
Feminist Jurisprudence and the Question of Home: Some Closing Remarks

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I do not want to take up too much time, as I want to open the floor to the audience. I will leave then the questions raised by the contents of the papers: the property and administrative law questions; the problems of law reform, and public housing; the very idea of the social - the idea of where Home sits as responsibility of and space for and by the polis, in Arendt's terms; not to mention how we tell and account for home, and its pasts.

Instead, I just wanted to draw two interrelated things out of how these papers speak together, and what they offer to feminist jurisprudence.

The first is they show us what work feminists in and at law have done, and do, to complicate and think with, the effect and affect of binaries: home/homelessness, the house/housing, public/private, safety/violence, state/land. All three papers remind us that an important aspect of feminist attention to these binaries is to show how law operationalizes, authorizes and sanctions the mediation between institution and experiences of living with law. All three show us this has profound effects for woman, that require historical, as well as ontological and epistemological consideration in our own time and places: variously oriented to describing or re-authorizing an imagined space to live at the Spa Green estate, or the constitutional referenda in Australia (or *folkehjem*), or through the legislative and administrative practices of the Local Authorities attending to women's homelessness in contemporary London.

Importantly, in offering us doctrinal and jurisprudential and historical insights into how home works, all three papers also describe, and let us observe, that part of that project for feminism - politically and intellectually - is to show there is, and always has been, ambivalence and disagreement, tensions and ambiguity, in how home (or its corollaries, the private sphere, work, care, domestic status, and condition) operate for women. This is also a constant theme, practice and intent of the history of feminism itself. It is important then to see that in each paper, how the speakers interpret and think about their archive, and to listen to the conversation between these archives, opens up different considerations of what home might carry in our present desire to make sense of the presence of the state and law in our immediate lives and our institutional recognitions. For example: the consideration by Margaret Davies of the problematic of identity politics and theory - the desire for dislocation, identified by De Lauretis and Braidotti, that women need to epistemologically leave home to realize ourselves, is placed into relation with observations about the changing materialities of subjects, and the counter pull of groundedness. As Margaret Davies writes, since the late 1980s theory has strongly valorized and even romanticized fluidity, flux, dynamism, diaspora and change: but often forgets, as she notes (and refers to Sara Ahmed et al.), 'being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed: being mobile is not necessarily about being detached'.

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This carries weight and meaning for Helen Carr's and Caroline Hunter's papers in a different way: they offer salient redescriptions through the histories they tell of law's present actions that the project of feminism itself - its speaking of how women's freedom and liberation, as well as protection and care, happen inside and outside, because of and in spite of, the idealized and actual place of 'the home' - is integral to the reordering by state and law of social housing and duties to the home-less, in our own time.

The second thing I want to draw out is how my friends and colleague do this. They not only ask us to think about home conceptually and doctrinally as a lived experience of law, but in doing so, as Helen Carr says, they show a site and a way of acting with law that connects with the tradition of feminist praxis concerned with reimagining how we might live.

In staging these papers as a conversation, then, what is so important to me, and what I am really pleased has been opened up, and hope we can discuss further, is the question of how we might attend to home as a way of conducting practices of jurisprudence. All three, in different ways, show how we can potentially frame feminist legal theory's own home architecture to work through a set of problems that in the current episteme appear at an impasse, or at least in constant ambiguity or tension. These problems are - as so eloquently argued - to do with what the state continues to mean, and how we are to able to conduct ourselves responsibly as legal thinkers - in and for and of a place - in relation to its limits. It is the mode of address for this argument, its named and specific feminism, which it is important to emphasise: and to remember how it has assisted many scholars concerned in different ways with the politics and experience of subjects historically and legally excluded from the shape and theory of law and state of place. (In particular, as Margaret Davies notes in the second half of the written paper, in relation to Australia, Aboriginal people.)

Through careful description, and observation, what the papers produce then is a gentle reminder that the usual repertoire of theoretical or critical approaches to law, which are sometimes practiced or described in a disconnected or even agonistic way, are unable to address the problems of how we live and reimagine law in a multi-dimensional way, that our own times insist upon.

So these papers, in showing how feminist jurisprudence has encountered home, remind us to take stock, to pause, to note our own canon and its inferences and intents, its internal conversation and inter-relationships. In so doing, there is an invitation here to reframe the constancy of public/private, experience/institution that exists in the political and legal architecture of home for feminist and broader critical legal thinking, and to observe its operation as a relational experience that brings these together into a single, complex, consideration.