feminism, Limited."

Postmodernism has been recruited in an effort to counter the essentialist dimension of the woman standpoint. Although I am sympathetic to the efforts of those (in particular the work of Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson)¹⁸ who are trying to match feminism and postmodernism through the magic of supplementation (a match not necessarily made in heaven), I am highly skeptical of satisfactorily concrete outcomes. The postmodern fallibilistic and decentering approach moves away from a unitary concept of the woman standpoint and opens up the door for alternative accounts of difference. However, this new entrance leads us into a meeting of discourses rather than to an encounter of those differences at the very concrete level of power differentials and unequal distribution of privileges.

Discourse, the understudy for representation, supplants representation once it is discarded as an obsolete and decadent way of apprehending reality.¹⁹ I

18. Nancy Fraser & Linda Nicholson, *Social Criticism Without Philosophy: An Encounter Between Feminism and Postmodernism*, in UNIVERSAL ABANDON? THE POLITICS OF POST MODERNISM 83 (Andrew Ross ed., 1988).

19. Although postmodern feminists have attempted to move away from some of postmodernism's main tenets, the social critique of power differentials remains inadequate and the primacy of discourse remains significantly unaltered. See FEMINISM/POSTMODERNISM (Linda J. Nicholson ed., 1990); JEAN-FRANCOIS LYOTARD, THE POSTMODERN CONDITION (1984); STEPHEN A. TYLER, THE UNSPEAKABLE: DISCOURSE, DIALOGUE AND RHETORIC IN THE POSTMODERN WORLD (1988); F. Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 146 NEW LEFT REV. 53 (1984).

am highly suspicious of discourse accounts, especially when I run into the postmodernist discussion of colonialism, a paradigm for marginality with which I am quite familiar. There is nothing outside the text in the realm of discourse, there is no point from which opposition forms. As Benita Parry accurately points out in her critique of Gayatri Spivak's work, the move is one to place "incendiary devices within the dominant structures of representation and not to confront these with another knowledge;"²⁰ the subaltern voice is deemed irretrievable; counternarratives of resistance are labeled as reverse discourse.

Linda Nicholson and Nancy Fraser talk about adopting a fallibilistic approach which "would tailor its methods and categories to the specific task at hand, using multiple categories when appropriate and forswearing the metaphysical comfort of a single 'feminist method' or 'feminist epistemology.'"²¹ Their approach "would be more like a tapestry composed of threads of many different hues rather than one woven in a single color."²² Not much is said, however, as to the relinquishment of privileges necessary for the multi-colored, multi-class composition of the weavers' labor force. I have levelled the same critique against those who, like Roberto Unger, in the elaboration of "context-smashers narratives" guided by empathy and solidarity, need to resort to the trinity of love, faith, and hope.²³

When I attempt to figure out if there is life after postmodernism, the recurrent image I have is one where I stand in the middle of a ballroom, paralyzed, surrounded by dancers experiencing the *jouissance* generated by dances of heterogeneous and fragmented accounts. Paralysis skyrockets my anxiety because I love to dance and thought I knew a lot about dancing . . .

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Ain't I a Feminist? I am a feminist with a broad and expansive liberation project. I advocate a broadening of horizons to show that the humanist project of subjectivity and agency need not be trashed but rather redefined. We have to expose those legal institutions which delay and obstruct the creation of conditions for strengthening identities, thereby enabling them to engage in dialogues which further refine our subjective perceptions and which serve as spaces for the creation of new narratives that are able to sustain the paradigm choices guiding the formation of new legal meanings.²⁴

Autonomy and subjectivity have a lot of appeal to Third World women. Feminist scholars and feminist legal theories should pay more attention to the

20. Benita Parry, *Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse*, 9 OXFORD LITERARY REV. 27, 43 (1987).

21. Fraser & Nicholson, *supra* note 18, at 101.

22. *Id.* at 101-02.

23. Celina Romany, Book Review, 54 U.P.R. L. REV. 587 (1985) (reviewing ROBERTO UNGER, *PASSION: AN ESSAY ON PERSONALITY* (1984)).

24. Cover, *supra* note 1.

work of Third World cultural theorists, who expose the intimate connections between political and national history and the constitution of the subject, stress the importance of revealing marginality conditions which bring about non-identity,²⁵ and grasp the meaning of the "border [which] houses the power of the outrageous, the imagination needed to turn the historical and cultural tables."²⁶ As the writings of Guillermo Gomez-Pena, George Yudice, and Juan Flores describe, "the view from the border enables us to apprehend the ultimate arbitrariness of the border itself, of forced separations and inferiorizations."²⁷

Juan Felipe Herrera's poem "*What if suddenly the continent turned upside down?*" says it best:

*What if the U.S was Mexico?
 What if 200,000 Anglosaxicans
 were to cross the border each month
 to work as gardeners, waiters,
 3rd chair musicians, movie extras,
 bouncers, babysitters, chauffers,
 syndicated cartoons, feather-weight
 boxers, fruit-pickers & anonymous poets?
 What if they were called waspanos,
 waspitos, wasperos, or wasbacks?
 What if we were the top dogs?
 What if literature was life, eh?²⁸*

25. Abdul R. JanMohamed & David Lloyd, *Introduction: Minority Discourse—What is to be Done?*, 7 CULTURAL CRITIQUE 5, 16 (1987).

26. Juan Flores & George Yudice, *Living Borders/Buscando America: Languages of Latino Self-Formation*, 24 SOC. TEXT 57, 80 (1990).

27. *Id.*

28. *Id.* at 79.

Postscript

Some time ago I read a paper in which I attempted to describe what it meant to be the concrete embodiment of the abstract conversation of feminists at a feminist conference: my invisibility. I said:

I looked around and saw that notwithstanding my unique location, the only Latina in the room, eye contact was avoided so as to reinforce my social invisibility. The experience is not exactly new. Yet, as at other times, I somehow nurtured hopes and expectations that my presence, or for that matter the presence of any other woman of color, could stir some interest in addressing the multi-facetedness of oppression. While following and observing the dynamics in that room, I asked myself how many of those participants actually had a person of color as a good friend or lover. I knew that a high percentage of those who had children have at least had close contact with that woman of color which allowed them to pursue their professional careers and personal realization: the domestic servant. At a more distant level many had come into contact with them in the lower ladders of service. In fact, at that same conference we were served food by one of them.

Therefore my presence in that room served the dual purpose of reminding them of their previous limited contacts with women of color, evoking feelings of distance and separation, and generating a good deal of curiosity as to my presence in that group. By talking of the need to find commonalities while asserting differences, I became the concrete embodiment of their abstract conversation. At one point an assertive student—why is it that students usually have the ability to generate honest confrontations?—directly gazed at me and asked the facilitators to discuss how those alluded differences were integrated into their feminist works. Loving and hating that student for her directness which was an open invitation for my intervention, I realized that the secure, yet uncomfortable, position of *observadora* was coming to an end.

That student had spoiled my otherwise successful “observer approach” in American feminist conferences. Since the rage and indignation were, as usual, very much inside myself, it was easier than I thought to accept her invitation. My accent, my color, the Caribbean rhythm in my words felt “different.” The established feminist authorities assented with their heads to my thoughts. Yet in their faces you could see their inability to grasp, apprehend my feelings and emotions. They were too distant, I was too “other.” Their otherness as women allowed them to walk with me half-way. But only half-way.

Marisa, one of my students at CUNY, after having read that paper, wrote:

Dear Celina:

What was it like becoming the concrete embodiment of their abstract conversation? What was it like to become the personification of theory? Why were they too distant? Why were you too other? You wrote that "their otherness as women allowed them to walk with me half-way, but only half-way." Is there just one path? Many paths? A straight line, a direction? Is that direction involved with purpose? Or is it a continuum, reflecting each of our lives? I think you hedge on page 8 when you refer to your rage and indignation. Is it that this "genre" of writing does not allow for visceral truthfulness/primitive truthfulness? Level with me and talk about that rage and indignation.

What is it like being invisible? Being made invisible by the discourse, by deconstruction, by academia? Being invisible in a world you've chosen to be in; in a world you thrive in? Don't you see the paradox, the dichotomy, the schism? You passed the professional rituals—but still you are invisible. You seek to become truly visible in evaluating social structures based upon experiencing oppression as a way of being.

So why is this core forced into hiding? It is forced externally (I realize you talk about internalization and complicity yet I want to dwell in the external). The externality of tentacles and arms which have the ability to enter human flesh—which have the ability to penetrate and wound—the tension at the moment of penetration . . . once inside, the tentacles divide and turn themselves into open hands which reach out for and search for living essences, the heart, the brain—they reach and squeeze hard. The essences aren't destroyed, they merely escape and hide, hide behind the heart and mind and continue to exist within the grip of those tentacles, because the essences of life have gone into hiding so that the whole organism can survive. These essences live themselves in a shallow pool of water—crystal clear, walled in by purple flowers that are always in bloom, which grow to enormous heights as the grip becomes stronger.

What does your space look like? You see my space, I don't know if it is a space for feminist legal scholars, but it is mine. Where is yours?

I realized I was truly visible to Marisa.

