

The background of the cover is a dark blue field filled with numerous bright blue, elongated, and slightly blurred light trails. These trails appear to be moving from the top towards the bottom, creating a sense of dynamic energy and depth. Some trails are straight, while others curve or branch out, resembling light painting or long-exposure photography of light sources.

Landscape, Race and Memory

Material Ecologies of Citizenship

Divya Praful Tolia-Kelly



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Landscape, Race and Memory

Material Ecologies of Citizenship

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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
1 Ecologies of Citizenship: Landscape, Race and Memory	1
2 Intimate Distance: Visualizing Post-Colonial <i>Englishness</i>	19
3 Ecological Thinking, Politics and Research Methodologies	39
4 Diaspora Landscapes: Mapping Post-Colonial Memory/History	57
5 Material Memories: Visual and Material Cultures in the South Asian Home	85
6 Mediations in Memory/History: The Art of Making Environmental Memory Tangible on Canvas	117
7 Post-Colonial Ecologies of Citizenship	143
<i>Appendices</i>	<i>151</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>167</i>

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List of Figures

4.1	Women's migration routes	65
4.2	Parental migration routes	66
5.1	Lalita's mandir	92
5.2	Hansa's mandir	92
5.3	Shazia's mandir	93
5.4	Batul's African copper engraving	99
5.5	Shanta's African copper engraving	99
5.6	Kajal's family	107
5.7	Painting of zebra in Shanta's home	110
6.1	'Describe a Landscape' project poster	120
6.2	Chandan's description	124
6.3	Carvalho's painting based on Chandan's description	125
6.4	Shilpa's description	126
6.5	Carvalho's painting based on Shilpa's description	127
6.6	Kokila's description	128
6.7	Carvalho's painting based on Kokila's description	129
6.8	Kanta's description	130
6.9	Carvalho's Painting based on Kanta's description	131
6.10	Carvalho's painting based on Zubeida's description	133
6.11	Private view with Melanie Carvalho at University College London	138
6.12	Private view with Melanie Carvalho at University College London	139

Appendices

1	Zubeida's description	151
2	Lalita's description	152
3	Carvalho's painting of Lalita's description	153
4	Puja's description	154
5	Carvalho's painting of Puja's description	155
6	Manjula's description	156
7	Carvalho's painting of Manjula's description	157
8	Darshna's description	158
9	Carvalho's painting of Darshna's description	159
10	Shanta's description	160
11	Carvalho's painting of Shanta's description	161
12	Carvalho's painting of Hansa's description	162

13	Carvalho's painting of Anila's description	163
14	Carvalho's painting of Kajal's description	164
15	Carvalho's painting of Sarabjit's description	165

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Chapter 1

Ecologies of Citizenship: Landscape, Race and Memory

Natural Citizenship

On 12 October 1979, my father, Praful Dalichand Tolia, was sent a certificate of naturalization for himself, my mother Pratibha and my then only sister. We had been rubber-stamped. It was official. We were accepted and considered naturally British. When I think of this now, it seems that I had officially passed the tests. I'd been through a bureaucratic catalyst, and had changed from a non-natural, *non-native* to British soil (namely a 'foreign' citizen of the British East Africa Protectorate) – and my parents too – to a bona fide citizen of the United Kingdom and its territories. My father deemed this a formality, as we were all born and brought up as *feeling* British; in Kenya, we had always felt protected by the wealth of infrastructure and governance systems of Elizabeth II, Queen of England. I had been born in Nairobi, Kenya, and my parents in Mantarre, Uganda, and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, respectively. We were all living near the Equator, in the Northern Hemisphere, yet were acclimatized to speaking English, drinking tea, and learning about English manners and the cultural praxis of Englishness through reciting English nursery rhymes, eating greens, recognizing gingham, reading C.S. Lewis and Rudyard Kipling, eating sandwiches, enjoying cricket and having picnics at Lake Nevasha. Although some of these things are done the world over, for my family, these customs were our *Englishness*. The naturalization certificate validated our being proper subjects of the Queen, after years of subjugation to English law, governance and systems of social mobility in the British East Africa Protectorate. My family and I have always been grateful to the Crown; my mother says that if our expulsion had occurred today, she wouldn't be confident that the avenues of attaining a place to call 'home' in the UK would have been offered. We would have been processed as *asylum seekers*, facing the precarious existence that this immigration status encompasses.

Our family's biological and cultural roots were in Indian soil, several generations prior. Our blood was linked to Indian Rajputti families of the eighteenth century, and had flowed through practitioners of both Jain and Hindu religion when deemed politic and even sometimes as a means to avoid genocide. Our last territory of citizenship had been Kenya; we loved the air, earth, flora and fauna of the African savannah and enjoyed the spectacle of the Masai, wild safaris, the Rift Valley and the mountainscapes of Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya. At once these were our cultural attachments to landscapes adopted as

our own, simultaneously these locales were figured through textual and musical attachments to the Beatles, Shakespeare, Dickens, *Alice in Wonderland*, Constable, Wordsworth, Johnny Mathis, Kenny Rogers, Chubby Checker and Elvis. These cultural texts evoked landscapes, ecologies and peoples that were 'Other', but part of our quotidian scene. Our cultural citizenship was not contained within a single territorial culture. Geographically, British East Africa had incorporated present-day nations such as Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. These were imagined as one single national community. My father had travelled from Mwanza to Mantarre and ended up in Nairobi. These three cities being in three separate nations was not a factor of concern. How could he then situate a singular notion of national citizenship in the twentieth century? Connections to land, blood and soil across India and British East Africa were core to his being, his material body, and his imagined community of fellow citizens. His connections with citizenship were *ecological*, materially, textually and conceptually. The state boundaries of India and British East Africa had changed several times in his lifetime. The immigration and citizenship legislation of Britain, too, had changed. He had been at various moments a different version of 'British'. He had been expelled from Kenya in 1972, along with my mother and their two daughters, for not being Kenyan. They at once were neither 'Kenyan' nor 'British', and they waited from March 1972 until 1979 to be secure in their status. Since this expulsion, and the correspondingly cool welcome in Britain, we have never forgotten that citizenship is ephemeral. As racialized bodies, we will always be 'Other' to the core values of 'Indianness', 'Englishness' and 'Africanness'. In this respect, we have found solace in the fact that we did survive and that we have benefited from the varied life experience and resulting resilience that is part of being British Asian. This book is about the process of becoming a citizen; of becoming naturally *in place*. It is also engaged with the ways in which citizenship can only be understood ecologically, materially (as bodies in the world), texturally (through cultural texts and textures of inhabitation), and conceptually (as a multidimensional way of thinking being, living and feeling). My family's journey represents the journey for many; through colonial territories, various biomes, and the environmental, spiritual, emotional and economic adjustment to that mobility. My family has been part of a racialized minority in Britain which were once a racialized minority on the African continent, but were also part of a majority; they formed the bulk of those British citizens who did not live here – they were those living in the colonies, populations of *British* who had not known or experienced this land, but had contributed to its wealth and success through their labour, embodied attachments, innovation, taxes, motivation and hardiness. These populations continue to be both *inside* and *outside*. Some of those who are British Muslims have been, since 9/11, more *outside* than others. Yet they are here because our Sovereign ruled *over there* with much violence, oppression and subjugation, the legacies of which continue to haunt us, creating the unstable and very *live* politics of citizenship that is practised on the soil, within the culture, and through infrastructures of economy, politics and heritage.

The process of *naturalization* is equally applied to the non-human world. The Royal Horticultural Society holds a definitive list of those plant species territorialized on British soil that are officially *natural* in Britain, but that were not always *native* to Britain. The general belief is that non-native species are a threat and that native species are under threat from aggressive, organic ‘miscegenation’ and thus the ecosystem of our native land needs to be preserved from the threat of ‘foreign’ invasion. However within these narratives are notions of plants that were non-native being *naturalized*.

Invasive non-native species are considered to be the second most significant cause of biodiversity loss on a global scale. The threat from non-native species is increasing with the continued growth of global trade and travel (Natural England, 2006).

An example of this is the walnut tree, which, after being called a ‘foreign species’, is now regarded as natural to the UK landscape. According to the Royal Horticultural Society, the walnut is an example of tree species that although described as ‘exotic’, has stayed so long that it is now part of our understanding of what constitutes as ‘native landscape’ (see Tolia-Kelly, 2007a). The notion of a ‘natural’ ecology or ‘natural’ citizen in both human and non-human cases rests on cultural and political definitions. An ecological attitude to both attests to the need for our embracing of a tolerant attitude to both, where a natural equilibrium will prevail. Or indeed, we need to recognize that terms such as ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ are culturally defined.

We are a genus of one species with many subdivisions, and there are divisions of that species that have predispositions that could prove fatal to the other subdivisions of that species. In the big picture, the exposure of a species to all there is to be exposed to ultimately will give it greater strength. ... As an individual you stand on your own two feet and are confronted with the world. Any claim that you shouldn’t be there is just wrong. You might not like the fact that there are gay people or those who have a different skin colour – these are elements of the human condition. Being exposed to diversity can only help you, strengthen you – exposure or collective living can retain integrity for the species – I would argue that this is the same for any other organism. (Interview with Phil Dewhurst, arboriculturist, Burnley, UK, July 2004; see also Tolia-Kelly, 2007a)

What Phil Dewhurst’s statement makes clear is that by embracing an ‘organic cosmopolitanism’, new notions of ecological citizenship are possible, especially one that can bridge the mobility of human and non-human species. This would be called an ecological citizenship based on a natural cosmopolitanism (see Clarke, 2002; Turner, 2002).

Doing Ecologies

The aim of this monograph is to bring together ideas and research on race, ethnicity and cultural geographies of citizenship and identity. Citizenship here is ecological: connections with soil, landscape, and the iconographies of lived experience are central. Our identification with these ecological textures is the basis for identity, belonging and embodied connections to place, space and nation. The monograph offers ways to think about race and citizenship in the twenty-first century through a commitment to culture, materialism and a notion of environmental histories, and thus it is framed as thinking about identity ecologically. Doing ecologies of citizenship and identity is about embracing a multinodal approach to thinking about the subjectivities of the racialized body in the 'West'. The 'West' is in parenthesis here because the idea of the West is fissured with people, ecologies, knowledges, value systems and materialities of that which is constructed as 'East', and thus cannot attain integrity or currency without these presences. The idea or political notion of there being an inextricable synthesis between these two co-constituted sites, natures, cultures and societies is illustrated throughout this research monograph; the embodied identities of those positioned as 'Other' are created and are part of colonial, imperial and academic imaginaries that have dominated the last few centuries. The Occidental, or that which is English, is reliant upon, and is structured through, the 'Oriental', or 'Indian' or 'African'; these material and cultural connections are running through its veins, keeping it alive and well.

The research presented here is based on 10 years of working with South Asian women living in London. All of these women are first-generation migrants, some of them twice or triple migrants. All have lived under the auspices of the British protectorate in East Africa, colonial rule in India (before partition), and colonies in Yemen, Zimbabwe, Malawi and many others. These women are at the heart of Englishness, as made through its legacy in Empire and the landscapes of Empire. Their biographies reflect the footprint of the British Empire, its economies, natures and cultural sphere of influence. Their migration reflects the Empire's need for the movement of labour, the use of colonized citizens to develop economies, to expand Empire, to consolidate geopolitical ambitions, and to instil acceptance of a model of law, economy and a political identity of Britishness itself. This research is about thinking Britishness within the boundaries of British citizenship, to unravel the multinational nature of Britishness and British culture. The identities of these South Asian women are shown through their very connectedness with landscapes, itself a European invention exported internationally. The iconographies of landscape, through which these individuals articulate their political, cultural, religious and social citizenship, are made tangible through the use of visual methodologies, material methodologies and in-depth group workshops on biographical routes of migration to the UK. The aim was to think 'identity' through geographies of landscape, nature and coordinates of everyday lived experience. This is counter to a body-centred approach to identity, reifying the notion of 'South Asian', 'Afro-Caribbean', 'African' and others. The body in a situated experience of landscape is what is pursued through ethnography.

Diaspora Identity

As I write this chapter, 'diaspora' research is on an exponential rate of increase in terms of both publication and funding priorities. Its use and meanings have become diverse (Brubaker, 2005). My research has been fully shaped and driven by 'diaspora' as conceptualized by Stuart Hall (1990), William Safran (1991), Paul Gilroy (1993a) and Avtar Brah (1996), none of whom had worked with notions of a visual and material citizenship defined through encounters with landscape. Diaspora is a term that is both helpful and reductive. In terms of visualizing a society of connected, mobile migrants or exiles, it instantly enables the possibility for a theorization of a particular and specific culture of experience, memory, political positioning and imaginative geography. What 'diaspora' often conceals when used in the contemporary social sciences is the violence of racial oppression, alienation and 'positioning' that is present in earlier accounts by Hall (1990), Morrison (1990), Kitaj (1989), Araeen (1992a, 1992b) and Hobsbawm (2005). Diaspora as a contemporary concept conceals the processes of racialization not intentionally but through slippages that occur when thinking about 'diaspora migration' 'culture' and 'landscapes'. The intention behind the title of the book, *Landscape, Race and Memory*, is to reassert the critical process of racialization that enforces upon the diaspora a positioning of always needing to respond as 'Other', as in Said's (1978) thesis. The diasporic sensibility is a sensibility that develops from experience of a racialization, and a mobility combined. Embedded in the diaspora sensibility are experiences of fear, insecurity, negation, abjection and in-betweenness in varying proportions. There is a biological aspect of diaspora racialization that is inherited from race taxonomies of the colonial period. These, like the diaspora, shift in formation, response and integrity. In response to this racialization, the diaspora develops a sense of 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991), 'belonging', and what I posit in this research as *citizenship* that is *environmental* and *ecological* as a response to being obscured and left at the social, political and cultural margins of 'others'. In this case, then, my consolidation of an *Asianness* is not to create a fantastic, coherent notion of 'diaspora' culture, but to affirm a notion of diaspora as continually in violent circumstances, which figures diaspora citizenship in dynamic flux, and defined 'in-relation' to an *Englishness* (Matless, 1998) which is also in tension with the notion of an inclusive Britishness. This conceptualization of diaspora does, however, resonate with contemporary writings on cosmopolitanism and transnationalism (see Turner, 2002, 2006). In this research the cultural and geographical diversity within the British Asian diaspora is made tangible, yet the integrity of diaspora community is also expressed. Environmental citizenship in this research is a conceptual understanding of the diaspora's coordinates of living and being a citizen within an environment. There has been rupture of identification and experience between past landscapes and present ones; soil, territory and a sense of 'home' are at stake. Therefore, what occurs in this research is a mapping of a territory of citizenry that operates beyond a formal timeline of history, heritage, cartography and spatial understandings of the 'body politic'. What you

are drawn into is a time-space set of coordinates that, through visual, material and biographical texts, enables an engagement with the landscapes of citizenship that enable diasporic expressive cultures of Britishness and citizenship.

Research on identity cannot be separated neatly into research on the body without embedding within it a notion of memory, or of culture without considering economy, or any tropes of identity without thinking about locales of belonging. Body, spirit, intellect, the affective and economies of being are linked through 'structures of feeling' (Williams, 1977), being, remembering, dwelling and landscapes of living. Doing ecologies of race is recognizing that questions of identity are riddled with the false logic of race, but that these are live and conjoined in contemporary politics of national citizenship, of global mobility and the political and moral geographies of belonging, being and feeling. Here, it is important to move away from the reification of categories of 'Black' and 'White' without rejecting the reasons for their resonance in contemporary society. It is also important not to relapse into the particular type of divisive identity politics of the 1980s, which served to bolster notions of 'type', racial or cultural 'competences', 'identity boundaries' and biological identification practices. The complex of identity is connected with global histories of the movement of land masses, genes, peoples, their regimes of cultural signification, and the political strategies for resource management and control. Ecological thinking allows us to embrace these complexities, which honour the histories and myriad differences that exist between human groups, but also to be genuine about the histories, materialities and dynamism of the categories of ethnicities, peoples and 'races'. Situating these notions of 'identity' can only be worked through using geographical and temporal frameworks; phenotype, environment and history are rejected for the uses of the intellectual bodies of knowledge on landscape, race and memory.

Ecological thinking positions the 'West' within a universal plane of thinking about culture, identity, landscape, and language. This thoughtful approach retains an imperative to acknowledge power differentials, economic unevenness, lack of global distributive justice, and indeed uneven access to a societal voice or power. By thinking of identity as ecologically positioned, we can be reflexive epistemologically, ontologically and heuristically. The avoidance of epistemic violence (see Code, 2006) is paramount. So a participatory approach to ethnography, storytelling, historical writing and academic dissemination moves a little way towards eliminating some of the literary and material violences which occur against the 'East', the 'Other', 'Muslim', 'famine victim', 'asylum seeker', 'migrant' and other outsiders. Ecological thinking is not a didactic mode of enquiry; instead, it is philosophical advice. Some would call this an ethics of practice, and I would call it responsible political practice in academic research.

The methodologies employed in this research are intended to be complicit with an ecological philosophy of thinking, both necessary and endemic to an ecological approach to identity. The visual and material elements of our lived daily lives are integral to our political, biological and sensory matrices of being and negotiation. There are accumulated knowledges that are corporeal, habituated and

felt, embedded in the rhythms, spaces and flows of our lived identities. The visual, material, temporal, geographical and sensory nodes of our identities are critical in a mapping of identity through power, body memory, biological identity and sense of place in the world. These nodes form a continually evolving and dynamic matrix of being that effectively binds us to opportunities, capacities and mobilities in the modern world. This research privileges the nodes of landscape, race and memory to attempt to refract and triangulate the mobilities, materialities and lived encounters of racialized populations of post-colonial citizens of Britain.

The importance of the 'textural' is that, as embodied citizens, we engage holistically with our locales of being and living. Therefore, thinking identity purely through the skin, the visual or sound, for example, would necessitate a reductive approach to cultural identification and thus also to the politics of representation and race. The need for a more triangulated approach to identity is promoted here, through coordinates of *living*, and through the visual and material cultures of the home as being cultural artefacts of diasporic heritage, thus being critical to a domestic landscape of belonging. The use or 'lens' of the 'textural' offers a dimension of an embodied approach to identity, where identity is not delimited to skin, nationality, economic status (as in the 'Third World'), political citizenship or religion. A notion of diaspora identity in the case of the South Asian women in this research enables us to think about their 'positioning' (Hall, 1990) in respect of lived biographies and their relationship to national identity through cultural artefacts, landscape paintings, oral histories and sensory memories. Thinking ecologically enables us to situate the racialized identity within a framework of the temporal, spatial, and sensorial, and the self-imagined or self-determined realm of identity praxis. The materials specifically engaged with here are visual, artefactual and imagined landscape connections which are biographical, utopian and lived.

Both For and Against 'Black Minority Ethnic'

Throughout this monograph I will use terms such as 'Black', 'race' 'ethnicity' and 'identity'. For many contemporary post-structuralist thinkers, these terms are no longer 'live' or indeed valuable. In my theoretical argument, thinking ecologically requires the reader to engage with power geometries (Massey, 1993), the continuing use of 'race' as a structural strategy of exclusion, and the oppression that is present in the everyday lives of racialized communities. 'Race' has been dismissed as being an inaccurate and non-scientific category; namely, culturally constructed and reproduced. Historically, 'race' was made a scientifically driven account of human hierarchy, of both intellectual and physical capacity. In the latter part of the twentieth century, after 1945, much of sociology and cultural studies has sought to challenge these categories under which colonial and imperial taxonomies of race, national type and environmentally determined ethnicities were framed. More recently, these challenges have been translated to dialogues within anti-racist groups and policymakers, and a challenge to the categories and reifications of

non-White groups and ethnicities developed during the realm of multiculturalism and the anti-racist movements from the 1970s onwards. There has been a struggle against non-positivist accounts of ethnicities that are plotted, mapped, defined and profiled under the auspices of 'migration research' (Modood, 1998). Alternatives to the framings of race and ethnic studies have emerged both from the radical activist's perspective and through post-structuralist critiques and post-colonial theory. In post-colonial accounts of race and difference, culture is the point of examination, namely literature and the voice of the subaltern. This is opposed to the nineteenth-century science of taxonomies, categories, environmental determinism and miscegenation (Anderson, 2007). In the twentieth century, namely the 1970s, the focus of anti-racists was also on the body, skin colour and notions of universal origins in African territory. For some, these new ways of thinking race were liberating and held real political currency. However, in light of the cultural studies school of thinking (Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Iain Chambers, Lidia Curti, etc.), these anti-racist lobbying groups' categorizations were also reductive and intellectually pedestrian. Despite being rooted in social justice, and claims for the redistribution of wealth, social infrastructure and rights, the language of identity politics did not resonate for all of the oppressed. Political struggles that centred on single-issue politics around skin colour, gender, disability, and sexual orientation often excluded questions of geography, class, history, and self-determined identity politics. All of these movements retained notions of identity as singular bounded categories. Part of the problem here was that 'identity' was crude, clumsy and outmoded. This sense of the unfair homogenization of groups' identities was damaging and disempowering, resulting in fractious and troubled times for anti-racists. This period of time coincided with the emergence of a body of thought labelled 'post-colonial theory', which recognized one levelling means of oppression above all others, that of colonial rule and its subjugating mechanisms of disempowerment. Post-colonial bodies had been subjugated, oppressed and silenced in particular ways, including the very real crushing of language systems and systems of cultural expression, heritage and dynamic self-determination. For writers such as Guyatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988), not only had there been suffering, but also the material history, the cultural, biological and intellectual integrity of a colonized society, had been smashed. This theory took the movement of anti-racism into the realms of acknowledging cultural, ethnic and intellectual violence alongside the physical violence of the street fascists in Europe and the US. What is important here is that post-colonialism was liberating. It allowed intellectual discussions about the 'hybrid', the voiceless 'subaltern', and the nature and mechanisms of imperial subjugation. This paralleled the recognition that racism was also evolving into the realms of *cultural difference* from being solely about *biological difference* (Gilroy, 1993b). The theory of a post-colonial scholarship was enabling and visionary. However, it was still locked into the elite world of literary theory and citations (Said, 1983, p. 2). The chasm between anti-racists on the ground and the post-colonial thinkers has not always been bridged. The aim of thinking *ecologically*, therefore, is precisely about situating the post-colonial subject in the quotidian