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Homing Desire, Cultural Citizenship, and Diasporic Imaginings

By Anh Hua¹

Abstract

This article examines the relationship between homing desire, cultural citizenship and diaspora communities. I begin by examining how citizenship is a deeply gendered concept. From there, I will explore how citizenship practices, although promising enfranchisement and equality, sometimes socially exclude certain gendered and racialized individuals and communities as inauthentic citizens, non-citizens, or denizens. Finally, I will analyze the concept of cultural citizenship and how it is being used in various diaspora communities as ways to imagine multiple modes of belonging within and beyond the coherence of national boundaries. I argue that to fully comprehend the lived experience of migratory and diasporic subjects, we, as feminist and diaspora scholars, need to pay heed to how migratory subjects negotiate and rewrite their citizenship status within the nation-state with cultural productions and cultural acts. In the process, migratory and diasporic subjects stake claims to their multiple identities, multiple homes and affiliations, and socio-political membership to the nation(s) and transnational communities.

Keywords: cultural citizenship, Diaspora imaginings, homing desire

Introduction

As more and more people travel and migrate globally, identities, communities, affiliation and citizenship status will take on more complicated significance. Because of the global trend of increasing migration and the building and imagining of different diaspora communities, the concept of citizenship needs to be rethought and reformulated. In this article, I wish to examine the relationship between homing desire, cultural citizenship and diaspora communities. The cultural citizenship I imagine speaks beyond the traditional duality of obligations and rights as citizens as dictated by the legality of the nation-state. Instead, it accords agency to gendered migratory subjects who may deploy cultural acts or performances as ways to challenge socio-cultural exclusion within the nation-state in order to write them into the nation. In particular, I am concerned with how cultural citizenship can allow for the performance of identities, home and belonging within various diaspora and transnational communities. How do gendered subjects and communities whose lives are governed by dislocation and displacement perform citizenship, and thus identities and homing desire, through various cultural practices to reclaim belonging in the place of settlement, to challenge social exclusion, and to imagine transnational diasporic communities? Some of these cultural practices I have in mind include the consumption, production and circulation of: literature, film, Satellite TV shows, Bollywood, photography, dance, music, performance arts, languages, folklores, cultural myths, rituals, religious texts, newspapers, independent community press, Internet blogs and websites, collectables and souvenirs and so on.

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Using the insights of various feminist theorists, I will begin by examining how citizenship is a deeply gendered concept. From there, I will explore how citizenship practices, although promising enfranchisement and equality, sometimes socially exclude certain gendered and racialized individuals and communities as inauthentic citizens, non-citizens, or denizens. In particular, I am interested in exploring issues of home and belonging, estrangement and alienation, especially around the figure of the stranger or foreigner. Finally, I will analyze the concept of cultural citizenship and how it is being used in various diaspora communities as ways to imagine multiple modes of belonging within and beyond the coherence of national boundaries. I argue that to fully comprehend the lived experience of migratory and diasporic subjects, we, as feminist and diaspora scholars, need to pay heed to how migratory subjects negotiate and rewrite their citizenship status within the nation-state with cultural productions and cultural acts. In the process, migratory and diasporic subjects, I suggest, stake claims to their multiple identities, multiple homes and affiliations, and socio-political membership to the nation and transnational communities.

Citizenship as Deeply Gendered

Rather than a neutral concept, citizenship is deeply gendered (Lister, 2003; Friedman, 2005; Yuval-Davis & Werbner, 1999). The concept of citizenship has different meanings and it varies according to “social, political and cultural context and reflect different historical legacies” (Lister, 2003, p. 3). At the individual level, there is an experience of “lived citizenship,” that is, “the meaning that citizenship actually has in people’s lives and the ways in which people’s social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizens” (Hall and Williamson, 1999, p. 2). Cloaked under an assumption of gender-neutrality, citizenship as a concept and lived experience is often depicted by much of the literature as male citizen with his interests and concerns dictating the agenda. As Jan Jindy Pettman notes, citizenship constructs an identity long presumed to be male and “rests in ambiguous ways on the private support world of family, home and women” (Pettman, 1999, p. 207). Throughout human history and in different parts of the world, women were and are continually denied the rights to citizenship. But as feminist Ruth Lister tells us: “A feminist project to (re)appropriate citizenship does not, however, imply an uncritical acceptance of its value as a concept” (Lister, 2003, p. 4). There is a “janus-faced nature” to citizenship for it “operates simultaneously as a mechanism of both inclusion and exclusion and also as a language of both discipline and resistance” (Lister, 2003, p. 4-5). A feminist citizenship project needs to accord and recognize “women’s agency and achievements as citizens,” both at the individual and collective levels, without ignoring “the deep-seated inequalities that still undermine many of their citizenship rights and particularly those of ‘minority group’ women” (Lister, 2003, p. 6).

Various theories on citizenship emphasize that citizenship is a two-way process, which involves obligations and rights (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 19). For example, voting is seen as a main citizenship right. Defending one’s own community and country is often perceived as an ultimate citizen’s duty, in fact, to die as well as to kill for the sake of the homeland or the nation (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 20). By linking citizenship to armed struggle for national defense, citizenship is clearly gendered. Men are expected to fight

in armed combat to protect the homeland, while women are seen as the need for male protection (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 20).

Many feminist theorists of citizenship have found T. H. Marshall's three elements of citizenship useful. Marshall argues that there are three elements to citizenship: civil, political and social rights. The civil element includes the rights necessary for individual freedom such as liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, as well as the right to justice. The political element refers to the right to participate in political power as a member of the political body or as an elector of the members of such a body. Lastly, the social element suggests the right to economic welfare and security, the right to fully share social heritage, and the right to live life according to the standard in the society (Marshall, 1950, p. 10-11).

While it is crucial to acknowledge the civil, political and social rights as promised by the attainment of citizenship, Marilyn Friedman have argued that citizenship is more variegated and multiple: "It can be an identity; a set of rights, privileges, and duties; an elevated and exclusionary political status; a relationship between individuals and their states; a set of practices that can unify – or divide – the members of a political community; and an ideal of political agency" (Friedman, 2005, p. 3). Because of increased migration, resurgent nationalisms, ethnic hostilities, changing political and national boundaries, and the global realignment of military power, the concept of citizenship has been destabilized and many nation-states are forced to rethink their citizenship practices (Friedman, 2005, p. 3).

What some feminists have argued for is the need to establish "active citizenship" for women, which according to Jan Jindy Pettman, "requires material conditions which support and enable women's participation in the public/political sphere" (Pettman, 1999, p. 212). In particular, women globally have been hard-hit by global deregulation and restructuring as an effect of globalization and the ideology of neo-liberalism, which tend to reprivatise services that in the past were the responsibilities of the state including health and education. As Pettman notes, women are especially hard-hit when the state reduces or withdraws from social support: "Women in their domestic and reproductive roles must compensate for state retreat, or for state failure to provide social infrastructure and support" (Pettman, 1999, p. 212).

An ideal democratic socially inclusive citizenship model rests on a balance of power among state, market and citizens in the civil society. Yet, as Margaret R. Somers observes: "Disproportionate market power disrupts this carefully constructed balance, as the risks and costs of managing human frailties under capitalism once shouldered by government and corporations get displaced onto individual workers and vulnerable families" (Somers, 2008, p. 2). Somers insists that citizenship is "the right to have rights" (Somers, 2008, p. 5). The first right to political membership is the right to social inclusion. By social inclusion, she refers to "the right to recognition by others as a moral equal treated by the same standards and values and due the same level of respect and dignity as all other members" (Somers, 2008, p. 6). It is this right of inclusion and membership that permits the "mutual acknowledgement of the other as a moral equal, and thus worthy of equal social and political recognition" (Somers, 2008, p. 6).

Citizenship is crucial for people's social, economic and political survival, as Hannah Arendt demonstrates with the case of the Holocaust, which reveals what happens to people when they are actually stateless. Arendt shows how the Nazis created

conditions for the genocide of Jews. First, the Nazis revoked the citizenship of the German Jews; then they expelled them from the nation-state into a condition of statelessness (Somers, 2008, p. 7). The lesson Hannah Arendt offers, as Margaret Somers observes, is that: “[I]t is not freedom and autonomy from all social and political entities that liberate us to be rights-bearers. Bare life...in fact makes humans who are ‘nothing but human’ as rightless as they are stateless... Instead, it is embeddedness, political membership, and social inclusion that are necessary to have any rights at all, especially the human right to life itself” (Somers, 2008, p. 7). Somers emphasizes that rights must be recognized to be public goods: “As such, socially inclusive democratic citizenship regimes (including human rights) can thrive only to the extent that egalitarian and solidaristic principles, practices, and institutions of civil society and the public commons are able to act with equal force against the exclusionary threats of market-driven politics” (Somers, 2008, p. 8). In sum, Margaret Somers, expanding on Arendt’s ideas, defines citizenship as “the right to have rights – not any single civil, juridical, or even social right, but the primary right of recognition, inclusion, and membership in both political and civil society” (Somers, 2008, p. 25). In other words, there is a distinction between the “formal rights” such as civil rights and political rights attached to the legal status of citizen, versus the “right to human personhood,” that is, the recognition of an individual as a moral equal endowed by full inclusion into the social and political body (Somers, 2008, p. 25).

According to Nira Yuval-Davis, to comprehend people’s citizenship today in an era of globalization and ethnicization as well as the changing relationship between states and civil societies, “citizenship should best be analyzed as a multi-tiered construct which applies, at the same time to people’s membership in sub-, cross- and supra-national collectivities as well as in states” (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 4). By linking citizenship to membership in a community rather than simply to the state, one can comprehend citizenship as “a multi-tier construct” to understand people’s membership in a variety of collectivities at the local, ethnic, national and transnational levels (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 5).

Citizenship Practices and Social Exclusion

On May Day 2006, hundreds of thousands of people marched the streets of various cities in the United States to protest against the persecution of “illegal” immigrants. The protest drew our attention to the fact that there are communities of people who are perceived as dispensable through the persistent denial of their right to citizenship yet they are vital to the first world economies because they provide cheap labor for the global capitalist system. To pose a question about citizenship, one therefore has to consider how citizenship is tied to economic and socio-political exclusion, immigration, racialization and racism, and the history of European colonialism and imperialism.

Another example of how citizenship practices, in this case American citizenship practices, fail to provide liberty, equality and security to certain racialized individuals is the case of Hurricane Katrina devastation in New Orleans, Louisiana beginning on August 28, 2005. While Hurricane Katrina is seen as a natural disaster, the language around the catastrophe served “to naturalize poor and black agony, distress and death” (McKittrick and Woods, 2007, p. 2). Given the formal and informal racial segregation in

the region, socio-economic differentiation, and environmental neglect, the human suffering caused by Katrina was hierarchically distributed. As Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (2007) note:

[T]he privileged residents of New Orleans, a largely white population, lived higher above sea level, on drier and less polluted lands, and were able to escape the hurricane by using readily available transportation (cars, airlifts); the economically underprivileged residents of New Orleans, largely black and living in areas with insufficient socio-economic services and low-income housing, suffered the brunt of the effects (p. 2).

There were various political narratives and responses to the Katrina devastation ranging from continuing government neglect and the militarization of the region to racialized media responses and local activism. As McKittrick and Woods observe, the Katrina devastation brought into clearer focus “a legacy of uneven geographies, of those locations long occupied by *les damnés de la terre*/ the wretched of the earth” (McKittrick and Woods, 2007, p. 2). I would also add that the Katrina devastation revealed the legacy of uneven citizenship status and practices. While the economically underprivileged Black population of New Orleans may have American legal citizenship status, they were not socially included nor given the right to recognition as a moral equal to be treated with the same standards, values, respect and dignity as other members. Because of governmental neglect to immediately rescue them from the catastrophe, the economically underprivileged Black population in New Orleans was not given what Margaret R. Somers calls “the right to have rights” (Somers, 2008, p. 5).

As Renato Rosaldo argues, citizenship is often times founded on socio-political exclusion:

In its official announcements, the state emphasizes its capacity to enfranchise and plays down its twin capacity to disenfranchise. Liberty, equality, fraternity... can, perhaps, convince all citizens of their membership in a horizontally organized egalitarian community. Does one routinely notice that the fraternal idea of equality excludes women? ... The nation-state's original exclusion created the conditions for the women's suffrage movement and present day feminism. Similarly, the North American failure to grant voting rights, not only to women, but also to nonwhites even led to antislavery and civil rights movements (Rosaldo, 1994, p. 403).

Hence, there is a Janus-faced quality to citizenship; it propagates inclusion and enfranchisement yet it also excludes and disenfranchises certain gendered, sexed, and racialized individuals and communities. Discussion about citizenship always raises the question what should happen to those members of the civil society who cannot or will not become full members of a particular political national community? As Nira Yuval-Davis suggests: “In virtually all contemporary states there are migrants and refugees, ‘old’ and ‘new’ minorities and in settler societies there are also indigenous people who are not part of the hegemonic national community” (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 7). Moreover, there is a

common status in Europe today, that of the “denizen,” “someone who is entitled to most social and civil rights but is deprived of the political rights of national voting” (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 8).

Because of the new cultural racism, everyday commonsense racism, structural racism and scientific racism along with sexism and homophobia, many people of color, women, and non-heterosexuals in Euro-America feel a deep-seated sense of unbelonging, whether it is social, political, economical, cultural or psychological. How then have women, ethnic minorities and non-heterosexuals, whose access to citizenship may be precarious and undergoing a constant act of negotiation, imagined and performed a different sense of citizenship and belonging? One way to understand how especially those who are marginalized within the nation-state because of their gender, racial, ethnic or sexual identities perform citizenship, is to pay attention to what Michel Foucault describes as the “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” (Foucault, 1977, p. 7). By subjugated knowledges, Foucault refers to “those ways of seeing and understanding the world which have been disqualified for their supposed lack of rigor or ‘scientificity,’ those knowledges that have been present but which are often made invisible” (Somers, 2008, p. 9). Subjugated knowledges can reveal that the genealogies of citizenship can look rather different when one examines the “outsider” or “outsider within” and their perspectives.

Home and Belonging, Stranger and Estrangement

When one examines issues of citizenship, understanding of home and belonging, stranger and estrangement, subjectivity and self-other relation are bound to arise. With the transnational movements of bodies, objects and capital, “the stranger is always in proximity,” that is, the stranger has come closer to home (Ahmed, 2000, p. 13). Sara Ahmed reflects that: “Strangers are not simply those who are not known in this dwelling, but those who are, in their very proximity, already recognized as not belonging, as being out of place. Such a recognition of those who are out of place allows both the demarcation and enforcement of the boundaries of ‘this place’, as where ‘we’ dwell” (Ahmed, 2000, p. 21-22). That is, the recognition of the stranger as not belonging and out of place permits the policing and enforcement of various social, political and geographical boundaries about this place and who has the right to dwell and belong.

With increasing travel and migration, narratives of home and away, belonging and estrangement take on complicated twists and detours. For some individuals, home then is not so much about roots or settlement but the security of a destination, that is, the journey itself in between departure and arrival becomes the familiar, the home. The comforting space or home can at times be the site in between journeys, the airport, the train station and so on. Pico Iyer calls such migratory subject who has multiple homes and feels more at home in the space in between departure and arrival the “Global Soul” (Iyer, 2000, p. 18). The “Global Soul” is a new kind of being, an international citizen who had grown up in many cultures all at once and who lived in the cracks between them. The “Global Soul” feels more comfortable in international airspace, and his currency is “air miles”: “His memories might be set in airports that looked more and more like transnational cities, in cities that looked like transnational airports” (Iyer, 2000, p. 19).

Sara Ahmed writes: “Home is here, not a particular place that one simply inhabits, but more than one place; there are too many homes to allow place to secure the

roots or routes of one's journey between homes provides the subject with the contours of a space of belonging, but a space that expresses the very logic of an interval, the passing through of the subject between apparently fixed moments of departure and arrival" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 77). For Ahmed, "The narrative of leaving home produces too many homes and hence no Home, too many places in which memories attach themselves through the carving out of inhabitable space, and hence no place that memory can allow the past to reach the present..." (Ahmed, 2000, p. 78).

Because of various transnational journeys of subjects, one is asked to reconsider what it means to be at home, to live in a particular place, and how it relates to one's identity and belonging. For Sara Ahmed, home is sometimes not so much about the past that binds the subject to a particular place but the necessity of the subject's future. Home is not so much "the space of inhabitation" but the space where "one is almost, but not quite, at home" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 78). As Sara Ahmed writes: "Home is some-where; it is indeed else-where, but it is also where the subject is going. Home becomes the impossibility and necessity of the subject's future (one never gets there, but is always getting there), rather than the past that binds the subject to a given place" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 78).

In our era of increased global migration and travel, it is more and more necessary to admit that the foreigner, the stranger, lives not only in proximity but also within us. In our postmodern and postcolonial times, we are strangers amongst strangers, and "strangers to ourselves" as the French feminist Julia Kristeva reveals in the title of her well-known book. Julia Kristeva in Strangers to Ourselves notes: "Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself.... The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities" (Kristeva, 1991, p. 1). It is imperative today "to accept new modalities of otherness" as the status of the foreigner is changing (Kristeva, 1991, p. 2). The foreigner embodies unbelonging and the impossibility to take root: "Not belonging to any place, any time, any love. A lost origin, the impossibility to take root, a rummaging memory... The space of the foreigner is a moving train, a plane in flight, the very transition that precludes stopping" (Kristeva, 1991, p. 7-8).

The foreigner not only experiences nostalgia but also melancholia, for the lost homeland, for the lost paradise. As Julia Kristeva writes: "We all know the foreigner who survives with a tearful face turned toward the lost homeland. Melancholy lover of a vanished space, he cannot, in fact, get over his having abandoned a period of time. The lost paradise is a mirage of the past that he will never be able to recover" (Kristeva, 1991, p. 9-10). Being in the foreigner's place helps to make oneself other for oneself: "Living with the other, with the foreigner, confronts us with the possibility or not of being an other. It is not simply...a matter of our being able to accept the other, but of being in his place, and this means to imagine and make oneself other for oneself" (Kristeva, 1991, p. 13). Being alienated from myself permits me some distance to question my cultural milieu from the insights of an exile: "Being alienated from myself, as painful as that may be, provides me with that exquisite distance within which perverse pleasure begins, as well as the possibility of my imagining and thinking, the impetus of my culture"

(Kristeva, 1991, p. 13-14). Confronting the stranger, the foreigner, shocks me and makes me lose my boundaries. While this process may be destabilizing, challenging my own autonomy, security and ego boundaries, it is crucial to recognize the similar in the foreign, difference of otherness in oneself.

For Kristeva, there is a connection between the feelings of xenophobia and the “agony of frightened joyfulness that has been called unheimlich, that in English is uncanny, and the Greeks quite simply call xenos, ‘foreign’” (Kristeva, 1991, p. 191). According to Kristeva, in rejecting what the foreigner arouses in us, there is an uncanny strangeness of depersonalization. Thus when we attempt to flee from or struggle against the foreigner, “we are fighting our unconscious” (Kristeva, 1991, p. 191). What we should strive towards is “to detect foreignness in ourselves” (Kristeva, 1991, p. 191), including the need to call on “the courage to call ourselves disintegrated in order not to integrate foreigners and even less so to hunt them down, but rather to welcome them to that uncanny strangeness, which is as much theirs as it is ours” (Kristeva, 1991, p. 192). What Kristeva attempts to do is to show us “the ultimate condition of our being with others”: “By recognizing our uncanny strangeness we shall neither suffer from it nor enjoy it from the outside. The foreigner is within me, hence we are all foreigners. If I am a foreigner, there are no foreigners” (Kristeva, 1991, p. 192).

Cultural Citizenship and Diaspora Imaginings

With increasing migration and the imagining of various diaspora communities, ideas about home, identity, citizenship and place are being rethought. Jan Jindy Pettman, for instance, reflects: “Thinking about home, and about citizenship, becomes much more complicated as globalization processes recast the relationship between people, place and identity... Nevertheless, ideas of place and home live on in the imaginings of many diasporic collectivities, and these ideas have very real implications for notions of self and citizenship” (Pettman, 1999, p. 216). Lily Cho also observes that recent scholarship is paying more attention to how “citizenship in the form granted by the nation-state cannot fully encompass the multiple modes of belonging that are actually practiced, and it is no accident a growing body of scholarship is proposing an understanding of citizenship that is not grounded in the nation-state” (Cho, 2007, p. 468). Cho notes that some diaspora scholars attempt to decouple citizenship from the nation-state by exploring the production of cultural communities under conditions of dislocation. Cho observes that these diaspora authors “assert the possibility of citizenship in diaspora, of citizenship grounded in cultures whose relation to the nation is complex, circuitous, and uneasy” (Cho, 2007, p. 468). I suggest that what needs to be made visible is the contradiction, tension and exclusionary tendencies in citizenship practices as found in classical citizenship rooted in the nation-states, and the need to expand our understanding of citizenship to include other multiple modes of belonging and political membership in various communities at the local, national, and supranational levels. One method to observe how some subjects, who are perceived as inauthentic citizens within a particular nation-state, perform citizenship to claim multiple modes of belonging is to analyze their cultural practices and production.

Culture is an important site for political contestation for it can be the expression of resistance to oppression and exploitation. As Wendy Walters argues, “the articulation of diaspora identity in writing is more than a literary performance; it is, in fact, a political act” (Walters, 2005, p. ix). Writing, especially the works by diaspora writers, can be read

as resistance to hegemony providing us with ways to think beyond the nation-state (Walters, 2005, p. xi). Literary narratives are “crucial ongoing sites where diaspora claims are made, unmade, contested, and reinforced” (Walters, 2005, p. xi). For many ethnic writers, diasporic writers, and women of color writers, the power of authorship is needed to not only challenge exclusion and discrimination, to write against civil and social death, but to provide a means of survival. As Houston Baker explains: “What I shall call memorial and performative writing is our rite of black revisionary survival par excellence. In the most profound ways, writing, and especially revisionary writing, is our key to sanity, our prophylaxis against civil and social death” (Baker, 2001, p. 5).

I suggest that cultural citizenship, as expressed by some ethnic or diasporic writers via cultural acts, can become what Holloway Sparks calls “dissident citizenship,” that is, dissenting acts by the less powerful to trouble those who hold relations of power in order to claim democratic participation (Sparks, 1997, p. 74). In her study of the dissident practices by activist women including the well-known story of Rosa Parks who refused to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama bus in 1955, Holloway Sparks theorizes a more expansive understanding of citizenship that recognizes both “dissent and an ethic of political courage as vital elements of democratic participation” (Sparks, 1997, p. 76). Sparks defines “dissident citizenship” as “the practices of marginalized citizens who publicly contest prevailing arrangements of power by means of oppositional democratic practices that augment or replace institutionalized channels of democratic opposition when those channels are inadequate or unavailable” (Sparks, 1997, p. 75). Rather than voting, lobbying, or petitioning, dissident citizens use “alternative public spaces” and practices including marches, protests, picket lines, sit-ins, speeches, strikes, and street theater. In other words, “dissident citizenship” involves the “creative oppositional practices of citizens who either by choice or (much more commonly) by forced exclusion from the institutionalized means of opposition, contest current arrangements of power from the margins of the polity” (Sparks, 1997, p. 75). Sparks also emphasizes that the discourse and practice of political courage is crucial in the practices of dissident citizenship, that is, “nonviolent resistance activities, protests, and communication with opponents can require courage, especially in the face of verbal abuse, threatened incarceration, or the possibility of physical violence” (Sparks, 1997, p. 76). What the political courage of nonviolent dissident citizens can provide is to “help publicize inequality and injustice while aiding the creation of tension and crises that force negotiation and change on the part of the more powerful” (Sparks, 1997, p. 88-89).

By understanding citizenship as performance, one can accord agency to those who may not have access to citizenship rights – whether civil, political or social – within the bounds of the nation-state. Citizenship as performance allows one to witness how cultural citizenship is imagined via the arts such as literature, film, music, performances, satellite TV, Internet blogs, everyday cultural gestures and so on, as well as permit one to understand how migration, displacement and informal networks of communities can produce more nomadic forms of citizenship.

May Joseph, for instance, theorizes the idea of “nomadic citizenship” (Joseph, 1999, p. 2). Moving beyond the limits of national boundaries, Joseph’s “nomadic citizenship” is tied transnationally to “informal networks of kinship, migrancy, and displacement” (Joseph, 1999, p. 2). “Nomadic citizenship” challenges the nation-state as the sole arbiter of identity and citizenship. With communities such as Mexican in Los

Angeles, Asians in Uganda, the Lebanese in West Africa, for instance, “nomadic citizenship enables the articulation of psychic and social boundaries of legitimation through which they exist as cultural citizens within the state that disavows them in subtle and overt ways” (Joseph, 1999, p. 17). May Joseph’s distinction between legal and cultural citizenship is helpful to comprehend how those who are constructed as inauthentic citizens legally can attempt to achieve cultural citizenship through political affiliations and community formations within and beyond the national boundaries (Joseph, 1999, p. 5). Joseph’s nomadic citizenship is critical for it opens up the concept of citizenship, giving agency to those who are often perceived as inauthentic citizens, according them with the creative power to perform their own cultural and political belonging.

As Elspeth Probyn notes: “...if you have to think about belonging, perhaps you are already outside” (Probyn, 1996, p. 8). In diasporic cultural narratives, “belonging is always problematic, a never-ending dialogue of same with other” (Bromley, 2000, p. 5). By recognizing diasporic communities and diasporic cultural narratives, one can begin to theorize culture, identity and citizenship away from the binds of nationality. Roger Bromley, for example, emphasizes the need to examine “cultures of ‘encounter’ and the possible condition of belonging simultaneously, mentally, psychologically and experientially, to a diversity of cultures” (Bromley, 2000, p. 7). The analysis of diasporic communities can become the focus of what Bromley calls “a post-national model of belonging” (Bromley, 2000, p. 9).

Similarly, Carole Boyce Davies and Babacar M’Bow note that: “Today citizenship, traditionally defined in the legal field as *jus sanguinis* or *jus solis*, is being reconsidered in the context of globalization as also being transnational” (Davis and M’Bow, 2007, p. 16). Throughout history, Black diaspora people in various nation-states have been treated as “deportable subject” (Davis and M’Bow, 2007, p. 19). For many years, Diaspora Black individuals did not have access to the basic rights accorded to citizens in many geographical locations prior to civil rights and other anti-colonial movements. In effect, Black diaspora individuals and communities felt a sense of statelessness and alienation from the various nation-states (Davis and M’Bow, 2007, p. 19). Davies and M’Bow argue for the politicization of what they call “African diaspora citizenship” to conceptualize Black Diaspora people’s affinity to their homeland Africa (Davis and M’Bow, 2007, p. 15). Davies and M’Bow examine the Black diaspora to redefine the nation-centered approaches to citizenship and belonging. They review the history of spatial displacements of Black people in order to forge “cross-national and outer-national global rights for black subjects” (McKittrick and Woods, 2007, p. 8). They challenge our understanding of the modern nation-state, revealing that centuries of displacement, migration, and dispersal may inform a different sense of belonging. In essence, these authors ask us to rethink how induced human scatterings can create new forms of citizenship.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored many facets of citizenship, revealing how it is not only deeply gendered, but how the concept, while promising enfranchisement, fraternity and equality, can also be deployed to socially exclude and spatially displace certain gendered and racialized individuals and communities such as some women, ethnic

minorities, non-heterosexuals, aboriginals, disabled people, undocumented migrants and so on. The basic “right to have rights” and moral recognition as personhood is distributed unequally amongst individuals and communities within various nation-states. Yet if one examines the experiences of gendered migratory and diasporic subjects, one can witness the performance of cultural citizenship by these individuals to claim multiple modes of belonging and hence multiple locations of home and affiliations. By doing so, migratory or diasporic subjects, both women and men, heterosexual and non-heterosexual, perform citizenship as personhood for creative survival. In the process, they rewrite the (symbolic) nation as an exclusionary site or uneven social-human geography, laying claim for more “dissident citizenship” (Sparks, 1997), “nomadic citizenship” (Joseph, 1999), “flexible citizenship” (Ong, 1999), or transnational cultural citizenship. Whether in their nostalgic and melancholic gaze to the lost homeland or their willingness to carve new spaces for new homes, the gendered diasporic subjects reveal that homing desire is tied to cultural citizenship and diasporic imaginings. Today, for many individuals, it is no longer that simple to say: “there is no place like home,” for there is sometimes no place called home. There are sometimes multiple homes, or transits between homes, or routes as home, or longing for homes, in physicality and in the symbolic imaginary.

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