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Judith Squires

Citizenship: Androgynous or Engendered Participation?

It is my contention that there is a widespread desire to reappropriate and retheorise the concept of citizenship, and that those engaged in this process would do well to study the recent history of the Women's Movement and the current writings of feminist theorists, for both have prefigured the developments within the polity and political theory more generally and thus offer invaluable insight into our political predicament. Within this literature we find a movement away from asserting the desirability of a sexually-differentiated citizenship model towards an endorsement of an androgynous model which seeks to transcend sexual difference through the assertion of a modified defence of liberal democracy. This paper argues that there is a move within feminist literature on citizenship to recuperate the liberal project, speculates on why this might be so, and offers a few initial qualms about this development.

L'auteur soutient qu'il existe un désir largement répandu de réémettre des hypothèses concernant le concept de citoyenneté et que ceux engagés dans ce processus feraient bien d'étudier la récente histoire du Mouvement des Femmes et les écrits courants de théoriciens féministes, étant donné que tous deux ont prévu les développements au sein du système politique et de la théorie politique de façon plus générale, nous offrant ainsi un inestimable aperçu de notre difficile situation politique. Dans cette littérature, nous trouvons un mouvement, qui – loin de revendiquer les avantages d'un modèle de citoyenneté sexuellement différenciée – tend à approuver un modèle androgyne cherchant à transcender la différence sexuelle par la revendication d'une défense modifiée de la démocratie libérale. Ce papier argumente que dans la littérature féministe concernant la citoyenneté, il existe un mouvement tendant à récupérer le projet libéral; il tente de fournir une explication à son apparition et émet aussi quelque inquiétude quant à son développement.

Ich behaupte, dass ein weitverbreiteter Wunsch danach besteht, den Begriff des Bürgerrechts neu zu verwenden und zu theoretisieren und dass jene, welche sich an diesem Prozess beteiligen gut daran täten, die jüngste Geschichte der Frauenbewegung und die aktuellen Publikationen von TheoretikerInnen des Feminismus zu studieren, denn beide haben die Entwicklungen im Staatswesen und der politischen Theorie allgemein vorausgesehen und bieten deshalb einen unschätzbaren Einblick in unsere missliche politische Lage. Innerhalb dieser Literatur finden wir eine Bewegung weg von der geltend gemachten Wünschbarkeit eines geschlechterdifferenzierten Modells der Bürgerschaft hin zur Bestätigung eines geschlechterlosen Modells, welches danach strebt, den geschlechtlichen Unterschied über die Geltendmachung einer geänderten Verteidigung der liberalen Demokratie zu überwinden. Dieser Beitrag argumentiert, dass innerhalb der feministischen Literatur über das Bürgerrecht ein Bestreben besteht, das liberale Projekt wiederzubeleben, spekuliert warum dem so sein könnte und bietet einige erste Bedenken zu dieser Entwicklung.

I. Introduction

«There is no notion more central in politics than citizenship and none more variable in history, or contested in theory . . .» Judith Shklar (1991:1).

Liberal Democracy, along with its «thin» procedural notion of political citizenship is in a state of crisis in Britain today. Politicians and theorists alike are fast invoking the language of moral values and a «stronger» substantive notion of social citizenship in an attempt to recreate the social preconditions for legitimate government, turning to the notion of «community» rather than individual, responsibility rather than rights.

Furthermore, all the various political groupings within this debate appear currently to be invoking citizenship as the positive notion which will resolve our problems. Mainstream political players of left and right are making appeal to citizenship as a means of reviving a sense of cohesive communities, shared moral values, social responsibility: the social basis for the maintenance of the existing political system. But feminist theorists (Phillips 1991; Dietz 1992; Mouffe 1992) are also invoking citizenship, though for rather different reasons. Their concern is to use citizenship as a means of dealing with the dilemmas of «democracy and difference» – the acknowledgement of plurality, the recognition of multi-culturalism, of non-essential identities, and also of economic, social and political inequalities.

This shared concern with the concept of citizenship is interesting in its own right. Of even greater interest is the nature of the conceptions of citizenship appealed to within the various contemporary political groupings. I shall argue that, in the context of the general desire to retheorise citizenship, developments within feminist theory and practice offer particularly insightful lessons for political theorising more generally on this issue. For within feminism there has developed a strong critique of the procedural mechanisms of representative democracy and the juridical notion of citizenship. The stress has long been on participatory democracy and belonging to communities; on friendship as a basis for political action; on an ethic of caring rather than justice; on community rather than individual. Yet when the liberal democratic model is at its weakest, when a substantive notion of citizenship and community are finally on the mainstream agenda, British feminist political theorists are turning away from the existing feminist model and asserting the importance of the procedural model of citizenship participation; of representative democracy and a distinct ethico-political realm. It is my understanding that they do so as a means of resolving the dilemmas posed with the feminist debates between essentialism and atomism. Moving from a weary disillusionment with socialist/Marxist feminism, through a despair at the nihilism of the postmodern agenda of anything goes, these theorists end up, back where the journey started, with a modified defence of liberal democracy.

What are we to make of this? Are feminist theorists in the ironic position of being the defenders of the liberal representative model of procedural democracy and a rights-based notion of citizenship after such a long opposition to this very model within mainstream theory?

II. Why citizenship?

The notion of citizenship is particularly important in contemporary European discussion: increasingly invoked by key political players and theorists alike. In order to understand why the concept of citizenship should be so ubiquitous in these current political and theoretical debates, we must recognise that the allegiances of locality and class, on which our political systems are largely based, are no longer the primary basis for communal solidarity. New technologies of production and consumption render these old communal bases obsolete, requiring as they do a transience and mobility which work to undermine old alliances and loyalties and to increase our encounters with «others» on a global scale. Thus, we are simultaneously confronted with radical difference and denied the old barriers of cohesion. The protective filters of time and place have disappeared, the periphery has infiltrated the colonial core.

In such circumstances we witness both a radical individualisation within society and a retreat into fortress identities. The age-old dichotomy between individual and collective takes a particularly intense form: a polarity born of fear and dislocation: «... it is,» says Kristeva, «a rare person who does not invoke a primal shelter to compensate for personal disarray.» (1993: 2) Thus we might argue that the invocation of «we feelings» and the rise of communitarianism are reactions to the experiences of the intolerable aspects of individualisation and enforced isolation. As the crisis of values and fragmentation of society intensifies, we take shelter under massive, regressive common denominators of national origins and/or essential identities.

The political fall-out of these social changes is evident in the manifest loss of faith in our political leaders and representatives: membership of political parties is at crisis point and is falling rapidly; the funding of the parties is no longer secure. As an ever dwindling number of people believe in our parties as vehicles for change or as an object of affiliation, it is significant that more people in Britain belong to Greenpeace than to the Labour Party, more to the «Royal Society for the Protection of Birds» than to the Conservative Party. The ailing state of parliamentary politics is ever more evident. As Martin Jacques (1993:8) states:

«Politics is like a declining sector of the economy: defensive, conservative, nostalgic, incapable of generating new ideas and practices, attracting fewer and fewer able people. It remains male-dominated, resistant to new technology and rooted in tradition.»

Faced with this situation, political theorists and actors of the new right and the new left are turning to the notion of citizenship, clamouring to reclaim it as their own. Our political representatives are desperately playing the citizenship card in an attempt to engage with the concerns of their electorate, to rejuvenate the political system.

Amongst the ageing new right, who are coming to terms with the realities of the post-Thatcher political landscape, there is to be seen a new-found enthusiasm for citizenship (note for example for emphasis placed on the introduction of the Citizen's Charter in the UK) which arises from a belated recognition that the

individualism of the free-market, and the atomism encouraged by the project of Thatcherism, are not sufficient to hold society (or the market) together. Witness the moral panics over child violence, ram raiders, the fear of amorality and concern over a lack of social responsibility as manifest most recently in the «Back to Basics» campaign of the British Government. The notion of citizenship as simply individual rights is here being challenged, and a renewed stress on social cohesion is to be found in the endorsement of neighbourhood watch schemes, community care rhetoric, the responsibility of parents and public morality.

In short we are witnessing an invocation (in more or less theorised forms) of the communitarian vision of the cohesive community, of shared values and traditions and the acceptance of the common good within the realm of civil citizenship. This represents a belated recognition of the importance of a substantive heart to democratic society, and the need to nurture a commitment to shared values. It is however a partial invocation of the communitarian vision, for there is a notable silence within current political rhetoric on another key aspect of communitarian thought – the stress on the importance of political participation and inclusion.

On the other hand, we witness amongst the old «new left» a coming to terms with the post-socialist landscape; an acknowledgement of the dissolution of their old power base – working class communities; and a recognition of the multiplicity of communities and identities within our polity which need to be addressed if they are to find new bases for support. Such a recognition however, leads not to an easy endorsement of the notion of community, but to a fear that the invocation of community, of shared values, will result in a regressive conservative nationalism. Citizenship for this group then is not based in community, nor a substantive notion of the good and shared social and moral values. The notion of citizenship invoked here is more likely to make appeal to the formal, procedural mechanisms of government, which allow for a cohesion despite diversity, which demand shared political commitments, but not moral ones. This is motivated by an equally belated recognition of the importance of procedural vision of democracy which allows for multiple differences and protects individual rights against the community/nation/state. And, given the absence of encoded rights within the UK political system, it is to the European Courts that this group looks for the reinvigoration of citizenship participation (see the work of Charter 88). In short whilst the ageing new-right invokes community, the old new-left turns to the liberal vision of procedural mechanisms of just government. The rhetoric which has characterised our left/right political spectrum has been inverted, signalling, perhaps confusion, but also a renewed need (and hence willingness) to retheorise the nature of political citizenship afresh.

III. Feminist Interventions:

Given this desire to retheorise citizenship, I want to argue that feminist political theory and practice has much to teach political theorists, of all persuasions. For feminist theory has, to a large extent, prefigured the theorising on citizenship that

we now witness across the political spectrum generally. If we examine the development of thought on the issue of citizenship as manifest in British feminist theory, for example, we find a revealing precursor of the current theoretical state of debate. I will look at some of this work, focusing particularly on the recent work of Anne Phillips (1991, 1993) and Chantal Mouffe (1992, 1993) by way of revealing the implications of attempts to realise a value-based politics and conception of citizenship, and the reasons for turning to a more formal notion of democratic citizen participation.

Numerous feminist theorists have focused on uncovering the disparity between the claims of liberal citizenship and the reality of women's exclusion. The idea of equal access to participation in the political sphere has been revealed to be mythic. Though feminist critiques of the liberal conceptions of citizenship are numerous, most have accepted that the present conception of the political is a male one, and that women's concerns cannot be accommodated within its framework. The modern category of the individual is argued to have been constructed in a manner that postulates a universalist, homogeneous public, excluding all particularity and difference, which is relocated within the private sphere. That this construction of the liberal political has had overwhelmingly negative consequences for women explains the centrality of the critique of the public/private division within feminist theorising (Pateman 1988; Elshtain 1981; Okin 1989).

One dominant feminist response to the bifurcation of society into public and private realms and the location of citizenship firmly within the public, has been to assert the specific feminine values of the private sphere as the basis for a new model of politics and citizenship. This feminised version of citizenship, most clearly articulated by Sara Ruddick (1984) and Jean Bethke Elshtain (1981) is committed to a particular view of the good life, to a conception of female political consciousness that is grounded in the virtues of women's private sphere – primarily mothering. Social justice, it is asserted, is not sufficient to generate a morally acceptable polity, we also need to adopt the maternal mode of caring as a basis for public interactions. The claim is that women's experiences as mothers within the private sphere provides them with certain insights and concerns which are valuable to the public sphere but currently absent from it. We might also argue that Carole Pateman (1988) makes similar claims for citizenship by virtue of her stress on the importance of motherhood as a defining characteristic of public participation, and her espousal of a «sexual difference» theory of citizenship (see Mouffe's discussion of this 1992:347–77).

Such feminist conceptions of citizenship are, in effect, versions of the communitarian vision which prioritises community as the basis for politics, a community which shares, in Michael Sandel's (1993) version, not only a spirit of benevolence and certain shared final ends but also a common vocabulary of discourse. Here the community is conceived as a community of women and the conception of the good a feminized good. I contend that as such the maternalist form of citizenship manifests the same strengths and weaknesses as the communitarian vision. Its strengths vis-a-vis the liberal conception are that it encompasses more than the reductive notion of individualist rights-based contractual citizenship and offers a

vision of a substantive good which might mobilise a sense of loyalty, belonging and caring in members of a community. Its weaknesses are that its vision of community is often nostalgic and cohesive, actually working to exclude all who do not conform to its particular conception of the good. Hence the creation of duality rather than unity: the invocation of «we feelings» inevitably resulting in the creation of an other, «them».

It is nonetheless the maternalist vision which has been the dominant inspiration for feminist political action within Britain throughout the 1970s and 80s. The Women's Movement, informed by such maternalist ideas, did much to generate new models for citizenship participation. For within the second wave Women's Movement there was a clear scepticism of any reliance on the formal mechanisms of representative democracy. In its place feminists inspired the active participation of women in small informal action groups: hierarchy was shunned, the rotating of responsibilities was instituted, expertise and authority divided and shared. Meetings were perceived, not primarily as decision-making mechanisms, but as experiences for sharing experiences and ideas. The political become personal on all levels, the agenda for debate changed, the procedures for discussion altered. The association of politics and friendship became great – for many the members of their women's groups were their closest friends.

Whilst this form of direct democratic participation was clearly invigorating and emancipatory (for some), it was not without its political problems. As Anne Phillips (1991:125) observes, it was not long before people noted the limits of friendship: «the most serious being that it is impossible to include everyone in the circle of your friends, and that it is hard to disagree without more fundamentally falling out.» *This recognition of the failings of friendship as the basis for politics is crucial*, for here we have the failings of the comunitarian and maternalist vision of citizenship made manifest. To demand that political actors are also personal allies is to demand too much: it undermines the possibility of affinity despite differences, of debate without pre-given consensus, of understanding despite opacity.

That this is so was made evident in the development of the Women's Movement itself: in recent years the trade-off between the intensity with which those who were involved committed themselves, and the ability of the movement to extend its appeal, has become clear. For, as is now common to note, the definition of a «we» implies the delimitation of a «frontier» and the designation of a «them». The creation of a cohesive community requires the simultaneous creation of a «constitutive outside» – an exterior to the community which is a precondition for its existence. Once we accept that there cannot be a «we» without a «them», we must recognise that all forms of consensus are by necessity based on acts of exclusion. This was experienced, often painfully, within the day-to-day operation of the Women's Movement, which ultimately fragmented under the strain of the assertions of marginalisation from women who were not part of the community. The bitter reproaches levelled at the primarily white, middle age, middle-class and heterosexual women involved in the Women's Movement by women who were black, gay, disabled... shattered the illusion of cohesion and unity.

The nature and cause of such bitter fragmentation is now increasingly recog-

nised and theorised from a post-structuralist perspective. Iris Young (1990:312), for instance, draws upon the Derridean notion of difference to argue that: «The striving for mutual identification and shared understanding among those who seek to foster a radical and progressive politics, can and has led to denying or suppressing differences within political groups or movements.» To demand such cohesion, she argues, is to deny the possibility of a fully inclusive citizenship; it is also to appeal to an implicitly essentialising notion of identity and to reify authentic voice. The fragmentation of the Women's Movement itself is thus a practical warning of the impossibility of achieving fully inclusive cohesive communities as the basis for political citizenship.

In the face of the practical dissolution of the Women's Movement and the notion of cohesive community which had underpinned its operation, and with the development of theoretical perspectives informed by post-structuralist assertions of the importance of celebrating difference, both feminist practice and theory has moved away from the search for unity, and begun to work with the realities of diversity.

IV. Feminist reassertions of political citizenship:

With the acknowledgement that societies are multi-cultural and multi-ethnic comes the recognition that any political system must incorporate polyvocal communities. In such circumstances, that political perspective which remains wedded to the cohesive community as the basis for citizenship, turns to identity politics. For identity politics becomes a way of mediating the search for bounded groups and authentic selves with the transience and fragmentation of locality and the demise of larger social bonds. The assertion of membership of identity groups becomes a response to the crisis of community which involves the endless splitting of groups into ever smaller enclaves in the search for a new essential unity.

In the face of the atomism inspired by Thatcherite policies, the impoverished vision of society and the argument that political citizenship required the transcendence (for which read denial) of differences as irrelevant to one's public status, the appeal of identity politics is evident. As the public sphere became atomistic, alienating and unstable, so people retreated into «oppositional communities», taking refuge in all that has been expelled from the public. These identities are then thrust upon the public sphere, devoid of all else which might inspire loyalty or cohesion. Identity politics might then best be viewed as community writ small: multiple communities each aspiring to fusion, largely achieved through opposition to other communities.

These are adversarial communities, communities of the dispossessed and dislocated. Born of fear and desperation they form a mechanism of defence and survival against the radical individualism of recent decades. The notion of citizenship which results from the acknowledgement of the existence of such a multiplicity of communities, or group identifications, is to be found articulated most clearly in the arguments for group representation. Consider, for example, Iris Young's

(1990:184) claim that «a democratic public should provide mechanisms for the effective recognition of representation of the distinct voices and perspectives of those of its constituent groups that are oppressed or disadvantaged.» Citizenship is thus conceived as entailing equal representation of groups, their experiences, perspectives and interests. Those groups which are oppressed and disadvantaged will require special institutional mechanisms of support and resources (1990:187).

Whilst there are many strong aspects to this strategy – avoiding as it does some of the pitfalls of both abstract individualism and oppressive communalism – it would seem to lead, not to a more plural and inclusive notion of citizenship, but to further fragmentation and the politics of the enclave. As Mouffe (1993:86) has argued, despite Young's own critique of community and claim that she seeks a politics beyond community, her own «groups» which form the basic units of her political model, are themselves nothing but communities. The criteria for assessing group membership will all too easily become essential characteristics («being» rather than «doing», essence rather than performance). Her perspective presupposes a collective experience and identity prior to group formation and thus overlooks the civic republican writing which argues that such experiences and identities are usually the product of collective action, that politics is about the construction of new identities rather than simply about ways of satisfying the demands of existing ones. The civic republican writing therefore suggests different reasons for advocating citizenship participation – not to make our representatives more reflective of our «perspective» which cannot be understood by those not of the same experience and identity, but because we actually form our identities through participation and action.

Failing to acknowledge this, the strategy of identity politics has all too often served to essentialise difference. And, whilst there may have been a necessary essentialising moment – a strategic essentialism – the question is whether we are any longer in that moment: whether it is still a sufficient basis for a renewed vision of citizenship. The essentializing moment is a weak one to rest on for too long. It naturalises and dehistoricises difference, mistaking what is cultural and historical for what is natural and biological (see Stuart Hall 1993:110–113). By positing identities as natural and biological categories they are torn from their cultural and political embedding, thereby valorising the very power structures they aimed to deconstruct. If we set identity outside of history, we also set it beyond political intervention.

Identity politics posits an essence prior to the speech which will assert it. Any identity based on essence runs into a problem when faced with accommodating otherness, and must therefore commit itself to a constant process of policing its terms against the threats constituted by alterity. Identification on the other hand, stresses an active and performative process rather than the status assumption of an identity label. Identification is always ambivalent (see Bjornerud 1993:122–143).

Given this, recent British feminist theorists have attempted to reconceive democratic citizenship in a way that acknowledges differences yet avoids the trap of essentialism. The two theorists who have done most to address this issue I take to be Chantal Mouffe and Anne Phillips. Mouffe (1992:370) attempts to develop «an anti-essentialist approach for a feminist political which is informed by a radical

democratic project» and Phillips (1993:136) argues that «we must develop a version of democratic equality that can recognise and represent group difference without thereby collapsing into the politics of the enclave.»

Although they have distinct political trajectories (Phillips coming from a form of socialist humanism, Mouffe from a post-structuralist marxism), both come to articulate something like a procedural, representative democratic notion of citizenship. Starting from a socialist/marxist scepticism of the state as a viable mechanism for radical reform or significant political change, working through the feminist experiences of direct democracy, negotiating recent theoretical discourses on identity and subjectivity, we find, in the work of these theorists, a modified defence of liberal democracy.

This may seem surprising – indeed Phillips (1991:61) herself is taken aback: «Until recently,» she says, «no feminist in her right mind would have thought liberal democracy could deliver the goods.» In even bothering to discuss the representation of women, she acknowledges that she goes against the grain of much contemporary feminism, and not only because of the theoretical challenges that have been levelled at liberal democracy, but also because of the strong presumption in favour of direct democracy within feminist practice to date.

What is intriguing about this is that Phillips and many others who have been disillusioned with socialism and depressed by postmodernism, turns away from her long-held suspicion of parliamentary political solutions and democratic remedies to social and economic problems, towards an acceptance of «the political» as a specific area of parliamentary mechanisms of political representation and participation. Mouffe (1993:7) too argues for the assertion of a distinctly political realm, and the reassertion of political liberalism as a valued framework for ensuring the liberal ideals of individual freedom and personal autonomy. Compare this also to Mary Dietz's (1992:75) injunction that concern ourselves with the «expressly political». Between them, these theorists constitute an important trend within contemporary feminist theory away from a communitarian or maternalist model of citizenship, towards a liberal or procedural model.

Yet they do so at a point when nearly every existing polity which lays claim to the title liberal democracy is in a state of crisis so profound that sages of the (now aged) new left and new right are driven to accept that the political has become disengaged from society and that we are witnessing the grim manifestations of post-liberalism (see John Gray 1993). Just as Phillips is, rather reluctantly, acknowledging the importance of the political as a distinct sphere of activity, focusing attention upon structures of representation, voting mechanisms and so on, the reality is that the «politics» of parliamentary parties has become disengaged and obsolescent. The irony then, is that as Phillips and Mouffe come round to this procedural perspective which asserts the need for a distinctly political realm separated off from the social, the parliamentary players are for the first time recognising the claims of the old feminist assertion that «the personal is political». Note, for example, the fact that the «Commission on Citizenship» (1990:42) conclude their report thus: «The participation of citizens in their society is both a measure and a source of that society's success; democracy and involvement are

not, and should not be, reducible to the narrowly political, but concern the very business of life . . . ». In direct contrast, Mouffe (1993:5) argues that: «The absence of a political frontier, far from being a sign of political maturity, is the symptom of a void that can endanger democracy . . . ». The tables have turned.

A second irony is that just as the mainstream political parties are addressing the issues of quota systems, just as they adopt a «Ministry for women» and insist upon women only lists for selection committees, we find Mouffe and others arguing for a more formal assertion of the generalised as opposed to the concrete other: for a concern with ideas rather than presence, the cerebral rather than the physical. See for instance Mouffe's (1992:376) assertion that: «. . . the limitations of the modern conception of citizenship should be remedied, not by making sexual difference politically relevant to its definition, but by constructing a new conception of citizenship where sexual difference should become effectively non-pertinent», or again: «. . . in the domain of politics, and as far as citizenship is concerned sexual difference should not be a pertinent distinction» (p.377).

In this she goes even further down the liberal democratic route than Phillips. For Phillips (1993a:7) holds onto some of the mechanisms for group representation to be found in the writings of Iris Young, though acknowledging the potential problems of so doing. She does allow that not all differences are based on the class model and so amenable to erasure. As such democratic process must acknowledge not just differences of interests, but also differences of perspectives: a recognition that can only be met by political presence. This being so, Phillips ends up endorsing quota systems for the representation of particular oppressed groups. Yet she is attuned to the dangers of this strategy. For Phillips (1991:72–73) allows that it can focus too narrowly on the composition of political elites; encourage essentialist notions of authentic voice and a concern with who rather than what is to be represented; lead to the infinite regress of calls for absolute mirror representation and hence to fragmentation; and, finally, that it can reduce the accountability of representatives.

Mouffe avoids these problems by advocating a more straight-forwardly representative democratic model. She stresses the centrality of the notion of rights for citizenship and the dangers of a substantive notion of the common good, she argues for affinity rather than identity. She rejects both Pateman's «sexually differentiated» model of citizenship and Young's «group differentiated» model. The only community which Mouffe (1992:378) allows as the basis for political action is a political community, a group «bound by their common identification with a given interpretation of a set of ethico-political values.» Arguing that all other communities are partial and exclusionary, the only notion of community which is acceptable as the basis for citizenship is – not a social community of any sort – but an ethico-political community, that is a community which accepts the procedural mechanisms of democracy, or in Mouffe's words, a grammar of conduct.

What I want to raise is this: just how does this model differ from the liberal procedural model which feminist theorists have done so much to challenge and reject? And why do we find it being advocated within feminist theory now, at a point when the model is perhaps at its weakest in practice? For my concern is that

this move back towards conceptualising citizenship as inclusion in formal procedures of democratic representation, fails to negotiate the fact that «politics» for most people – especially young people – has left the institutions of government altogether and has relocated within the cultural practices of what Foucault would name mechanisms of governmentality. As parliamentary politics is felt to be increasingly anachronistic, the preserve of a small professional political elite, is it not unlikely that the rejuvenation of citizenship will originate here?

Politics, it would seem, has gone cultural: it is to be found in self-help groups and consumers associations (social spaces which women have always occupied more easily than parliamentary places). It is no longer state oriented, it is global or local. Whilst fewer and fewer people join parliamentary parties, more and more join campaigns to save the day-nursery and the rain-forest. In such times, does it make sense to attempt to revive the ailing state-centred model of procedural democracy and formal citizenship rights? Might it not be more apposite to consider reviving citizenship through the rejuvenation of public spheres generally rather than through a narrow focus on the mechanisms of parliamentary process? For, even if we follow Mary Dietz's injunction that we concern ourselves with the «expressly political», is it any longer clear that the political is, or ought to be, located within the procedural mechanisms of parliamentary process?

V. Conclusion

Given the altered economic and social context in which politicians now operate, the need to retheorise citizenship, to reassess its political form and value, is manifest. It is my contention that anyone seeking to embark upon this project would do well to study the recent history of the Women's Movement and the current writings of feminist theorists, for both have prefigured the developments within the polity and political theory more generally and thus offer invaluable insight into our political predicament. The abandonment of the cohesive community as a working model for political participation; the rejection of friendship, solidarity and caring as appropriate political principles; the turn towards formal procedural mechanisms for ensuring participation, and the assertion of a distinctly political realm with its own norms of conduct are all evident within the most recent feminist theorising. That this should be so, amongst a movement which has perhaps come closest to embodying the communitarian vision within contemporary society, does not augur well for the communitarian project generally. The movement away from asserting the desirability of a sexually-differentiated citizenship model towards an endorsement of an androgynous model which seeks to transcend sexual difference through the sole focus upon the cerebral rather than the embodied nature of individuals, the abstract rather than the concrete, presents a clear critique of identity politics. In their place we find an assertion of a modified defence of liberal democracy.

Whilst I find this move both interesting and appealing, I want to signal some real doubts that remain. If we are to modify the liberal vision of citizenship participation to allow for the actual existence of oppressive and exploitative eco-

conomic, social and political relations, what are to be the precise mechanisms with which we might ensure equal citizenship participation and guarantee equal citizenship rights to all? If we have decentred the subject such that the individual is no longer the unproblematic unit of our social theory, and if global forces of production have so undermined the ability of the state to monopolise power within its territory, what is, practicably, left of the liberal model? But these are issues that I cannot address in this paper. I have confined myself here to signalling the move within feminist literature on citizenship to recuperate the liberal project; to speculating on why this might be so; and to offering a few initial qualms about this development.

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