The Specter of Citizenship[1]

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> [T]he deconstruction of core concepts … is followed, not by their
> abolition and disappearance but rather by their prolifera-
> tion … [H]aving been radically undermined in their unitary
> and essentialist form, [they] proliferate beyond our wildest
> expectations … (Hall, 1996, p. 248).

I

In the spring of 1999, Americans were haunted by the horror of the Columbine shootings. In that tragedy, it will be remembered, two high-school seniors in Littleton, Colorado launched an armed attack on their schoolmates, planting bombs and gunning down 12 students and a teacher before taking their own lives. The massacre provoked an intense round of soul-searching in the US press. Commentators assigned responsibility for the murders to a variety of causes: American mass culture (the shooters were obsessed with violent video games), parental neglect (they fabricated bombs in the family garage), adolescent exclusionism (they had been ostracized by the school athletes), the anomie of electronic culture (they were exposed to neo-Nazi ideology and bomb-making techniques on the Internet), and of course the unregulated availability of guns in the United States.

I want to begin with one such piece of stock-taking, an op-ed column by the *New York Times* pundit Thomas Friedman, because it illuminates the theme of my essay: the durable power of the discourse of citizenship in American culture and politics. For Friedman, guns and computers were the key culprits in Columbine—most of all, the extent to which the new global information infrastructure facilitated the violence and undid the checks that might have prevented it. '[P]recisely because the Internet is such a neutral, free, open and unregulated technology, it means that we are all connected, *but no one is in charge*' he wrote. 'The Internet is democracy, but with no constitution.' Yet if the anarchism of the Internet was part of the problem, he went on, the solution was clear. The way to secure the blessings of unfettered intercourse while protecting against its corrosive tendencies was … education in citizenship. '[I]f we are all connected and no one is in charge of cyberspace, then cultivating citizens in the schoolyard and the backyard becomes that much more important. The more the Internet makes us all broadcasters, all researchers … and, alas, all

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bomb makers, the more critical it is that our teachers, parents and communities are still making us citizens' (Friedman, 1999, italics in original).

Friedman is drawing here on some venerable American rhetorical and ideological traditions. Like cultural reformers throughout US history, he calls for a certain kind of educational uplift—the internalization of a regimen of self-governing habits—as the solution to the disorderly openness of democratic life. Moreover he delivers that call in what the cultural critic Sacvan Bercovitch describes as the classic form of the American jeremiad: a condemnation of the present corruption of American life joined to a vision of its possible future renewal (Bercovitch, 1978). Yet what is most salient for my purposes is the redemptive role that *citizenship* plays in this drama. Friedman's column testifies to the expansive power of the discourse of citizenship, its capacity to insinuate itself as an ennobling but everyday language of hope, warning, and moral solidarity into almost any social context. That power, however, is curiously mixed. On the one hand, Friedman asserts the grandeur of citizenship in an event that plainly marked its failure: the failure of a public school to fashion civic bonds out of alienation and conflict. Indeed he describes the Internet precisely as a catalyst of civic crisis, a threat to the constituted body of the people: '… we are all connected, *but no one is in charge*. The Internet is a democracy, but with no constitution'. What the Littleton deaths intimate in one sense, then, is the death of the civic body itself, the vulnerability of 'we the people' to alien corruption. On the other hand, Friedman reworks the massacre into a prophetic occasion for our rededication to the ideal of citizenship; he invokes civic education as the bulwark against free guns and free information, making the besieged citizen, so to speak, the source of his or her own self-regeneration. *Le citoyen est mort; vive le citoyen*.

I begin with this ephemeral piece because it seems to me symptomatic of the ways that contemporary intellectuals and opinion-makers think about citizenship and think *with* it. Friedman's column is only one of many recent calls for a revival of citizen education in the United States (as well as Canada, Britain, and other First-World countries) in the face of civil violence, separatist movements, ethnoracial divisions, and political apathy. Moreover, his tacit presentation of the Columbine killers as failed citizens and moral aliens, loyal to an empire of violent video games and neo-Nazi Websites, evokes unconsciously (and unintentionally, I am sure) the ways in which resident aliens are constructed in contemporary anti-immigrant and restrictionist rhetoric.

Indeed, much recent scholarship, policy discourse, political theory, and public-affairs commentary echo the themes of Friedman's column: heightened attention to citizenship as a fundamental social category; heightened fear for its robustness in the face of various threats; heightened hopes for its renovation as a means of overcoming those very threats. In the US, intellectuals of all stripes have proclaimed the 'devaluation', 'decline', and even 'death' of citizenship and promulgated conflicting programs for its resuscitation (Schuck, 1989; Jacobson, 1996; Geyer, 1996). Neo-conservatives blame affirmative-action and welfare policies for balkanizing American public life and replacing an ethos of civic obligation with passive 'rights talk' (Glendon, 1991; Mead, 1986). Progressive scholars trace 'America's civic crisis' to the attenuation of public associational

life, the growth of corporate power, and the privatized fantasies purveyed by the consumer culture. Populist and communitarian intellectuals have called for a 'new citizenship' to 're-engage ordinary citizens in public life and to renew civic cultures' (Boyte and Kari, 1996, p. xii; see also Sandel, 1996; 'Civic Declaration', 1994).

Similar currents have typified European intellectual politics. Influential left thinkers like Etienne Balibar and Jurgen Habermas decry what they see as the erosion of citizenship in the face of a postnational world of corporate globalism, mass migration, fluid information circuits, diasporic communities, and multicultural states. '[T]he financial and even legal internationalization of economies and centers of political decision making … is almost a new mode of life and thought', Balibar argues in language surprisingly congruent with that of Thomas Friedman. 'The national passport … no longer expresses … allegiance to an autonomous power but, rather, a conditional right of access to the "cosmopolis" of communications and … financ[e]'. Yet, rather than mourning the death of citizenship (or dancing on its grave), these public intellectuals have sought to revivify it. '[T]he struggle for citizenship', Balibar exhorts, again echoing his American counterparts, 'must begin again on new ground and with new objectives' (Balibar, 1988, p. 729; see also Balibar, 1991; Habermas, 1996, 1998).

From a variety of national, disciplinary, and ideological positions, then, scholars, policy-makers, and public intellectuals have arrived at the view that citizenship has grown anachronistic if not moribund in the contemporary world. New conditions, they argue, have dissolved the linkage of national membership, unitary identity, political agency, and personal rights by which the citizen was legally and ideologically constructed during the twentieth century. Paradoxically, however, they also refuse to let the category go: like the corpse in a classic ghost story, the body of the citizen keeps reappearing from the grave, revived in their work as the figure of new political projects (whether postmodern, populist, social-democratic, neoconservative, or other). Why is contemporary intellectual politics so haunted by the specter of citizenship? Why is political theory, migration policy, and legal scholarship filled with evidence of not only its debility, but also its uncanny durability and even utopian power? This essay offers some tentative answers, focusing on American politics, culture, and public discourse, but with an occasional comparative foray across the Atlantic.

The answers proposed here are not those of an expert on citizenship law or transnational migration, nor are they intended to make a normative intervention into policy debates in those fields. Rather, as a scholar of the cultural construction of nationality in nineteenth-century America, I am interested in the intellectual and ideological shape of the present moment. I want to understand why the category of citizenship seems so self-evidently in crisis, and why in turn, given the magnitude of the forces to which that crisis is ascribed, it has refused so tenaciously to yield to other models of affiliation, identity, legal membership, and political agency. I begin with a brief overview of what political theorists Will Kymlicka and Will Norman call the 'return of the citizen' in contemporary scholarly and intellectual debates, and I offer a very general sketch of the economic and political conjuncture that has made the citizen seem an endan-

gered species in those debates (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994). I go on to lay out the larger narrative by which American and European public intellectuals have framed the crisis of citizenship, a narrative in which transnational integration and subnational devolution threaten the stability of the nation-state system and civic nationalism.

This story has much force, and it helps to make sense of why the dominant model of political membership in international law and political theory—unitary citizens in unified nation-states—seems increasingly inadequate to describe conditions of multiculturalist politics, diasporic migrations, and transnational economic and legal institutions. Nonetheless, I argue, the globalist narrative of rupture—a spatial rupture in a world of nations and a temporal rupture with modernity—is misleading in three key ways. First, it understates the role to which the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Euro-American 'world of nations' was already a world of multiple affiliations, dynamic migrations, and fluid legal identities—a world that incorporated these complexities *within* its regimes of nation-building and citizenship. Second, this story understates how deeply the crisis of citizenship is about sea-changes in political ideology, reflecting not only 'objective' conditions in demography and economics, but also the exhaustion of the leading traditions of late-twentieth-century First-World politics—social democracy, welfare liberalism, Thatcherite conservativism—and their common commitment to the rights-bearing citizen as the beneficiary and microcosm of a just national order. Finally, and perhaps most important, the globalist narrative of rupture understates both the staying power and the flexibility of the national form as a mode of organizing affiliation, political agency, and the global movement of people, money, and ideas.

If I am right, these claims help to make sense of the paradoxical debility and durability of the citizen in contemporary discourse. In a era where the dominant ideological frames of Euro–American politics have grown exhausted, but the national form has not, where the nation serves as a key site of new trans- and subnational energies, citizenship retains an unmatched power to organize political membership and legitimize aspirations for change. Policy-makers, scholars, jurists, and public intellectuals cannot do without it, and they have exploited its suppleness to underwrite new policy proposals concerning immigration, education, and political access and new (often communitarian, often divergent) projects of both the left and right. The specter of the citizen, in short, is not only haunting contemporary intellectual politics, but remobilizing it.

II

The renewal of attention to citizenship in political, policy, and scholarly discourse has been widely remarked. 'Citizenship is very much on America's collective mind', legal scholar Peter Schuck states in the opening of his recent overview of legal and legislative debates. 'Congress is busily redefining it. Intellectuals are writing books about it. Citizens are debating whether it has lost its meaning. Aliens are lining up to apply for it in unprecedented numbers. What, one may ask, is going on?' (Schuck, 1997, p. 1). Kymlicka and Norman's illuminating essay similarly begins by noting the 'explosion of interest in the

concept of citizenship among political theorists' (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994, p. 352). Yet perhaps the most telling evidence of 'the return of the citizen' has been the proliferation of work in less programmatically 'civic' fields of study. American feminist scholarship has engaged the theme across many disciplines, for instance, with philosophers like Iris Marion Young, historians such as Nancy Cott, and literary scholars like Lauren Berlant exploring how legal rules, social practices, and cultural representations differentially gender the figure of the citizen in shifting ways (Young, 1990; Cott, 1998; Berlant, 1997). My own field of US history has seen several magisterial studies of citizenship in the past several years, including Rogers Smith's *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship In U.S. History*, Michael Schudson's *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life*, and Linda Kerber's *No Constitutional Right To Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (Smith, 1997; Schudson, 1998; Kerber, 1998). Apart from their intellectual achievements, it is striking that these books were written by scholars whose previous work concerned, respectively, American liberalism, the institutional history of advertising, and the ideology of womanhood in the American Revolution. Clearly citizenship has served as a kind of magnetic north for recent research, drawing scrutiny from many different fields and providing in turn an orientation for the exploration of new questions in those fields.

Whatever scholarly debates have impelled this interdisciplinary convergence on the study of citizenship, there are clearly powerful extrinsic social and political forces at work. The conjuncture of economic globalization, a new era of mass migration, and the disruption of the nation-state system has undermined the assumption that nations represent integral, distinct objects, characterized by unified political cultures, unitary identities, and the relatively natural incorporation of migrants. As the geographic boundaries among nation-states have become more permeable—and with them the notional boundary between member and stranger—the figure of the citizen has lost its self-evident status as the embodiment of the nation. The new intellectual interest in citizenship thus reflects both the significance and the fragility of the category.

In the United States, two recent sets of political conflicts worked in particular to focus public opinion, scholarship, and policy-making on the problem of the citizen. First of all, the culture wars broached the question of whether the US shared a common national public sphere that could span the ethnoracial and religious fault lines of American society. For both conservative and liberal critics, 'citizenship' was the name of what was threatened by a 'balkanizing' multiculturalism and conversely what possessed the moral capital to defeat it (Geyer, 1996; Schlesinger, 1992; 'Civic Declaration', 1994). Even more important was the flood of migrants, legal and illegal, who have arrived in the United States since the 1965 reformulation of American immigration laws. This latest 'new immigration' has had complex effects on the nation's demographic composition, social fabric, and cultural norms. It made the US more thoroughly polyracial; it challenged the majority status of European-identified ethnicities in some regions; and it subverted the widely-held vision of the United States as an inclusive 'nation of immigrants' that was at the same time an impregnable continental fortress. The rise of nativist and 'immigration reform' movements

and of policy battles over border regulation, the admittance of refugees, dual citizenship, naturalization rules, and the differential rights of aliens and citizens—most of all in the Congressional welfare-reform act of 1996—marked the transformation of ambient anxiety over the new immigration into an overt political struggle to define and contain citizenship (see Brimelow, 1995; and Geyer, 1996).

Among European and Europeanist scholars, 'the return of the citizen' seemed to be driven by a different inflection of the same basic issues of globalization and national sovereignty. Most important was the conjuncture of the political and legal integration of the European Union with longer-term processes of mass migration and guest-worker community-building. On the one hand, EU integration—especially the relatively vague promulgation of European citizenship in the Maastricht Treaty—compelled scholars, jurists, and policy intellectuals to elaborate new theories of supranational rights within the Union and differential layers of civic participation and legal status at the national and local levels of member-states (Martiniello, 2000; Baubock, 1994; O'Leary and Tiilikainen, 1998; Rosas and Antola, 1995; Layton-Henry, n.d.). On the other hand, the new wave of European in- and trans-migration led researchers to explore such issues as guest-worker rights, multiple citizenship within families, and the disassociation of national and local affiliation across the EU (Soysal, 1994; Kastoryano, 1997; Economic and Social Research Council, n.d.). The nexus of expanding migration and European integration, in short, disrupted established models of citizenship as a unitary, territorially grounded national membership and invited intellectuals to reimagine it.

This link between the destabilization of citizenship and the 'return of the citizen' to intellectual fashion is evident in the work itself. As I have noted, the deconstruction of the category is one of the defining themes of new scholarly and policy debates. '[I]n the postwar era', Soysal argues, the conjuncture of mass migration and 'an intensified discourse of personhood and human right' has 'rent the bounded universality of national citizenship', resulting in the extension of new rights to guest-worker communities in European states. David Jacobson puts the case more strongly: 'Transnational migration is steadily eroding the traditional basis of nation-state membership. As rights have come to be predicated on residency, not citizen status, the distinction between "citizen" and "alien" has eroded. … The ability of the state to govern comes into question … , and the "pact" between state and citizen is broken'. Both scholars, it should be noted, go on to explore what 'new understanding of citizenship'—multifold, deterritorialized, universalistic—might emerge from this delamination of civic agency and national identity. But I do not want to lose sight of what might be called the 'funeral oration' moment in the new work on citizenship, for the call to 'new understandings' is predicated on the view that citizenship has become a wraith of its former self (Soysal, 1994, p. 137; Jacobson, 1996, pp. 8–9).

III

On both sides of the political spectrum and the Atlantic, those who proclaim the crisis of citizenship tend to invoke a common metanarrative. It is at base a story

about globalization, but one that is specified in different ways from differing national, ideological, and disciplinary vantage points. Sometimes the *primum mobile* of the crisis is the upsurge in transnational migration, as Jacobson claims above (Jacobson, 1996). Sometimes it is the rise of supranational political institutions and international conventions that guarantee human rights against national sovereignty, as in the work of Soysal and other scholars of European integration (Soysal, 1994; Kastoryano, 1997). Sometimes, as both American progressives like Robert Reich and conservative nationalists like Pat Buchanan assert, the culprit is the globalizing of financial and informational power and the consequent withdrawal of corporate elites from national civic engagements (Reich, 1991; Buchanan, 1998). Sometimes it is the diasporic circulation of mass cultural materials and communal identities, as the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has claimed (Appadurai, 1996). These accounts include varying degrees of celebration and lament, depending on the analytical and political commitments of their proponents, but they share the assumption that the nation-state's containment of people, money, information, and sovereignty has been irrevocably breached. The national community is no longer the sole 'address' for the loyalties, right, and grievances of its residents, it is argued, and conversely those who *can* address the state with their claims and grievances need not be loyal citizens fully 'inside' the national polity.

At the same time, this metanarrative links the extraterritorial dispersion of national identity and power to a second, contrapuntal movement *within* nation-states: what Peter Schuck calls 'the fragmentation of national political authority, and its devolution … to smaller, subnational, often ethnically defined groups' (Schuck, 1997, p. 20). As the republics of the former Yugoslav and Soviet federations tragically show, such transnationalism from below may provoke outright civil war; but in Western Europe and North America, it has more often taken the form of internal separatist or autonomist movements on behalf of indigenous, religious, linguistic, ethnic, or regional communities. The US has a rich history of such movements by black nationalist, Puerto Rican, and native-American insurgents—not to mention the Confederate States of America—but in recent US history, the devolutionist tendency has primarily taken the 'softer' form of ethnically-based claims to affirmative-action resources. Whatever its degree of militancy, political devolution always involves the ideological disaggregation of the national public into some set of (fictively) primordial parts; its critics have rightly viewed it as a challenge to the linkage of national identity, national unity, and civic agency on which the classical model of citizenship is based (see Schlesinger, 1992; Hollinger, 1995).

This narrative of transnational and subnational threats to civic nationalism—the double-whammy of globalism and balkanization—tends to serve as the overall frame for the widespread sense of a crisis of citizenship. Yet policy-makers, opinion-makers, and scholars typically engage that larger story through a concrete set of political and legal struggles over such issues as naturalization standards, social welfare benefits, aliens' rights, and dual nationality. We might classify these flashpoints according to the two key functions that current political theory attributes to citizenship law and policy: an identity-forming function of defining who belongs to 'we the people', and a social-contractual function

of codifying the rights and responsibilities that organize the citizen's relationship to the national polity. Widespread political contention in both these domains (in the United States and elsewhere) has contributed to the recent anxiety over a crisis of citizenship.

The most obvious flashpoint in American politics linked to the identity-marking function of citizenship involves immigration and the status of resident aliens. To be sure, restrictionist movements have characterized every wave of migration to the United States since the mid-nineteenth century; today's calls for 'immigration reform' and stricter border policing fit squarely into that history (see Higham, 1955; Solomon, 1956; Brimelow, 1995; Geyer, 1996). Yet the specific configuration of the current migration wave—its polyracial demography, its decentered geography, and its organization around diasporic circuits as well as destinational resettlement—have sharpened anxiety about the value of citizenship to newcomers. The proliferation of dual nationality; the liberality of naturalization rules and *jus soli* birthright claims; the inability of federal authorities to stop illegal immigration; and the rise of well-rooted resident-alien communities—all this seems to encourage individual participation in civil society on the part of sojourners without implying a concomitant assumption of civic responsibilities or national loyalty (Schuck, 1989, 1997).

For many policy-makers, jurists, and advocates, this growth of weak, multifold, and legally protected forms of civil membership seems historically novel and disquieting. It is part of the common sense of current debates that, during past waves of immigration, newcomers entered not only their host countries but also an incorporationist regime that made strong legal distinctions between citizen and sojourner, a regime that offered the migrant the choice of naturalization or self-exclusion. As I discuss below, this assumption significantly distorts the immigrant experience of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century United States. My point here, however, is that it expresses widespread anxiety about the permeability of the line between citizen and alien in contemporary America, a permeability taken by scholars and opinion-makers to diminish the value of citizenship. '[T]he distinctive meaning of American citizenship … has been transformed in recent decades by a public philosophy that … [has] reduced almost to the vanishing point the marginal value of citizenship as compared to resident alien status', Peter Schuck writes in an essay that is the *locus classicus* for this position in US citizenship debates. 'Not only do aliens need or want it less; many of those who *do* want it for their children need expend remarkably little in order to get it' (Schuck, 1989, p. 60).

Such concerns have been reinforced by the second arena of citizenship law and policy, the social-contractual deployment of rights and responsibilities. As European and North American states have lowered barriers to naturalization, non-citizen settlement, and multiple citizenship among individuals and families—the overall tendency of current citizenship law—they have also tended to reduce the legal duties of citizenship and to equalize (albeit not fully) the rights and benefits accorded to citizens and aliens. European integration, for instance, has significantly enlarged the rights of non-citizens. It extended open travel, access to work, suffrage in local and European Parliament elections, and educational, social, labor, and health benefits to all member nationals in all

member states; and it provided significant work, education, and social benefits to third-country nationals (Kastoryano, 1997; Soysal, 1994; Nascimbene, 1998). In the United States, the 1996 'welfare reform' legislation reversed this trend, curtailing resident aliens' access to certain forms of government assistance. Yet the US has a well-rooted tradition of offering legal immigrants nearly equal access to the same menu of rights and benefits—strong on civil liberties, weak on government aid—that has long distinguished the citizens' compact in America from European social democracy. Notwithstanding the rollbacks of the Republican Congress, it remains largely accurate to conclude, as Alex Aleinikoff writes, that 'settled immigrants live lives largely indistinguishable from those of most U.S. citizens … , exercising most constitutional rights on the same terms as native-born and naturalized citizens' (Aleinikoff, 1998, p. 46).

IV

Those who fear the debility of citizenship, in short, have much to point to. Notwithstanding a multitude of diverse national trajectories, it is fair to say that a new regime of affiliation has emerged in the United States and Western Europe during the last quarter of the twentieth century. It is characterized by multiple levels of membership; by a continuum of statuses all of which include significant access to social, educational, and economic benefits; by a relative liberality of geographic movement and legal movement among categories; and by a discourse of citizenship organized around the claiming of civil rights rather than the performing of civic duties (Aleinikoff and Klusmeyer, 2000; Soysal, 1994; Jacobson, 1996; Sandel, 1996). This breaching of the existential divide between member and sojourner has struck many advocates, commentators, and policy-makers as a threat to the political integrity of the nation as a community of educated, active, engaged citizens. They have not been quiet in response. Indeed, their responses constitute the paradox behind this essay. For unlike Marc Antony, they have come not to bury citizenship, but to praise it.

In some cases, of course, the effort to restore citizenship is hardly surprising. To conservative nationalists and their Congressional allies, for instance—concerned with the perceived threat that mass immigration and multiculturalism pose to national solidarity—it makes perfect sense to fortify not only the physical borders of the United States but also the legal border surrounding citizenship status (Brimelow, 1995; Geyer, 1996). Their campaign for immigration restriction during the 1990s proved ideologically consistent if not legally coherent: first, Republican lawmakers reinforced the legal barrier between citizen and alien by denying benefits to lawfully settled non-citizens in the 1996 welfare legislation; and then they decried and investigated the (perfectly unsurprising) rise of naturalization petitions that followed. At the same time, conservative thinkers attacked the primacy of 'rights talk' that underlay the convergence of citizenship and alienage, arguing that a robust civic life should be grounded in knowledge of American traditions and the uplifting habit of duty, not the claiming of rights or the pursuit of happiness. For such thinkers, the 'return of the citizen' offered a return to the moral discipline of virtue, character, and patriotic loyalty (Glendon, 1991; Mead, 1986).

More surprising, perhaps, have been the parallel efforts of progressive thinkers and activists to nurture an ethic of citizenship grounded in mutualism, participatory action, and civic obligation. Left-communitarian and 'civic-republican' theorists have criticized the rights-based individualism that they see as the dominant note of American liberalism (Sandel, 1996; Etzioni, 1993). Longtime activist Harry Boyte, co-director of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at the University of Minnesota, has initiated grass-roots projects throughout Minnesota aimed at mobilizing this ideal of citizenship as participatory action and demonstrating the 'value of citizen work'. In partnership with the state League of Women Voters and local immigration organizations, Boyte's Center has also launched a series of study circles to critique the current US naturalization test and propose a more substantive civics curriculum that both migrants and native-born citizens might be expected to master (Center for Democracy and Citizenship, n.d.).

Indeed the most telling sign of the 'return of the citizen' in public and policy discourse is the proliferation of citizen education initiatives like Boyte's—precisely the response advocated by Thomas Friedman in the face of the Columbine killings. In the United Kingdom, for instance, groups such as the Institute for Citizenship and Charter88 have lobbied for the development of citizenship training curricula, and under the impetus of the Blair Government, citizenship will become a mandated theme of the National Curriculum in 2002 (Institute for Citizenship, n.d.; Charter88, n.d.; National Curriculum Online, n.d.). Similar efforts have been pursued by American civic and professional groups such as the California-based Center for Civic Education and the National Council for the Social Studies. 'Social studies educators teach students the content knowledge, intellectual skills, and civic values necessary for fulfilling the duties of citizenship in a participatory democracy', the NCSS mission statement reads (National Council for the Social Studies, n.d.; see also Center for Civic Education, n.d.). After three decades in which civics pedagogy seemed stale and moribund to professional educators, such language testifies to both anxiety over citizenship and its revived cultural power.

Clearly more is at stake here than the details of aliens' benefits, naturalization tests, and social-studies pedagogy. These issues and educational initiatives implicate some of the most consequential problems of democratic theory and twentieth-century political history. They reflect, I would argue, the exhaustion of older ideological visions, once dominant within American and European intellectual politics, for which the defense of the rights-bearing citizen and the convergence of citizen and sojourner represented honored political projects. Social democracy was the most important of these rights-regarding, inclusionist traditions: the ideal of a state that comprehensively ensured health care, education, labor rights, and social security as the precondition to and culmination of civic democracy. As articulated by T.H. Marshall, social citizenship was neither individualist nor passive—two charges that conservative critics have laid at its feet—but it did posit the claiming of rights as the foundational act of civic engagement, the precondition for all other forms of participation. By contrast, New Deal liberalism inflected the social-democratic ideal with an individualist vision of citizenship as a means to assimilation in an ethnically diverse nation

and a means to upward mobility in a consumer democracy. In contrast to both, Anglo–American conservatives offered their own capitalist utopias of universal citizenship and human rights based on entrepreneurial access and market freedom.²

The struggle among these traditions constitutes the great story of postwar political history, a story marked first by the hegemony of New Deal and social-democratic regimes in the United States and Europe and then by their Reaganite and Thatcherite successors. Implicit in the talk of a crisis of citizenship, it seems to me, this whole field of political struggle is being rejected, displaced in favor of a variety of communitarian projects that seek to reclaim the citizen as a figure of mutuality and obligation. Fear of the devaluation of the citizen, in short, marks the exhaustion of an older set of political possibilities — social democratic, liberal, and conservative-individualist — as a century of political struggle had composed it.

And yet it is equally clear that the depletion of these older ideologies does not imply the exhaustion of the ideal of citizenship itself. Quite the contrary: that ideal has become a 'big tent' under which a wide range of initiatives from immigration restriction to multicultural pedagogy can find shelter. Indeed, public and policy intellectuals have reclaimed it as a legitimating sign under which to pursue new, diverse, and conflicting projects of political transformation and cultural renewal. Thus English conservative pundits invoke the ideal of the 'active citizen', the productive, responsible contributor to the national public weal, as a way to attack Laborite welfare programs for enforcing passivity and dependency (Ignatieff, 1991). American neo-conservatives have launched a similar critique of US government social programs, arguing that work requirements for welfare recipients should not only be permitted but compelled 'to banish the worse bondage of unequal citizenship' (Mead, 1986, p. 258).

Conversely intellectuals like Etienne Balibar and Jurgen Habermas have sought to reinvest the European left in the transformative possibilities of citizenship. For these thinkers, the citizen stands against the twin threats that bedevil democratic equality and inclusiveness in the new Europe: the Darwinism of free-market ideology and the tribal exclusions of national-front racism. Habermas in particular argues that EU integration has opened the historic prospect of emancipating citizenship from ethnic primordialism and grounding its appeal in a region-wide 'constitutional patriotism' (Habermas, 1998, p. 408). Among American progressives, this impulse to reclaim the citizen as a utopian figure of political change has a somewhat different valence: it is intended as an alternative to the barren individualism of the American liberal tradition. Thus communitarian and populist thinkers have called for a 'New Citizenship' aimed at fostering a more robust, participatory political culture. If the conservative version of civic renewal has stressed the need to replace the passivity of 'rights talk' with an ethos of public duty and self-control, this communitarian-progressive version stresses the need for ordinary citizens to reclaim collectivity and public agency against the passivity of American consumerism and corporate power ('Civic Declaration', 1994; Boyte and Kari, 1996).

In short, even as they announce the decline of citizenship—and even as they

reject the traditions on which older notions of citizenship were grounded—intellectuals of both the left and right, from both the United States and elsewhere, have reclaimed and reused it. Citizenship has become the medium with which to articulate what modes of affiliation and action will organize the new forms of life thought to be so corrosive of citizenship. How do we explain this paradoxical mix of debility and strength? Why does the figure of the citizen seem at once to have outlived its effectiveness and yet to remain so indispensable?

In part, the answer must come from revisiting the metanarrative of rupture with which contemporary intellectuals have sought to explain the crisis of citizenship. For on the one hand, I want to argue, the conditions that made citizenship seem vulnerable and attenuated in the contemporary world are not quite as new as that narrative suggests; and on the other, the older bonds and ideals that citizenship helped to organize—particularly the bonds and ideals of the nation—are not quite as moribund.

V

As I have noted, it is widely assumed in current debates over citizenship and immigration that we are living through an era of unprecedented fluidity, mobility, and multifold affiliations—an era corrosive to a long-established system of stable, unitary national identities. Yet this assumption is, in important ways, a distortion, for it has long been a *normal* aspect of the history of citizenship that it organizes national membership and participation in a transnational world of fluid movements and multiple identities. Certainly the notion of some pre-'postnational' world, characterized by stable, unitary national membership and relatively smooth processes of migrant incorporation, is a fiction. The first century of global migration—from the 1830s to the Great Depression—was marked by mass circuits of seasonal sojourning, return migration, and long-term resident alienage: out of the 21 million migrants to the United States during the first half of the twentieth century, for instance, only one-third followed the pattern of destinational resettlement and naturalization (Bodnar, 1985, pp. 43–5, 53–6, 217). Moreover, both the United States and European imperial and post-imperial regimes displayed the sort of continuum of membership statuses that is often taken as a sign of the thinning-out of citizenship today. If anything, the law of national membership was even more chaotic and disunified in the late nineteenth century; given the volatility of political, military, and demographic change, it could not have been otherwise (Smith, 1997; Schorske, 1980; Hobsbawm, 1987).

Within such a transnational system, marked by economic insecurity, mass sojourning, and plural affiliations, there was no stable and consistent demarcation between national insiders and outsiders. Europeans, Americans, and the residents of other settler societies lived in a world of shifting boundaries and layered jurisdictions in which categories like 'Jew', 'woman', 'tramp', 'soldier', and 'colored' were as consequential to the distribution of rights and access as 'citizen' or 'alien'. In terms of the history of citizenship, it seems to me, the key

difference between contemporary globalism and the globalism of the late-nine-teenth and early-twentieth centuries does not have to do with the legal clarity of the category of citizen, but rather the paucity of civil rights and public resources to which *any* recognized member of a national public could lay claim. The great story of twentieth-century civic nationalism has been the expansion of those rights and resources through the mobilization of the ideal of citizenship (and the minds and bodies of citizens and aliens in war-fighting, education, and labor), not the attenuation of that ideal.

Indeed, the idea that a permeable, rights-based model of citizenship is corrosive to political participation seems to me undemonstrable from the historical record. There is no correlation in US history, for instance, between higher barriers to naturalization and higher levels of civic engagement: the great age of mass electoral mobilization (the 'second' and 'third' party periods during the latter half of the nineteenth century) was also an era in which immigration was relatively unregulated, naturalization generally more available, and the development of what we would now call guest-worker communities most widespread (Smith, 1997; Bodnar, 1985; Silbey, 1991). In such circumstances, the creation of in-between statuses and flexible pathways of affiliation may work as much to activate the political attachments of sojourners as to devalue full citizenship. Similarly, Michael Schudson makes the persuasive case that the rise of a 'rights-regarding politics' in postwar America—catalyzed especially by the moral vision and institutional successes of the civil rights movement—should be understood as a spur to *greater* civic mobilization and deliberative politics, not as a retreat into passivity or individualism (Schudson, 1998, pp. 240–93).

In short, the metanarrative that frames contemporary accounts of a crisis of citizenship seems to me to be importantly misleading. The Euro–American world of the past century and a half was already one in which citizenship, migration, and local community-building worked to accommodate multiple affiliations. Within that world, citizenship held out an emancipatory appeal precisely because it served as a means of reconciling personal rights and collective obligations, national incorporation with transnational solidarities, the multiple loyalties of inside and outside. Nation-building projects—and the concomitant project of constituting national citizenries—were not threatened by this fluidity, but presumed it as the global situation within which nations were embedded.

I do not mean to imply that there has been no destabilization of citizenship in recent law, policy, and intellectual politics. Clearly the law of migration and membership, as well as policies governing access to social benefits and political participation, have changed dramatically over the past 40 years, in the United States and elsewhere. The Wilsonian model of a world of nations organized by unitary membership in unified citizenries has lost its stature as the natural order of things. As this essay has argued, the deconstruction of citizenship is explained in part by what I have called the metanarrative of rupture—a story of global capital and information flows, renewed mass migration, and supra- and subna-tional challenges to national sovereignty—and partly by the exhaustion of older ideologies that had enshrined the ideal of the rights-bearing citizen as the embodiment of the nation in twentieth-century politics. Confronted by new

transnational realities and the weakening of the intellectual traditions that made it seem so commensical, the ideal of citizenship became paradoxically more visible and more vulnerable: a ghost of ruined projects.

And yet the specter has proven remarkably long-lived. Even as its debility was being lamented, citizenship has served as the sign under which all kinds of new political projects are imagined. It is a resilient ideal, in my view, because the form of the nation itself is far more resilient than current thinking about globalization and postnationality tends to assume. I do not mean by this what some commentators on the breakup of the Soviet and Yugoslav federations mean when they invoke the persistence of nationalism: that ethnic primordialism is an ineradicable, natural feature of human community. Rather, what has proven durable is precisely *civic* nationalism—and the citizen-subject who embodies it—because it offers the most elaborated ideal of a community that mediates between supposedly primordial bonds and abstract, universal humanity. It is the ideal of a community open and permeable to strangers and yet still compact and contingent: here and not there, specific to a history that we can imagine as ours.

Rainer Baubock has helpfully anatomized the rights specific to citizenship as 'bounded but not special', neither group-specific on the one hand, nor universal on the other. Such rights are valuable, he argues, because they simultaneously reinforce and disrupt 'existing forms of segmentation', producing 'a complex map of overlapping memberships' (Baubock, 1994, pp. 232, 19). The form of national affiliation—the form of citizenship—does not of itself guarantee Baubock's vision of a civic regime that is at once local and cosmopolitan, bounded and permeable; the recent Balkan wars underscore that. Yet it is still the most available frame that we have for protecting bodies, enlarging rights, and pursuing projects of collective agency. We do not, I think, live in a postnational age, merely a transnational one; and the nation is itself the most important site of transnational bonds and claims. If citizenship retains a ghostly persistence, the nation is its haunted house, the ruin that still exercises its power over the neighborhood.

Notes

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2. My argument in this and the following paragraph has been informed by Marshall (1950), Schudson (1998), Smith (1997), Forbath (1999), Fraser and Gordon (1992), and Rose (1998).

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