

A local welcome? Narrations of citizenship and nation in UK citizenship ceremonies¹

Introduction

Citizenship, along with national identity, has been debated extensively in the last 30 years in Britain with accompanying changes in legislation and public policy. One outcome of this debate was the introduction, in 2004, of citizenship ceremonies which were designed to ‘welcome’ new citizens to Britain. No equivalent ceremony was established for those who are citizens by virtue of their birth, although there have been discussions about having ceremonies for British-born citizens when they reach the age of eighteen. This paper will explore this celebration of the moment when migrants become citizens as a route into examining the ways in which citizenship and its relation to nationhood is constructed by state actors. Aihwa Ong argues that: ‘The multiple passport holder is an apt contemporary figure; he or she embodies the split between state imposed identity and personal identity caused by political upheavals, migration, changing global markets’. (Ong 1999: 2). Questions of citizenship are critical because of the ways they shape people’s movements and lives and because they are about power and politics: about membership of the state and the claims that can be made on the state. As Roger Smith argues: ‘Citizenship laws... are among the most fundamental of political creations. They distribute power, assign status and define political purposes. They create the most recognized political identity of the individuals they embrace, one displayed on passports scrutinized at every contested border. They also assign negative identities to the ‘aliens’ they fence out’ (*Civic*

¹ This research was carried out as part of a Leverhulme Fellowship from the Leverhulme Foundation. I would like to thank the Leverhulme Foundation as well as the many registrars who responded positively and promptly to my queries. Thanks also to Khalid Nadvi for very useful comments.

Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in US History 1997 p30-1). New citizens and the ceremonies designed to welcome them, represent the moment of crossing over from being an ‘alien’ to ‘one of us’. But citizenship, tied as it is in complex ways to national belonging and identity does not have clear borders, making the moment of crossing a potentially complex one. Not only are the rules and regulations governing citizenship status often in a process of administrative and legislative flux within states, but also, the claims of different kinds of citizens are not all equal: ‘citizenship is continually being produced out of a political, rhetorical and economic struggle over who will count as ‘the people’ and how social membership will be measured and valued’ (Berlant 1997: 20). The boundaries of citizenship are so often framed in national terms: ‘citizenship is meant to be universalistic and above cultural difference, yet it exists only in the context of a nation-state, which is based on cultural specificity – on the belief in being different from other nations’ (Castles and Davidson 2000: 12). This is the conquest of the state by the nation and the ‘transformation of the state from an instrument of the law into an instrument of the nation’ that Hannah Arendt (Arendt, 1951, p. 275) criticised. This exclusionary discourse of nation, and therefore of citizenship, can be as true for ‘civic’ nationalism as of ‘ethnic’ nationalism (see Berger 2007).

The ‘unmarked’ or universal citizen bearing equal rights and able to make equal claims is a mythical subject (Stasiulis and Ross 2006). There has been considerable research on the embodied, gendered, sexualised and racialised nature of citizenship, pointing out the different ways in which disabled groups, women, sexual minorities and racialised groups have less secure claims to the rights that citizenship supposedly endows (Barton 1993; Paul 1997; Donovan, Heaphy et al. 1999; Lister 2003; Lewis

2004; De Genova 2007; Lister 2007). At the same time, in an era of securitisation and in the political context of the 'war on terror' certain categories of individuals with dual or multiple citizenship are also subject to particular levels of scrutiny and left vulnerable in the context of gaps in the protection that states will offer them (Stasiulis and Ross 2006). With securitisation, debates over the success or otherwise of British forms of multiculturalism, the question is raised as to the terms of inclusion for new citizens and the extent to which they are allowed to become full members of British citizenship.

Nira Yuval-Davis argues that we need to use the concept of 'multi-layered citizenship', pointing out that 'people are citizens simultaneously in more than one political community... people's lives are shaped by their rights and obligations in local, ethnic, religious, national, regional, transnational and international political communities' (Yuval-Davis 2008: 160) She points out that this, whilst true for every citizen, is particularly true for those who have migration in their own or their families life histories. Equally, Yuval-Davis's notion of multi-layered might be seen as 'multi-scaler' with the local, the national and the international overlapping and combining in different ways at different points.

This paper will seek to explore one moment of the production of what Berlant might call the 'rhetoric' of citizenship (Berlant 1997: 10). It will do so through the examination of public sphere narratives produced in citizenship ceremonies which are explicitly designed to say something about citizenship in Britain and what it might mean. It will ask how new citizens specifically are being initiated into a 'public' or a 'people' (See (Benhabib 2008), paying particular attention to how the different levels of local-national-international interact. The paper will ask how citizenship and the

nation (-state) are being imagined in the new traditions of citizenship ceremonies and what are the terms of inclusion for new citizens. The introduction of a 'local' element to the ceremonies also raises scalar questions about the relationship between local and state levels. It potentially raises the possibility of local narratives of citizenship which may be in conflict with national versions. Does the emphasis on the local in these ceremonies offer the potential for an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991) of citizens who do not need to conform to a singular or unified notion of 'Britishness'?

The paper will introduce the UK citizenship ceremonies and the political context of their introduction. It will then describe how the texts of the speeches from the ceremonies were obtained and analysed. It will then examine how citizenship appears to be understood in these speeches, what meaning is given to rhetorics of rights and responsibilities and in particular, how ideas of diversity figure in the speeches. It will then go on to explore the significance of representations of landscape and history within the speeches which connect citizenship to national imaginings. Finally, it will consider what impact the recognition of migration has (or does not have) on the representation of citizenship.

Public discourses on Citizenship in the UK

Public debates around citizenship, which were initiated in the 1980s with the Conservative Government's launch of the 'citizen's charter' (Bell and Binnie 2000) reached a particularly high pitch in the 2000s. There was, according to some, a 'citizenship crisis' in Britain: the concern is frequently voiced that 'we' don't know what it means or how to do it. This argument was particularly present, for instance, in

response to civil disturbances in Oldham and Bradford in 2001 and in the ‘war on terror’. The Labour Government proposed various solutions to this ‘crisis’. These included: the introduction of citizenship studies in schools (2002); the bi-annual ‘citizenship survey’ begun in 2001; and attention given to the endowing of citizenship to new British subjects. The focus on new citizens needs to be understood as part of a contradictory move within British legislative policy. On the one hand, the government was arguing that immigration should be seen as potentially positive thing (where it is good for the economy), yet this is accompanied by an increasing demonization of ‘unmanaged’ immigration and in particular of ‘asylum seekers’ (Flynn 2005). In the context of the ‘war on terror’, the government also claimed the right to renege on some of the basic terms of the relationship between citizen and state (for instance in the control order in which the state restricts individuals mobility and subjects them to extra scrutiny without recourse to a trial).

The ‘crisis of citizenship’ identified in Britain has been closely allied to a perceived ‘crisis of Britishness’. National identity and citizenship are in a particularly complicated relationship for Britain which can be regarded as a multi-national nation state (although nobody would claim to have dual nationality by virtue of being both Scottish and English, for example). Part of the confusion around citizenship in Britain is also due to the complex relationship between nationality and citizenship which in part come out of the post-colonial legacy. Under the 1981 Immigration Act, 6 categories of citizen were established each with differing rights. Bernard Crick (Crick 1991: p90) wrote: ‘I am a citizen of a country with no agreed colloquial name’.² For Crick, Britishness is not a cultural identity, but a legal political concept, about a state, not a nation. Yet it is not always understood as such and is often interrelated in

² Even the first edition of the government document which outlines the test ‘Life in the UK’ got the definition of Britain wrong – see White, P. (2008). "Immigrants into Citizens." The Political Quarterly 79(2): 221231.

complicated ways with Englishness, Scottishness, Welshness and what might be called ‘Ulsterness’. (Nairn 1981; Colley 1992; Cohen 1994; Nairn 1997; Kumar 2003). Public and political debate on the nature of Britishness, its relationship with Englishness and Scottishness and Welshness have continued unabated since the 1980s, fuelled in some circumstances by devolution and debates around Europe (Billig, 2006). They have also helped to shape the debates on citizenship. David Cameron, Conservative Party leader declared in his 2006 Party Conference speech that ‘every child in our country, wherever they come from, must know and deeply understand what it means to be British’.³ This requires a singularity of meaning behind Britishness which politicians have struggled to pin down. A significant political discourse has emerged on both citizenship and national identity which positions Britain within a discourse of civic rather than ethnic nationalism and stresses multiculturalism and tolerance as key features of Britishness. For example the white paper, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* argues: ‘British nationality has never been associated with membership of a particular ethnic group. For centuries we have been a multi-ethnic nation. We do not exclude people from citizenship on the basis of their race or ethnicity’. This final contention would be disputed by scholars (see (Cohen 1994; Waters 1997; Tyler 2010). As Rosemary Sales argues: ‘exclusion on the basis of ethnicity and religion has been central to the construction of British national identity and to the rights enjoyed by British residents’ (Sales 2005).

Whilst political discourses from all the main parties (see (Billig, Downey et al. 2006) suggest an openness in the construction of citizenship in Britain, they can also often serve to silence accounts of the history of racism and racial exclusion and the

³ 4 October 2006: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/5407714.stm

everyday experiences of hostility and racism. Anne-Marie Fortier argues: ‘What remains invisible in the courteous world of multicultural tolerance are the numerous *discourtesies* that minoritized individuals are subjected to at the institutional as well as at the informal levels of daily life’ (Fortier 2008: 95). In addition, in a move akin to cultural racism, groups may be deemed ‘beyond tolerance’ not because of their ethnicity, but because of their assumed opposition to a loosely constructed idea of ‘British values’ (Billig, Downey et al. 2006).⁴ Indeed the terms of debate over citizenship and immigration retain notions of the deserving and undeserving – the high level economic migrant to be welcomed and the ‘bogus’ asylum seeker to be rebuffed. Lines are drawn along boundaries of education and finance, but also those of culture and values, including in highly gendered ways (Gedalof 2007: 77).

Citizenship ceremonies

The compulsory citizenship ceremonies for new citizens were introduced in 2004 as part of a legislative programme attempting to reshape citizenship and in response to what was being conceived as a ‘national crisis’. Citizenship ceremonies were conceived as a celebration of the achievement of citizenship. The White Paper, *Secure Borders, Safe Havens. Integration with diversity in modern Britain*, published in 2002, first introduced the idea of the ceremonies arguing for a change in the British approach to citizenship:

[U]nlike the position in many other countries, there are no arrangements for any kind of public act to mark becoming a British citizen. There is evidence to

⁴ An example of this is the racialised portrayal of recent Polish migrants to Britain which, in part, used the argument that they were different from Britons because of their racism.

suggest that these ceremonies can have an important impact on promoting the value of naturalisation and that immigrant groups welcome them’.

Thus it was a call for the ritualising of citizenship, the invention of a tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). The ceremonies take place largely in register offices and alongside the civil partnership ceremonies introduced in 2005, they mark a significant extension in the function of local borough and county register offices where they are generally conducted. These are the sites of the official marking of other significant life events – more traditionally life, death and marriage. Once applicants have been approved for naturalisation, they are invited to attend a local register office and given a date they must arrange to attend a ceremony within 90 days of receiving notification. Most ceremonies take place in register offices, presided over by a registrar.⁵ It is only after attending the ceremony that new citizens can apply for passports and are eligible to vote in all elections in Britain (some may already have been eligible to vote). New citizens are often welcomed with tea and coffee before the ceremony, they will already have been informed of the basic structure of the ceremony and given the text of what they will be required to say – they can choose between an affirmation or an oath of allegiance (the latter is religious) and a pledge.⁶ There is generally a portrait of the Queen displayed in the room in which the ceremonies take place (often the same room as used for civil partnership ceremonies and marriages) and a union flag. The national anthem is played at the end of the ceremony.

⁵ Occasionally, ceremonies are held in other venues, such as the Town Hall, or libraries or schools.

⁶ The oath is: ‘I (name) swear by Almighty God that on becoming a British citizen, I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, her Heirs and Successors, according to law’. The affirmation is: ‘(name) do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that on becoming a British citizen, I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, her Heirs and Successors, according to law.’ And the pledge that everyone says is: I will give my loyalty to the United Kingdom and respect its rights and freedoms. I will uphold its democratic values. I will observe its laws faithfully and fulfil my duties and obligations as a British citizen.’ The oath affirmation and pledge can also be made in Welsh at ceremonies in Wales. (<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/britishcitizenship/applying/ceremony/>)

Whilst the texts of the ceremony have been provided centrally, each ceremony also includes a ‘local welcome’ from the mayor or other functionary.⁷ Some of the dignitaries will have regalia to accompany their office, such as quasi military uniforms, heavy chains etc. which they wear at the ceremonies.⁸ In some ceremonies, there may also be other members of the local community represented – such as the police or local groups. The local element was integral to the White Paper’s conception of citizenship – that it should be based in local communities. Local register offices were told to give a welcome, but not told them what to put in it.⁹ It is these welcomes taking place across the country which is the focus of the paper. The notion of a local welcome draws attention to some of the scalar dimensions of multi-layered citizenship and may have been influenced by the notion of ‘community of communities’ introduced by the Parekh report (Parekh 2000).¹⁰ Yet the emphasis on the local is potentially in conflict with the singular production of ‘Britishness’ which is a frequent element of popular and political rhetoric on the subject of citizenship and national identity.

Methods of research and analysis

One hundred and fifty eight county and city level register office in Scotland, England and Wales were emailed between August 2008 and May 2009 with a request for the text of the local welcome given at the ceremony. Sixty-seven offices replied and 55

⁷ These include Mayor; Lord Lieutenant, High Sherriff, Provost or from the chairman or leader of the city council or a councillor

⁸ These posts raise interesting questions about the nature of the democracy which is often stressed within the ceremonies. Many of the posts are not democratically elected and perhaps few British citizens would be aware of their, albeit largely ceremonial, roles or mode of appointment.

⁹ Personal communication with register official.

¹⁰ Thanks to the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

supplied texts of the ceremony, of which 47 including the local welcome.¹¹ Many offices did not have a text, particularly in Wales and Scotland where smaller offices only had infrequent and small ceremonies. The offices which supplied texts are almost equally divided between those based in largely rural areas and those in cities. London Boroughs make up over half of the urban based responses. The ‘local welcomes’ of citizenship ceremonies offers a fascinating window into what local officials and administrators have made of the requirement to represent their local area and reflect on the question of citizenship. As invented traditions, the ceremonies lie somewhere between Billig’s banal nationalism of the ‘mindless flag’ – the flag on the government building which flaps unnoticed and the hot nationalism of the ‘saluted flag’ where the everyday is suspended (for example at a Coronation or Independence Day celebration) (Billig 1995). The ceremonies are intended to be celebrational, but fall short of the pomp of a royal event where the everyday is suspended (Cannadine 1983). The ceremonies are also private events, by invitation only. But nonetheless, the speeches at the ceremony do afford some insight into the ‘invented permanencies’ created in an age of modernity’ (Billig 1995, p29). The ceremonies are revealing as a moment of the invention of tradition, and as a moment of narrating citizenship.

The texts have been analysed through the use of a thematic frame. Initial analysis involved pulling out the common themes of the speeches (for example, discussion of rights and responsibilities of citizenship, discussion of diversity, allusion to landscape and historical accounts). Following on from this, a more detailed comparative analysis was carried out to trace different discourses of citizenship within the speeches

¹¹ In almost all of the cases, it is not known who authored the text. Most of them were probably written by employees of the register office, but in some cases, they may also have been written by the first dignitary who was asked to give a welcome. Speeches may also be adapted by different individuals.

Discourses of citizenship

All the speeches are fairly short, taking somewhere between a few minutes and ten minutes to deliver. The speeches are quite diverse in tone and content. Some reach for lyrical and almost poetic metaphors – others sound more like local council policy documents. The London Borough of Barnet might be taken as an example of the latter:

Barnet is one of London's largest boroughs covering 8,663 hectares and it is home to over 320,000. In Barnet we believe in putting the Community First. We are proud of our Clean Borough our first class Education Service and the support we give to the vulnerable. Our Roads and pavements are a high priority as well as defending our residents from the fear of crime.

This kind of speech is the exception and many of the speeches received were trying to reach beyond the state of the roads. While some speeches present touristic guides to the area, as will be discussed below, many give at least some consideration to the meaning or significance of citizenship. However, if the ceremonies are intended to contribute to an invigorated understanding of citizenship, then they may disappoint. Whilst just under half of the speeches examined do address features of what might be expected in a consideration of citizenship (such as democracy and voting, responsibility, freedom of speech and tolerance towards others), they do so in a largely passing manner and without much depth given to the concepts. Islington is a fairly typical example in seeming to simply supply a list of the attributes of citizenship:

The **values** and principles that underpin British society are of fundamental importance. A respect for **law** and **order**, valuing **tolerance** and **freedom of speech**, and a **respect for one another's beliefs**, are all vital elements of being a British citizen. It is also necessary to understand and **participate** in the **democratic** process, in order to fulfil your key role in British society (*emphasis in original*).

A slightly more fleshed out description was given in the Liverpool ceremony where suggestions were made as to what might represent active citizenship and participation in civic society (such as standing for election, becoming a school governor or taking part in a hospital trust). Nonetheless, the instruction to give a 'local welcome' does not seem to have produced a local response to what citizenship might mean in general, or indeed in the particular local context.

On a different scalar level, it is very interesting that the pre-set part of the ceremony does not mention membership of the European Union. For some taking this ceremony, the fact will be unremarkable as they already possess European citizenship. However, for many, a significant part of receiving British citizenship will be membership (and the rights and travel freedom) associated with being a European citizen. The omission of Europe is sustained in the vast majority of speeches and suggests that the speeches are taken as moments of assertion of a British national identity (within the context of the local) rather than a political civic identity (which is not just local and national but also international).

This returns us to the question of the relationship between citizenship of state and membership of nation, also complicated in Britain by the multiple nations contained within the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. This, perhaps predictably, is present

largely in the Scottish Welsh and Northern Irish¹² texts. However these references are muted, as shown by the following extract from the East Ayrshire speech:

You join us at a time that is particularly exciting for Scotland. We have forged our own strong identity within the United Kingdom and, internationally, we are well known for the many discoveries and inventions that have helped to shape our world.

Even in Scotland and Wales, the general thrust remains an abstract representation of citizenship. Nonetheless, as we shall see below, diversity (understood largely in terms of ethnicity) plays an important role in the speeches.

At least half the speeches regard the new citizens as making a contribution to the local community or nation, often in terms of contributing to diversity. In many cases, this is merely a passing reference, but in the speech from South Ayrshire contained a slightly longer consideration of what it might mean to be a new citizen and how the new citizens might contribute to the community, including the following abstracts:

Bringing different cultures, ideas and backgrounds together allows us to develop new friendships, forge new beginnings and to develop a deeper understanding of ourselves and each other.

[...]

This can be as challenging as it can be exciting, but we should never stop trying to make things better. [...] I firmly believe our future success depends on respect, tolerance, inclusion and harmony.

¹² For reasons of political sensitivity, Northern Irish ceremonies are conducted at Hillsborough Castle, organised by government officials rather than local registrars.

Many speeches make references to multiculturalism and diversity, which would be expected given that the ceremonies are welcoming new citizens from diverse countries and that the stated aim of the introduction of the ceremonies was a celebration of diversity and the desire to stress positive elements of multiculturalism. However, beyond stating a celebration of diversity, it appears that there is a sense of a struggle of how to really bring the concept to life. Many speeches fail to deliver a presentation of citizenship that opens it up to a full inclusion of new citizens. This would involve a version of citizenship perhaps along the lines of Yuval-Davis 'multilayered citizenship' where global connections are recognised and the different ways in which citizens identify locally globally and nationally and have emotional as well as economic and social ties across the different scalar levels are also embraced (See also (Edensor 2002)).

Nonetheless, there is some evidence of this in some of the speeches. Where it is done, it is achieved through the local. In stressing the particular characteristics of local areas that are being spoken through, not through a re-visioning of Britishness. One way of signalling the multilayered notion of citizenship was to move beyond listing the number of languages spoken, or faiths practiced in the area, towards a more celebratory perspective on not just 'variety', the 'vibrant', but also the 'international'. The Cambridge speech celebrates its ability to 'pull' in people 'Cambridgeshire is the fastest growing County in England, offering many opportunities. It is one of the most cosmopolitan, cultural and diverse societies in any part of Britain, drawing people from around the world through businesses, industries and the Universities'. Many speeches also spoke to a welcome social, economic or political contribution of the new citizen or immigrant, but again in many cases, this was stated, but with little to flesh out the concept.

For many speeches, representations of diversity come through discussions of local histories which were almost always presented as the history of a warm ‘welcome’. These will be discussed more fully in the following discussion on representations of history and landscape.

Britain, landscape and history

Many of the speeches contained touristic guides to the local area. This in itself is interesting as it seems to take the new citizens as newcomers, ignoring the fact that the regulations governing the acquisition of citizenship mean that it generally requires several years of residence. The touristic descriptions inhibit the presentation of new citizens as ‘fellow locals’. However, this may be inevitable as the notion of a welcome itself contains a sense of an outsider, as Derrida would argue in discussions of hospitality: in giving a welcome, one is also designating people as being on the outside of what one is welcoming into. The welcome in itself suggests the power to refuse to welcome (Derrida 2000).

For many, particularly those in rural areas, the image of what Patrick Wright (Wright 1985) calls ‘deep England’ (or in this case perhaps should be ‘deep Britain’) played an important role: So the Caerphilly speech declares ‘I believe it is one of the most outstanding areas of natural beauty in Wales’ or Perth refers to the ‘glorious countryside’ and the Suffolk speech notes that ‘the rural heartlands of Suffolk still support the farming traditions, which for centuries have supported the local economy’. The Gloucestershire speech celebrates the county’s possession of ‘some of the largest Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and states:

When people think about Gloucestershire the Cotswold hills are very much in their mind. These hills cover half the county, are of oolitic limestone and give the villages, nestling in the valleys and fed by streams such as the famous Windrush, such a ‘picture postcard’¹³ look.

Tim Edensor argues that ‘it is difficult to mention a nation without conjuring up a particular rural landscape’ (Edensor 2002: 46) and certainly these speeches appear to lay claim to representing the ‘heart’ of the nation through landscape. The significance of landscape is that, in these idyllic representations, it is unchanging but yet also cultural. The villages are still ‘nestling in the valleys’ and the implication is that they are socially and culturally, as well as geographically static. Thus these narratives are potentially in dissonance with the representation of citizenship as inclusive, dynamic and changing, but they also are often the point where the local takes centre stage.

In addition to landscape, over half of the speakers have some reference to local history and this history intersects with the national in interesting ways. For many, the necessarily abbreviated account still begins with ancient history. As Gellner (Gellner 1983) notes, nations, ‘like Everest’ must be presented as ancient and always there (see also (Bhabha 1990) on the temporality of nations). Of the 25 texts which mention history, 19 refer to a pre-Norman history, ranging from Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age through to Saxons, Vikings, Danes and, most often, Romans. The logic of the references to this ancient history in what are very short

¹³ As Billig argues, ‘even when flags are not being waved they are still hoisted upon the low poles of unremarkable cliché’ Billig, M. (1995). Banal Nationalism. London, Sage Publications..

speeches appears to vary from speech to speech. For some, it seems to establish a claim that the area has ancient origins, as in the case of Gloucestershire:

Gloucestershire has been inhabited for many thousands of years and successive generations have left behind remains that give us a glimpse of their lifestyle. Neolithic long barrows and Bronze and Iron Age hill forts are to be found throughout our region.

In contrast, in other speeches, mentioning ancient history plays a role in contributing to accounts of diversity and difference. Thus, the speech from Merton in London says that ‘Not only recently have people come to the area – there is evidence that the Romans settled here.’ However, this is a difficult narrative as it can summon an image of invasion which may be less celebratory than intended. For instance in the following excerpt from the West Sussex welcome speech:

Right from the early Roman invaders (Chichester was an important Roman city) and through subsequent invasions by Saxons, Vikings and Normans (who built our Cathedral just across the street....) to more recent times when people from all continents of the world have adopted Sussex as their home.

The switch from invasion to current migration is awkward in the context of a speech which is intended to welcome migrants, but such dramatic jumps in the historical account are not uncommon. The tension between invader and settler narratives also serves to remind us that a nation-state only exists in an international context of other

nations-states which help to define it. Nations need foreigners to exist, just as welcomes need residents and outsiders (Billig 1995, p79). However, this raises the question of on which 'side' new citizens are positioned and leaves little room for the 'multilayered citizenship' that Yuval-Davies advocates (Yuval-Davis 2008).

In the accounts of ancient history, there do seem to be claims to origins which are familiar to the narration of nation (Bhabha 1990). The use of royal connections (mentioned by more than a third of the speeches)¹⁴ can serve to provide the sense of a singular history, omitting civil wars, republics and the change in royal lines. The Kingston-upon-Thames speech is a good example of this claim for continuity: 'In the tenth century, Anglo-Saxon kings were crowned here in Kingston. Over the last thousand years, Kingston has had many close links with royalty.' The speech from Kingston then goes on to use the building of the local town hall as a metaphor for diversity:

When the present Guildhall was built in 1935, the builders used some local materials: the stone is from Portland, in Dorset; the bricks come from Oxshott, not far from here; and the tiles are from Cranleigh, near Guildford.

But the timbers are from many places around the world, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Americas. This building could not exist without materials that come from the local area and from other countries

This is an interesting account as it erases the particular relations between the 'places around the world' to Britain. Relations of empire still influence the migration patterns of many new citizens. However, this evasion is not uncommon. References to the

¹⁴ It should be noted that Royalty are not the only famous names mentioned. A wide range of historical figures, figures from the arts and even more modern celebrities are referenced in the speeches.

British Empire and to histories of racism and opposition to racism are largely shunned.¹⁵ There is only one direct mention of the British Empire in 47 speeches (and one mentions the Commonwealth). This is particularly striking given the emphasis within the literature of the imperial nature of British national identity (see for example (Wright 1985; Colley 1992; Kumar 2003). Hertfordshire puts the British Empire in the context of a history of immigration, in a way which seeks to play down conflicts. After mentioning the influxes of Flemish weavers; Huguenots; refugees from the French Revolution and Jewish immigration in the 19th and early 20th century, it states:

As the British Empire came to a close many people from the former colonies were also welcomed. This welcome continues as evidenced by our ceremony today.

All the tensions, conflicts and debates around the Empire, the struggles for independence and the often hostile response to post-colonial immigration, and continuing racism are eradicated in this speech by the concept of ‘welcome’. The erasure of potential hostility through an assertion of British welcome may also negate the everyday experience of many new citizens.

For some, history of arrivals, cultural mixing and change are stressed in preference to talk of invasion or of ancient settlement. In the Manchester speech, in which it is described as ‘a city full of energy and vitality ... A multi-cultural and multi-racial city promoting tolerance and understanding.’ The speech asserts that it is Manchester’s people which make up its nature:

¹⁵ There are also very few references to war.

Each community that has developed in Manchester over the centuries has enriched the cultural life of the city which has a long history of welcoming people to settle here. The history of settlements includes the Italian, Irish, Jewish, people from the Asian sub-continent, Commonwealth countries and later from eastern Europe and non-Commonwealth African countries. People have come to this country for a wide range of reasons, often for reasons of their own or their family's safety or because of their political or religious beliefs and have been welcomed into the Manchester community.

This abbreviated history, whilst it fits with Manchester's self-presentation as a cosmopolitan city nonetheless ignores some of the more awkward parts of Manchester's history – not least its long involvement and profit from the slave trade (Fryer 1984) as well as a more complicated history of response to racialised others by the population.¹⁶

Migration and citizenship

Citizenship, particularly in the context of migration and 'naturalisation' raises important questions of belonging and identity. The proper inclusion and participation of those who were not born in the country and therefore received automatic citizenship requires new ways of thinking about belonging and identity which are open to multiplicities of roots and routes. This is potentially inhibited by a discourse of citizenship which is tied to notions of nationhood and the singularity of identity.

¹⁶ The slave trade is not mentioned in any of the speeches, despite its more recent historical status, relative to Roman history for example.

The speech from South Ayrshire acknowledged the new citizens as active choosing agents 'I am fully aware that you will have thought long and hard before making the decision you did today'. However this recognition was rare. Very few speeches made any mention of the journeys and potential difficulties which are involved in migration and applications for citizenship. Another exception was West Sussex:

Today we are very pleased to be able to say 'Welcome' to YOU, to thank you for the contribution that you bring with you from your own backgrounds - be it your skills, your talents, or your customs - your Bravery - which it undoubtedly takes, along with enthusiasm, to embrace life in a different country - but we also want to thank you now for what you WILL contribute as you continue your life here.

Yet it is important here to be attentive to the subjects created in this speech: 'we' welcome 'you'. There is an awkward hiatus in the ceremonies. At what point do the 'you' of the foreigner/outsider to the nation, become part of the 'we' of the nation? The use of 'we' is particularly instructive. As Billig notes, 'an ideological consciousness of nationhood can be seen to be at work. It embraces a complex set of themes about 'us', 'our homeland', 'nations' ('ours' and 'theirs'), the 'world' as well as the morality of national duty and honour' (Billig 1995, p4). The ceremony and the endowing of citizenship fail to be 'a happy performative' (Austin 1962) as the speech goes on to suggest:

Today, as you finally are able to acquire that all-important British passport, it is the end of the process. It is also the real beginning of a new life with new status.

- and that new status brings with it some responsibilities. *If you are to be really British, it will involve much more.* I hope you will think carefully about those responsibilities – that you will become involved in the life of the community around you – beyond your own family and close friends - learn about that community and what makes it function – that you will, in short, join in. *If you do that, it will not only make your own newly-acquired citizenship more meaningful for YOU, but will also enable others to see that you really do want to be part of us.* (emphasis added)

Here clearly in this speech is the suggestion of an incomplete process. That citizenship might be endowed, but full membership, ‘*if you are to be really British*’ requires much more. It is a process which involves further acceptance based on the right kind of behaviour and the judgement of others on the right intentions. It also suggests that there is an audience of ‘real’ British citizens who are yet to be convinced of the new citizens’ membership. As Anne-Marie Fortier argues: ‘Citizenship ceremonies are a fitting example of the entanglement of technologies of reassurance with technologies of enmity within the fantasy of national unity, as they demarcate a distinction between the good established citizens who need reassuring, the new citizens who need confirmation of their propriety, and the failed citizens - those who do not ‘choose to be part of the family’ or who fail to ‘act British’ (Fortier 2008: 101). Whilst the West Sussex speech implied only provisional membership, the Bradford speech appeared to assume that this administrative process would also involve a total severance of other ties. The speech began welcoming the new citizens as the Lord Lieutenant’s ‘brother and sister’ and ended by welcoming them to ‘the greatest county of the greatest country in the world’. Yuval-Davis argues that ‘Any genuine anti-racist

vision of citizenship in Britain would need to get away from the normativity that British citizens should be only, or even primarily, British citizens. We are all multi-layered citizens' (Yuval-Davis 2008: 169).

Conclusion

In the ongoing debate around immigration and national-state belonging, the citizenship ceremonies were constructed as a moment of marking and celebrating the end of a journey of migration. Of all the different routes into Britain, those who get to this point in many senses represent an elite, those who have managed to negotiate the complex and often punitive system of entry, residence and testing. The speeches offer a sense of what local government bureaucracies make of this opportunity to celebrate citizenship and how they take up the challenge of providing the 'local welcome' that is required of them. As Derrida reminds us, the notion of hospitality and welcome does rest on a notion of territoriality and the ability to refuse entry (Derrida 2000). This is retained in British laws around citizenship: new citizens, who are not citizens by birth and ancestry, continue to stand out as only citizens whose citizenship the state can revoke. Thus it is perhaps not surprising that it is only new citizens who are accorded such a welcome.

What is interesting about the establishment of the citizenship ceremonies in 2004 was the devolution of responsibility for designing the ceremonies to local government.

Whilst the pledge or oath of allegiance and the overall structure of the ceremonies are uniform, it was left to local areas to decide on the detail of the welcome. The local has a shifting relationship to the national: Tim Edensor has considered the multi-scalar nature of national identity arguing that:

'Local rhythms are often co-ordinated and synchronised with national rhythms, local customs may be considered part of a national cultural mosaic, national

institutions penetrate local worlds, and national news systems collect information from the localities which make up the nation. There are multiple, overlapping networks of experience, and the interpenetration of domestic, local and national processes produces moments of dissonance, also occasioning mutual reinforcement where domestic life slides into the local, which in turn merges with the national. This interrelational process shapes shared sentiments and sensations, forms of common sense, and widely disseminated representations to provide a matrix of dense signification. (Edensor 2002: p21)

Equally, it might be argued that citizenship needs to be understood as multi-scalar with practices and rhetorics of citizenship shifting as we move from the local to the national and international.

I have argued that the speeches generally fail to provide a richer sense of what citizenship means in Britain. Beyond the dutiful referencing of ‘rights and responsibilities’, there is little depth or texture to what that might mean in everyday life. Whilst many of the speeches do show warmth and certainly the registrars appear to take a great deal of care in arranging the ceremonies, it seems that the chance is missed to consider the meaning of what it might be to migrate, or to adopt a new citizenship might mean and the implications that that might have for citizenship in general. The common reliance on references to bucolic idylls and the ancient stones suggest myths of permanency which preclude more dynamic considerations of citizenship and belonging. The multiplicities of identity and experience of the new citizens are only included into the production of a public in awkward and uneasy ways. Post-colonial perspectives on histories of empire and of racism in Britain appear to have made no impact. Equally, the status of new citizens as one of ‘us’ remains in doubt.

Nonetheless, the speeches do generally stick to the brief of providing a 'local' welcome and in this they might be understood as resisting the national. There are few attempts to provide a sense of 'Britishness' that politicians so frequently call for. Thus the space between representations of the local (through history, landscape and notions of diversity) and the idea of a singular and exclusionary national may offer new citizens places to belong and participate.

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