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Denizenship



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Man will ultimately be known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens.

—Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

How has the customary affiliation of citizenship with belonging come to be newly and increasingly muddled by the variegated spectra of figures that disarticulate belonging from citizenship or, alternately, expose an unforeseen instability unsettling the presumptive monopoly on belonging conventionally attributed to citizenship? Who, or what, are the multifarious figures that expose an antinomy between citizenship and belonging? These are the questions that animate this volume, the thematic that invigorates this book. Remarkably, citizenship seems to quite reliably and unrelentingly generate a proliferation of categories of persons disqualified from its graces. Indeed, regimes of citizenship seem to generate a kind of precarity not only for those subjects associated with the juridical statuses of noncitizenship but also for those who would otherwise appear to be securely located within the parameters and presumptive protections of citizenship itself. Despite its conventional aura of inclusivity, in other words, citizenship seems to operate as a convulsive machinery for the veritable expulsion of various categories of lived social membership from the juridical and political status of citizenship through which states inscribe proper inclusion within

their politics. This heterogenous spectrum of citizenship's "others" (see Anderson and Hughes 2015) commands our critical scrutiny, not least because, sooner or later, we discover ourselves among them. In this essay, I am interested in approaching this larger thematic regarding the antinomies of citizenship and belonging through the critical lens of *denizenship*.

The figure of the denizen has been gradually emerging as a kind of counterpart of the citizen—both apposite and apparently opposite to the figure of the citizen. Perhaps most prominently, and in what retrospectively may now seem like a pioneering usage, Tomas Hammar proposed the term *denizens* to refer to “a new status group,” whose members are neither naturalized citizens nor “regular and plain foreign citizens anymore,” and who have attained more or less secure residence status and a variety of rights and entitlements to social access and benefits (1990, 12–13). Notably, the European ambivalence around the rise of this new social formation of migrant denizens following the extended post–World War II era of migrant guest-worker labor recruitment, replete with a variety of new legal conundrums, which Hammar sought to analyze, is poignantly summarized by Neil Walker: denizenship in Europe, “was not and has never since become conceptually linked to the acquisition of citizenship through any of the obvious avenues. . . . In brief, denizenship has been understood and treated (i) neither as an *incident* of citizenship, (ii) nor as fully *constitutive* of citizenship (iii) nor as *tantamount* to citizenship, (iv) nor even as having the acquisition of citizenship as its designated or probable *terminus*” (2008, 2). Of course, writing as he was in this particular political, socio-spatial, and historical context—where the mere admission that European nation-states might be recognized as “countries of immigration” remained a controversial proposition, even in the closing decades of the twentieth century (Penninx et al. 2004)—Hammar surely overstated the newness of this status. Indeed, in ways previously unforeseen and still insufficiently understood, and in concert with unprecedented integration and harmonization, Europe has become a complex and heterogeneous “immigration continent” (Penninx 2010). Migration indubitably has by now taken center stage in the veritable crisis of “European” identity, and supplies a premier fulcrum for what I have elsewhere designated to be the European Question (De Genova 2016, 2017b; New Keywords Collective 2016). Indeed, Hammar’s formulation of denizenship anticipated ensuing debates around membership and mobility that would become constitutional concerns for European integration, inviting optimistic speculation regarding the potentially transformative significance of denizenship as a new alternative model of membership that could supersede citizenship altogether. Walker posits that the denizen might signal the “typical inhabitant of a more complex postnational constellation, simultaneously present within and belonging to different and overlapping political communities,” or might help to “precipitate the marginalization or demise of the very idea of political membership,” whereby the denizen “possesses a status that transcends fixed status, a membership only of the society of non-members, in a new and more

fluid configuration of political association and investment” (2008, 7). In light of the experience of North America and other long-standing so-called countries of immigration, of course, the existence of persons who inhabit a sociopolitical condition of noncitizenship in an enduring way, as long-established migrant residents with one or another degree of official juridical status and concomitant access to legal rights and substantive entitlements, is plainly nothing new. In fact, over recent decades, in the United States and elsewhere, we have witnessed a significant erosion of the putative rights of even those migrants otherwise classed as “legal” residents. These more familiar figurations of denizenship nonetheless remain conjoined to citizenship in a rigidly hierarchical relation. And it is precisely for this reason that, at the conceptual level, I have long objected to Hammar’s relatively tight and somewhat rarefied definition, whereby denizenship is posited as a counterpart to citizenship and comes to designate the more or less stable juridically inscribed status of “legal,” settled (or permanent) noncitizen residents.

As a synonym, in effect, for resident foreigner/alien, the term *denizen* is affiliated with the former concept’s genealogical origins in classical antiquity. In *Politics*, for instance, Aristotle appears to demonstratively underscore the difference between the citizen and the “resident alien”:

We must investigate who should be called a citizen, and who the citizen is. For there is often dispute about the citizen as well, since not everyone agrees that the same person is a citizen. . . . Nor is a citizen a citizen through residing in a place, for resident aliens and slaves share the dwelling place with him. (. . . in fact in many places the participation of resident aliens in the justice system is not even complete, but they need a sponsor, so that their participation in this sort of communal relationship is in a way incomplete). Like minors who are too young to be enrolled in the citizen lists or old people who have been excused from their civic duties, they must be said to be citizens *of a sort*, but not UNQUALIFIED citizens. Instead, a qualification must be added, such as “incomplete.” (Book III, Chapter I; emphases in original)

Here, what appears to be Aristotle’s principal preoccupation is the overt question of how to define citizenship. Yet, he introduces the question with a remarkable acknowledgment of the instability of the partition between citizen and noncitizen, and depicts that distinction as one that, in practice, is enshrouded in ambiguity if not equivocation, and haunted by controversy. In Aristotle’s account, migrants in ancient Athens inhabited the status of “citizens *of a sort*,” however “incomplete.” It is important to note, moreover, that with reference to this figure of the resident foreigner, the ancient Greeks relied upon the term *metic* (Kasimis 2018). In this respect, the questions surrounding the juridical and political standing of resident foreigners in antiquity already operate at some remove from what contemporary commentators have customarily come to call the

denizen. The term *denizen* itself had no provenance in ancient Greece and is derived etymologically from late medieval Britain, and is only retroactively substituted for this ancient Greek analogue.¹ The substitution, however, is an imprecise one that introduces a significant elision, which is itself symptomatic of how modern political philosophy has systematically failed to take stock of the complex figurations of the *metic* in the classic texts of Athenian democracy, as Demetra Kasimis (2018) has powerfully demonstrated.

Despite his provocative gesture in an article titled “We Are All Denizens Now,” which in some sense resonates with my concerns here, Bryan Turner effectively adopts the same conventional definition as Hammar: “A denizen may thus be defined as a person who has a legal right of residence (by virtue of a visa or work permit) in a given territory, but who has limited rights to welfare and political participation such as the right to vote” (2016, 682).² For my part, I have long been more inclined to deploy the term *denizen* in a more capacious way to encompass the full range and extent of heterogeneous categories of noncitizen (see De Genova 2007; cf. Standing 2011), in a manner that resembles Linda Bosniak’s (2006) explorations of the concept of *alienage*. More recently, however, I have found it productive to deploy the concept of denizenship still more expansively, now not as a broad category exclusively for naming *noncitizenship* but rather as a kind of mirror of citizenship, or perhaps better yet, the uncanny shadowy double of citizenship (De Genova 2015a).

In other words, rather than merely positing the concept of denizenship as a name for the alterities of citizenship, or as a way to frame citizenship’s overt exclusions, I am interested in how denizenship is a concept that may give us some critical analytical leverage in the task of interrogating the political and intellectual complacencies that so stubbornly enshroud citizenship, in order to consider how the ruse of citizenship conceals its own hard kernel of denizenship. Alongside the full spectrum of noncitizens, in a kind of continuum, it is urgent and vital to situate all the varieties of citizens and the vagaries that vex their juridical as well as sociopolitical statuses. In short, I am interested in what we might call, inelegantly, the noncitizenship of citizenship—the negations of citizenship that are inherent and intrinsic to citizenship itself, the denizenship that accompanies citizenship permanently as its shadowy double.

In what follows, I will seek to interrogate the mythologies and mystification of modern citizenship in order to trace the outlines of denizenship that seem to permanently accompany it. First, this will entail a theoretical examination of the ways that citizenship is situated in relation to modern sovereignty, and consequently how it is a form of subjection to the power of the modern state. I will also consider citizenship as a feature of a global regime of territorially defined state sovereignties that retrieves citizenship from being reduced to any specific affiliation to the presumptive exceptionalism of one nation-state or another and thereby reveals how state power and territoriality is posited always relationally on the global scale, such that citizenship is inherently dedicated to managing and

distributing the global poor as the proper denizens of each particular state. In all of this, the antinomies of citizenship and belonging will repeatedly manifest themselves, as will the sociopolitical processes of precaritization by which ostensible citizens may find themselves relegated to a condition or status approximating that of noncitizens. I will then move to consider a series of specific examples of abject belonging that serve to elucidate various aspects of the denizenship that inheres within citizenship itself, including an extended consideration of the troubled nexus that irrevocably conjoins the virtual citizenship of Dreamers, the precarity of their tenuous relief from deportation through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, and enduring fact of their illegalization and deportability. Finally, I will return to the theoretical problem of denizenship as an otherness that is intrinsic to citizenship itself, not reducible to the mere exclusionary repercussions of citizenship but rather as the shadowy dimension that exposes citizenship as a form of confinement, and commands that we contemplate ways for our disparate and discrepant modes of belonging to be radically disarticulated from the confinements of state power and the territoriality of citizenship.

The Mystique of Citizenship

The legitimacy of modern state power is customarily presented as originating from a mythical covenant, a social contract, among naturally free and equal individuals. Thus, the power of the state is purported to derive from the natural-born power for self-government that is said to reside within each and every human being. Once people are gathered together into some sort of political “community,” the effective freedom and equality that are considered to be everyone’s birthright become not an individual autonomous power of self-government but a collective one. Citizenship, then, is necessary to translate this wild, “natural” freedom into the sort of politically and juridically defined liberty that can be used to justify the authority of the state as the democratic expression of a popular will. Given this sleight of hand—involving a democratic covenant that never happened, whereby we are summarily divested of our putatively inalienable birthright freedoms in return for rights granted by the state—the state’s sovereignty now appears to be legitimate, ostensibly derived from the innate and natural sovereignty of “the people.” In the name of freedom and equality, in other words, citizenship serves to subject people as individuals to state power. As citizens, we are fashioned as the supposedly free and equal subjects of “democratic” self-government, while in fact citizenship is how we are made the *objects* of modern state power. It is precisely in this respect that our citizenship may indeed be the key to unlocking the dark secret of our denizenship.

Citizenship, as we know it, is therefore a technology of modern state power. It is the elementary political form by which people—embodied persons embedded in dense and complex webs of social relations—are reduced to individuals

who may be abstractly figured as equals before the Law. The specificity of this distinctly modern form of sovereign power derives precisely from the notion that the Rule of Man (as in a monarchy or an aristocracy), a personalistic and immediate power, has been irreversibly replaced by the Rule of Law, something abstract, impersonal—indeed, empty (Brace 2015). As abstract individuals, therefore, all citizens are ostensibly equal, commensurable, effectively interchangeable, as the Law is supposed to apply uniformly to all, and no one is supposed to be enduringly subjected to personalistic and hierarchical forms of domination and dependency. Yet the emptiness of these abstractions, such as citizenship, is generative of a whole panoply of elisions and omissions with regard to the very substantive and palpable differences and inequalities that are otherwise rendered invisible, which is to say, incognizable, within this sociopolitical regime of modern abstraction. Denizenship may provide a name for that zone of indistinction where the substantiality of real life is captured (and held captive) by state power, and thus enclosed by the abstraction of citizenship as a form of empty or eviscerated “belonging.”

Citizenship notably corresponds to a social order in which everyone is presumed to voluntarily and freely engage in exchange, whether it be the exchange of goods for money, or much more commonly, the exchange of the capacity to labor for money wages. In short, citizenship is a political form that abides by the abstract rules that govern the capitalist marketplace. In a formal sense, all relations in such a marketplace are impersonal and mediated—by money. Likewise, these relations are abstract and devoid of quality, as the differences that matter in the marketplace are merely greater or lesser quantities of money. Everyone appears in the sphere of capitalist market relations as an “owner” who may freely trade with others, even when all one has to sell is the capacity to work, or in other words, the vital productive energies and creative capacities of her own body and mind. The exchange of commodities, including the peculiar commodity that is this same capacity to work (one’s labor-power), is presented as a free, consensual, and voluntary (uncoerced) commerce abiding only by the conventional rules of a kind of ubiquitous contract, strictly upholding the rights of property ownership on the parts of buyers and sellers. As Marx famously demonstrated, however, this formal configuration of freedom and equality systematically disguises very substantial modern forms of subordination and fierce inequality. In Marx’s phrase, those who are compelled to sell their vital energies—life itself—in order to earn the money necessary for mere survival are “like someone who has brought his own hide to market and now has nothing else to expect but—a tanning” (1867/1976, 280).

Citizenship, then, may be recognized to be the form of our *un*freedom. Denizenship, consequently, may be the more apt expression for this distinctly modern form of subjection.

Despite its broadly inclusive and egalitarian mystique, once we locate citizenship as a kind of legal personhood within a polity defined by the territorial

borders and juridical boundaries of a state, it becomes clearer that citizenship is always an inherently exclusionary and divisive framework for the production of various degrees of noncitizenship and thus, legal nonpersonhood. In this respect, we can only properly assess the true meaning of citizenship from a global perspective that is not posited from, or confined within, the borders of any particular state formation (Hindess 2000). In her discussion of what she designates the “global citizenship regime,” Bridget Anderson (2015, 42–43) explains: “While the requirement to be admitted [for entry into the territory of a particular nation-state] is cast as a right of the citizen, it might be better characterised as a duty of admittance that is imposed on and by states, a duty that is required for mutual recognition of sovereignty. If states refuse to accept the entry of their ‘undesirable’ citizens they risk other states following suit, thereby limiting their own power to deport non-citizens.” Hence, we detect that those deemed as deportable noncitizens from the vantage of one state power may well be mere denizens within the purview of the state where they are juridically inscribed as properly belonging (if undesirable) citizens—denizens, that is, precisely from the perspective of their own state. As Anderson contends further, “The people whose movement tends to be the most controlled by the global citizenship regime are those imagined as the global poor, in their guise as the ‘unskilled,’ the low waged, the poorly educated. While policy makers in liberal democracies are keen to claim that immigration controls are not racist, there are no claims that immigration controls are *not* designed to keep out the global poor” (2015, 44). In this way, there is an effectively universal collusion among states to collaboratively exercise their ostensibly national sovereignty toward the ends of enforcing a global regime of mobility control—first and foremost, with regard to the global poor—through their diverse techniques of bordering and their respective regimes of citizenship. An international regime for the management of the unruly and incorrigible mobility of the global poor, however, exposes the extent to which each state’s particular regime of citizenship must necessarily encompass that state’s share of the larger motley crew of the world’s denizens.

Object Belonging

Citizenship remains, then, an enduring framework for the production of hierarchies and exclusions that have been foundational—and indeed, internal—to its very order. The others of citizenship, its multifarious denizens, proliferate around its murky and treacherous margins. Nevertheless, we must be careful not to let these exclusionary dynamics seduce us into an unwitting complicity with the illusory promises of inclusion within some imagined—more perfect—citizenship yet to be realized. From the imposition of income requirements for citizens seeking to sponsor noncitizen spouses, partners, or other family members (Anderson 2015; Hughes 2015), to the disenfranchisement and evacuation of the citizenship of those convicted of crimes, to the deportation of citizens

(Stevens 2011; cf. Kanstroom 2012), to procedures for the denaturalization or stripping of citizens of their putative birthright entitlements to citizenship, their concomitant branding as “illegal immigrants,” and their relegation to de facto statelessness in the countries of their birth and lifelong residence (De Genova 2018; De Genova and Roy 2020)—we must remain alert to the ever multiplying gamut of new techniques for recalibrating and differentiating citizenship from within. These may all be taken as potent figures of denizenship. Emphasizing too narrowly the inclusions/exclusions of citizenship inherent in the citizen/noncitizen binary encourages the misguided assumption not only that immigration controls have no direct adverse consequences for citizens but also that all citizens are, or have ever been, fully and equally included (Anderson 2013). This unrelenting restabilization and re-enchantment of the mythology of citizenship is what may be provided a stringent but much-needed antidote with the concept of denizenship that I am seeking to elaborate.

In a seeming paradox, persistent legal or enforcement interventions calculated to restabilize citizenship by reinforcing the citizen/noncitizen partition have peculiar boomerang effects for the very citizens whose putative interests are thereby protected. “The myth of full citizenship,” Anderson (2015, 47) elaborates further, “entrenches the idea that migrants and citizens are competitors for the privileges of membership”—above all, access to the ostensibly national labor market—in ways that reinscribe the privilege of citizenship with the dubious duty to be a laboring subject, a worker-citizen. Precisely this same moralizing politics of deservingness associated with dutiful labor and industriousness likewise disciplines the noncitizen migrant. Hence, Anderson shows how this pernicious politics of citizenship and the putative protection of its prerogatives generates a still greater paradox: the presumptive equation of deservingness (for membership)—and the consequent injunction for migrants to exude a demonstrable devotion to work hard and to shun the purported laziness widely attributed to impoverished (and commonly, racially marginalized) citizens—comes to be marshaled to denigrate migrants for “stealing jobs” from rightfully entitled citizens. In other words, the fateful coupling of citizenship with labor serves to simultaneously degrade the labor of migrants (noncitizens) while disqualifying and debasing the entitlement to the presumed protections of citizenship for those citizens who fail to satisfy the laborious requirements of an idealized (dutiful and docile) worker-citizen. What Anderson discerns in the much maligned figurations of the “failed citizen” may be productively affiliated with what I am proposing here to be the abject truth of denizenship as it ultimately haunts every figure of citizenship.

The figure of the “criminal alien” tellingly serves as a condensation of two of citizenship’s alterities, namely, the migrant noncitizen and the criminal (failed) citizen, supplying a convenient elision of foreignness, the presumption of “illegality,” and the allegation of outright criminality (see, e.g., Peutz 2006, 2010; Stumpf 2006; Kanstroom 2012; Dowling and Inda 2013; Griffiths 2015; Hasselberg 2016). The figure of the “criminal alien,” furthermore, is customarily

racialized as nonwhite (Griffiths 2015), thereby presumptively justifying punitive treatment and exclusion yet nonetheless silencing the racialized, gendered, and class-based inequalities embedded in its sociopolitical and juridical production. In this manner, criminological improvisations contributing to an escalation in the targeting of “criminal” noncitizens serve to legitimize the intensified and inordinate policing of racially subordinate (minoritized) communities and populations, in which the bright lines between citizens and noncitizens are very belligerently blurred, and a shared condition of denizenship is starkly revealed.

This variety of what Melanie B. Griffiths (2015, 80) calls “pre-emptive justice” ensures that migrants can be branded and penalized as criminals without ever in fact having committed any crime, merely because their noncitizen status compounds the punitive repercussions of any variety of minor offenses. This means that any contact a noncitizen may have with the police exacerbates his or her susceptibility to being designated a criminal, increasingly with detention and deportation triggered as the consequence of mere police suspicion (cf. De Genova 2007, 2017a). Therefore, as Griffiths emphasizes, many noncitizens are “made criminal through their presence and persona—bad because of who and where they are, rather than what they do or because of what they have done” (2015, 84). Their status as illegalized or criminalized migrants consequently constitutes a fundamentally *political* identity—one with deep affinities, moreover, with all those abject citizens (Hepworth 2012; cf. 2015) for whom their routine (and commonly racialized) criminalization supplies a sure sign of their denizenship.

Here, the invidious politics of citizenship stands in stark opposition to the messiness of belonging, where the actual lived social relations of real people defy all the neat and tidy partitions of the regime of citizenship and alienage. There is perhaps no better illustration of this than the aggressive expansion of the purview of deportation to encompass an ever-expanding variety of criminalized noncitizens, including those who have previously been “legal” “permanent” residents, whereby the fact of deportation exacts a manifold punishment on the families and communities of the deported, including spouses and/or children who commonly are citizens (Kanstroom 2012; Hasselberg 2016).

The salience of denizenship for complicating any facile affiliation of citizenship and belonging has become still more pronounced in the era of the political struggle for one or another iteration of the DREAM Act in the United States.³ During the past decade, we have seen the bold and courageous political movement of undocumented youth, widely known as Dreamers, who have generally been raised and educated in the United States after having been brought to the country as children by their migrant parents. The audacity of the Dreamers has derived from their increasingly militant preparedness to “come out” as “undocumented, unafraid, and unapologetic” (Negrón-Gonzales 2015), enacting what I have elsewhere celebrated as a queer politics of migration, an anti-assimilationist and counternormative politics of incorrigibility (De Genova 2010c). Nonetheless, as is well known, many Dreamers were induced for a time to voluntarily

expose themselves to state surveillance and subject themselves to extraordinary scrutiny and penalties by immigration authorities in exchange for a temporary—and pronouncedly retractable—deferral of their susceptibility to deportation and a provisional eligibility for work authorization under the DACA program, which was initiated in 2012 (under Obama). The cruel truth—that this deferral of deportation merely revised the terms and conditions of Dreamers’ deportability—was fully exposed only thereafter, in 2017 (under Trump), when this putative protection was callously thrown into jeopardy. Indeed, controversy over the fate of DACA was cynically manipulated by Trump to become the centerpiece of the federal budget stalemate and the resultant government shutdown that was instigated on January 20, 2018. Thus, the predominantly Latino/a/x undocumented youth movement summarily assumed a monumental significance with unforeseen political repercussions. We must recognize, therefore, the simultaneity of radical political openings arising from the struggle over the disposability (and specifically, the deportability) of the lives of these “illegal” virtual citizens, as well as the invidious potential of such selective exceptions for sorting and ranking the deportable according to divisive distinctions of greater or lesser “deservingness.” “The act of ascribing legible, intelligible, and normative value,” Lisa Cacho notes incisively, “is inherently violent and relationally devaluing” (2012, 149). In this respect, the greater nexus of controversy around DACA and the Dreamers must inevitably confront the task of challenging the deportability of *all* illegalized migrants and the urgency of obstructing and subverting the larger deportation regime.

Compromises and complicities with the hegemonic narratives of “American” assimilationism and the moral economy of eligibility for a path to citizenship work to ideologically interpellate and recuperate some Dreamers (namely, those who have been able to qualify for DACA—also known as the “DACA-mented”) by repudiating and commonly criminalizing those undocumented youth and other undocumented migrants (including the Dreamers’ parents, of course) who could not satisfy the program’s stringent eligibility requirements. This pernicious bifurcation was amplified to the point of grotesque caricature in Trump’s State of the Union address on January 30, 2018, in which he exploited tragic stories of street violence in Latino communities in order to supplant the figure of the meritorious Dreamer with the spectacularized figure of “the savage gang MS-13,” who, he alleged with characteristic contempt for the truth, “took advantage of glaring loopholes in our laws to enter the country as unaccompanied alien minors.” Invoking the lurid image of a deliberate and devious manipulation of U.S. immigration law by criminals intent to infiltrate the United States, Trump insinuated that such migration was tantamount to home invasion, underscoring that such “deadly loopholes . . . have allowed MS-13, and other criminals, to break into our country.” Indeed, he later resorted to this same discourse of “criminal alien invasion” as a justification for the outright atrocity of terroristic family separations and the sadistic detention of children at the border, insisting that

his draconian border enforcement policies would serve to protect the country (and its proper citizenry) from an infestation of migrant criminals, particularly MS-13 gang members.⁴ Thus, the ghoulish figure of MS-13 as a generic racial signifier of Latino criminality in Trump's discourse has been incisively likened to the notorious exploitation of Willie Horton, converted into the iconic racial figure of African American criminality during the 1988 presidential campaign of George H. W. Bush (see, e.g. *New York Times* 2017). In his State of the Union address, however, Trump emphatically juxtaposed the question of immigration (and implicitly, the prospect of regularization and naturalization for Dreamers) to U.S. citizens' purported "right to the American Dream," and invoked his duty—"the sacred duty of every elected official in this chamber"—"to protect our citizens . . . to defend Americans. . . . Because Americans are dreamers too."

The real (more or less lifelong) belonging of Dreamers within their communities in the United States, while commonly fashioned as a kind of virtual citizenship that is widely understood to stage their deservingness for the real thing (citizenship) through a regularization of their "illegal"/migrant status, has not ceased to be yet another manifestation of their denizenship—including the cynical and malicious allegation of criminality against which "our citizens" must be protected. If the ideological script that has legitimated the Dreamers has reinvigorated the classic xenophilic impulses of U.S. nationalism (Honig 1998, 2001; cf. De Genova 2005, 56–94), furthermore, that same discourse's intransigent proclivity for disqualifying the predicaments of other illegalized migrants and their children from the hallowed status of Dreamers, and thereby repudiating *their* dreams and desires, has merely exposed the deeper contradictions that situate the undocumented—with Latino/a/xs most prominent among them—at the veritable center of the contemporary immigration debate in the United States, as well as racialized disputes over "American" national identity and belonging.

If nations have historically been invented as imagined communities, in Benedict Anderson's (1983) famous phrase, then it is telling in our contemporary historical moment that the ever more beleaguered nationalist projects of virtually all state powers require that nations now be "imagined as *threatened* communities" (Sharma 2015, 102), always vulnerable to "infiltration" and subversion by spectral "foreigners," particularly migrants or refugees, but indeed also by citizen/denizens whose claims to belonging may be overshadowed and undermined by allegations of their virtual or de facto foreignness. Consequently, particularly in the era of the so-called War on Terror and its aftermath—with the global institutionalization of the Homeland Security State and the routinization of the antiterrorist state of emergency (De Genova 2007, 2010a)—immigration restriction has been pervasively legitimated as a matter of the sovereignty of the national state and indeed a matter of national security. Moreover, we have likewise seen states seek to inoculate themselves from their own abject citizens through the irregularization (Nyers 2019) of a whole new spectrum of "accidental

citizens”—those who are deemed to have inherited a particular birthright citizenship by dint of the accident of their birth on the territory of a particular state, but who may be repudiated all the same as lacking the substance of proper citizenship for any variety of reasons related to a purported deficiency of real affiliation, whereby the incidental is reframed as “a potentially catastrophic exception to the norm” (Nyers 2006, 24; cf. 2019). Trump’s opportunistic recourse on the eve of the 2018 midterm elections to long-standing calls to abrogate the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (see, e.g., Schuck and Smith 1985; Brimelow 1995) in order to nullify the “accidental” (or in any case, illegitimate) birthright citizenship of the children of undocumented migrants merely provides one of the most high-profile recent exhibits in the rogue’s gallery of denizenship.

The Otherness of Citizenship

Here, we are compelled to interrogate how denizenship operates *within* citizenship itself, and renders ostensible citizens as so many more putative pretenders to the claim of belonging within a polity that can only be refortified by convulsively repudiating and regurgitating its own abject internal others in repeated populist paroxysms of re-bordering the people (De Genova 2018). Citizenship, then, is exposed as a regime for the production, superintendence, and regulation of a wide and heterogeneous array of ostensible members as de facto outsiders, domesticated versions of colonized “natives,” virtual foreigners who are not only at home but furthermore have never left, who are in fact contained within the space of the state but pathologized, excoriated, and castigated as its veritable denizens. That is to say, with denizenship, we are confronted with the otherness of citizenship itself, and provided with a name for citizenship’s pernicious aporias. Presenting the treacherous allure of egalitarian inclusivity, citizenship has long been shrouded in the aura of a universality of membership and belonging. Yet the inexorable requirement that citizenship produce and sustain an avalanche of exclusions has perennially haunted citizenship with the grievances of its others, and mired its democratic conceits in the brute realities of our modern forms of subjugation, exploitation, and despotism, including of course the ultimate impulse of “purification”: genocide. Denizenship, however, cannot be apprehensible as reducible to a mere inventory of the nation-state’s “others.” Denizenship, as the otherness that is truly inherent in and integral to citizenship itself, resides in and is derived from citizenship’s intrinsic alignment with state power, whereby the sovereignty of the state is predicated upon the cannibalization of our own powers and freedoms—the powers and freedoms of human life itself (De Genova 2010b). Denizenship thus names our confinement within a regime of citizenship and our juridical inscription within the categories, distinctions, and hierarchies of state power. Whatever our formal statuses, in other words, however we may be configured and registered in statutory terms—as

citizens, migrants, refugees, exiles, or otherwise—we remain the subjects of an eminently modern form of power for which citizenship has been an instrumental and indispensable technology: denizens all.

Denizenship compels us therefore to account for our diverse respective senses of belonging according to a new and still incipient politics of location that invokes hitherto unforeseen affinities and affiliations of experience, identity, and place. How might our discrepant forms and affective formations of belonging serve as claims to heterogenous locations within one or another conception of place—claims that can be affirmed, while yet acknowledged in their historical contingency, and thereby articulated as a larger relation of the human species to the space of the planet? How indeed might our claims to belonging be deliberately disarticulated from any sort of inscription within the enclosures and containments of state power and the territoriality of citizenship? Such claims to be/long/ing, then, could manifest our diverse forms of *being* while yet expressing our unresolved and open-ended *longing* to be otherwise. The question, finally, might therefore be: How might we embrace and inhabit our denizenship as the prelude to and practical precipice from which to take the fateful leap into the as-yet uncertain and unknowable promised land of a different world yet to come?

Notes

- 1 Walker offers this synopsis: “The concepts of *denization* and *denizenship* find their legal origins in a process of the English common law dating from the 13th century by which a foreigner could gain some of the privileges of an English subject through the operation of the royal prerogative, including the right to hold land. Common law denization fell into disuse when statutory mechanisms began to develop for the naturalization of putative subjects who were born neither within national territory nor to parents who were already full subjects, although at the same time denizenship acquired new statutory meanings complementary to the naturalization process. For example, in the English Settlement Act of 1701 the term denizenship was used to describe naturalized foreigners who remained excluded from appointment to certain public offices” (2008, 1). What is especially pertinent here is that denizenship emerges in this premodern English context during an era when there was in fact no corresponding status of citizenship in any modern sense (see Anderson 2013), and the distinction between the rights or entitlements of resident foreigners and “natives” primarily concerned the status of the latter as *subjects* of the monarchy.
- 2 Indeed, the real interest in Turner’s intervention is to deploy the figure of the denizen as a conceptual foil for citizenship in a manner that serves to underscore the article’s principal concern, as suggested in its subtitle: “the erosion of citizenship” (cf. Turner 2001).
- 3 The abortive legislative bill, the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, was first introduced in the U.S. Senate in 2001 (intentionally so named in order to be popularized as the DREAM Act). The original version of the bill was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives earlier in 2001 by Representative Luis Gutiérrez (Illinois), with another title: the Immigrant Children’s Educational Advancement and Dropout Prevention Act.

- 4 Under direct orders from the Trump administration through Attorney General Jeff Sessions's notorious "zero tolerance" memorandum (April 6, 2018), Central American migrant/refugee families have found themselves targeted at the spectacular center of the repugnant atrocity of state-sponsored kidnapping and child abuse perpetrated by the U.S. Border Patrol. That systemic abuse was further perpetuated across the country by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' superintendence of the children's secretive internment following their abduction from their parents. Through this perverse mass-mediated spectacle of the caging, encampment, and veritable torture of Latino/a infants, toddlers, and other children and their protracted, indefinite abduction from their migrant/refugee parents, the Trump regime—notorious for its wild governmental recklessness, unprecedented incompetence, flagrant corruption, and authoritarian disdain for the rule of law—deliberately secured for itself an infamy of historic proportions, haunted by analogies with African/American slavery, Native American coercive "assimilation," Japanese/American internment, and the Nazi Holocaust (Tazzioli and De Genova 2020).

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