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This is a well-articulated discussion by Anjali Dayal, who is an assistant professor of International Politics at Fordham University and a research fellow at Georgetown University's Institute of Women, Peace and Security.

“So it is for me as a woman today. The mass reckoning with sexual harassment, violent misogyny, and its inextricably from power structures is no surprise. And yet – as it’s exposed for what it is in a process that I welcome and have worked to precipitate whenever possible – I’ve found myself struggling to recover a sense I had of being a woman that wasn’t forged by inequity, by white supremacy, by misogyny, by patriarchy. Over the last year, I have thought, again and again, of David Foster Wallace’s famous speech “[This Is Water](#).” Wallace tells the story of two young fish swimming along when they meet an older fish “who nods at them and says ‘Morning, boys, how’s the water?’ And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, ‘What the hell is water?’”

“The immediate point of the fish story,” Wallace writes, “is that the most obvious, ubiquitous, important realities are often the ones that are the hardest to see and talk about.” “What is so real and essential,” he writes, “so hidden in plain sight all around us, that we have to keep reminding ourselves, over and over: ‘This is water, this is water.’ It is unimaginably hard to do this, to stay conscious and alive, day in and day out.”

And indeed, [over the last sixteen months](#), the stories that nearly every woman has heard repeatedly since she was too young to understand them, the stories that lay bare the strange, sublimated daily nightmare of our lives, have for me taken on the simultaneously surreal and hyper-real quality that the ocean must have for the reflective fish. Because a second serpent’s entwined and submerged with the first: The Leviathan state swims with the violence of daily life for women in a misogynist society. Wrestling it from the water has long been

the work of feminist activists; today, seeing it heaved onto the shore, some people are shocked to learn it was ever there. Through certain lenses, it's remarkably hard to see. Some of us are appalled because it's hard to look at it again and again, when you know full well its reach and its terrible power.

The structure of everyday violence against women is reflected in the battlements we build to protect ourselves: the little accommodations, the things you do reflexively to keep yourself from being hurt while you walk around, all the subtle ways you protect yourself from being alone with some men in offices and other men in cars and all unknown men in large empty buildings; some of the men you know; the strange men you don't know; every single dark stairwell; the lurking danger of being cornered in a bar or followed on the street or spat at or having a lit cigarette thrown at you while you walk your dog at 10 p.m. on a Sunday night in the middle of Manhattan; the raised eyebrow when someone hears you were out alone at 10 p.m. on a Sunday night in the middle of Manhattan; the voice shouting at you in a meeting, because how dare you speak; the constant knowledge that your time is weighed cheaply and your work will always be discounted, so you will have to do twice as much of it; every taxi you've ever taken instead of walking through the park; every time you've ignored the lewd comment from a man on the street or at a bar or at a party, because who knows what he'll do if you lash out; the strange gift of a week in which a stranger doesn't call you a bitch for not smiling at him on the street; the quick scan of a subway car when the train pulls into the station to ensure that there are enough people so you won't be alone if someone threatens you, but not so many people that you'll get groped without being able to place the hands — a thousand transgressions so small and so regular that you never name them to anyone, even while you decry structural inequality, even when you work to advance a feminist agenda, because *that's just the way life is*.

Toxic patriarchy poisons every well: This is water. ”



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