Cultures of Citizenship
An Introduction

Vanessa Evans and Mita Banerjee

> "Assimilation is not a precondition for either unity or belonging; indeed, it is a deep and irreversible impoverishment."
> *James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson*, "*Sui Generis and Treaty Citizenship*"

Ours is a time when the concept of the citizen has become more urgent than ever. While some argue that the nation state is obsolete given the transnational flow of both goods and capital, the question of being a citizen of a particular country nevertheless continues. In an era when entire populations are forced to relocate as a result of wars, climate change, and economic precarity, the concept of the citizen comes to be further defined by its opposite: the non-citizen. What does it mean, in other words, not to have citizenship? What does it imply for someone to be "undocumented"? At this crucial juncture, literary texts and other cultural representations can give a different meaning to legal concepts. As Jason De Léon has argued, these texts and representations can translate the language of border policing back into the language of humanity; they can illuminate the violence of state-sanctioned belonging hiding in plain sight (3–4).[1]

In recent years, the debate over the "status" of (climate) refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants has thus continued to challenge our understanding of citizenship, citizens, and non-citizens. One needs little more than a Google search to be reminded of citizenship's material realities in 2023: US-bound migrants continue to be held at the Mexico-US border in inhumane conditions ("Photos"); the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline in what is currently British Columbia, Canada, has been completed despite Wet'suwet'en nation Hereditary Chiefs not giving consent to the project;

1 For De Léon, the United States's strategic plan regarding immigration is a "killing machine that simultaneously uses and hides behind the viciousness of the Sonoran Desert [of Arizona]" (3–4).

nearly nineteen million people have left Ukraine for European countries since Russia's invasion in February, 2022 (Sharma); thousands of refugees and migrants continue to flee to Europe from countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Syria, and Egypt ("At least"). Further, as thousands of refugees lose their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea each year, a number of questions emerge that lie at the heart of citizenship. How do we mourn the lives lost? Does the concept of "undocumented migration" affect or even determine whether we mourn for these lives? As Judith Butler forcefully argues in *Precarious Life*, we have come to make a distinction between deaths we mourn and those that have become "ungrievable" (xiv). The difference between the citizen and the non-citizen has thus become more vital than ever; and, as we argue in this collection, it is increasingly urgent to interrogate this distinction. With this focus, we consider how the alterity of citizenship "does not pre-exist, but is constituted by [the citizen]" (Isin *Being Political* 4). In her recent work, Lily Cho articulates this reality in no uncertain terms: "Non-citizenship is the verso of citizenship, and the existence of one depends on the other … because citizenship emerges only in relation to non-citizenship, the latter functions as citizenship's perpetual other. Non-citizenship haunts citizenship" (*Mass Capture* 8). The shifting climates and developing histories of our contemporary worlds require constant vigilance within citizenship studies and its intersecting disciplines as cultures of citizenship shift and harden in response to the lines drawn and redrawn between citizen and non-citizen.

The connection between culture and citizenship is one of citizenship studies' earliest points of interest (Rosaldo; Turner, *Orientalism*; Pakulski). In addition to social, political, and civil rights, early citizenship studies scholarship saw a focus on the term *cultural citizenship* as a means of expressing membership beyond the confines of state-sanctioned citizenship (Turner, "The erosion of citizenship"; Stevenson; Ong; Rosaldo). Cultural citizenship, as Renato Rosaldo contends, is "a deliberate oxymoron" referring to "the right to be different and to belong in a participatory democratic sense" (402). Cultural citizenship means belonging—group membership and self-determination—regardless of one's class, gender, sexuality, religion, or race (402). Cultural citizenship, however, has proved a somewhat amorphous concept, and while the chapters in this edited collection undoubtedly contribute to its further theorization, they also consider what it might mean to think about cultures *of* citizenship.

In 2006, responding to the robust focus on cultural citizenship, Nick Couldry called for scholars to further investigate these culture(s) *of* citizenship. In so doing, Couldry suggests that there are essential contributions to be made beyond continued theorizations of cultural citizenship which "may obscure a more interesting set of questions" about what a culture of citizenship might look like, and what new cultures of citizenship might be emerging (321–23). Surprisingly, Couldry's call has received very limited attention. Our edited collection responds to this gap, asking: what cultures emerge when we focus on the cacophony at the intersection of the

citizen and non-citizen? What norms, expectations, and understandings appear or are challenged by the friction between citizen and non-citizen? To begin answering these questions, the chapters in this edited collection attend to the tension between the citizen and its spectral others, centering the latter to reveal the tensions determined by how countries define difference at a given moment. In doing so, *Cultures of Citizenship in the Twenty-First Century* is interested in citizenship's conceptual realm where a lack of consensus still hovers (Bosniak, "Being Here," "Citizenship and Bleakness"; Cisernos; Clarke; Gauvin). By investigating the cultures of citizenship conjured in this cacophony, we seek to illuminate the affective and conceptual space where non-citizens can also be theorized as future citizens. Here we follow Cho, who considers non-citizens as future citizens whose anticipation of citizenship can be just as important as citizenship itself: "anticipation is an affect, but also a mode of agency" (199). Consequently, our chapters theorize cultures of belonging in an array of contexts including post-apocalyptic communities, the penal voluntary sector, early modern science, among the living and the dead, or in post- and decolonial contexts. In thinking this way about citizenship, our edited collection embraces "citizenship's elastic cultural purpose" to consider the multiplicative ways that cultures of citizenship can be theorized toward a more robust understanding of citizenship's processual nature and heft (Gauvin 7; Macklin).

Importantly, cultural productions have long contended with the affective and conceptual space between citizen and non-citizen. For example, in Sophocles' *Antigone*, the princess Antigone demands that her brother Polynices—who attacked his own city—be buried according to custom rather than left to decay. In doing so, Antigone questions the culture of citizenship surrounding the dead, their rights as citizens or non-citizens, as well as their agency (Llanque and Sarkowksy). Illuminating the sustained relevance of *Antigone*'s concerns, Kamila Shamsie's 2017 novel *Home Fire* reimagines *Antigone* through contemporary British Muslim siblings Aneeka and Parvais. When Parvais joins ISIS and is killed, the British Home Secretary refuses to repatriate Parvais's body: "the only story here was that of a British citizen who had turned his back on his nation" (191). When Aneeka tries to return her brother's body to Britain, she is also killed in a terrorist attack. With this reimagining, *Home Fire* demonstrates the sustained importance of citizenship's conceptual realm and its cultures across temporal and state borders, demonstrating the urgent need in citizenship studies for further consideration of how cultures of citizenship are theorized, sustained, and expressed.

More recently, cultural productions have proven to empower citizens facing the curtailing of their rights. Specifically, we are writing this introduction at a time when abortion is once again being banned in many states across the US after the US Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to an abortion, reversing *Roe v. Wade*. In Washington, DC, in 2021, protestors against these abortion bans—anticipating the threat to Roe v. Wade—took to the streets wearing the handmaid

uniform envisioned by Margaret Atwood in her dystopian novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*. Speaking with *The Guardian* about the costume being adopted by women protestors, Atwood notes that the handmaid's costume is a symbol of visual protest (Beaumont and Holpuch). For our purposes, this symbol demonstrates how cultural productions such as literary texts can provide citizens with powerful blueprints through which they can try to resist legal realities and shift cultures of citizenship.

As our edited collection demonstrates, cultures of citizenship are responding to current climates and developing histories that require constant vigilance in citizenship studies and its intersecting disciplines. All too often, legal and state-bound conceptualizations of citizenship occlude and even eclipse citizenship's cultural dimensions, its multiplicative modes of expression, severely limiting our understanding of citizenship's performance. As Mitchell Gauvin has rightly noted, "overemphasis on statutory conditions unjustifiably obscures how citizenship is not monolithically a legal status" (27). Cultures of citizenship, then, may be those cultures created through and by the anticipation and enactment of belonging. Ultimately, citizenship studies has had an enduring focus on the ways in which the citizen and its others contest, constitute, and converge to form diverse and distinct cultures to which our collection is especially attuned.

The last three decades have seen a large outpouring of scholarly interest in the subject of citizenship, coalescing in a rich interdisciplinary field. Writing on the relationship between the citizen and its others is a constant thread. Notable works on this connection have paid attention to how spatial technologies of the city have shaped the citizen and non-citizen (Isin); the principles and practices for incorporating refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers under just membership rather than just distribution (Benhabib); problematic invitations of statutory citizenship that erase and deny the legitimacy of sui generis and treaty citizenship (Henderson); the ways birthright citizenship in affluent societies can be theorized as a form of property inheritance that entrenches global inequality (Shachar); and more recently, how Chinese head tax in Canada functioned as a form of mass capture surveillance that results in the making of non-citizens (Cho). The chapters in this collection are concerned with new perspectives on this relationship, the interdisciplinary locations within which it is being negotiated in the twenty-first century, and the potential these perspectives hold for broader considerations of citizenship's transit across disciplinary boundaries. More specifically, our edited collection is interested in the cultures of citizenship produced by this relationship.

Citizenship has been explored across a variety of disciplines in the edited collection form, further demonstrating its importance. These collections have considered citizenship's intersections with geography (Kallio et al.), sociology and social anthropology (Gonzales and Sigona), political science (Bianculli and Hoffmann; Brooks; Henderson et al.), sociology and childhood studies (Baraldi and Cockburn), migration studies (Dobrowolsky and Tastsoglou; Proglio), and cultural studies (McCosker

et al.). Remaining critical of the borders and boundaries that delineate scholarly fields, our edited collection takes an interdisciplinary approach to its interrogations of the cultures that emerge from the relationship between the citizen and non-citizen. In doing so we contribute to the burgeoning tide of interdisciplinary research on citizenship in works such as *Die Politik Der Toten: Figuren und Funktionen der Toten in Literatur und Politischer Theorie* ("*The Politics of the Dead: Figures and Functions of the Dead in Literature and Political Theory*"), edited by Marcus Llanque and Katja Sarkowsky, and *Democratic Citizenship in Flux: Conceptions of Citizenship in the Light of Political and Social Fragmentation* by Markus Bayer et al. By bringing citizenship studies into contact with fields not typically in dialogue with citizenship (e.g., literary studies, medical humanities, video game studies), our contributions explore how cultures of citizenship are expressed at new and exciting intersections. They ask: what is the affective power of, for example, literary narrative for describing what it feels like to be excluded from (or in anticipation of) national belonging and legal protection? These chapters explore, for example, undocumented migrants or economically disenfranchised groups who may have little access to health insurance and criminalized individuals who are deprived of their right to vote after their release from prison. The chapters revisit concepts, discourses, and scenarios that have often been associated with citizenship but whose cultural expressions require greater attention. How, for instance, might the concept of citizenship be infracted differently with regard to old age, the history of science, environmental justice, or resource extraction? How might the tension between citizen and non-citizen relate not only to the living, but also to the dead? In these and in many other instances, the present edited collection aims to probe what the concept of the citizen conveys as much as what it may obfuscate.

In this vein, our collection gathers its contributions into four thematic sections: (i) citizenship's fluidity in space and time, (ii) citizenship and (state) violence, (iii) performing citizenship, and (iv) citizenship, science, and medicine. The first section comprises chapters focused on the cultures of citizenship that emerge when we consider citizenship's endurance and fluidity in/across space and time, as well as the effects and affects of that endurance. In "Citizenship in Time: Temporality and Time-Reckoning in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*," Mitchell Gauvin explores the intersection between citizenship, time, and temporal variability in Kincaid's famous work. This intersection presents stark temporal fissures that are wed to geographical location in a way that serves as allegory for the distinction between the local and the global. Subverting traditional views of citizenship as an emancipatory status, Gauvin reads citizenship as a neo-imperialistic and neo-capitalist cudgel against transgressive identities. In "John MacKenzie's *Letters I Didn't Write*: Rewriting Home, Homeland, and Citizenship," Kristen Smith considers how home, through a transnational transposition, can become a mobile and fluid concept. To do so, she examines how MacKenzie critiques Eurowestern arbiters of citizenship by reconsidering (and destabilizing) the relationship between national belonging and

textual ownership through the concept of transposition. For Smith, MacKenzie's act of transposition is one of absolute deterritorialization with implications for the conceptual realm and culture of citizenship. Finally, Georgi's "Transnational Citizenship and Dreams of Belonging in Imbolo Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers*" examines how migration narratives can challenge the concept of the American Dream and the immigration policies that illuminate its fictions. Mbue's characters ultimately emerge as agentic transmigrants who, initially motivated by the American Dream, come to understand its fiction and ultimately build a better life for themselves in Nigeria.

In the collection's second section on citizenship and (state) violence, scholars examine the cultures of citizenship that emerge in response to various forms of (state) oppression, control, and disciplinary power. In "'Present Absentees, Weak-Kneed Nobodies': Exiles, Airports, and Non-Citizenship in Abdourahman Waberi's *Transit*," Nasra Smith centers Achille Mbembe's post-Foucauldian concept of biopolitics to critically analyze how recent citizenship discourse challenges "technologies of control" (airport) and "exclusion" (deportation) as the sovereign, militarizing power of the host-state, theorizing the role of the new, normalized refugee who is between death, detention, and deportation—the citizen Other's Other (Nyers 1069). Through Fanon, Smith suggests that the modern airport is a colonial space of control and coercion—the novel's silent character that wields the power of the French nation-state. In "'You've Heard it Now': Storytelling and Acts of Citizenship in Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves*," Vanessa Evans investigates how Indigenous characters respond to the violent control and oppression of Indigenous Peoples through the extraction of their bone marrow in post-apocalyptic North America by enacting resurgence. In focusing on how a return to Indigenous ways of being and knowing cultivate belonging (and actively destroy settler infrastructure), Evans's reading of *Marrow Thieves* illuminates the novel's interrogation of the unsustainable nature of western citizenship and its theorization of a decolonial set of rights and responsibilities rooted in storytelling and reciprocal relations with land. The final two chapters in this section contend with carceral citizenship and its implications. In "'Clean Body, Clean Mind, Clean Job': The Role of Penal Voluntary Sector Organizations in Constructing 'Good' Carceral Citizens," Kaitlyn Quinn and Erika Canossini contend that criminal justice non-profit organizations respond to state violence by offering (re)integrative services and support to former prisoners, actively participating in the construction of "good" carceral citizens. Quinn and Canossini thereby examine the cultures of citizenship produced in non-profit organizations that have both inclusionary and exclusionary effects—spaces that comprise an important, but underexamined site for the production and consumption of ideas about carceral citizenship. Lastly, Nina Heydt's "Between Imprisonment and Citizenship: Jessica Kent's Navigation of Carceral Citizenship," positions the prison survival guide found on Jessica Kent's *YouTube* as a response to the state's curtailing of her political and economic

belonging following her imprisonment. Heydt thus extends Quinn and Canossini's considerations of carceral citizenship to prison survival guides that aim to help people navigate the process of community re-entry after imprisonment.

Our collection's third section considers how citizenship's performance produces cultures of citizenship that critique and reimagine the relationship between citizen and other. Julia Velten, in "Paragon of Aging, Paragon of Voting: Centenarians and the Imaginary of a Model Citizen," argues that because centenarians are regarded as the paragons of positive aging with their exceptionally long lives, narratives about voting centenarians elevate them to a status of paragons of citizenship. Velten interrogates the cultural norms and implications of idolizing how centenarians perform citizenship toward a better understanding of the complex arguments put forth in their (auto)biographies and the media's representations. In "Making Material Borders: Petro-Cultures and Modern Citizenship," Scott Obernesser focuses on oil as a material criterion of citizenship which equates national ideologies with socio-cultural obligations to petro-capitalism. By examining (con)texts that span sovereign borders, Obernesser illustrates how modern citizenship is steadily becoming less about imagined geographies and more about one's ability to perform the requirements of an oil culture membership that shapes and reshapes human interiority. Marcus Llanque and Katja Sarkowsky's "Citizenship of the Dead: Antigone and Beyond" draws on examples from both political debates and literary texts to reveal how the dead continue to perform the role of citizen-actors. Llanque and Sarkowsky work to understand how such an extended notion of membership and belonging, and the practices that potentially follow from it, question and challenge the self-conception of contemporary liberal democracies. Similarly, Anah-Jayne Samuelson's "'We had to control the narrative': The Innovations and Limitations of Youth Citizenship," examines expressions of youth citizenship with a focus on activism. As a method of youth citizenship, activism allows American youths to perform and negotiate their uncertain and fraught relations with the state and its hegemonic criteria of belonging. Malaika Sutter's "'To Couple the Beauty of the Place and the Harsh Realities of Its Racist History': Piecing Together African American Citizenship in Faith Ringgold's *Flag Story Quilt* and *Coming to Jones Road*" analyzes Faith Ringgold's story quilts, which trace and re-imagine the incomplete genesis of African American citizenship in hegemonic white US culture. Ringgold's depictions of Black identities and histories as well as white men's violence in the US remain pressing to today's conversations on African American citizenship and its performance.

In the collection's final section, Mita Banerjee, Jessica Hanselman Gray, and Amina Touzos consider what cultures of citizenship might exist in the tension between the citizen and its others where medicine and science are concerned. In "'What the Eyes Don't See': Medical Citizenship and Environmental Justice in Mona Hanna-Attisha's Medical Memoir," Banerjee asks what happens to belonging when the nation-state fails to ensure the health and well-being of its subjects. Her investigation

draws on Hanna-Attisha's memoir to consider the breach of citizenship rights that occurred during the Flint, Michigan, water crisis. In "Foreign Relations: Utopian Fictions and the Birth of Scientific Citizenship," Hanselman Gray turns to Margaret Cavendish's seventeenth-century entrance into the Royal Society of London to investigate how such a border crossing rendered her an alien outsider to science and what such a rendering can tell us about gendered politics of inclusion. In her analysis, Hanselman Gray considers two works of seventeenth-century fiction: Francis Bacon's *The New Atlantis* and Cavendish's *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*, both of which narrate border-crossing adventures in which travelers enmesh themselves in new scientific worlds. Finally, Touzos's essay "'You're My People Now': *The Last of Us* Series on the Question of Belonging and Citizenship during the Age of Pandemics" takes readers into the post-apocalyptic world of *The Last of Us* video game series where medical status—infected and uninfected—overtake traditional arbiters of citizenship. Touzos looks at how representations of citizenship are made ambiguous by the medicalization of civic rights and their intersection with trauma, unearthing disconcerting truths about our own (post)pandemic lives.

With these sections in mind, we remain aware of the limitations of our collection's focus, especially regarding questions of sexuality, gender, reproductive rights, or the rights of people with disabilities. We hope these limitations encourage other scholars interested in citizenship studies to consider what cultures of citizenship have yet to be theorized and to continue the work done in this edited collection. Future research might, for instance, investigate how the cacophony at the intersection of citizen and non-citizen could be further illuminated through analyses of cultural responses to the Respect for Marriage Act or the introduction of bills across the US that aim to prevent trans people from receiving basic healthcare and legal recognition. Alternatively, future research may ask what cultures of citizenship can be observed through the dialogue between dystopian literary texts such as Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Louise Erdrich's (Chippewa) *Future Home of the Living God* and contemporary restrictions on reproductive rights. We see the potential of these future interventions as indicative of the openness and mutability inherent in cultures of citizenship, an openness inviting of further exploration.

As we move through the second decade of the twenty-first century, this edited collection underscores how the concept of the citizen is far from obsolete. As each of the chapters that follow will demonstrate, it is essential to probe not only into the legal specificities of how citizenship is bestowed and on to whom, but to also inquire into the social and cultural underpinnings of the citizen. In this vein, literary and cultural texts can provide alternative representations of what the citizen is or what they might be. These texts vividly demonstrate what it may mean to be excluded from citizenship and from the rights and benefits that it bestows. In dialogue with the field of law and literature studies, then, this collection argues that literary and cultural texts are indispensable commentaries without which the material, emotional,

and psychological consequences of legal concepts cannot be fully grasped. Seen from this perspective, we hope, the notion of *cultures of citizenship* may be vital not only for understanding the literature and culture of the twenty-first century, but also the legal assumptions through which this century is currently defined. At a time when the relevance of the humanities and social sciences is increasingly being questioned, the issues foregrounded in this edited collection are all the more significant.

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