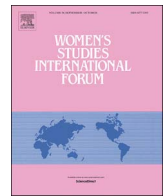




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Women's Studies International Forum

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/wsif

Editorial for special section “Gendering cosmopolitanisms: Recognition, belonging and difference,” womens' studies international forum



Ruth P. Fitzgerald^{a,*}, Maila Stivens^{b,*}

^a University of Otago, / Te Whare Wananga o Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

^b University of Melbourne, Australia

This special section on the gendering of cosmopolitanisms originated in a feminist anthropology panel at the Conference “Cosmopolitan Anthropologies” organized by the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/New Zealand and the Australian Anthropological Society, Queenstown, New Zealand in November 2014.

Working from various feminist perspectives, and following Pnina Werbner's and her contributors' (2008) explorations of grounded or vernacular cosmopolitanisms, we have been interested in a number of key questions: how might more coherently and explicitly gendered analyses of cosmopolitanisms focusing on the dynamics of situated cosmopolitanism add new dimensions to the current debates about the concept? How is cosmopolitan space (en)gendered and how does gendered politics make cosmopolitan spaces? How does the historically contingent intimate and domestic configure cosmopolitan spaces and practices? What are the challenges facing women's rights claims in fighting for, expressing and living within the utopian framework of “human” rights and citizenships? And is a cosmopolitan analysis of the engagement with difference among women worth considering as a tactic to better promote their varied interests or should feminists align with the existing critiques of cosmopolitan theories? As anthropologists, we have been interested to address the diversity and complexity of contemporary feminist predicaments in the in-between spaces created by the tensions between local cultural loyalties and wider fields of imagined or experienced universalisms, and to explore our core questions well beyond the Eurocentric confines of much work on cosmopolitanism.

This collection of six papers, presented by a mix of senior and emerging scholars, draws on a variety of feminist ethnographic approaches to answer our central questions. Comprising essays, case studies, and formal analyses of ethnographic research, our special section searches for experiences, rejections, aspirations and imaginings of the cosmopolitan within the everyday, taken-for-granted practices of gendered agents within a variety of localized and interconnected worlds. We should underline that we are not reading gender as “women,” although our papers here do focus on women's experiences.

Our answers to our central questions are posed against extensive theoretical debates if not scepticism about the usefulness of

“cosmopolitanism” in recent decades. Despite considerable enthusiasm for cosmopolitanism as concept and ideal, a growing body of scholarship has also been expressing serious reservations if not outright pessimism about the utility of cosmopolitanism, new or old: it has seen the concept not only as an exclusionary child of western modernity but perhaps more importantly, as analytically problematic, of questionable intellectual value and dubious political relevance (see for example, Braidotti, Hanafin, & Blaagaard, 2012; Chouliaraki, 2012; Werbner, 2008a, 2008b; Glick Schiller & Irving, 2015). In the face of these debates, the majority of the contributors here seek to reassert the ultimate value of the moral, ethical and political imperatives behind such work, while sharing some of the same concerns, and argue for exploring the ways in which gendered analyses might help overcome some of the latest critiques.

Anthropology came relatively late to debates about cosmopolitanisms, but with some enthusiasm on occasion. Employing a range of qualifiers, including “grounded,” “rooted,” “situated,” “subaltern,” “vernacular,” “ordinary,” “tactical,” “everyday,” “discrepant,” and “ambivalent,” cosmopolitanism (see Werbner, 2008a, 2008b), anthropology's relative optimism has included – disputed – claims that anthropology is itself a cosmopolitan practice (Kahn, 2003) and new searches for more inclusive universalisms. As one of our contributors, Maree Parry, notes, with its greater focus on opportunities to engage diversity, explore difference and examine acts of political solidarity, new cosmopolitan scholarship looks to the everyday, rather than a “shared humanity” as the site for finding a more peaceful and just world. Our section set out to explore some of the challenges in gendering understandings of the cosmopolitan in anthropology, arguing for placing gender at the heart of such notions of rooted/grounded cosmopolitanism(s).

As suggested, a growing body of scholarship both within and beyond anthropology, however, has been engaged in often polarized debates about the value of the concept of cosmopolitanism, new or old. Rosi Braidotti (2012) for example, notes that cosmopolitanism has been critiqued on these grounds by progressive political movements such as post-colonialism, feminism and environmentalism, and by the radical epistemologies engendered by these political movements. For her,

* Corresponding authors.

E-mail addresses: ruth.fitzgerald@otago.ac.nz (R.P. Fitzgerald), m.stivens@unimelb.edu.au (M. Stivens).

cosmopolitanism is what she describes as an exploded concept. Her core argument is that, given the multiple, complex and contradictory notions and practices of planetary interrelation today, cosmopolitanism can only remain relevant by undergoing a radical mutation.

I will suggest that this shift of perspective starts by relinquishing the historical and conceptual attachment of cosmopolitanism to the idea of liberal individualism as a unitary vision of the subject, which entails self-correcting rationality and a propensity for moral and cognitive universalism. Cosmopolitanism needs to 'become-world', i.e. embrace diversity and the immanence of structural relationality so as to account also for the atrocities and structural injustices, as well as for the many benefits, of pan-human perspectives today. (2012: 8)

The anthropologist Henrietta Moore, too, suggests in the same volume that cosmopolitanism as a philosophy or set of ideals exists in a set of complex intersections with counter-cosmopolitan discourses and is overdetermined by various ways of imagining and thinking about the "global" and relations with others within the sphere of the global (2012: 99, citing Skrbis & Woodward, 2007: 744–45). She suggests that the many linguistic turns and qualifying phrases indicate that the conceptual apparatus underlying the notion of cosmopolitanism may not be equal to the analytic challenges demanded of it.

It should be noted that while Braidotti does not discuss either the gendering of cosmopolitan theorizing or gendered cosmopolitanisms, she does see feminist theory as offering a path to the furthering of her project. She identifies in particular the feminist method of the politics of location and what she terms dis-identifications from dominant models of subject-formation, which she sees as potentially productive and creative events (2012).

One of Moore's main concerns seems to be the ambiguities of difference – she discusses the feelings of ambivalent cosmopolitans—and the problematics of everyday encounters. Citing Landau and Fremantle's (2010) study of Johannesburg (381), she sees cosmopolitanism as a practice and "form of experiential culture," which arises from the demands and pragmatics of living rather than from an appreciation of cultural diversity or a universal concern for others (2012: 100). Such "rubbing-along," however, is quite congruent with points made by Joel Kahn (2006) about structures of feeling in multi-ethnic Malaysia, and by the geographer Sophie Watson (2013), writing about the city in the UK: both authors underline just how people do—often—rub along together in such circumstances. Moore (2012) also points to the way that cosmopolitanism—as normative ideal and political practice—is haunted by the unresolved binary of the local and the global, a point made by many others.

Werbner (2008b), in a more optimistic register, however, discussing the treatment of power and inequality within discussions of cosmopolitanism, argues that a rooted or grounded cosmopolitanism addresses some of these concerns: she points to the way in which cosmopolitanism reflects a striving for universal ideals and local multiculturalism within a field of power (2008b: 13). And power is, we would argue, always gendered.

As suggested, we and the contributors to this special section share many of the concerns of the cosmosceptics. But most of us wish to argue with Werbner (2008a, 2008b), and with Glick Schiller and Irving (2015) for the value of accounts that emphasize cosmopolitanisms as grounded or situated practices in theorizing ordinary people's experiences or engagements with diversity and difference, and for the ultimate value of the moral, ethical and political imperatives behind such work. (See also Giri, 2018, and Werbner's 2018 arguments for a de-orientalized, non-elitist, demotic, vernacular cosmopolitanism that is nonetheless moral and ethical). Those assertions are firmly based in considerations of cosmopolitanism as practice and the need to understand such practice as explicitly gendered.

It might have been hoped that moves from an emphasis on normative political philosophical understandings of cosmopolitanism to an

emphasis on grounded/rooted/subaltern/cosmopolitanism from below would have seen a greater interest in gendered accounts. Yet it is clear that two or more decades after renewed debates about cosmopolitanism first appeared¹ there are continuing significant gender absences and silences in the writing on the old and the new cosmopolitanism(s) (see Stevens, 2008). We note with Werbner and others (cf. Stevens, 2008) the widespread neglect of the women's movement in cosmopolitanism literature. This might be seen as part of the habitual neglect of the complex concept "gender" that still typifies much social science theorizing.² As Maila Stevens suggests in her piece in this collection, it is significant that there has been an ongoing and continuing exclusion of considerations of gender within much normative theorizing about cosmopolitanisms. Stevens was struck by a glaring example of just how problematic the gender silences and exclusions have been by thinking about the core notion in Kant's formulation—that of hospitality: she explores here the gendered character of this in relation to organizations welcoming refugees and asylum seekers in the contemporary Australian context, engaging with some recent writings on hospitality which have addressed this character.

One could make a long shopping list of the arguments about the usefulness of exploring the gender dimensions of these arguments: these would include discussions of the ways in which feminist theory and gender-based movements alike have worked their way painfully through arguments about ethnocentrism, neo-imperialism, and the violence of liberal universalism and the power structures in which it is imbricated—themselves often highly masculinist—towards ideas of transversalism and cosmofeminisms (see Stevens, 2008). Our pieces here are particularly interested in how gendered political action makes cosmopolitan spaces, especially the ways in which ideas of the domestic, familial and intimate can configure such spaces (cf. Nava, 2007). Mica Nava's work on the emotions and imaginaries associated with cosmopolitanisms as structures of feeling points one important way forward in dealing with these concerns. As she has so ably illustrated, affective cultures are deeply implicated in political resistance and transformation (2007: 51). They are also deeply gendered. Gendered affective politics are key issues for several contributions here.

A number of our contributions directly address the relationships between cosmopolitanisms and gender-based movements. Maree Parry addresses some key questions around the relation of women's movements and cosmopolitanisms. She suggests that cosmopolitan scholarship might well consider the value of rethinking its aspirations of hospitality and openness by developing greater curiosity about the potential contribution of transnational feminist rights histories, with their tensions, contradictions and emotions, to cosmopolitan theory and practice. Stevens addresses the gendering of the contemporary social movement in Australia that is acting to support refugees and people seeking asylum and to advocate against the ever more securitized and militarized state asylum regime. Michelle Dyer explores how environmental activism, in particular resistance to large-scale logging companies, occupies a gendered cosmopolitan space at a village level in Solomon Islands. Sherrema Oom-Dove poses the question as to whether or not feminisms can be found among Pentecostal revivalist women, a question widely debated in the field of women's and gender studies. And against a background of the publicly polarized positions on reproductive choice among various activist groups, Ruth Fitzgerald, Susan Wardell and Michael Legge, in an engagement with feminist and critical disability studies and cosmopolitan ethics, search for a cosmopolitan vernacular of the "right to choose" among people faced with the predicaments surrounding fetal genetic difference. As all the contributions make clear, feminist knowledge traditions can offer valuable

¹ See for example *The British Journal of Sociology special issue on Cosmopolitanism* (2006), which contained almost no references to gender.

² This neglect is easily demonstrated in the age of data by the tiny numbers of such terms as "gendering (of) cosmopolitanism(s)" or "gendered cosmopolitanism" recorded in search engines like Google Scholar.

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