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EXOTICISING CITIZENSHIP:
Anthropology and the new citizenship debate

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A repeated anthropological claim to theoretical distinction has been our ability not only to make the exotic familiar but to render the familiar exotic; even, as I shall argue today, to exoticise the utterly modern. Such claims are undoubtedly put to the test in the study of citizenship since, on the face of it, citizenship is an utterly modern invention, remote from the world views of the people anthropologists mostly study. It is legalistic, technical, procedural, and often rather dull. It seems to lack the passions of nationalism or ethnicity, with their cultural roots in the past and their appeals to primordial sentiments of blood and soil. Yet despite this apparent blandness, citizenship has historically been, and still is, the site of intense struggle, arising partly from its central locus within modernity itself.¹

THE PRAGMATICS AND PARADOXES OF CITIZENSHIP

My aim in this talk is to begin to sketch out what anthropology might contribute to a newly emergent discourse of citizenship — one which is post-liberal, post-nationalist, and post-communist; a discourse which is, distinctively, sceptical of any naive invocations of equality and freedom while still embracing these values; a globalising discourse of human rights which starts from difference. The new discourse draws especially on feminist and post-colonial critiques, and is responsive to challenges posed by the new social movements. My central question is: how can we develop a committed post-colonial anthropology while at the same time retaining our traditional stance of detachment — our ability as anthropologists to step back from our subject matter, in this case, citizenship?

For a start, we need, I suggest, to stand back from the tendency of key academic players in the citizenship debate to become part of the very discourse they are analysing. Among these are, first: textualists, mainly moral
and political philosophers, who roam freely across the centuries, intervening in their commentaries in debates emanating from Aristotle, Lock or Kant, Rawls or Taylor. Second are the typologisers, mainly political scientists, who generate elaborate classifications of political systems while actively critiquing their central tendencies — communitarian, civic republican, liberal, socialist. Finally are the activists — radical feminists or anti-racists, whose aim it is to highlight the false claims of citizenship.

Against such ambivalent insertions into the very object of scholarly scrutiny, an anthropological theory of citizenship has to start from a recognition that citizenship is neither a pure realm of ideas nor simply an arena of political advocacy. Yet at the same time such a theory has also to share with the activists an engagement with the false universalisms of citizenship claims.

The new discourse of citizenship is pitched against such false claims. It starts from one of the great historical paradoxes of modernity — the fact that the moment of universal emancipation was also the moment of female and racial subordination and exclusion. Following the French Revolution, for example, women lost their civil, economic and political rights in the emergent public sphere and were relegated to the private sphere of the family, denied even of the right to own property. This has led many feminist writers, from Carole Pateman to Ruth Lister (Pateman 1988; Lister 1997:69), to argue that the exclusion of women from citizenship was not incidental but was inherent in bourgeois patriarchy, and thus intrinsic to the very ideas of the Enlightenment. These ideas essentialised women as embodiments of the private, the familial, the natural, the irrational and the emotional. By contrast, the public sphere was constructed as essentially masculine, rational, responsible and respectable. Women became, paradoxically, both the ‘property’ of men and, as ‘signs’, the physical embodiments of the nation and the reproducers and transmitters of its culture (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Kandiyoti 1991a and 1991b; Yuval-Davis 1997). In a further twist, women were also defined, despite their supposed irrationality, as the mothers and socialisers of citizens (Vogel 1991). Anthropologists are familiar with this argument as it has come to us through the work of Sherry Ortner and the nature-culture-gender debate (see, for example, MacCormack and Strathern 1980). The need is, however, to move this debate forward to address the issue of citizenship — of women and other excluded minorities’ membership in the political community.

The new democratic order of the late eighteenth century excluded, of course, not only women but black people, indigenous minorities, slaves,
colonial subjects, and the working classes, on grounds of their 'difference'. In the face of this false universalism, feminists espousing identity politics as the basis for radical democratic alliances across difference (for example Mouffe 1992 and 1993; Ruddick 1989) have argued that universalist invocations of the abstract individual, the bearer of democratic civil and political rights, constitute merely an ideological smokescreen. If abstract egalitarianism means normative homogeneity and the suppression of particularity and difference, it cannot be, these activist scholars reason, the basis for a true emancipatory politics. Many feminists deny the very possibility of an impartial perspective, of 'the view from everywhere' (Young 1990:105; 103 passim), of a 'monological moral reason' as Iris Marion Young calls it (p.106), the 'God trick' in the words of Donna Haraway. Standpoint feminists argue that universals are false because they are generated from particular, often hegemonic, vantage points, which impose what is in reality a partial vision on others. A similar deep scepticism, Liisa Malkki has shown, animates the response of Hutu refugees living in camps in Tanzania, victims of genocidal state terror, to Tutsi elite invocations of citizenship in Burundi (Malkki 1995).

The problem is that while this kind of critique is appropriate for the West where basic civil, political and social rights are relatively well established (even if these were achieved only after a century and a half of struggle), the rejection of universal ideas cannot provide a real understanding for us as anthropologists working in developing nations. We need to understand the power of these very same ideas in motivating democratic struggles. We need a theory of citizenship that addresses the complex realities of post-colonial societies, fighting not only against gender inequalities but against predatory global capitalism, state terror, religious communalism, ethnic cleansing, and pervasive human rights abuses.

First, however, we must exoticise citizenship. Just as Bourdieu (1995) has argued that the field of art, despite its claims to aesthetic autonomy, is responsive to economic and political forces, so too we need to start from the fact that Enlightenment ideas about universal citizenship are not so much false, but everywhere inserted into a social field of heterogeneous, partly overlapping and conflicting narratives and practices. The rhetoric of freedom, equality and autonomy is entangled everywhere with the passionate particularisms of nationalism and religiosity, and pitted against the entrenched institutions of kinship and the family, with their taken-for-granted assumptions about gendered and generational hierarchies of authority and power relations.
From a phenomenological point of view citizenship is thus, much like Azande witchcraft in Evans-Pritchard’s brilliant analysis (1937), a pragmatic, commonsense moral discourse, a practical discourse in Bourdieu’s terms (1977). Even when it invokes freedom and equality and masquerades as rational, masculine and universal, citizenship as a discourse is necessarily replete with unmarked inconsistencies and contradictions, precisely because it is embedded in everyday power relations and particularist ideologies. It is nevertheless perpetuated, much like witchcraft, by situational selection and ad hoc secondary elaborations of belief. These allow its protagonists to continue to believe in the reality of — in this case — utopian ideals of freedom and equality.

Second, we need to recognise the complex, conjunctural nature of citizenship as a discourse of modernity. As recent debates about the modern versus the late-modern or postmodern have highlighted, modernity was marked from its inception by contradictory tendencies: towards ordering, control and normalisation, on the one hand, and the toleration of uncertainty, scepticism, disagreement and difference, on the other. Democratic citizenship as a social and political construct encapsulates this modern aporia: it opens up spaces and arenas of autonomy and ‘freedom’ — of conflict, unpredictability, intimacy, the right to be different — while restricting and structuring these spaces by procedural hedges about limits. It orders conflict, channels and tames it; it labels and classifies collective differences; it determines how, where and when difference may be legitimately ‘represented’, and who counts as ‘different’ in the political arena — itself a social construct. Citizenship defines the limits of state power and where a ‘civil society’ or the private sphere of free individuals begins. These opposed impulses, I propose, are part of what makes citizenship, for subjects themselves, such a complex, ambiguous imaginary.

As an unstable political and jural formation, citizenship both compounds and confounds contradictory tendencies: of universalism and particularism, freedom and order, individual rights and collective responsibilities, identity and difference, nation and individual. Because such combinations remain inherently unstable, democratic citizenship is, to echo a favourite Derridean aphorism, always already becoming a historically contingent social formation, a particular negotiated compromise between forces of normalisation and differentiation. It is, therefore, always inflected by power and by the commonsense assumptions of hegemonic cultural and political elites.
THE HORIZONS OF CITIZENSHIP

This leads to a further insight, one which is my starting point here. Rather than being simply an artificial construct of modernity, citizenship as a subjectivity is deeply dialogical, encapsulating specific, historically inflected, cultural and social assumptions about similarity and difference. The negotiation of these may generate at different times and places quite different sets of practices, institutional arrangements, modes of social interaction and future orientations. This is especially so because, unlike nationalism which grounds itself in a mythical past, citizenship raises its eyes towards the future, to common destinies. Its politics are aspirational, a 'politics of desire' (Falk 1994:131, 139-40). As a political imaginary, discourses of citizenship constitute horizons of possibility, a 'telos to be realised' (Parry 1991:167), an 'ideal' (Marshall 1950:29), a 'blueprint' for democracy (Anderson 1983:81) or, following de Toqueville, an 'egalitarian utopia' (Göle 1996:52; Mouffe 1988:94). Citizenship is the gold standard against which the negotiated order is measured and, inevitably, found wanting.

Why has citizenship emerged at the present moment as one of the most debated concepts in moral philosophy and the social sciences? Partly, the reasons are geopolitical: the breakdown of communism and the global spread of multinational capitalism; the impotence of the democratic West in the face of state terror, ethnic cleansing and genocide; the rise of religious fundamentalism and communalism; the increased flow of refugees and global migrants from the South to the North; the threat posed by neo-liberal policies to the achievements of the welfare state and 'social' citizenship; the dangers of global warming and the greenhouse effect, but also, the end of apartheid; the post-World War II creation of human rights charters and supranational entities such as the European Union; the convocation of giant, UN-sponsored world conferences: on Women, on Human Rights, on Reproduction, on the Environment — all of these have underlined the planetary interdependence of citizens worldwide and the need to seek a new, democratic, responsible and caring global cosmopolitan society, as David Held has recently argued (Held 1995).

This is where citizenship becomes more than itself, both spatially and temporally: implicit within it is a charter for human rights which is uncircumscribed territorially and which envisages, to borrow a phrase from Claude Lévi-Strauss, a 'humanity without frontiers' (Lévi-Strauss 1966:166) — the ethical, physical and cultural survival of the human species in all its
totemic diversity. Against those who regard citizenship as exclusionary and
confined to the nation-state, global citizens today have nothing less, according
to Richard Falk, than the peaceful survival of the planet and its multifarious
biological and cultural variety as their telos, pitched against the totalising,
invasive and homogenising project of Western modernity (Falk 1994:140).

Hence new social movements — of women, greens, gays, indigenous
minorities, human rights groups, multiculturalists and diasporic activists — all
of them moving with apparent ease and breathtaking speed between the utterly
local and the totally global, have, in different ways, challenged the historical
and analytic divide between the ‘private’ and the ‘public’, the particular and
the universal, the national and the transnational. It is they, above all, who have
generated the new discourse of citizenship. They reject, as we have seen, the
earlier, homogenising, cultural nationalist versions of majoritarian democratic
citizenship, even in its socialist varieties, and seek to transcend its exclusivist
and exclusionary moral imaginaries.

The new discourse aims — both conceptually and practically — towards
a universal citizenship that recognises the right to be ‘different’; that stresses
the dialogical, transnational and global dimensions of citizenship. As Seyla
Benhabib, a prominent feminist moral philosopher has argued (1992), such a
citizenship is premised on the permeability and complexity of the late
capitalist public sphere, no longer defined as a separate space or a particular
set of substantive issues but as an open arena of moral and political dialogue
and contestation. No longer simply a formal, jurid relation between an
individual and the state, citizenship is now being defined as a holistic relation
to a particular, culturally plural political community (see the contributions to
Yuval-Davis and Werbner, in press). In the new discourse, citizenship is
understood as always locally embedded in the particularities of culture, place
and history (Held 1995:283-6).

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY OF CITIZENSHIP

It is in this sense that a post-colonial anthropology can contribute to the new
discourse of citizenship, not only because anthropology studies the impact of
the state on the local, or the meanings of grassroots activism, but because
theoretically, anthropology’s subject matter has always been ‘difference’ and
‘identity’, the particular in the universal, the dynamics of inclusion and
exclusion. Also, anthropology has always been a discipline concerned with the
pragmatics of moral discourses, not simply their philosophical validity. And
finally, because anthropology has repeatedly focused not only on the pervasiveness of power, but on the power of culture.

The need, however, is to draw these strands together into a new anthropological discourse of citizenship. Clifford Geertz’s original insights on new nation citizenship remain I suggest, even today, a relevant starting point for such an anthropological theory: ‘citizenship in the truly modern state’, he wrote in 1963, ‘has more and more become the most broadly negotiable claim to personal significance’ (Geertz 1963:108). The tensions and contradictions between the ‘will to be modern’ implicit in citizenship and the culturally grounded demand, as Geertz puts it, ‘to exist and have a name’ (1963:108), have fuelled national politics in the post-colonial world for the past forty years.

Perhaps what has changed most is our appreciation of the complexity of personal subjectivities in a post-national, postmodern world. It is not just ethnic or religious identities that count today. Subjects are also positioned in terms of other identifications — of gender, class, sexual orientation, political commitment and so forth. These form the basis for crosscutting alliances between like-minded citizens. Drawing on Max Gluckman’s conflict theory, Robert Thornton argues that in the new, post-apartheid South Africa (Thornton 1996) a multiplicity of conflicts generates transcendent solidarities across differences. Transversal alliances, as Nira Yuval-Davis calls them, allow otherwise divided protagonists to engage in joint political battles for the sake of peace or vulnerable minorities (Yuval-Davis 1997).

Such alliances start from the fact that struggles for citizenship in a post-liberal world have also become struggles for identity, for visibility, the right to be recognised, to have a ‘voice’ and a ‘name’. These struggles expose the truth that not all individuals have equal access to the state, that citizenship is a mediated relationship determined at least in some measure by social positioning. This is the message of Anna Tsing’s recent study of the Meratus in Borneo, positioned on the margins of the margins of the Indonesian state (Tsing 1993). Tsing shows how the Meratus attempt to centre their universe imaginatively, beyond the reach of the centre.

T.H. Marshall, the great British theorist of the welfare state, defined citizenship in holistic terms as a ‘status’ in the community. Marshall traces the evolution of citizenship rights in Britain from civil in the eighteenth century, to political in the nineteenth, to social in the twentieth. Social citizenship, he argues, is premised on the idea that the formal right to vote does not in itself confer equal access to civic participation. To be an active citizen requires a
minimum of economic and physical wellbeing and autonomy. It is the responsibility of the political community to guarantee these for its weakest and most vulnerable members.

Holistic definitions of this sort have come increasingly to be incorporated into contemporary human rights discourses. These are premised on the idea that to be a free agent, to be an autonomous citizen, indeed to be fully human, a person requires a minimum of economic and cultural autonomy, as well as the right to bodily integrity and to collective protection from physical and symbolic violence, whether perpetrated by the state, male kinsmen, or other collectivities. The result has been a continual expansion in the definition of what is constitutive of human rights (Gould 1988).

What has all this to do with anthropology? Notions of individualism and autonomous agency make little sense, it might seem, in societies in which sociality is grounded in ideas about status rather than contract, divalidism rather than individualism, interdependency and complementarity rather than autonomy. The answer to this objection is twofold: first, the new discourse of citizenship starts, as we have seen, from a post-liberal view about the dialogical, relational and interdependent character of citizenship everywhere. Second, notions of democracy, justice and state accountability are narratives that have travelled well beyond Europe and, indeed, beyond Third World Westernised elites.

In the developing world today, as among indigenous peoples in the First, organically hybrid discourses of democracy echo indigenous ideas about moral authority, the rule of law and collective responsibility. In Zimbabwe, for example, Richard Werbner describes how local activists engage in a politics of moral accountability against Robert Mugabe’s regime, as they demand retribution for atrocities committed against civilians in Ndebeleland (Werbner 1995, 1998). Urban activists frame their demands in the language of human rights discourses. But equally, rural Kalanga victims of these atrocities invoke Mwali, the High God, whose oracular voice calls for reconciliation and peace between politicians. In the narratives of the cult’s adepts, Mugabe is constructed in ethical terms as desecrator and destroyer of the land and its people, a man who has brought upon his nation drought and natural disaster because of his unnatural deeds. Here discourses of human rights and indigenous ideas about interpersonal morality and the interdependence of the microcosm and the macrocosm are conjoined in a single dissenting politics. Indeed notions of authority, legitimate power, and political accountability are not unique to the West; they can be found throughout the developing world.
Sally Engle Merry, a legal anthropologist who has studied the indigenous movement in Hawaii, speaks of the vernacularisation and globalisation of the law by indigenous people, who draw in their struggles for land and sovereignty on a fundamentally plural set of legal ideas and corpuses, from global human rights to national law and local traditions (Merry 1997; see also Jolly 1996).

In a quite different context, the pious Muslim women whose organisation I studied in Manchester, in fighting to gain an autonomous voice in the diasporic public sphere invoke the true spirit of Islam in a discourse which combine the demand for gender equality with an assertion of their unique moral and ethical qualities as women. In their struggle to capture the moral high ground these women began as charitable workers collecting money and clothing for sick children and impoverished women in Pakistan. In the face of local Pakistani male opposition to their philanthropic mobilisation, however, the women intensified their transnational activism. They organised a Women in Black protest march against human rights abuses perpetrated by the Serbian and Indian states against women and children in Bosnia and Kashmir. Twice the women travelled overland through Europe, in the cold of winter, to the border of Bosnia, bringing with them an ambulance, food, clothing, medicines and toys for Bosnian Muslim refugees.

These women are not part of a radical Westernised diasporic elite. They come from traditional, quite religious backgrounds in which khidmat, service for the community, is a central moral value. They began as philanthropists rather than radical feminists. Their political subjectivities are clearly grounded in all their multiple identities — as Muslims, members of a global Muslim ummah; as Pakistanis, with patriotic loyalty to their nation; as South Asians who enjoy Punjabi music, dance and celebration; as British citizens, demanding a voice in their newly adopted country; and as women, demanding a public presence and moral authority vis-à-vis the male elders of their own community.

The women are empowered by their conviction that Islam grants full equality to men and women. But the Islam they refer to is not a puritanical Islam which denies sensual, bodily enjoyment. They use vernacular Punjabi popular culture — songs, dances, fashion shows, amateur plays which they write and stage themselves and which satirise men, religious clerics and arranged marriages — to mobilise women in the community, and to have fun. They exploit all the cultural resources they command as women to carve out a gendered space for themselves in the male-dominated diasporic public sphere. In invoking Islam as an egalitarian ethos that stresses the equality of men and
women, they are also, however, clearly expressing the democratic *zeitgeist* of our times, rather than simply the truth of Islam at its foundational moment.

Women’s political activism in the Third World often starts from domains of authority under their control. Hence one route used by women to overcome their construction as ‘different’ has been to stress their superior, encompassing ‘maternal’ qualities of caring, responsibility and compassion. Both in their writings and their activism they re-imagine citizenship and the public sphere as constituted by ‘feminine’ values. They become, in my terms, ‘political mothers’.

Political motherhood, a concept coined by Jennifer Schirmer (1993), is to be understood as an emancipatory movement which has brought about the ‘feminisation’ of citizenship both in the West and beyond it (see Werbner, in press). In Latin America, in the face of authoritarian regimes of terror, motherist groups led the public battle for human and democratic rights in the name of incarcerated or ‘disappeared’ husbands, lovers, sons or brothers. Schirmer, an anthropologist working in El Salvador, proposes that rather than starting out as feminists such women reach towards a specific feminist consciousness rooted in particular places at particular historical junctures (Schirmer 1993:61). In such instances ‘dualistic theories’ of public/private and gender opposition are revealed as inadequate (Stephen 1995:824). We need models, Lynn Stephen, another Latin American feminist anthropologist argues, that allow us to theorise forms of women’s activism that do not simply reject traditional gender roles and that recognise that in the Third World the family remains a primary site of identity, not just a battleground.

Networks of Western feminists have played a crucial role in supporting such women’s human rights struggles beyond the West. Writing about human and civil rights lawyers working in Africa, Sally Falk Moore argues that:

> their knowledge that there are people in the international community who know what they are doing is crucial to them. Connections with those networks are more than just desirable. They can literally be life-sustaining (Moore 1998:150).

This global interdependence makes the old anthropological critique of human rights discourses, on the grounds that they fail to recognise the relativity of all cultural values, oddly out of touch with contemporary alignments (see Wilson 1997). In a world of nation-states, human rights networks and discourses are weapons used by democratic activists, including women and cultural or indigenous minorities, against authoritarian and repressive regimes and culturally homogenising nationalisms. Rather than denying cultural difference,
then, human rights discourses defend the right to be different (see J. Bhabha, in press). Outlining an anthropological perspective on human rights, Richard Wilson argues that in a globalising world of multi-ethnic nation-states, the task of the anthropologist is ‘to restore the richness of [local] subjectivities, and chart the complex field of social relations [and] contradictory values’ in particular historical and local contexts (Wilson 1997:15).

The Women in Black movement which inspired the Pakistani women activists’ march through the streets of Manchester is part of a wider, international women’s peace movement. Founded by feminist peace activists in Israel, Women in Black’s weekly public vigils and the symbolism of mourning which the movement deploys have been adopted by Serbian women in Belgrade and spread worldwide. Ayala Emmett, the anthropologist who studied this movement, stresses the emotional dimensions of citizenship implied by the women’s vigils (Emmett 1996). They are meant, she argues, to highlight emotions of grief and compassion against the Israeli Right’s appeals to rage and vengeance. Although its members are feminists demanding the right to a voice and say in the Middle East conflict, the women are also part of the broader Israeli peace movement. Like many other Third World and diasporic women, they see female values of compassion and caring as encompassing a broader stress on human rights, equality and justice.

CITIZENSHIP AS ENCOMPASSMENT

Instead of an exclusionary universalism, then, rejected by feminists, multiculturalists and indigenous minorities, the logic of citizenship is to be understood, I want to suggest, as a logic of encompassment in the sense defined by Louis Dumont (1972[1966]). According to this dialectical logic, citizenship first transcends difference, defining all subjects in abstract terms as equal before the law. But difference is then reinstated as a higher order value which encompasses equality through a relational and dialogical ethic of care, tolerance, compassion and responsibility for the other. This higher-order stress on difference thus encompasses and subsumes universal and inclusive ideas about equality within it, without denying them, just as Dumont argued the purity of the Brahmans encompasses the temporal power of the Rajputs to which it is opposed, without denying its critical centrality. Rather than a model which posits an opposition between abstract individualism and relational divalence, then, the logic of encompassment highlights their coexistence
within a hierarchy of values which transcends the 'paradoxes' of citizenship (Scott 1996).

The logic of encompassment explains how it is that Third World women historically aligned with men in the anti-colonial struggle for independence, while at the same time continuing to fight for specifically feminist causes. So too, Pakistani women in Manchester highlight in their rhetoric the evils of a dominant nationalist masculinity that has perpetrated the rape of Bosnian or Kashmiri women, just as they struggle against male leaders of their own local community who attempt to exclude them from active participation in the diasporic public sphere. Yet these same women also assert their equality with men and demonstrate alongside them in diasporic campaigns for the independence of Kashmir or in protest at the atrocities inflicted on all Muslims in the former Yugoslavia.

Against accusations by post-colonial feminists such as Chandra Mohanty (1991:31-2) that anthropology 'nativises' women and essentialises them as Other, has been a sustained anthropological critique of simplistic, essentialist feminist patriarchal models of absolute male authority. Anthropologists highlight the fact that women in post-colonial nations are not simply victims of bourgeois patriarchy, as they clearly were in the West at the dawn of modern citizenship; in many (though not all) Third World communities women are in critical respects active agents of their own destiny, able to exercise their rightful claims vis-a-vis male relatives and to sustain viable female cultural 'worlds'. As Emrys Peters argued long ago about the Bedouin of Cyrenaica, women's consciousness of their rights is not simply a matter of hidden resistance (Peters 1990:243). Women make claims underpinned by recognised and established entitlements (p.258) and, as elders, they acquire authority in the public sphere (p.262). They often play a key mediating role in kinship and affinal networks. Among Kalanga in Botswana, for example, elite women form a cult of spirit possession which purifies the homestead for the sake of human prosperity. Richard Werbner argues that:

> the power of women as hosts [of invading demons] is not the power of the weak. Nor is it a blackmail by otherwise passive inferiors or nascent suffragettes ... A host mediates and makes her demands as a relative (Werbner 1989:80).

So too Punjabi women, whether Muslim, Sikh or Hindu, control the system of ceremonial gift exchanges between families that shapes the inter-domestic domain of Punjabi sociality. In their wedding rituals women symbolically
assert their ownership and control of the domestic domain, and their power of mediation between culture and nature beyond it (Werbner 1990:294).

MULTICULTURALISM AND THE LIMITS OF CULTURAL HYBRIDITY

As in the case of women, indigenous and ethnic minorities have increasingly defied the homogenising tendencies of nationalism and the modern state, demanding that their cultures be recognised in the public sphere. Such calls for multiculturalism rest on two principles: first, that fully self-conscious, creative personal and collective autonomy requires respect and recognition for a subject's culture; and second, that many minority groups suffer not simply from racism but from cultural racism (Modood 1997a and 1997b). In the language deployed by 'one-nation' anti-multiculturalists, culture is an innate tendency, a racialised quality. This type of discourse essentialises culture as embodied and unchanging. Cultural 'difference' thus can, and often does, evoke disgust, disdain or violence, and people of colour are frequently differentiated according to the degree to which they assimilate Western middle class cultural values, as Aiwa Ong has recently demonstrated in relation to Southeast Asian immigrants to the United States (Ong 1996).

Conversely, anthropological critics of multiculturalism argue that it falsely reifies or essentialises cultural communities as internally homogeneous, fixed and bounded collectivities. Multiculturalism, they argue, thus fails to recognise the creative, dynamic, agonistic, argumentative and hybrid nature of all cultures. Feminists in particular see multicultural state policies as granting too much decision-making power over women and their bodies to unelected 'traditional' communal male elders. Socialists and anti-racists reject multiculturalism on the grounds that it undermines the solidarity of political struggles by the oppressed, introducing divisive 'identity politics' which weaken their effectiveness (Sivanandan 1990).

But multiculturalism can also be understood as one strand in a broader anti-racist strategy, as we argue in a recent collection on the politics of multiculturalism in the new Europe (Modood and Werbner 1997; see also Blum 1994; Ben-Tovim 1997; Werbner 1997a). Most critics are agreed that cultural recognition and respect, 'symbolic citizenship' as Avishai Margalit has called it (Margalit 1996), cannot and should not entail a limiting of universalist individual liberal rights. Hence they reject 'incorporative' multiculturalist policies adopted vis-a-vis migrants or immigrants. These are still prevalent in several European countries (see Soysal 1994; on Germany see
Yalcin-Heckman 1997, for example). Such incorporative policies are less likely, however, where immigrant-settlers are full citizens, whose individual autonomy and freedom is guaranteed by the state, and who participate actively in a wide range of civil and political associations. Under quite different circumstances, indigenous minorities, once they gain citizenship, may begin to claim collective historic rights to land or to regional, federal autonomy.

The big mistake is to think of multiculturalism as a top-down invention by well-meaning liberals or manipulative state officials. My own work on Pakistanis in Britain, and that of others, shows that multiculturalism is a negotiated process pushed forward as much by grassroots activism, and involving demands from a reluctant state for cultural recognition or moral accountability. This means that multiculturalism is not one thing only. It varies from country to country, even between cities and localities. It is multi-tiered. In the EU, it encompasses demands for federal autonomy by indigenous or regional minorities, as well as demands for cultural and religious recognition by dispersed immigrant groups. Its darker side in Europe today is a pervasive fear of Muslims, Islamophobia. In Australia, multiculturalism encompasses the demand by Aboriginal peoples for historical compensation and land title, along with calls for tolerance towards settler immigrants and refugees. In Canada, similar struggles are further entangled in the Francophone politics of Quebec; in the US, multiculturalism started from a demand to open the ‘canon’ to minority literary works, but has expanded to encompass broader struggles over language, heritage, quotas and mother-tongue schooling.

As this list indicates, and as Europeanists and Australians are all too aware, it is not only socialists, feminists, anthropologists and anti-racists who criticise multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is also seen as a threat by nationalists and racists. This is because multiculturalism is, above all, an interruptive rhetoric. It destabilises the false homogeneity of the ‘nation’, as Homi K. Bhabha has rightly argued, and publicly highlights the fact that the political community is a complex cultural and ethnic formation (Bhabha 1994; for a further discussion see Werbner 1997b). Multiculturalism forces on the majority population a consciousness of difference, of cultural heterogeneity, of what can be experienced as a polluting and dangerous hybridity. It is thus an important antidote to the assimilationist tendencies of the nation-state, to the interpretation of the equality of citizenship as grounded in cultural, gendered, religious and racial homogeneity and exclusion.7

Intentional hybridities, like critical multiculturalism, create, in the words of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), a ‘double consciousness’. They do so by
juxtaposing and mixing unlike categories. Like the ritual monsters studied by anthropologists which are licensed to transgress boundaries and cross thresholds, cultural hybrids can be experienced as exhilarating and fun; but in creating disorder, they play dangerously on the boundary. Strangers, as Zygmunt Bauman argues following Mary Douglas, can be ambivalent, threatening figures, matter out of place (1989). But hybridity can also be offensive to ethnic or religious minorities themselves, as the Rushdie affair revealed. Indeed, one dimension of multiculturalism in Britain at least has been a move towards stressing the need for respect and public civility, including religious respect, at the cost of absolute freedom of speech.

CONCLUSION

If, as David Held has argued (1995), citizenship is an ‘embedded utopia’, then there is great scope for anthropology to study the cultural and political context in which notions of legitimate authority and moral accountability are generated. In the post-colonial world of nation-states, these issues animate the local in its connections with the global. Even in the West most civic activism is local and proto-political (Lister 1997). Anthropology’s theoretical armoury of concepts, from pragmatic commonsense reasoning to the logic of encompassment, as well as our understanding of the politics of kinship, gender and cultural difference are, I have argued here, at the heart of the current citizenship project. What has been missing, perhaps, in present studies of nationalism, state terror, gender or the micropolitics of community, is the concept of citizenship which animates the politics of indigenous minorities and the Third World today, as well as its diasporic extensions into the West.

NOTES

This paper has benefited from, and draws upon, a jointly written introduction to a collected volume, Women, citizenship and difference, co-edited with Nira Yuval-Davis (Yuval-Davis and Werbner, in press), as well as my own chapter in that book. I am grateful to Nira for the stimulating arguments, intellectual challenge and infinite encouragement that she so generously offered during our joint editorial and writing efforts. A brief version of the paper was presented at the European Association of Social Anthropologists meeting in Frankfurt in September 1998, and I benefited from comments by Richard Wilson and Cris Shore. I would also like to thank Kathy Robinson for generously inviting me to give this plenary address, and Ann Curthoys, the discussant at the session, for her perceptive and stimulating comments.
1 This is particularly evident in Australia and in Europe today, as it is in much of the Third World.
2 On postmodernism see Lyotard (1986[1977]); Bauman (1992); on late modernity see Giddens (1991); on the ordering tendencies of modernity see Foucault (1977); on modern uncertainty see Webber (1996).
3 On the effects of capitalist, neo-liberal globalisation on women in particular see Pettman (in press). Pettman argues that the semi-organised or disorganised global movement of women in search of work requires a theorisation of non-citizenship as well as citizenship.
4 This linear evolutionary model has been rightly criticised by feminists as inapplicable to women (Vogel 1991; Walby 1994).
5 Thus also Ruth Lister speaks of ‘differentiated universalism’ (Lister 1997).
6 On the first point see Yuval Davis (1997); Caglar (1997); Baumann (1997). On the second, see Saghali and Yuval Davis (1992) and Yuval-Davis (1997, Chapter 3).
7 For a detailed discussion and case studies exemplifying this, see the contributions to Modood and Webber (1997). For some of the paradoxical dimensions of multiculturalism as it reflects back on new racist discourses of culture, see Bauman (1997) and Wieviorka (1997).

Discussant’s Comments
Anne Curthoys

Firstly, thank you for inviting me to speak at the Australian Anthropological Society Annual conference. As I am not an anthropologist I consider it an honour, and look forward to the discussion we are about to have.

Secondly, I would like to open my commentary by saying how much I admired and enjoyed Pnina’s paper. From it I learnt a lot about both anthropological identity and current citizenship debates. I admire her clarity of exposition, and the breadth of understanding and argument in the paper. My commentary is accordingly less in the nature of a critique, than a taking up of several of her points and reflecting on them from a distinctively Australian viewpoint and also from the viewpoint of a cultural and political historian.

In her paper Pnina argues for the reconciliation of discourses of universal human rights and discourses recognising difference, whether based on gender, race, nation, or any other form of particularist identity. She outlines
in her paper one of the great paradoxes of modernity — the concurrence in
the late-eighteenth century of the emergence of the ideals of universal
emancipation and of modern forms of female and racial subordination and
exclusion. She then notes that feminism and other liberation and social
movements have accordingly, in the last twenty years or so, developed a
critique of humanist universalist ideals on the basis that these are always
necessarily partial and systematically obscure their own partiality; they
inherently represent particular concerns as universalist ones. She then offers us
a critique of that critique. True, she says, the rhetoric of freedom and equality
is always entangled with passionate particularisms, and the discourse of
citizenship is necessarily inconsistent and contradictory. Nevertheless, we do
not have to take sides; we don’t have to opt either for or against universalist
ideals. Rather, we can recognise the emergence, in indigenous, multicultural,
post-colonial and gendered contexts, of hybrid discourses in which difference
is first transcended to produce the abstract concept of human rights, and then
reinstated through a recognition of cultural difference — this recognition
becoming a basis for extending rather than curtailing universalist individual
human rights.

In exploring this basic argument, that universalist ideals and recognition
of different and particularist ideals can be made compatible, I would like to
look at three issues. One concerns the particular place anthropology might
have in such debates, the second concerns what this might mean in the
Australian context, and the third considers the specifically feminist dimensions
of this debate.

ANTHROPOLOGY

Pnina argues that anthropology should be more involved in the current debate
around citizenship than it has been. Part of her argument is that notions of
human rights and autonomous agency have now travelled well beyond the
West, and animate the politics of much of the world today. The other part of
her argument refers to anthropology’s particular strengths and conceptual
armoury, which make it ideally suited to explore the embeddedness of
universalistic citizenship ideals within various passionate particularisms.

I would want to add to these observations the point that any discussion
of the role of anthropology specifically would need to take into account the
changes within our own intellectual landscape, that is the changing
arrangements and border lines within the humanities and social sciences today.
If there is a paradox in the modernist conceptions of universal human rights and particularist allegiances, so too is there a paradox between, on the one hand, the noticeable increased blurring of disciplinary boundaries and frequency of disciplinary border crossing, and on the other, of the continuing strength of disciplinary identity. Certainly in my discipline, history, fears of the postmodern influences from cultural studies and other sources can lead to especially defensive restatements of attachments to empiricism and historical truth. The blurring of boundaries can lead us all to reinstate them more vigorously, and to defend our particularity in a way recognisable to few other than ourselves. That is to say, in advocating more anthropological involvement in citizenship debates, is Phina advocating involvement of anthropology as it is and on the basis of its strong traditional concepts and concerns, or is she envisaging a new anthropology? Will what Phina describes as anthropology's traditional concern with 'the particular in the universal' lead to new insights in citizenship debates, or will involvement in those debates lead anthropology itself to recast the ways it conceptualises 'the particular in the universal', questions of identity, or notions of culture and power?

CITIZENSHIP AND MULTICULTURALISM — AUSTRALIAN DEBATES

My second point relates to specifically Australian takes on all these debates. We have been engaged, especially over the last two years, in intensive debates on the problem of equality and difference, especially in discussion of indigenous rights and multiculturalism. We have seen the emergence of a populist position, epitomised by One Nation (but which will remain important whether One Nation itself does or not), which argues against recognition of indigenous rights, and against multiculturalism. Public intellectuals and academics working in a variety of fields have attempted to understand this development, and to use their scholarly expertise to develop a critique of the One Nation position. Of the many discussions, two books are probably the most important, The resurgence of racism (Gray and Winter 1997) and the recent Two nations (Abbott et al. 1998). What all this debate reveals most clearly to me is that we have in Australia our own citizenship paradox — ideals of racial equality which were argued for so strongly in the 1960s and after as a way of recognising Aboriginal claims and demands for citizenship rights, land rights, and the right to retain distinct cultural identity within the boundaries of the Australian nation state. The notion of equality has, in One Nation and similar rhetoric, now become an argument for refusing to recognise those very
same things. The ideal of equality itself has split into two opposing camps —
on the one hand a demand that everyone be treated the same, so that relevant
differences are refused recognition, and on the other a demand that we
develop new political arrangements that take greater account of group rights
than we do now, as for example, Henry Reynolds (1996) does in his discussion
of Aboriginal sovereignty.

What has interested me particularly in these Australian citizenship
debates has been the way they have exposed the importance of our settler
colonial past to our multicultural present. We have had a sharp reminder of the
importance of the category of 'colonial settler society', and a reminder that we
are not yet post-colonial and still uneasily multicultural. We have had a sharp
reminder, too, of the racial hatreds of the past and their strength in the present,
in relation both to indigenous people and to Asian immigrants. In all of this,
the problem of history is everywhere: in the debates about 'black armband
history', about Native title itself, and about the question of a national apology
for the stolen generations. The objection to the notion of indigenous rights is
firmly grounded in a refusal to see the past in terms of invasion and
colonisation, a refusal which operates both at a psychic and a political level.
What is interesting, though, is that these objections have been met by opposing
views which do accept the notion of indigenous rights by virtue of prior
occupation, and which, of course, have their own psychic and political
foundations.

All this is to support Pnina's observation that ideals of equality and
freedom are everywhere inserted into 'a social field of heterogenous, partly
overlapping and conflicting narratives and practices'. In our own case,
thinking through the issues raised by indigenous claims and our uneasy
multiculturalism needs the contribution of political theorists, historians, literary
critics, and anthropologists alike. While anthropology might be thought to
have particular relevance in acknowledging, understanding, and interpreting
indigenous claims, to me it is equally important for its particular ability to
investigate and illuminate white Australian historical mythology. In my own
recent work in exploring the complexity of white Australian historical
mythologies, I have found the work of people like Debbie Rose and Andrew
Lattas of particular importance; they help me get outside the narratives that we
historians help construct. Perhaps because they are not involved directly in
debates over historical empirical detail, they are able to see shapes, patterns,
and tendencies which we ourselves cannot.
FEMINISM

My third and last set of comments relates to the questions about feminism that Pnina raises in her paper. They are quite crucial to her argument. She discusses how in recent decades feminists have developed extensive critiques of humanist and universalist ideals as embodying the perspectives and aspirations of men rather than of humanity generally. She also argues for a form of feminist anthropology which would allow us to theorise women’s activism and citizenship claims in terms that recognise the continuing importance of family and separate female identity, and the importance of what she calls ‘political motherhood’ as a specific form of female political action.

But where I wonder about Pnina’s argument is her vision of a reconciliation between feminist demands for equality and feminist demands for a recognition of gender-based difference. I think I would rather follow the line of feminist and post-structuralist historian Joan Scott, who suggests that feminism is beset by an ‘incurable paradox’, in its attachment both to equality and difference. Feminism wants now, and has always wanted, both equality and difference, both inclusion and autonomy. In its 200-year history, or so, feminism has swung between the poles of equality and difference, and at times has been torn apart by the internal conflict between the ideals of equal and different treatment, for example before the law. The discourses of the Muslim women in Manchester of whom Pnina speaks, combining demands for gender equality with an assertion of their unique moral and ethical qualities as women, are strikingly similar in form, though not in specific content, to the demands of English, American and Australian feminists, both now and a century or more ago. ‘Political motherhood’, it’s important to remember, was the basis of a great deal of first wave feminism.

In debates about the contributions of feminist theory to citizenship discourses and debates, it seems to me important to historicise feminism itself. It is especially important not to take the rejection of traditional gender roles, or indeed any gender role, that characterised much women’s liberation discourse in the 1970s, as representing feminism generally. It does not even represent Western feminism, let alone feminisms elsewhere. Western feminism during the 1980s and 1990s has been through a painful period of auto-critique as indigenous and black feminist voices were heard, so that the category ‘woman’ has become rather fragile. Feminism, I am suggesting, has always been torn between its desire for full inclusion in the notion of the abstract individual who lies at the basis of liberal claims for freedom and equality, and
its desire to assert women’s agency, autonomy, and identity as women. It is not a consistent theoretical or political position.

CONCLUSION

In bringing together a discussion of anthropology and citizenship, with a significant focus on feminist theory and practice, Pnina has encouraged us to interrogate and explore all three, and their interrelation. I now turn this exploration over to you.

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