

Cadlwell, Kia Lilly, Kathleen Coll, Tracy Fisher, Renya Ramirez and Lok Siu (eds.). 2009. *Gendered Citizenship, Transnational Perspectives on Knowledge Production, Political Activism, and Culture (Comparative Feminist Studies Series)*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 248 pp. Hb.: \$ 75.00. ISBN: 0230619851.

Feminist scholarship has been reinventing itself with innovative works that seek to represent and analyse the contemporary realities within a critical framework that rejects conventional paradigms and stretches scholarship into unexplored areas, which interrogates the active arena of power relationships (in this case, the nation state and notions of citizenship); an arena that has led to many debates about the entire concept, goals and reality of nation states and their existence in the modern global political and economic arena. The ineffectual and shaky existence of these newly formed political entities, where (as indicated in one of the papers in this volume) people can become 'outsiders', by the mere redrawing of political boundaries, or some people may become marginal citizens in their own country, has evoked critical intellectual attention for the past few decades. Yet the gendering of 'citizenship' is one theoretical paradigm that has not yet found much input from scholars.

In this sense, this is an important book as it not only focuses on what is now widely understood as the 'unfinished' project of the nation state, as boundaries continue to be eroded and redone in the modern world, but also as it introduces an innovative collective mode of scholarship where rather than one or two authors, it is a collection of scholars who have worked together on a project and presented their work as such.

The feminism of this work is not about men and women or about the state and its differential treatment of people within its boundaries, where 'citizenship' with all its associated parameters of 'belonging', 'rights', 'privileges' and 'responsibilities' is shown as intersecting gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, migration, class and a host of other criteria that define and place 'citizens' into various categories of marginalisation and privilege.

One interesting analysis for example shows how the state shirks its responsibility to provide sustenance and right of life and property to its citizens by evoking laws such as 'domestic violence' and concepts such as 'traditions'. Thus instead of mitigating the circumstances under which a crime such as battering takes place, it allows the victim to take action against the batterer, who under the circumstances is himself a victim of structural inequality and inequalities perpetrated by the state. Thus the state exonerates itself and blames, 'patriarchy' or 'individual delinquency' for crimes, say against women without looking into the 'real' causes such as unemployment, poverty, lack of resources and lack of accessibility by certain categories of people such as migrants, ethnic minorities, indigenous populations, people of colour, disabled and people speaking different languages than the ones favoured by the state. Thus the state refuses to recognise its own discriminations (such as structural adjustment programs) and instead puts in place laws which may only make the situation worse for the female victims violence by their partners. For example, in the case of a migrant woman, if her partner goes to jail or is deported, she becomes even more impoverished and vulnerable. Children of incarcerated parents become forever stigmatised. The conditions under which the most marginal sections of citizens are forced exist only makes it almost certain that they will remain marginalised. Thus, the state reproduces its

conditions of oppression even through its so called reformatory laws.

Another dimension brought up in this volume is the notion of ‘cultural citizenship’, which is also an adjunct of the historical process of colonisation, though which most nation states have come into existence. That today we have a category of people who are called ‘indigenous’ is an outcome of this historical reality. In fact, there are two kinds of ‘cultural citizenships’ that have been described in these essays. One is the type that is being demanded by migrant populations and ethnic minorities, like the Latinos in the USA. Here the marginalised culture wants its recognition by the dominant culture. In another interpretation of ‘cultural citizenship’, we have the perspective of the indigenous women who want a restoration of their cultural space, as space in which they had enjoyed privileges, rights and a better life than what has been given to them by the colonizing state. So in one case the demand is for recognition within a given entity of the state and the other case, it is a break away a granting or restoration of lost space and values.

Another critical feminist point of view that runs through this book is of coping, of forming human relationships to counter the state created oppressions and very importantly to seek out ‘feeling’ as opposed to reason, as used by the state. The concept of *autoestima* evoked by Latin American migrant women, the formation of sisterly bonding and self-support groups, the publication of a magazine as in the case of the Philippine migrant domestic workers, the support given to white women with brown babies by black women fraternities in Britain, are all examples of the oppressed use their humanity to transgress the inhuman state machinery that creates conditions where the weak and vulnerable become victims of the perpetuation of self-interest by the groups in power.

Peer group support, the recourse to inappropriate (from the point of view of the state) emotions such as anger and love, creating spaces of ‘cultural autonomy’, including ‘beauty contests’ may be the spaces and the self created and sustained practices by which the marginalised counter and also reclaim a degree of self respect, identity and power in contradiction to the formal and legal powers of the state.

Thus this volume is not just about conditions of oppression and marginalisation, it is more about the strategies, the manipulations and the creation of cultural and personal space by those whom the state refuses to recognise as full citizens.

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