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Mothers and Muslims, Sisters and Sojourners

The Contested Boundaries of Feminist Citizenship

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Three tendencies can be discerned in feminist theories of citizenship: the first aims at the inclusion of women as full-fledged citizens, the second opts for a reversal of the dominant conceptions of citizenship, and the third deconstructs existing dichotomous frameworks of citizenship in order to develop feminist reconceptualizations of liberal democracy. Each of these outlooks generates a different perspective on one of the most nagging questions in contemporary feminist theory: how do the political aims of feminism and multiculturalism relate to one another? Each of these perspectives is confronted with the tacit assumption that citizenship involves the position of members of a nation-state. Current processes of globalization appear to undermine this conception of citizenship. For feminists, a conception of citizenship beyond the nation-state brings up urgent questions, such as: Should we aim at global justice for all women world-wide, or does our civic responsibility require us to primarily care for our co-citizens? As feminist citizens, who do we count as part of our community?

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1990s, many feminist philosophers found that the practice of the women's movement as well as those of other new social movements could be articulated most adequately in terms of citizenship. The classical political vocabulary of citizenship seemed to offer a viable alternative to the vocabularies that until then had been dominant in feminist political theory: the individualistic, rights-oriented discourse of liberalism, and the structuralist, interest-oriented perspectives of socialism and Marxism. Citizenship-talk made room for the political role of social groups and communities, and it emphasized the value of the attachment to and active participation in

those communities. The focus on citizenship, moreover, enabled feminist theorists to rethink the political struggles and achievements of the women's movement as part of a much larger process of democratization which had evolved in the modern Western world since the American and French Revolutions.

Recent feminist reflections on citizenship are confronted by two nagging questions. The first concerns the relation between the political projects of multiculturalism and feminism: how can we reconcile the justified demand of minority groups for recognition of their religious, ethnic, or cultural identity with the feminist goal of the individual autonomy of women? Some feminists argue that multiculturalism is 'bad for women' because it tends to lock them up within the confines of their traditional, often patriarchal communities and actually hands them over to the power of the men in those communities. Others perceive multiculturalism not as opposed to, but rather as allied to the feminist project: just as women have fought for the equal valuation of differences among women, so are ethnic or cultural groups asking for recognition of their differences. To reformulate this controversy in terms of citizenship: whereas some are deeply concerned that the granting of specific cultural rights to members of ethnic and cultural groups will privilege the men of these groups and violate the civil, political, and social rights of the women, according to others the recognition of religious and cultural identity is nothing less than an example of the further democratization of Western societies and of the inclusion of previous outsiders as legitimate members of civil society.

The second issue concerns the relationship between feminist struggles aimed at equality and justice for women and struggles for more global justice between developed and developing countries. The nagging question here is: who, as feminist citizens, do we reckon to be part of our community? Should we aim at global justice for all women world-wide, or does our civic responsibility require us to primarily care for our co-citizens? This nagging question, as will become clear, is due to a tacit assumption at the heart of contemporary political theories, namely, that the territorial domain of the nation-state is the only political community that can endow individuals with the status, rights, and privileges of citizenship.

In this chapter, I will distinguish three different feminist strategies regarding feminist citizenship: the strategy of inclusion, the strategy of reversal, and the strategy of displacement. The meaning, usefulness, and limitations of each will be assessed by exploring how it handles the much disputed issue of multiculturalism versus feminism. I will argue that the strategy of displacement seems to offer the best conceptual tools to steer a middle way between the radical affirmation and a wholesale rejection of multiculturalism. I will conclude with some reflections on how the current process of globalization not only affects the position of women world-wide in different and often contradictory ways, but also fundamentally challenges each of the three kinds of feminist citizen-talk discussed in this chapter. However, before diving into these specific debates, it seems wise to retreat for one

moment and first get an idea of the relationship between feminism and political theory in general.

FEMINISM AND POLITICAL THEORY

Feminist practice and theory can be named *political* projects, in so far as they initiate processes of public negotiation and struggle over the right to equal participation in the exercise of government – over oneself as well as over one's community. Feminist interventions are aimed at the equality of opportunities for each woman to develop her talents, to realize her ambitions, and to attain the same socio-economic status as men. Political activities which seek to establish more equality belong to the 'official-political sphere' (Fraser, 1997). They focus on problems that can be handled by existing governmental and social institutions. Demands put forward here focus on the acquisition of rights, backed by official legislation. If successful, these interventions result in the inclusion of women in the existing social and political order. However, for the transformation of such a *de jure* equality into *de facto* equality, a different kind of political activity is needed. These are activities which aim to describe matters previously defined as apolitical, for instance the economy, culture, or family life, into political problems of exploitation, injustice, or exclusion. Such practices of *politicization* involve the public contestation of dominant interpretations of codes of conduct, needs, interests, and identities. They make public what was formerly considered private. By exposing what is usually perceived of as necessary and natural as in fact contingent and socially constructed, transformative political practices redefine what looked like inevitable fate into changeable circumstances. Such activities belong to the sphere of the 'discursive-political' (Fraser, 1997).

In the 1970s feminists confronted modern liberal thought with the slogan 'the personal is the political'. Until then, it was taken for granted that the spheres of social relationships and personal life should be regarded as 'private' domains, as spheres of freedom with which the state ought not interfere. On the one hand, government should interfere as little as possible with citizens' activities in the public sphere. On the other hand, individuals' most personal thoughts and projects should not be curbed either, not by state regulations, nor by civil conventions and social expectations. Hence, civil society counts as 'private' when opposed to the state, but as 'public' when opposed to the personal.

'The personal is the political' also takes issue with this tripartite liberal-romantic framework for neglecting yet another public-private divide, between the public and domestic or family life. Many feminist critics have pointed out how liberal thought failed to theorize the very domain which serves to constitute and legitimize the framework of liberal political philosophy (Squires, 1999: 27). On the one hand, the family is the realm of intimate relationships, based on values of love and care rather than economic gain, political power, or

social status. On the other hand, the family is a public institution: marriage is a contract which regulates the rights and responsibilities of spouses, and parents have legal custody over their children. Hence, the family emerges as a 'private' realm when opposed to civil society, but as a 'public' institution when contrasted to the personal life of an individual.

A final deconstructive move implied in 'the personal is political' involves the politicization of our intimate 'inner' life. Feminists put much effort into exposing the variegated ways in which our most personal needs and desires can be perceived as the articulations of a dominant discourse. Rather than express the needs and desires of a universal human (or female) subject, they constitute what, in a particular time and place, counts as a human (or female) subject. Even our most intimate sexual desires can be interrogated for their implications on the level of social relationships, and even as autonomous subjects, we are not simply the sources of our own speech and action, but the contingent outcome of social-symbolic processes of 'subjectification' and 'abjection' (Butler, 1993).

In sum, the feminist rallying cry 'the personal is the political' aptly summarizes the endless ways in which not only the official-political realm – the state – but also the spheres of civil society, the family, and the personal are deeply political and pervaded by power.

CITIZENSHIP

From its very start, modern feminism constitutes a theory and practice which challenges the exclusion or marginalization of women in economic, social, and political life. Feminists have fought for equal rights and opportunities, such as women's right to education, economic independence, or control over their own bodies. These demands for more equality within the existing societal order could not, however, ignore the different roles and identities historically ascribed to and adopted by women. Consequently, struggles for equality and inclusion were often accompanied by demands for particular rights, such as the right to maternity leave or to specific welfare measures for single mothers. Thus, where demands for the equality of women discarded sexual difference, every so often they had to be based on the affirmation of sexual difference. This complicated predicament reminded feminists that the dominant societal order was not a gender-neutral but a masculine order, which structurally favoured male subjects. Nowadays, it is acknowledged that equality and difference are not opposite but rather interdependent strategies, such that political equality rests on the recognition of differences, which in turn implies the recognition of the equal value of these differences (Bock and James, 1992: 10).

Postmodernist thought has led feminist intellectuals to interrogate critically oppositions such as equality versus difference. They are interested in the myriad ways in which such oppositions produce their own 'constitutive outside' in

the form of 'hybrid' or 'subaltern' identities and practices. These identities and practices cannot be captured under either pole of a categorical divide, but simultaneously form the matrix that produces these categorizations (Butler and Scott, 1992).

The development in feminist theories of citizenship follows a similar pattern as feminist theory in general. Thus, we can discern tendencies that focus on the equality and *inclusion* of women, arguing that women are to be recognized as full-fledged citizens. A second line of proposals, in drawing attention to the value of female and other differences, aims for the *reversal* of dominant, masculine, or Western conceptions of citizenship. Finally, there are political theorists who wish to deconstruct the dichotomous frameworks altogether, a *displacement* which enables them to develop feminist reconceptualizations of liberal democracy (Squires, 1999).

The strategy of inclusion: Women are citizens, too

The American and French Revolutions of the eighteenth century were the first political events in which the subjects of a sovereign power demanded to be acknowledged as equal citizens of their own state. The recognition of the equality of each citizen in the American Declaration of Independence (1776) self-evidently applied to the White, male, Anglo settler – but not to women, Blacks (slaves), or Native Americans (Indians). In a similar manner, in revolutionary France, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789), which elevated the status of 'the commons' to that of 'citoyens', excluded women. Their exclusion was defended with the argument that, because women were economically dependent on and legally subordinated to (under coverture of) their fathers or husbands, they were unable to make independent judgements – their social status reflected their naturally dependent status. Consequently, the democratic revolutions reserved citizenship status only for property-owning men who were heads of households. Nevertheless, revolutionary slogans such as 'men are born and remain free and equal in their rights', or 'all men are created equal', were susceptible to the criticism that these ideals were not carried through to their full extent.

The American and the French Revolutions clearly marked the beginning of the *liberal-rights* tradition. Within this tradition, citizenship consists primarily of the status, rights, and entitlements granted by a state to its members. Usually, three kinds of citizenship rights are distinguished: civil rights, which secure the realization of individual freedom, such as freedom of speech and the right to own property; political rights, which allow for active and passive participation in the exercise of government; and social rights, which guarantee each individual a minimum share in economic wealth and social security (Marshall, 1950).

Already in the eighteenth century, revolutionary women like Olympe de Gouge and Mary Wollstonecraft actually took the public stage to argue

passionately for the inclusion of women as full-fledged citizens within the political community. They thus presented themselves as active citizens, as individuals who had the competence to speak in public, to write political treatises, to set up a rational argument. In doing so, these women answered to the criteria of good citizenship set by the *civic-republican* tradition, another main theoretical perspective on citizenship. Contrary to the liberal-rights tradition, which conceives of citizenship in terms of status, according to the republican view, citizenship is determined by an individual's active engagement with the public interest. Citizenship here does not so much involve membership in a state, but membership in a community. Rather than start from the assumption of self-interest, the civic-republican tradition expects citizens to cultivate a virtuous self (Connolly, 1991: 74). A good citizen, finally, is expected to exhibit typically manly virtues, such as self-control, impartiality, and civic courage.

To suggest, however, that the approaches of individual liberalism and civic-republicanism are diametrically opposed to one another would be misleading. Within the liberal perspective, the allocation of rights is implicitly made dependent on the fulfilment of certain obligations, such as a citizen's compliance to national laws and regulations. And no modern republican would deny that civic virtues are fostered most in a society which grants its citizens certain rights, such as the civil right of assembly, the political right to vote, and the social right to education. The insight that rights-based and virtue-based approaches to citizenship cannot be separated from each other resonates in contemporary reflections on women's inclusion as equal members of the citizenry. Thus, Ruth Lister (2003) argues for a 'synthetic approach', which conceives of citizenship as both status and practice and acknowledges that civil, political, and social rights are prerequisites for human agency, and that, in turn, agency is needed to acquire individual rights. Susan Moller Okin (1989) pointed out that women will have an equal opportunity to positions of political influence only after the transformation of the family from a patriarchal into a 'gender-free' institution. As long as they remain financially dependent on their husbands, women cannot simply choose to step out of an oppressive relationship, let alone speak up in public. Only when they have a real exit-option will women be able to use their voice and stand up for themselves.

Okin's use of the terms of 'voice' and 'exit', which she adopts from the political theorist Alfred Hirschmann, are particularly insightful with regard to her interventions in recent debates on multiculturalism. Okin took issue with the fact that participants in these debates often parry the question of what to do if claims of special rights by minority cultures clash with the norm of gender equality that liberal states in principle endorse (1998; 1999). With this critique, Okin was the first in a long list of authors who questioned the feminist credentials of multiculturalism (Hirsi Ali, 2002; Wikan, 2002). Each of them chastized adherents to multiculturalism for their attempt to extend the list of

liberal rights with a fourth type of rights – cultural rights. Multiculturalists defend the recognition of cultural rights as the logical extension of citizenship rights with the argument that for most individuals, their culture provides them with a meaningful context of choice and a sense of belonging which are essential for their well-being. Hence, it is a fundamental human right for individuals to maintain their own culture (Kymlicka, 1995). Moreover, in an era of ongoing immigration, cultural rights also function as ‘rights of integration’, allowing non-citizens to become part of civil society on their own terms (Pia Lara, 2002).

To this line of reasoning, liberal feminists object that the crucial difference between civil, political, and social rights and cultural rights is that the first are individual rights whereas the latter are group rights. As group rights, cultural rights are at odds with the liberal value of individual freedom, and their recognition may have devastating consequences, especially for the women members of a group. This conflict, according to Okin, is especially evident when we realize that most cultures are deeply gendered and that our individual sense of self is developed in the private sphere of domestic and family life. Thus we find, first, that most cultures preserve their distinct character and values through regulations of sexuality, reproduction, and family life, which affect the lives of women far more than the lives of men. Second, most cultures are patriarchal cultures, in which women’s lives are under the constant control of men, who expect them to serve their every desire and interest. Liberal thinkers who defend multiculturalism on the grounds that one’s own culture is an indispensable source for the development of self-esteem and self-respect forget that in most cultures, girls and women are often indoctrinated with the idea that they are of less value than boys, or that their life’s sole purpose is to guard the honour of the family. Okin argues that even a defence of group rights only in so far as these rights do not interfere with the freedom of individuals concentrates too much on forms of overt restriction, to the detriment of the far more subtle, but no less influential discriminatory practices in the private sphere of the household and the family. Liberal multiculturalists in particular should be critically aware of such intragroup inequalities. Even in the rare cases that a group has been rightfully granted the right to organize its community life according to its own traditional customs or religious prescriptions, Okin insists that individual members maintain the right to step out of their group whenever they wish to do so. Just as Okin in her earlier reflections endorsed the importance of women having a right to ‘exit’ from an oppressive marriage, she now emphasizes that liberal societies should do their utmost to lessen the inevitable economic, social, and emotional costs when individuals, especially women, decide to distance themselves from their family, their church, or their cultural–ethnic community – a position with which, for that matter, most liberal multiculturalists wholeheartedly agree.

The strategy of reversal: Communitarian and maternal thinking

Liberal feminist critiques of multiculturalism are sometimes countered by precisely the women they claim to stand up for. Ever more Muslim women speak up in public, through interventions in political debates and articles in newspapers and academic books. In Western countries, more Muslim women and girls have taken to wearing the veil, some of them even causing quite a stir when challenging public authorities by attending class or appearing in court dressed in the traditional niqáb. These Muslim women thus manifest themselves as active citizens, initiating and participating in public debates by challenging the liberal–feminist idea that when women are free to choose their own way of life, they will self-evidently choose to live according to the values of secular liberalism. They object to the ethnocentric or ‘orientalist’ perspective of Western feminists, accusing them of reducing Muslim women to the position of ‘inessential Others’ (Al-Hibri, 1999: 42). In contrast, Muslim women emphasize their commitment to their own cultural or religious community, which they firmly believe can be changed. They contend that such transformations, however, will not come from the outside, but are possible only from within. For these women, ‘Muslim feminism’ is not a contradiction in terms, as secular feminists seem to assume. On the contrary, they argue that it offers the only viable strategy really to improve the position of Muslim women. Many Muslim feminists thus take great pains over rereading the Qur’an and the *hadith* (commentary) in order to show that Islam in itself does not offer any legitimation for treating women differently from men. Leila Ahmed emphasizes ‘the egalitarian conception of gender inherent in the ethical vision of Islam’ (1992: 64), while Azizah Al-Hibri argues that some of the basic Islamic principles imply that women and men are equally entitled to engage in *ijthihad* (the interpretation of the religious texts), that Islam celebrates rather than suppresses diversity, and that Islamic law is meant to be flexible regarding time and place (1999: 43). Muslim feminists also make a point of distinguishing religion from culture, claiming that most woman-unfriendly practices in contemporary Muslim countries and communities can be traced back either to pre-Islamic custom or to their being imposed by conservative exegetes. They also claim that one should understand woman-unfriendly *suras* (Qur’an chapters) in their historical context, rather than holding on to their literal meaning in a world which has undergone dramatic changes (Selim, 2003).

Muslim feminists thus express a different view of feminist citizenship than their liberal and civic–republican counterparts. In many respects, their view can be perceived of as a particular version of *communitarianism*. Modern communitarians have attacked the rights-based approach of liberalism for its assumption of the individual as an ‘atomistic’ self, to replace it with a conception of the individual as an ‘embedded’ self. Within the liberal view,

an individual can in principle stand back from even her most dearly held convictions. From a communitarian perspective, however, 'our selves are at least partly constituted by ends that we do not choose, but rather discover by virtue of our being embedded in some shared social context' (Kymlicka, 2002: 224). This does not imply that individuals can only obediently follow the traditions in which they are raised. Communitarians subscribe to crucial aspects of modernity, such as the validity of universal human rights. Modernity to them does not so much imply the rejection as the transformation of tradition.

Muslim feminists choose to fulfil their civic duty by voicing their criticism, rather than stepping out of their community altogether. The liberal preference for 'exit' indicates that liberals conceive of communities as voluntary associations, whereas the emphasis on 'voice' is in line with the communitarian view that many of our social ties are not freely chosen, but given. According to this view, most of us have strong emotional bonds with our parents, our family, our neighbourhood; we often find that the language, customs, and habits with which we were raised make us feel more at home in some places than in others. Our attachment to our communal values therefore is not the outcome of some reasonable judgement – it rather is something we discover to be an intimate part of ourselves, to constitute our identity. Communitarians agree with civic-republicans that the responsibility of individuals towards their community comes first. But in their eyes this responsibility does not so much require that citizens actively participate in political decision-making, but that they act decently by fulfilling their basic social obligations.

Muslim feminism can be regarded as the most recent articulation of communitarian approaches to feminist citizenship. An earlier influential strand of communitarian thought in feminism has been elaborated by theorists such as Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sara Ruddick under the denominator of 'maternal thinking'. While these early maternalist thinkers took women's experiences as mothers and feminist philosophies of standpoint as their points of departure, contemporary adherents are especially inspired by the activities of grassroots movements like the women's peace camps at Greenham Common in Britain, the Madres of the Plaza del Mayo in Argentina, the Women in Black (a worldwide peace organization), or Indigenous community workers engaged in fighting poverty. Even organizations which initially started out as the purely personal concern of mothers for their children, or which seem to be engaged in 'mere' philanthropic work, often get involved in political activities. As Pnina Werbner phrases it, these women testify to the view that one should 'valorize maternal qualities [...] as encompassing and anchored in democratic values', and that 'political motherhood' is a viable and much needed alternative conception of active citizenship (1999: 221).

Maternalist thinkers have rightly criticized the false universalism of the traditions of civic republicanism and liberalism. These seemingly neutral conceptions of citizenship are indeed highly gendered. But to simply replace them with a maternalist point of view does not really escape the dichotomous framework of gender. As a consequence, maternalist thinking may

easily backfire on women. First, because it tends to essentialize female identity, it runs the risk of imposing the norms of maternalism on all women (Dietz, 1985). Second, it may foster claims to innocent victimhood and moral superiority vis-à-vis men. Third, because it focuses on the 'remoralization' rather than politicization of social life, a maternalist reversal risks playing into the hands of moral conservatism (Squires, 1999: 169).

Comparable risks threaten an all too uncritical espousal of a politics of multiculturalism and group rights by communitarian Muslim feminists. Muslim feminists spend much energy rereading the Qur'an to support their interpretation of its verses as in fact very woman-friendly and emancipatory. However sympathetic, these attempts run parallel to the projects of Islamic fundamentalists in their desire to go back to the original, 'true' meaning of these sacred texts. As such, they run the risk of imposing a new kind of orthodoxy on Muslim women concerning the question of how a 'good Muslima' should live. Indulging in denunciations of orientalist 'othering' and contrasting these dehumanizing gestures with a celebration of the supposedly true humaneness and ethical integrity of Islam may contribute to unproductive feelings of resentment and/or moral superiority towards the Western world in general and towards Western feminism in particular. Despite its emancipatory drive, Muslim feminism, like maternalist thinking, may well relapse into a position of moral conservatism.

For these reasons, many political theorists have opted for a third strategy to give shape to feminist citizenship, the strategy of displacement.

THE STRATEGY OF DISPLACEMENT: FEMINIST CITIZENSHIP AS A PRACTICE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

Politicization to those espousing displacement is the most vital aspect of feminist citizenship. The term comprises the entire gamut of strategies that feminists historically have followed to improve the position of women. As I have indicated earlier, savvy feminist critics may expose any area of public or private life and show how its discursive practices are subtly but deeply contestable. Recently, however, feminists have noted that to label a particular practice as contested, hence political, is in itself a political and therefore contested move. The exposure of private-public boundaries as politically non-innocent constructions does not mean that we should just dispense with them. On the contrary, to mark particular opinions, practices, or domains as matters of private rather than public concern constitutes an important safeguard for our individual liberty.

With such self-reflexive notes, adherents to the strategy of displacement testify to their allegiance to a view of social and political reality as a discursive reality, mediated and sustained by linguistic and narrative conventions. They give a deconstructivist twist to the equal rights and participatory

perspectives of inclusion, as well as to the aim of the reversal of dominant masculine or secular Western values by feminist communitarians. Perhaps surprisingly, this radical plea for a more politicized approach to feminist citizenship ends up with what looks like a politically quite moderate position, namely, the reevaluation of existing liberal-democratic societies. There seems to be a growing consensus among feminist political theorists that genderized or otherwise differential approaches to citizenship can be displaced only by feminist-informed practices of liberal democracy. This unexpected belief in the emancipatory and empowering potential of liberal democracy is sustained by several insights.

First, feminist liberal democrats subscribe to a constructivist view of identity. Identities, whether sexual, cultural, or religious, are the provisional outcome of dynamic processes of self-identification and ascriptions by others. Boundaries between groups are fluid and permeable and axes of domination are constituted by the intersections and boundary-crossings between different sexual, ethnic, cultural, and religious groups. Consequently, the use of a dichotomous framework of gender provides insufficient insight into the forms of injustice, misrecognition, and exclusion that women from different backgrounds may suffer, nor will it offer viable strategies for political transformation. Instead, feminist citizenship involves the ongoing contestation of identities as given, of the way in which particular issues are framed, and of the tacit norms and values underlying supposedly gender- or value-neutral policy measures. For example, feminist citizenship recognizes that in the context of the welfare state, of which women are the principal subjects, the idiom of 'needs' is not politically innocent but may hide assumptions and controversies concerning who has the authority to decide what people 'really' need, which needs are a matter of legitimate political concern and which a matter of individual responsibility, and to what extent the dominant discourse on needs is in fact a *gendered* discourse. Such practices of contestation can assume all kinds of forms, from strategies of silent withdrawal or articulate resistance by individual clients to formally organized groups combating disciplinary welfare practices (Fraser, 1989).

Second, feminist liberal democrats agree that one of the more effective ways to displace existing hegemonic relationships is through collective identity politics. Such collectivities, however, are preferably not based on primordial links such as motherhood, Muslim or other religious sisterhoods, or ethnicity. The political unity of a collective 'we' is never simply given but the result of the creation and articulation of new political identities (Mouffe, 1992). Donna Haraway evokes the figure of the former slave woman Sojourner Truth, who, with her ironical question 'Ain't I a Woman?', simultaneously claimed and deconstructed the identity of 'woman' (1992: 96). Haraway's earlier 'Manifesto for Cyborgs' can equally be read as an alternative figuration of feminist citizenship, presenting the cyborg as a creature of a post-gender world whose alliances are not based on identity, but on 'affinity' (1991 [1985]). Twentieth-century Black and Latina feminists like

Audre Lorde and Gloria Anzaldúa subscribe to such conscious mobilizations of identity. They suggest a conception of citizenship which allows women of all backgrounds to create commonality by both claiming *and* transfiguring given identities (Bickford, 1997).

According to Seyla Benhabib, from the perspective of an outside observer, cultures appear as if they were unified organic wholes; from the perspective of an insider, however, they rather form 'a horizon that recedes each time one approaches it' (2002: 5). This dual perspective implies that a politics of recognition need not involve the recognition of one particular identity. A politics of recognition might just as well 'initiate critical dialogue and reflection in public life about the very identity of the collectivity itself', allowing for democratic dissent and contestation, possibly leading to the 'reflexive reconstitution of collective identities' (p. 70). This insight opens up space for women's renegotiation of the dominant narratives of identity and difference within their own community. It indicates that women of cultural and religious minority groups are not solely to be seen as 'victims' but also as the potential agents of change, as active citizens able to cross and renegotiate the boundaries between their own cultural or religious community and the wider society.

Third, adherents of the strategy of displacement believe that whether a problematic belongs to the domain of the public or the private, justice or the good life, norms or values, is a matter of contestation – none of these discursive boundaries is sacred, each can be crossed and displaced. This fundamental openness vis-à-vis the subject of debate inevitably affects assumptions concerning the proper *place* for political speech and action, as well as ideas on the required *style* of public speech and action. In a truly open society, there is a plurality of public spheres, ranging from the official sphere of representative institutions to the unofficial spheres of social movements, from voluntary civic associations to grassroots activism, from artistic to religious collectivities. Publics can be distinguished according to lines of ideology, class, or identity, but also regarding their unequal status and their unequal access to discursive resources and positions of power. 'Subaltern counterpublics' may pop up at unexpected places, such as the mosque, the theatre, or the school. They may articulate their views through religious lectures, movies, or clothing. Such alternative styles challenge existing views of legitimate public speech and action by exploring its more affective, rhetorical, and impassioned dimensions, by highlighting the particular rather than the universal, and by appealing to desire rather than reason (Mouffe, 2002; Young, 1997).

Fourth, value pluralism and conflicting interests are considered essential to a vital democracy. A viable theory of democratic citizenship should therefore theorize the ways in which conflicts can be kept alive and tackled at the same time. The relationship between political adversaries should be regulated such that their differences are neither soothed away, nor unnecessarily polarized.

Still, there is significant controversy among adherents of the displacement strategy concerning the ultimate foundations of liberal democracy. Benhabib (1992), for instance, develops the notion of 'interactive universalism' in order

to emphasize that the value of liberal democracy lies in its insistence that 'participation precedes universality'. Inspired by Carol Gilligan's ethic of care, Benhabib emphasizes the importance of openness in public deliberations to 'the standpoint of the concrete other'; that is, to the specific needs and interests of people who are different. But this attitude should never become a goal in itself; it should always serve as the critical position from which 'the standpoint of the general other' – the other as an equal bearer of rights and duties – is constantly questioned and revised. The ultimate aim of this responsiveness to particular others is to ensure that our institutions and laws live up to their claims of justice and fairness for all – their claims of universality.

Against this 'deliberative' view, Chantal Mouffe proposes a more 'radical' view of liberal democracy, one which remains distrustful of any appeal to universal values. Democracy, according to Mouffe, is an ancient tradition in which equality and popular sovereignty are the core values. The liberal emphasis on freedom and individual rights, however, is a product of the modern era. Deliberative democrats deny the essential tension between the liberal espousal of individual rights and the democratic emphasis on collective will formation. While democracy is built upon the opposition between 'us' (citizens) and 'them' (non-citizens), liberal principles apply to each individual, no matter her passport or place of residence. According to Mouffe, it is precisely this paradoxical nature of liberal democracy which makes it such a valuable regime. Because any existing configuration of power can be challenged, liberal-democratic regimes have propelled forth important historical political developments. It is therefore of the utmost importance to uphold the 'agonistic' nature of liberal democracy and to distrust any legitimation of the status quo in terms of rational consensus. In the end, it is not public reason, but political passion that motivates citizens to participate actively in the public sphere. However fair the procedures, however reasonable their outcome, democratic struggles will always result in new forms of exclusion, in the hegemony of one particular group interest or form of life to the detriment of others (Mouffe, 2000).

Finally, deliberative and radical democrats alike recognize that, despite the inevitability of value pluralism and conflicting interests, one of the most important public goods in a liberal democracy is 'a viable sense of collective identity' (Benhabib, 1996). A liberal democracy is a *political* community, whose common good cannot be found at the level of substantive beliefs, but must be located at the level of agreed-upon procedures for articulating conflicts and attaining temporary agreement. To this insight, and in line with her agonistic view, Mouffe adds the reminder that a fully inclusive political community can never be realized: each construction of a 'we' implies the constitution of an outside, of a 'them'. She therefore prefers to view the common good of a political community as 'a vanishing point' – something to which we, as citizens, must constantly refer, but that can never be reached (1992: 379).

GLOBALIZATION

Globalization can be seen as the set of economic and cultural processes which simultaneously haunt and evade our contemporary thought on what may count as a political community (see Chapter 10, this volume). Globalization casts doubt on previously self-evident assumptions concerning the power of the nation-state, the boundaries of civil society, and the scope of people to whom we are morally obligated: who do we consider to be part of 'our' community; who should we perceive as our co-citizens? Should we as feminists aim at global justice for all women, or does our civic responsibility require us primarily to care for our co-citizens? Confronted with this choice between the liberal perspective of human rights and the democratic perspective of the rights of sovereign peoples, most feminists do not hesitate. They prefer the 'cosmopolitan' view of citizenship which perceives human beings (men and women alike) as citizens of the global community, over and against the 'internationalist' view according to which individuals primarily belong to, and demand rights and benefits from, a particular political community or nation-state.

However, international women's networks and organizations which attempt to practice global feminist citizenship are acutely aware that their struggles for the greater personal autonomy and equality for all women may not always mesh easily with their demands for a more just global economy (Sen and Onufer Correa, 1999). While the process of economic and cultural globalization has enhanced the empowerment of women world-wide, it has also facilitated the upsurge of religious fundamentalisms which instigated a conservative backlash. Thus, at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the Vatican branch of Christian fundamentalism entered into alliances with its Islamic counterparts in demanding that the personal autonomy of women be curbed by strict state regulations concerning dress, sexuality, marriage, and reproduction. Such restrictions are not merely imposed 'from above', they are also supported by many religious women themselves – 'from below'.

This tension between the fight for women's rights and the defence of patriarchal relationships is an apt illustration of the *Janus-face* of globalization as a simultaneous process of modernization and traditionalization. While the outcomes of economic liberalization are embraced almost universally, cultural liberalization is resisted as a form of Western imperialism. Politically conscious women from the East and the South often choose to identify as citizens of their particular religious or ethnic community rather than as citizens of the universal community of humanity. Thus, global civil society seems to be marked by the same tension which troubles liberal multicultural states: the tension between the demands for individual rights for women on the one hand, and demands for collective rights by non-liberal groups and peoples on the other.

Globalization confronts feminist theorists with the problem of the usefulness of the concept of citizenship itself. In the current era of 'deterritorialization', individual rights and responsibilities are less and less tied to the territorial-boundaries of the nation-state. Most Western countries grant specific civil, social, and even some political rights to immigrants who are not (yet) naturalized citizens. On the other hand, social rights of citizens may be violated, for instance when they feel forced to accept jobs in so-called 'free export zones' within their own country. While national governments provide transnational corporations with the infrastructure and energy needed to get their production work done, they at the same time allow them to profit from their 'extraterritorial' status by not paying taxes, evading import and export tariffs, and dodging national regulations concerning minimum payment or maximum working days. As an effect of globalization, contemporary nation-states, especially Western welfare states, are undergoing a significant face-lift: from 'caring' states they are gradually turning into 'competitive' states. Succumbing ever more to the pressures of privatization and liberalization issued by the global market, they lose their power to sustain networks of solidarity amongst compatriots and to safeguard people's basic rights as citizens.

This breakdown of the meaning of national citizenship as a guarantee for individual rights and benefits has been accompanied by the rise of NGOs like Amnesty International and DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), the proliferation of international treaties and conferences (such as UN conferences on the position of women), and the emergence of a worldwide discourse on human and women's rights. We might conclude that the decline of national political communities is somehow made good by the rise of a new political community, that of global civil society. That, however, would be an over-hasty conclusion. For one thing, complaints against violations of human or women's rights only make sense if they can be addressed to institutions with the political and juridical power to condemn and prohibit such practices, and the only institutions endowed with such effective power and jurisdiction are still the institutions of the nation-state. It seems that as yet only as citizens of a particular nation-state can we effectively appeal to our universal rights as human beings. It might be an illusion to think that international institutions, forums, and treaties will, even in the longer run, be able to fill the gap created by the demise of nationhood. Perhaps the ideal of a cosmopolitan 'world republic' is too far-fetched. It might very well be that the promotion of mutual trust and solidarity within particular national communities is the only viable way to achieve more global justice and democracy.

It seems therefore that in the near future, feminist citizenship will have to be practised on two fronts at once. On the one hand, feminists need to strengthen further their international networks and alliances to fight for global justice and democratization for all women. On the other hand, we have to accept that nation-states do remain important transformative agents for achieving a gender-neutral 'community of fate' (Van Gunsteren, 1998). This acknowledgement of the need for a dual strategy makes it even more

urgent for feminist theorists to think through the notion of 'global' or 'cosmopolitan' citizenship more thoroughly. For, although it is widely agreed that a feminist practice of citizenship 'cannot stop at the borders of individual nation-states' (Lister, 2003: 199), it is far less clear what such an alternative conception of feminist citizenship should look like in order to be politically effective.

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