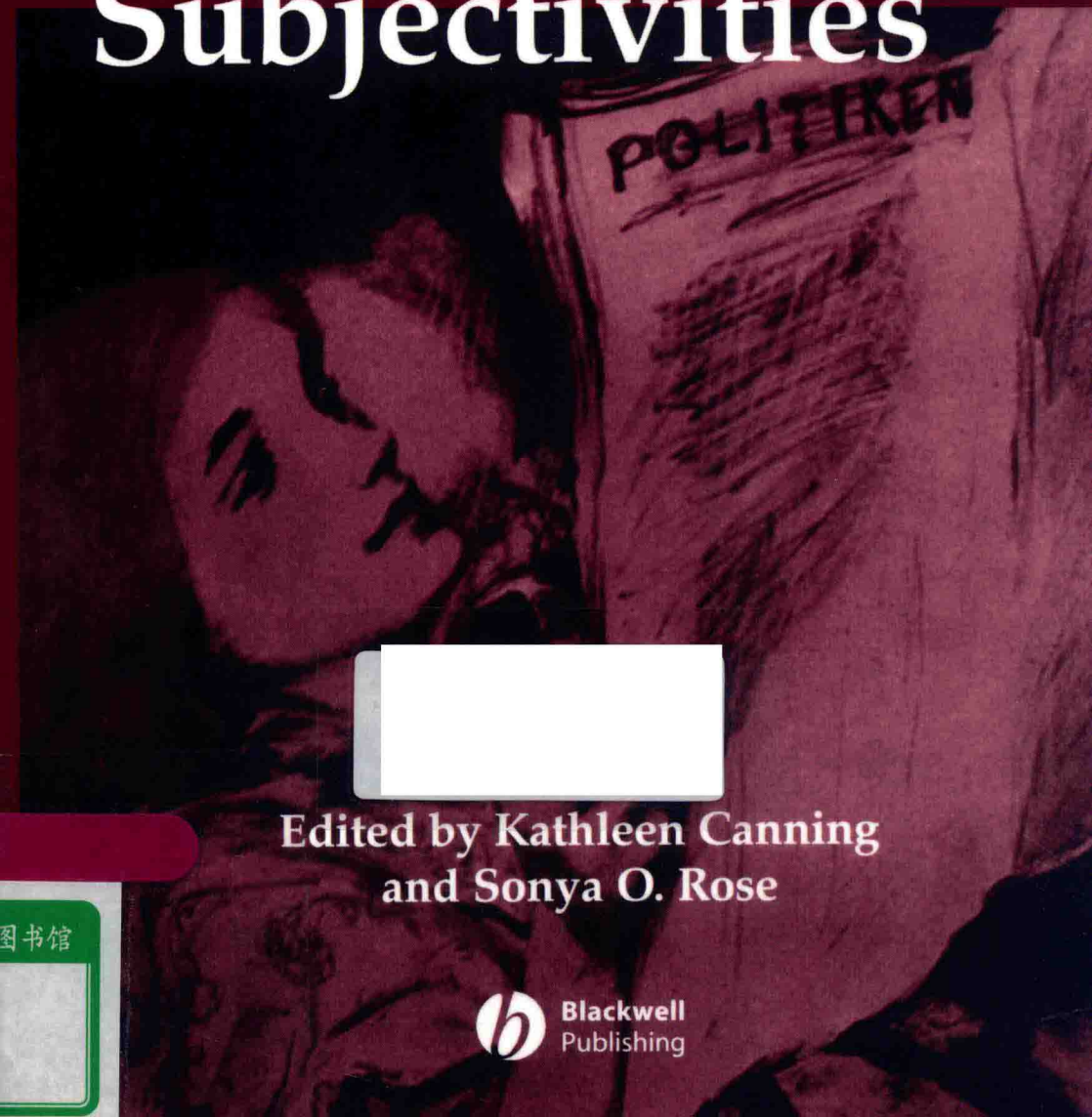
Gender, Citizenships & Subjectivities



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GENDER, CITIZENSHIPS AND SUBJECTIVITIES

Contents

1 **Introduction**
Gender, Citizenship and Subjectivity: Some Historical and Theoretical Considerations
KATHLEEN CANNING AND SONYA O. ROSE 1

2 Citizens and Scientists: Toward a Gendered History of Scientific Practice in Post-revolutionary France
CAROL E. HARRISON 18

3 The Rhetorics of Slavery and Citizenship: Suffragist Discourse and Canonical Texts in Britain, 1880–1914
LAURA E. NYM MAYHALL 55

4 Imagining Female Citizenship in the 'New Spain': Gendering the Democratic Transition, 1975–1978
PAMELA BETH RADCLIFF 72

5 The Trial of the New Woman: Citizens-in-Training in the New Soviet Republi
ELIZABETH A. WOOD 98

6 Enfranchised Selves: Women, Culture and Rights in Nineteenth-Century Bengal
TANIKA SARKAR 120

7 Citizenship as Non-Discrimination: Acceptance or Assimilationism? Political Logic and Emotional Investment in Campaigns for Aboriginal Rights in Australia, 1940 to 1970
MARILYN LAKE 140

8 Producing Citizens, Reproducing the 'French Race': Immigration, Demography, and Pronatalism in Early Twentieth-Century France
ELISA CAMISCIOLI 167

9 Citizenship as Contingent National Belonging: Married Women and Foreigners in Twentieth-Century Switzerland
BRIGITTE STUDER (translated by KATE STURGE) 196

Notes on Contributors 229

Index 231

INTRODUCTION

Gender, Citizenship and Subjectivity: Some Historical and Theoretical Considerations

Kathleen Canning and Sonya O. Rose

Just a few years ago the concept of class, and its inflections by race, ethnicity, and gender, formed the focal point of debate across the humanities and social science disciplines. Since the mid 1990s, citizenship has gained a new salience, propelled in part by the political transformations of relations within and between those zones once termed the first, second and third world. Feminist scholars have taken a particular interest in the historical inception as well as current practices of citizenship across the globe. One of the most porous concepts in contemporary academic parlance, citizenship can be understood as a political status assigned to individuals by states, as a relation of belonging to specific communities, or as a set of social practices that define the relationships between peoples and states and among peoples within communities.[1] Citizenship, according to sociologist Margaret Somers, is an 'instituted process' by which the social practices of peoples in particular historical settings engender citizenship rights through their 'interactions with institutions, ideals and rules of legal power'.[2] In recent years citizenship has also signified either one or

all of the trio of rights T. H. Marshall identified: civil, political, and social rights. In most accounts these stages represent progressive, linear stages of citizenship, encompassing the period between the 'age of democratic revolutions' and the rise of twentieth-century welfare states, as paradigms of western history.[3] Marshall's implicitly teleological model has been the frequent target of feminist critiques that point to the impossibility of mapping the struggles of minorities, women or colonised peoples for citizenship onto Marshall's model of progressive stages.[4]

Understood as both status and practice, citizenship spans local, regional, and national spaces and involves distinct rights, claims and rhetorics in these disparate contexts. Citizenship sometimes seems virtually inextricable from nationality, in the sense of membership in national communities 'that privilege origin and culture'.[5] In other cases citizenship delineates, in the name of the state, territories that encompass a range of nationalities and ethnic groups, facilitating a common position of these disparate groups in relationship to the state. More recently, the spatial location of citizenship has also been a topic of debate, as citizenship is increasingly conceived in terms of global or international human rights that transcend the nation-state.[6] The temporal location of citizenship in 'modernity' is another topic of debate. Although the importance of citizenship for the ancient polis or early modern city-states is not in dispute, citizenship acquired new meanings in the period known as 'modernity', in which it defined new boundaries – both of nation-states and emergent public spheres.

The implication of citizenship in linear models of change and progress has also been challenged by scholars who take citizenship not primarily as a fixed juridical or legal status, but rather as a lens for analysing the changing and shifting boundaries within societies and communities. Evelyn Nakano Glenn underscores the importance of race and gender as continuous 'organizing principles of American citizenship' and as 'primary axes for contesting boundaries and rights'.[7] Yet she makes powerfully clear that the boundaries inflected by race and gender changed and shifted over time, leading not to the progressive expansion of citizenship rights for free blacks, Chinese, Japanese or Mexican immigrants, or women, but instead rendering citizenship a sustained field of contest for these groups.

These distinct meanings and scholarly usages of the term citizenship, shaped in part by different political and disciplinary traditions, have produced both fruitful debate and important new ways of thinking

about the meanings of citizenship in contemporary political life. Feminist scholars have launched a critical examination of the politics of inclusion and exclusion inherent in both liberal and republican traditions of citizenship. Carole Pateman's landmark essays, widely read in the mid and late 1980s and still influential, were crucially important in stimulating interest in the relationship between gender and citizenship.[8] While some feminists regarded Pateman's work as essentialist, her analysis of the gendered contradictions of liberal citizenship and of liberal democracy's dependence on a notion of the abstract individual was groundbreaking for feminist scholarship.[9] Pateman pointed to the fashioning of the 'civil body politic' after the image of the male individual, exposing both the fraternal bonds underpinning civil society and the 'bodily removal' of women from civil society and their relegation to the realm of nature.[10] The essays in this volume attest to the continuing, even expanding, significance of Pateman's analysis.

Other critiques of the universality of modern liberal citizenship point to the discrepancy between the promise of equality and inclusivity on the one hand, and, on the other, the legal and substantive inequalities and social, political and economic incapacities that historically have generated waves of identity politics. Scholars have debated whether or not these exclusionary propensities are an intrinsic aspect of liberalism, or whether they are relatively independent of liberal political principles. Carole Pateman and Uday Mehta have argued, in different veins, that the exclusions stem from how the capacities imagined in Liberal theory to mark the universal political subject were understood and produced. Mehta has claimed, for example, that Locke's liberalism included 'mediating strategies' through which 'universalistic doctrines issued in exclusionary practices'.[11] In particular, Mehta contended that Locke detailed a set of conditions of upbringing and culture that were necessary for the 'natural individual', equipped with universal capacities, to be politically competent, an inheritance which, in Mehta's view, has probably resulted in the exclusionary political practices integral to liberal citizenship. Of course, the distinctions between those who are and those who are not full citizens are recurrent matters of contestation. Not only those who have been excluded, constrained or marginalised, or who have engaged in contestation, but also those in control of maintaining the boundaries of belonging, entitlement and participation have been politically engaged around these issues. What philosopher Charles Taylor has termed a 'politics of recognition' has been used both by those in power, to draw boundaries of inclusion

and exclusion, and by those who have been marginalised, to contest those boundaries.[12]

The recent work of political scientist Rogers Smith is helpful in thinking about citizenship and exclusion. In his book, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History*, Smith seeks to understand why the politics of American citizenship laws are 'likely to generate sets of rules filled with anomalies, even contradiction', and why issues of citizenship have been so intensely contested. According to Smith:

> Citizenship laws ... are among the most fundamental of political creations. They distribute power, assign status and define political purposes. They create the most recognized political identity of the individuals they embrace, one displayed on passports scrutinized at every contested border. They also assign negative identities to the 'aliens' they fence out ... Citizenship laws also literally constitute – they create with legal words – a collective civic identity. They proclaim the existence of a political 'people' and designate who those persons are as a people, in ways that often become integral to individuals' senses of personal identity as well.[13]

At issue here is the designation of 'the people', the 'we', that master category of group identity that we have understood in the modern era as 'the nation', '*our* nation'. The practices of inclusion and exclusion, which stem from what Smith calls 'ascriptive civic myths', were crucial to the project of forming and maintaining a sense of common political identity. Thus, citizenship, as Rogers Brubaker has argued, is a powerful instrument of 'social closure'.[14]

Having uncovered the ideologies and exclusions of gender at the heart of civil society and liberal democracy, feminist scholars have more recently sought to render citizenship a useful category of social analysis. They have embraced the dualities, contingencies and contradictions encompassed in the concept of citizenship, which render it 'a site of intense struggle', both theoretical and political.[15] As Ruth Lister has shown, conceiving of citizenship as *both* (rather than *either*) status and practice provides a useful framework for examining the gender differences that are intrinsic to citizenship. Lister argues that women who have the status of citizen may not always be able to 'fulfill the full potential of that status' by practising or acting as citizens. Her point is to underscore that women whose political participation as citizens is constrained by domestic or caring responsibilities be counted as citizens politically and historically. The approach taken by Pnina Werbner and Nira Yuval-Davis, who understand citizenship

as a relationship 'inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging', adds considerably to the usefulness of the concept and resonates with the historical studies of gender and citizenship collected in this volume.[16]

One of the purposes of this volume is to explore the implications of these critical conceptions of citizenship for the historical study of gender and citizenship across a range of regions, nations, and historical settings. In addition to historicising the politics of gender, race, and location in the studies collected here, this volume also probes the notion of citizenship as subjectivity. Citizenship can clearly be understood in both discursive and experiential dimensions. As a multi-dimensional discursive framework, citizenship provides the languages, rhetorics, and even the formal categories for claims-making, sometimes in the name of national belonging or on behalf of specific rights, duties, or protections, or visions of political participation. Invocations of citizenship can serve at times to buttress the integrative practices of states, while in other instances they might enunciate visions or claims of those formally excluded from citizenship. Citizenship was experienced by subjects, that is both by historical actors and by those subjected to various instances of power. In highlighting the ways in which citizenship serves as a basis for claims-making, we mean to link the experiential and discursive dimensions of citizenship. We also would like to suggest first that the juridical and legal inscriptions, as well as the unwritten traditions, of citizenship, create subject positions that have meanings for those governing and those inhabiting citizenships, as well as those excluded from citizenship. Second, actors in different historical situations appropriate these subject positions in order to challenge, redefine, or honour the boundaries of citizenship. Those who were excluded from all or some citizenship rights on the basis of gender, race, or ethnicity frequently took up the discourses and rhetorics of citizenship to make claims upon nation, state or local communities, which is why claims-making is of crucial interest to us in this volume.

In proposing an understanding of citizenship as subjectivity rather than confining its meanings to the social identities and practices anchored in law, we do not mean to eschew the importance of the realms of law or the policies of states in designating the margins of inclusion and exclusion for specific communities or in defining the formal rights and obligations of their citizens/members. The legal, philosophical, and administrative framings of citizenships are already well

understood in most cases. Our main interest is the process by which historical actors assigned meanings to the prescriptions and delineations of citizenship and hence became subjects in their encounters with citizenship laws, rhetorics, and practices. Our analysis of this process does not presume resistance or subversion but is most interested in the subject positions of those on the margins or formally excluded from full citizenship, for whom citizenship was nonetheless meaningful.

The word 'subject', according to Cultural Studies scholar Nick Mansfield, suggests that 'the self is not a separate and isolated entity'.[17] 'Subjectivity', Mansfield contends, 'defies our separation into distinct selves' and 'encourages us to imagine that ... our interior lives ... involve other people, either as objects of need, desire or interest or as necessary sharers of common experience'. Subjectivity is central then for citizenship because it fundamentally involves the positioning of a subject in relation to 'something outside of it – an idea or principle, or the society of other subjects'.[18] In her study of autobiographical texts, Reginia Gagnier understands a subject as being (1) a subject to herself, (2) a subject to and of others, and (3) a subject of knowledges.[19] The work of Michel Foucault, and of the scholars he has inspired, has provided us with considerable insight into the manifold ways that social actors in the modern era became subject to webs of social institutions and their increasingly specialised disciplinary knowledges. The essays in this volume by Carol Harrison, Brigitte Studer and Elisa Camiscioli suggest the importance of thinking about how these forms of knowledge often infused politics, helping to delineate civil rights, realms of political participation and social entitlements.

Finally, subjectivity captures the complexities of citizenship as both highly individualised and, at the same time, a collectively invoked social identity and subject position. American historian Nancy Cott suggests that citizenship confers 'an identity that may have deep personal and psychological dimensions at the same time that it expresses belonging'.[20] Furthermore, a subject can also be understood, as Gagnier points out, 'as a body that is separate (except in the case of pregnant women) from other human bodies', even if it is, like other bodies, closely dependent on its physical environment. Gagnier's location of the subject in the body also prompts reflections on the ways in which discourses about citizenship have collectively embodied citizens by race, gender, and age.[21] At the same time, the personal and psychological dimensions of citizenship are experienced in individual bodies, which often, in turn, inform citizenship claims. The complex

ways in which citizenship as a subjectivity is simultaneously both individual and collective are integral to Aihwa Ong's notion of 'cultural citizenship', defined as a process of self-making and of being made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society.[22] In a similar vein literary critic Lauren Berlant suggests that 'practices of citizenship involve both public-sphere narratives and concrete experiences of quotidian life that do not cohere or harmonize'. Citizenship, in her view, provides 'important definitional frames for the ways people see themselves as *public,* when they do'.[23]

The essays in this volume analyse the ways in which discourses of citizenship worked to enact hierarchies, to institute registers of difference along lines of gender and race, ethnicity, or marital status. Transformations were most acute at moments when national boundaries or identities were contested internally through revolutions or civil strife, or externally by wars, formations or dissolutions of state, or changes in imperial rule. At the centre of each article is an analysis of the ways in which gender shaped claims-making activity in the name of citizenship; and in most of the cases examined here, women, often aligned with immigrants or minorities, had a leading role in staking these claims. Yet their claims upon and visions of citizenship vary markedly, ranging from the right to vote and represent oneself politically (Mayhall, Radcliff, Lake), to the right to marry a foreign citizen (Studer, Camiscioli), to the immunity from intellectual, physical or sexual death (Sarkar). In nearly every case, citizenship for women remained partial, improvised, or contingent. Wherever women sought formal equality, from revolutionary France to prewar Britain, Spain after Franco, Bolshevik Russia or within the campaigns for Aboriginal rights in Australia, they remained citizens under the tutelage of male citizens, comrades, or state authorities. In still other cases, such as in interwar France, women became citizens in the sense of national duties but not in terms of civil or political rights; here women, conjoined with desirable immigrants, were entrusted with saving the nation from population decline (Camiscioli).

The essays collected here take different approaches to the question of citizenship as subjectivity. In Tanika Sarkar's study of nineteenth-century Bengal, women became subjects or attained 'selfhood' through 'self-narrativising against the grain of ancestral culture', which took place in the form of women's novels and autobiographies. Carol Harrison offers insight into the subjectivities of bourgeois men in nineteenth-century France during a prolonged period after the abolition

of the Old Regime when constitutional definitions of male citizenship remained fluid and contested. She argues that science had a crucial role in identifying masculine capacity for citizenship: as both a language and practice of citizenship, science also shaped subject positions for those whom it disqualified from civic capacity. Marilyn Lake's interest is similarly the different subjectivities that emerged in various mobilisations around Aboriginal rights in Australia. The participation of each of the three women activists at the centre of her study was constituted by 'structures of feeling', by 'different kinds of wounded attachments to the past which spoke to different but not mutually exclusive histories of pain'. Laura Mayhall's view of politics as chiefly a 'realm of speech' underpins her emphasis on citizens as 'speaking beings'. Her essay explores two of the major sources that informed British suffragists' subjectivities and which influenced the theories and strategies of their movement: John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* and Giuseppe Mazzini's *The Duties of Man*. The studies by Camiscioli and Studer attend mainly to the discourses of state, jurists and social reformers, which redefined the boundaries of nationality and citizenship, in one case rendering women 'stateless' and in the other, racialising the ways in which French women and their foreign husbands should belong to the nation. Elizabeth Wood and Pamela Radcliff's examinations of moments of political transformation – the transition to socialism in Russia and to democracy in Spain – also highlight the power of past symbols, images and ideologies of gender in the politics of transformation, shaping and at the same time marginalising the new subject positions of feminism.

Several of the essays in this volume probe the question of women's activism and their public/political participation. Marilyn Lake's essay examines the fate of a coalition of feminist and Aboriginal groups when their claims for the inclusion of Aboriginal people as citizens gave way to an indigenous people's movement for self-determination and group-specific rights. Mayhall maintains that the two widely studied texts by Mill and Mazzini, read dialogically, provided suffragists with new ways of thinking about women's relationship to the political. In particular, she proposes that the concepts of slavery and tyranny functioned by analogy in these texts to enlarge and delimit the arena in which women could act. Mayhall's essay thus complements other recent studies of the British feminist movement that have examined the larger cultural and political contexts informing debates about the suffrage, such as those by Antoinette Burton and by Jane Rendall.[24]

Women's relationship to the political arena is also the focus of Pamela Radcliff's essay on gender and the transition in Spain from Francoist authoritarian rule to the 'new democracy' between 1975 and 1978. She examines the tensions and contradictions in the construction of the female citizen of the 'New Spain', articulated within a supposedly gender-neutral discourse. While women and the family continued to be linked in representations of the nation in the post-Franco years, Radcliff argues that the new regime fostered a 'communitarian passive' form of citizenship, meaning that democratic rights were bestowed upon the people by the elites. Her essay analyses how feminist activism in public around the issue of equal citizenship 'collided with expectations of communitarian passivity' and was perceived as threatening to divide Spain at a crucial point of national consensus-building. Elizabeth Wood examines agitation trials in Bolshevik Russia, in which women's activism was displayed and encouraged in the course of the transition to socialism during the early 1920s. The Communist Party and the Soviet state undertook the project of socialist 'enlightenment', including the instruction of women in public political participation. Wood's analysis of mock trials designed for political education makes clear that the status of woman as equal citizens was in no sense assured, for women remained 'citizens-in-training', still subordinate to party comrades, the only full citizens of Soviet Russia.

Not only does citizenship call up diverse sets of rights, duties, visions, and immunities in the cases examined here, but those excluded from citizenship also adopted a range of subject positions in articulating their claims. Citizenship was alternatively confrontational or performative (Wood, Radcliff, Mayhall, Harrison); argued within the confines of courts, ministries and police (Studer); brought into public debate through women's written or spoken representation of self (Sarkar, Lake); or gendered by the relegation of women to realms of nature, family, domesticity or leisure that were ostensibly far removed from the terrain of politics (Camiscioli, Harrison, Sarkar).

Furthermore, these articles also each contend with the meanings of public and private for gendered citizenships. Social theorists generally assign citizenship to the public domain (state, civil society or public sphere), but feminists have refused this dichotomy by emphasising that women's subordination in the realm of the family, or the elevation of women 'as reproducers of the nation', has served to undermine the formal rights they may have gained in the public domain.[25]

While many of the essays in this volume probe the changing meanings of private and public over time, they also offer powerful evidence of the impossibility of establishing a meaningful boundary between the two. In this sense our notion of citizenship as subjectivity seeks to link collective or public prescriptions and invocations of citizenship, to the interior, individualised meanings and experiences of citizenship.

Pnina Werbner and Nira Yuval-Davis have also analysed citizenship in terms of subjectivity, emphasising the 'aspirational politics' of citizenship, which 'raises its eyes towards the future, to common destinies', thus forming a 'politics of desire' that linked rather than divided public and private concerns. Illustrative is Laura Mayhall's contention in her essay that both John Stuart Mill and Giuseppe Mazzini analysed the 'private realm of family life' as 'embedded in the heart of public life'. Mayhall stresses how reading Mill and Mazzini in dialogue provided suffragists with a vision of active resistance against their exclusion from the political arena, and enabled them to connect family to the realm of the political. She asserts that both Mill and Mazzini deployed the analogy of slavery to insist that women's oppression 'should not remain a relationship embedded within the private realm, but should be a matter of concern within the public'.

Two decades of feminist scholarship have made clear that western representations generally equated women and domesticity and understood femininity as characterised by partiality and emotion.[26] Hence women's issues, raised in the French Revolution, the democratic transition in Spain, or amidst the reform of empires, were generally defined as particularistic or private. Carol Harrison's study of 'Citizens and Scientists' argues for the significance of science and scientific societies in the mapping of public and private in the wake of the French Revolution. Scientific societies endowed men with the capacity for citizenship in the sense of imparting to them certain citizenly qualities, like rationality, expertise, and public spirit, performed in the public sphere of the salons, while banishing women from the domains of science and citizenship. In Harrison's view 'preserving the link between science and civic capacity' meant 'maintaining the masculinity of both. They were to remain closed to women by nature, not merely by social custom'. During the mid- and late nineteenth century, social reformers and intellectuals mobilised science to explain that women could be neither citizens nor scientists. Yet Harrison also emphasises that the 'links among science, citizenship and masculinity' were unstable and thus 'refused to stay put in the masculine camp'. By the

later decades of the nineteenth century the 'serious, scientific, and virile world of bourgeois male sociability' had been undermined by the growing proximity between masculine public and amateur science, and female artistic hobbies, which women pursued at home.

Tanika Sarkar's study of women, culture and rights in nineteenth-century Bengal argues that the Indian public sphere was organised around issues that were 'highly domestic', such as the age of consent to marriage, widow immolation and remarriage. These issues were legislated and debated as the colonial state sought to gain custody over those 'domestic' realms it had previously relegated to the governance of religious communities. Women in Bengal gained 'rights-like competencies' then, not as an outcome of movements 'aspiring to produce citizenship', Sarkar argues, but in the course of struggles over the age of consent and immunity from death (sexual, physical, intellectual) in the domestic realm.

Pamela Radcliff's study argues persuasively for the new symbolic importance of the public/private divide in Spain during the transition from Francoism to democracy, when 'conquest of the public carried specific political meanings'. Because the private familial sphere, and women's particular place within it, had been sanctified by the Franco regime, many democratic reformers concluded that women would have to become 'modernised' before entering realms of public debate or becoming full citizens. Yet when Spanish feminists began to mobilise actively on behalf of women's civil, political, and reproductive citizenship rights in the 1970s, thus moving their politics 'outside of the family metaphor and the private sphere', progressives refused to view them as 'truly public' because of their pursuit of particularistic or 'selfish interests'. In an interesting parallel to the passive communitarian citizenship that emerged in Spain in the 1970s, Elizabeth Wood analyses why and how, during the transition to socialism in Soviet Russia, brutal husbands who tried to educate their wives politically were contrasted with the party authorities who 'took women delegates in hand' and taught them by example. In Wood's analysis, even heroines of the agitation trials moved 'seamlessly from the "we" of the family into the "we" of the state, extending their seemingly ineradicable maternal qualities to the "whole collective"'.

While women may have been excluded from the arena of public discourse because of their association with domesticity, the *topics* of family life, maternity, sex, and reproduction, as well as norms about women's proper behaviour and activities, were all subjects of frequent