'Unfamiliar Acts of Citizenship: Cultural Practices, Sensory Engagement and Ambiguity'

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Chapter Title: 'Unfamiliar Acts of Citizenship: Cultural Practices, Sensory Engagement and Ambiguity' by Aoileann Ní Mhurchú

1. Introduction: From Acts of Citizenship to Unfamiliar Acts of Citizenship

The concept of 'Acts of Citizenship' theorized by Engin Isin (2008), and then reflected upon, elaborated on and developed by many others (see e.g. edited volumes by Isin and Nyers 2014; Isin and Saward 2013) has helped build upon calls by feminist cultural scholars regarding the need for more attention to issues of embodiment and exclusionary practice surrounding citizenship (e.g. Rosaldo 1994; Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999). The Acts of Citizenship (AoC) literature has provided a framework for greater analysis of the nuance and variety of lived and embodied political engagement in everyday life from a bottom up perspective – by theorizing citizenship as a practice (a doing) rather than a status (a doer) – and for thinking about how citizenship can be defined through practices of exclusion rather than merely inclusion. To draw on the title of Anne McNevin's 2011 book, what is opened up when engaging the idea of citizenship as an 'act' is the variety of ways in which citizenship is 'contested' rather than reaffirmed; what is opened up is much needed reflection on the relationship between otherness and being political through claims, struggles and challenges to the status quo. The AoC literature disrupts the social and spatial terms of reference through which we have come to understand how citizenship is made meaningful and our assumptions about the type of subject who is engaged in this practice. This is in direct contrast to traditional

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citizenship studies which is geared towards thinking about how citizenship can be made more inclusive in a straightforward sense linked to the ideal of the rights-bearing liberal subject.

Much of the AoC literature when considering migrant activism has focused however on familiar practices traditionally associated with citizenship demands – such as anti-deportation campaigning, marching, withdrawing labour, voicing dissent, strikes, protests, raising/waving of flags and sit ins. It has focused on how these familiar practices are undertaken by unfamiliar actors (refugees, non-status peoples, irregular migrants, stateless people) in order to rethink 'who' can be a citizen beyond the already-existing rights-bearing liberal subject. Less explored has been the question of rethinking 'what type' of practices can be understood as citizenship. Although unfamiliarity of practices has been discussed, it has been pointed to as residing in *who* is undertaking such acts (as well as where and how) rather than in the unfamiliar nature of such acts themselves. For example, existing literature emphasizes the unfamiliarity of non-status migrants demanding rights (through protest, mass organization and collective solidarity) given their precarious status, and points to the unexpected appearance of migrant agency (and new possible forms of citizenship identities) in related places meant to deny, limit or repress it (e.g. McNevin 2011; Nyers and Rygiel 2012).

Such work is often framed as a deliberate attempt to balance the importance of "conventional acts of contestation" with the need to remain open to the potential for acts that "cannot be contained or even necessarily imagined by existing conceptual vocabularies" (McNevin 2011, p. 97). However, I suggest that increasingly we see literature which is managing this balance from a different perspective – through a focus on cultural acts. What we see is analysis of citizenship linked to acts which are less-than-immediately perceptible as 'political' in a recognizably familiar way (which we already understand as based around struggles over inclusion and exclusion). Instead, what has been focused upon are processes of representation linked to a broad range of cultural acts – such as caring practices, theatre participation, walking biographies, collective storytelling, music, dance, and language mixing (e.g. Askins 2016; Erel 2013; Erel et al 2018; Huijsmans et al. 2019; Ní Mhurchú 2016; O'Neill 2018; Van Klinken 2018). This growing body of literature positions such acts as political because of how they affect the categories through which the nation-state operates – its practices of racialization, its cultural, sexual and social boundaries – even when such acts do not set out to do so nor do so directly. Such a focus has precedence in initial discussions about the infinite potential as to what Acts of Citizenship could be. These were linked to a range of possible (un)intentionalities and creativities: for example, in film, humour and dance (see Ercel 2008; Morrison 2008; Saunders 2008). This more recent literature focusing on cultural acts

complements the growing emphasis more generally on culture, creativity and aesthetics which has been increasingly emphasized as necessary to unpack citizenship in all its complexities (Baker and Blaagaard 2016). Unpacking and exploring the detail of cultural potentialities, it urges us to draw out existing insight about the aestheticized nature of politics and the political nature of aesthetics within the social sciences (see for example Hill-Collins 2000; Shapiro 2012).

The focus of this growing body of literature is on acts which can be understood as political through their effects (Foucault 1978) on our ideas about rights, community and participation. It is no longer on acts which are political primarily by virtue of their location in traditional struggles around rights, community, and participation in the name of challenging exclusion. What is explored in these cultural acts by this AoC literature is how active engagement and political struggles are mobilized through embodied and affective meaning linked to creativity and sensory engagement. In the introduction to this volume we see how in educational contexts the cultural concepts and practices of learners can be usefully explored from this perspective (Introduction-Link). What is foregrounded in the literature which is looking at cultural acts are the processes embedded in struggles over representation linked to sensory engagement which invoke political effects. Doing it moves away from a focus on struggles over representation which more directly (and overtly) ”mobilize this notion [of citizenship] in a given context” (Neveu et al 2011, p. 956). Instead this literature attempts to draw out the manner in which culture acts as a “meaning-making process that negotiates, contests and challenges, as well as produces and reifies, particular power relations” (Erel 2013, p. 979) linked to issues of embodiment, creativity and the sensory. It explores how cultural practices indirectly mobilize the notion of citizenship by virtue of the ways in which they engage in embodied meaning-making over rights, community and participation.

Below I argue that the concept of ‘unfamiliar acts’ (see also Ní Mhurchú 2016) enables us to think about the move here to theorizing citizenship in terms of less familiar sensory cultural processes. I consider how this concept of ‘unfamiliar acts’ helps us to understand the move made *away* from a focus on direct action processes that are already recognizably linked to citizenship (which can be used to explore breaks and interruptions into more traditional scripts about citizenship when performed in unexpected ways and by unexpected voices and subjects); and towards indirect less familiar action processes located in the cultural sphere. I point to vernacular language as an example of an unfamiliar Act of Citizenship to unpack these arguments. I argue that what is unfamiliar here is how such a focus locates the politics of citizenship and practices of representation in ambiguity. Our understanding of citizenship is no

longer grounded within a familiar terrain about an overt battle over exclusionary socio-historical colonial relations and inclusionary claims against this (which is then interrupted by unexpected actors or by actions out of place). The role of the subaltern here is no longer that of an unfamiliar citizenship subject responding to (pre)existing familiar exclusionary colonial power and its oppressions – rendered political by how they put into question these orders and regimes of belonging directly and overtly in a variety of ways. Rather, our starting point for how we locate citizenship and associated acts is disoriented – which undermines this existing narrative. The existing AoC literature can be understood to *end up* with an indeterminate and ambiguous understanding of what constitutes 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' (and related concepts of community and belonging) when looking at the complexities of acts which are articulated as direct challenges to exclusionary practices, rights and responsibilities. However, I suggest that studies of citizenship acts as cultural practices are mobilized within and thus *start from* such an indeterminate and ambiguous space (Ní Mhurchú 2014) over inclusion and exclusion. This unsettles the foundations upon which we have come to inquire into citizenship disruptions in the first place (which are based around recognized familiar political struggles) and forces us to reflect upon the unfamiliar (not yet recognized) ways we have yet to think about that these struggles might take place, and how understanding these may require unlearning by us.

2. (Un)familiar Acts

Let us consider how cultural practices are (un)familiarly linked to citizenship: invoking both familiarity and unfamiliarity. They invoke familiar questions about citizenship when we focus on 'who' engages in them – for example whether this is people with precarious or regularized status, men or women etc. But they also move away from these more familiar questions related to subject roles given how they furthermore open up questions of who and what it is *to identify* and *locate* the self. To put it another way, citizenship is normally posited around the struggles which take place over 'who' is included and excluded via enactments. But cultural practices *also* open up a prior question – about how roles become linked to inclusion and exclusion in the first place. They do so by asking questions about the creativity of the self, linked to "ethnic ambiguity and ethnic plurality" prior to the assignment of roles such as 'migrant' or 'refugee' or 'non-status' or 'citizen' (Erel and Reynolds 2018, p. 4). Rather than merely looking at how existing roles (as migrants, undocumented, citizens, non-status etc.) are challenged through particular enactments, in other words, cultural practices start by questioning cultural and ethnic

identities *underpinning* such roles. The unfamiliarity of cultural practices comes from the emphasis here on the possibilities of reappropriation and re-interpretation which undermine our ability to invoke such roles in any straightforward manner *in the first place*, given the location of cultural practices in creativity as a starting point (Erel et al. 2018, p. 63).

2.1 The Example of Vernacular Language : Verlan and Straßendeutsch

As a cultural practice I suggest that vernacular language use invokes this (un)familiarity linked to citizenship in the following way. On one hand, language has a recognized and very familiar role in acts linked to the demands and engagement by different groups in citizenship. Most notably, language is used to articulate demands/grievances/struggles/frustrations on placards held during demonstrations and in marches, chants or slogans which represent different groups and allow them to question their roles – as migrants, as non-status, as refugees etc. – in terms of inclusion or exclusion. Vernacular language is also an example of an act, however, which moves away from the use of language in these more overt political ways that we are already 'familiar' with – given how it uses inversions, mixes language forms and develops slang in a manner which raises issues about how people identify themselves (culturally and ethnically) in the first place. For example, vernacular language is linked to the creation of slang through "speak[ing] in inversions" as noted below by rapper TIS.

> *J'ai besoin de rendre mes parents fiers/* I need to make my parents proud
> *Même si je parle en verlan/* even if I speak in slang
> *Et que je parle en vers /* and If I do speak in inversions
> *j'ai besoin de construire mon paradis /* I need to [do so to] construct my own paradise
> *Sans passer par l'enfer, j'peux pas refaire l'monde* / without passing into hell, I can't remake the world
> *donc j'ai besoin d'créer* / therefore I need to create
> **(TIS 2007: 2,50–3,02 mins)**

Entitled *J'ai Besoin* (I need), the video for this song is set against the backdrop of a French *banlieu* (spaces known for being predominately low income, multi-ethnic spaces in France). *Banlieus* are both located on the margins of cities and understood to house those who are marginalized within French society. Youth from these types of spaces like TIS who use vernacular language argue that they are creating new forms of language to reflect their lives better – referring to it as "*notre langue à nous"* for example (Doran 2007, p.502). This is further explained by Eko Fresh below – a rapper that describes himself on his twitter handle as "half

Kurdish, half Turkish but still really German"/ *halber Kurde halber Türke aber eigentlich ja deutscher*.

> *Für Deutsche sind wir Türken* / for Germans we are Turks
> *Für Türken sind wir Deutsch* / for Turks we are German
> *…Wir werden oft als Asoziale betitelt / …*we're often labelled as social misfits
> *Haben unsere eigene Sprache entwickelt* / we've developed our own language
> *Nennen es Straßendeutsch oder Türkenslang* / we refer to it as Street German or Turk slang
> (**Eko Fresh, 2012: 1,10–1,23 mins)**

The vernacular languages which TIS and Eko Fresh discuss above are *verlan* and *Straßendeutsch* respectively (the latter which is also often called *Kietzdeutsch* by socio-linguists). These are known as 'contact languages' and understood to develop "in situations where the repertories of existing languages available to the people in contact did not provide a sufficiently effective tool for communication" (Bakker and Matras 2013, p. 1). The official linguistic term for *verlan* and *StraßenDeutsch* is a 'multi-ethnolect' which is a variety of contact language. Multi-ethnolects are understood "to emerge from a desire of group members to express an identity to distinguish themselves from others" (ibid, p. 262). They are defined by a series of regularities (including alternative grammars, phonological and phonetic innovations, and lexical additions) in how they are used and spoken (Wiese 2012) – as I discuss below. Socio-linguistics therefore argue that they enrich rather than detracting from contemporary German and French (e.g. Doran 2004; Wiese 2014).

Verlan uses standard French (known as 'neutral French') as its base language and brings words into French from across various other languages such as Romani, Arabic and Wolof, but also American rap English – reflecting the multicultural urban communities which it is traced back to – which house people from North Africa, West Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. As Doran (2007 p.501) explains "the use of terms from family minority language represents an obvious assertion of youths' connections to multiple cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the face of a homogenizing cultural discourse" to be found in French Republicanism. As I have written about elsewhere (Ní Mhurchú 2016) through vernacular language and the mixing up that goes on here of various cultural linguistic influences, youth are able to draw together (and create) different variants of political belonging beyond a necessary binary or simple hyphenated choice. They are able to challenge the *necessary link* between a particular language (or a very narrow set of languages) and that of a particular ethnicity. Drawing inspiration from the ancient wordplay tradition known as *Argot*, a key

feature of *verlan* that it involves the inversion of syllables in words. An example is how the word 'Arabe' has been inverted to 'beur'. The meaning of words shifts and changes with such inversions rather than staying the same. For example, *beur* (or *beurette*) is used to refer today to those whose parents or grandparents migrated to France (the so-called second generation) from the Maghreb rather than people of Arab heritage in general (the dominant meaning of 'Arabe'). Inversions are placed on inversions furthermore (with *beur* subsequently having become *rebu*) which reinforces such ambiguity/ies.

StraßenDeutsch has *Hochdeutsch* as its base language. *Hochdeutsch* literally means 'high German' in reference to the higher altitudes it originally was spoken in, and has become known as standard German/the standardized variety of the German language. *StraßenDeutsch* sometimes draws words in from other languages (including from Arabic, Turkish, or Kurdish) to it, thus reflecting the multicultural make-up of the urban areas it developed in within Germany (Nortier and Dorleijn 2013; Nortier and Svendsen 2015; Wiese 2012); however a key feature of *StraßenDeutsch* is that it brings in atypical grammatical regularities to German. Notably, it drops prepositions which indicate direction towards something, often moves the verb into third place out of its second place rule in sentences; and it shortens sentences. Examples include, *Lassma Kino gehn* instead of, *Lass uns mal ins Kino gehen* ('Let's go to the movies'). Or *Morgen gehe ich ins Kino* ('tomorrow go I to the cinema') which becomes *Morgan, ich gehe Kino* ('tomorrow I go cinema'). This defies standard German grammar because it says 'tomorrow I go' (which is more like English grammatical structure) instead of 'tomorrow go I' which is how verb order works in standard German; and by dropping 'to the' cinema which is a requirement in standard German. We see words borrowed from other languages like *lan* (from Turkish meaning mate or buddy) or *wallah* (from Arabic *Allah/ bei Allah* indicating 'sure'). It typically sees phonetic influences on standard German words which is often presumed to come from Turkish, Arabic and Kurdish influences. An example of this is the following sentence where 'ich' and 'mich' turn to 'isch' and 'misch' (so 'ch' becomes 'sch'): *isch freue misch*. However socio-linguist Heike Wiese (2012) argues that such pronunciations can be found in middle German dialects (e.g. Rhineland dialect) or in the Berlin dialect (although less regularly here) also.

As themselves part of a multicultural urban environment, TIS and Eko Fresh in these excerpts are providing an analysis of what *verlan* and *StraßenDeutsch* are doing when used by people like them. They are pointing to the way in which vernacular language practices enable them to question traditional categories of identification by introducing more ambiguity and plurality into how these are used as starting points. Language is not being focused on here as a

tool to disrupt the types of inclusion and exclusion allowed to people *already* assigned different roles in society (e.g. to migrants versus nationals). Doing so, such practices challenge our understanding of how we *expect* demands over inclusion to appear *contra* exclusion, as they point to forms of exclusion *within* France and Germany rather than exclusion from France and Germany. Like many other cultural processes, their focus is a site of struggle over broad practices of representation – and about how different forms of representation are heard or seen in the first place.

To summarize, *verlan* and *Straßendeutsch* can be understood as linguistic enactments which are not reflective of national standardized expectations for how language should be articulated. They are unfamiliarly based around atypical linguistic practices *within* standard national French and German linguistic structures; these atypical linguistic practices include the use of so-called non-French and non-German grammar and vocabulary, as well as the use of out-of-place French and German grammar and vocabulary. When used by migrant heritage communities growing up in multicultural urban environments the result is that they invoke ambiguous meanings of 'french-ness' and 'german-ness' through a series of atypical sounds and structures which produce competing feelings (embodiments) about what 'makes sense' within a particular 'national' context. What is produced is a form of voice and ideas of belonging based *in* ambiguity which speak through the 'national language' while also disorienting this because they confuse existing ideas of how the national language should be understood, felt and articulated. Such enactments can be contrasted with more familiar linguistic enactments which articulate direct dissatisfaction (on placards, as slogans or in speeches etc.) through standardized national languages to point to how belonging has been narrowly defined in a particular national situation and/or how this is/should be challenged. The latter also invoke feelings (embodiment) and point to contradictions but they do so by locating these feelings within more clearly articulated dissatisfaction rather than in ambiguity.[2]

2.2 An Unfamiliar Starting Point in Ambiguity: Rethinking Resistance and Disruption

The turn towards vernacular language can be read, I argue, as an Act of Citizenship when we focus on how it involves creative processes of redrawing and mixing up sanctioned 'national' and 'non-national' linguistic resources by young people. These produce different understandings of who they are and who they can be, beyond the dominant national space of political identity and belonging *as a starting point*. We are forced to rethink the nature of

[2] Of course creative linguistic enactment such as vernacular language use and more direct forms of linguistic enactment are not mutually exclusive.

resistance here in unfamiliar ways because language use is political in its *effect* rather than necessarily in its intent or explicit content (which is how we are used to understanding resistance). Our attention is diverted towards “the ambiguities of thought, feelings and actions” at play (Hughes 2016, p. 4).

To explain, increasingly mono-lingual and mono-ethnic affiliations have become the dominant ways in which national values and proficiency in language have been sutured together. This is evident, for example, in the growing trend towards citizenship tests (introduced in 2003 in France and 2005 in the UK and Germany) which act as a basis for granting nationality in an ever growing number of European countries (Blackledge and Creese 2010). What these citizenship tests reinforce is not only an understanding that language ability is necessary for integration. They reinforce the idea that speaking language *in a certain way* (through use of a so-called standard) is necessary for integration and to call oneself a member of the national community, underplaying the multilingual nature of these societies (Alexander et al 2007; Fortier 2018). In vernacular language what we see is a reworking of what it is to be ‘German’, or ‘French’ beyond these traditional standard linguistic frameworks. Its use undermines the idea of a necessary link between a particular type of standard language use and nationality. By tying together in an unfamiliar way a range of national influences and linguistic rules within the practice of speaking ‘French ‘ or ‘German’ what is provided is a milieu which enables hybridity (inconsistency and overlap) as to what it means to be ‘French’ or ‘German’ rather than coherency and consistency about this. It locates agency *in* the ambiguity of many different possible combinations across different linguistic influences – rather than being grounded in an alternative (clearly articulated) new formulation of being ‘French’ or being ‘German’ which people can point to (Ní Mhurchú 2016; Perry 2008).

Indeed, for intergenerational migrant youth (who are people growing up in the country where their parents or grandparents migrated to) their exclusion is often implicit. Rather than being necessarily directly excluded from society by having rights withheld, they are made feel like problematic members of those societies in subtle and less subtle ways. We can see this in how Eko Fresh notes in the song lyrics above that he and others like him are labelled as social misfits within German society by being seen as hustlers; they are labelled an unsavoury element *of* German society in other words. This points to the construction of them as different *within* the existing national system rather than from it; and points to how such youth are marginalized in complex, subtle and therefore ambiguous ways (looking from the outside in and from the inside out) rather than simply excluded in a direct manner through the withholding of rights and/or privileges. To quote bell hooks (1996, p. 49) it is useful to consider how their

marginalization is located at the intersection of "being part of while also outside the main body" of 'Germany', 'France' etc. What we are being asked to consider by such practices, I suggest, is how challenges to subtle forms of marginalization are being articulated in ambiguously creative ways. This is to focus on sensory (e.g. visual, performative, musical; emotive) processes as indirect responses to experiences that may not easily translate into more straightforward verbal discourse (Erel et al. 2018, p. 70). We might reflect here on how creative responses are located in what Kye Askins (2015) refers to as "a quiet politics".

Indeed, we have much to learn arguably from studying the ambiguous positioning here of these groups and of their creative challenges. I suggest in particular that some parallels can be drawn with other groups such as irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who also find themselves demanding recognition from *within* so-called 'host' societies. More generally we must be very careful to not conflate the experiences of those who have migrated themselves and those whose parents and grandparents have migrated – given the dissimilarities in how they inhabit and engage with processes of belonging and citizenship – including how they experience threat of deportation.[3] What I want to draw attention to here however are the similarities in the sensory forms of unjustness (those injustices which are felt rather than verbalized) experienced by these otherwise different groups. We know that belonging and identity are not simply facts (such as the holding of a passport). They are bound up in feelings and ways of being in society, and the enactment of exclusion and inclusion is rarely straightforward or directly articulated. Rather it is often produced through the creation of a sense of belonging or unbelonging for people, linked to feelings of safety or danger for example (Jones et al. 2017) or ideas of beauty and ugliness (Smith et al. 2020). By looking at practices which foreground sensory engagements we can consider how challenges to complex unjustness within society might be expressed in an indirect manner – e.g. through drawing on music, performance, storytelling etc. – even among these otherwise different groups.[4]

3. The Creation of Political Community Through Ordinary Cultural Acts

What the discussion above draws attention to is how a focus on creative processes which are unfamiliarly linked to citizenship moves us to the realm of everyday more ordinary or mundane

[3] For more detailed discussion on the importance of these differences, see Anthias 2009; Ní Mhurchú 2014, 2016.
[4] See, for example, McNevin 2013 for a discussion about the need to understand better this position of 'ambivalence' for irregular migrants.

acts, as a starting point for thinking about citizenship. It "renders visible processes (practices, sites, moments) that are rendered invisible in the mainstream political discourse and research" in an important manner (GRAC 2014 quoted in Neveu 2015, p. 8). It renders visible acts which are often overlooked at because they don't express themselves in a traditional political manner. For example, although the use of language to convey a political message and represent a group is well recognized as a political act, vernacular language in itself is very seldom understood as political. In fact, it is often missed as political because it is associated with playful youth speech or with a failure (and thus inability) to express oneself due to the lacking of necessary linguistic skills (Doran 2004; Wiese 2014, 2015). The focus on what is political about cultural practices is most often on *who* undertakes them. In contrast, in what I have looked at above, we see a turn to focus on the nature of how cultural acts can be understood as political processes regardless of understandings about who undertakes these. What is focused on is how they leave us precisely without a clear handle on the question of roles and 'who' is undertaking what. These cultural acts are understood to constitute a political intervention in their own right.

However, I want to argue that turning to cultural practices does more than ask us to think about including an analysis of everyday processes in defining and shaping citizenship – which is of course very important in its own right. It also shows how important cultural engagement is to representation *as an* audible and visible subject. What we see, for example, with vernacular language is its integral role in "the creation of self as an audible and corporal presence that can be described as political" (Nyers 2007, p. 3). Put another way, it forces us to think about how political acts operate outside of what we already hear as 'audible' presence. Indeed, postcolonial authors like bell hooks and Audre Lorde have written at some length about the failure of those who ostensibly seek out to hear marginalized voices to do so ultimately (hooks 2015; Lorde 2007). They link this failure not to will itself, but to the "ideologies of racism" (Lorde 2007, p. 37) embedded in structural constraints surrounding language which render certain ways of speaking as 'playful' rather than 'serious', and therefore as more easily dismissed. What they help us understand is how hearing is difficult precisely because not all voices appear within the existing range of how we have come to expect 'voicing' as political intervention to work. Turning to vernacular language use helps us consider the ways in which locations of representation *from* which people are often positioned to speak and be heard from (as either from a position of power or alternatively from a subordinate position of resistance) can be and are being disrupted and disoriented. By messing with the rules of standardized languages, vernacular language undermines the existing parameters through which we set out to listen and hear each other and/or othered voices. It is its unfamiliar reworkings of

standardized languages through slang and inversions which enable it to undermine our ability to 'place' people and our expectations therefore about what they *should* sound like.

Positing vernacular language and other creative practices as 'unfamiliar Acts of Citizenship' draws attention to how they do not represent a familiar declaration about citizenship – along the lines of a statement which says 'here is how we can see a challenge to the designation of exclusion'. Emphasizing that they are 'unfamiliar' draws attention to the way they disorient the audibility of citizenship demands and the space that these demands start from. They move us beyond the question that we need to be open to recognizing that people may make demands or voice their marginality in different ways (already explored at some length in the foundational reflections on citizenship as an act). Going a step further, it makes unfamiliar our understanding of the category of 'voice' itself. It delinks this from being necessarily politicized through the identification of otherness which is challenged. Voice instead is linked to subtle sensory processes which invoke embodiment (linking desire and care, sound etc. to issues of belonging). It is from this position of embodiment that unfamiliar Acts of Citizenship create possibilities for (re)making sense of the world.

Post and de/colonial literature explores how much of what we take for granted as knowledge "has been grounded in the suppression of sensing and the body" (Mignolo 2013, p. 133; see also e.g. hooks 2015; Lorde 2007; Salami 2020). It points to the active suppression of ways of being linked to the senses under colonialism/modernity (as two sides of the same coin). To put it another way, decolonial studies asks us to think about how the felt and the embodied have been disconnected from understandings of how the world works and from what is presumed to be usefully worth knowing about the world. What becomes clear therefore when viewing cultural processes as unfamiliar Acts of Citizenship from a decolonial perspective is that looking at such sensory issues does not merely 'add to' our existing knowledge within the social sciences. Rather it raises epistemological questions about how we have come to *know* reality. Foregrounding ambiguity and multiplicity is significant because these have been de-valorized under Enlightenment thought (Bhabha 1990). In the case of vernacular language, multiplicity and ambiguity comes from the way it introduces competing feelings which exist side by side – linked to both exclusion and inclusion and/or harmonious and dissonant sounds. Starting with sensing and the body opens up questions of how we have come to know 'politics' as a realm of particular forms of sayability, audibility and thinkability. It forces us to rethink how we have framed citizenship in terms of particular types of already audible (recognizable) challenges to exclusion. It destabilizes this terrain as it introduces multiple competing (ambiguous) options simultaneously – an array of sounds and feelings linked to both inclusion

and exclusion which cannot therefore be grounded firmly any more in existing categories already linked to power contra resistance. Doing so it asks us to rethink what we 'know' and have come to 'know' about citizenship and to rethink where we presume (because we have come to know it in a particular way) 'disruption' into citizenship begins.

4. Conclusion

While citizenship-in–the-making has always by definition been open within the AoC literature, inquiries here have tended to focus on an openness to unfamiliar and disruptive notions of 'who' is possibly named a citizen but within a more *familiar* and less disruptive terrain of 'what' this involves (by focusing on demands and gestures which directly engage in struggles over inclusion and exclusion). Yet, this literature has been critiqued for failing "to decentre the Western liberal institutional structure within which non-status subjects are materially embedded" and made visible (Lee 2014, p.76). For example, Gurminder Bhambra (2015) has pointed out that, those who act as the Other of citizenship might not make demands for inclusion and exclusion in a familiar way (which can then be read in turn for their disruptive qualities arising out of this) and as a result their actions are ignored unless they are put into that language. McNevin (2013) elsewhere has argued for more grounding of inquiries regarding citizenship within ambivalence to take account of the multiple (visible and less visible) aspects through which people engage politically – for example, across purpose, politics and forms of desperation. Such work points to the need for more inquiry into *how* citizenship is enacted *outside* of familiar political engagements which can be understood as perceptible demands around inclusion and exclusion.

I've argued in this chapter that the concept of 'unfamiliar Acts of Citizenship' helps us capture literature which is thinking about acts contained in creative practices. This is literature which explores what we might term 'everyday resistance' (see e.g. Scott et al 2014; Vinthagen and Johansson 2013) which manifests as indirect practices linked to subtle destabilisations of dominant national spaces of political identity and belonging. This literature explores acts which draw upon and reconfigure rather than necessarily oppose these dominant spaces. In particular I have looked at how vernacular language is an example of one such creative practice – and unpacked how it draws upon dominant linguistic and ethnic markers, mixing them up with others, and thereby undermining them, rather than by opposing them in a direct manner. Being political is opened up in such literature to include even subtle challenges to dominant power

relations with all the messiness this entails, rather than remaining focused on struggles involving dialogue whereby a message is conveyed about demand(s) for wider inclusion contra western liberal colonial exclusionary structures.

I have reflected in this chapter therefore on how inquiries into otherness located in cultural and creative practices (rather than those located in direct invocations against exclusion) also enable us to think “radical openness” (hooks 1996, p. 51) into citizenship. What I have explored is how such acts unfamiliarly enact political intervention (and develop resistance). They point to a particular type of presence which is difficult to pin down in terms of a battle over inclusion *contra* exclusion, given their location in indeterminacy. Such acts link being political to, and thus helps us think about citizenship, as something which resides in process of relationality (and interconnection) rather than in any type of resolution they could provide. Citizenship in this literature is located *as a starting point* in temporary and fleeting connections – made between, for example, placing Turkish, Kurdish and German influences together through linguistic processes – where these are recognized as battles about representation of the self in sensory terms. It is this ambiguous position as a starting point *from which* to theorize citizenship and its complexities anew which such literature gives us.

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