

INTERLUDE 1

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Nobody's Supposed to Be Here

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In the first half of the twentieth century, gender rules both fluctuated and calcified, depending on the particular time, place, and group. But two important features of these decades in the West, and specifically in the United States, are important to mention here: First, the image of the ideal woman as domestic consumer and architect flourished. Long after the cult of true womanhood, ideal women were imagined as those whose primary interaction with capitalist production was in the form of consumption and the cultivation of the domestic arena. Second, the structure of patriarchy included women for whom this ideal was inaccessible as a result of class and racialization. Those women, by virtue of the sort of labor they did, often occupied public space, though they were exploited differently from their male counterparts.

In the succeeding decades, white bourgeois women entered public space, earning suffrage rights in the United States in 1929 and entering the workforce, with the greatest increase in the war effort of the 1940s. At the same time, the discipline of their relationship to patriarchy often came in the form of moral panic around children and delinquency and around sexual freedom and sexuality—that is, around their becoming too much like those “other” women. I would argue that gender discourses and geopolitics gained heightened importance as the structure of patriarchal domination softened, particularly after World War II. As some boundaries of personhood softened within Western nation-states, the language of who counted as legitimate “men” and “women” and where people existed in a global political order was extended and even rearticulated to maintain hierarchies of value.

In the postwar landscape that colonized and Jim Crowed people faced, Western nations made claims for universal human rights and the recognition of personhood internationally, yet excluded so many peoples in the world. There was at once a nominal denial and a deepening of the idea

of nonpersonhood. The West had effectively constructed nation-states and citizenship in the terms laid out in the previous chapters—as the patriarch as citizen—and continued to exclude. The anticolonial imagination, as well as the civil rights imagination, were shaped by the terms of the West. Whether it was the recuperation of a lost “manhood” or what Homi Bhabha refers as “colonial mimicry” in which the colonized and Jim Crowed made claims to inclusion based on the terms of order of the colonizers, these struggles often (though not universally) demonstrated the manner in which the history of empire had a global impact with respect to gender. This has been a foundational problematic for liberation struggles. Many have assiduously tried to articulate and address how gender is integral to the structure of empire, but the task is persistently difficult. Stories of the journey from then to now help us understand why.

In March 1979, when I was six years old, the film *Norma Rae*, starring Sally Field, was released. It was based on the life of Crystal Lee Sutton, a thirty-something-year-old woman who worked at the J. P. Stevens textile plant in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina. Sutton had worked at the plant since eleventh grade, and at thirty-three she made \$2.65 an hour folding towels. Organizers from the Textile Workers Union of America came to Roanoke Rapids to encourage unionization. Sutton was inspired to join the union. Mill bosses tried deceptive measures to prevent the workers from unionizing. For example, they tried to dissuade white membership by posting a flyer in the shop saying that any union started would be run by Blacks. (It was true that African American women, along with Sutton, were an integral part of organizing the union.) When Sutton transcribed the flyer to share with union organizers, against the rules of the shop, she was accosted by supervisors. The police were called, and before she was kicked out she did something recounted powerfully in the film: “I took a piece of cardboard and wrote the word UNION on it in big letters, got up on my work table, and slowly turned it around. The workers started cutting their machines off and giving me the victory sign. All of a sudden the plant was very quiet.”¹ The police removed Sutton from the plant, and she was fired. In the case for her reinstatement filed by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, Sutton was successful. She was awarded back wages and allowed to return to her job. Sutton did so only briefly. However, she continued to be a union organizer.

Although the film stays fairly close to the facts, the larger story is revelatory. Sutton was not a lone hero, and her struggle was encased in a community that had long been economically exploited. She was born in a mill town; her parents and grandparents had worked for the same company, which also “owned every shotgun house in Sutton’s neighborhood.”²

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In the succeeding decades, white bourgeois women entered public space, earning suffrage rights in the United States in 1929 and entering the workforce, with the greatest increase in the war effort of the 1940s. At the same time, the discipline of their relationship to patriarchy often came in the form of moral panic around children and delinquency and around sexual freedom and sexuality—that is, around their becoming too much like those “other” women. I would argue that gender discourses and geopolitics gained heightened importance as the structure of patriarchal domination softened, particularly after World War II. As some boundaries of personhood softened within Western nation-states, the language of who counted as legitimate “men” and “women” and where people existed in a global political order was extended and even rearticulated to maintain hierarchies of value.

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Despite her story's immense popularity, Sutton was uncompensated for it: She was offered just \$1 in consideration to turn her life into what became an iconic feminist artifact of the late twentieth century. Sutton would recall later that she was uncomfortable with the focus on romantic intrigue and that the story was presented as solely about her rather than about the unionizing workers as a group.³

In the years that followed the production of the film, Sutton lived an economically vulnerable life. She worked in fast food and as a hotel maid. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, she was diagnosed with meningioma. Her insurance company initially refused to cover the treatment to fight the cancer. Because Sutton's cancer was so fast-growing, by the time she won her battle with her insurance company, it was too late to successfully fight the cancer. She died in 2009.

There is something about the space between Norma Rae, the fictional feminist heroine, and the life of her inspiration, Crystal Lee Sutton, that captures the cultural and economic moves of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. *Norma Rae* was a singular Hollywood tale, a blockbuster. Sutton was one of many voices of the mid-twentieth century, the roar of social transformation. Social transformation reached across the globe in various forms. It is in the theory we read: poststructural, postcolonial, feminist, critical. It is in the changing landscape of the academy in the late twentieth century, the change that allows me, a Black woman born in the Deep South, to be present within it.

Born in Alabama, I was a child migrant to the North in the 1970s. I once interviewed a legal client who was doing day labor picking butterbeans and, with a jolt, realized that with a mere accidental change in fate, that might have been me. The same could be said of mill workers such as Sutton. Just the slightest wind that changed the outcome for my mother's generation had put me in a circumstance different from that of either of them.

In the North I landed in Boston, the same place as many Black and Brown feminist activists, adults while I was still a child, but who also were a hair's breadth away from an agricultural or factory life. They had come of age with that knowledge, and in the social movements of the 1960s, and they had witnessed the political and imaginative possibilities of decolonization in Africa and Asia. It makes sense that they would turn to gender as a primary concern for liberation. Its realities coursed through every struggle. In Boston, the women of the Combahee River Collective and the Boston Women Health Book Collective, which produced the classic *Our Bodies, Ourselves*⁴ gathered and imagined a feminist future. *This Bridge Called My Back*, a classic feminist text that centered the experience

of women of color and, specifically, lesbians of color was also published in Boston following a series of meetings in a local church.⁵

These particular organizations recommended a feminism that was critical of all relations of domination that traversed from the terms of intimate association to economic power. For example, these words are in the brief, yet powerfully resonant, Combahee River Collective Statement:

The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face.

We realize that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy. We are socialists because we believe that work must be organized for the collective benefit of those who do the work and create the products, and not for the profit of the bosses.⁶

They critically imagined, standing at vestibules and borders, a robust theoretical landscape that entailed the liberation of most of the globe. The nesting structures of domination would be upended with the "standing up" of those standing under the weight of gender, sexuality, race, and class oppression. Their vision focused on the materiality of relations of domination and their fleshly consequences. Gloria Anzaldúa wrote,

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the halfdead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal."⁷

In this, Anzaldúa both names the "crossroads" space that excludes and the punishment of its transgression, which cuts in multiple ways but finds its point of origin in the logics of domination of the sovereign European nations in modernity.

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These and other critical feminist movements across the nation and world coexisted in the 1970s with a wide array of liberation movements. These movements were intimately, nationally, and internationally concerned and struggled with the vestiges of colonialism and Jim Crow, economic domination and the exploitative practices of ruling elites, militarism, white supremacy, poverty, and patriarchy, as well as with the often silent suffering and diminishment experienced by those considered less than "Man" and not full persons for the bulk of modern history.

In the United States, these feminists, like others, grappled with Martin Luther King's haunting metaphorical question about the value of integration into a burning house. It was a struggle that resonated across the globe as U.S. economic domination demanded allegiance to its authority. Mid-century reckonings with the fact that it was an architecture that diminished the sovereignty of others proliferated. Political imaginations included ones that veered away from building plantation households with more rooms. Blowing things up, new structures altogether, were imagined as a prospective future. I was one of those children who was reared watching the cult classic film *The Battle of Algiers*, about the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria. The postcolonial imaginary flowed into the post-Jim Crow, post-patriarchal imaginary. And the postmodern turn challenged what we thought we knew about how the world worked according to the inherited rules of modernity. It was a complex time.

It is common in the academy to read theory of that period without an awareness of its political underpinnings. Poststructuralist ideas were fundamental political interventions, albeit today remembered in terms solely of their intellectual, and not their political, expressions. In the United States, but also in Europe, and particularly France, 1968 was a big year. The events of May 1968 in Paris, in which workers joined students in a general strike motivated by leftist politics that brought more than a million people into the street, were at the core of their cutting-edge critical theories. Intellectuals from Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida to Jean Baudrillard understood their work as a response to the call of these protests.

However, in the process of undoing the concept of universal truths, meta-theories, and objective reality, poststructuralists generally left a theorization of the structure of nonpersonhood undone and failed to fully reveal its architecture. The same critique can be made of critical legal studies, which proliferated roughly in the same period. Critics, as critical legal studies scholars were called, emphasized power, contingency, and the fictions of universalism. They often moved too quickly past the fact of the nonuniversal and extralegal non-subject subject who was always

in the midst of modernity. These were essential interventions and yet still didn't allow us to get to the structure of nonpersonhood as a point of origin and fundamental to modernity.

Theorizing nonpersonhood, neglected in so much critical theory, was at the core of the previously mentioned work of Black and Chicana feminists of the 1970s. Identity politics—whether in cultural studies, Black studies, or critical race theory—that developed in this period were important for many reasons but particularly for how they described structures that were too often neglected by poststructuralists and Critics. Some Black feminist, Chicana feminist, and postcolonial Marxist feminist theorists brought these modes of inquiry together. Their synthesis and integration of poststructuralist, Marxist, and identity-political theory intervention was rooted in centering the position of the woman who existed outside personhood and theorizing from there. In some ways, the foregoing chapters are a reading back from the 1970s and 1980s in light of these traditions. This reorienting project to tell a story of modernity out of those constructed as abject, presented for its own sake but also to prepare us for thinking about contemporary challenges.

Toward the end of the 1970s, two transformations occurred simultaneously that would profoundly shape their legacies, moves that at once served as a backlash against social movements and as an integration of some of their ideals into the dominant frames of U.S. society. The first was what we now call "the turn to neoliberalism." It marked a shift in economic policy from prioritizing the full employment, economic stability, and productivity of working people toward beneficial (for elites) international trade relations and, ultimately, the globalization of labor, decline of manufacturing, and increase in long-term unemployment and underemployment for poor and working-class Americans. The steady departure of the United States from the social safety net and move toward the demonization of needs-based assistance (often shorthand for "welfare") and so-called big government ensued. At the same time, we also began to witness a practice of incorporating small numbers of previously excluded peoples into various sectors of American society as a response to social movements. Affirmative action in higher education, employment, contracting, and media were examples of this move. Although affirmative action was met with hostility from the outset and consistently has been described by detractors as a favor rather than a right—or as right—really ought to be understood as a very modest grant, an increase of opportunity for some among disfavored groups precisely at the moment that broad benefits were narrowed. Rather than sharing prosperity, prosperity was made more competitive, exclusive, and slightly more diverse.

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Competition for “success” became open to people with types of bodies that previously had been left out, and women and people of color began to enter slowly into new arenas. This slightly open door, a pretense to equity, soon reinvigorated hostility toward those who weren’t among the few deemed “competitive” enough to make it, notwithstanding the vestiges of a long history of, and resilient present filled with, exclusion. And yet another form of hostility, a presumption of inadequacy, was placed on those who gained access to what previously were exclusively white men’s spaces. Nevertheless, white women and people of color trickled onto Wall Street, with their power suits battling those presuppositions. At the same time, though, the welfare rights movement led by multiracial women was soundly defeated by politicians, and the image of the poor was tarnished with stigmatizing terms such as “welfare queen.”⁸

Internationally focused yet U.S.-based feminists, as well as the more domestic liberal variety, experienced contraction in the face of the rightward turn of the United States. Internationally, decolonization was systematically undermined by Western and particularly U.S. neocolonialist and neo-imperialist forces of economic exploitation, extraction, and domination, as well as the manipulations of the two major superpowers in the midst of the Cold War. Domestic precariousness became explicitly tied to exploitation internationally with the spread of multinational corporations.

Even as feminist organizations were sustained, and U.S., U.K. and Caribbean Black feminist writing flourished in the 1980s,⁹ it was a decade of more losses than wins for the utopic feminist imagination. There were victories. They were simply of a very particular and circumscribed sort: the inclusion of some “others” and “outsiders” strictly along the terms of the liberal democratic state, which had never been fully inclusive and remained closed to many. In the United States, expanded constitutional rights were to be protected in the abstract, but passionate inattention to the people on the margins was maintained. Feminist gains therefore became increasingly privatized and elite. We can see an example of this in how the legal framework for recognizing abortion rights was based in the right to privacy according to the U.S. Supreme Court’s opinion *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, not in terms of equal protection.¹⁰ The power of this example is heightened with an observation that the ability to terminate a pregnancy has been steadily eroded as access to public facilities is systematically denied to poor and working-class women. So while the rights-based framework of the liberal democratic state recognizes the right to have an abortion, it remains an abstraction. Hence, decades after the right was recognized, abortion is neither broadly protected nor widely accessible.

Understandably, when social transformation is marked by the lives of the few rather than the many of a marginalized group, the few gain heightened importance both literally and symbolically. Women in Congress, Black mayors, feminist professors: they all became the ostensible faces of the slowed march toward equality. Likewise, when freedom movements waned or were destroyed, many of the remaining organizations dedicated to social justice ends became bureaucratized and institutionalized to sustain themselves, requiring more money and infrastructure. They had to market themselves to funders and choose discrete, attainable goals within the dominant political framework to demonstrate their value, thus narrowing the potential political imagination of their members.

Philosophical premises that were understood to be essential parts of feminism in the 1960s and ’70s, such as community, nonhierarchical organization, collectivism, mutual political growth, and care, do not fit easily within the order of this competitive society. In higher education, as well as in K–12 education, incorporation of some of “us” as new full “members” also meant that we were called to fit (and at times distort) feminist ideologies, books, and departments into a structure of knowledge production and credentializing and into institutions that were mired in gender and racial inequality at their very foundation. Of course, to become incorporated always requires a degree of capitulation to the status quo. This one, in a competitive and deeply unequal society, required evidence of distinction between the incorporated and the unincorporated. It has taken the form of performatives (language, style, gesture), credentials (degrees, appointments, contracts) and practices that, regardless of intent, always are implicated in exclusiveness.

For critics who are shaped by legacies of the mid-twentieth-century liberation movements, an enormous challenge is presented by the overarching frame of liberalism in the discourses and mechanisms of mainstream contemporary feminism. We often speak the language of liberalism even as our critical languages are Marxian. That is to say, the terms of our popular feminist books, of our protests, and of our legal struggles are often constricted by the liberal democratic project. The politics of inclusion overwhelm our struggles. Moreover, having a “seat at the table” as a precondition for our assertions threatens to overdetermine the table or to return to an earlier formulation; to place aspirations to the lady or the patriarch above the call to embrace the monstrosity. Our calls for an expansion of who can be patriarchs and ladies are such that we find the argument against the terms of liberalism difficult. We should not be ashamed of this or to admit this. It is a product of how we arrive at the institutional spaces where we have the conversations. We operate in the terms

previously had been left out, and women and people of color began to enter slowly into new arenas. This slightly open door, a pretense to equity, soon reinvigorated hostility toward those who weren't among the few deemed "competitive" enough to make it, notwithstanding the vestiges of a long history of, and resilient present filled with, exclusion. And yet another form of hostility, a presumption of inadequacy, was placed on those who gained access to what previously were exclusively white men's spaces. Nevertheless, white women and people of color trickled onto Wall Street, with their power suits battling those presuppositions. At the same time, though, the welfare rights movement led by multiracial women was soundly defeated by politicians, and the image of the poor was tarnished with stigmatizing terms such as "welfare queen."⁸

Internationally focused yet U.S.-based feminists, as well as the more domestic liberal variety, experienced contraction in the face of the rightward turn of the United States. Internationally, decolonization was systematically undermined by Western and particularly U.S. neocolonialist and neo-imperialist forces of economic exploitation, extraction, and domination, as well as the manipulations of the two major superpowers in the midst of the Cold War. Domestic precariousness became explicitly tied to exploitation internationally with the spread of multinational corporations.

Even as feminist organizations were sustained, and U.S., U.K. and Caribbean Black feminist writing flourished in the 1980s,⁹ it was a decade of more losses than wins for the utopic feminist imagination. There were victories. They were simply of a very particular and circumscribed sort: the inclusion of some "others" and "outsiders" strictly along the terms of the liberal democratic state, which had never been fully inclusive and remained closed to many. In the United States, expanded constitutional rights were to be protected in the abstract, but passionate inattention to the people on the margins was maintained. Feminist gains therefore became increasingly privatized and elite. We can see an example of this in how the legal framework for recognizing abortion rights was based in the right to privacy according to the U.S. Supreme Court's opinion *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, not in terms of equal protection.¹⁰ The power of this example is heightened with an observation that the ability to terminate pregnancy has been steadily eroded as access to public facilities is systematically denied to poor and working-class women. So while the rights-based framework of the liberal democratic state recognizes the right to have an abortion, it remains an abstraction. Hence, decades after the right was recognized, abortion is neither broadly protected nor widely accessible.

Understandably, when social transformation is marked by the lives of the few rather than the many of a marginalized group, the few gain heightened importance both literally and symbolically. Women in Congress, Black mayors, feminist professors: they all became the ostensible faces of the slowed march toward equality. Likewise, when freedom movements waned or were destroyed, many of the remaining organizations dedicated to social justice ends became bureaucratized and institutionalized to sustain themselves, requiring more money and infrastructure. They had to market themselves to funders and choose discrete, attainable goals within the dominant political framework to demonstrate their value, thus narrowing the potential political imagination of their members.

Philosophical premises that were understood to be essential parts of feminism in the 1960s and '70s, such as community, nonhierarchical organization, collectivism, mutual political growth, and care, do not fit easily within the order of this competitive society. In higher education, as well as in K-12 education, incorporation of some of "us" as new full "members" also meant that we were called to fit (and at times distort) feminist ideologies, books, and departments into a structure of knowledge production and credentializing and into institutions that were mired in gender and racial inequality at their very foundation. Of course, to become incorporated always requires a degree of capitulation to the status quo. This one, in a competitive and deeply unequal society, required evidence of distinction between the incorporated and the unincorporated. It has taken the form of performatives (language, style, gesture), credentials (degrees, appointments, contracts) and practices that, regardless of intent, always are implicated in exclusiveness.

For critics who are shaped by legacies of the mid-twentieth-century liberation movements, an enormous challenge is presented by the overarching frame of liberalism in the discourses and mechanisms of mainstream contemporary feminism. We often speak the language of liberalism even as our critical languages are Marxian. That is to say, the terms of our popular feminist books, of our protests, and of our legal struggles are often constricted by the liberal democratic project. The politics of inclusion overwhelm our struggles. Moreover, having a "seat at the table" as a precondition for our assertions threatens to overdetermine the table or to return to an earlier formulation; to place aspirations to the lady or the patriarch above the call to embrace the monstrosity. Our calls for an expansion of who can be patriarchs and ladies are such that we find the argument against the terms of liberalism difficult. We should not be ashamed of this or to admit this. It is a product of how we arrive at the institutional spaces where we have the conversations. We operate in the terms

of liberal democratic theory even when we think with the tools of mid-twentieth century Marxian/post-structuralist or feminist thought, and our current economic model is another challenging matter altogether. We are constrained and implicated by that constraint. That is our condition.

Nevertheless, various feminist thinkers from the 1980s through the 2000s have tried to grapple, on the narrow perch that exists, with both the inheritance of the logics of domination under modernity and the current economic order that has followed the backlash against the movements of the mid-century. A few examples are in order to illustrate this point. Beginning in the 1980s, Zillah Eisenstein took up discourse theory in a materialist fashion, embracing the rejection of truth as a call to attend to the contingency of experiences of the world shaped by relations of power. She spoke to the multiple significations of the body, such that the body should not be read as an abstraction with coherent meaning. Rather, she argued, particular renderings that led to different conditions of embodiment were important. This model of feminist thought led her to make key interventions, including one mentioned earlier: that we ought to read the transatlantic slave trade as the first stage of globalization. Eisenstein's work is consistent with Judith Butler's, as those familiar with Butler's corpus will immediately register. For both, an interrogation of law and, in particular, legal recognition (and its absence) and coercion (of gender roles of imperial relations) were and are critical to analyses of gender. Butler influentially rejected essentializing conceptions of woman that were part of continental feminism. While Butler reluctantly accepts the usefulness of identity politics, I want to understand them not simply as politically salient, but as gesturing toward constitutive relations of domination. In this, I follow the lead of other scholars. Angela Davis, Patricia Hill Collins, and bell hooks, for example, centered Black women inside an economic order, theorizing architectures of domination—an extension of the identity politics articulated by Combahee. From this, hooks developed the term "White supremacist hetero-patriarchal capitalism" as a multidimensional analytic. Collins encouraged thinkers to recognize domination as a matrix with multiple layers, not a single axis. Thus, "representatives"—either racial- or gender-representative figures, so often elites—she argued, stand in for an understanding of the logics of domination. Further, she contested models of "knowledge" production; thus, her work can be read as responding to the post-structuralist critiques of "disciplinary knowledge" and discourses by locating the critique in lived practices as well as in theoretical interventions. The possibilities of the subaltern imagination are made "real" in this pursuit. Similarly,

Davis explored the potentiality of those who were legally nonpersons (the enslaved) to imagine nonpatriarchal relations, as they were wholly excluded from its logics by virtue of their ungendering and ungended domination.

But the call that is perhaps most directly influential in the form of this project is Chandra Mohanty's discouraging us from engaging in the theoretical apartheid that so often is part of feminist criticism.¹¹ Like the aforementioned scholars, she has insisted on an understanding of capital, militarism, and global relations of power as fundamental to feminist criticism. She has challenged the category "woman" in a way distinct from Butler. The singular category obscures relations of domination between the West and the rest; it also erases specificity. At the same time, the category "Third World woman" posited, in a parallel fashion to the West, as under the patriarchal thumb of "Third World man" as a static category abdicates the theoretical responsibility to think about domination fully, particularly in terms of neocolonial and neoliberal formations, and erases the conditions of human experience. Mohanty's insistence that we theorize both specifically and globally, through both categorical abstraction and lived experience, is a powerful guide. I read her call not as a criticism of standpoint theory or of women-of-color feminisms as particular and specific enterprises; instead it is a call for critical integrations of these bodies of work with others to think about gender ever more rigorously. The influence of her work on the relations between gendered labor in Asia and sweatshops in the United States, for example, can be seen throughout the second section of this book. Likewise, her call for us to be feminists with a global theoretical project shapes this project.

Following in the tradition of the aforementioned body of work, perhaps ironically, has led me away from focusing "identity" as a political category in this work, largely because in the post-1970s world, its overtermination often obscures the work of neoliberalism and how vexations and relations of domination within identity categories may be as salient as the commonality of the identity. Yet I know that this work is possible because of the interventions made by those who used identity as a category for critical interrogation and that the ascribed and adopted identity of subjects is very real. However, as will be further explored in the next chapter, I choose to decenter it as a mode of analysis because of how the intersections of identity are so frequently taken up as an understanding of the personal possessive rather than an articulation of relations.

Theoretical work is challenging, particularly in light of the dissembling of meta-theory that attended the postmodern turn. The shift away from

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materiality and systems toward meanings and discourses has seemed at times to threaten endless abstraction that pulls us away from the fact of human life and our ethics within the world. While contingency did and does exist, laws, language, and discourses had coercive outcomes. They produced material realities. And while it was essential to challenge the idea of the universal, it is also essential to interrogate theoretically the condition of those resigned to the nonuniversal.

The truth is that training in feminist theory frequently relies on postmodernism and poststructuralism rendered in a de-historicized or narrow fashion rather than in a tradition of multiracial and multinational feminist theory. Those who are trained in the latter are often seen in the academy as less critical and less rigorous than the former, as simply doing the work of "representing" identities and social history without a theoretical footing.

This is an unacceptable diminishment of the scope of their work. The scholars mentioned earlier have written against the narrowing of feminism to bourgeois representation. Theirs has proved a Herculean task. They broaden although are often depicted as limiting. Despite their breadth, they (with the exception perhaps of Butler) are largely marginal to mainstream "feminist" discourses. Take a look at any bookstore, academic or otherwise: The latest rich feminist tome will be at the front of the store; these writers will be in its margins, despite the fact that their works concern a much broader terrain than do the corporate elites focused on in a bestseller such as Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In*.

Neoliberalism, the shift in the political economy that drives so much of the dynamic of which I speak, has not defeated feminist theory. But it has produced challenges for feminist analytics in real time. The next two chapters will propose modes of analysis to meet this challenge. The bricolage of critical work that facilitates an accounting of this landscape demands attention to both inherited forms of patriarchy and their new iterations. The postmodern condition entails modernism. Neoliberalism has liberalism wrapped up in it. In the "post-feminist" era, feminism remains essential. Race still matters; gender still constrains; and empire newly unfurls. The imperative to reject theoretical apartheid is heightened to best describe what it is we are confronting with the changes wrought in the post-movement twentieth century and the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In this endeavor, we must extend the idea of standpoint theory, a focus on particular positions of marginalized people, to insist that the root of the architecture of patriarchy is found in those places underneath layers of domination. We must do what Hortense Spillers demanded of

us in 1987: embrace the monstrosity. That is a core task for a critical understanding of patriarchy: to embrace the monstrosity, not the celebrity; the monstrosity, not the representative; the monstrosity, not the ideal. To embrace the monstrosity is to wrestle with the world from the status of the outside. The task is hard and demands that we read the world we occupy rigorously.

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